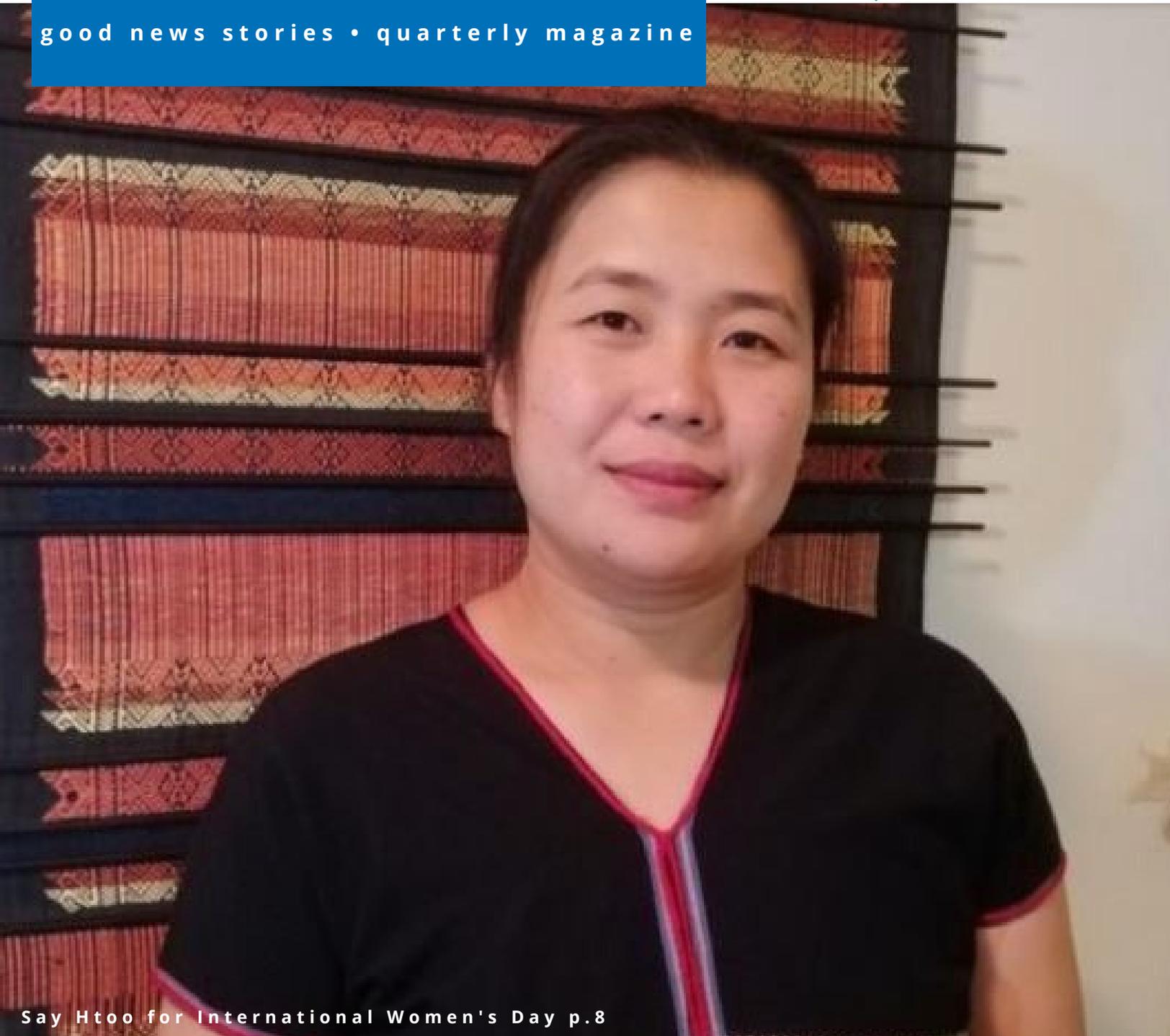


issue 1 • April 2022

TOGETHER

good news stories • quarterly magazine



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welcome

Welcome to the first issue of TOGETHER magazine – where we celebrate both good news stories from across our Baptist Union and give you an insight into what is going on in our churches, our agencies and our support hub.

Our monthly newsletter has been transformed into a digital magazine format that will hopefully be easier to read and incorporates some additional news sections.

The vision for the Baptist Union of Victoria is to be a Union of Flourishing Churches with Christlike followers who redeem society. The BUV Support Hub (the office that provides services to the network of churches in our Union) exists to empower, equip and encourage churches to advance God's kingdom in Victoria.

I'm personally so proud of the way our churches and agencies have managed over the past two years when we were all thrown the biggest curve ball we have ever faced. Now, as we emerge and reconnect with our church community and our wider local communities, we have an opportunity to reflect and reimagine, together with our leadership teams and congregations, what the future might look like.

[Click here to subscribe](#)

At the BUV Support Hub, we're all about helping churches to flourish and we love to hear stories from your churches. In our Church Pulse article, we interview a small selection of pastors to see how they and their congregations are travelling as we head towards Covid normal, and what their outlook for the future is.

Also in this issue, we've got some wonderful stories of what some of our church members have been up to. We celebrate with Say Htoo, a Westgate Karen Baptist Church member, who has an inspiring story and was recognised by the Wyndham City Council on International Women's Day earlier this month. We also hear from Alex Ng, a member of Crossway Baptist Church, who got involved in the Telephone Care ministry to bless others and had an unexpected result.

There's a story of Baptist young people getting together to serve and young leaders being trained and empowered to lead, as well as a wonderful story of collaboration between churches in a local government area and the impact they have made.

We also give you a glimpse into what some of our Pastors have been up to at recent events, celebrate those who have

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recently been ordained, update you on partnership news and what's happening with our Baptist agencies.

So, enjoy reading the wonderful articles and news in this edition and if you think someone else would like to receive this magazine, please forward it onto them or share [this subscription link](#).

Feel free to share with your congregations.

God Bless,

Daniel



Rev Daniel Bullock is the BUV Director of Mission and Ministries.

CHURCH PULSE

Looking towards a post COVID church



We posed 7 questions to Pastors of 12 different churches within our Baptist Union to get an insight into how they are travelling since restrictions have been lifted and as they look towards a post Covid church. The churches in this article represent the diversity of our Union and cover small and large, metro and regional, LOTE, English speaking and multilingual churches.

Note: This article is not designed to make generalizations, but to show an insight into how just some churches across our Union are feeling at this moment in time.

- The majority of churches are now in the reimagining or rebuilding phase where they are not back to full in-person capacity, but are also open to what is ahead and are using this time to reimagine what their church expression will look like in the future based on the shifts that have occurred in the last 2 years
- Half of churches represented have over 60% of their congregation back meeting in person and around a quarter have 80-90% back;
- All but one church will continue to run hybrid church services using online church in some format, some seeing it as a new 'front door', some expanding their investment and service style to cater for a fully online audience in addition to their in-person congregations;
- The vast majority of churches continued their community outreach programmes through COVID and/or have now recommenced any that had paused;

- Not surprisingly, although pastors and church leadership are hopeful for the future, most (and there were exceptions) are surviving, not thriving and are looking forward to opportunities to rest;
- It is encouraging to see that most churches (pastors and congregations on the whole), although recognising the effects of the last 2 years, are enthused about being back together in community and hopeful about the future and the possibilities that it holds;
- Some churches are sitting and holding, intent to slow down and get the basics right, others are forging ahead.

Thanks to all 12 Pastors for taking the time to participate in this interview.

If your church is wanting to reimagine or revitalize, the BUV Mission Catalyst Team would love to talk to you and assist you through a congregational mission and vision forum process. [For more info click here](#)

Q1. What mode are you in – crisis, recovery, returned to normal, reimagining future? (or other)

Two churches indicated they are returned to normal but the majority of Pastors we interviewed believe their churches are in reimagining / rebuilding or renewal mode. A couple are definitely still in recovery mode, and even within those churches, certain segments remain in crisis.

We are in a rebuilding mode in Bendigo as we emerge from the pandemic with a real focus upon RENEWAL. The past two years have pushed and pulled us in so many different directions and our focus in the coming year is upon making a RENEWED commitment towards loving God, loving others and getting on with the mission of Jesus (being and making disciples) in this world.

DAVE LOVELL BENDIGO BAPTIST CHURCH



Not everything needs to be dismantled. And even while deconstructing and rethinking we need to be caring, connecting, teaching, worshiping, praying, witnessing and serving in the kingdom of God. We have a Members and Supporters Vision gathering this week to listen to each other. Our Church Council and Pastoral Leadership are thinking and praying about the coming seasons. We are walking slowly. We are seeking to 'hold' for a while in the discovery and discernment phase before we make firm decisions

ALLAN DEMOND NEWHOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

Q2. What stage are you at re church online vs meeting in person?

It is encouraging to hear that in over half the churches we spoke to, the pastors estimate that, although it has been a slow return due to some hesitancy, 60% or more (and in a quarter of cases, between 80-90%) of attendees have returned. All recognised that there will be some who will never return, but in contrast, many have gained online attendees that were not part of the church prior to COVID. A couple of churches commented that they have either lost the fringes or the fringe have become even more fringe, for example those who attended once a month may now only attend every two months.

There is still a percentage of people who are disengaged for various reasons, but we are hopeful that most will return in their own time. Our job is to provide a safe, welcoming and non-judgemental presence.

MALCOLM WARD NARINGAL BAPTIST CHURCH



Now at 60-70% pre-covid numbers with around 400 people on site (pre covid 550), but another 400 connecting online every week. We are a bit unsure of the level of engagement online but there have been stories of anecdotal evidence of impact for the online audience. **PAUL CROTHERS** NEW PENINSULA BAPTIST CHURCH



80% of members came back for worship but there is still fear and discomfort about being too close together, like we were before the pandemic. Unfortunately, the Church building where we were meeting pre COVID is no longer available and we have started looking for a new place to worship, but because we are still struggling to find somewhere, we have been meeting for worship services at our Pastor's house.

PANCIA TINTUEP ZOTUNG BAPTIST CHURCH



Q3. Are you still running online church?

Almost all the churches we spoke to will continue to run church online in addition to their in-person services. Several churches spoke of the need to invest in this area even further to develop the platform so that it is catering to the audience more precisely. Some churches, whilst running large online services, are still keen to attract as many people back to the community of in-person events. Smaller churches are adapting their service styles to the hybrid model and including some of their online attendees in the service on screen.

We will continue to run church online into the future because our connection has gone well beyond our local community and embraces people who can't get to church.

DAVID HODGENS WODONGA BAPTIST CHURCH



We already had an online service prior to COVID but over the last 2 years, we have put more resources into this space, adding service hosts to engage with the congregation. We want to validate the online space and this will continue to grow in the future. We recognise that how people choose to worship is their choice - but our number 1 messaging is that of community.

MARK PURSER CROSSWAY BAPTIST CHURCH (BURWOOD EAST CAMPUS)



Q4. What's the pulse in your church? Are people traumatised, fearful, hopeful, enthused or any other emotion?

It is clear that although all of these emotions are being felt by different people (or the same people at different times), the overall sense from our interviews is that of enthusiasm and hope for the future. Across the churches we spoke to we heard there was /is some tiredness and reticence to either return or volunteer, mixed with some fear of the future from a world events perspective, but it seems the overwhelming emotion is joy to be back in community with fellow church members and hope as the church reimagines the future.



At the first few weeks from returning to physical gathering service, most people were nervous and scared or hesitant to shake hands. First I wondered, if I offer my hand for a handshake, will people respond willingly? And as a pastor if I don't offer for handshake what other will think of me.

GAIL MOE WERRIBEE KAREN BAPTIST CHURCH

Fearful because of world events like Covid, but now Ukraine and potential war. If it wasn't for that, with regard to the church, they are hopeful about planning for the future.

PAUL HUGLIN WEST PRESTON BAPTIST CHURCH



Q5. Have you re-engaged / recommenced ministry to/ in your community?

Most churches that we spoke to continued their community outreach programmes right through COVID - those that didn't, have recommenced or are recommencing community ministries currently. Whilst COVID made it difficult to meet together in person as church communities, it does seem to have been a catalyst for community engagement.

A significant example of this is Whitehorse Church Care - which you can read about on page 15.

Throughout Covid, we had a significant ministry to the homeless of the city when other welfare groups were shutting up shop.

DAVE LOVELL BENDIGO BAPTIST CHURCH



Yes, once a month we run Green Wedge Public Lectures instead of our church service. It's basically an opportunity to get experts along to talk about topics relevant to the local community (mainly environment, mental health and social justice). It's like a bridge for people to experience church without the religious bits! We are a little community so having 20+ community members along was quite a thrill!

SALLY AGOSTINO SOUTHERN CROSS COMMUNITY CHURCH

Q6. How are you (and other pastoral team members / staff) holding up?

The answers to this question didn't surprise us – church ministry teams have worked so hard during the past 2 years and, as church has recommenced, volunteers to run programmes have been hard to come by or unreliable due to COVID. The general consensus was that Pastors and teams are tired, do not have a lot left in their tanks, are surviving not thriving and looking for opportunities to rest. Having said that, they remain hopeful for the future.



Very tired. The main spiritual challenge is to remain steady through the storm of emotions that fly around. Another big challenge is always having multiple contingency plans for when volunteers/plans fall through, which is frequent and exhausting. I'm thanking and relying on our ever-loving, constantly present Alpha and Omega.

JUDE WALDRON ARMADALE BAPTIST CHURCH

We believe we are holding each other well. We had tough Covid years but supported each other through it and are still trusting the Lord and each other, re-engaging people and re-imagining ministry.

ROBYN SONG BENTLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH



Q7. What's the outlook for the year?

The sentiment across the board is one of hope for the future, whilst acknowledging the effect that the last 2 years has had on people. Some churches are sitting and holding, intent to slow down and get the basics right. Others are forging ahead.

I can see the year ahead is bright and moving as God's plan!

GAIL MOE WERRIBEE KAREN BAPTIST CHURCH



Positive! Some of the things we did through covid such as our neighbourhood church initiative had such promise that we will revisit them in another form.

DAVID HODGENS WODONGA DISTRICT BAPTIST CHURCH



Recognising WOMEN OF THE BUV on



International Women's Day



This year's International Women's Day (8 March), we recognised and applauded the significant contribution of our Victorian Baptist women leaders in helping our local churches and agencies flourish.

The BUV is proud to affirm and encourage women leaders in their gifts and calling at all levels of leadership, whether that be in a vocational pastoral capacity, within local church leadership, or wherever God has called them.

In this article we are profiling one of our Baptist Karen leaders, Naw Say Htoo Eh Moero ("Say Htoo") from Westgate Karen Baptist Church. Say Htoo has a deeply inspiring story of God's faithfulness and provision from her early years in Burma, her journey to Australia and to the leadership roles she holds within her workplace, community and church.

Say Htoo came to Melbourne as a refugee with her family at the age of 21. Due to Burmese military activity, the family had fled to Bangkok where they endured three years of living confined to a small one-bedroom apartment because of their illegal immigrant status.

Say Htoo remembers those years of isolation well. It was very much a day-to-day existence as they prayed and believed God would take care of them each day. Eventually the family was granted refugee status, arriving in Australia in 1999.



On arrival in Melbourne, Say Htoo worked as a cleaner, shelf-stacker and kitchen hand. Over time, she worked her way into community service roles, with several different agencies. In the early days, Say Htoo and her family were welcomed into Baptist church life, thanks to the inclusion and leadership of Alan Marr, BUV Director of Ministries at that time.

Along with a handful of other Karen refugees, Say Htoo and her family began attending Westgate Baptist Church. As more Karen families continued to arrive from Burma, 'Westgate Karen Baptist Church' was born in 2000. Since that time, Say Htoo has served in various leadership capacities, including a stint as Treasurer and as Church Secretary for many years.

She was also one of the first members of the RAALS committee (Refugee Airfare & Assistance Loan Scheme) formed by the BUV in 2004.

Say Htoo entered the *TransFormation* program at Whitley College in 2005 as part of the first cohort where she recalls

being an important step in her leadership development as she began to develop broader life views and gain self-confidence as a leader.

In recent times during the pandemic, Say Htoo has been involved with other members of Westgate Karen Baptist Church in helping fundraise for life-giving oxygen cylinders during the height of COVID, along with money for relatives and friends displaced by impacts of the 2021 Burmese military coup.

Since 2009, Say Htoo has worked at the Wyndham Community and Education Centre as a settlement worker.

"It is here that I have found the place I can really give back to the community," she says. "I remember those difficult years – especially in Bangkok, locked in that room. People helped us. That meant such a great deal to us, you cannot imagine. Jesus taught us to love our neighbours and help those in need...I understand I am to shine his light".

In 2012, Say Htoo received a Lalor award in recognition of her work with helping settle refugees, presented by then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard. The following year, Ms Gillard presented Say Htoo with the Settlement Worker of the Year for Australia award in Canberra.

"When I think back on what I have achieved, and what I have gone through to get here, I think, 'How did I do all this?' Say Htoo reflects. "I did this while being a mother of two children. As women, we are strong, passionate and resilient. I would like to encourage girls and women that we are strong, passionate and resilient. I would like to encourage girls and women that we are strong and we can do a lot of things and make things happen."

There are many challenges in our daily lives and even in our faith, but when we need strength, we can ask God and he will help and strengthen us."

"I thank God that he brought me here to Australia so I can glorify him".

The BUV recognises the outstanding contribution Say Htoo has made and continues to make as a leader within the communities she lives and works in, and we thank her for sharing some of her story here. |

**As women,
we are strong, passionate
and resilient.**

Newcomers find **Belonging & Blessing**

Telephone Care Ministry

Alex Ng and his wife emigrated to Melbourne from Hong Kong early last year and soon found their church home at Crossway Baptist Church. Not long after joining the church, Alex and his wife began serving in the telephone care ministry.

In seeking to be on mission by caring for others, Alex and his wife experienced the delight and joy of being loved and cared for themselves!

This is an uplifting story and an encouragement of the blessings that come through service and everyday mission.



Over the eight months in 2021 after my immigration entry into Melbourne from Hong Kong, I experienced three city lockdowns, one earthquake, two power outages and the three seasons of winter, spring and summer.

These all came as to our new beginning of life here, but not short of God's grace. We have a good Chinese neighbourhood in our suburb where we met a family kind enough to assist us in settling down.

In our new church here (Crossway Baptist), we were taken care of by devoted pastoral staff and godly brothers and sisters.

We did not expect we could so readily jump on board with Crossway's 'Telephone Caring Ministry' in serving other people. My wife started with joining the Welcome Team where she

Rather than sit and wait, it is better for us to proactively make ourselves good neighbours to others by caring for their needs.



This ministry accomplishes Jesus's commission: as His disciples and followers, we should care and support each other in living out and advancing God's love. When we spread the gospel, we must show care and gentleness so others can feel God's love and peace. Rather than sit and wait, it is better for us to proactively make ourselves good neighbours to others by caring for their needs.

could actively meet more people in church just by being present at the foyer entrance of the Chapel.

Subsequently, our pastors initiated the 'telephone caring' mission, so a small team was formed with a view to approaching individual congregational members who were unable to attend worship services due to Covid restrictions.

Based on the respective name lists allocated, our team members called them up one by one; we extended our care to their challenges and spiritual needs amid the pandemic, as well keeping them posted of our congregational updates.

From my initial phone call encounters, I discovered most of my contacts had been in Australia for a long time - among them there were retirees, a university lecturer, high school teacher, accountant, chef, real estate agent, business executive etc. Being a new immigrant, I felt unsure to ask how they were going.

But after more conversations, I started feeling it was God's plan for me to be in touch with them as they thanked me for

Crossway put up their prayer requests, raised concerns for our church, exchanged views on faith, enquired on Hong Kong updates, shared their business experience, expressed their worries, talked about grandchildren etc. Most of all, I received their offers of help to me as a new settler, for example, some would refer me to their connections in my same job category for a better understanding of the Melbourne situation. I was grateful for their kindness, as well as the helpful information, as this made me feel more comfortable to keep the conversation going. I started off with my caring intention but ended up being cared for... this is God's plan, in all things He works for the good.

As a newcomer to this land of Australia, I can only pray that God's guidance is in every phone call so that our care can reach out to the person on the other end, and that through our conversations we can clearly see their spiritual needs.

I recall a sermon by Pastor Chow Kwok Cheong (from Hong Kong) titled "Mission at our doorstep". Serving in Crossway's telephone caring ministry allows me to reach out to people here different to me, and realise I am indeed on mission.

As I think about these things, I reflect on this verse: "But whoever looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom and continues in it—not forgetting what they have heard, but doing it—they will be blessed in what they do." (James 1:25) |

We must show care and gentleness so others can feel God's love and peace.



YOUNG BAPTIST LEADERS ON MISSION

This story is a wonderful snapshot of how our Baptist young adults across Victoria are developing and serving as missional leaders. We celebrate what God is doing through their lives and leadership in all different expressions of ministry, in helping the next generation to flourish and experience the love of God.

Over the Christmas and January summer period each year, many Baptist young adults can be found serving and leading in various expressions of local mission. Often this is through leadership at summer camps and programs for example, Baptist Camping, SUFM, CYC, ESA, etc.

These events undoubtedly have significant impact in the lives of those who attend as well as the leaders themselves.



As they serve, their own leadership skills are developed which enhances their capabilities within the local church environment. This is surely a win/win all round!

Another place where young adult leaders are serving and being shaped is in the Red Frogs organisation. A support program for young people from the ages of 13 – 30, Red Frogs is probably best known for its work during Schoolies week, but also runs programs in Secondary schools, Universities, Music Festivals, Sporting events and Boardriders providing direct relief, safety and support to young people.

Among our Victorian Baptist family, there are young leaders who form part of the 1500 strong volunteer network with Red Frogs from churches such as OneHope (Geelong), Kew, NewHope, Syndal, Church by the Bay, Crossway, to name a few.

Such is the positive reputation of Red Frogs, they were asked to assist at the recent high-profile Foo Fighters Concert early this month at GMHBA (Kardinia Park), Geelong. Around 40 Red Frog volunteers served on the night, helping the Ambulance, Police and stadium staff to create a safe environment for concert goers.



Allegra Williams, youth leader at NewHope and Red Frog volunteer, was part of the Foo Fighters Red Frog team on the night. She has also been part of the Red Frogs Schoolies team at Lorne for the past five years, an experience that has played an important part in her faith and leadership development. She shares the following reflection:

"During my first year with Red Frogs Schoolies, I was quickly confronted by an environment in which young people were at times vulnerable, fragile, and in need of support. In the midst of this, as every-day young adult leaders, we had the great privilege of being the presence of Christ in these moments of need for our schoolies.

We did this through simple acts of service - cooking pancakes to ease hangovers, handing out water supplies and red frog lollies, being a listening ear and often the voice of reason and calm amid chaos.

As a follower of Jesus, I hadn't questioned these acts of service as it felt natural to me to extend help to those in need. I quickly learnt that for many young people, this kind of unconditional love is countercultural and simply didn't make sense.

I love to see the growth in our young leaders and to see them finding greater purpose in their faith, modelling Jesus, loving people unconditionally through their actions.

Questions like 'why do you guys do this?' and 'surely you wouldn't pay to catch our vomit all week long?' tend to come after just a couple of days in the schoolies week!

While these conversations have led to some meaningful discussions about faith, just as powerful have been the moments where we have simply been able to speak value over a young person's life.

I have also had the privilege of carrying the presence of God into some heavy situations during schoolies and been able to provide hope through the practical extension of his love.



Each schoolies week, I am struck in a new way how powerful this is, and ultimately how profound our mission is.

Being part of Red Frogs, especially during a critical period of early adulthood, has shaped me in ways I never expected, both in my faith and leadership development. I have learnt so much from serving alongside other Red Frog leaders and been encouraged to use my own unique strengths as a leader and volunteer."



Robbie Spicer, Young Adults Pastor at One Hope in Geelong, has been involved with Red Frogs for the past 20 years and estimates around 20-30 young adults from OneHope regularly serve with Red Frogs at Schoolies, Unis and other events.

"I love to see the growth in our young leaders and to see them finding greater purpose in their faith, modelling Jesus, loving people unconditionally through their actions" he says. Robbie also highlights the value of young adults from different churches learning to work together as they serve in Red Frogs, united by faith and purpose, and experiencing what it is to be a Kingdom movement." |



The BUV has a training pathway for Emerging leaders. [Click here](#) to find out more.



**“IT WAS THE
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These words are reflections from Allan Demond (Senior Pastor of NewHope Baptist Church) about a shared vision for mission amongst a diverse group of churches for their local area that has resulted in the formation and operation of the Whitehorse Churches Care organisation.

One of the strategic focus areas for the Baptist Union is the area of relationship - encouraging churches to support, pray for, and share resources between one another – being TOGETHER on mission. This good news story epitomises this goal, and goes beyond, extending to all churches within the Whitehorse council area.

Whitehorse Churches Care (WCC) is a registered charity of Christian churches from across the City of Whitehorse LGA and was formed in 2019. Made up of over 300 volunteers from around 70 churches in the LGA, the origins of WCC can be traced back 20 years ago to the humble beginnings of what would become some 10 years later, regular ecumenical



WHITEHORSE CHURCHES CARE

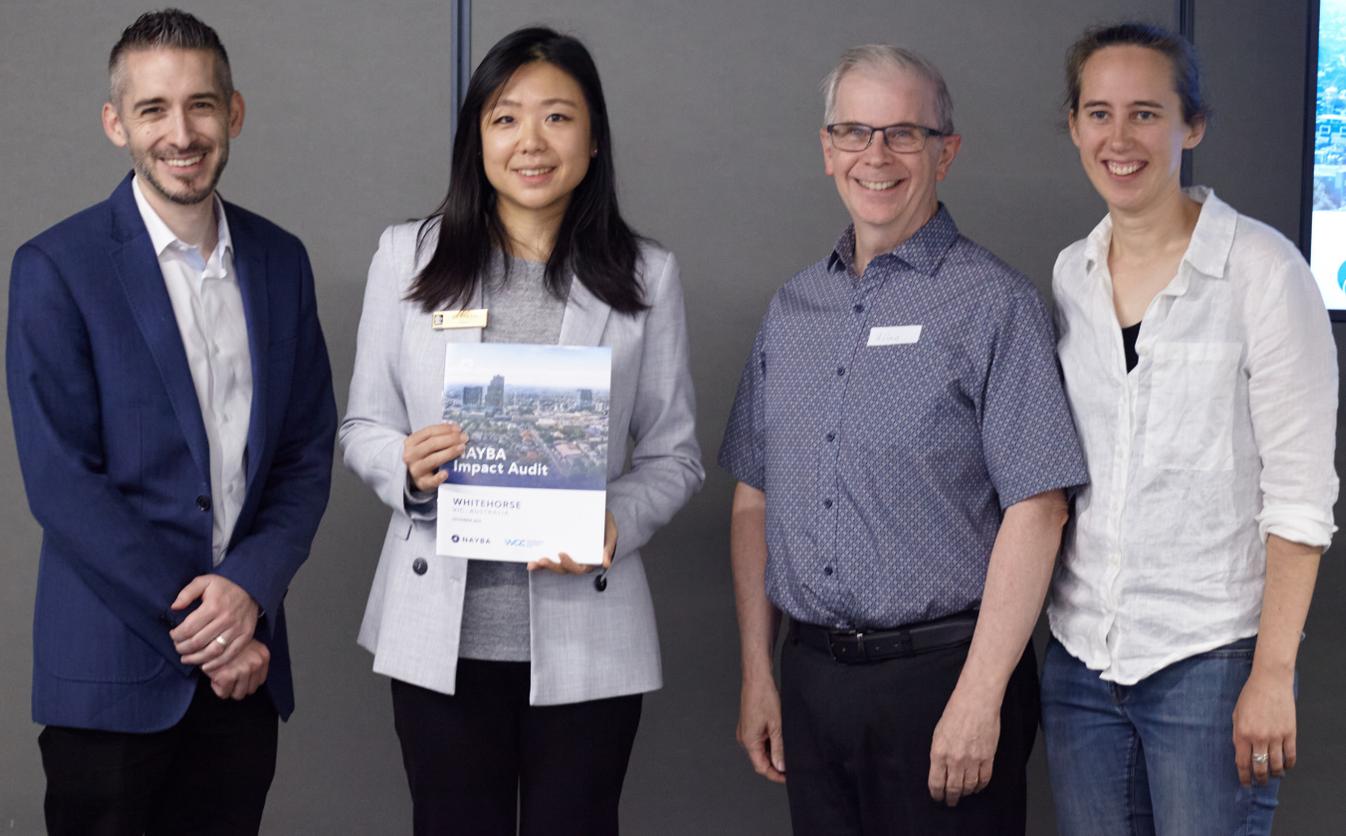
gatherings of pastors in the Whitehorse area. Through relationship and support for one another over many years, grew a desire to be on mission together and respond collaboratively to need within the local community, eventually leading to the formation of WCC. Since that time, connections have been strengthened between the churches and local support agencies as they have worked together to identify social needs and opportunities for collaboration, learning and shared resourcing.

OVER THE LAST 18 MONTHS WE HAVE WITNESSED AN EXTRAORDINARY COMMITMENT FROM THE LOCAL FAITH SECTOR TO THE WELLBEING OF OUR COMMUNITY. THESE GROUPS HAVE PLAYED AN INCREDIBLY IMPORTANT ROLE IN KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY SAFE AND INFORMED.

WCC initiatives have included 'Winter Shelter' (a program using church buildings to offer hospitality and shelter to people experiencing homelessness) and 'Partners in Care' (a partnership between the Whitehorse Police and the local churches to provide care packages to seniors on the Whitehorse Support Register).

It's worth noting that COVID provided the churches with a perfect opportunity to form and consolidate relationships with Whitehorse Council's social services along with the Whitehorse Police.





A recent independent impact audit conducted in Whitehorse LGA concluded that local churches and faith-based organisations in the LGA played a critical role in feeding, connecting, and caring for the wider community throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the words of the Whitehorse Mayor, Cr. Tina Liu: “Over the last 18 months we have witnessed an extraordinary commitment from the local faith sector to the wellbeing of our community. These groups have played an incredibly important role in keeping our community safe and informed.”

The audit also identified 94 community service activities were being supported by churches and faith groups, addressing 15 of the greatest social needs in the region. This is a testament to the work of the local churches as they actively and practically seek to be a blessing in their neighbourhoods.

In a further encouraging development, Whitehorse Council have announced they will provide WCC with a community hub space at Forest Hill Chase Shopping Centre from April for an initial period of 6 months.

The hub will provide opportunity for connection, conversation, relationships and support. It will include a drop-in space, regular programs and groups, a Community Support Register, along with volunteer opportunities. More information can be found [here](#).

It is expected the community hub will be of particular benefit to those affected by social isolation and loneliness in the Whitehorse area. This is one of several social areas WCC will be focusing on during this year in addition to mental health/wellbeing and crisis intervention (domestic violence, food insecurity and homelessness). WCC anticipates the community hub will help provide opportunity for engagement with these issues.

Baptist church members of WCC include NewHope Baptist, Box Hill Baptist, Crossway Baptist and Mitcham Baptist. We celebrate what God is doing through these church communities and the many other churches who make up WCC to help the people of Whitehorse LGA flourish and thrive. |

LOVE BEYOND MEASURE

Easter

Series

By Rev Daniel Bullock

I am an empty nester, with one adult son who lives about a 15 minute drive from my house. This is a good season of life for my wife and I, as we no longer have the parental responsibility to meet the immediate physical and emotional needs of a dependent child. Thus freeing us up to spend more time together and to allowing us to more time to focus on other demands of our schedule.

Yet, just because my son is an adult and does not live in my home, doesn't mean I love him any less than I did when he was 2, 5, 10 or 15. I love my son because he is my son. Not because of his age, where he lives, the job he does, company he keeps or even the choices he makes in life. I may not always agree with him; I can get disappointed, frustrated and even angry with him. But that does not stop me loving him.

So it is with God's love for us. We are God's children; daughters and sons. We belong to him. No matter how old we are, where we live, choices we make, church we attend, struggles we endure and even mistakes we make.

We are God's children and He loves us. In fact, the apostle Paul in Romans 8 suggests that God's love for us is beyond measure:

"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

– Rom 8:38-39

As we travel through life and endure some of life's hardships, we may doubt the veracity of this statement. Indeed, in recent years we have literally endured fires, floods, earthquakes and a global pandemic. Many have lost loved ones, been inflicted with sickness, loss of income and a variety of other hardships.

Are these trials some kind of sign that God has abandoned us? On the contrary. The Apostle Paul had been through many trials: unjust persecution, famine, false arrest, shipwreck, threat of murder, and so much more. Yet, he remained confident in the truth that God's love knows no end.

LOVE BEYOND MEASURE

There isn't anything that we have done, should have done, or that's been done to us that can keep God from loving us. His love is constant and unstoppable. The only thing we can be assured of as we travel through the tumultuous journey of life is the love and faithfulness of God.

We are God's children, bearers of his image and because of that he loves us unconditionally. This means if we walk away – he will always leave the door unlocked, in hope of our return. If we call, he will always be there to hear our concerns and even our complaints. When we suffer, he will gently come beside us and soothe our pain. God loves us, in spite of all our failings and sin, he loves us as a parent loves a child.

In God's love we have the promised inheritance of eternal life, mercy, grace and forgiveness that is ours with the simple acceptance of Jesus' death on the cross. Nothing can ever take His love from us. We are children of the most-high God, and He will never stop loving you or me unconditionally... nothing you do can change that!

Know that the Lord is with you today and loves you beyond measure!

Our 4-Part Easter 2022 sermon starter series / small group study guide delves into what it truly means for God to love us beyond measure. Access the series by clicking on the links below or visiting www.buv.com.au/pray/

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

PART 2: PALM SUNDAY **THE HUMBLE KING**

PART 3: GOOD FRIDAY **LOVE CHANGES EVERYTHING**

PART 4: EASTER SUNDAY **LOVE HAS OVERCOME**

pastoral news

For more news and updates please visit www.buv.com.au/pastoral-movements



Pastor Minh was inducted as the Senior Pastor of Channel of Peace Church on Sunday, 6 February 2022.



Pastor Dave Gillet was inducted as pastor of Epsom Community Church in Bendigo on Sunday, 13 February 2022.



Regional Ministers Fellowship (RMF) at Sale in March



A very special Karen Pastors' Ordination service was held last December at Werribee - Soe Khaing (Cloverdale Karen BC) & Poh Eh (Werribee Karen BC) with about 200 people in attendance.



On Sunday, 27 March Patrick Houghton was inducted as the new Pastor at Boort Baptist Church. Pictured with his wife Colleen

BUV ORDINATION SERVICE

Saturday, 5 March was a very special day at Syndal Baptist Church with the celebration of 13 newly ordained Pastors!



prayer calendar

We love to be praying for our churches and their ministries. Join us as we pray for one church each day

april 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
					Chin Baptist Church Inc	Chin Christian Community Church Melbourne
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Christian Community Church Morwell	Church by the Bay	City Baptist Church	Clarinda Baptist Church	Cloverdale Baptist Church	Coburg Baptist Church	Cohuna Baptist Church
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Colac Baptist Church	Collins Street Baptist Church	Community Church of St Mark	Community of the Transfiguration	Compassion Christian Church Inc.	Corryong Baptist Church	Cranbourne Baptist Community Church
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
Crosspoint Baptist Church	Crossway Baptist Church	Croydon Hills Baptist Church	Dandenong Baptist Church	Diamond Valley Baptist Church	Doreen Baptist Church	Doveton Baptist Church
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
Drouin Baptist Church	East Doncaster Baptist Church	Eastern Chinese Baptist Church	Eastern Hills Community Church	Emmanuel Baptist Church	Encounter Baptist Church Inc.	Epsom Community Church

Each issue of TOGETHER, we will share some news from a couple of our BUV Agencies.



Global Interaction is now known as Baptist Mission Australia! Please visit baptistmissionaustralia.org for more information on the meaning behind the new name.



May Missions Month 2022 theme is *Crossing the Street*.
[Click here to find out how to get involved](#) or click on the invitational video



A Passion for Jesus

Dachan Kim, Whitley College Alumni, tells us a little of his experience of studying at Whitley and the impact it had on his life.



When I was young, reading the kid's Bible, I wanted to know what Jesus really looked like, how Jesus spoke, whether Jesus really had long hair (and beard) like the pictures showed. There were never ending questions. As I grew up reading the Bible, I wanted to know what it felt like to walk where Jesus walked, and stand by the sea of Galilee. My passion for Jesus and scripture led me to live and study in Israel after studying at Whitley College.

Even today, we have similar questions to ask like what language did Jesus speak? What do the parables mean? What do we know about the historical context and the culture at the time of Jesus? Why did Jesus refer to the Old Testament scriptures? [Read more of Dachan's story here](#)

A LOT OF PEOPLE GIVING MAKES A REMARKABLE DIFFERENCE.



The statement above sums up how we felt at the BUV Support Hub when we ran an appeal in early 2020 for the Victorian Bushfires. We were so encouraged by the generosity of the Baptist community who gave nearly \$600,000 to this appeal.

Most individual donations were small, but a lot of people giving a little makes a remarkable difference and those funds are still accomplishing significant results.

Isn't it great to be **'Together on Mission'**?

[Click here](#) to view some videos that show the ways these donations have assisted bushfire affected communities.

We partner together like this because, as an association of Baptist Churches, mission is at our centre. Whilst our primary role at the BUV Support Hub is to equip, encourage and empower local churches to advance the kingdom of God in Victoria, our vision for the wider Baptist Union of Victoria is to be a union of flourishing churches with Christlike followers who redeem society.

As part of this, we are continually working on new and innovative ways to both help our existing churches flourish but also to see new churches and communities of faith sprout right across

Church Planting Partnerships

This is of particular need in growth corridors and other areas where there is no expression of church. We are developing partnerships to support new church plants and community placemaking initiatives with interested churches and individuals keen to engage. You'll find more information on the opportunity to join with others in giving to church planting initiatives [here](#).

Legacy

Some exciting projects have come about as a result of generous gifts left to the BUV in Wills. The opportunity is for one person's legacy to shape another person's destiny. Once again, we are partnering with local churches and with individuals who are keen to see the legacy of their life continue to have an impact on others well into the future. You'll find more information about leaving a legacy through a gift in Will [here](#).

If you'd like to talk more about any of these programmes or initiatives, please contact me via email Andrew.Naylor@buv.com.au or call the BUV Support Hub on (03) 9880 6100



Andrew Naylor is the BUV Partnership Development Pastor

UPCOMING EVENTS

BUY NOURISH & MEMBERS' DINNER - SAVE THE DATE

FRIDAY 20TH MAY, 2022

Twice a year, we look forward to our Gathering - a day for Pastors, leaders and church delegates to get together for encouragement, connection and discernment.

NOURISH for BUY Pastors will be held **from 9:30am - 3pm** at **Essendon Baptist Community Church.**

May Members Meeting (Assembly Gathering) will be held **at 6pm** at **L'Unica Reception and Convention Centre at 476 Brunswick Rd, Brunswick West.**

Registration for NOURISH and May Members' Meeting will open in April 2022.



CONSULTATION FORUMS

Final forums:

- April 7th - Warrnambool, 7-9pm
- April 11th - via ZOOM, 7-9pm

Register [here](#).

MULTICULTURAL PASTORS RETREAT

For LOTE Pastors

Monday 9th May - Wednesday 11th May 2022
Camp Wilkin, Anglesea

Register [here](#).

EMERGE NEXT STEPS IN LEADERSHIP

For Baptist emerging leaders.

Online - Please see ticket for address details.

Register [here](#).

CHURCH ADMIN WORKSHOP DAY

For Church Secretaries, Treasurers and Administrators

Sat 2nd Apr, 9:30 am - 4:00 pm Camberwell
Sat 18th Jun, 9:30am - 4:00pm Melton

Register [here](#).

Have a Good News Story of your own?

*Send through your Good News Stories to
comms@buu.com.au*



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