



Baptist Union
of Victoria

TOGETHER

Our stories together ♦ Quarterly magazine

Issue 4 ♦ May 2023



Featuring **MYANMAR**
STORIES FROM AROUND THE BUV
LEADERSHIP
RESOURCES events PRAYER

WELCOME

Well, I'm not sure about you, but I have sensed that 2023 began with a bang and hasn't stopped! People seem to be up and about. People seem to be ready for new things. People seem to be back into everything and almost bursting at the seams with busyness. After the last 3 years or so, it's wonderful to see and yes, almost a little bit overwhelming.

It has been so exciting to hear stories of new life and new missional adventures all around our union. Perhaps plans that birthed during, or maybe because of, COVID, coming to fruition. New ideas that have sprung forth because of the desire to be back together again in community. Whatever it is, there is a feeling of great joy as we see the 'new' emerging.

In this issue, we have highlighted some of our wonderful stories - but we have also highlighted our focus for the year on Myanmar – a 'not so good' story. Our brothers and sisters of Myanmar are hurting – they are surrounded by conflict and grief. Since the military coup in 2021, 1,584,000* people have been displaced and are now living in Internally Displaced People (IDP) Refugee Camps on various borders, or are hiding in the jungle every day, away from their villages (the ones that haven't been burnt or destroyed by drones) for fear of military air strikes. Before the war, the church in Myanmar was the fastest growing Baptist church in the world. Your Baptist brothers and sisters need our help – they need us to stand with them. In this issue, you can read stories and "Stand with Myanmar" through prayer, giving and advocacy.

I hope you will join with me in the celebration of our good stories, and in being part of the solution with the peoples of Myanmar.

God Bless,

Daniel

*Source: United Nations

Rev Daniel Bullock



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Got a story to share?

Send through your story and photos

(with appropriate permission from people in the photo)

to comms@buv.com.au

FEATURE - MYANMAR



 **Baptist Union**
of Victoria

Can you put yourself in their shoes?

Can you imagine fleeing as fast as you can with children in tow, to the jungle as soon as you hear the sound of jet fighters or drones? Can you imagine living like this for years on end, not knowing when the next occasion will be?

Sadly, airstrikes are a frequent occurrence that the people of Myanmar have lived with on a constant basis. Thousands of our Baptist brothers and sisters live like this every day. From January to March 2023 alone there have been at least 25 airstrikes by the military across regions in Myanmar.

On Monday 10th April, the Junta attacked the town of Waibula by airstrike resulting in many deaths, including a Chin Pastor and his wife. Chin pastors in our Victorian churches are grieving the loss of their community members. Other images we received were too graphic to share.

The next day another airstrike hit the town of Kanbalu with the death toll now estimated to be over 170.

In early April, we received a devastating text from a Pastor of one of our Baptist Burmese churches in Melbourne that we share here (with permission).

“We are grieving at the tragic news of the killing of innocent villagers of Khuafo village, 5 miles away from Thantlang. Yesterday morning (Thurs 1 April, 2023), the Junta dropped bombs from a jet fighter on to the innocent peasant village killing 10 people and injuring 20 people. Some children were left by their parents in the incident. This little girl and her younger sibling (pictured) survived the incident in which their parents were killed.”





Myanmar Working Group

We are so grateful to have some of our wonderful Chin, Karen and Kachin church leaders representing and advocating for support of their families and communities in their home country. Hearing their stories of persecution and terror from Myanmar is truly humbling and challenging.

Thank you to the members of the Myanmar working group for your passion – we are praying for peace in Myanmar!

‘Conflict, Violence, and a Just Future in Myanmar’



As part of our focus for 2023 on peace and justice for Myanmar, the BUV, in collaboration with Whitley College, co-hosted an event on ‘Conflict, Violence, and a Just Future in Myanmar’. Guest speakers included Rev Associate Professor Ellen Jamir from Nagaland (Oriental Theological Seminary) and Dr David Moe (Yale University).

This was an important conversation as we heard stories of conflict, trauma, resilience, and hope. We also brainstormed ways in which the wider BUV churches and community can respond and stand in solidarity with our siblings from Myanmar.



Stand with Myanmar appeal

A call to all Victorian Baptist churches and communities of faith to participate in Stand with Myanmar Appeal as we pray for, advocate and raise funds for the people of Myanmar, particularly those of the Karen, Chin and Kachin states.

Prior to the war, the Baptist church in Myanmar was the fastest growing church in the world with 1.7 million Baptists. But the last 2 years, since the military coup in February 2021, have been horrific. Myanmar has been rocked by violence, oppression and instability. The economy has collapsed and there are shortages of food, fuel and basic supplies. Families have been forced to separate, churches continue to be damaged and several prominent Baptist pastors have been arrested and remain in prison. The military continue, not only to use brute force on anyone who has pressed for peace, but also release bombs that have decimated entire villages.

Since the coup more than 3000 people have been killed and 16,000 people detained. Almost 1.6 million people are displaced within Myanmar and 1.1 million refugees and asylum seekers from Myanmar live in refugee camps on the Thai and Indian and Chinese borders and within other towns in Thailand and India. Other families still in Myanmar have fled their burned villages and are hiding in the jungle.

Within the BUV, 56 (16%) of our church congregations originate from different ethnic groups within Myanmar. These churches are both supporting their local congregation members and families and communities back in Myanmar. We encourage churches and individuals to join together to help our brothers and sisters in Myanmar who are facing ongoing hardship and are in urgent need of emergency relief supplies.



3 ways you can help

Pray

- » [Click here](#) for a Prayer Guide for your individual or church prayer time (or access through buv.com.au/standwithmyanmar)

Give

Funds raised will be used for

- » Emergency supplies - food (rice), raincoats, warm clothes, blankets, plastic for shelter (tarps), mosquito nets (ideally camouflage), portable water treatment, winter boots
- » Medical supplies
- » Educational supplies for children's ongoing schooling in jungle areas

All funds raised from Victorian Baptists will be directed to Baptist Mission Australia who have secure channels for the distribution of funds to each of the Chin (including Haka Chin), Kachin and Karen states.

Give now

Advocate

- » Write to your MP to express your concerns - [Click here](#) for a letter template you may like to use detailing the "asks". (or access through buv.com.au/standwithmyanmar)





Visiting the border projects

Geoff Maddock and Chris MacCartney from Baptist Mission Australia visit Kawthoolei Karen Baptist church (KKBC) on the Thai/Burma border.

“Chris MacCartney and I have had an incredible few days with the Kawthoolei Karen Baptist church (KKBC) leaders at both the Bible school and college and the Hope Theological Seminary. The college is located in the Mae La refugee camp near Mae Sot on the Thai/Burma border. Hearing stories of hope and resilience alongside the refugee experience has been truly moving, especially so given the many Karen Baptist churches in Victoria and elsewhere throughout Australia.

Drones, war planes and Burmese military personnel are active just across the river from the college and seminary, a constant reminder of the cruel circumstances under which our Baptist family and many others survive day to day. Please continue to pray for these courageous and resilient brothers and sisters. They ask simply not to be forgotten as the world’s attention moved away from the situation in Myanmar.”

- Geoff Maddock



Peacefully advocating for Myanmar

Recently Pastor Peacefully Thomas, from the Karen state in Burma (Myanmar,) visited Melbourne and we were privileged to have some time with him at the BUV Support Hub. Peacefully fled from Myanmar to Thailand as a child because of the conflict there but has faithfully invested into the country despite the threat of persecution.

Peacefully, like his name suggests, is a global ambassador and advocate for peace in Myanmar, representing his people at international conventions. He is both part of the peace building process among grassroots Karen splinter groups locally and continues to work with international lawyers to approach the US government.

It was a privilege to meet Pastor Peacefully - please pray for him and his Team as they persevere in their long-standing journey to peace in Myanmar.

[Click here](#) to watch a video with Rev Daniel Bullock and Pastor Peacefully discussing the situation in Myanmar and how we can help.

Direct Link:
<https://vimeo.com/821517828/94c987fa32>



AROUND THE BUV



 **Baptist Union**
of Victoria

Free Summer Fun Days for Wangaratta community

Pastor Aaron Wardle from Wangaratta Baptist Church recounts the wonderful experiences that his church has had this year providing free community Fun Days over the summer and during Easter, and the follow on effects. What a wonderful expression of love shown to the community – Well done Wangaratta!



Towards the end of 2022 our church sought ways to bring hope to our community in a practical way. Our vision is to bring glory to God and Hope of the Gospel to the North East. Putting legs on our vision, seeing it work out in practical ways, led to the birth of our Free Summer Fun Days.

We know that during Summer in Wangaratta there isn't a lot going on for kids, teens and families, especially things that are free. So we wanted to provide a solution to that problem and bring some hope in a practical way. The idea was to run 3 Free Summer Fun Days on the first 3 Wednesdays in January – each with a different attraction or activity in a public space, open to everyone completely free of charge.

Everywhere I went, speaking to businesses and locals about the fun days, there was fantastic support. Our local Newspaper ran articles promoting it, Coles donated over 1,000 sausages and the bread to each Fun Day and Woolworths kicked in some funds too. Our church people were so generous in their support as well. Finances flowed quickly, even from young teenagers in our church, one donating \$100, and others in our church supporting with finances and as volunteers as well.

On Day 1 we offered mobile laser tag (an activity not offered anywhere in the region), a toy making

workshop run by a church member and a free sausage sizzle. To say the Laser Tag was a hit is probably an understatement as 500 kids participated through the day, and hundreds of kids made their own wooden toys.

For Day 2 we booked out the local Council operated public pool and the inflatable zone with free entry for the whole community, plus a free sausage sizzle. God blessed us with a scorching hot day, resulting in over 1,000 people attending.

On Day 3 we hosted 2 giant inflatable water slides, a jumping castle, and once again offered the free sausage sizzle. With a warm 28 degrees and a bit of humidity we had around 500-700 people rolling through the day with long lines for the water slides. Through the three events we gave away nearly 3000 sausages and 800 bottles of water.

God blessed us with funds, resources, and connections to run these events. Our local council provided some funding for our event through a community pitch process, where we were awarded \$750. In addition, some of the other community organisations that also pitched for funding were so excited by our pitch that they offered to participate in our Summer Days events for free. A Dance School came along to the first event,

put on a pop-up dance workshop, and gave us \$1,000 towards the events. The local concert band was also supportive, playing at the first one, and members from the band also played in a jazz band at the second one, and a French band at the third.

The attendance and response from the community was amazing! But it was the conversations that we had with people at the events that was the best thing for me. Everyone was so thankful for what we had done for the community, some even commenting that “for a little church like ours to put on something so big like this was amazing”. One lady said to me that she thought it would take a lot to restore her faith in the institutional church, but we had done it with these fun days. I could go on and on recounting conversations with people in our community about life and faith. Those are conversations we would never have had if we hadn’t taken this step to reach out and bless our community generously, bringing hope in a practical way.

On the back of the success of the Summer Fun Days our community was asking for more things like that, and so we held another free fun day on Easter Saturday. This one was the most highly attended of all, with well over 1000 people coming along. We provided jumping castles, face painting, easter craft, free hot cross buns, a sausage sizzle (we ran out, having already given away over 1,000 sausage and so had to go and buy some more!), and an Easter egg hunt with 1200 big eggs. Once again it was a great success, and everyone that came was so thankful that it was free – it was a privilege to bless our community with this generosity and bring hope in a practical way.

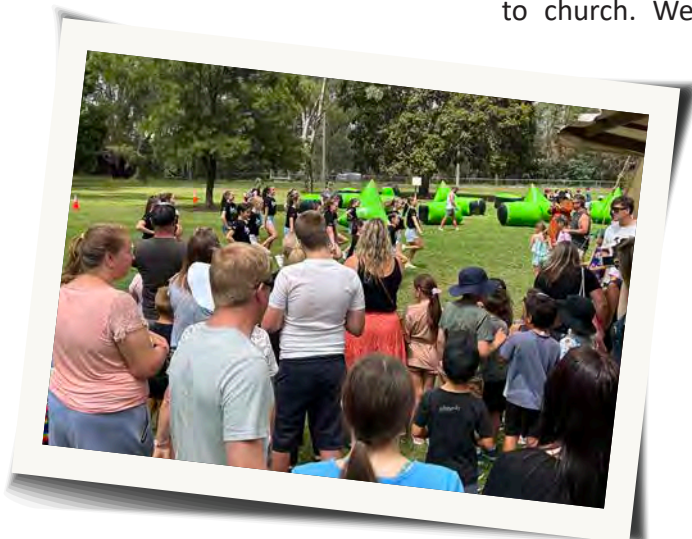
Over the last 18 months we have seen our numbers increasing at church and in March this year we began a Youth Group – something our church hasn’t had for many years – with 30 high school aged regularly coming along. We have also seen people who were irregular attenders, come back more regularly to church. We



think it’s a combination of clear vision and motivation. Our people have caught the vision and are running with it – bringing the hope of the Gospel in practical ways – through contact with our community, connecting with people on a deeper level, and having the relationship to communicate the Gospel. We have also benefited from the increased visibility of the church and a level of trust having been built with the community based on both us wanting to bless people and bring hope, and the conversations we’ve been able to have with people in our community whom we might otherwise never have had contact. We’ve taken the church to the people in unexpected ways, and it has been great to see the community responding so positively to a church generously blessing the community, not asking for money, but giving to our community. Some people from the fun days have come to church, but the most important thing we have done has been sowing the seeds of generosity and hope into our community.

Giving our people an opportunity to serve our community outside our four walls has been a great encouragement to them as well, and I think is one of the reasons we continue to grow, alongside a friendly and welcoming congregation, solid biblical teaching, and a culture of generous hospitality. We have recently submitted plans to council for a new 250 seat purpose-built auditorium, and the current building will be repurposed into a Youth, Children and Community Centre which we will offer to the community to use for free. We already have several community groups using our facilities, but this will expand the opportunities.

We are excited for the future and what God is doing in Wangaratta.



Pastor Aaron Wardle



Raise your glass to Donnybrook



Donnybrook Community Church

'Raise Your Glass' is an initiative of Donnybrook Community Church (DCC), a new church plant in the new outer-north housing development of Olivine. Kathryn Jensen, Pastor of DCC explains the concept of Raise your Glass. *"Challenging our western culture that likes to 'roast' people, we're intentionally creating a culture that 'toasts' people! We believe that mission needs to start with celebrating what's good in our neighbourhood (a 'Genesis chapter one' approach)!"*

Once a term, Donnybrook Community Church invite their neighbours to a themed evening at Shared Cup Cafe to enjoy a meal, make new friends, and discuss topics such as 'the importance of community post-covid' or 'the five love languages'. At the end of each evening, there is time set aside to toast (raise a glass) the ordinary heroes in the community who are doing great things! People like Helen who is championing sustainability and creation-care, or Anesu who supported her neighbour practically during covid-isolation. Kathryn is so impressed that without exception, the neighbours also raise a glass to the good things they see the church doing (like fostering positivity or bringing people together).

Raise Your Glass events are followed up with opportunities to keep the conversation going - socially (connect BBQ) or spiritually (join a Hope Group to explore the stories of hope in the life of Jesus). "We've been encouraged to see how many people are willing to engage with our faith community in spiritual conversations!"

Challenging our western culture that likes to 'roast' people, we're intentionally creating a culture that 'toasts' people!



Kathryn Jensen

Mission to the margins in Dandenong



“We value neighbours and long to extend our community more and more into the city of Dandenong. We want to share your joys and your heartaches, to lend a helping hand in your struggles, to celebrate with you in your successes and to offer a listening ear and caring words.”

These are powerful words that are at the heart of Dandenong Baptist Church (DBC) which hold prime position on the front page of the church website. Most importantly though, they are not just words on a page – these words are retold by people who are being touched and led to Jesus through the church and its relationship with Cornerstone Contact Centre.

Dandenong is a suburb with lots of people who experience social and economic disadvantage. There are lots of migrants, asylum seekers and homeless in the local area.

When Rev. Dr. David Talathoti became Senior Pastor of Dandenong Baptist Church in 2014, the church did not reflect the community they were living in. They started inviting the people passing by to come in and have a cup of tea or coffee. This then grew into a bigger crowd in just a few months. Soon there were many people who came into the church throughout the week seeking practical support, with anything from food to blankets and assistance filling out forms.

In 2015, Naomi Paterson began working as Pastor for Community and they established Nourish at DBC in response to this local need. Nourish (a ministry of Dandenong Baptist Church) was formed as an outreach to the local community, beyond the immediate church family. By the end of 2015, DBC were providing a weekly meal for around 70 people. In 2017, they started Nourish Church, an informal church service attended

by many who are homeless or residing in social housing or rooming houses. This group has grown significantly, with around 30 people who worship together, fellowship together over a meal after the service, and care for each as followers of Christ.

Meanwhile, Dandenong Baptist Church always had historic connections with Cornerstone Contact Centre. Cornerstone was established back in 1992 by Barb Siddall, one of the elders of the church. In 2016, David joined the Cornerstone Board and saw the parallels in the way that Cornerstone serves the community. Cornerstone also works with the homeless and marginalised in Dandenong, caring for the community’s practical needs by providing food support, referrals, and assistance with things like showers, laundry,



Rev. Dr. David Talathoti



Naomi Paterson



mental health and primary health support. In 2019, Cornerstone Contact Centre needed a new venue and moved their operations to Dandenong Baptist Church. Both Naomi and DBC's Youth Pastor Janik also work for Cornerstone, and there is a beautiful synergy in the way that Cornerstone's practical support for the marginalised connects people with the spiritual formation provided at Nourish Church. There are ways that Cornerstone, as a community organisation largely funded by government grants, is limited in sharing the gospel. Having Cornerstone located at Dandenong Baptist Church, with members of our Pastoral team working for the organisation, has meant that they can reach out to more community members and share the good news about Jesus. Many Cornerstone community members have now become regular attendees at both Nourish Church and DBC.

Cassie's* Story

When Cassie* and her partner first attended Cornerstone Contact Centre, they were sleeping in their car, which leaked every time it rained. They came along to a Thursday evening meal, in tears, with all of their possessions soaking wet. They were unsure how they would get by until the following week when they could afford to pay the bond and rent for a cabin they had secured at a local caravan park. While our team helped the couple with some dry clothes and a hot meal, we called a local housing agency to help fast-track their housing. By the next morning, Cassie and her partner were in their cabin.

Cassie started coming along to Cornerstone meals regularly and came to enjoy the care and conversations shared with our team. We invited her along to Nourish Church, but Cassie was hesitant; she had grown up in a very religious family, who taught her about a harsh God, characterised by punishment and wrath. The God she had been taught about disapproved of tattoos, not to mention some of the other lifestyle choices in her past. We kept gently reassuring her of God's love, and letting her know that she was loved and cared for by her friends at church too.

One day at the Cornerstone lunch program, Cassie asked one of our volunteers to pray with her about some challenges she was facing that week. That Sunday, Cassie came along to Nourish Church for the first time, and during the Nourish sharing time she talked about the incredible peace she experienced after being prayed for earlier that week. Cassie now attends Nourish Church regularly and is coming to trust that God loves and cares for her.

Following are two stories shared by Naomi Paterson, (CEO of Cornerstone Contact Centre and Pastor for Community Engagement at Dandenong Baptist Church) of beautiful outcomes for two community members who have felt the love of the community and, over time, have come to know the love of Jesus.

Cornerstone Contact Centre, a Christian not-for-profit organisation working with homeless and marginalised people in Dandenong since 1992, has been located at DBC since 2020. The Sunday evening service at Dandenong Baptist Church, Nourish Church, is designed for the community and Cornerstone clients in mind, and is intentionally followed by a hot meal to provide further time for connection and conversation.

**Cassie's and Henry's stories and photo have been shared with permission and names have been changed.*



Henry's* Story

Henry* has been part of the Cornerstone meal community for many years. When Cornerstone moved to Dandenong Baptist Church, we invited Henry along to Nourish Church.

Henry has been coming along regularly to Nourish Church for three years. Over the years, he has shared often about his desire to trust God more, and to experience a personal relationship with God.

Earlier this year, Henry had an experience of God's Spirit, and he committed his life to Christ. He continues to grow in his faith and understanding and enjoys being a part of a caring and supportive faith community. Henry will be baptised next month.

Christian Camping that inspires by serving

Following a couple of very difficult years, Baptist Camping Victoria (BCV) had a record-breaking 2022. We experienced considerable growth across the board - in our people and their resilience, in our ministry programs, in people responding to the Lord and a record volume of people enjoying our sites afresh - in some cases after two years of cancelled attempts.

Moving on from the many unique obstacles of prior years (Covid lockdowns and interruptions to camps), it's evident the Lord was with us through its many challenges and continues to be in our growth.

With camp attendance 'bursting at the seams', there was a lot of pressure on our staff, with many parts of BCV continuing to wrestle with the impact of staff turnover and attrition. New employment struggled to keep pace with increased demand and only by God's grace and the dedication of our amazing team did we manage to keep delivering Christian Camping that Inspires by Serving – our renewed purpose statement.

During the recent 2023 Autumn Roundups at Mill Valley Ranch, they had 36 young people make decisions to follow Jesus and were also able to give away 32 bibles to children who did not have one. This is not unique to the past couple of weeks - it happens every single school holidays.

An integral part of the impact of the ministry are Chapel Speakers who share for 25-30 minutes each day. Speakers are not required to be pastors, but simply people who have a heart to share the gospel and see the lives of young people transformed.

As we each continue to press on towards the goal that is in Christ Jesus, we at BCV also strive to be salt and light for all who come to camp in this wonderful ministry God has called us to.



Epsom's exciting missional expansion into nearby Huntly

Epsom Community Church continues to think outside the box in its mission to reach its community. During COVID, when churches were closed, Epsom ran a "Drive in Church" where members parked in the church carpark and listened via their FM car radio to the pastor preaching a sermon outside the church building.

More recently, when the church found they were running out of space, they began to think outside the box once again. Rather than just create another gathering in the same location there was support for thinking a little more missionally about planting a church in the nearby burgeoning Bendigo suburb of Huntly – a suburb with significant land development but a distinct lack of "church presence".

And so, Huntly Community Church, was born. The combined Epsom / Huntly leadership are co-operating with a small Anglican church in Huntly, appreciating the generosity shown in their agreement to share their facility. "I feel that God has been blowing us along with His plan in the lead up to the first gathering". Huntly Community Church has been blessed by the group of about 25 who came from Epsom Community Church along with the steady stream of people coming to 'check them out' as well as some who have joined from the local community. Around 70 people attended the launch but, as usual, this has been settling over the more recent weeks and they are getting a more accurate idea of who might be going to continue to attend.



Pastor Jonathan Phillips says "We are still working out what it looks like to be part of our community, but I'm reminded of the verse that tells that us if Jesus is lifted up, He will draw people to Himself and so that's what we endeavour to do as we start." Let's keep this innovative church in our prayers as they continue to bless the Bendigo area.



Celebrating a century of education

Carey Baptist Grammer



This year, 2023, Carey Baptist Grammar School is celebrating its centenary year. Carey was founded in 1923 and named in honour of Rev Dr William Carey.

Underpinning the centenary year is the theme, 'honouring our past, embracing our future'. The aim is to deliver an inclusive and accessible celebration, which pays tribute to its Baptist founders and the 100-year history of Carey Baptist Grammar School, and to acknowledge the past and present, strengthen relationships and inspire innovation into the next century.

For 100 years now, Carey has been committed to developing wise, independent and motivated young people who are inspired to create positive change in our rapidly changing local, national and global communities.

Throughout its history, Carey has continued to grow, thrive and engage with its community. From being invited to join the Associated Public Schools of Victoria (APS) in 1957 to maintaining an even gender balance since 2011, the school has excelled in achievements and student offerings.

Throughout the year we will deliver a range of inclusive, accessible celebrations for all members of our community to come together, reflect and commemorate this occasion.

[Click here to watch video](#)

(<https://vimeo.com/720478972>)

[Read Rev Daniel Bullock's speech at the 2023 Centenary Year Commencement Service](#)

Kilvington Grammer



This year, there is much for the Kilvington Grammar community to look forward to as we celebrate our centenary with a range of events and activities. The Centenary Fair, which was held on 25 March, special Founders' Service on 20 June and Centenary Concert on 10 August, among other events, will help us mark this significant milestone in Kilvington's rich history.

The Centenary provides us with the opportunity to give thanks to all who have gone before us, particularly the courageous and trailblazing mother and daughter combination, Caroline and Constance Barrett, who founded and passionately pursued their vision for a school in Ormond all those years ago.

Our 100th year also affords a good opportunity to look ahead and set a vision for what we want our school to look like in the future. We know that one constant will be change, and we will embrace new technologies and modes of assisting our students with their learning moving forward.

You can learn more about our Centenary at a specially created [website](https://centenarykilvington.ptly.com/100) (<https://centenarykilvington.ptly.com/100>).



LEADERSHIP



Celebrating 40 years of Rural Ministry Fellowships

This April we celebrated the 40th anniversary of Victorian Baptist Rural Ministry Fellowships (RMF's). Rev John Simpson, who still attends the Halls Gap RMF each year, was instrumental in giving birth to RMF's back in 1983 and we had a chance to celebrate the anniversary with him at the Halls Gap RMF earlier this month.

The idea of RMF's began to gain momentum around 1978 when John commenced as the BUV Coordinator of Christian Development, a role dedicated to, as John put it "helping people do what they were doing better." The Secretary of the Union at the time, Trevor Farmilo, told John to just get out there and do what needs to be done.

"So I lived on the road and it was pretty normal for me to rack up a thousand kilometers a week. Over the early years, I pretty much visited every pastor in every manse in the city and around the Victorian country."

John discovered through his travels that Pastors in regional and rural areas of Victoria were lonely; they knew the other Pastors in surrounding areas but didn't really know each other. There were no zoom calls, mobile phones or even email in those days and the distance between Melbourne and some of these areas took its toll on frequent visits. Not only were Pastors lonely – they also felt alone in their work.

So, in 1983, 40 years ago, the first RMF was held in Stawell for Victorian Baptist Pastors in the north west region. The value of the RMF was quickly realized and the concept was duplicated in other regions around Victoria.

Part of the purpose of the RMF's was to bring groups of Pastors in regions together to create links, build friendships, create listening spaces, share and provide opportunity for mutual encouragement. Through his travels John also discovered that for country Pastors and leaders, the BUV office as it was known then, was seen pretty much only as the Melbourne base for insurance and for setting the recommended stipend. Of course, John knew the value of the BUV office was far greater and set about building links between the office and the churches where possible, providing support and service.

After some time in this role, John ultimately realised that he couldn't live on the road all the time, and so it



led to the appointment of the Regional Superintendents or Regional Pastors as we know them today.

"I think the role gave the BUV a face that (and I'm not meaning to talk about myself here - I'm just saying), was a stepping-stone towards the creation of what we have now."

Today, five RMF's are held each year covering North West, South West, North East, South East and the Geelong / Surf coast regions with the same goals - to create links between Pastors in regions, build friendships, provide mutual encouragement and create 2-way listening and sharing spaces not only between churches but also the BUV Support Hub. Several BUV Support Hub staff attend each RMF through the year on a rotating basis so that staff can get to know the Pastors and churches and the Pastors can understand what services each team can provide to their church.





“From my perspective here and now in 2023, I look at what the Hub is doing, and I derive enormous satisfaction from that, great delight to think that the years which God allowed me to invest in His work amongst Victorian Baptists has been pursued, followed, developed, and now we have the Support

Hub - we couldn't ask for anything more. So a blessing upon you, upon the Hub folks, keep up the good work.”

We are truly grateful that God chose John and Judith to be instrumental in giving birth to such a great form of ministry.



Suffering produces perseverance

“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; character; and character, hope.” Rom 5:3-4

Earlier this year, Rev Beth Jackson, Head of Ordination at the BUV Support Hub was thrilled to finalise Elizabeth Johnstone’s ordination process that began more than 12 years earlier. On 25th February, Elizabeth was officially ordained to the ministry of Word, Sacrament, Pastoral Care and Mission by the Baptist Union of Victoria at Seymour Baptist Church by Rev Daniel Bullock.

Liz started her ordination process more than 12 years ago when living in Nelson Bay, NSW. In 2011, just months before she was to be ordained, Elizabeth went in to hospital to have a pelvic mesh implant inserted. It was to be a 15 minute procedure but unfortunately led to 10 years of pain and disability.

Almost immediately after the surgery, Elizabeth experienced pain and could not continue working. She was diagnosed as ‘permanently disabled’ in 2012. After seeing many doctors over years, Elizabeth was diagnosed as having multiple sclerosis. She accepted her fate and that she would never walk on her own again.

In 2019, Elizabeth learnt about a Senate Inquiry into the pelvic mesh implants and wondered if she, like thousands of other women, was suffering

from an allergic reaction to the implant. This was to be confirmed by a specialist in 2020. Additionally, Elizabeth’s neurologist ruled in 2021, that she did not in fact have multiple sclerosis.

Soon after, Elizabeth and her husband Geoffrey decided to self-fund the expensive operation to remove the implant – and what a good decision it was. “I went into hospital in a wheelchair to get the pelvic implant removed and 3 days later, I walked out – the surgeons gave me my life back.”

In November 2021, after moving to Victoria, Elizabeth’s husband Geoffrey took up the pastoral role at Seymour Baptist Church. “I asked the leadership team to recognise the hard work that Elizabeth accomplished to become a pastor and they were only too pleased to sponsor her application to the BUV for ordination.”

Director of Mission and Ministries, Rev Daniel Bullock, and Head of Ordination, Rev Beth Jackson agreed and on February 25th, made a trip to Seymour to officially recognise Elizabeth into Ordination in the Baptist Union of Victoria. The Vine Baptist church in Alexandra that Geoffrey also pastors, voted Elizabeth in as Associate Pastor. Elizabeth rejoices “I love that I can now do what I studied for all those years ago!”



Pastoral Ministry is changing for good!

There is a change starting to sweep across Victoria among Baptist Pastors – it began slowly but is now gaining momentum. The difference may not be obvious now, but in the future the change will be major. The changes will be good and will impact Pastors and will help the churches they lead to flourish.

What is this change? Pastors are beginning to sit down with a professional to talk. They are reflecting on the way they do their ministry; they are wondering, imagining and they are learning. They are beginning their journey of Professional Pastoral Supervision.

Pastors and churches are investing in a trained professional who has a Graduate Certificate in Professional Supervision, and they are talking about their pastoral role, how their ministry impacts or is impacted by the people they serve and the context in which they serve. The supervisor listens, asks questions, is attentive to emerging themes and makes observations. Often situations that were overwhelming, are seen differently, and with the oversight of the Supervisor, the Pastors can tap into resources that were there all along and deal with their situations in a more streamlined way. Past experiences are drawn on to help face the current challenges.

*Pastors are...
reflecting on the way
they do their ministry;
they are wondering,
imagining and they are
learning.*

Supervision is a great place for the tough stuff of ministry to be shared. Discussions between a pastor and their professional pastoral supervisor are confidential. Ministry experiences are shared freely because the pastor knows that it is a safe place to talk. Trust continues to grow as the pastor returns for their regular sessions.

BUV Pastoral leaders are encouraged to undertake Professional Pastoral Supervision, beginning this year, ideally fitting in 3 sessions. From 2024, every BUV pastoral leader will be required to have a minimum three sessions of Professional Pastoral

Supervision to maintain their BUV Pastoral Leadership Accreditation.

Our website has the photos and bios of more than 30 Professional Pastoral Supervisors who are recommended by the BUV. Please visit the page and call one of them today and be part of the change that his happening for good across our union of churches.

[Click here to head to the website](https://www.buv.com.au/supervision)

<https://www.buv.com.au/supervision>

Up close and personal with Elijah Brown



In March this year, our Union Council, and heads of Baptist Agencies were treated to an Up Close and Personal with Elijah Brown, the General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance. The General Secretary is the CEO of the BWA, has overall responsibilities for

the administration and operations of the organization, and is its chief representative to global organizations and institutions, ecclesial and secular, as well as governments.

Elijah is an engaging speaker and shared many stories of visiting Baptist churches and projects around the globe.

Elijah was in Australia visiting each state to promote the Baptist Word Congress being held Australia in 2025. The Congress will be held in Queensland and will be a wonderful gathering of Baptists from every tribe and nation.

Click the button to see a video from Elijah about the Congress.

[Click here to watch video](https://vimeo.com/824963067)

<https://vimeo.com/824963067>

Intentional investment in leadership development



Leadership development is a major part of the BUV Generations Network and as usual the first half of the year kicked off with a bang.

The 2023 EMERGE (intentional leadership development pathway for emerging leaders) cohort kicked off in February with the now traditional team building / getting to know each other activity of assembling bikes. The bikes were donated to children at Mt Waverley Nth Primary School (after being checked by the local bike guy to ensure their safety!).

The cohort has also been treated to an Interview with an Authentic Leader – which happened to be our BUV Director of Mission and Ministries, Rev Daniel Bullock. It was a mutually beneficial day - the cohort benefited from Daniel providing genuine leadership wisdom from his years in generation, church and now denomination leadership while Daniel and the wider BUV benefited from the investment in the future leadership!

Those already in Generations ministry roles didn't miss out on input from Daniel Bullock either. Daniel spoke at their BUV Generations Network Day in March where they focused on reflective practices and the power of feedback. The day provided great connections and was deeply appreciated by those who attended.

We have also welcomed new Generations Pastors at the following churches Kilsyth, OneHope (4 appointments), Lifeway, Werribee (3 new appointments) – Please join with us in welcoming them to our Baptist Generations Network and praying for them as they lead, support and care for our next generation.

To find out more about any of these programmes or youth, young adults or generations ministry, contact our BUV Generations Pastor, [Kimberly Smith](#)

If you are in any Generations Ministry in a Baptist Church and want to be more connected with our Generations network, [join our FB Groups here](#)



EVENTS

Visit buv.com.au for more information

BUV Admin Workshop (Bendigo) - 17 June

This is an opportunity to ask questions about your church's administration, property, finance, governance, insurance, professional standards and safe church responsibilities. This one day workshop to be held in Bendigo, will give you an overview of these topics and will introduce you to key personnel at the BUV Support Hub that are available to assist you on an ongoing basis.

[Click here to register](#)

Finishing Well 21 June 9:30am - 1pm

The BUV, in partnership with Baptcare and other like-minded and caring organisations, are offering a half-day seminar to cover things to think about, such as Continuum of Care (Retirement Living, Residential Care, In-home Care, Palliative Care, Advanced Care Planning – decision makers etc), Estate Planning (Wills, Powers of Attorney), Grief Counselling, Funeral Planning.

[Click here to register](#)

or email events@buv.com.au; or call 9880 6100

Marriage Celebrant Training 6 July Online

The purpose of this training is to enable you to be well prepared to offer effective pastoral care and marriage preparation, lead meaningful wedding services and provide ethical and legally competent ministry as a marriage celebrant for the BUV, CCVT or CCCVaT.

This training day is for new celebrants and experienced celebrants who are in need of refresher training.

[Click here to register](#)

Creating Safe Spaces

- North Melbourne - 3 June - [Click here to register](#)
- Online - 7 June - [Click here to register](#)
- Online - 17 June - [Click here to register](#)
- Lilydale - 15 July - [Click here to register](#)

Let's Pray Together - 13 July

We would love any pastors, church leaders or congregation members to join us to pray together for our union, our state and our world. There is so much to pray for, particularly as we witness the devastation and unrest in many parts of our world.

You don't need to register – just join the zoom link to attend the prayer meeting:

[Click here for more information](#)

or copy and paste the following link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/89493603691>

Reimagine Mission Toolkit - 3 Aug

Join key Alpha team leaders exploring the process, key values, and available resources to make Alpha work best for you and your church.

Through an interactive discussion over a meal, explore what Alpha is and how to best launch your next one ahead. Expand Alpha's potential and deepen a culture of evangelism within your church. Discover your next step and available resources in our expanding opportunity and generational moment with Alpha Youth"

[Click here to register](#)

BUV Generations Network Cafe Catch Ups

Cafe Catch Ups are happening across the next few weeks for Pastors and Leaders in Generations ministries in our Baptist churches. These are chances to meet new people, connect with others in similar roles, and share ideas and encouragement in a casual, accessible environment. If you can join us, contact Kimberly Smith so we know to expect you.

- **May 30 - 11am** @ Milk & Wine, Heathmont - with Jordan Stoyanoff
- **June 8 - 11am** @ The Little Tea Pot Cafe, Lara - with Abbie Pilat
- **June 14 - 1:30** @ Rubix Cafe, Blackburn North - with Adam Southwood
- **June 22 - 1pm** @ Benny & Me, Essendon - with Sally Danger



PARTNERSHIP NEWS

Finishing Well

In 2 Timothy 4:6-8 we read these words from Paul “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith...” and in the Parable of the Talents we read the Master’s words, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.”

We all contemplate what it means to live the kind of life that embodies these sentiments. For those of us who are more mature in age, there may still be some things to consider and prepare for before we hear those words from our Master.

The BUV, in partnership with Baptcare and other like-minded and caring organisations, are offering a half-day seminar to cover things to think about, such as:

- Continuum of Care Presented by Baptcare
 - » Retirement Living
 - » Residential Care
 - » In-home Care
 - » Advanced Care Planning – decision makers etc
 - » Palliative Care
- Estate Planning Presented by Stephen Morton, McCracken & McCracken
 - » Wills
 - » Powers of Attorney
- Grief Counselling Presented by Sarah Fountas NewHope Medical
- Funeral Planning Presented by Bethel Funerals

*I have fought the good fight,
I have finished the course, I have kept
the faith...*

2 Timothy 4:6-8

You’ll hear from practitioners in these fields and also have an opportunity to ask questions that relate to their field of expertise.

Date: Wednesday 21st June 2023

Time: 9:30am -1pm
morning tea included

Venue: NewHope Baptist Church
3 Springfield Rd, Blackburn Nth

RSVP: We would love to know if you can join us so that we can prepare morning tea and resources.

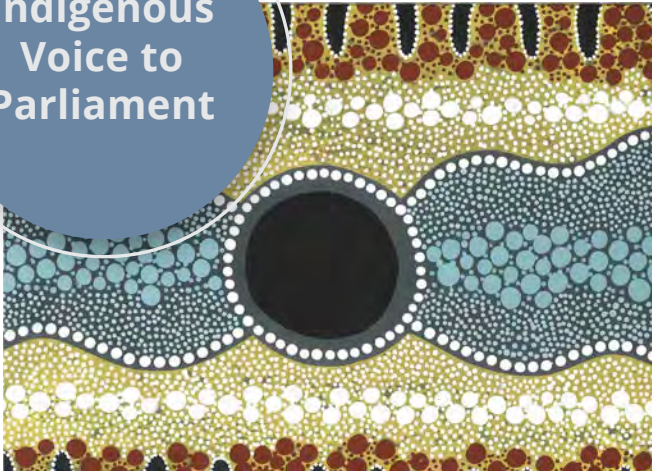
- [Click here](#) to register online
- Register via email events@buvs.com.au
- Or call Andrew Naylor, 9880 6129
BUV Partnership Development Manager

Once registered you will be sent a questionnaire so that you can let us know what topics you are particularly interested in and where you may need more information.

Our team of presenters look forward to sharing this seminar with you and assisting you to finish well.

RESOURCES

Indigenous Voice to Parliament



During 2023, it is anticipated that Australia will face a referendum on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. This has come about from the call of the 2017 Uluru Statement from the Heart, for the establishment of a First Nations Voice to Parliament to be enshrined in the Constitution.

The BUV Support Hub have compiled some documents, resources and reflections to consider as we, as a nation, head towards this historic referendum concerning the First Nations people in this country: a Voice to Parliament on behalf of those who, despite being here for millennia, feel unheard in their own land. Our history is complex, but our rich past must be woven into the fabric of our nation, not forgotten or erased. Our past always plays a part in our present and our future, just as this important decision will also.

For resources and up to date information relating the Voice to Parliament Resource Pack.

[Download the Resources here](#)

Or visit buu.com.au/voicetoparliament



In 2023, the Baptist Union of Victoria Support Hub is piloting a Reimagine Mission Toolkit for any church or leadership team wishing to improve their missional, discipleship and/or evangelistic edge. The vision is to see churches and faith communities flourishing in holistic mission.

At the BUV we want to help your church or community of faith to reimagine mission in your community or context. The BUV has partnered with trusted and accomplished mission organisations to offer you the Reimagine Mission Toolkit. This 2 year programme designed for 2 or more people from your church or community of faith, delivers expert mission training with:

- Fortnightly coaching sessions on mission in your context – delivered and facilitated by the BUV Mission Catalyst team
- Access to workshops run by our partners in several different areas – min 2 per year – 10 available to choose from per year
- church planting and multiplication (through City to City and Exponential Australia)
- micro churches -small flexible community type church format (through the BUV micro church network and Micro Churches Australia)
- mission to people on the margins (through Empowered Faith Communities)
- evangelism and sharing faith (through Alpha Australia)
- community placemaking, discipleship and mentoring (through COACH Community mentoring and Grassroots Placemakers)
- Online resources – from partners
- Annual Retreat

More information: buu.com.au/reimaginemissiontoolkit/

JUNE 2023 PRAYER CALENDAR

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thur

Fri

Sat

Sun



Baptist Union
of Victoria

			1 Syndal Baptist Church	2 Templestowe Baptist Church	3 The First Hungarian Baptist Church	4 The Terminal Baptist Church
5 The Vine	6 The Vine Baptist Church - Eltham Campus	7 The Vine Baptist Church - Hurstbridge Campus	8 The Vine Church Rutherglen	9 Torquay Christian Fellowship	10 Tottenham Bilingual Baptist Church (Evangelica)	11 Tov Micro Church
12 Traralgon & District Baptist Church	13 Upwey Baptist Community Church	14 Victoria Gospel Baptist Church	15 Victoria Zokhuapeng Baptist Church	16 Victorian Chin Baptist Church	17 Victorian Matu Christian Church	18 Victorian New Creation Church
19 Victory Christian Church	20 Wandin Baptist Church	21 Wangaratta Baptist Church	22 Warracknabeal Baptist Church	23 Warrnambool & District Baptist Church	24 Waverley Baptist Church	25 Werribee Baptist Church
26 Werribee Karen Baptist Church	27 West Melbourne Baptist Church	28 West Preston Baptist Church	29 Western Melbourne Romanian Baptist Church	30 Western New Community Baptist Church	Download your prayer calendar from buv.com.au/pray	

JULY 2023 PRAYER CALENDAR

Mon

Tue

Wed

Thur

Fri

Sat

Sun



Baptist Union
of Victoria

31 Beamaris - Mordialloc Baptist Church - Bayside Campus	Here at the Baptist Union Support Hub we believe that together, in prayer and listening to His voice, we can be the voice others need to hear through this new season. We'd love you to join us in daily prayers for our churches, leaders, communities.			1 Westgarth Baptist Church	2 Westgate Baptist Community Church	
3 Westgate Karen Baptist Community Church	4 Wodonga District Baptist Church	5 Wonthaggi Baptist Church - Grantville Campus	6 Wonthaggi Baptist Church - Wonthaggi Campus	7 Zomi Baptist Church Victoria	8 Zomi Mission Church	9 Zotung Baptist Church
10 Aberdeen Street Baptist Church	11 Aberfeldie Baptist Church	12 Aintree Micro Church	13 Albert Park Baptist Church	14 Albury Baptist Church	15 Altona Baptist Church	16 Anglesea Baptist Church
17 Arabic Baptist Church	18 Arise City Church	19 Armadale Baptist Church	20 Ashburton Baptist Church	21 Auburn Baptist Church	22 Australia Zophei Church Inc	23 Australia Zotung Church
24 Australian Christian Baptist Church	25 Australian Gospel Baptist Church	26 Bacchus Marsh Baptist Church	27 Bairnsdale Baptist Church	28 Ballarat North Baptist Church	29 Balwyn Baptist Church	30 Beaconsfield Baptist Church