

The following church profile was prepared to represent a picture of the church, its ministry, life, ethos and values in 2015 and has been updated in some places to reflect changes in 2017.

### **The Canberra Baptist Church in the nation's capital**

In response to federation, Australian Baptists committed themselves to establishing a presence in Canberra. The church and manse were built in 1929 with contributions from Baptists around Australia. The beautiful church building is located in the Inner South suburb of Kingston and forms part of Canberra's heritage, being heritage listed in 2009. It is noted for its stained glass windows and other memorials.

The church was founded in 1929, soon after the first permanent residents moved into the new national capital where it was the first church in the Baptist tradition. It has been directly or indirectly responsible for the formation of the other seven Baptist churches in the ACT. The church has a unique role in Australian Baptist church life and witness. Since its earliest beginnings and still today, the church and its ministers have recognised its responsibility to be concerned not only with a vital local ministry and witness, but to also be engaged in and have a relevance to the nation as a whole in and through the life of the national capital. It has had real opportunities to articulate Christian views on national issues and to represent those views to the public, to government and the media.

### **The church and its values**

The church's life has been shaped by a distinctive set of values.

1. Worship that engages people and contributes to their life in the world is of central importance.
2. Preaching and teaching that brings together the good news of the gospel and its relevance to daily life is highly valued.
3. The church has from its beginning expressed an open-mindedness which encourages honesty, generosity of spirit, liberality and freedom to seek and grow. There is a diversity of views on theology and on issues such as same sex marriage within the congregation.
4. The church has never had a constitution but only a simple and brief set of Standing Orders which have served it well since its beginning.
5. It is thoughtful towards change and democratic in its government and in reaching decisions, preferring to think carefully through important matters.

It values the wide range of age groups represented in the church community and seeks to accommodate the needs of everyone and their interests in its life and worship. It encourages the offering of time and talents, recognising that much responsibility for the health of the church rests on the laity. The church understands that friendship, fellowship and personal support for one another are expressions of a caring church. These ministries

are central to its life and witness. It recognises that social justice issues are not optional extras for the church to wrestle with but are an essential responsibility of those who follow Christ. Finally, the church is ecumenical in outlook, wanting to stress unity rather than uniformity. These are all values that the church has articulated since its inception.

### **The church and its vision**

The church seeks to express its vision in its work and witness. Its mission statement is "Building a vibrant and open community which is responsive to God's love in Christ and committed to serving God and people".

The church has a wide range of programs and strong interest in social justice issues and agendas. The church's work is organised under the areas of Mission, Stewardship, Nurture and Worship.

Mission includes programs involving the local community such as the Currie Crescent Community Centre, the Kingston Organic Community Garden and an annual 'SMAD' camp for children held in January, as well as for the wider community and also financial support for global mission.

Nurture includes small groups and youth group programs and opportunities for the church community to gather together, such as the church Christmas party and annual church camp. Regular opportunities for older members of the congregation to gather are provided through quarterly Communion, Cuppa and Chat services, which are specifically designed for those members of the community who are not able to attend Sunday services.

Stewardship covers financial matters and church property maintenance.

The church maintains a web site, [www.canbap.org](http://www.canbap.org). It provides resources and a means of initial contact with the church.

The church recognises that involvement in the community by those who seek to live Christian lives is vital to maintaining an open, outward looking and growing church community. Committed to this vision, the church looks to the future knowing that it will face opportunities and challenges that will offer both personal and corporate growth.

### **The church membership**

The church's active membership was 149 on 30 June 2017. Two hundred and seventy-three people who belong to our church community attended at least one Sunday service in the first six months of 2017. The average weekly attendance, including both adults and children, was 155 in 2016-17.

The Church has a strong core of members who have been active in the church for many years.

The congregation lives across Canberra with a smaller number living in its immediate vicinity.

The church stands in the Baptist tradition of encouraging people to publicly affirm their faith through baptism by immersion at the time of their becoming a church member. The church also welcomes into its life people from non-Baptist backgrounds and a number have become members. The church has thought carefully about how these people may become members, recognising their involvement and commitment, whilst it still upholds and teaches important Baptist principles.

Most years see people both baptised and received into membership.

### **The church and its ministry team**

For the last three years, the church's ministry team comprised a Pastoral Team Leader (minister) and a part-time (4 days per week) Pastoral Team Member (minister). The church also has a volunteer Pastoral Care Assistant who assists with the regular visitation of members of the congregation aged 70 and over. A Community Development Worker has also been employed for 8 hours per week to assist in the community centre project.

### **The church and its worship**

The church has two morning services each Sunday at 9.00 am and 10.30 am. There is no evening service. A children's ministry segment is a feature of the 10.30 am service and this service also has a greater focus on contemporary music.

The style of worship is thoughtful and structured with preaching that is challenging both spiritually and intellectually. As well as touching people spiritually it seeks to equip them for life and ministry in the world. Music is a feature of worship and a variety of musical material is used including hymns from Baptist Praise and Worship and contemporary songs. There are regular family and special services. The church is fortunate in having capable and committed singers and instrumentalists to lead worship. Music is most frequently provided by the organ with a small music group assisting with music at the 10.30 service. After many years of providing music for special occasions, the choir contributes to services on a semi regular basis and leads Christmas and Easter celebrations. Congregational singing is important - this is a singing church!

### **Christian formation and education**

We have about 25 families with children under high school age who are active in the church.

The Sunday School program is conducted during the 10.30 am service. Teachers from the church community commit to teaching in pairs for a term at a time. The Sunday School uses Scripture Union material for its pre-school programme, Scripture Union and Oasis material for K-6 and more varied content for the high school age young people. At the end of each term pre-school and K-6 minister to the congregation by participating in worship in the second morning service.

Our Young Families ministry comprises work with a Young Families Committee to review programs for families and to discuss other nurture initiatives. Pastoral care for families is undertaken and there are five small groups in which young families are active.

The youth ministry comprises social activities on a Friday night, camps and a mentoring program.

In addition to home groups for families and young people, 8 groups with around 8 members meet regularly for study, fellowship and prayer.

The Irene's Place ministry was commenced in 2008 to promote the teachings of peace, non violence and practising everyday faith. This Ministry is guided by a small committee and hosted by a resident church family. Regular activities include Prayers for Peace and Coffee, Cake and Conversation, to discuss a variety of topics in depth.

### **Opportunities to witness in the community**

People within the church are involved in a variety of mission and service opportunities.

As part of its mission to the local community, the church has established a community centre to pursue the mission of the Canberra Baptist Church by sharing the resources of the church with the wider community and accepting what the community has to share with us. The Centre is home to a wide range of activities addressing a broad range of community needs. It seeks to cover physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs. The activities include playgroups for infants and toddlers, Yoga, Tae Kwon Do, Tai Chi, exercise classes, Cooking Circles, Somatic and folk dance, African drumming, addiction services, Toastmasters public speaking, craft, counselling and gardening. A free counselling service called "Conversations at 4Cs", operates for three days a week. This service has been started to assist those in financial hardship who are experiencing overwhelming issues in their lives.

Since 2013, a very successful school holiday program, the SMAD camp, has been run in late January. SMAD stands for Sports, Music, Art and Drama. It was the vision of two of our young people to create a fun environment where children can experience and hear about God's love. The 140 places in the 2018 camp were booked out on the day registrations opened. Most of the children who participate are from the local community. The camp provides a great opportunity for leadership development for our youth group, who assist with the program.

Each week a playgroup is held attracting young mothers from the surrounding community and church families and there is a group that connects parents and carers of babies (aged 0-1 years) with an interactive, education and support program. A craft group is held most Fridays and many local women attend.

A group combines with two other local churches to provide a friendship and meal support ministry 'The Verandah' at the Stuart Flats, a low cost disadvantaged housing complex in the nearby suburb of Griffith.

The Church supported the establishment of the Kingston Organic Community Garden on the church site. This aims to provide the residents of Kingston and surrounding areas, irrespective of their income, background, race or religion, with an opportunity to participate in organic gardening with their neighbours, thereby building community cohesion and understanding and raising awareness about health and nutrition, food production, waste management and environmental sustainability.

A significant outreach opportunity to bring the real message of Christmas to the community is the annual Carols in the Park event.

The church has been involved in the Journey of Healing, assists refugee families who settle in Canberra and supports international efforts through our Thank Offering and Christmas Offering.

In addition to these activities, individual members of the church community are personally involved in supporting a variety of mission activities in the Canberra community or are on boards or committees of church and para-church organisations.

### **The church and its ethos**

Whilst holding to a thoroughly Baptist position and giving strong support to the Association of Baptist Churches of the ACT Region, the church is tolerant and accepts other Christian perspectives. It actively cooperates with other churches and such organisations as the ACT Churches Council and the Australian Centre for Christianity and Culture. It warmly embraces the necessity of reconciling with the indigenous people of Australia and actively seeks ways

in which it may contribute. It has a strong social concern, both within its local community and also more widely at national and international levels.

### **The church and its property**

The church occupies some 2 hectares (nearly 5 acres) of prime real estate in the heart of the capital. The land tenure is a perpetual church lands lease with the Baptist Union of Australia as trustee. The church complex includes the Church building, a hall, lounge, meeting rooms, offices and manse.

The property is well maintained and its facilities are well utilised by community groups and in this way is a local and wider resource. There is a large array of solar panels on the Waldock Hall and the feed in tariff from these panels is added to the Thank Offering funds to support the BUILT project in Bangladesh.

The church manse is adjacent to the church on the same lease.

The Canberra Baptist Church shares its premises on a Sunday with a Korean Baptist Church which has met here for about ten years. There is an agreement detailing the responsibilities of each church community.

### **The church and finance**

The church is in a sound financial position. Its annual budget is \$377,000, including donations for special appeals and other income, excluding the financial appeals noted below. The church has a history of meeting or exceeding its budgets most financial years. In addition to its weekly offerings, the church has two major financial appeals each year. The Christmas offering, which raised \$22,100 in 2017, is currently divided equally to support a Hagar Case Worker, the Baptist World Aid Australia Symbiosis project in Bangladesh and the BaptistCare Chisholm Project. The church's annual thank offering has been used to support the Banishanta Union Integrated Livelihood Transformation (BUILT) Project in Bangladesh. \$24,577 was provided to support the project in 2017.

The church supports financially the Cooperative Budget of the Baptist Churches of NSW and the ACT, the Association of Baptist Churches of the ACT region and Global Interaction, as well as a number of other causes. Provision is made for forward estimates of expenditure to meet future anticipated major maintenance on the church property.

### **The church in the future**

The features of our church life confirmed in the 2017 National Church Life Survey were wider community care and social justice and the value of sermons, preaching and bible teaching. A significant proportion of respondents had a sense of belonging and were strongly committed to the visions and goals of the church.

### **Conclusion**

The Canberra Baptist Church is a strong and well established church with a unique role in Australia's national capital. It seeks to represent Christ and preach and teach the good news of the gospel with all its contemporary relevance, offering new life in the risen Christ as the means of redemption and spiritual growth of the whole person. It endeavours to proclaim a message of hope and relevance to people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.