

BATHURST BAPTIST CHURCH

CHURCH PROFILE 2024

The Church

Bathurst Baptist Church meets in a well appointed building, on the outskirts of Bathurst near Eglinton, surrounded by new housing developments.

Over the years we have been pastored and led by many Godly men. We have seen periods of spiritual and numerical growth. We have worshipped at 3 main locations within our city, Keppel Street: 1870 -1974; Stewart Street: 1974 -1988; Eglinton Road: 1988 –present.

Like many churches there have been times of growth and times of difficulty. Some of these difficulties have resulted in the church engaging with a Consultant to resolve and on another occasion the church engaged an intentional interim. Looking back, even in the times of difficulty, we can see God's hand of leading at all times. At present there are 70 active members. Over the past fifty years there have been five senior Pastors; Revs. Mike Robinson (twice), Bob Smith, Gary Baker and John Armstrong. There have also been several associate Pastors at various times during this period. Each of these Pastors has contributed different strengths and vision for the church.

Our identity is within the Baptist Association of Churches of NSW. In March 2023 the church celebrated 160 years of worship in Bathurst with a special weekend.

We currently have an Interim Pastor, part-time Administration Officer/ PA to Pastor, a leadership team consisting of Elders and Deacons, Safe Church Team & WHS Team. We follow a well developed constitution and have a minimum of 4 church meetings a year, including an AGM. Currently our leadership meet once a month.

With the leaving of Rev John Armstrong and the impacts of the disruption from Covid the church's numbers declined but at present there is a positive optimism within the fellowship. The church has an increased number of volunteers stepping up to take responsibility and contribute to the activities of the church and is looking forward with excitement to the future.

Sunday Worship

Morning Worship Service(every week).

9.30am Family Celebration Service. The worship style is ordered but with room for freedom of expression. Attendance at this service is currently 50 persons, comprising mostly older adults and a few children. The Worship Leader coordinates the service incorporating a range of worship components. The music is drawn from contemporary and traditional sources and is either played by our musicians or by the use of pre-recorded music. There is pastoral prayer, scripture reading and a sermon. The children remain in for the whole service and we include a dedicated "Kids Time" during this time . We have a crèche available for parents of toddlers to use if needed. Following this service there is a time of prayer and fellowship over coffee.

Café Church

A fortnightly 6pm Sunday Night Service is primarily more relaxed and focused on the youth and young adults. Members of the morning congregation are encouraged to attend to help build relationships with the youth and young adults and to support this ministry.

This service follows a model similar to “messy church” with a more informal feel, including a “weird activity” and supper prior to a 10min talk. There are currently about 45 persons attending this service . Due to its size, it tends to be more inter-active and can include games, quizzes, panel, testimonies and the like.

Ministries

Mission support:

The church helps to support several local and overseas missionary families and organisations, most of whom have been involved or had a connection with Bathurst Baptist Church. This support can be through prayer, finances, correspondence etc. Currently the church has approved to give 10% of our offerings to these various missions. This support includes Primary School Scripture (SRE) and the Bathurst Council for Christian Education, a ministry that supports a Christian Educator into the campuses of both our state secondary schools, teaching the students the truths of Scripture and the relevance of God to their daily lives.

During the year we have special Sundays, appeals and /or guest speakers for a range of missionaries and/or programs. These include Samaritan’s Purse, Gideon’s, Baptist Mission Australia, Crossover, Share an Opportunity (SAO) & Baptist World Aid and Compassion.

Home Groups / Bible Studies.

Currently there are 4 home groups / Bible studies, catering for people of all ages and various spiritual growth. There are around 30 people involved in these groups.

We also host an interdenominational KYB group, who meet weekly throughout the year.

Kids Time

This ministry is for Children as part of our Morning Worship Service. The program is based around the “Beginner’s Bible “ book and devotions, with a nominated “reader” telling the story. There is an “Activity” table at the back of the sanctuary that parents can take children to or a ‘Kids Talk’ helper can assist.

Playtime:

Playtime is a ministry to pre-school aged families from within our church family and the community. This ministry is a great encouragement to all who attend. Programs includes some practical parenting education as well as spiritual input, which occurs through invaluable relationships built through the ministry.

Pastoral Care and Prayer:

The elders and a number of people provide encouragement and care for each other, and coordinate care through the church office for those with specific needs. This includes visitation, meals, prayer, welcoming at services, morning tea roster, etc.

Throughout the week / month there are opportunities for corporate prayer – which covers areas such as Outreach, Church Family Prayer, phone prayer for urgent situations, etc. A corporate time of prayer is held at 11:15pm after morning tea on Sunday and a newer initiative of a time of prayer on Wednesday evening at the church.

Women's Ministry:

Women have special events irregularly throughout the year at various times. These events are open to all women and are a time of fellowship, sharing and encouragement. Outreach opportunities are part of the program. There is also a Women's' Breakfast held at a local café on a regular basis.

Men's Ministry:

At various times through the year men meet for a specific activity. Informal Men's' Breakfasts are also held irregularly. There is also a monthly "Men's Coffee" morning at the local RSL once a month.

Associated Ministries

Scripture in Schools

Bathurst Baptist Church supports scripture in schools and has volunteers who teach regularly in local primary schools. The Church is providing Bibles and other Christian literature for distribution at school scripture.

Carols at Christmas

Each December there is a special Carols event. The Church has had Carols on the Carpet, or Carols Café style in the sanctuary or had on previous occasions held an outside Carols service on the front lawn. These events are seen as outreach opportunities through a family fun evening celebrating Christmas, with food, carols and a short devotional input.

Hire / Rent of Premises

We have a 2 bedroom flat as part of our church building that is currently being rented. We also hire out various rooms to local organisations on a weekly basis. These include:

- Life FM for their transmission equipment
- Bathurst U3A
- East Orange & Bathurst Physie Group
- Wollemi Sensory Play
- Just Dance

Communication

We communicate to our regular attendees weekly in the form of an 'enews' newsletter. This includes: upcoming dates and events, praise and prayer points, a kids devotion, a mission spot, a section of interest and other current information.

Members receive a monthly newsletter which includes the month's offering figures and a reflection from the Pastor.

We also have a Facebook page which has a weekly Bible verse and upcoming events.

Safe Church Requirements

In 2022 we completed the Safe Church Health Check which outlines our commitment to complying with the child safe standards and the recommendations of Royal Commission regarding child safe institutions. We have implemented the recommended policies, procedures and practices as part of our Safe Church .

Church Life Survey

Results of the survey indicate that during the period between the last two surveys, the church, has in most categories showed some decline. The full results are available if required.

Church Strengths

- Many people committed to the church and its ministry.
- People across all the age demographics but morning worship is weighted towards retirees.
- A number of people with Pastoral, teaching and missionary experience.
- Freedom to use ministry gifts.
- Many gifted people.
- Church is well positioned in the community, with excellent facilities and no property debt.
- Corporate, individual and small group prayer.
- A friendly and caring church community.

Challenges for the Church

- Need to work on encouraging young people to deeper commitment to church and membership..
- Difficulty in connecting our congregations together.
- Encouraging people to attend church based prayer.
- To put in place accountability and regular review process for leadership
- A portion of the congregation has a culture of casual attendance.
- In the past there has been difficulty dealing with differences.
- There is a need for all members to understand and commit to stewardship and its responsibilities.
- Some lack of monitoring our activities and governance.
- Need for transparency for the benefit of both Pastor and Church

The Church Over 160 Years

In 1862 two young preachers began services in Bathurst the first church was formed on 21st March, 1863 with Rev. James Thornton as pastor. Land was purchased at 100 Keppel Street, and a building erected at the rear of the land. Rev. W. Field's ministry followed with 15 people baptised and in 1866 during Rev. J. T. Hinton's ministry a church building was erected by voluntary labour. Rev. David Fenwick followed in and built the first church which opened in 1870 with a debt \$300 paid off in 2 years.

The work grew under the leadership of Rev. Phillip Lane, Rev. A. W Grant and Rev. H. Phillips. These pastors were followed by Rev. Ebenezer Price, during whose ministry the church manse was built next to the church and Rev. James Worboys who established services at Sunny Corner, Yetholme and assisted with the work at Wellington. Outstations were important and buildings were erected at Eglinton, Raglan and Perthville

At the beginning of a new century Rev. C Palmer was appointed pastor followed by Rev. David Steel during which time the church grew. Following Rev. A. H. Tolhurst the church was without a pastor and experienced some difficulties and the Home Mission provided assistance. Rev. W. Collier followed by Rev. H. D. Collier who provided guidance in a healing ministry continued by Rev. E. J. Rogers. Rev. J. H. Jagers, Rev. James Hunter and Rev. P Maidment followed in the pastorate and the church grew with a number of conversions. 1928 Rev. Joseph Hunter served the church but these were difficult years due to the depression. However many came to the Lord during a mission held by Dr. Wilfred Jarvis.

During the Second World War Rev. D. McCullough and Rev. McColl led the church and provided an effective ministry to people stationed at Bathurst. Rev. Alan Tester led the church in the post war years, Rev. Keith Evans followed and the church building was renovated during this time. Rev. Dalton Armstrong was followed by Rev. J. W. McBride whose ministry included the church providing help to many in need, also the church members were blessed by participation in the Billy Graham crusade. A new manse was purchased 208 Keppel Street with old one being used for a Religious Education Block.

Rev. John Giles commenced ministry in 1962 and provided a strong evangelistic ministry into the community, including work within the teachers college, and growth in youth work. In 1960 the church had formed a committee who suggested purchasing a new site for expansion, however it was 1962 when a recommendation of land in Stewart St was suggested but not purchased till 1964. Rev. George Jepson served the church from 1965 till 1972 when Rev. Mike Robinson commenced ministry. The new church building was opened in 1974 by Rev. E. C. Long. During this time, as in the years before, many of the church members worked together in fellowship to further the work of the Lord.

Rev. Bob Smith commenced his ministry in 1976. He ministered to those who were isolated, encouraged the churches participation in Ridgecrest Camp site and provided a strong pastoral ministry. 1985 five acres of land was purchased at Eglinton, and the Stewart Street property sold to the Salvation Army. In 1988 the church at Eglinton was officially opened.

Rev. Mike Robinson commenced ministry in 1991 and his teaching ministry was well received. Paul Pickford was appointed associate pastor and served in this position for 5 years. Rob Feeney, then Steve Messner were appointed as Associate Pastors. The formation of Kelso Baptist Church took place in 1995 with a number of church members transferring to this church plant.

Rev. Gary Baker commenced ministry in 2004, his counselling and help given to people in need was greatly appreciated, along with his leadership in the strengthening of the church's relationship with the community. Following Rev. Gary Baker's resignation in 2011 the church entered into an Intentional Interim Ministry to prepare the church for a new Pastor.

Rev John Armstrong commenced ministry in 2014, John was a gifted musician often playing a variety of instruments. John developed the churches online presence which came into its own during the Covid-19 lockdown period. "Church on Tuesday" continued under John's ministry and "Cafe Church" on Sunday evenings was commenced during this time. John concluded his ministry in July 2022 followed by a period of Long Service Leave that concluded in October 2022.

It was in October 2022 that the Church appointed Rev Lindsay Croll as interim pastor, a long term member of the church, to prepare the church for a new Pastor. For Rev Croll this was the third occasion he had been appointed in an interim pastor role to this church. A weekend of celebration for the 160th Church Anniversary was held on the 18th and 19th March 2023