

Tasmanian Baptists

Partners in Christian Mission

Report to Mid Year Assembly

4 July 2009

Introduction

- The superintendent of Tasmanian Baptists, Garry Billing, will retire at the end of 2009
- Garry has been a Godly and wise leader who has made a significant contribution to the spiritual growth of the denomination. He will leave a gap in leadership that needs to be filled
- Council asked the newly appointed chairperson of Tasmanian Baptists, Ivan James, to conduct a review of the denomination to help us prepare for the future
- Ivan made this presentation to the mid-year assembly on 4 July
- Assembly decided to encourage all churches to study this material and consider the five questions raised in this presentation
- The next assembly in Hobart at the end of October should make a decision about the future structure and leadership of the denomination, after taking into account input from all churches

Role of the superintendent

- *Visionary leader of the denomination*
- *Team leader for mission leadership team*
- *Mentor for pastors*
- *Church care*
- *Liaison with the Baptist Union of Australia and unions in other States*

Role of regional ministers

In addition to their roles as pastors, John Smith (South), Jeff McKinnon (North) and Ivan Jordan (North-West) are responsible for:

- *Missional leadership*
- *Care of missional leaders*
- *Working with the superintendent to cast missional vision and care for churches and pastors in crisis*

Terms of reference

- Establish and coordinate a process of review, developing recommendations to address the core issues
 1. Longevity and viability of the denomination
 2. Reduced commitment to churches and denomination
 3. Implications for future denominational leadership model

Viability

- This issue highlights a complex interplay of factors, including:
 - *the denomination's ageing profile*
 - *lack of viable youth ministries*
 - *its restricted capacity for renewing vision*
 - *difficulty coping with discontinuous change*
 - *the increasing challenge of resourcing the state-wide mission in terms of personnel and finance*
- It also relates to the impact on our churches of post-denominational attitudes, especially among the younger generations

Commitment

- Churches struggle to maintain competent leadership, find resource personnel for key programmes, finance the Union budget, and accommodate a greater plurality of those with non-Baptist heritage
- Denominationally-speaking, it is increasingly difficult to identify and involve suitable people in council or taskforce roles
- There appears to be a gap between the aspiration of churches to be part of the Union and their capacity for, or commitment to, practical involvement

Leadership

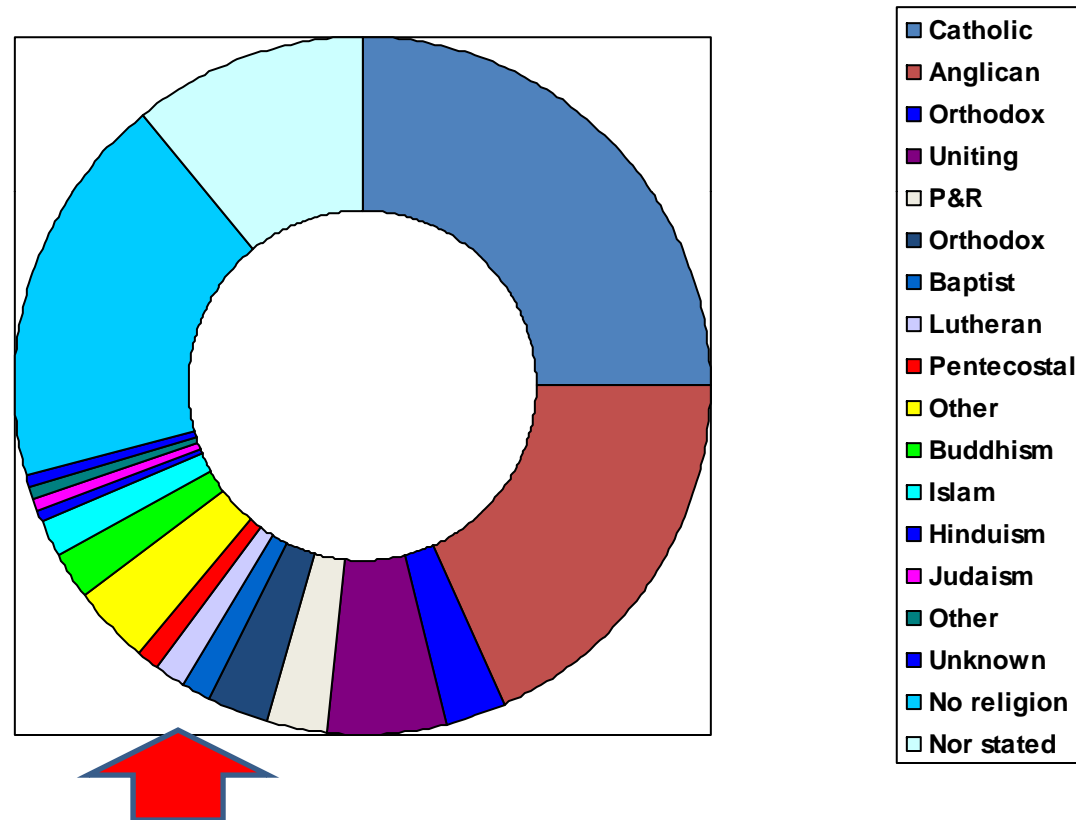
- In light of the current Superintendent's notification of intention to retire at the end of 2009, it is opportune to re-assess the denomination's leadership needs in the light of the above factors
- This opens up issues such as leadership priorities, style, and preferred models for a time of challenging discontinuous change

The starting point for the review:

- What is happening in Australia?
- What is happening in Tasmania?
- Is the Baptist church in Tasmania growing, when compared with other denominations, other religions and the total population?
- What does this say about our denomination?

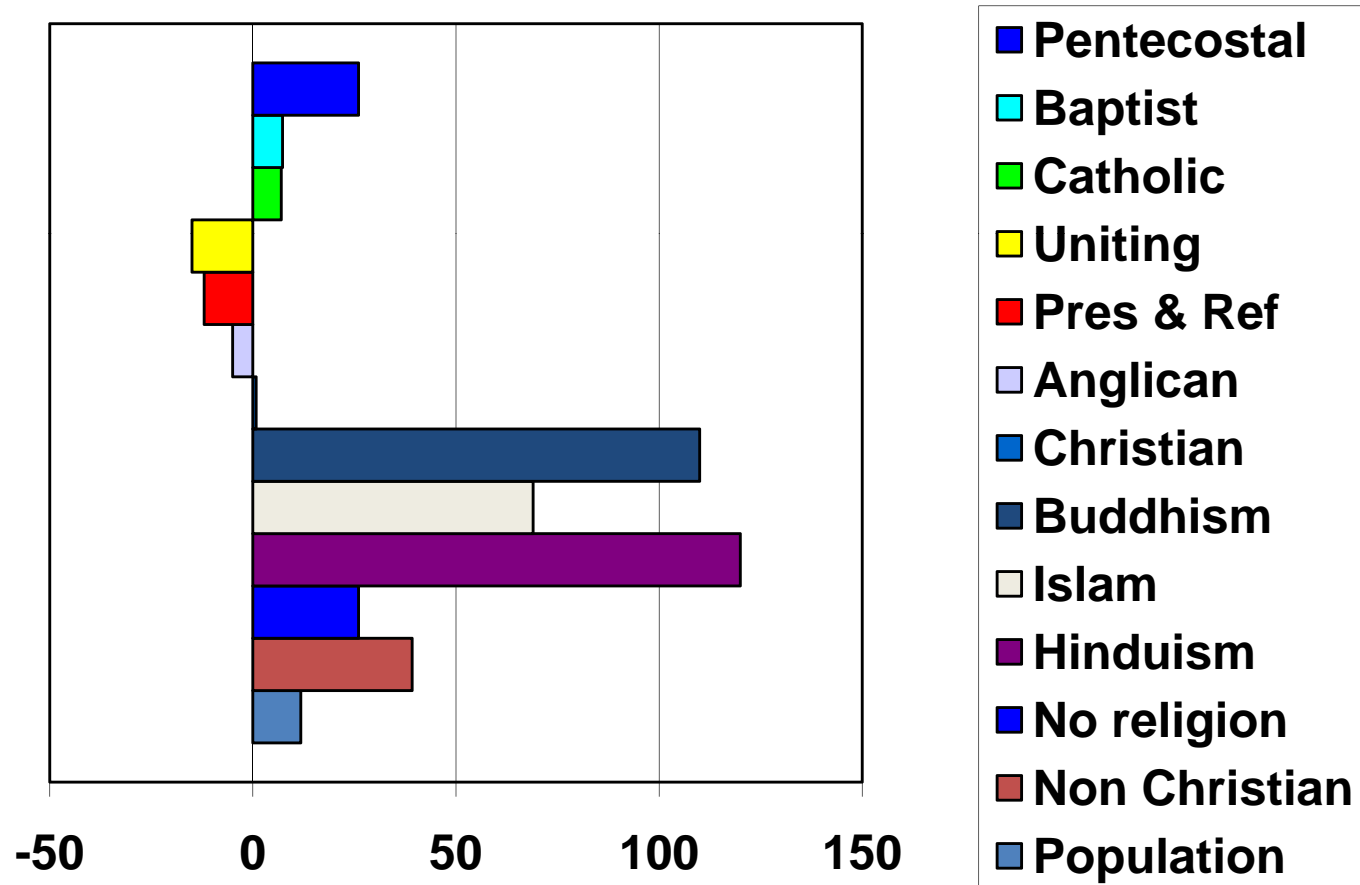
Baptists are only 1.6% of Australia

Australian Religious Affiliation 2006 Census



Non-Christian religions continue to grow in Australia at a faster rate

% growth over 10 years as per 2006 Census

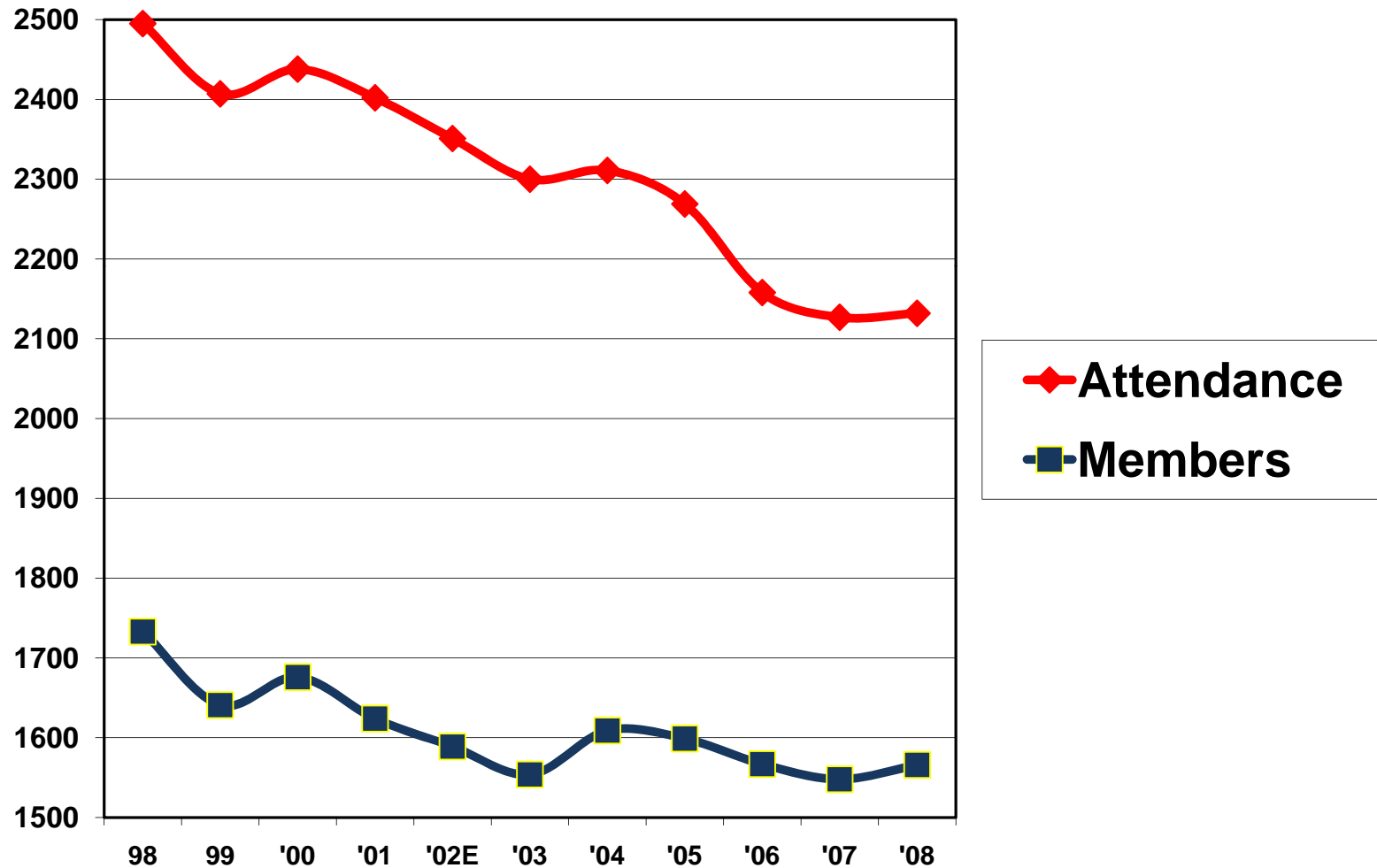


Baptists only 0.4% of Tasmania

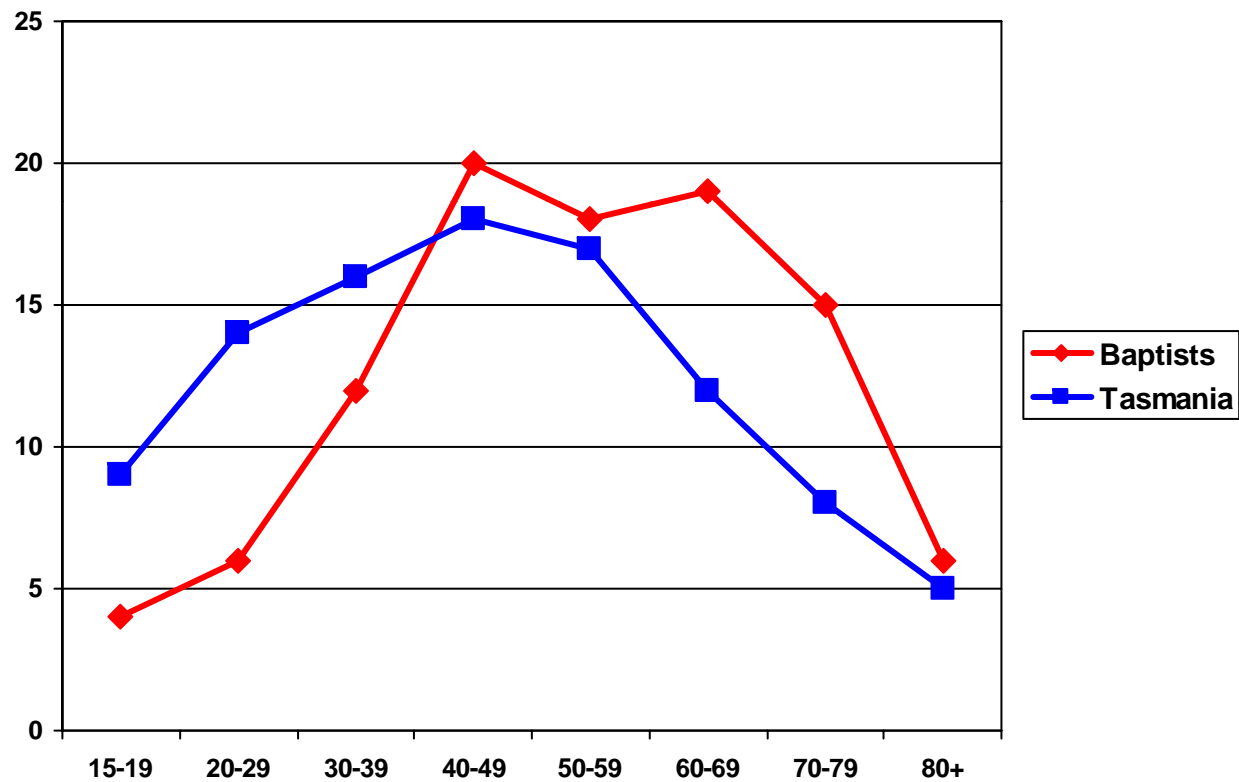
	<i>HOBART</i>	<i>LAUNCESTON</i>	<i>OTHER</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Population	200,500	68,600	230,900	500,000
Churches	5	5	20	30
Members	338	426	1,009	1,773
Change last year	+20	-10	-30	-20
Change %	+6.3%	-2.3%	-2.9%	-1.1%
Average attendance	416	515	1,201	2,132
% Population	0.2%	0.8%	0.5%	0.4%
Baptisms last year	6	5*	7	18
National Baptist %				1.6%
National Change %				+7.8%

Attendance and membership is declining

Tasmanian Baptist churches over the last 10 years



*We aren't reaching people under 40
Attendance could halve within the next 10 years
(Age profile Tasmanian Baptists v the population of Tasmania - 2006 Census)*



*Over the last 5 years we did not grow by conversion;
and we did not retain our young people*

- Switchers and transfers were 25%
- Young adult retention was only 3%
- Newcomers were only 8%
- “Switchers or transfers” means people arriving from local churches of other denominations (switchers) or from churches of the same denomination (transfers) in the last five years
- “Young adult retention” means young people aged 15+ who were attending the same Tasmanian Baptist church five years ago
- “Newcomers” means people who were not attending any church five years ago

What is God's mission?

- The mission of God (*Missio Dei*) as redeemer, through Christ, in the Spirit, is to restore and reconcile the fallen creation *
- *It is not the Church of God that has a mission in the world, but the God of mission who has a Church in the world ***

* Colossians 1.20

**Tim Dearborn, *Beyond Duty: a passion for Christ, a heart for mission*, MARC, 1998

We are meant to be a missionary church, which is ...

- Focused on God the Trinity, all its life and activity is undergirded by prayer
- Incarnational, it seeks to be responsive to the activity of the Spirit in its community
- Transformational, it is not self-serving, self-seeking or self-focused – the kingdom of God is its goal
- Makes disciples, it is concerned with the transformation of individuals as well as communities
- Relational, it is characterised by welcome and hospitality

* Mission-shaped church – Church planting and fresh expressions of church in a changing context, 2005 Willow Publishing

Questions for discussion

Mid-year assembly decided to encourage all churches to prayerfully consider this material and discuss the following five questions

Question 1

- *Should we just focus on saving the denomination and continue to play at being church?*
- *Or, should we recognise that Tasmania is still a mission field?*
- *And, if so, should we focus on being intentional missionaries and plant new faith communities throughout Tasmania?*

Question 2

- *When did we stop being missional and why and how should we encourage our congregations to repent and pray for revival?*

Question 3

- *How should we communicate the urgency and importance of this missional task to every congregation?*

Question 4

- *Who will be the agents of change?*
 - *Will it be our pastors, elders, deacons, or young adults?*
 - *Who will represent the people that are missing from our existing congregations - children and 15-35 year olds and those outside our existing social networks?*
 - *What leadership skills will we need?*
 - *How important is the denomination in this process?*

Question 5

- *Are we prepared to cope with the pain and sacrifice that will come as we become missional?*
- *In other words, will we be prepared to stop being demanding consumers of religious goods and services and become servants of the God of mission in our generation?*
- *At the same time, how should we care for pastors and churches in crisis in a responsible manner, without becoming diverted from the main work of church planting?*

What's next?

- With regard to the future leadership, we have three main options:
 - A new denominational leader
 - An intentional interim denominational leader
 - A mission leadership team, consisting of the regional ministers and the GIA state director, with one of their number being the team leader
- If you would like to have this material presented to your church, please talk to your regional minister, who would be pleased to help with this task
- If you would like to comment on this material, or suggest other lines of thought for the review, please send an email to ivan.james@acl.com.au
- Or mail your comments to *46 Mary Street, East Launceston, TAS 7250 in an envelope marked "Review"*