

JUNE 11, 2020

S T E P B Y S T E P  
**ADVANCE**  
Tasmanian  
**BAPTISTS** 



*With the COVID-19 pandemic reaching Australia's shores in March 2020, Australian churches were, for the first time ever, instructed not to meet.*

Tasmanian Baptists responded admirably, and while it was an unsettling time, it also created some unexpected opportunities:

- **Some family members** who had stopped attending church, began attending online services.
- **Many elderly folk** unable to attend church due to ill-health, enjoyed their own church fellowships online.
- **Communication increased**, using whatever means possible: Phoning or "Zooming" friends, family and congregation members for cuppas and chats; Newsletters sent by email, mail and personal delivery, or converted to online resources; - Social media used more intentionally to create community.

Our churches have risen to the challenges, as you will see in the latest Regional RoundUp. Plus, find out why God might use this pandemic - and there's an interview with Nepalese Pastor Paul Rai.

Happy Reading!

Jenny

---

**Jenny Baxter**

Communications Manager, Tasmanian Baptists

[jennyb@tasbaptists.org.au](mailto:jennyb@tasbaptists.org.au)

Reflection:

## Creation Groans

by Tasmanian Baptists Mission Director Stephen Baxter



There is no doubt the world is going through a time of great convulsion - environmental, economic, and social. It is not easy to see where all this is going.

Jesus encouraged his disciples by saying:

*When you hear of wars and rumours of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth-pains.*  
Mark 13:7-8

Creation is groaning, as Paul writes in Romans 8, as it "waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. (In the hope), will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God" (19, 21).

Now, nearly 2000 years later, we are still in "birth-pains" and creation is "groaning". The world is facing turmoil and there is great fear. Some suggest the planet would be best served if humanity allowed itself to go into extinction. But Paul's insight is that the future lies in the children of God stepping up and taking their place.

What might God be saying to us amid the current "groaning"? Is there a judgment within the pandemic?

### What is God Saying?

---

To answer the question, we need to clarify what we mean by judgment.

If "judgment" means "punishment", and the question reads, "Is there punishment in the current pandemic?", then I think not. God is not punishing us, because Jesus has paid the penalty for sin and "the punishment that brought us peace was on him" (Isaiah 53:5).

“

God is  
working his  
purpose out, as  
year succeeds  
to year

ARTHUR AINGER



However, if by judgment, we mean discernment and decision, then I do believe God may be judging us. That is, God is using the current convolutions to create a moment for reflection, assessment and repentance. A crisis like this alerts us of problems about our narratives of consumerism and globalism, holding us to account for our greed and folly.

### Being Jesus' Church

---

**This is not to blame anyone. It is a call to lament and repent.**

It's a time to admit our own complicity in the crisis, a moment to allow the Holy Spirit to lift us out of our decay, and renew, revive and re-envision us.

What might it look like for us, the children of God, to rise up into our inheritance and be the Church Jesus calls us to be?

The Tasmanian Baptists' theme for this year is *Emmanuel, God with us*. This is good news. "God is working his purpose out, as year succeedsto year" as the 1894 hymn by Arthur Ainger puts it. So let's be alert to all God is doing within our world.

As we step into and unknown future amid the convulsions in and around us, we step with confidence, not in ourselves or in each other, but in our big brother Jesus who has gone before us.

So "let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:1b-2a).

**Stephen Baxter**

[stephen@tasbaptists.org.au](mailto:stephen@tasbaptists.org.au)

Regional RoundUp:

## What's Going On?

Did your church miss out being included below? This page can be updated!  
[Please let us know what's happening HERE >>>](#)

### North - Launceston Churches

#### City Baptist

---

**Ministry continues** - City Baptist has had a significant focus in continuing the programs that we can with vulnerable groups in Launceston - the street community and Hazara people. The recent death of a young man has rocked the Muslim community.

At City, we have worked hard to stay in touch with our most isolated and vulnerable people within the church. The drop-in centre has kept on going, with tweaks, to stick to current government restrictions.

**90th Birthday celebration** - We had a great pop-up 'street party' (socially distancing) on Saturday May 30, celebrating David Jacobs' 90th birthday. (See photos, below) David and Pat are a deeply loved couple at City. We knocked on their door, sang Happy Birthday and gave David a card and cake. Later we delivered a catered evening meal.



#### Summerhill Baptist

---

**Carpark open** - recently, Summerhill has been able to bless the local medical centre with use of their car park for their drive through flu vaccination station.

**Future planning** - They have also been through a branding workshop process with S. Group for the next season in ministry together. In regard to church services, the decision has been made to postpone those until at least August.

#### Gateway Baptist

---

**Those who meet at Gateway** have been running online services, and playing with creative preaching styles.

#### Newstead Baptist

---

**Please pray** - During these past months, the congregation at Newstead have not been meeting. Please pray for them as they seek to find a new pastor after an evaluation process.

#### Riverlands, Longford

---

**Services resume** - Riverlands are scheduled to resume smaller gatherings this Sunday June 14 and will be exploring together what things post-Covid look like.

## Launceston Regional

---

We met as regional leadership teams via Zoom on Sunday May 17 to discuss collaboration in mission, in light of what our city is experiencing. We will be having another conversation to keep the conversation going and look at some concrete initiatives moving forward.

*Maddy Svoboda*  
MLT, Launceston

### **Town and Country Churches**

## Latrobe Baptist

---

**Services Resuming** - Latrobe will be opening this coming Sunday, June 14, at 10am for worship.

**The Men's Shed** will also be opening on Friday mornings for community work. Unfortunately both Chat 'n' Choose, and Playgroup, will remain closed until restrictions are lifted.

## Perth Baptist

---

**Connecting, and blessing** - As with all churches, the last few months have been very different. With an aged congregation Perth have many without email, so they have had to ensure regular phone contact. However, they have been able to maintain the publication and distribution of their weekly newsletter, and provide a message each Sunday. They have also encouraged people to go online and watch a service, which many have done.

**Perth's friends at Eskleigh** have arranged a weekly service using online resources, and hand out the Perth Baptist newsletter. However, they really miss not being able to get out to church and fellowship.

**Services resume** - They plan to have the first service post-Covid in early July, which will be a time of encouragement and sharing.



### **Coastal Churches**

## LifeWay Baptist, Devonport

---

**LifeWay have been focusing** on teaching and connecting.

**Zoom Groups** - Over the past few months, everyone was allocated into Zoom Groups to facilitate connection through sharing and prayer. These groups meet each Sunday following the sermon, (some groups meet mid-week as well), The groups share how people are going, and discuss questions relating to the teaching that morning. The sermon is delivered via their [YouTube channel](#), live-streaming (usually) from Pastor Nicholas Alexander's basement! They are going through Hebrews at the moment, which is both challenging and exciting.

**Currently, LifeWay are trialling** adding some music from our worship band, and considering allowing Zoom Groups to meet together face-to-face, if groups can comply with the current restrictions relating to meeting in homes. They also encourage people to share through the church Facebook group: music that is helping, prayer points, prayers, and reflections. It's quite simple, but it seems to work.

**There are things we miss** - like singing together, sharing communion and just catching up. But people are enjoying the small group connections, and the quieter, more relaxed pace of Sunday morning.

**In Memoriam** - Dan Rough's dear wife, Irene, passed away on Friday June 5 after a long illness. Dan is a regular attendee at the NW Pastors get-togethers. Dan and Irene pastored our Latrobe and Sassafras churches back in the 80's and 90's and then represented Leprosy Mission. Precious memories of a lovely lady.

## Lower Barrington Baptist

---

**Lower Barrington have continued Sunday services**, including communion, at home. The service is sent out by email with the service outline by rostered leader including hymns and sermon. Some meet on Skype, others meet as a small group of one or two people meeting together in homes with social distancing. For those without email, the person who lives closest prints off a copy with the service, and they are sent an audio copy of the sermon to their mobile phones by text message.

**The Leadership team** have a small number of the congregation to ring on a regular basis to check how they are doing. If they need more frequent calls, they are encouraged to contact any of the Leadership team.



**Pastor Chris Aulich** endeavours to contact every member also, and his response has been well-received among the fellowship. Pastor Chris also sends a audio copy of a short Devotional through the week called a Sunroom Chat.

**Every week** the Tas Baptist Prayer points, ADVANCE emails and any other relevant information is forwarded on, so everyone kept in the loop.

## Southern Churches

### Claremont Baptist

---

**Dear sister in Christ**, Roslein Priddle, was promoted to glory on Friday 29 May 2020. With her husband John, she was a founder member of Claremont Baptist. She was loved and respected and had many friends in the wider church community. Her wise counsel, gentle ways and wonderful example of living by faith will be remembered and treasured. A Celebration of Life gathering will be held later in the year.

**Zoom meetings** - In recent months, Claremont have held Zoom meetings on Sunday afternoons and 80% of regulars have been able to negotiate the technology and share in this unique way of gathering. There has been a strong feeling of community as people have stayed in touch by phone, cards, email, Facebook and care visits. Surprisingly, the Virtual Bible Study has been well supported and purposeful and it is most likely this will be the preferred option for a midweek evening study even when things get back to "normal".

### Citywide Baptist

---

**Citywide micro church** - With their own [YouTube channel](#), including multiple playlists, Citywide have an active online presence. They also meet regularly using as "micro Churches" Zoom.

**Services have resumed** at the Lenah Valley campus, with restricted numbers.

**Auditorium Renovations at Mornington** - With the auditorium not being used, it seemed timely to undertake the work involved to move the wall and the associated works. This change will reduce the size of the main auditorium, and for the next five years provide greater space for one of the main tenants,



Clarence Gymsports. The Facilities Team are managing this project. The building work took about two weeks, and is being followed by painting. Finalising the project will happen as restrictions resulting from the virus allow.

**Services at Mornington** have not yet recommenced but by the time they meet there again, it will be in the newly renovated auditorium.

## Nepalese Church

**Congratulations** to Pastor Paul Rai and Manisha on the safe arrival of twins Aaron and Aiden on May 18.

**Paul is our featured interview this week!**

[Read all about Paul, his life as a refugee, and God's call to pastoral ministry HERE >>>](#)



## Hobart Baptist

---

**Hobart Baptist** has a weekly [YouTube service](#) scheduled every Sunday morning at 10:15am. People are welcome to join in for a Zoom chat both before and after the service. Services will begin again on Sunday June 21, with numbers limited as required.

**Kids' Church** have met regularly on Sunday morning with Zoom meetings.

**The building development** continues with the completion of the units at the rear of the property, and the next phase to renovate the Soundy Hall and Building now underway.

**Sadly, Margaret Hart**, born 7 April 1929, passed away peacefully surrounded by her family on Saturday 30 May 2020. She was a member of Hobart Baptist Church for 76 years.

**In July Hobart will celebrate** *Christmas in Winter*, including Advent, carol-singing leading up to Christmas Eve, and a Christmas Day service on Sunday July 26.



## Hobart Baptist Internationals

*Overall, Hobart's "International Sanctuaries" have coped well, and have discovered their unique ways of supporting each other.*

**Karen Congregation** - Pastors Paw Nay and Moo Lay have been visiting homes for prayer, family devotions, and birthday celebrations, while observing the guidelines and restrictions. They have also been on Zoom for meetings and have been using it for mutual encouragement and support.

**Anuak Community** - The members of the Anuak community have carefully observed isolation. They have stayed connected via social media, and been calling each other regularly. They have also joined a prayer service via group connection with a ministry to the Anuak based in the U.S.A.

**Mabuhay Filipino Congregation** - *From Pastor Joel Ortiz* - We have been encouraging each other via FB Messenger, which we have used for more than two years now, where I post the daily Bible Readings copied from the Lectionary of

the Presbyterian Mission. We celebrated Communion on 12 April, via FB Messenger. Since the easing of restrictions May and June, I celebrated communion with five people in a home. I have also visited many of the members of our congregation. Some have been following their home church on line; others have reconnected with their home church in the Philippines and have been watching their services via YouTube.

**International Fellowship** - Joel and Tracy Ortiz have personally met a few times with some of the international families; and with the others via Messenger. They're all doing well

Interview:

## Pastor Paul Rai

by Laurie Rowston

***Paul Rai was born 1 January 1985 to Hindu parents living in Bhutan.***

As there was no democracy for Nepalese in that country, the family comprising Paul's Grandfather, parents, three sisters and one brother fled to neighbouring Nepal when Paul was just four-years-old. They lived in Nepal in a refugee camp for 20 years, and home was but tents.

### From Hindus to Christians

---

Even so Paul received his education there. In 2003 the whole family became Christian. Before that, annually, they had to visit the Hindu temple and offer sacrifices at great financial cost to the family. As the debt grew, the family found no peace.

Finally, Paul's younger brother Isaac, not at all well physically, heard the Christian Gospel and when he accepted it, his healing followed. The family became Christian and some persecution followed. But a Christian group formed in the camp.



### Transition to Tasmania

---

In 2007 the family became legal refugees, and in 2010 through the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration, they became part of that year's 10,000 refugee intake to Australia. The family was sent to Tasmania and settled in Hobart.

At first, Paul and his grandmother attended the Hope Church in North Hobart but being some distance from their home, the family began a home prayer group and numbers increased as Paul shared the Gospel with other Nepalese.

**Yet it was back in 2003** that Paul first felt called to Christian ministry, and the following year went over the border to attend a Bible College in North India - there were no border controls or visas required.

After a year at this college, he then studied at the South India Bible College, an Asian Mission Seminary, and after three years gained a B. Theol. Paul then returned to the refugee camp, and began an evangelization ministry. By 2008 the Christians had formed a church with Paul as Pastor. Sundays would see 90-100 gathered for worship.

### And on to Lenah Valley

---

In Hobart Paul and his family transferred to the Lenah Valley Baptist Church and in time the Nepalese were offered use of the building for their own church on Sunday afternoons. The Nepalese Fellowship now sees 60-70 folk every Sunday meeting three times a month in the afternoon and once a month the fellowship joins with the morning congregation.

Paul is their Pastor and carries out regular pastoral duties. In the community where they live, he teaches Hindus to drive and in doing so shares his Christian faith; conversions sometimes follow. The hindrance is that the Hindu living in Hobart generally sees Christianity as a white man's religion.

With a steady congregation meeting at the Lenah Valley Church there are no financial worries, and he receives a stipend from the Fellowship.

In 2012 Paul married Manisha whose father is a Christian Pastor in Nepal. On 18 May, 2020 Paul and Manisha became the proud parents of twins Aaron and Aiden!

*Please pray for Paul and Manisha as they adjust to being new parents. And especially for Paul as he spends time with his Nepalese compatriots, explains the gospel to them, and pastors Hobart's only Nepalese church.*

“

Children are a  
gift from the  
LORD;  
they are a  
reward from  
him.



PSALM 127:3 (NIRV)

---