

Tasmanian Baptists Strategic Plan 2021-23

Context

Over the past half a century or more, Tasmania has changed dramatically. In the 2016 Census, 38% of Tasmanians and 40% of Hobartians said they had no religion, the highest of any State or capital city in Australia. Across Tasmania, just under 50% identified as Christian and only 47.3% in Hobart.¹ For the first time since white settlement, Christians are a minority in Tasmania, and church attendance the lowest on record (convicts were required to attend church²).

We acknowledge Tasmania is a mission field, and that should change the way we think about church and do church.

Young people, who started leaving churches in the late 1960s have never returned. Today, younger generations are absent from our churches in increasing numbers. The loss of purpose, shared values and direction in the wider community has significant impact with severe consequences for our young people.

Jesus calls us to be salt and light³ for the good of the Tasmanian community. The best future for our state lies in God's response to the prayer Jesus taught, "your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."⁴ It is nothing more or less than the biblically infused vision of *shalom*. Here, people live in wholesome community where no one is forgotten or despised. Peace reigns, and God's good creation is both treasured and protected as a gift.

This is our call. We are agents of the Kingdom called to pray and work for shalom. God fills us with the Spirit so that our churches can be centres of care, havens of hope, places of peace and beacons of light for all Tasmanians.

For over a decade Tasmanian Baptists have actively focussed on the need to be missional and adapt to the changing community and its needs. Just as Jesus acknowledged you cannot "pour new wine into old wineskins,"⁵ we, too, are aware that the "newness" needed cannot be contained in old patterns of regulation or discipline. This is not a matter of rejecting the past but fulfilling it.⁶ We must maintain a respect for the "old garment" and the "old wine", but focus on passionately seeking what is both relevant and prophetic for our time, place and people. This will require discipline and imagination.

Just as God called Abraham to leave Ur and trust for an unknown future, we too move forward with only an inkling of what it all means. While we hope for quick adaptation and rapid change, we pray we align to God's timeframe which maybe different to what we currently envisage.

What follows is our best attempt to articulate what we sense is critical for us in the next phase of the journey for Tasmanian Baptists. It is a statement of trust and faith to assist us to walk together into a new future ever alert to the new things God is doing and the context in which we live.

¹ <https://home.id.com.au/demographic-resources/>

The 2016 Census: no religion 38.1% Tasmania, 40.3% Hobart. 29.9% Australia. Christian 49.7% Tasmania, 47.3% Hobart, 51.1% Australia.

² The Colonial Office believed the Church provided a necessary code for social order and control. Governors were required to ensure the observance of religion and good order in the colony through the practise of public religious worship. <https://www.hobarthistory.com.au/get-to-church/>

³ Matthew 5:13-16

⁴ Matthew 6:10

⁵ Matthew 9:17

⁶ Matthew 5:17

Values

Tasmanian Baptist churches value...

- a. **Grace:** by depending on God, forgiving others, living a life of repentance and seeking justice.
 - 2 Corinthians 12:9; Matthew 23:23
- b. **Transformation:** to love and live like Jesus.
 - Romans 12:2; Philippians 2:3-5
- c. **Our State identity:** by giving thanks for its beauty; our islands, towns and cities; praying for our flourishing.
 - Jeremiah 29:7; Matthew 6:10
- d. **Community globally and locally:** by building trust and relationships and acknowledging we are better together.
 - John 17:23, Philippians 2:1-4
- e. **Our heritage:** by recognising our history and by being agents of restoration for people and our environment.
 - Psalm 78:2-4
- f. **Our present moment:** by celebrating God and his abundant gifts, being generous and sharing the good news with others, and investing today in the leaders of tomorrow.
 - John 10:10, Acts 17:25, 28; Matthew 5:13-16; James 1:17.
- g. **Our freedom:** by recognising freedom of conscience and association for each other and our churches, and working to discern, share and disagree well with each other as we seek common understanding.
 - John 8:36; Galatians 5:1, 13; 1 Corinthians 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:17.

Mission: we exist to . . .

engage Tasmania and Tasmanians with the transforming love of God, empowering them to develop their own authentic ways of following Jesus.

Vision: we envisage a . . .

Tasmania infused with the salt and light of the kingdom of God.

Our contribution to seeing the vision realised is through facilitating and developing innovative, diverse, and transformative member churches and faith communities* living out the Gospel.

Tagline: Tasmanian Baptists:

Living the Way (alternatives: God's people on mission together, Living the Life, deployed for mission)

Key Strategies

1. Reengage

"Every Christian is either a missionary or an imposter." Charles H. Spurgeon

Our goal is for every Tasmanian Baptist and Tasmanian Baptist church to (re)engage with their missional calling

- We will encourage every disciple to live out their calling—the God-given intersection of their gift, passion and story.
 - We will work to reorient church consumers to become contributors to Jesus' mission
 - We aim to equip disciples to be loving missionaries and effective disciple makers where they live, work, learn and play
- We will encourage and resource member churches and faith communities to listen to their cultural context and engage their community in love and compassion.
 - We will encourage the revitalisation of existing congregations

- We will assist local congregations to be hospitable (attractive and inviting) for those who might be looking for a spiritual home
- We will advocate for and equip CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) people, women, and young people
 - We will raise up leaders from among them
- We will prioritise engagement in the areas of Foster Care and Arts
 - We will partner with Fostering Hope and Bapcare to encouraging churches and faith communities to make foster care and kinship care a priority
 - We will encourage churches and faith communities to use the Arts as a missional strategy

2. Reimagine

“When Christians work together in sincere worship and genuine community to accomplish a part of the mission of God, they are the church.” Brian Sanders

Our goal is to continually reimagine church as the intersection of our worship, community and mission lived out in innovative, diverse and transformative faith communities.

- We will value the stories of indigenous people
 - We will make space for these stories in Assemblies, Advance, Communications and meetings
- We will encourage our churches and faith communities to embrace and embody this understanding of church
 - We will make Jesus the centre of all we do and think (worship)
 - We will ensure our member churches are centres of love, acceptance and forgiveness (community)
 - We will call everyone to join God in God’s mission as it applies in their communities (mission)
- We will empower faith communities (generally groups of 5-20 Christ followers) who embody and declare the Gospel to a specific people, neighbourhood, or network of relationships.
 - We will work to see these groups become, and grow as, disciples of Jesus as they work to serve their specific mission focus consistently and creatively.
 - We will develop ways to include missional leadership into our governance structures
- We will encourage the development of faith communities (see below).
 - We will encourage the development of new ways to connect with those who are not drawn to traditional church

3. Realign

“All organisations are perfectly designed to get the results they are now getting. If we want different results, we must change the way we do things.” Tom Northup

Our goal is to realign the resources of Tasmanian Baptists to enable everyday missionaries to establish and sustain member churches and faith communities in their neighbourhoods and networks

- We will provide the legal and relational framework that empowers both member churches and faith communities.
 - We will support strong cluster relationships involving prayer, planning and mutual accountability

- Within our existing legal framework will work to foster and underpin diverse and transformative faith communities
- We will provide administrative support in the form of financial and insurance services and a property trust
- We will provide resources to empower servant leaders of faith communities.
 - To run training courses that equip and enable leaders (including young people, women and those with a LOTE)
 - Provide mentoring and coaching to leaders of faith communities and emerging leaders
 - To align the timing, location and focus of Assemblies and Musters with this plan
- We will provide communications and media backup.
 - Including webpage hosting and design, and media advice

* member church = a constituent church as outlined in the constitution, faith community = a recognised missional faith community not satisfying the criteria to be a constituent church

(this is a rolling 3-year plan that is reviewed and updated every year.)

Version 2b

Drafted by MLT, Staff and Council October – December 2020.

Updated by Council - March 20, 2021

Ratified by Assembly – May 8, 2021

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		We will encourage and resource member churches and faith communities to listen to their cultural context and engage their community in love and compassion.	We will encourage the revitalisation of existing congregations
			We will assist local congregations to be hospitable (attractive and inviting) for those who might be looking for a spiritual home
		We will advocate for and equip women and young people	We will raise up leaders from among them
		We will prioritise engagement in the areas of Foster Care and Arts	We will partner with Fostering Hope and Baptcare to encouraging churches and faith communities to make foster care and kinship care a priority
		We will encourage churches and faith communities to use the Arts as a missional strategy	
reimagine	Our goal is to continually reimagine church as the intersection of our worship, community and mission lived out in innovative, diverse and transformative faith communities	We will equally value the stories of indigenous and non-indigenous people	We will make space for these stories in Assemblies, Advance, Communications and meetings
			We will make Jesus the centre of all we do and think (worship)
		We will encourage our churches and faith communities to embrace and embody this understanding of church	We will ensure our member churches are centres of love, acceptance and forgiveness (community)
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realign	Our goal is to realign the resources of Tasmanian Baptists to enable everyday missionaries to establish and sustain faith communities in their neighbourhoods and networks	We will provide the legal and relational framework that empowers both member churches and faith communities	We will support strong cluster relationships involving prayer, planning and mutual accountability
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