

Faith Statement

Baptist Care Australia's faith statement sets out the reason for our work.

It articulates biblical principles that are relevant to the advocacy work we do at a national level, and to the community work of our member organisations.

The statement's development included consideration and inclusion of many of the principles that are characteristic of Baptist churches and organisations.

Baptist Care Australia acts to reflect God's love and justice by partnering with communities and individuals to empower hope filled, purposeful lives, while championing safe places for the marginalised and those at risk in society.

Rationale

Baptist Care Australia acts

When James says in the Christian Scripture "... I will show you my faith by my deeds" (James 2:18) he emphasises the importance of taking action to authenticate the core commitments and values of true faith.

Baptist Care Australia "acts" not in the sense of "activism", that is, thoughtless action, and not believing in action alone to change things. But action is required; action as a demonstration of our core commitments and values.

In the Christian Scripture we are summonsed to "... continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose" (Philippians 2:12-13). Our acts (our works) are not independent of God's acts. They are not presumptuous. We do not trust in or count on our acts alone to change things. We act in dependence on God who acts (works) in us and through us to fulfil God's good purposes.

When Baptist Care Australia "acts", we do so because we do not intend being merely theorists or spectators; we do not intend remaining passive. We value prayer, reflection, and imagination. But these are not enough. They must give rise to and be accompanied by "acts". To "act" in this context is an outworking of the strong call to live rightly and to display the power of the Gospel through our just treatment of others.

to reflect

We understand humans to be made in the image of God. At the heart of being human is our calling to image or reflect God. This is at the core of what it means to be "witnesses" to God and the story of Jesus: being people of integrity, truthful speech, Christ like character, and godly action, who reflect the true God to the world. To reflect in this context infers to reveal, to mirror, to make visible the invisible character of God; to act as a signpost to God and the story of Jesus.

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God's love and justice

In its acts, Baptist Care Australia particularly wants to reflect the love of God to the world. We want to make visible to others what the Christian Scriptures affirm in 1 John 4:11-12, "since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us."

In its acts, Baptist Care Australia also wants to reflect the justice of God to the world. God's justice is exercised in accordance with his unswerving commitment to the promises he has made to bless the world. These are covenantal promises, secured through the life and work of Jesus.

Biblical justice will at times entail addressing the causes of oppression including at times standing on behalf of the oppressed against the oppressor or the oppressive system when that system is clearly in breach of the principles of Biblical justice.

by partnering

"Partnering" is a way of honouring the "other". To truly partner is to not only be for the other (which may smack of patronage, and remain impersonal and distant), but also to be with the other (knowing, located, relational, alongside, intimate) and to the other (facing, attentive, communicating).

True partnerships are also an acknowledgement of our own limitations, of our need for interdependence, of complementary gifting and resourcing, of working strategically and not triumphalistically. True partnerships foster humility and gratitude for the other.

with communities

Human identity is necessarily formed within communities, initially families and then various other community contexts. Baptist Care Australia does not seek to remove people from communities, or somehow replace communities as the primary context in which people live. Rather, Baptist Care Australia partners with communities so they will be relational places in which people can flourish.

Where appropriate Baptist Care Australia also partners with local Baptist (and other) churches, and with other organisations with a shared commitment to help people flourish.

and individuals

Human individuality is nevertheless unique and to be celebrated. It does not collapse into communal sameness. Baptist Care Australia recognises the worth of each individual human and seeks to partner with individuals in ways which respect and value them, helping them to live purposefully within community contexts.

to empower

We might say empowering others is the true purpose of power. Power is not to be held or accumulated. It is to be given away. God's use of power is for the empowering of others who are powerless; enriching, promoting and freeing the other from powerlessness, from slavery. Philippians 2 points us towards living for the sake of the other, counting others better than ourselves – this is Christ-like human living. To "empower" others is an outworking of beauty.

The Christian Scriptures is threaded throughout with the call to "Vindicate the weak and fatherless; Do justice to the afflicted and destitute. Rescue the weak and needy; Deliver them out of the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3-4). A distinctive of Christian justice, in keeping with God's own covenantal faithfulness, is to take costly action to deliver the oppressed from the oppressor and thus truly empower them, not just offer superficial charity.

hope-filled, purposeful lives

The term "hope-filled" is more fitting than simply "hopeful", because to be hope-filled affirms hope is strong and resilient and it fuels perseverance, work, worship, lament, prayer, and the whole social, economic, political and religious dimensions of human existence.

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The term hope-filled, along with faith-filled and love-filled are good words for describing the practices of those who walk in God's ways. Hope-filled becomes a description of character. The world is full of stories of cheap hope (consumer-like, quick fix, without cost, easily gained and lost). Just as Bonhoeffer wrote of cheap and costly grace, so we can speak of cheap hope and costly hope and also of cheap love and costly love.

When we speak of "purposeful", we understand purpose from the viewpoints of human wellbeing, spirituality generally, and Christian spirituality specifically in terms of "the way". John 14:6. Christ shows us the way. We then need to walk it, together with God and others, step by step in a direction as God directs. Human life which is not purposeful is finally aimless, lost and despairing.

while championing

Champions are those who lead the way; who embody the gospel and practice truth, goodness and beauty in a world longing for new models and exemplars of such. Baptist Care Australia can be that. To champion safe places for the marginalized and those at risk is a wonderful purpose to work faithfully and to strategise for intergenerational service and influence.

safe places

The Scriptures talk of refuge and being free from violence and oppression. We are seeking help for the foreigner to find refuge, and for the vulnerable such as women and children to find freedom from violence, and for the homeless to have their own permanent space. We also seek help for the mentally ill to be free from discrimination and for acceptance for the disabled.

The call to 'help' people springs from biblical justice, entailing not only delivering people from the oppressor or cause of oppression but also ensuring they are delivered to a better place – that is, to 'safe places.'

At the centre of our life is the conviction that God has acted for the good of the world in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and that we are called to follow in the way of Jesus in building communities of grace, love, generosity, justice, and compassion.

for the marginalized and those at risk in society

The marginalised and those at risk are people who are devalued or excluded from the dominant cultural narratives and power structures of a society. In the consumerist, individualistic narratives of modern 21st century societies, these include groups such as the poor, those with disabilities, and the aged. Baptist Care Australia wants to champion safe places for such people as a focus of its commitment to love and justice.

God has a heart for the poor, the widowed and the orphan, and we resolve to embody and reflect his heart to the world.