

Five Major Steps in Community Development.

1. Preparation

- Thinking through the biblical and faith-based reasons for community ministries.
- Building a team of people to explore options for community ministry.

2. Research

- Gathering statistical and narrative information about the community, its strengths, interests, and concerns.

3. Vision and Strategy

- Painting a clear picture of the preferred future, and describing the activities, skills, and resources needed to get to that point.

4. Implementation

- Enacting the strategy, using the most appropriate guidelines and management approach needed for this program.

5. Evaluation

- Keeping a track of whom and what contributes to the program, the activities within the program, and the consequences of the program.

What is offered through Community Ministries?

Baptcare supports congregational community ministries through four related strategies.

1. Providing information about community ministries, including biblical and practical overviews, and resources to do community development.

2. Consulting with congregations and helping them work through the major steps of community development mentioned earlier to help establish a ministry.

3. Where appropriate, providing ongoing support to some community ministries through a partnership.

4. Providing leadership to the broader Christian community through seminars, conferences, networking, and other activities that build capacity for community ministries.

Baptcare helps congregations to:

- Prepare for community ministry through biblical studies and prayer support;
- Form a team of people to listen for local strengths and needs in the community and the congregation;
- Develop networks to participate in local programs, or devise new programs and;
- Help congregations to reflect on their learning and evaluate their contribution to local life.

By working together, congregations and local communities can grow to realise and express their ability to care for one another, and for our wider world.

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Community Ministries





What are 'Community Ministries'?

Community ministries are ways that faith-based groups work with and contribute to their local communities.

Community ministries can be done by individuals, groups, organisations or congregations. The ministries may take the form of:

- Relationships
- Activities
- Programs

Community ministries work to connect people in congregations with their neighbours in local communities.

Some examples of community ministries in Victoria include:

- Volunteers working in Community Information Centres, Health Centres, or Neighbourhood houses.
- Evening meals served each week among the public;
- Housing programs for students who can't stay in their own family home;
- Playgroups and parent support groups;
- Homework tuition groups;
- Conversational English classes for people from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- Counselling centres.

Why engage in Community Ministries?

There are many broad reasons for becoming involved in community ministries. These include:

- To show interest in and respect for other people.
- To respect ourselves by using our abilities to mutual benefit.

What are Baptcare's 'Community Ministries'?

Baptcare's Community Ministries program shares the organisation's wider aim of "bringing care to life".

The Community Ministries program works towards strengthening the links between congregations of the Baptist Union and their local communities.

In this way Baptcare is helping congregations to BE good news in their local communities.

- To build up a community's ability to respond to its own needs by drawing on the strengths it already has.

For people in congregations, community ministries work towards realising a biblical agenda for the quality of relationships among people. Three examples help illustrate this agenda.

1. In the Bible the book of Isaiah outlines a longing for wellbeing in society. Isaiah 65:20-23 talks about a vision that many still share: of a society where no children should suffer, that the aged are treated with dignity and that workers benefit from their labour. Though the context differs, these challenges still confront society. Children deserve quality of life, learning, and wellbeing. As our aged population grows, so too does our responsibility to care for them. People in the workforce face new pressures, and these affect wider family and community life.

2. In the Gospels we see Jesus giving specific attention to people who were 'at the edge' – of society, themselves, or both. The spirit of living with care for one's neighbours shows in the parable of the Good Samaritan, in Jesus' willingness to dine with the cross-section of society, and in his compassion for vulnerable people.

3. Later still in the Bible we read an emphatic call to practical faith in the Letter of James. He calls for a consistent link between faith and actions: it is not enough to wish someone else is warm and well fed when there is the capacity to help this happen.

This work is not an attempt gain significance or to exercise power and control over other people. Rather, by working together with congregations and local communities, Baptcare aims to bring this biblical vision for wellbeing closer to reality.

'Community development' – the road to community ministries.

Community development is both a method of community work and a set of values that Baptcare uses to establish and maintain ministries in local communities.

Community development work identifies some aspects of a community's 'preferred future'.

Baptcare works to identify and build the capacity of individuals and groups of people to realise this vision.

Baptcare operates on the basis that communities have many untapped abilities and resources that can be coordinated to their own benefit. Where necessary, Baptcare may also seek outside skills and resources, such as funding and expertise.

The values of community development are demonstrated through the programs we develop. These include commitments to:

- social justice
- participation
- equality
- co-operation
- mutual learning

When these values are upheld, a method of working with people unfolds that encourages their right to decide and contribute to their community's wellbeing and development.