

JOURNEYING TOGETHER IN MISSION

BAPTIST CHURCHES SA & BAPTIST CARE SA

Recognising that Baptist Care is an expression and outworking of the mission and ministry of Baptist Churches of SA, it is also appropriate to speak of the relationship between the two organisations due to the unique and complementary structure, personnel and role of Baptist Care SA. Therefore we will promote this framework for good work between Baptist Care SA and the Baptist churches in SA under best practice principles.

The key underlining principles of this framework can be expounded by the following:

Journey together-

As representatives of Baptist Care and the Baptist Churches we commit to work together in the Spirit of Christ we share. We believe Baptist Care and Baptist Churches have unique and complementary roles in supporting healthy, thriving communities.¹ We will promote the development of an effective continuum of care between acute care services and faith communities.

We will be prayerful with and for one another, and be open to the voice of the Spirit. We will work to understand one another by suspending judgement, assuming the best of one another, respecting confidences, and being open to innovative possibilities.

Our “*journey together*” envisions and establishes this as an ongoing process and provides a sense of hope for constant progress.

We are committed to journey together as two organisations, but also to *journey together in mission... with the most vulnerable in our communities*. We therefore commit to this journey and the often necessarily slow process needed for lasting, effective and empowering community health and development.

By journeying together in this way we will set an example for our services, our churches and our communities.

In Mission-

In our frameworks and strategies we will demonstrate an understanding that we are not bringing Christ to poor and vulnerable communities, but that God has always been active in and sustains these communities.² We will promote the role of people who know and recognise Christ’s redemptive work as one of discovering, appreciating and celebrating what God has been doing in our communities as He reconciles all things to Himself, and joining God in that work.

We will promote an empowerment model; encouraging strategies and frameworks that help vulnerable people in our communities to discover, celebrate and further develop God’s good gifts in them.

Serve to transform lives-

Our vision, framework and strategies will promote working in a manner reflective of the servant attitude demonstrated by Jesus³ (i.e. of humility and of setting aside privilege).⁴ We will, therefore, promote an attitude of ‘service’ that minimises power imbalances, and seeks to place vulnerable and disadvantaged person/s within our communities at the centre.⁵

¹ The use of the plural (communities rather than community) throughout this document reflects the uniqueness of groups of people throughout our state and our need for our work to reflect this uniqueness in its innovation and approach.

² Colossians 1:16-17

³ John 13:12-17; Matthew 20:28 / Mark 10:45

⁴ Philippians 2:5-8

⁵ eg. “at the head of the table” Luke 14:7-11

We will promote self-awareness of our motivations for community work. We will avoid strategies that demonstrate any form of resource, spiritual, knowledge, labour or managerial paternalism (i.e. never doing or providing for a person what they could be rightly expected to do or provide for themselves).

We will work WITH people-

Consistent with the perspective that all people are image-bearers of God and blessed with gifts in line with that image,⁶ we will put an emphasis on discovering what the most vulnerable in our communities already have, instead of immediately providing external resources and solutions.

In all that we create and construct, we will promote an understanding that the provision of external resources can, by their volume or timing, undermine the willingness or ability of the individual or community to grow in stewardship of their own gifts and resources.

While we will not deny or minimise the needs experienced by those marginalised in our communities, we will seek to promote recognition that the best means of overcoming the foundational causes of these needs is when the individuals are empowered and equipped to mobilise their *own* gifts, experiences and assets. By starting with the gifts and capacities of the person, we can change the dynamics that have both disempowered and marginalised the individual and created a sense of superiority in ourselves.

We will encourage practices that empower vulnerable people to best steward the gifts they have. We will affirm the dignity of people previously marginalised by our communities. We will promote their capacity to contribute to the betterment of our communities. By inviting these individuals to be contributors, we can support the process of overcoming shame and minimise demotivation. As we begin to witness people using their gifts and abilities, we are also transformed as we develop our capacity to see them as God does, helping us overcome any residual sense of superiority.

We will use language in reference to individuals that is empowering and not demeaning such as objectifying or labelling that would isolate or disenfranchise individuals or groups.

We will actively seek to promote the health of both individuals and communities by encouraging care practices that foster interdependence, mutuality, compassion and healing. This approach does not wait for a problem to occur in order to respond with Christ's love, but creates communities who are empowered to promote health, prevent suffering, and find ways to alleviate distress when issues arise.

The most vulnerable

We will promote the recognition that the work of God is always swayed towards those most disempowered, voiceless and marginalised by society.⁷ This is demonstrated in the central concepts of *shalom* and reconciliation in the Hebrew and Christian Scriptures, which express God's desire for a society marked by justice for all, universal well-being and right relationships (harmony & wholeness) between Creator, created and creation.⁸ Never is this clearer than in the life of Jesus.⁹ Jesus himself was vilified for spending time among those least appreciated and most damaged by their society (the blind, the leper, the sick, outcast and the poor) and it is therefore not surprising that since the first recorded instances of the Christian Church¹⁰, Christians have followed their King's footsteps into places of brokenness. We will promote the continuing of this tradition of preferential work among those more vulnerable to disadvantage in our communities.

Including amendments passed at:
Baptist Care Board 29/3/16
Assembly Board 4/4/16

⁶ Baptist Value 9. "... We affirm the gift of the Holy Spirit to all God's people, male and female, young and old, significant and seemingly insignificant, and so we recognise that all members of the church have a role to play using their God-given gifts, skills and talents for the good of the church and the community in the service of God's mission."

⁷ Deuteronomy 15:11; Psalm 34:18

⁸ 1 Chronicles 22: 1-11; Isaiah 54: 10-13; Isaiah 66: 10-13; Ephesians 2:13-22; Isaiah 40; Jeremiah 29:7

⁹ Matt 5:42, Luke 4:17-21

¹⁰ Acts 4:34