



Dear Friends,

There's a lot happening this week!

It's Refugee Week (Sunday 14th to Saturday 20th June) and it was wonderful to attend the *Canberra Refugee Support Geoff McPherson Education Awards* in Cook on Tuesday. The

theme of Refugee Week this year is 'a million stories' and it was amazing to hear each of the brief stories that was read for each – very deserving – award recipient! I'll be saying more about that on Sunday!

Last Saturday was also the Open Baptists Conference 2026, which we had moved online a few months ago, concerned about the impact of the fuel crisis.

Being online had obvious downsides – our time was very truncated, and it was frustrating to see someone in a breakout room and not be able to go over and chat!

But it was wonderful to have 80-100 people together – even with the limitations of being online – to hear Tanya Riches, *Director of the Master of Transformational Development, Eastern College Australia*, speak from her wealth of experience in worship, development, Pentecostal theology and Indigenous engagement, to spend time in breakout rooms talking together about how we continue to share God's love in our churches, and to celebrate the admission of two more churches – Box Hill Baptist Church and the Community of Transfiguration - into the Open Baptists Association.

We are now an association of nine churches and we are giving thanks to God for that – as well as for reaching the wonderful stage of having accredited our first three ministers, Jennie Clarke (West Ryde Community Church - who preached for us in January) Benedikt Exner (formerly at St Ives Baptist - who preached for us a couple of years ago) and Amy Watkins (Northside Baptist Church).

I am very grateful to those who helped put this conference together – most especially Nathan Nettleton whose technical expertise with online gatherings was amazing!

And as I heard stories from Auckland and Newcastle and Melbourne and Sydney – and here in Canberra too of course – I was so thankful for all that has been achieved over the past three years!

Thank you to all of you for your support of the Open Baptists and your prayers.

Grace and peace,

Belinda