



## **Our Story Our Call: Laingholm Baptist Church 2023-2024**

### **SETTING THE SCENE**

We at Laingholm Baptist Church have gone through a period of re-envisioning during the time prior to the departure of a pastor of 30 years and leading up to the arrival of our transitional pastor. We (Saroná Manase, Kieran Madden and Catherine Alpe) were invited to lead a process that would help bring the church together, ready for the next phase. While our identity is firmly in Christ, What is it that makes our church unique? Who are we as a church? What are we called to do?

### **WHAT WE DID**

It was really important to bring the church with us for the process—so they felt not just heard but also a sense of participation and ownership in it. Before our work, Lorraine Glanville shared stories of our church history on a Sunday which gave a good sense of our wonderful inheritance. There was clear vision and generous investment of our founders and subsequent members, of prayer, time and resources.

So, along with James Widgery, we decided to hold two workshops during church services in October and November last year.

1. Who are we? For the first one, we asked the congregation for a time where they felt like they belonged or were proud to be part of Laingholm Baptist. They shared with one another in small groups and then one by one in a big circle.
2. What are we called to do? For the second one, we shared what we heard at the first workshop. We also heard stories and research from James's community survey. We prayed together in small groups and shared with the rest of the church what emerged.

The process of asking the church what makes us feel connected and engaged, and listening to the responses from church and community has helped to clarify the story of who we are and what we are called to. The collated stories from the October workshop were presented to

a Sunday service in November so that together we could reflect on the themes, pray and discern the mind of Christ for what's next.

## WHAT WE FOUND

Some insight into what could be next has emerged in our reflection and prayer as a church seeking to discern the mind of Christ.

## WHO ARE WE? (OUR STORY)

**How we see ourselves emerges in the stories.**

- ***We have visibility through the new buildings and the services we offer (Op Shop, Kauri Cone ice creams, Friday Club children's ministry...).*** In the workshops, many people talked about coming to LBC because it was local. There were stories from people whose children were ministered to in the children's and youth work. Community people knew about Kauri Cones and the Op Shop.
- ***We are invitational and open to creating spaces for healing and restoration.*** There were many stories from people who connected through invitations to church activities or to join ministry teams such as the worship team. Others talked about times when someone at church listened and prayed, addressing issues, bringing healing or restoring relationships.
- ***We see ourselves as a family and hospitable as we welcome others and connect over food and in small groups.*** We had stories from people who felt warmly attached to people that they named (pastoral staff in particular) who had blessed them in some way. Some people shared that they felt most connected in small groups.
- ***We appreciate authenticity in relationships and worship, and being open to the Holy Spirit's work.*** People talked about feeling free to be themselves and that it was OK to be vulnerable. Some shared appreciation that worshipping together felt authentic and real.
- ***We invest in ministry and outreach to children.*** Some described the sense of wanting to raise their children in church and others talked of the long-lasting impact for their children or themselves, so that they returned or continued to be involved.
- ***We are busy and hard-working!*** Many different activities were mentioned as ministry opportunities and connection points, from early days of children's work and community classes to current involvement in Alpha, the worship team, small groups, children and youth work.

These are summarised in the **Five Key Themes** we fed back to the church in the November workshop. (see [Powerpoint presentation](#) and Notes pages for details)

- **Community and family connection**
- **Opportunities to serve**
- **Invitations and welcome community**

- **Nurture and emphasise children's ministry**
- **Small groups and community ministry**

## **WHAT HAPPENED NEXT**

The November workshop invited the church to reflect on the Key Themes. Also presented in this workshop were some key messages from the 2023 community survey as follows (James Widgery):

- **What the community thinks we should do?** People in the community of Laingholm recognise:
  - a need for LBC to communicate more about what we do
  - for them to have greater access to our space and connection with us
  - for us to continue with the activities and services that we offer.

People at the workshop were then invited to gather in small groups to share their thoughts and to pray for discernment about what the Holy Spirit wants us to know.

Since then, Sarona, Catherine and Kieran have reflected on the feedback from this time of small group sharing and prayer and what it could mean.

The next section presents our findings about the key values that emerged, and where God seems to be focusing our attention for resourcing and further development. We are passing these stories and themes through to consider as the church begins the calling process for our next Pastor.

## **WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO DO? (OUR CALL)**

Some potential areas of focus for the future:

### **Key Values that underpin Who We Are**

- **Volunteerism and Community Service:** A commitment to serve the community, reaching out to those in need.
- **Healing and Restoration:** Providing a space where people can find healing and restoration from past experiences.
- **Acceptance and Diversity:** Embracing different types of people, acknowledging challenges, and committing to being a welcoming place.
- **Connection and Prayer:** Addressing loneliness, emphasizing better connections within the community and with God.
- **Worship:** Focusing on humility, openness to the Holy Spirit, and participation across generations.

- **Authenticity and Vulnerability:** Promoting real, authentic, and vulnerable relationships within the church.

### Hopes for the Future:

- **Building Relationships:** Emphasizing the importance of deep connections, doing life together, and helping each other.
- **Community Outreach:** Proactively reaching out to the community, volunteering, and meeting people where they are.
- **Authenticity on Sundays/at church:** Creating an invitational space and addressing feedback from those who haven't felt they belonged.

### Potential areas of focus for the future:

- **Identifying and Nurturing Gifts:** Recognizing and nurturing the unique gifts and strengths within the community.
- **Visibility and Communication:** Exploring ways to increase visibility in the community and communicate effectively.
- **Leadership and Discipleship:** Resourcing the church for discernment, emphasizing discipleship, worship, and healthy resource management.

### Leadership's Role:

- **Transformational Community:** Leading the community to be authentic, connected, and a family across generations.
- **Investment in the Next Generation:** Recognizing the importance of investing in and nurturing the next generation.
- **Healing and Restoration:** Facilitating opportunities for internal and external healing, supporting difficult conversations, and encouraging restoration.
- **Discipleship:** Prioritizing belonging, growth, maturity, and opportunities to serve.
- **Healthy Resources:** Stewardship, finances, and administration effectively to support the church's strategies and activities