



The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of Baptist Heritage Queensland

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End of an Era

By Eric Kopittke, Chair, BHQ

In the early 1980s, the Baptist Union of Queensland (now Queensland Baptists) established the Archives under the direction of Rev Dr David Parker as honorary Archivist. There was much work to be done with documents to be sorted, catalogued and stored, photographs identified, and storage organised. Not infrequently important material needed to be 'found' after having been stored in some obscure place. In later years as emails and electronic documents progressively replaced paper records, David developed protocols for dealing with collecting and preserving such material. Over the years he has encouraged churches to preserve their important records safely, and has provided guidelines to that end.

In 1984 the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (now Baptist Heritage Queensland) was established to promote interest in the heritage of Baptists in Queensland. David took a major role in the Historical Society, researching, authoring and editing a large number of books and articles, and editing *Forum*. Over the years, the Society has also assisted with the activities of the Archives. One such memorable project has been the scanning and digitising Baptist Year Books, the *Queensland Baptist*, and the *Australian Baptist*, thus making valuable historical information available and searchable.

A number of people have assisted David at the Archives over the years. Bill Hughes and Anne Cameron have been part of the volunteer team at the Archives since 2008 and 2010 respectively. The NSW Baptist Archives introduced both of them to us upon their retirement and return to Queensland. Along with David, they settled down to working on Wednesday mornings each week, with occasional extra visits and time at home answering urgent matters. This has been a voluntary contribution by all.

Bill has contributed enormously by digitising our entire photographic collection (1600+ items and counting), developing a Bio-Database of deceased Queensland Baptists and researching and writing a large number of projects on Queensland Baptist people and movements. Anne's contribution, as a former senior employee of the Baptist Union of NSW, has been equally important in many research projects, answering queries, updating our Historical Record, managing the binding of annual minutes and such like.

From December 2019, David Parker has indicated that he will no longer be available to fill the position of Archivist but is willing to assist as able and to help orient his successor. Bill Hughes has indicated that he will conclude his activities at the Archives from December 2019, although perhaps available for special projects on an ad hoc basis. Anne Cameron plans to continue, health and circumstances permitting.

So with December 2019 marking the end of an era, we take the opportunity to thank sincerely David, Bill and Anne for the wonderful work that they have done over the years!

***All the Way* biographical series**

This edition of *Forum* has another of the occasional series *All the Way* featuring life stories of Queensland Baptists. This time the story is from David Parker and is titled *Faith seeking Understanding* and it coincides with the Jubilee of his ordination. See page 3 for this interesting story.

BHQ Meetings 2020: Feb 22, June 13, Nov 7 (AGM) 2pm @The Baptist Archives

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Baptist Heritage Queensland

Annual Report 2 Nov 2019

At the AGM in October 2018 the following appointments were made: Eric KOPittke (President), Bill Hughes (Secretary), Hope Colegrove (Treasurer) and Rosemary Kopittke (Publications Officer).

BHQ's finances remain in a healthy position. Further details are contained in the Treasurer's report.

Further work on BHQ's "Plaques Project" is continuing although progress has been slow. To date historical plaques have been installed on the site of the United Evangelical Church, the Windsor Road Baptist Church, the City Tabernacle Baptist Church and the Toowong Baptist Church. Some progress has been made on installing a plaque on the former Petrie Terrace church building. Little progress has been made on plans to install a plaque on the North East Baptist Church at Nundah. We have been waiting for some time for the church to advise their agreement to the wording suggested for use on the plaque.

BHQ used to maintain a presence at the Annual Conventions through manning a display table of literature and photographs, but the last two years BHQ publications have been on display at the Annual Assembly and a small number of sales have been achieved.

The Archives page in the *Queensland Baptist* (published six times each year) was expanded during the current year and now covers two full pages of interesting information of an historical nature. The burden for writing this report largely falls on the Archivist, Dr Parker.

The BHQ publication *Queensland Baptist Forum* has again been produced on a quarterly basis this year. The *Forum* goes to those on our membership list and others. It contains a variety of interesting articles, mainly on historical subjects, but also covers other matters such as Baptist principles. Digital copies of *Forum* are available in the Archives. Again, much of the work for producing this report four times a year is undertaken by Dr Parker.

During the year we were given the silver salver presented to Pastor William Moore by the Petrie Terrace Baptist Church in February 1886 on the occasion of his retirement after sixteen years as the church's pastor. We had the salver valued for security and insurance purposes.

Bill Hughes, Secretary

Some Notes from the Archives Report

Visitor: We were privileged to have a visit from Rev Emma Walsh, formerly librarian at the Angus Library, Regents Park College, Oxford, who made a few good suggestions about our operations.

Archives Activity: There has been a steady stream of enquiries during the year but few accessions, apart from the usual transfer of Baptist Union documents from the previous period. Less use of paper records means that this situation will continue, placing much more emphasis on the archiving of digital records – problematic for most churches. Some digital transfers from QB departments have occurred but much more needs to be done, and our own internal systems need to be upgraded.

We have been pro-active in seeking **digital records**. One welcome transfer was a complete batch of documents relating to the process of registering pastors; another collection came from someone's home computer of documents relating to the important QB Quinquennial Review 2003-2005 (this was a major review which introduced changes to the pastor recognition procedure). A backlog of Malyon College files (paper and digital) has also just been received; they have also sent us hundreds of photographs!

Digitisation Projects: We currently have the most important BUQ records for the first 60+ years and the last 30 years in digital form (plus all available QB magazines and Yearbooks), with work continuing as time permits.

Regular projects have continued such as tidying up records and updating data of various kinds. This includes the Bio-database of deceased persons which now has in excess of 2000 entries. Bill Hughes has also virtually completed the digitisation of the existing photographic collection, with over 1600 items. A step by step guide to the project has also been prepared.

Rev Rod Bullpitt prepared a master **database of Baptist ministers** (1328 in all) and their churches using the information published in the Ministers' lists in the BUQ Yearbooks going back to the origin of that publication, 1907. A basic database of 69 19th century ministers and their 28 churches has also been prepared giving full coverage from the beginning (of course, dependant on the accuracy and completeness of the original sources!)

Computers: This has been the worst year on record for our computers, an essential part of the work. Mid-year the QB system was changed from the local server to a cloud-based system. We have found that the promised advantages of this system have been offset by operational and technical difficulties and have concluded that it is a system that does not fit easily with the particular requirements of the Archives. There have also been numerous problems with the actual computers and copier/printer, hampering our activities virtually every week for several months, but we are now assured the problems have at last been rectified.

All the Way: 'Faith seeking Understanding'

By David Parker on the Jubilee of his Ordination

This is a further instalment in our occasional series where people tell their personal, family, and ministry experiences, highlighting aspects of spiritual and ministry growth for the interest of our readers and to be stored in the Archives for future reference.

This episode features Rev Dr David Parker who has been part of Baptist Heritage Queensland for many years. He has also been involved in the Baptist Church Archives but will be concluding his leadership there at the end of 2019.



A current view of Scots Church, Sydney where David Parker was ordained 50 years ago

Introduction

I was ordained just over 50 years ago—24 Sept 1969! This is the most important factor in my spiritual life and ministry, so it seems like a good time to respond to suggestions that have been made that I should contribute to our BHQ series *All the Way*. This project is an opportunity for retired and senior ministerial and lay people of Baptists in Queensland to reflect on their journey—where they have come from, who has influenced them and what they have observed as they have followed their Master 'all the way'!

Home and family

I was born in 1941 and brought up in the Granite Belt on my parents' apple orchard a few kilometres north of Stanthorpe. My father, who had come from England at the age of 16 under the 'Dreadnought Scheme' for young English lads, had no church background. We believe he had been converted under the ministry of the 'rugged' itinerant evangelist John Sloan (this was a characteristic Dad respected in a spiritual leader). My mother came from Woodford, Queensland and was one of the Chalmers family, stalwarts of the Baptist church there. A few weeks after I was born, Dad was called up to serve in the Army with the 25th Battalion and ended up fighting in the decisive Battle of Milne Bay, returning home when I was just over two years old.

I have many vivid memories of my childhood, including bouts of serious illness. I was schooled locally and attended the nearby church, which was Presbyterian in name but had a fine history of interdenominational sympathy. I made a response in a children's meeting conducted by the Presbyterian evangelist, Rev Harold Whitney. In my later years of primary school I became a

Sunday School teacher. When a Baptist church was established in the district in the 1950s, we supported it as much as we could.

I did well at primary school and then attended nearby Warwick High School where I was a straight A student up to Junior level. I was in Warwick only for the school week so did not get involved in any church activity there, but I was active in the Crusaders meeting held during school hours. The leader was Colin Denner from nearby Kingswood Camp who made his mark on me and other students. There was a mini-revival during my second year which affected me.

There was no thought of my ever going on to Senior (Matriculation) so I left home not long after my 17th birthday for Brisbane. Having been keenly interested in the hobby of radio for some time, I joined the Postmaster General's Department (PMG) as a Technician-in-Training. The course took five years which I completed with ease, taking out some prizes along the way. After the first year, we were assigned to a workplace—for me located adjacent to the GPO in Queen Street. This made it easy for me to attend evening classes at the old Trocadero, where the Queensland Art Gallery now stands, through which I gained my Senior with quite good results. My aim was to matriculate so that I could study electrical engineering and transfer to the engineering side of the PMG, being encouraged in this by my superiors.

In Brisbane I found accommodation near the Newmarket-Grange Baptist Church (later just Grange) and soon became deeply involved with its life—including the services, youth group, Christian Endeavour (CE) and the Sunday School (superintendent of the Junior department). I was eventually appointed a deacon (perhaps a 'junior deacon'). All-age Sunday School was introduced during this time which involved lots of planning and training. I scarcely knew the minister in office when I started there (he was at retirement age and only part-time). But Rev Lance Flatters became pastor in mid-1960, and I was greatly encouraged by him, especially in my thoughts about going to college. I began this track by studying New Testament Greek at the Queensland Bible Institute (now Brisbane School of Theology) on Saturday mornings.

Then there was Baptist Youth Fellowship with its regular city-wide rallies and its annual city-country Youth Exchange programs. The Billy Graham Crusade was held in Brisbane in my first year. I also became involved with denominational matters through one of my (senior) workmates, who was active in the Baptist Union Evangelism Department and in the establishment of a radio studio in Baptist House, 345 Ann Street. I started preaching, first at the Grange Church and then



At Murwillumbah Baptist Church

occasionally in other churches, thanks to a roster which supplied preachers for churches in need.

This was a busy period in my life but there was one other very important layer as well! Through my work with the City and Valley CE Union, of which I was secretary for some time, I mixed regularly with other CE groups, one of which was Enoggera Methodist. Bill and Ethel McVie and their daughter Joyce were all involved there, and in the City and Valley work as well. Soon a very good friendship started with Joyce. She was my own age (almost to the day) and was an infants' teacher, studying university subjects at night, and teaching Sunday School, singing in the choir and everything else at her own church. She too had a sensed a call to full-time Christian service. The friendship blossomed and we were married on 8 February 1964, just after I had completed my PMG training.

Joyce had also been aware of the issue of baptism, and after much soul searching was baptised and joined the Grange Church before our marriage. This was a tough matter for the family because her mother's people were very loyal Methodists; however, her father had been involved with Enoggera Baptist church in his youth and had been baptised, which made it easier. The whole process was made harder because we were talking of overseas missionary service—the prospect of their only child going far away was difficult, but it was not long before we were blessed with their full support.

College and NSW sojourn

In our call to overseas missionary work, we were inspired, as many were at the time, by 'Operation Auca' and the deaths of the five US missionaries to the Huaorani people in Ecuador; we had their song, 'We rest on thee', at our wedding. I was especially interested in radio missions. We selected the NSW Baptist College in Eastwood (now Morling College, Macquarie Park), Sydney for our training. Here we would both be able to study together in the Bible College section. It was denominational and the courses overlapped with the regular pastoral training which meant the level was high and our options for the future would be kept open. An added bonus we discovered was the presence of several international students.

By the time we arrived in February 1964, the college was in turmoil over the future of its principal, Rev Dr E Roberts-Thomson, who had interviewed us earlier on. He

was soon forced to resign and interim administration arrangements were put in place. At least this meant we had a chance hear the famous previous principal, Rev G H Morling who filled in briefly to teach theology. Being inter-staters and not in the pastoral course, we were not involved in a lot of the issues. Living off-campus (no married accommodation on-site) also separated us from the turmoil, so we got on with our studies. However, we were rather bewildered by the antics of some of the men students! There were also some big egos (not just amongst students!) which seemed to us at times to be completely untamed.

We took the two-year course. Joyce completed this well and returned to teaching, gaining a position at a school for disabled children (many suffering from the effects of thalidomide) which was an eye-opener and proved to be the introduction to a different teaching career for her. I had continued to pursue the radio calling by taking up engineering studies part-time, obtaining wireless licences and gaining experience with radio ministries in Sydney (Christian Broadcasting Association and the Baptist Union). But the doors to this ministry did not open as expected (and neither did other missionary interests later on). Moreover, by then, I had begun to see the value of serious theological study and its importance for my development. So after the initial two diploma years, I applied to the Baptist Union of NSW for acceptance into the pastoral course. I saw this as the next step, but did not necessarily see local church pastorates as a long-term ministry for me.

During my course, I was given three very different kinds of churches to pastor which proved to be happy and educational—Warrimoo in the Lower Blue Mountains, the small but historic church of Dundas in north western Sydney not far from some mega-churches of the day, and Leichhardt in the inner city which had a dual Australian-Italian ministry at the time. I worked with an Italian couple—he had trained in Italy and she at the famous Rüsçhlikon Seminary in Switzerland. These pastorates, though only a year each, gave me lots of varied experiences and some lasting friendships. I also had a stint at military hospital chaplaincy.

Before this, in our first two years, we had linked up with Ryde Memorial church, which gave us a wonderful introduction to the workings of a large, modern church. Its youth department was a great blessing to us with friendships and support that lasted for years. One of the great benefits was the use of their manse later on, which meant an end to those wretched flats we had to rent at first.



At Warrimoo Baptist Church

Meanwhile the college course was solid and comprehensive in biblical and theological areas, but for the 'swinging 60s' it was very weak in preparing us for contemporary issues. That defect was alleviated to some extent by extra-curricular lectures and the involvement of some of the students in the counter-culture Christian ministries that flourished at the time. Nevertheless, I am grateful to the college experience for opening our eyes to theological matters and their importance.

The best and most helpful lecturer by far was ex-Queenslander, Dr John A Thompson, who was an outstanding teacher in Old Testament, an exemplary academic and a spiritual giant (as was his wife Marion). It was a pity that the college turmoil meant that he did not stay long! The other teachers in my time, both staff and honorary, were faithful and devoted but the syllabus, context and their background did not allow for the college to be the moulding intellectual and spiritual force that it might have been.

Since I had my Greek already, I was able to take some advanced courses and also Hebrew in my first years. Also having already some credits from the NSW Bible College course and yet needing to spend the prescribed period before ordination, I had plenty of time to take on extra subjects which meant I completed my LTh and DipRE and did some independent studies.

I took an interest in degree studies and amongst the limited options open to me, decided on the University of London BD degree—a two stage course, a preliminary and a final. All the papers for each section were to be sat at the same time, on a combined pass/fail basis. That took careful planning and hard work, but I succeeded. I supplemented my college experience with a missions trip of a few weeks to PNG where I worked with radio ministries and gained helpful insights into this area of outreach. I also visited some of the Baptist mission work, a remarkable venture which by then was still in its early stages.

The practical side of the college course (under the title 'Pastoral Theology') with associated missions and field experience, was nothing like their modern equivalents, but was effective in creating solid practice and attitudes which prepared us for church life. We were well informed about Baptist history and principles and were fully integrated into the Baptist Union of NSW denominational life. We found that NSW Baptists,



The old Murwillumbah Baptist Church



With other students at the Ordination Retreat

especially at the denominational level, were energetic and serious; they certainly seemed to have imbibed that 'robust' culture so typical of Sydney!

I graduated in November 1968, having taken a few prizes, and was ordained on 24 September 1969 at a highly meaningful service held at The Scots Church, Sydney. Ordination was most important to me and has coloured my entire ministry thereafter, even if I felt that there was not much of the required reciprocity from the Baptist Unions with which I have served since.

My first 'real' church was at The Entrance on the Central Coast, combining beachside, holiday, town and rural ministries. Participation in two big Christmas evangelistic campaigns, one with the celebrated Methodist, Alan Walker and the second with his Baptist counterpart, Dr EH Watson, brought interesting insights into how these top-level people operated.

We moved back to Queensland and I took a few months to prepare for my BD Finals in 1971. We were welcomed back by the Grange church and had a useful part-time interim ministry there while they transitioned through to a new pastor, Rev Mal Steer, which marked the start of a long friendship.

Then we were approached about a call to Murwillumbah, NSW. This was attractive because it was so close to home and families. It did not matter to us that it was about as far as you could get from Sydney! We owe a debt to Area Superintendent, Rev JC Campbell who had been interim leader of the college in our first year. He facilitated our settlement and assisted us greatly during our time there. The separate church at Mullumbimby was also part of our responsibility, requiring weekly visits for visitation, school RI and the prayer meeting, and a service on alternate Sundays. It was also the closest town to the burgeoning 'hippy' culture—not that Baptists were able to respond to this movement very positively!

The biggest issue at Murwillumbah was the building project. The church had been relocated many years earlier from its original position near the Tweed River, but the current position was also subject to flooding and the building was old and in urgent need of renovation or replacement. So after much effort, we finally opened the revamped building on Saturday 9 March 1974 in the midst of more heavy rain, an aftermath of catastrophic floods of that year. Another key issue which arose during our time in the Tweed was the Charismatic Movement. Nearby churches were deeply affected, and we had issues to deal with locally.

The pastorate came to an end in 1974 without any immediate prospects, despite several enquiries and leads.

Then, rather miraculously, an opportunity opened up with the Crusader Union in Sydney, which operated school and home meetings and camps for children in private (independent) schools in Sydney. I accepted a trial appointment and we moved to Sydney in September 1974, where I worked from their office in George Street—a long way from the Tweed in many respects!

This organisation had its own particular history which proved to be a big challenge to me, not possessing any of the appropriate 'old school tie' background! I was also not very adept at the camping side of the program, to say the least. Even so, they still wanted me on staff, so I would be based in the office and help particularly with some organisational restructuring. However, late night meetings in the city and weeks away from home at camp were not suitable for the family, so I saw out my provisional time there and we parted amicably early in 1975 with some kind words from the high-profile chairman of the Board. Joyce had some memorable experiences with several of the Crusader ladies.

So we moved back to Queensland after our time in NSW—we had gone south first of all on our honeymoon and the sojourn had lasted more than a decade! We enjoyed Sydney as a destination and no doubt were much different as we returned—not least because we had become a family with both of our children born there—Christine while at the Entrance and Martin in Murwillumbah. I appreciated the wholehearted approach to church life, and the range of church sizes and methods found in NSW (not only Baptist). The general experience of growth in theological understanding was vital for me personally, and I had tested my call in a variety of ways.

Back in Queensland

I had put my name forward in Queensland for a call and agreed on Gordon Park Baptist Church, to commence in March 1975. My immediate predecessor there, Rev Max Howard, was a well loved and highly prominent pastor. His family had endured some difficult times, which engaged the church as well.

On settling the call, there had been agreement that we would be on leave in the middle of the year to attend the Baptist World Alliance Congress in Stockholm, Sweden and also do some touring. This trip, our first overseas together, proved to be an outstanding blessing in multiple ways, but our absence from the church for several weeks probably made the pastorate difficult. Our departure was a bit difficult too because not long before we left, Joyce's mother died completely unexpectedly while in hospital



With two colleagues at the Baptist 400th Anniversary, Amsterdam

for some treatment. Then soon after we arrived back home, my father died suddenly at his home.

The BWA Congress was beyond our expectations in opening up our horizons to the kind of quality and variety of Baptist life that existed around the world. We were amazed at what we saw, a breadth and depth that we had not experienced at home, which gave us strength and resilience for what was to come. The post-event tour of Baptist and Reformation sites in Europe was an education in itself which further deepened our understanding and faith. Finally, we had a tour of Israel which did the same for us in terms of biblical understanding. (I later expanded very significantly on this by studying at the Institute for Holy Land Studies in Jerusalem and did several more tours, in many cases as a tour director.)

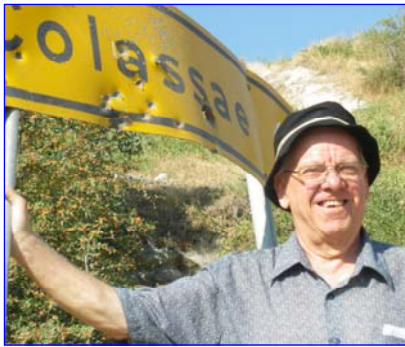
Arrival back home meant working through the family issues, but we also found that there were rumblings at the church. Certain people had taken exception to some (modest) proposals I had made about church structure and operation, trying to incorporate some of the trends of the day. I had also made suggestions about their building program which ran counter to some of theirs. More importantly, there were complaints from some over my theology and my preaching.

Underlying all this, I felt, was a difference of culture which, in my position, I could do nothing to change. I was disappointed at the unrest because it was clear to me at the time of the call that the deacons were enthusiastically in support of a new approach. I was puzzled when one leading person, who was sure he knew what I was like when I had gone to college 10+ years earlier, accused me of having 'changed'—I really did wonder what they thought college training and early years of pastoral life was supposed to do to you? Leave you completely unscathed perhaps!

There was no reasoning with them, and the advice of the Baptist Union General Secretary was that I should resign forthwith. As a pastor I received no help or encouragement from the Baptist Union then or at any time later, although I was at least recognised from then on as a 'Minister on Special Service'. My only further formal pastoral experience was, briefly, as an honorary associate pastor at Wavell Heights (in conjunction with my old friend, Rev Mal Steer), and much later, an interim at Silkstone. I took only a few services, but some of the interesting ones were at Toowong Baptist Church, translated into Chinese.

We fellowshiped at Grange Baptist and then joined Wavell Baptist Church, remaining in membership after my pastoral duties there ceased. When we relocated our home years later, we joined Taringa Baptist. This interesting church had its own unique way of operating and, although it was very supportive of the many Bible College students who attended, there seemed to be little interest in College faculty; I took just a few services very occasionally as a fill-in, but Joyce was a deacon for some time.

After leaving Gordon Park, Joyce was able to obtain a teaching position, but after years



On a Bible Lands tour—at Colossae, Turkey

away from the classroom found it a bit difficult. She was advised to apply for specialist teaching. One of her mentors in earlier days had taught at the famous Royal Brisbane Hospital School and this had always attracted Joyce. There

were no openings there at the time, but a position was open at the Correspondence School (later Distance Education). Joyce took this, and found her feet—it was an ideal context and she was a natural in the role (even though for many it was considered a dead-end appointment). She took further courses to upgrade and specialise, and spent the rest of her life there as a valued and expert teacher, loved by students and their families and highly respected by staff and management—as amply testified in the large number from school who came to her funeral even though it was in the school holiday period.

‘Faith seeking understanding’

I came from NSW feeling that I had been well grounded for the future. But I do not think I could have coped with all that transpired without the perspective gained from our participation in the BWA Congress, and the travels in Europe and the Holy Land. The family bereavements in that same year, 1975, were added burdens. So I needed to think through the meaning of it all, as the classic theological statement has it, it was a case of ‘faith seeking understanding’ (*Fides quaerens intellectum*). Despite these events, I was certain that my ordination was of key importance and that I still had calling on my life. Joyce’s new career of special teaching was confirmed step by step and our needs which were modest were being well met.

Higher study

I decided to improve my academic standing. Over the years I had come across many people who had been overseas to do higher studies, especially to USA, and I had often looked at that possibility. But finally I opted for the local alternative, the University of Queensland (UQ) which, despite its limitations, had many advantages (I often wonder how things would have worked out had I gone abroad!). UQ had been offering ‘Divinity’ studies in various forms for about forty years (a pioneer in the field in Australia) but had recently transitioned to ‘Studies in Religion’. This was a broader approach which offered more flexibility but most of the faculty and some of the courses were still of the older era. I was able to qualify for entry to the Master’s degree with the option of doctoral studies later. I started in 1976 and eventually completed my PhD in 1982, with the help of government scholarships and some part-time teaching.

I choose the general area of ‘Salvation in recent evangelical theology’ as my overall area which gave me plenty of room to work through issues which were not only highly prominent at that time in the evangelical

world but also ones that had impacted me. This was also the case with the PhD dissertation on ‘Fundamentalism in Australia’. In these two projects, I satisfied myself that I had taken the right line in my own development and I gained a very wide-ranging understanding of the Australian (and global) conservative evangelical scene. Later, a comprehensive study of the leading evangelical theologian, Dr DG Bloesch, with enough material for another doctorate and more, rounded out my theological perspective (and resulted in a long-term friendship with that great theologian).

University Chaplaincy

While studying, I also engaged in two other rather diverse activities. One was as a University Chaplain for the Queensland Council of Churches (QCC). This was a 50% appointment and the QCC wanted to appoint two people—so I got a 25% placing, which suited me time-wise. It opened up a new perspective on the academic world, and also put me alongside other chaplains whose views and sympathies were very different, especially in the social justice area which was in full swing at the time. This position also spilt over into being secretary of the QCC which brought me into contact with some of the most senior ministers and lay people of the Protestant churches in Brisbane. The QCC itself had good history but was in decline when I was involved—it closed down a few years later.

Queensland Bible Institute/Bible College of Queensland

The other activity proved to be far more lasting—part-time lecturing with Queensland Bible Institute (later Bible College of Queensland, BCQ, and now Brisbane School of Theology). In 1976 this 40+ year-old college had a sudden crisis when the Board realised that the theology and ethos of its principal and most of the staff did not reflect the values of the College. So the faculty was ‘let go’ (only one remained but he was overseas) and almost all the students left as well. Faculty assistance was needed urgently! Mysteriously to me, I was approached to teach one New Testament exegesis subject—an invitation I was pleased to accept. (I had to start from where the previous lecturer stopped when the crisis arose—in the middle of a chapter!) The involvement grew steadily until I was appointed Academic Dean and Lecturer in NT and Theology upon the completion of my PhD. I was also librarian (self-taught) and taught some other subjects, including ethics, and biblical geography/archaeology (as the fruit of my tours of Bible lands). When computers arrived, I was the IT man as well.



For the new team at the college, it was a matter of stabilising the institution, devising a new more mainstream curriculum and then developing it to take advantage of the new growth in academic and practical studies that was then flowing through Bible and Theological Colleges. I was the only one on the permanent faculty with a doctorate for quite some time, and the only ordained minister. There were many ups and downs, but overall, we worked well as a team and it was a satisfying experience, especially on the personal level of interaction with students. Joyce was teaching full-time but, as much as we could, we opened our home to the students who responded very warmly. Academically, I thought my specialist area was a perfect fit for the college.

I also tried to bring to the college a wider evangelical perspective. My studies had convinced me of the virtues



Touring the Western Front

of evangelical theology and practice, and I felt there was a lot of potential to develop the college as a centre of interdenominational evangelical theology and missiology. I gained many insights as secretary of the South Pacific Association of Bible Colleges which linked us with other Australian colleges and also with colleges worldwide. My involvement at this time with the Evangelical Alliance (established in UK in 1848) opened up to me global dimensions in theology, theological education and missiology (more on this below). I saw fine examples of people, institutions and movements past and present, which reinforced the vision I had of what QBI could become, at least in a small way.

However, the initial glamour gradually wore off and, on a day to day basis, my role as 'Academic Dean'

became increasingly diminished and meaningless. Furthermore, the dynamics of the curriculum did not provide much incentive for lecturers and, in fact, became progressively onerous. I found that the corporate model of the college was not reflective of my values. In the end, my naivety in regard to the system and its leaders, and poor personnel records led to a parting of the ways at the end of 1992. Yet, we made lots of fine friends among the students and the experience was positive in many ways. Since then the college has been through several major changes so it hardly resembles its former self.

'Consultant Theologian'

Then I became a 'consultant theologian' or 'theologian at large'! I did some casual teaching at the Baptist Theological College in later years, especially when it was short-staffed, and also at other colleges. An interesting development that did provide a welcome incentive was the advent of post-graduate courses through the Australian College of Theology where there was an opportunity to create units based on the interests and skills of the lecturer. I enjoyed doing some of these locally and interstate. One of the best was on social ethics which elicited many appreciative comments (reflecting the pronounced disconnect in Queensland Baptist circles between faith and public life).

I had originally taken only a 4 day-a-week position with BCQ so I could continue private research and writing, with quite a few articles and projects to my credit. This was all part of my desire to think through the significance and nature of my faith. Along the way, I found myself trying to understand the ministries in which I was involved by writing their histories—Murwillumbah church, the Bible College and the Theological Commission especially, and more recently, the Baptist Historical Society and Archives. Early on, I had taken up a post-graduate diploma in worship to try to understand church services which were then, of course, a key part of my work. This proved to be extremely beneficial, but, understanding the history, theology and dynamics of worship made it hard for me to fit in with trends in the churches which were just then moving to the 'contemporary' style.

Contemporary worship (which is now actually more than a generation 'old'), is hard for the average church to do well, and, lacking any of the spiritual drive it had at the beginning, often defaults to the mediocre which is thin, shallow and unsatisfying. In fact, it seems that the 'better' contemporary worship is done as a quality 'production', the further it departs from what the New Testament depicts. In short, a 20 minute presentation by a musical team, 10 minutes promotion of the church program and a 40 minute (often affective) inspirational talk does not in any way represent the potency of biblical worship or represent the rich textures of generations of Christian experience (and this is not even to mention the way communion and baptism are handled).

So writing was an important part of my effort to understand things. I had done a few Christian writing courses in my younger days—with some success in producing published output. I was very happy to accept roles of reporting for the now defunct *The Australian Baptist* as the Queensland correspondent and contributing occasionally to *The Queensland Baptist (QB)*. (I was even fill-in QB editor for a short time!) So for all the years at BCQ, although I was not involved with regular Baptist Union activity, I was a keen

observer, attending meetings and functions to obtain information and following up on stories personally.

Baptist Heritage and Archives

This took on even sharper focus when I became interested in the Baptist Archives (through my PhD research). There was no proper Archives at the time, so I volunteered to do something to assist. Then I became involved with the 'historical committee'. I was engaged



Speaking at a theological conference in Seoul, South Korea with the WEA TC

to write promotional material for the Baptist Union centenary in 1977 and in time suggested the formation of a proper historical society, such as had been operating in NSW for many years. The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (Baptist Heritage Qld, BHQ) was formed in 1984 and I became the editor of the newsletter and later, editor of most of its publications. The greatest of these was the sesqui-centenary history of Baptists in Queensland, published in 2005. I was overall editor, and also author of the section covering the years 1945–2005—a period which interested me intensely, and another example of trying to figure things out.

This and other projects required a great deal of research and analysis of Baptist developments in the state and beyond. This of course went in tandem with my role in the Archives itself, working with the material and dealing with many queries. Assistance of two helpers in later years and the overall support of the BHQ has been most significant and we have built up a very effective operation, with good backing from the BUQ administration. Occasional teaching in the Australian Baptist history class at Malyon College was another thread. (I had long decided that Baptist studies would be one of my fields of academic interest—there was plenty of source material available locally and many themes of interest largely unresearched.)

These activities inevitably led to much contact with other states. But it went further—in 1995 I was invited to join the Baptist World Alliance Heritage and Identity Commission. This involved annual gatherings in many different parts of the world which meant greatly increased understanding of Baptists globally, and also more contacts with people and resources. I presented several papers at BWA gatherings, including a series on

an empirical approach to Baptist identity. The international Baptist Studies conferences organised by Professor David Bebbington of Stirling University also strengthened my interests.

WEA Theological Commission

I also worked out my editorial role with the World Evangelical Fellowship Theological Commission (TC) as editor of both their quarterly newsletter (print and online) and especially their journal, *Evangelical Review of Theology*, plus some of their other books and digital publications and website.

My involvement with this movement had its beginnings while I was at BCQ. I was first of all active at the state level, and then the national. This led to the invitation to join the Theological Commission of the global body, then known as the World Evangelical Fellowship (now Alliance). All up, my involvement with the TC covered 1986 to 2017, starting with being an ordinary member and then becoming editor, administrator, and finally Executive Director). This meant unexpected participation in conferences, publishing, lecture tours and study groups, as well as contact (and in some cases close friendships) with outstanding evangelical theologians and familiarity with institutions and movements of considerable significance. I also mixed in the wider areas of the WEA as a whole and with the Lausanne movement, where I saw some important developments and some of the inner life of the global Christian movement.

Highlights of my TC activity included a large conference in UK in 1996, with particular assistance from Joyce, and then, much later, in 2008 a long tour of Latin America to renew and strengthen historic ties in that important area. There were also numerous trips to Asia, USA and Europe and some to Africa. Preaching to thousands in South Korea mega-churches was quite an experience.

I felt in the end that through the BWA and WEA I had been able to fulfil my initial 'missionary' calling at least in some manner. Joyce was a keen a supporter of me in this and was able to enjoy some of the travel.

Being a Baptist in Queensland

Since returning to Queensland in 1975, I have had the opportunity to observe (more than be involved in) the many bewildering changes in Baptist life. I have tried to trace that process in my chapter in the sesqui-centenary history and in college lectures on Baptist history.

The Charismatic movement was perhaps the most tumultuous of all—reinforced by parallel changes in worship, church structures and mission. Initially there was a strong (if highly controversial) spirituality driving these movements. This changed generations of Baptist life in a moment—often accompanied by ugly tension—but the movement dissipated quickly (especially after some of it became ragged at the edges) leaving churches grasping for a new models and directions. (I have written this up in my unfinished series on the movement.) The gap was quickly filled by a cavalcade of more trends, mostly from USA (including body life, purpose driven, seeker-sensitive churches, lay witness and renewal, mega-churches, etc) and the corporate super-church approach.

While theological and spiritual principles have been involved, the overriding factors seem to have been strongly pragmatic (viz, how to have a smooth running

and successful church and Baptist Union), and sadly, the potential for much needed spiritual renewal has long since disappeared. Prominent for a time in all of this was the notion of 'a healthy church' (this concept was, we were told, deliberately left undefined). In many cases, the churches seemed to have become Baptist in organisational links and name only. It seemed that for some, the 'Baptist' brand was an advantage, but not the Baptist essence.

At the same time as the Baptist Union of Queensland was grappling with these developments, pressure was put on it to restructure its internal organisation (triggered by a devastating report arising out of the damaging property fiasco in the 1980s), a process which took about the last fifteen years of the 20th century to complete, resulting in a completely new structure and face.

The period since then has been relatively stable, but under the surface, pressures were building, so a recent wide scale review has set in train another series of radical changes. The changes in the late 1990s gave the churches much more freedom to pursue their own ethos (although pastors were increasingly tied to the administrative structures of the Baptist Union). With significant changes now underway, it will be interesting to see if these trends will change, and if Baptists as a whole can remain more or less 'mainline' (albeit more agile and self-confident than other denominations which are haemorrhaging badly), or whether they will follow the roller-coaster path of the array of new 'start-up' churches which have appeared on virtually every corner in recent years.

Personal

Through all these 50-plus years, there has been the support of family (both immediate and extended). My parents were pleased that both of their sons ended up in the Baptist ministry; Joyce's parents were also proud of their daughter. Joyce was a strength to me as wife, lady of the manse, active supporter of my ministries, and throughout it all, a working mum (helping to provide my



Speaking at the City Tabernacle at the opening of the Heritage Plaque

children with their excellent education) and in later years a deacon at Taringa church. The shock in mid-1999 when we found that she had contracted multiple myeloma was therefore incredible. Thankfully the suffering was not too long (despite the vain hopes of the senior specialist) and she passed to glory on 20 January 2000. I was devastated and our family was impacted strongly by the trauma. At least I had the memory of a wonderful trip overseas for recreation, research and conferences just prior to the onset of the disease. (I dedicated one of my pastoral biographies to her.)

So it was with a particular and acute sense of providence that

we can now all look back on God's provision of Deaconess Dianne Yates, whom he sent to be with me from 2002 onwards. I met Dianne first through a mutual friend and I shared some of her outstanding hospital chaplaincy work (which came after many years as a devoted and much appreciated deaconess in several Presbyterian parishes). She fitted into our family as a whole in such a unique and remarkable way (there is no other word for it), enriching us with her firm devotion to the Lord and to her ministry (albeit in a different evangelical family), as well as her practical and homely ways of relating to all in the family. Fellowship with her church, St Paul's, Spring Hill, and circle of friends was enriching and provided new opportunities of ministry, often in tandem.

Dianne was the ideal companion, so it was with more devastation that we learned late in 2017 that she was suffering from an aggressive malignant brain tumour. She battled this condition with faith and fortitude for nineteen months before being taken home on 29 May 2019.

'All the Way'

I am thankful to God for this jubilee of my ordination because it allows me to look back on so many experiences, despite the fact that I was moved by the Baptist Union to the retired list in February 2012 contrary to my desires and without one word of thanks or appreciation. Nevertheless, I am grateful that I was able to choose the ordination option back in college days, and for those who stood with me then and since.

I hope that along the way I have been able to make some small contributions here and there to the Kingdom. I have been privileged to enjoy fellowship with many people in a great variety of contexts, and overseas travel on well over fifty occasions, all of which have enriched my life. In particular I have benefitted from seeing a wide spectrum of church life, but remain convinced that the essential Baptist position, when properly executed, is the right option in this day and age. I hope to remain active for a little longer yet so that I can continue 'to make full proof of my ministry' (2 Tim 4:5).



Dianne and David Parker, in New Zealand