

The Queensland Baptist Forum

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Central Queensland Project Book Launch



The Central Queensland Baptist history project which is occupied our time for the last year or more was successfully completed when the book, *Something more than Gold*, was launched at the Queensland Baptists annual Convention in Rockhampton on May 18. The launching took place during the main business session and was carried out by Rev Barry Downes, associate minister of Rockhampton Baptist Tabernacle. Mr Downes has responsibility for working with regional churches, and he and his wife Lois, also assisted with information for the book itself. The Downes' also feature in the book because of their earlier ministry in Rockhampton.



Baptist Heritage Qld set up a colourful stand at the Convention and met many local and visiting people, as well as selling quite a few copies of the new book, and other publications. One of the features of launch was a competition with the prize being a copy of the new book which was provided by one of our loyal BHSQ members. The answer to the competition question was found on the display stand. Another copy of the book is available for the best contribution of a story on Queensland Baptist Heritage suitable for publishing in the QB magazine.

Sales of the new book before and at the Convention were encouraging, but there are still plenty of copies available. So we urge readers to place their orders as soon as possible. It would make a suitable birthday or Christmas gift for people with an interest in the region and the story of Baptists in Queensland.

Essay Competition

The biennial essay competition is being conducted again this year in conjunction with the Malyon College course on Baptist history and principles. The winner receives a prize of \$100 and one years' membership of BHQ. The competition is open to all, not only Malyon students, so contact BHQ for details.

Please join us for the Annual Meeting of BHQ—Nov 3 (AGM) 2pm at Baptist Archives

<p>Baptist Heritage Queensland The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (est. 1984)</p> <p>Membership (2012) Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.</p> <p><i>Qld Baptist Forum</i> 3 issues p.a. Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p>President: Mr Eric W. Kopittke 98 Yallambee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Phone 3376 4339 kopittke@tpg.com.au</p> <p>Secretary: Dr Ken G. Smith, 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Phone 3892 6337 tizzardsmith@hotmail.com http://home.pacific.net.au/~dparker/bhsq.htm</p> <p>BWA Baptist Heritage & Identity Commission www.bwa-baptist-heritage.org</p>	<p>CONTENTS</p> <p>Qld Baptist Forum No 82 Aug 2012</p> <p><i>Something more than Gold</i> Launching p 1</p> <p>By-Laws, Anniversaries & Celebrations p 2</p> <p>Digitisation of Church Records - a Guide p 3</p> <p>Fascinating Figures: Baptists and p 5 the 2011 Census by David Parker</p> <p>Baptists on the Darling Downs p 6</p> <p>Senior Girls' Missionary Union p 7 by Bill Hughes</p> <p>An Appeal to Church Historians p 8 by Neville Callam, BWA</p>
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Denominational Archives given Official Foundation

The 2012 Queensland Baptist Assembly gave official recognition to the Baptist Church Archives Qld by adding a specific section to the Constitution & By-Laws. The section, No 25, is headed, 'Recognition of Role and Work of the Archivist' and begins, 'The Baptist Union shall establish and maintain an Archives for the collection, preservation and management of its physical and electronic records.' which shall be 'under the control of an Archivist appointed by the Board.' It goes on to specify that 'All sections of the Baptist Union, including Board, ASG, Charter Groups Service Groups, Ministry organisations, and officers, shall keep formal records of their activities, and these records shall be transferred regularly to the Archives, or be cared for in a similar manner by the originating organisation.'

The new article explains that 'Records housed in the Archives shall be subject to rules of access with the purpose of maximising their preservation and facilitating their use by bona fide researchers.' and that 'Records of member churches, organisations and individuals related to the denomination and to Baptist work generally may also be accepted by the Archives.' In the case of churches that cease to function, the new By-Law states that 'The Baptist Union shall encourage [them] to transfer all records to the Archives.'

These new provisions were introduced in consultation with the Archives and it is hoped that they will not only put the denominational Archives on a firm footing, but also serve to encourage local churches to care for their records properly as well.

Anniversaries and Celebrations

A number of churches are currently marking significant anniversaries. The **Minden District Baptist Church** family celebrated its 130th anniversary on 22 April, 2012 with a large number of people attending a celebration service and luncheon. Greetings from local civic officials were received and as were messages from previous pastors. Some of the long-standing families of this historic German Baptist church were well represented, including members of the Truloff, Lehmann, Sippel, Schumann and Schulz families.

Windsor Road Baptist Church marked its 135th anniversary on June 2-3 with elaborate celebrations including an open day on the Saturday and a service and lunch on Sunday 3rd. A great deal of work was done by organisers, especially Ian and Sue McQuay, in inviting former members and friends and setting up colourful displays of the long years of the history of the church which were arranged around the inside of the church. A special background feature of the anniversary was the digitization of church records.

Nearly as old is **Gympie**—at 125 years; initial services took place in 1887, although the church was not formally constituted until 1889 and then lapsed before reforming some years later in 1897. Celebrations are planned for later this year.

Silkstone Baptist Church celebrated its centenary with a series of events commencing last year and continuing throughout 2012. The church was formed as an outreach from Ipswich Baptist Church under the energetic leadership of Rev J C Farquhar who had the vision of establishing church in key areas of the city as it grew in strength and importance. Silkstone developed into a strong work and has continued its important ministry to the present, despite many changes in the life of the district. **Nambour** marks also marks a century as a constituted church, as does **Rosalie**, whose activities commenced almost 30 years earlier.

Rockhampton has celebrated its 150th anniversary. **Carey** at Bulimba can virtually claim a similar age—it was formed as a merger of Norman Park in 1967 with Bulimba; this church which was an outstation served by Wharf St and Jireh at different times, can trace its history to 1862 or possibly even earlier. **Southbank** (Vulture St, South Brisbane) is 140 years old.

Gatton celebrates 75 years, while anniversaries marking 60 years since work began fall this year at **Deception Bay** and **Sunnybank** while a jubilee can be marked at **Innisfail**.

Changes are taking place in other churches too with **Lindum** being absorbed by Wynnum, and **Geebung**, established in 1923, merging with **Sandgate** after 60 years as a constituted church to form a new united church. **Sandgate** itself is 125 years old. Another one of similar age is **Rosewood** which commenced as Lanefield.

This all means plenty of rejoicing and many opportunities to reflect on the pioneers and pilgrims of the past. It seems that the next sesqui-centenary to be celebrated will be Annerley which began its life in Fairfield with a church building erected in 1865. The church later relocated to its current position in Annerley and another church was commenced a short time later elsewhere in Fairfield.

Digitisation of Church Records - a Guide



Scanning a church record book

One aspect of Archives 'going digital' is digitisation, the conversion of traditional records into digital or electronic form. This covers paper records such as minutes, correspondence, reports, financial records, and other similar items as well as photographs. It can also include graphic items such as movie film and slides, and audio material such as cassettes and tapes.

Thanks to advances in technology, it is now comparatively easy and economic to digitise these materials using home equipment and without the need to outsource the process to professionals.

When referring to digitisation of church records, the main group of documents in mind are the historic records of the church, but another important group are new ones being received at the current time, such as letters, invoices, and other similar items. These would be fewer in number because most documents now are created and circulated electronically via email and the like.

The process of digitisation can be thought of as an electronic equivalent to microfilming which is a well established process for preservation and sharing of records. (It is also possible to digitise microfilms.)

Why Digitise?

There are many reasons for digitising your records. One is to preserve them better, especially when they have already become fragile, and another is space saving. Digital records can also be shared very easily, and they can be copied, printed and displayed very readily. They can also be integrated into the church's current administration system where everything else is already digital. (This paper does not cover the archival handling of existing digital records.)

One of the best reasons for digitising is ease of locating information. This is the case with printed material which can be turned into editable and searchable electronic files through the process of "optical character recognition" (OCR). This means an end to manual searches through pages of records because it can be done instantly on the computer. OCR can be done using readily available software, and the files produced become just like those that have been created new by your computer. However, more advanced equipment may be needed where the original documents are not in good condition (eg, indistinct type, discoloured or damaged paper) or are large in size or difficult to place on a scanner because they are bound into thick volumes. Unfortunately hand-written documents cannot yet be simply OCR'd - probably many of the older records of a church fall into this category. However, when digitised, they can at least be viewed electronically, and shared and stored with the rest of the church's electronic documents.

Factors to Consider

There are some drawbacks to digitisation to consider. First of all, on the practical level, the physical process can be damaging to the records, because it involves handling every page and probably turning the books over continuously; this is particularly critical where the records are already fragile. However, once the process is done, the original records will probably not need to be touched again.

Then, it is a big undertaking to digitise a church's entire collection of material so it needs to be planned and managed well. It needs good IT support and archival expertise to achieve a satisfactory outcome, unless the process is entirely outsourced. There is a considerable cost, both initial and on-going, to see the process through and to maintain the digital archive.

It may not be feasible or necessary to digitise all records, so decisions need to be made about which documents to include. Then once the job is done, careful consideration is needed to decide on the fate of the old records - whether to dispose them completely or to retain them in some way. The best solution is probably to place the old records in safe archival storage where they can be preserved and accessed if needed.

On the technical side, good IT advice and support is needed to deal with computer equipment that quickly becomes obsolescent, and storage media such as CD, tapes and drives, which can deteriorate as well as become outdated. Common solutions to these issues including keeping hardware and software up to date, and migrating the data at regular intervals to new media using currently available software so that the information remains accessible. It is also necessary to maintain and update electronic record management systems so that the data is readily available for use. Compared with their physical counterparts, digital records are far less tangible and

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those responsible for them need to be much more proactive in ensuring they are retained and managed properly, or else they will be quickly lost or become inaccessible.

In digitising records it is also necessary to pay attention to the authenticity of records - ie, making sure that they what they are supposed to be, and to their integrity - ie, making sure that they have not been altered in any significant way, or lost any of their vital pieces of information. (It is important to note that moving a record from one format to another is likely to alter its presentation - eg, changing of fonts, margins or page size which may be crucial in some circumstances.) Quite apart from historical considerations, there can easily be serious legal implications if vital documents have not retained their authenticity or integrity.

Another factor to consider with digital records is the ease with which than can be shared and distributed in comparison with their paper originals. This may mean that privacy and confidentiality issues are raised when many copies are in circulation. (Generally, the conditions of access that apply to the original documents should also apply to their digital versions.) A further practical concern arises when different versions of the same document are involved.

However, in many situations, traditional records are already in danger of being lost because of their age, the difficulties of storage, or lack of proper care, so the digital alternative is attractive and comparatively easy. For many churches, the digitisation of at least the most important documents is likely to be a good step forward, and one that should be undertaken without delay. However, when the decision to proceed is made, it is necessary to set up policies and practical steps to maintain the digital records for as long as they are needed in the same way that traditional paper records are currently preserved and managed.

How to Digitise?

The process of digitisation is simple in principle, especially in the case of paper documents – it merely involves scanning them to produce an “electronic picture” of the originals. A domestic A4 sized scanner will effectively copy letters and photographs and books of that or smaller size. There are also portable A4 scanners which can make the task very easy. However, there is a problem with the traditional larger size Minute Books which need an A3 size scanner. Anything larger than the normal commonly available domestic unit is likely to be much more expensive. An office photocopier with a scanning function which takes an A3 page is a good alternative. Another solution is to use a digital camera and convert the images (usually JPG) to other file formats suitable for documents, such as PDF.

Slides and film negatives require more specialised equipment to achieve good results due to the need for high resolution scanning, as do movie films. Audio tapes can be converted to digital with an adaptor used with a home computer. In difficult cases, such as large documents, those bound in thick volumes, big quantities of material and fragile or specialised documents, it would be wise to seek professional and commercial assistance.

The type of file produced by the scanning process is important. It must be one that is likely to be easily readable by commonly available equipment well on into the future, such as PDF/A for documents, TIF, PNG or at least JPG for images, and MP3 for sound. A high enough resolution should be used to preserve the essential information in the original, although the higher the resolution the larger the file which means more storage space is needed.

There also needs to be adequate provision for back-up copies in secure locations. Over time, it will be necessary to migrate the files to new media using appropriate software to avoid problems of deterioration and obsolescence. It is also important to record information about the files (metadata) with the collection; this information is necessary for proper management and access to the material.

Finally, quality control is vital, especially where the original records are to be destroyed after digitisation. Care must be taken throughout to ensure that the required records are being digitised, that their provenance is maintained, and that their full readability, authenticity and integrity are preserved.

More detailed information about digitisation can be found by searching the internet (especially sites of large libraries and national or corporate Archives) and from professional consultants. Baptist Heritage Queensland is able to advise and assist churches seeking assistance.



Scanning a large Minute book

Fascinating Figures: Baptists & the 2011 Census

By David Parker

Initial figures for the 2011 Census released on 21 June 2012 show that the percentage of the population in Queensland claiming to be Baptist has made a big jump up to 2.01% - from 1.87% in 2006 (which recorded a slump from previous periods). The actual figure is 41,413 males and 45,858 females, a total of 87,271. This makes Queensland the second largest state in terms of numbers of Baptists after Victoria, and also second in proportion of the population after Northern Territory (2.6%). The figure for Australia as a whole is 1.64%, a total of 352,499. The gender balance for Australia is 97 men to 100 women; Queensland is just above this at 98. The age distribution of Baptists follows the state population closely where there are almost 30,000 under 25 years of age, 46,000 from 25 to 65, and 11,000 seniors, including 1300 over 85. The median age is of all Queenslanders is 36.

The Queensland Baptists website states that more than 35,000 people meet each week for worship which is less than 50% of the census figure. Unlike some other religious movements, there is only one category for Baptists in the census, but there are Baptist churches not affiliated with Queensland Baptists which would help to account for difference; it still means there are a lot of nominal Baptists. The figures supplied by the Baptist Union of Australia indicate there are 62,719 members nationally, which is only 18% of the census figure; it is probably less than that for Queensland (for comparison, membership figures need to be supplemented by children of Baptist families). Whether the count is by worship attendance or membership, there is a big differential, which presents a challenge for evangelism and discipleship.

Although the average density of Baptists in the Queensland is 2.01%, the figure varies quite markedly in different areas. For example, in the Banana Shire it is 2.62%, Longreach 2.53%, Mt Isa 2.40%, Fraser Coast 2.26%, and Bundaberg 2.20%. Brisbane and Gladstone are on 2.08% while in Townsville it is 1.38%, Cairns, 1.27%, Toowoomba, 1.59% and the Gold Coast, 1.44%.

The relative size of Christian churches has not changed much – Roman Catholics are the largest, followed by the Anglicans, the Uniting Church,

and Presbyterian and Reformed churches in Queensland and nationally. In Australia the Eastern Orthodox come next with a non-specified “Christian” group following. Baptist are seventh, edging out the Lutherans who used to be larger, and the Pentecostals (all grouped together). The order is the same for Queensland except that Eastern Orthodox are down the scale, smaller than Pentecostals.

However, as the press reported widely at the time of the release of the figures, the “no religion” category is now larger than the Anglicans, the “not stated” group comes next after the Anglicans. Taken together, these two groups comprise 31% of the Australian and also of the Queensland population. There are a few more Buddhists in Queensland than Pentecostals, while Islam and Hinduism are each about half the number of Buddhism. Hinduism is the fast growing non-Christian religion.

Queensland’s total population is 4,332,739, of whom 155,824 or 4% are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islanders and 888,636 (21%) were born overseas (some of the most common places being South Africa, India, Philippines, China and Germany, as well as the traditional UK and New Zealand).

Overall, in the five years since the last Census, Baptist growth in Queensland (16.7%) has exceeded population growth (10%) and in so doing, has performed better than others, including the Anglican, Catholics, Pentecostals, Presbyterians and Lutherans; some have declined against the general population (Brethren, Churches of Christ, Salvation Army and Uniting Church). However, the strong percentage growth of non-Christian religions and the Mormons is a factor to consider, as is the rapid increase in “no religion” category.

These initial figures are helpful in providing some overall indications of trends, but the National Church Life Survey which was taken at about the same time as the census, should give a lot more insights into the internal dynamics of our churches, and help to answer the “why” as well as the “what”. A fuller picture will also emerge as more census figures are released.

Baptists on the Darling Downs

Sketching origins and developments in the 'never, never'

Now that the Central Queensland project is complete, thoughts turn to other regions. Baptists have been on the Darling Downs at places like Toowoomba, Warwick, Stanthorpe, Goondiwindi, Dalby, Chinchilla and Roma, for many years. However, the coverage of this vast and productive area is still not extensive and some works that held promise in the past no longer exist. There was even a mobile missionary travelling in Western Queensland for a time. There are many new challenges in this part of Queensland, especially with the mining boom.

The first church established in the region was at Toowoomba in 1875. Rev William Moore of Petrie Terrace church conducted a service on 21 March 1875 at the Oddfellows Hall, Ruthven Street and several people decided to form a church. Mr Moore also conducted a baptism in Queens Park on 16 May which attracted a great deal of interest. A pastor was soon appointed, Rev John MacPherson, who had previously been an evangelist in Britain, Ireland and Peru, and was recommended by Jireh Baptist Church in Brisbane, where he was a member. A chapel was erected at the corner of Herries and Hume Streets, and there were many baptisms and membership transfers; work was also established in surrounding areas such as Highfields and Gowrie Junction and eventually in some of the outlying areas of the town.

Mr MacPherson's pastorate lasted until 1880, but there were tensions associated with its conclusion, resulting in the establishment of rival services in the town for a period. The early Churches of Christ activity in Queensland also impacted negatively on the church with some people leaving the Baptists to proselytise for the new religious group locally and in Brisbane.

So in 1882 when the second pastor arrived, Rev William Higlett, there was need for considerable effort to re-establish and strengthen the church. Mr Higlett reported to his friends back in England that the church was one of only ten in Queensland, and it was the farthest from the coast, making it "the vanguard of the Baptists towards the interior. Westward for over 2,000 miles extends the vast 'never, never' country, without any Baptist church and but few ministers of any denomination."

For eight years, Mr Higlett did stalwart work in Toowoomba and also in the late 1880s encouraged a group of Danish Baptists who took up land at Freestone near Warwick, forming themselves into a church. Baptist Association leaders anticipated that an English speaking work would begin in Warwick itself although in the earliest stages (from as early as 1871) there was only a Sunday School conducted by dedicated lay women. The planting of a permanent church at Warwick would not take place until 1911.

It grew steadily but remained a Home Mission work for about 20 years. However, it was vigorous in its outreach and had preaching places in several different areas around the district. Eventually two of them became established churches. Initial contacts were made in Allora during World War II by Rev E Edwards, and work be-

gan in 1947 with a building opened in 1950. However, the small town could not support the work effectively, especially as population declined, and it closed in 1970 (the building lived on at Rosewood).

Stanthorpe was more successful. Some evangelistic and pastoral work was taking place at the end of World War I, and periodical services were held but it was not until after World War II that there was any firm development. A great deal of effort was made by the pastor at Warwick, Rev Dick Walker, in conjunction with Rev Max Howard of the Baptist Union's Gospel Wagon, which produced good results. Rev Rob Beeston took up the work under the Home Mission in 1952 and a church was constituted in 1955. A building was opened 8 Feb 1958.

Outreach efforts were also taking place further west, when in 1948, the Toowoomba church began looking at Dalby. After some preliminary work, the first service was conducted on 25 June by Rev H White; there was also considerable support by the Gospel Wagon, but due to personnel changes, initial expectations of quick progress were dashed. It was only in 1950 the work picked up again under the direction of the Home Mission with preachers coming from Brisbane, and a Sunday school started.

This effort was quickly rewarded, and the constitution of the church took place 9 April 1950; Pastor A Back was appointed under the Home Mission in June. Despite obstacles and disappointments, there was steady progress, with membership growth and the erection of a church which was opened 23 May 1954. There have been many changes to the church buildings since with the most recent event being the opening of a large new complex in 2010.

The next area of development was Chinchilla. Pastors from Dalby and the Home Mission Superintendent made occasional visits to meet people and conduct services from the early 1960s at least. Then in 1970, an already existing independent church which included within its membership some Baptists sought admission to the Baptist Union of Queensland, thus creating a Baptist presence in the town, complete with land and a building.

A surge in Home Mission work in the early 1960s saw interest in the south-west with the appointment of Pastor N C Butcher as a Mobile Missionary, complete with van. His circuit included Miles, Roma, Mitchell and Charleville, areas which included oil and gas discoveries which suggested rapid development was likely. Roma was the most promising for Baptist work, which resulted in the establishment of a church there in 1965. However the anticipated growth did not take place and that work closed down in 1994, and has not been replaced. In more recent times, Mission to Queensland saw an opportunity for work in Goondiwindi and commenced operations in 1995. The church was constituted in 2010.

Expansion was also taking place in Toowoomba. In

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Senior Girls' Missionary Union 1924-1991

A Great Story of an Effective Movement



The history of the Senior Girls Missionary Union (SGMU), has been written by Bill Hughes with the support of a number of former "senior girls", has now been released, and is available for sale.

The SGMU was a highly successful and hardworking organisation which provided financial, personal and spiritual support for overseas missionaries following its establishment in Queensland in 1924. In its earlier years the SGMU mainly supported women missionaries in India and Bangladesh, but it later expanded its work to cover other

parts of the world as well.



The history covers the establishment of the SGMU, the nature of its work, the contribution of women to the work of the overseas missions and the type of missionary work that the organisation supported. A number of attachments list the main office holders of the SGMU Central Executive, SGMU membership statistics, year by year funds raised by the SGMU and the names of Queensland missionaries who served in India from 1855 to 1966.

In its heyday the SGMU was supported by women at a time when many were homemakers and were not bound by involvement in paid employment. As more and more women moved into the paid workforce the numbers available for this type of missionary support work diminished and other ways of supporting missions were developed. But the work of the SGMU was quite remarkable and the history of this fairly unique organisation is well worth recording.

Copies of the history are available at a cost of \$10 (plus postage where applicable) and may be obtained from Bill Hughes (07-3256 8897 or 0409 915 685) or by contacting the Queensland Baptist Archives by email at archives@qb.com.au

This is just one of a number of monographs that Bill Hughes has produced. Others include "A History of the Biloela District Baptist Church", "A History of the Gladstone Baptist Church, 1966-2011", "The Deagon Baptist Mission", and Gracemere Baptist Fellowship, 1991-2011". He also wrote the centennial history of the Warwick Baptist Church which was published in 2011.

The histories of Biloela, Gladstone and Gracemere were produced as part of the Central Queensland project, for which Bill also wrote the history of Mount Morgan church (this is being revised with additional information which has recently become available). These are all available on a print-on-demand basis.

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1949 a Sunday School began in South Toowoomba as an outreach of the main church. A hall was erected in 1952, and other halls elsewhere in the city were later moved to the site. The work was a branch church until 1975 when it gained independence and has grown steadily since. However a serious fire in Sept 2009 caused extensive damage.

From the early 1950s a Sunday School and services were conducted at Rockville which led the formation of a church in 1956 (now Toowoomba Northside). Baptist work was conducted at Highfields in the early days, with the fellowship there sometimes being part of the Toowoomba church and sometimes independent. However, with growth in the district in more recent years, it has become a solid independent church, reporting its own membership since the late 1980s.

Recently Outlook Christian Church has also been established in Toowoomba and is currently a Phase 2 plant.

Meanwhile, the central church maintained its development and in 1995 moved from its long standing CBD location to a large new site on the western edge of the city at Glenvale Road with the name, Toowoomba Community Baptist Church.

Since William Higlett's days, the boundary of (permanent) Baptist work has extended only about 100 of the 2000 miles that he saw leading away to the 'vast never, never' country, despite the vision and hopes of many over the years. The population of that area is still not great, and the combined reported membership of the 10 Baptist churches in the region is about 700.

The need still exists to share the life and witness of the gospel and to build up those who are part of the Baptist community. Meanwhile, Baptist Heritage Queensland hopes to record the story of the work that has taken place in these areas, and invites people who are interested in the project to contact us about it.

An Appeal to Church Historians

By Neville Callam, General Secretary, Baptist World Alliance

Recently, I read the book, *New Century/New Directions* edited by James and Carole Spickelmeier. The volume helpfully brings together insights from a number of carefully chosen persons who are committed to the effectiveness of Converge Worldwide, the organization under review. The result is a very useful product! We commend the authors and the Baptist organization they serve for supporting a publication of this kind. They reflect the maturity and openness that are required of all church leaders who affirm their role as servants of Christ.

While reading *New Century/New Directions*, I remembered something that Socrates said many years ago. Not everything that Socrates said is worth repeating, but perhaps few persons would challenge one of the sayings attributed to him at his trial for heresy - An unexamined life is not worth living.

This maxim is as applicable to the life of individuals as it is to that of organizations. However much we try to dodge the language of institutions, substituting for it the language of movements, as Hugo Hecllo has so expertly explained in his book, *Thinking Institutionally*, there is no escaping the significant role that institutions play in our lives. We may seriously distrust institutions, but institutions fulfill community-building and community-supporting roles that connect us to purposes that are larger than ourselves.

To retain vitality in an organization - which, of course, is not identical with an institution, but which is closely related to it - one indispensable requirement is the periodic subjection of the organization's aims and *modus operandi* to rigorous evaluation. If done fairly and thoroughly, this is likely to help governors, managers and all "stake holders" associated with a particular organization to be aware of the tendency to depart from the lofty, and still reasonable, goals espoused when the organization was born. It will also alert those concerned of the inclination to resort to strategies, methods and approaches that are no longer effective.

The analysis of what an ecclesial organization does may be undertaken by persons from several fields of study. From the work they do, much can be learned and needed changes may result. In

many cases, however, those who are called upon to undertake the task are handicapped by many personal factors that impinge upon their work. Sometimes, personal agendas mar clear vision. Especially when dealing with worldwide organizations, too often, evaluators work with templates from their own residential geographical sphere, believing that these offer great clues that enable them to provide answers to the peculiar challenges that face multi- and cross-cultural organizations with a global reach.

Competent historians, and especially gifted church historians, are among those on whom we depend as we seek clarity on how our church-related organizations are pursuing their mission. These men and women have an important vocation to assist the church and its related organizations in the critical evaluation of their life. Part of the reason for this is the penchant for good historians to take context seriously. The capacity to understand the relationship between context and process enables historians to interpret trends and offer insights that can help advance positive developments and reverse negative trends.

Ecclesial organizations need church historians who focus on happenings of yesteryear; this is a function the church needs them to perform. We also need historians who are willing to risk analysis of more recent, and also contemporary, situations and to make available to the church community the benefit of their carefully honed research and analytical skills. This is part of the responsible stewardship of church historians.

If the unexamined life is not worth living, the unexamined life of organizations may cause them to be banished to the scrap heap of history. This may be prevented if those whom God has gifted for the task put their hands to the plough and produce material that can help guide those who must make decisions that affect the future of vital organizations. The findings of gifted church historians may not cause accolades to be heaped on their heads. Nevertheless, their contribution could potentially help church organizations, like the Baptist World Alliance, to be more faithful in the way they fulfill the mandate the triune God has given them.

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