



The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of Baptist Heritage Queensland

MARK YOUR DIARY

BHQ AND ARCHIVES—30 YEARS

Tracks - Trends - Trophies

1.30pm 31 May 2014

QB Centre, 53 Prospect Road Gaythorne

The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (BHSQ), now known as Baptist Heritage Queensland (BHQ), was established at Windsor Road Baptist Church on 1 May 1984. Rev Owen Gregory was the first secretary, and the first chairman was Rev Dr David Parker. Membership was open to individuals, families and churches/organisations with the funds raised from the fees being the main source of the Society's operating expenses. The slogan, 'Preserve, Promote, Publish our Heritage', adopted from 1996, aptly sums up the aims and functions of the organisation. Work began on organising the Baptist Archives a little earlier so we are now both 30 years old.

You are warmly invited to a celebration of these 30 years at the Baptist Archives, QB Centre, 53 Prospect Road, Gaythorne on 31 May, commencing at 1.30pm. Please share this information and encourage your church and others to attend.

The program will feature a panel of 'Senior Baptists' sharing their reflections on the key events, people and trends of this period and how they have been influenced by them. These will be personal reflections and will show different perspectives on the 'tracks, trends and trophies' the last 30 years. There will be a Q & A session so you can explore further and share your own impressions.

The Archives will be open with displays of key photographs, records, publications and artefacts. There will be demonstrations of how information, documents and photographs can be located and used. You will also be able to 'Ask the Experts' about your project – family history, the story of your church, or managing your digital and other records. You can also bring along material such as photographs, letters, records, memorabilia for identification and evaluation of its historical significance.

Refreshments will be served. RSVP will be helpful.

For more information, contact the Archives or Baptist Heritage

2014 Meeting Dates — 31 May (30 year celebration); 8 Nov (AGM) 2pm @ Archives!

<p>Baptist Heritage Queensland (est. 1984)</p> <p>Membership (2014)</p> <p>Individual \$10 p.a. Family \$15 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a. <i>Qld Baptist Forum 3 issues p.a.</i></p> <p>Free to Members Others \$2 each posted</p> <p>President: <i>Mr Eric W. Kopittke</i> 98 Yallabee Rd., Jindalee 4074 Ph 3376 4339 <i>kopittke@tpg.com.au</i></p> <p>Secretary: <i>Dr Ken G. Smith,</i> 2301/15 Cansdale Street, Yeronga, Qld 4104 Ph 3892 6337 <i>tizzardsmith@hotmail.com</i></p> <p>http://parker.org.au/bhsq.htm archives@qb.com.au Ph 07-3354 5642</p>	<p>CONTENTS</p> <p>Qld Baptist Forum No 87 April 2014</p> <p>Trends—Tracks—Trophies: 30 years of the Archives and BHQ p 1</p> <p>'Preserve, Promote, & Publish our Heritage' 30 Year History of BHSQ Part 1 by David Parker p 2</p> <p>Exploring the 'Community' in Baptist Community' Churches by Dr Anne Klose p 6</p>
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'Preserve, Promote, & Publish our Heritage'

A 30 Year History of The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

Part 1

by David Parker

Formation and background

The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (BHSQ), now known as Baptist Heritage Queensland (BHQ), was established as a voluntary society operating within the Baptist denomination in Queensland at a meeting at Windsor Road Baptist Church on 1 May 1984. Rev Owen Gregory was the first secretary, and the first chairman was Rev Dr David Parker. Membership was open to individuals, families and churches/organisations with the funds raised from the fees being the main source of the Society's operating expenses. The slogan, 'Preserve, Promote, Publish our Heritage', adopted from 1996, aptly sums up the aims and functions of the organisation.

Precursors

More than 20 years earlier, there had been another initiative to care for Baptist historical interests in Queensland. In 1961 the Baptist Union appointed a committee, known as 'The Baptist Historical Society' as an official part of its structure. Principal TC Warriner, MA, BD, was the first convenor, but in 1963 Rev John E White, MA, assumed the position, which he held until 1979. Mr Bob Bavinton, LLB, held it for the remainder of the Committee's period of active existence. Others who were long-time members of this committee were Revs Dr EG Gibson, AM Hooker, GW Martin, SW Nickerson, FJC Stone, JC Ward, HE West, and Messrs JH Allsop, J Keilly, RH Maw, RJ Morris and J Pryce-Davies.

Although this committee had a 20-year life span, it was not very active, to say the least. It took two years before it was listed in the Baptist Union Year Book, and then another five years before it brought a report. Even then the report said that it had not met in the previous year, or had met only once, or that planning was under way. There are some letters in the files from the General Secretary, Rev FJC Stone, who was conscious of the importance of historical work, which 'encouraged' the committee to be more active, but evidently there was little response to these approaches. The Baptist Theological College did offer to provide storage for historical records.

It seemed that that Committee mainly saw itself as responding to directives from the Baptist Union, rather than taking initiatives of its own; those possible projects that it did discuss were not actioned. One such remit was the celebration of the centenary of the formation of the Baptist Union, due in 1977. However, not long after adopting this project, it became clear that celebrations would need to be quite large, so planning was moved to a new centenary committee created especially for the purpose by the Union. On the literary side, Rev JE White was commissioned to write the official history of the Baptist Union which was to be published in conjunction with the centenary. But the committee had little to do with that because once work got under way, it became the author's personal responsibility. By the

time the book, *A Fellowship of Service*, was published at the end of 1977, the committee had stopped meeting.

There had also been earlier interest at a national level. In 1950, the Baptist Union of Australia established the Australian Baptist Historical Society as one of its boards. The Society had its own official crest, (see page 8) and cost five shillings to join; a gift of 10 guineas bought life membership. The Society put out a magazine called *Churinga* (Aboriginal for tradition) for a few years, but then both Society and magazine ceased to exist. Vice-Presidents were appointed by the State Unions, but interestingly, there never was one listed for Queensland!

Some historical work had been done many years before. The official records of the Union, although not organised into an effective archival collection, had been preserved quite well (with only a couple of major omissions). (See separate 30-year history of Baptist Church Archives Qld for more information.) There had also been some earlier historical publications. The most significant of these was a 135-page, copiously illustrated, book produced at the time of the jubilee of Baptist work in 1905. It consisted of the proceedings of the extensive celebrations and a 10,000-word history of the denomination and the 28 churches that existed up to that time. This had been edited for publication by Rev Wm Higlett, using a manuscript more than three times as long written by Edmund Gregory, the Government Printer and leading Baptist layman.

The earliest histories were the fourth annual report of the Wharf Street church issued in 1859, and a series of articles by one of the early pastors, Rev Wm Moore, published in 1886. Moore's work consisted of personal reflections and memories; another early personal, but controversial, account was written by layman, Joshua Jenyns, who participated in some of the most spectacular developments of church expansion by division. Mr Higlett also included a short account of Queensland Baptist life in his booklet published in association with the formation of the Baptist Union of Australia in 1926. The centenary of Baptists in Queensland in 1955 was low key and no historical work was produced. (Some of these documents are reproduced in *Remember all the Way! A Century of Baptist Heritage* published by BHSQ in 1996.)

Formation

So there was a need for a body to foster historical interest, research, publication and preservation of materials. This sort of effort had been happening effectively elsewhere in Australia, especially in New South Wales, where a historical society with a voluntary membership had developed an enviable record of service since 1974. Then there were the highly successful groups overseas, especially the Baptist Historical Society in UK (founded 1906) and the American Baptist Historical Society in USA (founded 1853).

So at the 1983 Queensland Baptist Assembly, following discussion with various officials and other interested people stretching over the previous year, Dr David Parker, who had research interests covering Queensland Baptist history, proposed the formation of a society in Queensland on lines similar to those followed in NSW. (One document, dated 1969, actually proposed a very similar function for the old committee, but it was not acted upon at that time.) Dr Parker was appointed convenor of the existing historical committee, and it was given the brief to investigate the proposal. Administratively, it would be recognised as an 'Associated Fellowship' of the Baptist Union of Queensland.

The committee endorsed the idea of forming a Society along the lines of the NSW Society, and steps were taken for its formation on 1 May 1984 with the blessing of the Baptist Union. None of the existing committee members continued their involvement, except for Rev John White who acted as an unofficial patron until his death in 1993. It was also proposed that another committee (possibly the existing one) would be responsible for the Archives of the Baptist Union which were then in a process of being organised. However, no action was ever taken on this idea, and a little later, Dr Parker, who had begun working with the archival material in late 1982, was appointed Archives Officer (*for details, see separate history of the Archives*).

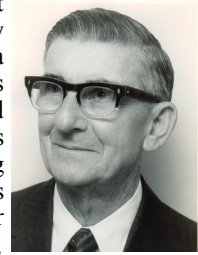
The aims and objects of Baptist Historical Society of Queensland were:

1. To encourage research into the history of Baptists, especially those in Queensland
2. To encourage the preservation of important Baptist records
3. To encourage the collating and recording of Baptist history
4. To foster interest in Baptist history at the local church level
5. To assist research students at schools, colleges and universities
6. To publish articles and historical information
7. To be alert to church jubilees, centenaries and other significant anniversaries for Baptists and where possible, assist in the provision of relevant historical details
8. To promote care of buildings and sites of historical interest to Baptists.

The Constitution and these aims were modelled on the successful BHS of NSW but there was one major difference – in NSW, the BHS itself took on the role of gathering historical material and creating an Archives, but in Queensland, it was decided that the Archives were the responsibility of the Baptist Union itself. However, the Queensland Society would be supportive of Archives in a practical and advisory sense. A close relationship was developed which has continued throughout.

The meeting at Windsor Road Church to form the Society featured Rev John White, who had written the centenary history, as the main speaker. The General Superintendent, Rev Brian Jenkins, brought greetings from the Baptist Union, while Rev Dr David Parker screened an audio-visual, 'Exploring Baptist Brisbane' highlighting important sites around the city.

The second meeting was held at South Brisbane Church on 16 July 1984 with the theme, 'Preparing a local church history'. Speakers included Rev Larry Holt who had recently written the host church's history, Rev John Ward ('Printing and publishing your church's history') and Dr David Parker ('Why write your church's history'); other contributors were Mr Dick Scanlan of Laidley, who shared his local church and family history experiences, and Mr Alan Miles (by tape) who had recently issued a history of the Rosalie church.



Rev JE White

The initial plan for the Society's operation was to hold several public meetings each year, publish a journal as a channel for research and information, and generally promote historical awareness and activity in whatever ways opened up. Initial support was encouraging. The first issue of the 'Baptist Historical Society of Queensland Newsletter' appeared in September 1984. Membership, which cost only \$5 per annum, reached 20 within the first year.

However, the initial interest was short lived, and already by late 1985 it seemed that the society would go out of existence. At this point, several key people responded with a long term commitment which ensured the survival of the group, even if ambitions were now a little more restrained. Mrs Ellen Chataway took over the secretarial post, and her husband, Rev Vince Chataway, cared for the finances.

Activities

Newsletter

The first two newsletters were produced on a typewriter, photocopied in A4 size and stapled. From No. 3, July 1985, a word processor was used but the same photocopy production continued, settling down to three issues of eight pages per year, with Dr David Parker as editor. Later on, better software and photocopying machines improved the production; this was especially the case with photographs as screening gave way to digital techniques. The name was changed to *Queensland Baptist Forum* in 1995, and by the end of 2013, 86 issues, extending to 729 pages, had been produced, all of which had been digitised.

Over the years, the journal contained a variety of articles, including news about local Baptist historical events; information and reports about BHSQ events, including notes of lectures and talks, and annual reports; book reviews; and articles providing guidance on doing history and caring for church records. Some articles were reproduced from historic material previously appearing in the *Queensland Baptist*, especially two interesting series on churches and early pastors. Many of the articles were the result of the research of members and friends, some of which later appeared in BHSQ books.

The journal is included as part of BHSQ membership, but complimentary copies were also sent to Baptist Historical Societies in other states and some local institutions and libraries. A summary of the contents of each issue is posted on the BHSQ website

and the entire run is available for purchase in PDF format.

Events

Several public gatherings were held in the first year or so, but this ambitious program soon settled down to three meetings for planning and discussion of historical work, and one public presentation each year. The planning meetings were held on Saturday afternoons in the hope that this timing would enable busy people to attend. They were held at the Archives, or at a church or in a private home, until after the opening of the Archives at Gaythorne in 2005 which then became the regular meeting place.

The public gatherings, sometimes called the 'Annual Festivals of Baptist Heritage', were usually organised to link in with some popular theme or interest group at a local church. The two most successful were a celebration of the anniversary of the publication of the book by pioneer Baptist missionary, William Carey, 'The Enquiry', and a celebration of German Baptist Heritage. The Carey event held on 20 May 1992, also marking the bi-centenary of the Baptist Missionary Society, filled Windsor Road Baptist Church to capacity even though the weather was atrocious and the State of Origin was on nearby! Its huge success was due in large measure to the state Department of Mission enthusing its people to mark such important events, and also to the quality of the lecture by Dr Ken Manley of Whitley College, Melbourne, Australia's foremost Baptist historian. For the German Baptist celebration, hundreds of people came to Laidley on 5 July 1986 for a very well laden fellowship meal, *Liebefest*, followed by a musical and concert program at the Town Hall, accompanied by many displays of maps, photographs and other memorabilia. It was a worthy celebration of an important and unique strand of Baptist life in Queensland, and a tribute to those representing the participating churches who organised it.

Not all of these public events were so successful – in fact the one held in August 1985 at Taringa Baptist Church focusing on the work of Queensland's first missionary, Martha Plested, was a complete failure, as was an open day in 1993 to mark the re-establishment of the Archives in its new premises. However, most achieved their aims and they covered a wide range of topics. Some were linked to events such as the heritage listing of City Tabernacle church (1984), the history of Windsor Road (1985); or to a family (such as the Brooks-Hiron family at Toowong, 1998), or an activity such as Baptist camping (Greenslopes, 1991). A workshop on family history was held at Albion in 1994; other topics included CH Spurgeon (1988), the Baptist Theological College (1989), Clifford House (Community Services) (1990), and the architecture of Baptist church buildings (1987). In some cases, the event focused on the launching of a book, such as biographies of Rev James Voller (1997), and Rev AH Brooks (1998).

The last of the Festivals of Baptist Heritage was held at Centenary church in 2002 to celebrate the extensive church planting ministry of Jireh Church. After this, the focus turned to sales tables and presentations at the Annual Assembly, sometimes linked to a book launching.

Archives support

Even though the BHSQ did not aim at creating its own Archives, it worked in closely with the Baptist Church Archives Queensland (BCAQ). The Archives exists to collect, preserve and manage the historical records and to deal with basic enquiries, while the Historical Society takes on the larger role of research, promotion and publishing.

In the early period, when BCAQ was still being organised, some of the BHSQ meetings were workshop sessions to provide practical help. Since 2005, when the Archives were set up at the QB Centre, Gaythorne, and a regular team of volunteers established, the need for practical assistance has lessened. The Archives staff, however, value the support, interest and advice of the BHSQ.

Other interests

The aims of the BHSQ were intentionally designed to be wide, in the hope that the Society could offer support to whatever interests appeared within the scope of Baptist work in Queensland and beyond. One of these areas of interest, Baptist cemeteries, was a speciality of Eric and Rosemary Kopittke who have taken a leading role in the Society. The German Baptist churches at Vernor, Mt Walker/Coleville, Tarampa, Minden, Kalbar and Boonah as well as the church at Highfields are the only ones in Queensland to have operated their own cemeteries. The Society has taken an interest in the welfare and physical state of these cemeteries, and Eric and Rosemary have transcribed and published their Monumental Inscriptions. They also have vast experience, knowledge and contacts in Family History which they have made available to the Society through seminars, publication, research and assistance in answering queries. Another particular interest they have is 19th century German immigration, which has been a source of considerable help for the work of BHSQ.

Local Baptist Church history is another area that BHSQ has fostered. One of its first projects was to provide guidance on how churches could manage, research and present their history. This advice took the form of several Guide Sheets, a day-long seminar and a session at an Assembly, as well as answering numerous enquiries and helping to care for church records in the Archives. BHSQ people have attended some local church historical events, although many churches do not mark these events very well or notify the BHSQ about them.

Membership

When BHSQ was established in 1984, it was set up as a membership-based organisation, in contrast to the previous group which was a functional committee appointed by the Baptist Union. A vigorous effort was made to promote membership, but it was not anticipated that a large number of people would join. The main aim was to be a place where those interested in Baptist history could meet, share their work and find outlets for publication. Over the years, many of its members have been deeply involved in this kind of work, while also, in some cases, maintaining other interests. As often as possible, information about church celebrations is featured in *Forum*.

The work of Eric and Rosemary Kopittke in family history and German immigration has already been mentioned. In addition, Rev Melvin C Williams not only published several Baptist historical studies for the BHSQ, but was also an award-winning numismatist with an interest in medals and communion tokens; the latter interests revealed themselves in research he carried out on Baptist Sunday School examination awards and communion practices at Jireh and other churches. Richard Scanlan, OAM, of Laidley wrote several pieces about his local church, its aged care facility and some of its people as well as working in the wider areas of German Baptist life and German family history. Les J Ball completed a PhD in Queensland Baptist history, while Peter Whitehead wrote the history of Gordon Park church and Dr Ken Smith did extensive research on the work of the Queensland Baptist Social Questions Committee. Rev John Lane wrote on Baptists in the South Burnett and completed a loving biography of his father, Rev Sam Lane.

Changes at 10 years

After 10 years of activity, Dr David Parker handed the leadership of BHSQ to Dr Les Ball, lecturer at the Baptist Theological College of Queensland who had recently completed the first PhD in Queensland Baptist studies at the University of Queensland; Les assumed leadership at the 1984 annual meeting. The next year, Mrs Ellen Chataway also relinquished her role as Secretary after 10 valuable years in the post; Dr Pat Godman, a former missionary, who had recently completed his doctoral studies at the University of Queensland, took over this role.

19th century records preserved

Les Ball's research had covered 19th century Baptist life in considerable detail, which gave him a first-rate insight into the churches of that period, and especially the value of the documents belonging to these churches and the Baptist Union. Concerned for their preservation and access, he suggested that these ought to be microfilmed. So after a successful application to Baplink, the Baptist Union's financial arm, for a grant of \$1200, work began in 1996. Over the course of the following years, and with assistance of another grant, the Minutes and membership rolls of the major 19th century churches up to about 1920 were all filmed and produced as microfiche. In addition, the Minutes of the Baptist Union Assemblies and Executive meetings were also covered. This collection, along with the microfiches of the 'Queensland Freeman/Baptist' which had been done by John Oxley Library in the mid-1980s, proved to be a valuable asset. They were digitally scanned in 2012 making them even more useful.

Another new venture in the mid-1990s was the book publication program. Dr Les Ball initiated this development which resulted in a decision to produce modestly priced books on topics of interest for the average reader. The advent of computerised desktop publishing processes meant that it was feasible to produce books in smaller quantities; assistance was gained from Church Archivists' Society based in Toowoomba which had considerable experience already in this avenue of publishing.

The Annual Meeting held 6 November 1993 made the decision to establish a new fund and to begin work

on the first publication. It would be a 40-page informational booklet called *Baptists in Queensland* which would cover the history, beliefs and practical aspects of church life, suitable for new members, students and others needing basic information about Baptist life in the State. Dr Ball wrote the chapter on Baptist history with a focus on the Queensland story; Dr Stan Nickerson, Principal of the Baptist Theological College, wrote the chapter on Baptist beliefs; and the section on the operation and activity of local churches was penned by veteran pastor, Rev Norm Weston. Overall editing and preparation of many side-boxes and illustrations and other attractive features was carried out by Dr David Parker.

Funds were needed for the venture which were raised by special appeal. Preparation went smoothly, and the book was launched at the National Baptist Family Convention held at Griffith University on 6 January 1994 by Mr Ollwyn Abbott, Secretary of the Baptist Union of Australia. It cost \$2.50 and sales were brisk; a reprint was soon required. This volume remained popular for new membership classes and as an introduction to Baptist life. A new 'Millennium' edition was produced in 2000, which sold out completely at the Assembly where it was launched, requiring another reprint immediately. It was completely revised and issued in an attractive colour cover in 2013 with sponsorship by the Baptist Union of Queensland which distributed copies to all churches.

Leadership changes

After three years, Dr Les Ball found that he was unable to continue as President due to pressure of work in his role as Academic Dean of the Queensland Baptist College of Ministries (formerly Baptist Theological College of Queensland). So at the 1997 annual meeting, Eric Kopittke, BSc, BA, DipEd, a secondary Physics and Maths teacher, was appointed to replace him. Dr Ball made another significant contribution to the Society in 2005 when he wrote the 19th century section of the sesquicentenary history of Baptists in Queensland. He also contributed to the centenary history of the Theological College published in 2004 and wrote the sesquicentenary history of the City Tabernacle Baptist Church in 2005.

There had also been a change in secretary. Dr Pat Godman transferred to Canberra in 1996 and Rev Rod Benson was acting secretary for a short time. At the 1996 Annual Meeting, Dr Ken Smith, who taught Maths at the University of Queensland and had been active in a number of Baptist Union committees including Social Questions and the Department of Theological Studies, took over the position. Ken had already published some of his findings on the history of Social Questions in the BHSQ newsletter, and Eric Kopittke and his wife Rosemary had several publications in their areas of Family History and German immigration. Rosemary Kopittke, BSc, BA, was also appointed to the role of Publications Officer. Eric, Rosemary and Ken have remained in these roles since. Rev Keith Applegate made a significant contribution not only by assisting with one of the publications and carrying out some basic research while visiting England, but also by placing some of his office facilities at the disposal of the Society during the 1990s.

TO BE CONTINUED

Exploring the 'Community' in Baptist 'Community' Churches

By Dr Anne Klose

We congratulate Dr Anne Klose, a prominent member of BHQ, on being awarded a PhD from the University of Queensland in November 2013. Her prize-winning thesis is called: 'Joint and Mutual Covenantal Priesthood: A Narrative of Community for Australian Baptist Churches.' This article is based on it. We look forward to more articles in the future. Anne was also the winner of our BHQ Baptist Essay prize in 2010.



'Community' has become quite a buzz word in Australian Baptist church circles. We like to feel that our churches are 'communities'... that they are places of warm and authentic relationality where people feel welcomed and included. Community is something that we feel is at a premium in society, a bit like

some exotic, endangered species. Community is therefore something distinctive that we can offer to those seeking shelter from the isolation of our neighbourly suburbs.

But my suspicion is that even within our Baptist churches our sense of community sometimes only runs a little deeper than that which is offered by our wider society; also, contrary to some views, this is *not* an inevitable outcome of our Baptist insistence that God summons people into personal/individual relationship with himself.

Church Community as 'Family'

So let's begin with the terms that many of us currently prefer to use in narrating (providing the story behind) the nature of our church community. Firstly, at the top of our list of favourites is 'family' – and what's not to love about this term? It's scriptural (e.g. Mark 3:31-35; Gal 1:2; 1 Pet 2:17), and we expect that people will relate it to the best aspects of being part of a human family - unconditional love, support and encouragement. Darrell Jackson, now teaching at Morling College in Sydney, explored the use of 'family' as part of his ThD research in the UK, and found that this language is used to encompass this much-prized relationality, including mutual responsibility and accountability, but that it is without formal structure, and appears to hold only as long as the individual's needs are met. Perhaps what is really meant when we talk about church as 'family' is actually more like 'network' in which 'connecting and disconnecting are equally legitimate choices... [and] connections are entered on demand, and can be broken at will'.

We *speak* of family, but we seem to *mean* something far less rigorous and demanding. Dr Jackson suggests that perhaps placing more focus on the local church as 'the body of Christ' might counter such trends. He suggests that, in such terms, relationality is about who we are as a community at the very core of our being. The mutuality of our relationships is

deepened through the ongoing flow of action and reaction, of 'obligation and service'.

But, Australian Baptist churches appear able to take this language and give it, also, an individualistic slant. We can all too easily explain this 'body' language as valuing 'highly the worth of every individual and the diversity of their gifts.' Being part of the 'body of Christ' is, thus, still mainly about our own, individual relationship with Christ, and what this means for each of us in our diversity rather than our unity.

So, it would appear, we tend to limit our engagement with the scriptural images of what it means to be a church community to just a couple of the narratives available to us. We treat these in a fairly narrow way which perhaps doesn't have all that much to do with their scriptural context.

The Church Community in Scripture

And I do not believe, as I indicated above, that this is an inevitable outcome of our Baptist commitment to each person coming into their own relationship with God in a way which cannot be mediated by anyone else. Each of us comes on a personal basis to Christ, but in doing so we are welcomed into the open-plan home of the Trinity - Father, Son and Spirit – and, in Christ, the home of all God's people. We are, by the Spirit and through our baptism, *together* 'in Christ' (1 Cor 12:12-13). The new covenant which Jesus inaugurated through his own blood (Luke 22:20), whilst making the fundamental shift from inclusion in God's family on the basis of communal ethnicity to inclusion on the basis of personal faith, in no way does away with the drive towards the *reconciled community* which mends that which was marred in Eden (Eph 2:11-22). It encompasses both divine-human and human-human relationality – which are inseparable and fundamental to the very nature of salvation.

We are those 'called out' by God (ἐκκλησία), with our communal nature and life grounded in him; we are constituted by the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4; 1 Cor 12:12-13; Eph 4:1-5): we are God's household and family (Gal 1:2; 4:4-7; 6:10; Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15; 1 Pet 2:17; 4:17); we are the body of Christ (Rom 12:3-5; 1 Cor 12:12-27; Eph 1:22-23); we are the 'new humanity' (Eph 2:15); and the new temple of the Lord/Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21; 1 Pet 2:5.) In addition, as God proclaimed of Israel, and together with the believers of the New Testament, we are ordained as God's nation and priesthood (Eph 2:19; 1 Pet 2:9; cf. Exod 19:5-6).

And it is all this that comes to expression in the most common, local form of the New Testament ecclesia. The body of Christ is not an abstract construct but, rather, to be Christian is to engage with and participate in a particular, embodied community of believers so that God's life may come to expression in the world.

The Priesthood of God's People

It is the concept of the priesthood of God's people as local gathered communities, which has captured my attention over the past four years as I have worked on my doctoral thesis in Practical Theology. Whilst the grand turning points of the scriptural narrative (such as creation, fall, Israel, law, Christ, church, and eschaton) are the bones of God's story, themes such as priesthood (and covenant, rest, temple, sacrifice and kingdom) provide its ligaments, holding the canon of Scripture together, and affording us the means by which to link the parts of this story in particular ways down through the ages.



Blackwater Baptist Church float in community event

God first proclaimed Israel's communal priesthood in Exodus 19:6: they were to be his 'priestly kingdom and a holy nation'. In a manner which paralleled the work of the caste of priests set aside from within their ranks, they were, as one people, to act as God's priesthood before the nations. A priest, in this Old Testament setting, was one who, qualified by the holiness of his own life (both gifted to him at installation and guarded by him in the cultic and ethical purity of his life), constantly turned in mediation between YHWH and his people. The priest faced YHWH, representing the people in their humble and grateful worship before YHWH's holiness and covenant faithfulness. Then, inevitably, the priest turned to face the people, conveying what he had witnessed in his worship, and representing YHWH to them: guaranteeing YHWH's good will; presenting YHWH's image to them; and speaking on YHWH's behalf in revelation, instruction, and blessing/declaration (Judg 8:27; 17:13; 8:27).

Having been face to face with the people in their plight, in compassion based on personal experience, Israel's priest then turned again to YHWH and represented the people before him: the high priest bearing in his breastplate a reminder of the tribes of Israel, bringing Israel to 'continual remembrance before the Lord' (Exod 28:12, 29-30), confessing the sins of all the people over the scapegoat, and interceding for

them (Lev 16:21; Ezra 6:10; Joel 1:13). And so on, over and over, driven by a priestly imperative to live and serve in the gap between YHWH and YHWH's people, Israel.

In the New Testament, and most especially in the Letter to the Hebrews, we see that this shadowy yet fundamental form of priesthood comes to glorious fulfillment in Jesus Christ. In his life, death and resurrection, Jesus had qualified as the perfect high priest: perfect in his representation of God to humanity (John 1:14; 5:19, 30; 8:28; 12:49; 2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15; Heb 1:3); perfect in his compassionate representation of humanity to God (Matt 4:1-11; 9:36; Luke 19:41-44; John 11:28-37; Rom 8:34; Heb 2:10-18; 4:14-5:10); and perfect in both his capacity to offer and to be an atoning sacrifice (John 1:29; 36; Rom 3:24-25; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb 5:7-10; 7:26-28; 9:11-14, 23-27; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:12).

In all these ways 'he offers to the Father that worship, that obedience, that life of love in unbroken intimate communion', and, in doing so, opens the way for those who are *in him* to take up their own communal priestly role, offering their worship both *in* and *through* Christ (Rom 5:11; 6:3, 6-7; 5:11; Col 2:6-3:17; 1 Tim 2:15). The derivative nature of the priesthood of New Testament church communities is highlighted in the types of sacrifice which they are called to make: no longer cultic or atoning, but prayerful and ethical in nature (Heb 13:15; Rom 12; 2 Cor 9:11-15; Phil 4:18; Rev 5:8; 8:3-4).

Communal Priesthood in Three Dimensions

My research has led me to suggest that this priesthood may be understood as coming to expression in three key dimensions: worship, life together and mission.

Firstly, the worship of the churches as they are represented in the New Testament no longer revolved around a single human priest who alone had access to the Father. Now, as participants in 'a *polycentric-participative community*', based upon baptism and charisma, each member was expected to bring their gifting and contribution to the community's corporate worship (1 Cor 14:26. See also 1 Cor 12). With Christ as their high priest making the way open to God, and with the Holy Spirit as their very present orchestrator, these priestly participants did not stand alone before the Father in worship but ministered together to him, not just polyphonically but symphonically. Theirs was a *joint* priesthood of worship.

Secondly, communal priesthood under the new covenant, just as it had for Israel, carried with it a requirement to maintain the God-hosting holiness of the community. So, for Paul, there was no doubt that the true worship of Christ's followers, their fitting and reasonable response to all that God had done (Rom 1-11), would consist of the priestly exercise of offering their bodies, their whole beings, as 'a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship' (Rom 12:1), resulting in their mutual, sacrificial service (Rom 12:1; cf. 6:13; 1 Pet 2:5). This reorientation of mind and will towards obedience to God



(Rom 12:2), would result in the relativisation of the individual's self-interest (Rom 12:3) because, fundamentally, 'we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another' (Rom

12:5). The love and mutuality of the community was not, therefore, dependent upon personal inclination but was indeed structured by its relatedness in Christ. There was a *mutual* priesthood.

And thirdly, this priesthood of the new covenant was to labour together in mission through priestly representation. They were to *represent God to the world* by drawing on all their joint resources to proclaim the good news of Christ, to perpetuate those actions which Jesus performed and identified as the markers of the inauguration of that kingdom (healing, liberating and raising up the poor), and to bear witness by the quality of their lives together. Then, together, as Christ's body, the church was to *represent the world to God* by taking on its 'Christ-shaped' role and, in doing so, 'to bear the pain and shame of the world in its own body, that the world may be healed' (see, for example, 2 Cor 4:7-12; 2 Tim 1:8-9; 1 Pet 2:18-25). There was a *joint* mission.

This vision of the local church as a *joint and mutual priesthood* is, of course, not the only way in which we might challenge and enrich our current understanding of what it means to be 'community' – there are all the other scriptural narratives of church to explore as well. But, as I will go on to outline in a forthcoming issue of *The Queensland Baptist Forum*, this vision is one which the early Baptists lived out with great commitment - and is brimming over with narratival resources for our church *communities*.

Notes

1. An exploration of how the themes which are raised in this paper have been dealt with throughout the history of Baptist ecclesiology will be the subject of a further issue of *The Queensland Baptist Forum*.

2. Darrell Jackson, "The Discourse of 'Belonging' and Baptist Church Membership in Contemporary Britain: Historical, Theological and Demotic Elements of a Post-Foundational Theological Proposal" (University of Birmingham, 2009), 153,154. Whilst Darrell Jackson's research was

conducted in the UK and may therefore not be applicable to the Australian context in all its particulars, I would argue that the phenomena it describes are largely recognisable in the Australian Baptist situation.

3. Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003), xii.

4. Jackson, "The Discourse of 'Belonging' ", 153.

5. Our use of these scriptural allusions is, in Jackson's terms, largely 'disembedded' from their scriptural context. Jackson, "The Discourse of 'Belonging' ", 65.

6. Miroslav Volf, *After Our Likeness: The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998), 172, emphasis in original.

7. Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Broadman & Holman, 2000), 485.

8. See Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 466-467. Robert Banks, *Paul's Idea of Community: The Early House Churches in Their Historical Setting* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 49-52.

9. D.A. Carson, *Christ and Culture Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 2012), 45.

10. Frank Rees, "The Worship of All Believers," *The Baptist Quarterly* 41, no. July (2005): 178.

11. Richard D. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest: Community and Priesthood in Biblical Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 86,87.

12. Bruce C. Birch et al., *A Theological Introduction to the Old Testament* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1999), 137.

13. Nelson, *Raising up a Faithful Priest*, 86.

14. John 1:29; 36; Rom 3:24-25; 1 Cor 5:7; Eph 5:2; Heb 5:7-10; 7:26-28; 9:11-14, 23-27; 1 Pet 1:19; Rev 5:12.

15. James B. Torrance, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace* (Carlisle, UK: Paternoster Press, 1996), 48.

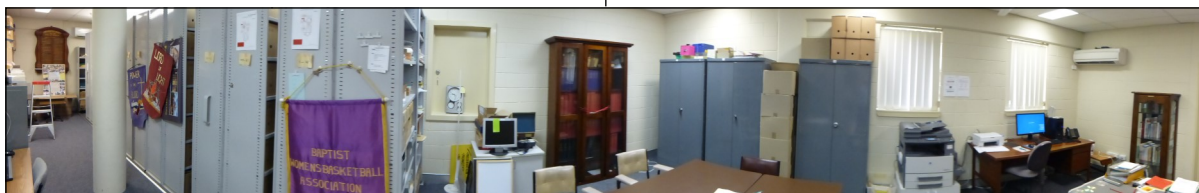
16. Greg Liston, "The Dynamics of Trinitarian Worship," *New Zealand Journal of Baptist Research* 6 (2001): 35,36.

17. Alex T.M. Cheung, "The Priest as the Redeemed Man: A Biblical-Theological Study of the Priesthood," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29, no. 3 (1986): 274.

18. Miroslav Volf, "Community Formation as an Image of the Triune God: A Congregational Model of Church Order and Life," in *Community Formation in the Early Church and in the Church Today*, ed. Richard N. Longenecker (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2002), 231.

19. Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995), 230.

20. N. T. Wright, *The Climax of the Covenant: Christ and the Law in Pauline Theology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1991), 256.



Panoramic view of Baptist Church Archives, Qld