

# Brookside

## Muswellbrook Baptist Church

### 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary BOOK



Sunday August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service

Photo: Jess Dugan Photography

# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book

## Muswellbrook Baptist Church 2018

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## **Introduction**

### **A message from the Pastor Rev Darryl Spicer**

For the past 3 years it has been my great privilege to be Brookside's (Muswellbrook Baptist Church) Pastor.

Like most churches of a similar age Brookside has seen change. Change in our world, Prime Ministers come and go, sporting championships played for. We have seen the highs and lows of a town built around mining. We have seen our farmers go through droughts. We have seen babies born and children grow and we have been there as people have left our church family, be it for work, school or being called to glory.

I believe that through this we as a church have done what churches do. We have met together be it during a weekly service or in home groups, we have offered prayer and worshipped together, we have laughed and had moments of joy, as well as times where we have cried and mourned together. We have shared meals and communions, we have seen people commit their lives to Jesus and be baptised. Things have changed.

But one thing in all of Brookside's history hasn't changed. And that is our God. For fifty years this church has desired more of God. For fifty years this church has tried to help people explore what Jesus means for them. I believe that for

fifty years this church has sought out to live in faith and care for it's people and it's town.

This account of the life of Brookside is not us patting ourselves on the back for the good work we have done but rather it is a reminder that this is all for the glory of our Saviour Jesus. So as you read give thanks and pray that in another fifty years we will still be doing this for His glory. Please pray with me for this church and town.

*Dear God,*

*We praise you for the blessings you have given those who have attended Brookside, or Muswellbrook Baptist Church over the past 50 years. We thank you for all those who have been involved in different ways and at different seasons. We thank you for the ways you have spoken to us and the way you have allowed your Holy Spirit to minister through us.*

*Father we pray that you would continue to bless us by speaking to us and revealing yourself to us for the next 50 years and beyond. We pray that we might be attuned to your will for us as a church in the township of Muswellbrook. We pray your blessing upon our friends old and new, those who are here, wish they could be or were only briefly connected to us; we pray for those who have come before and those who will come in the future.*

*Thank you Jesus for 50 years of Brookside, Muswellbrook Baptist Church.  
Amen*

## **The second volume of our history.**

In 1993 Muswellbrook Baptist Church held its 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and as part of that celebration a book was written to give an outline of the history of those first 25 years. Twenty five more years have past, and this document is being written to be a complement to that original book and to continue the story. The original book has also been made available as an electronic document with the newer material, in order that those who have become a part of the church since that time, and those who don't have a copy of that book, can have access to the earlier material. It is intended that all of this material will be made available on the church website - [www.brookside.org.au](http://www.brookside.org.au).

The information gathered here only forms a small part of the events to mark this Golden Anniversary. A dinner was held on Saturday August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2018, and also a commemorative worship service on Sunday morning August 26<sup>th</sup>. In addition, a collection of photos covering the period 1993 to 2018 will be made available in electronic format. A limited number will be displayed on the church website.

It is our prayer that God's glory has been increased and the gospel has been made known through our congregation. We don't exist for ourselves, but as a living witness to the salvation and reconciliation available through our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God for His generosity to us, for His provision of leadership and especially of pastoral care through the ministers we have had during this time. We look to God's help in the next exciting twenty-five, fifty, or more years, until the next instalment of this history is written.

## **CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS**

- 1964 Baptist Christians began to meet together in Muswellbrook.  
Rev. William Bartlett from Singleton commences ministry here.
- 1966 The block on the corner of Sydney and Mitchell Streets (no. 79 Sydney Street) was purchased.
- 1968 The Church was formally constituted, with 15 members.  
Worship was held in the Senior Citizens Centre and C.W.A. rooms.
- 1969 Rev. Rodney Williams ministered for three years.
- 1974 A wooden building from Sandgate church was transported and erected on 79 Sydney Street. The first building was opened. Rev. G. Miers of Singleton commenced ministry.
- 1975 The adjacent block and house (no 77 Sydney St) were purchased.
- 1977 Rev. David Schmidt was called to the joint pastorate of the Upper Hunter Baptist Fellowship - including Muswellbrook.
- 1980 Two bedroom cottage at 60 King St purchased as potential manse.
- 1981 King St property sold and the church acquired the 5 bedroom manse in Wilkins St for our first resident Pastor, Rev. Garry Folwell.
- 1985 The Upper Hunter Fellowship was dissolved, (i.e. the link with Singleton) giving the Muswellbrook church full responsibility for the Upper Hunter (Muswellbrook +Scone).
- 1986 The Scone Fellowship called their first Pastor and Garry Folwell finished his ministry at Muswellbrook.
- 1986 The church building was expanded to twice its size, its opening coinciding with the arrival of the Rev. Neil Cowling.
- 1993 The church's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary  
The conclusion of Neil Cowling's ministry.
- 1995 The commencement of Rev Chris Nelson's ministry.  
Purchase of 2 Mitchell St
- 2002 The finish of Chris Nelson's ministry.
- 2003 The commencement of Rev Matt Ortiger's ministry.
- 2007 Demolition of No. 77 Sydney St.  
Creation of leadership structure with the PST (Pastoral Support Team) and AST (Administrative Support Team).
- 2008 Opening of the new extension by Mrs Pat Carson. This provided a new hall, kitchen, two offices, a bathroom with shower within the building



and two Sunday School rooms, plus a sealed car park where the old No. 77 house used to stand.

- 2010 Move to a Pastoral Team with appointment of Richard French as part-time Associate (Sept) and Dave Burgess as full-time Associate (Oct). Church becomes known as 'Brookside'.
- 2011 Start of the church plant in Scone (SALT). Dave Burgess finishes his ministry.
- 2012 Tristan Hinds called as an associate pastor.
- 2014 Finish of Matt Ortiger's and Tristan Hind's ministry.
- 2015 Construction of the new playground by church members.
- 2015 The commencement of Rev Darryl Spicer's ministry.



**Chris Nelson baptizes Robert French with Clinton Baker in 2002.**

## **Greetings from Chris Nelson – Pastor 1995-2002**

“But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” Ephesians 2:4-5.

It would have to be one of the great visions given to a prophet in the Bible. Ezekiel sees a valley full of dry bones. It is a vision of death and defeat. He is told to speak to the bones. The bones come together. Tendons, flesh and skin appear, but they are not alive.

Ezekiel is told to speak once more. This time he is to speak to the four winds and to command them to breathe into those who have been defeated and slain in battle. And the vast army assembled before Ezekiel comes to life. The dead live and fulfil God's plan for this world.

By the time we get to the apostle Paul and his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Ezekiel's vision begins to make sense to us. Because of God's great love and mercy those who were dead in their rebellion and sin are made alive in Christ. Those who were cut off and condemned by God become living breathing sons and daughters, and at the centre of it all is Jesus Christ our Lord. He makes such a life changing miracle possible.

My time at Muswellbrook Community Baptist Church was all about seeing and experiencing this new life in Christ. I saw the dry bones of the dead come alive as they received God's great love and as they enjoyed his rich mercy in Christ.

In the eight years my family and I spent in Muswellbrook, I saw men, women and children living out his new life in Christ our Lord. I cannot mention all of them but I can highlight a few that stand out.

Jim Beckwith and John Rogers displayed this life as elders within the church. Along with their wives Daphne and Chris, they provided a wonderful example of what it means to know Christ, to teach Christ and to be filled with his wisdom and love.

Bill and Janine Summers sacrificed time and energy to launch OASIS, a ministry that helped children of all ages to hear about Christ in a way that was accessible and appealing at the same time.

There was Robert French and the other youth who had the entire church singing and celebrating with the heavy metal band POD, as we sang together the 2001 hit single Alive.

Now that I know you (I could never turn my back away)  
Now that I see you (I could never look away)  
Now that I know you (I could never turn my back away)  
Now that I see you (I believe no matter what they say)  
I feel so alive for the very first time

There was Nicole Blundell acting out her year 12 interpretation of Dr Faustus and his terrible deal with the devil. She helped us to see what it means to be dead to God and why his love and mercy are so important to us.

There was Curt and Mekelle our students from Texas and the look of horror on their faces when while sitting in the church kitchen an Aussie blow fly began flying around their heads. They displayed what it means to be in Christ as they shared their lives with us far beyond the months they spent with us as students.

There was Shaun Potts sharing the gospel to friends and family as he highlighted the wonder and the majesty of Jesus our Lord. He himself would suffer from poor health and still does to this day, but the Lord continues to use him as he shows what it means to live for Christ in the midst of suffering.

Then there was Ivy Eagleton, baptised at the age of 92. She showed us that it was never too late to celebrate and recognise the life we have with God in Jesus our Lord. A couple of years later she would pass away leaving behind a wonderful and unforgettable example of what it means to always be growing in Jesus Christ our Lord.

We are the fulfilment of Ezekiel's wonderful vision. We are the dead made alive. And as Paul repeats again and again in his wonderful letter to the Christians in Ephesus, it all happens in Christ.

And so with these memories in mind I join with Paul and countless others by singing "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."



**Matt Ortiger at the Muswellbrook South Public School working Bee, 2012.**

## **Greetings from Matt Ortiger – Pastor 2003-2014**

To insist with pitbull determination that  
the gospel be preached,  
the lost be found,  
the believers be equipped,  
the poor be served,  
the lonely enfolded into community  
and that God gets the credit for it all.

(we stole this statement from Bill Hybels *Courageous Leadership*)

When we came to Brookside it was called Muswellbrook Community Baptist Church. Along the way the church realized that while our address was in Muswellbrook, the people who made up our community were attending from Denman, Muswellbrook, Aberdeen & Scone. The church also realized that while officially 'Baptist' the people who comprised our church historically identified with a number of diverse denominations. And so the community rebranded itself as Brookside.

One of the amazing things about Brookside was its diversity, all sorts of different people from different towns, different denominations, different vocations, different ages and different stages in their spiritual journeys. Brookside was the sort of community where there was unity in diversity (vs uniformity)



As we tried to define who we were and what we were about as a community of Jesus followers we stole the following statement from Bill Hybels "Insist with pitbull determination that the gospel be preached, the lost be found, the believers be equipped, the poor be served, the lonely enfolded into community and that God gets the credit for it all." Having stolen the statement, we tried to allow it to shape our community life. Over our time at Brookside many, many things happened that we can give God credit for.

God gets the credit for it all ... Brookside was a church willing to take a risk following Jesus. To better fulfil its mission, Brookside decided to put on a full time associate pastor. When they determined to put someone on (ultimately David Burgess) the church was quite broke. The people committed to the role and committed to give to cover the new cost but if they didn't Brookside would have been broke in 3mths. To their credit the people rose to the challenge and God provided through them.

God gets the credit for it all ... Brookside was a church willing to get creative in following Jesus. To better fulfil its mission Brookside experimented with some crazy ministry and perhaps none crazier than the Beer Nights and Meat Nights at the Frenchs' place. The night Brookside (or more specifically Richard French) slaughtered a sheep at a men's Meat Night is still a story I regularly tell and I'm sure it remains part of Brookside folklore. But more importantly, dozens of men who would never attend a Sunday service loved attending those nights and God used those events to draw men (and their families) into the Brookside community and into the Kingdom of God.

God gets the credit for it all ... Brookside was a church willing to follow Jesus by loving people (and not all people are easy to love). I won't name names for obvious reasons but there was a lady who had experienced a devastating stroke and she struggled to speak, to walk and to maintain her personal hygiene. She financially struggled. She was relatively alone. But for years humble Jesus-like people brought her to church on Sunday, checked on her mid week, provided her with food, a scooter and a fridge ... even cleaning her up when she had an "accident" ... and generally loving her like Jesus loves her.

God gets the credit for it all ... Brookside was a church willing to leave town for the sake of ministry. Escape Family Friendly Camping was one of my favourite ministries because I could pretend I was working while camping and 4wding. Escape was another amazing time at Brookside because of the moments shared in community with other Brooksidians but also because people who would never consider attending church were able to connect with and belong with the Escape Community.

God gets the credit for it all ... Brookside was a church willing to get practical to get the job done. Some of my favourite times at Brookside were the building projects. Brookside helped me owner build a home, knocked down 77, owner built the hall, participated in a number of Bali Orphanage building projects and built a playground. Not to mention the building we did at Muswellbrook South Primary School. They were all great times of unmistakable camaraderie. But I do remember the destruction of 77. The Friday night before the heavy equipment moved in, youth group moved in with cans of spray paint. Most of what was painted on the walls that night was suitable for viewing the following Sunday. I have to apologise again to the

parents of the beautiful blonde young lady who decided to spray paint her hair green that night, not realising that it would not wash out.

We really had some of the best times of our lives at Brookside. We saw God do some amazing things in our time there. Some people who were fringe members or new believers when we came were leaders of the church when we left. We made some amazing friends at Brookside and had some fantastic times there. Our kids, especially Maddy, got her start in ministry at Brookside. We were sad to leave and to this day remain sad to have left. Brookside was very good to us and God gave us some amazing gifts through our time at Brookside ... God gets the credit for it all.

Many of those gifts were spiritual or relational in nature, some were however very material in nature. I try not to mention names because when you do you always leave someone out. But it's appropriate to slip a few in here. As part of Brookside's ongoing exploration of what it looks like to be 'missional', Phil & Ruth Fletcher opened up their home, renovating the downstairs as a Man Cave where everyone was welcome. They even got an old Holden for blokes to fiddle with. Not unlike Escape they were trying to create an environment where people who weren't churchy could gather and enjoy community. Blokes from Brookside and blokes not from Brookside, like Ruth & Phil's neighbour Dan, would gather on Fridays to BBQ, watch footy, tell tall tales and tinker with this Holden. It was a great missional enterprise.

Little did I know that Phil, Ruth and a bunch of generous others at Brookside had additional generous plans for that car. They actually gifted the car to me and gave my wife a beautiful little red Holden Cruze. Thanks to Brookside's generosity I still get to drive around Newcastle in a 1975 Absinthe yellow Holden HJ Monaro with a 308 stroked out to 355 running on 17in Kragars. And strangely enough that Holden is still a missional project because everywhere I go in Newcastle bogan guys with ACDC t-shirts, mullet haircuts and missing teeth come up to meet me.

We thank God & Brookside for the time we were able to spend as part of that community and wish the whole community the best on it's anniversary. Don't ever stop insisting with pitbull determination that the gospel be preached, the lost be found, the believers be equipped, the poor be served, the lonely enfolded into community and that God gets the credit for it all.



Matt installs roof trusses with Nick Gould and Robert French.

## **Pastors AND Associate Pastors for the second 25 years of Muswellbrook Baptist Church**

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary our pastor was Rev. Neil Cowling. Neil and his family had been with us since 1986. Neil actually commenced his ministry on the day the new church building was opened. He completed his ministry in 1993 just after our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Following Neil, our Pastors have been...

1995-2002	Rev Chris Nelson
2003-2014	Rev Matt Ortiger
2010-2015	Richard French (Part Time Associate)
2010-2011	Dave Burgess (Associate)
2012-2014	Tristan Hinds (Associate)
2015-	Rev Darryl Spicer

### **The Leadership Structure**

During Matt Ortiger's pastorate, he reorganised the leadership structure of the church. For most of the history of the church there had been a three level system with a Pastor, one or more Elders and a Diaconate. In 1984 Kevin Butler and John Davidson were appointed as Elders and both served only in that year and interestingly both left the church to go into full-time ministry.

The longest serving of the Elders was John Rogers, a local medical practitioner, whose was first appointed in 1987, and was continuously reappointed until his resignation in 2007, with a short break for an extended family holiday in 1991-92. Jim Beckwith, an engineer who worked in electricity generation, was appointed as an elder in 1992. He served until he and his wife Daphne moved with his employment to Newcastle in 2001. Each of these men met with the pastor regularly and was involved in the pastoral and preaching ministries of the church.

The fifth Elder appointed was Bruce Alexander, who commenced his service in 2004. Whereas the other elders had undertaken a pastoral role, Bruce had a more practical ministry. While that did include at many points undertaking the maintenance of the church properties, the more important role was his concern for the everyday needs of both members of the congregation and the community.

Bruce shared with Chris Nelson a desire to support those struggling in our community, and so the "Food Ministry" programme was initiated. The Anglican Church and the St Vincent de Paul Society both provided assistance during the week, but there was nothing available on weekends. So for twenty years Bruce, and a small group of helpers have been providing food parcels on Sunday mornings after the service. While others have offered financial support, much of the cost has been borne by Bruce and his wife, Lynne.

Bruce has formed many strong relationships with those he has helped. He has welcomed them and encouraged them to feel a part of the church and many have attended church activities and services. When one couple married, some of the church provided the meal for the wedding reception. Some have assisted Bruce in his maintenance tasks. Bruce stood down as an Elder in 2013, but has continued to undertake roles in the Food Ministry and maintenance.

In 2007, at a special meeting on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, the church moved to a new system, at first as a one year trial, but one which was continued. The change reinforced the three level structure but effectively widened the group of elders. Two teams were created to operate under the supervision of a Pastor or Pastors. The first team was initially called the "Vision Team", but this became the "Pastoral Support Team" (or PST), a name which helped the congregation to better understand its role. This group meet with the Pastor to deal with the vision, direction and spiritual needs of the church. The second group was the "Support Team", which became known as the "Administrative Support Team" (or AST) and it has as its responsibility the role of deacons, the general operations of the church, it's finances and properties.

In 2010 the pastoral role moved to a Pastoral Team. In May that year Richard French was added as a part-time associate, after the completion of his study at Morling College. In October 2010, as the size of the congregation grew, the church accepted Matt's challenge to fund a second full-time pastor, in order to undertake a stronger outreach into the community.

Dave Burgess was appointed to this position, which he held until December 2011. Dave and his wife Alannah were strongly involved in the children's work of the church, teaching school scripture and running several 'Mainly Music' groups, a programme for pre-schoolers and their mothers. Dave's appointment also allowed the Ortiger family to take a 14 week long service leave trip, through Queensland and all the way to the tip off Cape York, and included much 4WD excitement. After Dave resigned in Dec 2011, he accepted a position as the pastor at Forbes Baptist Church.

Tristan Hinds was appointed as Associate in May 2012. He had a strong vision for outreach and community programmes and we undertook work improving the grounds of Muswellbrook South Public School, and helped the Women's refuge to enjoy a special Christmas. Another programme was "Escape" a four wheel drive club, which was an opportunity for members of the congregation to get to know people in the community and spend time with them in a relaxed setting. It was reviewed by the Muswellbrook Chronicle.

As the income of the church had struggled to support two pastors, Tristan moved, first to four days and then to three days per week, as he set up a business called 'Erwin's Distribution', a company selling consumables and cleaning products to businesses in the Upper Hunter. Tristan resigned in Oct 2014 and expanded 'Erwin's'. It now has a number of employees and is located in the Muswellbrook Industrial Estate.

Matt Ortiger resigned in Dec 2014, to move into a secular self employed business in Newcastle. He has since accepted a pastoral position as Senior Pastor at Islington Baptist Church.

In September 2015 Darryl Spicer was appointed as the Pastor, and Richard French stood down as Associate Pastor, in order to assist Darryl in establishing his new role, and thus the church returned to having a single pastor. The PST and AST teams remain as the leadership structure, regularly reporting to church meetings.

In 2018, the pattern of church meetings was amended. The previous pattern of quarterly meetings and an AGM was changed, as there had been very little that required discussion at church meetings. In May 2018 the church voted to move to a biannual meeting with appointments and planning to be considered at an AGM in November, and the finances and budget reviewed at a meeting in May. The financial year was also altered and now runs from the April 1st until March 31<sup>st</sup>.

Meetings of the PST and AST are still held regularly and reports from these meetings are given both orally at the next service and in written form to the congregation.

### A comparison of the 2003 and 2018 Financial Statements

	I&E 2002	Budget 2003	I&E 2017	Budget 2018
<b>Income</b>				
Offering	\$55,888.00	\$56,000.00	\$135,331.00	\$140,000.00
Specific gifts	\$20,299.00		\$5,122.00	\$0.00
Property Rental	\$6,596.00	\$6,000.00	\$22,333.00	\$18,000.00
Misc	\$296.00	\$500.00	\$2,730.00	\$4,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$83,079.00</b>	<b>\$62,500.00</b>	<b>\$165,516.00</b>	<b>\$162,000.00</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Administration	\$10,580.00	\$11,000.00	\$41,959.00	\$40,000.00
Church Activity	\$9,169.00	\$4,000.00	\$2,907.00	\$5,000.00
Property	\$928.00	\$1,000.00	\$10,401.00	\$10,000.00
Missions	\$9,060.00	\$5,000.00	\$12,274.00	\$12,000.00
Pastoral	\$40,426.00	\$43,000.00	\$95,959.00	\$95,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$70,163.00</b>	<b>\$64,000.00</b>	<b>\$163,500.00</b>	<b>\$162,000.00</b>

Notes:-

2003 included significant gifts towards the replacement of "77" which occurred over the next couple of years. There was also a significant proportion of the year without a pastor, which reduced the pastoral costs and allowed the manse to be rented for several months.

In 2017, both the manse, 3 Wilkins St, and the house behind the church, 2 Mitchell St were rented to tenants. Administration was higher due to the employment of a part time secretary.



## **Deacons**

Stan Ingham	1968
John Rigg	1968
Barry Daniel	1968-69
Robert Weir	1968-69
Gordon Crimp	1968-70, 1980-84
Colin Nelson	1969-71
Peter Wilkinson	1971-72
Bert Gay	1972-79, 1980-83
Colin Eyb	1974-84
Ken Grieve	1974-76, 1977-80
Graham Turvey	1979-85, 1992-98
Harold Weeks	1979-81
Bob Griffiths	1979-80, 1981-82
Wal Smith	1981-83
Kevin Butler	1982-84
Owen Allsopp	1983-87
Stuart Garrard	1984-90, 1992-1994, 2007
Ian Pedler	1984-85
John Rogers	1984-87
Trevor Chesworth	1984-86
Terry Dean	1985-89
Ken Berry	1986-92, 1995-2001
Chris Rogers	1987-91, 2007.
Graham Jenkins	1987-93
Richard French	1988-1994, 1997-2003
Henk Boddendyke	1990-92, 1992-1994
Joy Stone	1991
Merril Darling	1991-92
Greg Hanly	1993-1997, 2000-04
Sue Gould	1994-2000. 2003-2007
Jim Cook	1994-95
Bill Summers	1994-96, 1997-99
Fergus Hancock	1995-2001
Wendy Hanly	2000-04
Ken Baker	2000-01
Jeannine Garrard	1999-2005
Murray Kershaw	2001-03
Bruce Alexander	2003-07
Barbara Turvey	2003-07
Janine Summers	2003-07

## **Since 2007**

### **Pastoral Support Team Members**

Retired – Bruce Alexander, Verna Esdaile, Chris Dutton, Graham Gageler, Nicole Glenn, Sue Gould.

Current – Jim Dugan, Richard French, Fred Murphy, Leonie Rogers, Jonathon Walsh, Pastor Darryl Spicer and Admin assistant Sonya O'Hara.

### **Administrative Support Team Members**

Retired – Carolyn Baker, Kier Bowman, Alison Murphy, Martin Parish, Barbara Turvey.

Current – Lynda Dugan, Vicki French, Richard French, Janet Walsh, Pastor Darryl Spicer and Admin assistant Sonya O'Hara.

# **The Ministry of the church**

## **Sunday School**

Muswellbrook Baptist had a Sunday School programme in place even before it was constituted as a church, and thus now for 53 years since 1965. Some details of the first twenty eight years of the Sunday school are included in the first volume. Over almost all of these fifty plus years we have been very fortunate to include in our congregation a large proportion of young families. This has been in contrast to a number of other churches in the town, where the attendance has mostly been older adults. It has been both viable and essential to have a continuous ministry to children. For many families who moved to Muswellbrook, the presence of this ministry has encouraged them to become a part of our church.

### **Timing**

The Sunday School had originally run at 9:30 am prior to the Sunday morning service, which was held at 11:00 am. However in 1990 the church service was moved to 10 am and the Sunday school programme ran when students and teachers left part-way through the service. This pattern has largely been followed throughout the subsequent years. For a short period in 2014, when we ran two morning church services, a Sunday School programme was run during both services, however finding enough teachers was a challenge.

### **Location**

The Sunday School lessons have been held in a few different locations over the years. After the acquisition of 77 Sydney St, this was the space in which most of the lessons took place. However the restricted number of rooms meant that classes were also held in the church kitchen. After the building of the extension in 2007, Sunday School was held in the new hall and adjacent rooms, but by 2010 there was insufficient space to fit all of the children and classes. The church had been renting out the house behind the church, (2 Mitchell St), which had been acquired to allow for expansion. When the tenancy finished, the opportunity was taken to use the house as extra space for the Sunday School. The large back yard proved an excellent venue for outside games and activities. It was used for the Primary age Sunday School group until 2014, and also for some time as office space by Tristan Hinds. The extension opened in 2008 was designed to house the Sunday School. Currently, Sunday School has been renamed Brook Kids and is now taking place in the Hall and its 2 classrooms.

### **Lesson Material**

We have used a number of different lesson materials over the years. The most significant during the period of the second 25 years was the Oasis programme developed by Logosdor, a Christian group based in Hornsby (with whom the Rogers' family had a connection). The Logosdor team came and presented at a Sunday morning service. These lessons for Primary School aged children moved Sunday School into the multi-media era, and each week would include segments on video (initially VHS tape and later DVD) shown on a television, singing along with recorded music, and craft activities. The programmes came in ten lesson units, which were written with a flow that encouraged the children to understand the place of commitment and ministry. A number of the programmes culminated in a drama, presentation or artistic creation that was presented at a Sunday morning service. The programmes

were so well received that they were all reused, some a number of times, as new children grew into the Primary age group.



**An Oasis presentation to the church in 2002**

More recently we moved further in terms of technology to use lessons developed by Hillsong in Sydney and made available on DVD or by internet download. Again there were video segments – now via a data projector onto a large screen, plus music segments and craft and games. Having used all of the available modules, we are currently using CEP material.

### **In service childrens' message**

For a significant proportion of these years there has been a part of the Sunday service allocated to a message or story for the children. For some periods it contained a message that complemented the passage and the sermon, but at other times it was the choice of the presenter. Many of these stories were created by Barbie Turvey, but a quite different and very popular “presenter” was a bright orange puppet called Salsa. Salsa was the alter-ego of Bill Summers and he lived in a puppet theatre that for many years sat to the right of the pulpit. While Bill did have some other puppets, Salsa was the star and many stories consisted of a dialogue between the puppet and Richard French. Bill was aware that a puppet can say and do many things that a human cannot, and he used this both to entertain and to effectively present the gospel message.



**A Brook kids presentation in 2011.**

## **Music Ministry – Over the Past 20 Years**

### Music Coordinators:

1999 – 2001	Daphne Beckwith
2002 – 2006	Jenny Kershaw
2006 - 2008	Andrew & Rebecca Roberts
2008 - 2010	Jenny Kershaw
2010 – 2013	Ruth Fletcher
2013 – 2014	Heidi Fairbairn
2014 – current	Jenny Kershaw

### **What the Music ministry looked like in the Year 2000**

Music coordinator: Daphne Beckwith

Musicians:

Piano – Daphne Beckwith, Barbie Turvey, Sue Gould, Margaret Jenkins, Jenny Kershaw

Clarinet – Barbie Turvey

Violin – Jenny Kershaw

Music in the Year 2000 was mostly accompanied by piano, occasionally with another instrument. The Church's old faithful (but rather tired) piano was replaced by a nice new shiny black one! The singing was led by the service leader, or just the piano. Hymn books and Scripture in Song books were being phased out in favour of transparencies and an overhead projector. Hymns were gradually being replaced by Choruses from Scripture in Songs and Mission Praise.

### Top 10 Songs

Amazing Love

Shout to the Lord

Jesus What a Beautiful Name

The Heavens Shall Declare

Lord I Lift Your Name on High

May the Mind of Christ My Saviour

Be Thou My Vision

Amazing Grace

Great is Thy Faithfulness

To God be the Glory

What a Friend we have in Jesus

### **What the Music ministry looked like in the Years 2001 - 2005**

Music coordinator: Jenny Kershaw

Musicians:

Piano/Keyboard – Jenny Kershaw, Barbie Turvey, Rod Smith, Gwen Thring, Bethany Gould

Guitar – Russell Esdaile, Murray Kershaw, Paul Williams

Flute – Leonie Rogers, Hannah French, Richard French

Clarinet – Barbie Turvey, Bethany Gould, Emily Berry

Violin – Jenny Kershaw

Trumpet – Jasmine Christie

Trombone – Robert French

Saxophone – Ken Berry

This was a time of change for the music, with songs drawn increasingly from the Resource Song Books and only an occasional hymn. Regular monthly music meetings/practices were held from 2003 onwards, with topics such as What is worship, Song selection, Microphone technique & Responsibilities of the Music team members being discussed, along with many new songs learned. Song leaders began to be introduced, and rehearsal before the service became the norm. Many of the younger musicians were involved in special services and more instrumentalists played on a regular basis.

#### Top 10 songs

God is Great  
Lord I Lift Your Name on High  
I am Carried  
New Song in My Heart  
This is my Desire  
Above All  
Have Faith in God  
How Deep the Father's Love  
Shout to the Lord  
Ancient of Days

### **What the Music ministry looked like in the Years 2006 - 2010**

Music coordinator: 2006 – 2008 Rebecca Roberts  
2008 – 2010 Jenny Kershaw

#### Musicians:

Piano/Keyboard – Rebecca & Andrew Roberts, Jenny Kershaw, Barbie Turvey, Gwen Thring  
Guitar – Russell Esdaile, Murray Kershaw, Chris Dutton, Robert French  
Drums – Martin Mason, Sam Green, Robert French

#### Singers:

Andrew & Rebecca Roberts, Sue Gould, Russell Esdaile, Jeannine Garrard, Cheryl Wiseman, Jenny Kershaw, Monica Ortiger, Tony Garmeister, Georgina Mason, Matt Graham, Susan Thring, Richard French, Jordan Summers

Sound/data: - Craig Flemming, Jono Walsh, Murray Kershaw, Barbie Turvey, Murray Scott,

Technology was the big influencer in these 5 years, with the keyboard gradually replacing the piano and the data projector taking over from the overhead projector, creating new ministry areas to support the worship. With the leadership of Rebecca & Andrew Roberts, the band format became the main music format, with two or more singers leading the worship, guitar and drums the main other instruments. Songs from Hillsong began to increase in popularity, along with the Emu publishers. During this time we also sang regularly a song written by Amanda Lawrence (Gould) – *Your Great Love*. Amanda had grown up in this church

#### Top 10 songs



Ancient of Days  
Blessed be Your Name  
Every Day  
How Deep the Father's Love  
In Christ Alone  
Indescribable  
Jesus, Thank You  
May the Mind of Christ My Saviour  
My Heart is filled with Thankfulness  
My Redeemer Lives

### **What the Music ministry looked like in the Years 2010 - 2015**

Music coordinator:	2010 – 2013	Ruth Fletcher
	2013 - 2014	Heidi Fairbairn
	2014 -	Jenny Kershaw

#### **Musicians:**

Piano/Keyboard – Ruth Fletcher, Heidi Fairbairn, Jenny Kershaw, Gwen Thring, Lynne Llewelyn  
Guitar – Russell Esdaile, Murray Kershaw, Nick Henderson, Jordan Gageler, Jason Thring, Kirralee Deimar,  
Drums – Lachlan Rogers, Brad Westgate  
Violin – Jenny Kershaw, Amanda Thring  
Flute – Alison Murphy, Leonie Rogers

#### **Singers:**

Ruth Fletcher, Suzanne Gakowski, Russell Esdaile, Sasha Barbour, Susan Thring, Linda Jackson, Leonie Rogers, Alison Murphy, Heidi Fairbairn, Brianna Rogers, Cheryl Wiseman, Amanda Thring, Des Casey

Sound/data: - Jono Walsh, Murray Kershaw, Barbie Turvey, Phil Thring, Fred Murphy, Julie Fibbins, Barbie Turvey, Jeeva, John Langle

During this period, we were blessed with many outstanding musicians & singers, notably Ruth Fletcher and Suzanne Gakowski, who were the catalyst to producing two CD's of original music, including *All for You*, one of Ruth's songs which we also sang regularly in church services.

#### Top 10 songs

Prepared a Place for me  
Amazing Grace (My Chain are gone)  
Stronger  
How Great is our God  
Ten thousand reasons  
Indescribable  
Where would we be  
Mighty to Save  
You alone can rescue  
Your Grace is enough



**Suzanne Gakowski, Leonie Rogers, Ruth Fletcher (obscured) and Russell Esdaile at the 2010 Christmas Carols.**

### **The Present – 2018**

Music coordinator: 2014 – 2018 Jenny Kershaw

#### **Musicians:**

Piano/Keyboard –Jenny Kershaw, Gwen Thring, Anna Loiterton

Guitar – Murray Kershaw, John Heald, Jason Thring

Drums – Lachlan Rogers, Brad Westgate, Christopher Thring, Andre Timis

#### **Singers:**

Leonie Rogers, Alison Murphy, Cheryl Wiseman, Mel Goodworth, Gwen Thring, Barbara Spicer, Jenny & Murray Kershaw, Nicole Glenn, Jess Dugan, Natalie Harris

Sound/data: - Jono Walsh, Murray Kershaw, Phil Thring, Fred Murphy, Barbie Turvey, Vicki French, Sandra Langley, Cheryl Wiseman, Jason Thring, Anna Loiterton

#### **Current Top 10 songs**

Only a Holy God

Amazing Grace (My Chains are gone)

Cornerstone

Ten thousand reasons

Our God

I Stand Amazed (How Marvellous)

Mighty to Save

The Wonder of the Cross

We Lift You Up (Jesus You are strong to save)

How Deep the Father's Love

## **Playgroups**

The church has had a ministry to mothers and small children for much of the last forty years. This has for much of the time comprised small groups meeting in the old '77' building. These groups have been larger and smaller according to the numbers of small children. Over the years it has been an important introduction into the church for many families that have moved to the town.

In addition, in 2010-11 under the leadership of Dave and Alannah Burgess we ran a 'Mainly Music' programme. This was a session for parents and pre-school children which involved singing, dancing and playing along with a selection of songs, many of which presented gospel messages. This was very popular and expanded to several sessions and also to a group in Scone.

### **Current Parents' Group Brookside - Sonya O'Hara**

Our group began in May 2017 when 3 church families decided to meet at the church to share good conversation and morning tea together. There is no set format for the 2 hour session on a Monday. The children aged from 0-5 years are free to play with the abundance of toys from previous church playgroups. Families from the community hear about our group and come along, allowing us to build friendships as the children play and interact with each other.



**Mainly Music in 2011.**

## **School Scripture**

Throughout these years our congregation has provided a large proportion of the teachers for School Scripture classes. We have been represented in the scripture programme at Muswellbrook Public (Roger St), Muswellbrook South Public School and at Muswellbrook High School.

For many recent years the co-ordinator has been Sandra Langley, and the teachers from our church that have been involved in the Primary programme have included Tanya Dart, Lynda Dugan, Vicki French, Mary Googe, Murray and Jenny Kershaw, Sandra Langley, Katie Mills, Paula Sinton, Gwen Thring, Barbara and Graham Turvey, Cheryl Walsh, Cheryl Wiseman, Chris Nelson, Matt Ortiger, Dave and Alana Burgess, Darryl and Barbara Spicer.

At the High School in the eighties and nineties, scripture consisted of occasional day long seminars. These were most often run in conjunction with an outside Christian organization and included volunteers from many of the local churches, including our own. However, in 2005 a group of Christians in Muswellbrook, which included a number of members of this congregation, met with a representative of Scripture Union and started a committee to raise funds to place an employed SRE (Special Religious Education) teacher in Muswellbrook High School - Muswellbrook Christian Education Association (MCEA). The work started with one day a week at Muswellbrook High, then grew to two days per week, and then the Muswellbrook and Scone committees amalgamated to create the Upper Hunter Christian Education Association (UHCEA). Currently Davinder Garbyal, a member of our church, is employed to work for two days per week in Muswellbrook and one day per week at Scone. He also has the chaplaincy role at Muswellbrook High, for two days per week, funded by the Federal government.

Those involved in MCEA and UHCEA from our church have been Matt Ortiger, Jenny Kershaw, Barbie Turvey, Cheryl Walsh, Sandra Langley, Vicki and Richard French.

### **Youth Group**

Youth Group leaders over these years have included Chris Nelson, Paul and Vanessa Williams, Marty and Liz Parish, Matt Ortiger, Dave Burgess, Jono Riley, Murray Kershaw, Tristan Hinds, Linda Pollard, Ruth Fletcher, Suzie Gakowski, Mick Googe.



**Chris Nelson took the Youth Group to Tahlee in 2002 for the “Battle of the Youth Groups”.**

### **Brookside Youth Ministry** by Murray Kershaw

My first memory of youth at Muswellbrook was years before we moved here, I think about 1983 while my brother was living here and invited me to a caving trip to Timor caves. In addition to the caving experience I can still picture John Roger's mustard yellow Volvo.

Youth ministry has transformed in numerous directions over the years including some before my time. We first came to Muswellbrook in the Chris



Nelson era but did not step into youth at that stage so Robert's comments below will fill in this Gap. As well as Chris, the leaders also included Paul and Vanessa Williams, Marty and Liz Parish.

During Matt Ortiger's time we rebranded youth to 'X-Factor' where we tried to pack in as much engaging fun as we could, combined with Christian teaching. Some of our more out-there nights usually involved food like fishing eyeballs out of brains (lychees in spaghetti), extreme ice cream competitions making the kitchen look like a bomb zone or chocolate tasting with a twist (molten into disposable nappies). Some of our other games may have been a bit on the wild side resulting in replacing numerous lights in the hall.

We also took the group on a number of trips to KYCK – Katoomba Youth Convention, where the youth really enjoyed the experience, the music and the great teaching. We also attended a few 'RICE' Rallies in the Entertainment Centre in Sydney combined with a treasure hunt starting at Luna Park across the bridge ending at Darling Harbour.

During Ruth Fletcher's time, we also kicked off our evening youth services where we aimed to involve as many youth as possible in the services. This also led to Ruth and Suzie writing some new songs and creating the opportunity to give Jordan Gageler, Nick Henderson and Lachlan Rogers the chance to lay down some tracks in a recording studio and produced a CD.

Even over the last few months I have been blessed by meeting some past youth who still have great memories of youth and the impact it has had on their lives.

Through a reduction in youth at Brookside, X-factor folded but God had other plans where Brookside and Hope City combined forces and set up 'Extreme' youth in the Indoor sports centre to provide a safe and fun venue reaching out to all youth in town.

Extreme is a totally different dynamic, where we are still averaging approximately 40 young people each Friday night and have had some nights with over 80! Although this size makes it hard to build significant relationships it is amazing how God has significantly changed some of the youth's lives.

### *Youth Group Memories from Robert French*

"I can recall that when I was too young to attend Youth Group, there had been several night time activities at our farm. Having armed some of the kids with torches they would play spotlight type games down in the paddock. I distinctly recall blood and pain when someone ran into a new and very sharp barbed wire fence!

We went on a youth group trip to Sydney with Chris Nelson. One of the key activities was going to the Sydney Olympic Aquatic centre. We stayed over in a church hall.

One of my favourite ever Youth Group activities was when 77 was about to be demolished. The youth were all given spray paint and told to go crazy with it and paint whatever we wanted. There was also a bit of early "pre" demolition that occurred as well.



Another youth group activity involved a bonfire at our house. Having been hard-wired by Jesus to be an evangelist, I thought this would be the perfect opportunity to invite non-Christian mates to this event. But when my mates started to turn up, one of the mums (I still remember who!) came to me rather worried and said something along the lines of, 'there are all these people I don't know here, just watch that none of them aren't dealing drugs'. I proceeded to assure her that these were my friends and there were no drugs being dealt...that's dad's job.

At one stage the youth group numbers were very low, and every now and again it would be only me turning up or perhaps me and Aleisha Summers. On these nights Matt O, would regularly suggest we go to Maccas!

We would occasionally have a combined activity with the group at Scone (where the Baumhammers were involved). Often this would be Glenbawn activities with boats. I think I may have broken/cracked some of Brian Baumhammer's ribs when I was driving the boat and he was on the tube!

We went to several Battle of the Youth Groups at Tahlee Bible College. One year we entered a Band! We didn't win!

For a while youth group consisted of a meeting at the Gould's house for Bible study.

I "invented" a game at youth group that involved kicking a ball at the giant cross hanging on the wall at church and trying to knock it off the wall. Another time when kicking a ball I smashed a window at church. Matt got it fixed, then the following week, a week in which I couldn't attend, Matt broke the same window when he was kicking a ball!

Some of the people that attended while I was a part of Youth Group... Daniel Brink, Nathan Burton, Beth Gould, Sam Green, Hannah French, Ben Lovegrove, Samarie Lovegrove, Will Norman, Joan Rickard-Bell, Aleisha Summers, Jordan Summers, Karina Summers, Brook 'Chooka' Wright "

### **Baptist Student Union (BSU) Teams from USA**

In 1992 and 1993 we were fortunate to be selected to receive Summer Ministry students from the Baptist Student Union of Texas, as noted in the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary volume. In 1998 we received our third team, Curt Weidner and Mekelle Douglas.

In 2000 we hosted our fourth team, this time two young women, Amber Mitchell and Crystal Dickens. The BSU students give up their summer holidays (July and August) and were selected from a large pool of volunteers to spend ten weeks on a placement which could be in the USA, or one of a number of foreign countries (these countries varied each year). The NSW Baptist Union became involved in the programme early in the 1990s and generally the limit for any church was three teams. However one of the selected churches was not able to participate at the last minute and we were very happy to host a fourth team and a programme was quickly arranged. For the first time we had students that were not from Texas - Amber came from Kansas City, Missouri and Crystal came from Shreveport, Louisiana.



**Amber & Crystal in Canberra.**

While they were here, each of the teams were billeted by a number of the church families, and they were able to take a short trip around NSW and to Canberra with some of the congregation.

During each week the BSU students were involved in Sunday School, Youth Group, Playtime group, school scripture and Bible Studies. During the school holidays several of the teams assisted in running a week long school holiday programme and each time large numbers of children attended.

In 2002 Suzanne Weidner, the younger sister of Curt Weidner, one of our earlier students, came as a privately arranged student. John and Chris Rogers had remained in contact with a number of previous BSU students. As we knew we would not be able to get another team, they asked via these contacts if there were any students interested in spending a summer in Australia. As a result we enjoyed an extra summer with an American student. Suzanne has since been ordained within the Episcopal Church in the USA.

Several families have stayed in contact with some of our BSU student missionaries. Tracey Goen [1992] (now Tracey Fields) is married to a Baptist minister and has written a book called "Nearly Normal", which chronicles her family's journey of faith through trials and joys. She has two children of her own, and three adopted children of Hispanic and African American heritage and who have significant difficulties e.g. one has Foetal Alcohol Syndrome.

Rebecca 'Becky' Pickens [1993] – now Rebecca Epley spent many years with her husband and children in missionary work in Chittagong, Bangladesh. Rebecca co-ordinated work amongst women and at a school teaching employment skills to young women from a slum on the edge of the city. Her husband Jeff mentored young Christian leaders. They are now in ministry at Oakwood Baptist Church, Texas.

The Weidner family, including Curt [BSU team 1998], Suzanne [2002] along with their brother Ross and father Jim, travelled to Australia to visit church

families, to see where Curt and Suzanne had ministered and also to see a little more of the country.

In 2013 Eric Hough [BSU team 1992], now a School Principal, with his wife Shelley and children Brenden, Heather and Nathan came to holiday in Australia, so Eric could show them the place he spent his summer. The French family travelled with them to retrace the trip on which we had taken the BSU team, around NSW, in 1992.



**Hough family with Robert French in 2013.**

### **Eric wrote of his time in Muswellbrook in 1992...**

*I can not even start to put into words the impact that spending the summer in Muswellbrook has had on my life. Realizing that it happened 26 years ago makes it even more amazing. From the moment I stepped off the plane and Vicki French hugged my neck, I knew that none of the training I had been through prepared me for what was coming. Below are just a few of the things I remember:*

*We spent an entire week trying to get the VBS kids to stop climbing and jumping on the fence during recreation. The next to the last day the ball went over the fence, no one was watching so I jumped the fence grabbed the ball and before I could return heard one of the kids yell, "Wow you jumped high!" I have never forgotten that someone is always watching.*

*Driving on the wrong side of the road is not so tough and after 10 weeks you get so used to it. So used to it that when you return home you can no longer tell your right from your left or determine which side of the road to drive on.*

*The opportunity to teach Bible class in your public school was a fantastic experience. It is also a real eye-opener when one of the students says you are his Bible and you realize this may be all the Bible he sees.*

*Doing my Bible Study on one of the few mornings I did not have to be at the church and hearing God say, "Walk to town and talk to Peter." I walked to*

*town to go the Museum, Peter was the curator at the time. He was not there so I headed back home on the way I stopped and talked to a man on walkabout from Queensland who just happened to be named Peter. I finished my visit and headed back to the house. I got there and before I sat down God said, "Go to town and talk to Peter." Again, I walked to town and went to the Museum. This time Peter was there and we had a great visit. I have no idea if either conversation had an impact on either of the Peters but I have never forgotten it and pray for them still.*

*And from his wife Shelly:-*

*From our family trip...Worshipping with fellow believers in Muswellbrook is definitely a highlight of our family trip in 2013. The kids loved the sermon on Jericho and marching around the wall of boxes! I enjoyed having tea. One of the things that has stayed with me is every Sunday there is 24 hours of believers meeting together all over the world to worship. In Australia we were at the beginning of the day. Here in Texas we join later, but we are still part of the Church worshipping our One Living, Loving God. I think of you often starting us off to a great Sunday!*

*We hope you have a blessed celebration!  
Eric & Shelly Hough  
Brenden, Heather, and Nathan*

**From Amber Hart (nee Mitchell) who came in 2000...**

*In the year 2000 I came to Muswellbrook to serve the Lord in anyway I could. To my surprise I left Muswellbrook served.*

*During those few months the people of Muswellbrook Baptist church touched my life in many ways. I learned that Jesus was everywhere. I learned how He changed the lives of people all over the world, not just my world. This really strengthened my faith, being that I was a very young Christian at the time and was just starting to learn the Bible and the doctrines of our faith. Another thing I learned that has stayed with me, was how to be hospitable. The people of Muswellbrook Baptist Church opened their homes, refrigerators, cars and hearts to us. I learned the value of hospitality when I lived with you.*

*My hope is that as my young family grows I will be able to teach them the same things about hospitality. I pray that I will teach my children how to open the door to the stranger and welcome them with open arms. This has stuck with me and God put me in your sweet church body to teach me about this beautiful gift.*

*Keep loving people well Muswellbrook Baptist Church, your community is blessed to have you. I pray God grows you and keeps you as you grow in the knowledge and the power of His Grace.*

*Thank You for your faithful service to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*

*Amber (Mitchell) Hart  
Raleigh, North Carolina USA*



## **Church Visits**

We received two teams from the USA that came as a result of invitations from the Baptist Union of NSW.

The first was in 2000. It was lead by Rev. Carrol "Booty" Garlington, a Baptist minister from Louisiana who had with him a couple from New Mexico, Irvin and Sylvia Ashley (both physiotherapists). Rev Garlington spoke at the church service and we ran a number of events during the week. The most successful was a sports medicine evening held at the Senior Citizens' Centre. The Ashleys both spoke on prevention and treatment of common sporting injuries and the evening was very well attended by members of many of our local sporting clubs.

The second visit was in July 2002. This time the team were all from Texas. The Team of four was lead by Rev Price Mathieson and included his wife Mary, and another couple from the Baptist Church at Lawn, Texas, Mark and Sandy Moore. Mark was a Commander in the Abilene Police Department and a part time student at the Theological Seminary at Hardin-Simmons University. The group spoke at a number of meetings, including a men's event where Mark spoke about his role as a Police Officer.

The French family have visited the Moore family several times since and have spoken at Lawn Baptist Church. When Mark completed his theological training, he left the Police Force and became the Associate Pastor at Lawn Baptist Church. Then Mark, Sandy and their younger daughter Sarah moved to New Zealand and worked with International Student Ministries of NZ for about five years, supporting and evangelizing foreign students (mainly Pacific Islander and Asian students) at the two universities in Wellington. At the end of their time in NZ they came to Australia for a holiday and Mark acted as an interim pastor in our church from January to March 2015. They have since returned to Texas, and following several years pastoring at Regan Wells Baptist Church, Mark is now the Senior Pastor at Lawn Baptist Church.



**Sandy and Mark Moore with their daughters Sarah and Jennifer.**



## **Baptisms**

As a Baptist church we have continued in the practise of full immersion baptism, even though the church itself does not have a baptismal pool. In 2000, we had a significant discussion at a leadership level and as a result two elderly ladies, Mrs Alma Whitehouse and Mrs Ivy Eagleton were baptised at the Berry's home pool in a less orthodox manner. Mrs Whitehouse was baptised by pouring a bucket of water over her while sitting on a chair beside the swimming pool, while Mrs Eagleton was able to sit on the steps of the swimming pool. We took a pragmatic and practical view to allow these older women to demonstrate their profession of faith.



**Mrs Ivy Eagleton is baptized in the Berry family pool by Chris Nelson.**

Over the life of the church we have had baptisms in both natural watercourses and pools. Several times we used the Hunter River, at the bend of the river at the end of Scott Street, in what is known as Rutherford Park. We have also used Sandy Creek at "Gelston", the home of the French family on a number of occasions.

We have also used a number of home swimming pools, including those of the Berry, French and Walsh families. We have also been keen to make these a public event, and thus a public demonstration of faith, and so in recent years we have on two occasions set up a temporary pool in the front yard of the church and held the service on the front lawn. We are fortunate to have seen more than fifty people baptised over the last 25 years.



**Jeremiah Dugan is baptized at “Gelston” in 2018 by Darryl Spicer with Jim Dugan.**

### **Multiple Services**

We have experimented with different service formats over the years. For about a year we added an early evening service. This was designed for families and included a light dinner (often soup and bread) with a very informal service and an interactive message. It was held in the hall and those who attended were encouraged to both ask and answer questions as we went along. On several nights we ran a film rather than a service and had a discussion afterwards. It ceased when we decided to move this format to Scone and start SALT in 2011.

In 2014, as a result of the growth of the church, we were struggling to fit everyone in to our Sunday morning service. We had done our best to fit as many chairs as possible into the sanctuary following the conclusion of the addition of the extensions, which replaced “77”, and had allowed us to remove the last of the internal walls. However it was still often difficult to find spaces for families who did not arrive sufficiently early to sit together.

The decision was made to undertake two morning services. The difficulties with this arrangement included a concern that some members of the congregation would never see each other, but perhaps more importantly the need for many more volunteers. It was during this period that the church had the largest attendances of its history.

In order to maintain the feeling of “one congregation” it was decided to hold morning tea between the two services and to encourage all to be at the church during that period. Thus those going “in” would also see those coming “out”. In practise however, we ended up also having a second morning tea at the end of the second service.

The musicians, service leaders and preachers agreed to serve at both services, which was a heavy commitment. After much discussion it was decided to offer Sunday School classes at both services. The plan had been to encourage those that taught during one service to attend the other. The problem we had envisaged was that as the majority of our congregation had children involved in the Sunday School, that if we offered classes at only the first service, there may be very few who attended the second. Getting enough teachers proved quite difficult. Once established, it was clear that the majority of the congregation attended the first service.

This new two morning service format was not successful. Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not clear if or how the changes that were attempted in 2014 could have been better managed. In combination with some significant changes in the direction and leadership of the church at that time, there were noticeable feelings of unhappiness among some in the congregation. The morale and enthusiasm of the congregation was much diminished.

At the same time there were several external factors that had an impact on our church. The 'mining boom' that had driven the population growth of the town came to an end, and the church had benefitted from the families that had moved in to the town. Quite a number of families in the church left the town at this time as a result of employment changes. The AOG congregation in Muswellbrook had been without a pastor for several years, and one consequence was that during this period a number of families from that congregation attended our church. The AOG church then appointed a new minister and this attracted those families to return to that church, along with some who preferred their style of worship, and also some others who expressed unhappiness with the direction of our leadership.

The result was that the need for two services no longer existed and we returned to a single service commencing at 9:30am. Sadly towards the end of 2014, it also led to the resignation of the two full-time pastors, Matt Ortiger and Tristan Hinds. Matt moved to Newcastle and went into business for himself. In 2018 he decided to return to ministry and was appointed the Senior Pastor at Islington Baptist Church in Newcastle. Tristan Hinds and his wife had already started a business in Muswellbrook and moved to run it full-time. It has since thrived and has recently moved into enlarged premises in the Industrial estate.

During 2015 the church had lengthy discussion with Rev Dr Vivian Grice of the Baptist Union about the direction for the church and the desirability of a "Intentional Interim" pastor – a ministry deliberately designed to assist in church planning. For the period of January to March 2015, Mark and Sandy Moore, who had come to the church on a church exchange in 2002, and had most recently been involved in student mission in NZ, undertook the pastoral role. Following that, Richard French acted to fill the pastoral role at the church. During a period of six months a committee was formed and with the PST a pastoral search was undertaken, which resulted in the appointment of Darryl Spicer.

## **Church plant at Scone SALT**

In the early years of the church, a pastor was shared by Upper Hunter Churches. From 1974 to 1977 Greg Miers was pastor of both Muswellbrook and Singleton. From 1977 to 1981 David Schmidt was the pastor of Singleton, Muswellbrook and Scone, with occasional visits to Merriwa. From 1981 to 1985 Gary Folwell was pastor of Muswellbrook and Scone. Thereafter, the churches were independent, with Neil Cowling as the pastor at Muswellbrook, and occasional preaching at Merriwa.

Scone church had struggled at some points in its history and had generally lay preachers in the congregation and it withdrew from the Baptist Union. The connection between the two churches for most of the second twenty five years of Muswellbrook's history was minimal. However the church was struggling to fill its preaching roster and approached Muswellbrook for help. For three years Richard French preached on the first Sunday of the month, in order to encourage the group.

The leadership at Muswellbrook were challenged by the fact that at least five, and sometimes more families that were a part of our congregation lived in Scone, but for various reasons chose not to attend the small, now independent Baptist church there. We looked for an opportunity to provide these families with a local church.

In 2011 meetings were held with four of these families and several other Christians in Scone with a view to planting a new church, which would be independent in name but evangelical in character and Baptist in practice. It was decided to hold the service late in the afternoon in the hall of the Scone Primary School. We decided on the name "SALT", carrying with it a strong overtone of the image Jesus used of our role in the world, but also as an acronym for Sunday Afternoon Learning Time. Some church members from Muswellbrook committed to attending and helping in the set up of this plant – Richard and Vicki French, Matt Ortiger, and Des and Joy Casey.

We obtained the use of an enclosed trailer and carried everything we needed each week in it. The preaching was a repeat of the Sunday morning message at Muswellbrook. As we met each week at 5pm, during the weeks of winter, we included a light dinner, which was provided by Vicki French.

The group grew to about 20 people from Scone plus a few members of the Muswellbrook congregation who would come on a fairly regular basis to encourage the project. However, the end of the mining boom also created great difficulties for us. Between 2011 and 2013 all of the founding Scone families had moved away from Scone by virtue of employment. One went to a mine in Africa, one to Alaska, one to Newcastle and one to Gunnedah. Brian and Susan Baumhammer, a Scone couple who had been a member of the Anglican Church and prime movers of the church plant also left Australia, as missionaries with CMS to Indonesia. The loss of all of these families meant the group was unsustainable. We had initially hoped that after three years it would be able to continue without input from Muswellbrook, but this was not the case. After three years we ceased to meet at Scone.

We had however begun a "Mainly Music" Scone group, with some of the young mothers and their children which met in the hall of St Mary's Catholic School. For several years someone from Muswellbrook had assisted the



group by operating the audio-visual equipment each week. This group continued on after the cessation of the Sunday afternoon meeting and for some time was self-sustaining. It stopped however when the children of the founding sisters, Jane Holden and Bec Eveleigh started school.



**Muswellbrook Baptist congregation at Christmas 1994.**

### **Building Projects**

At the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1993, the church congregation met in the building at 79 Sydney St that had been extended in 1986. This building included a foyer, an office for the pastor, and a cry room just to the right inside the front doors, a storeroom that ran along the southern wall and a kitchen attached at the rear.

### **Number “77”**

On the adjoining block of land was an old house which was affectionately known as “77”, its address being 77 Sydney St. This building had been purchased in 1975 and had been modified for use as a Sunday School building, and during the week it was used by Playtime groups (mothers and pre-school children) and for some periods prior to the completion of the extension in 1986, as office space for the pastor. However “77” was not ideal for this purpose as it had been designed as a house, and thus had small rooms and no large space which could be used as a hall. It consisted of four rooms with a central hall and a lean-to at the rear. The rear portion had been added in several sections over the years and had three different floor levels, which made the space difficult to use and represented quite a trip and fall hazard.



**Ruth Dean and some of the youth group Inside 77 with Eric Hough in 1992.**

Along part of its northern side was a narrow enclosed verandah, which included the old kitchen and toilet plus another room, which was not really a suitable size or shape for any use other than as a storeroom. To make better use of the building the two northern rooms had most of the connecting wall removed to create the space used by the Primary aged Sunday School classes. While there had been two bedrooms on the southern side, the rear room had been opened onto the lean to, so as to give enough space for the Infants class and the front room was either used for a junior high school group, or as the second classroom for the Primary age group, as numbers in each age group ebbed and flowed.

The building by this time was in quite poor condition. It was constructed of timber and fibro with an iron roof and had not been built for the robust use the church was making of it. Much time and effort was spent in maintaining this old building and quite some time was taken up in deacon's meetings during the late 1990s discussing how it could be made safer, weatherproof, possum proof and more useful, but all within the constraints of the minimal finances we had available. By 2003 the leadership had developed a plan to demolish and replace the most poorly constructed rear lean-to sections of the building. This would make the floor level throughout this rear section and include reroofing the entire building, having first strengthened the roof structure of the front section that was to be retained.

However the plan stalled when difficulties were encountered with the shire council's parking requirements. Behind the building there was a fenced play area, used during Sunday School, church services and playtime groups. The church was unwilling to lose this area as it was well used. It was shaded by trees that had been planted some years earlier by the Garrard family and included a small "fort", built by the French family, which comprised a timber structure on which the children could climb and a covered sand pit. The remaining land between this yard and the fence with Garlick's Hardware yard was the small parking area. This contained the spaces which the church had



needed to provide for the parking, assessed as a result of the 1986 church extension. It was far from ideal, and while we often managed to park about ten cars in it, it actually only consisted of about half that number of “official” car spaces. It had been sprayed with tar but this had rapidly deteriorated back to loose gravel.

The council wanted to see the church create a much greater number of car spaces, because in addition to the assessment of extra spaces that the council expected as a result of the refurbishment of the old house, the submission of a DA apparently allowed the council to reconsider the car parking requirement of the church building itself. We were suddenly facing a requirement for a large number of parking spaces (in excess of 20), even though we argued that we were not actually increasing the floor space. This created a significant problem as the only remaining available area was the lawn in front of the church, which was used after every service and many hoped might one day offer a space to extend the church itself. Discussions continued but with no progress and the plan did not proceed.

Several years later, one of the congregation, Gary Serhan, was elected as a member of the Muswellbrook Shire Council. He had made inquiries on behalf of the church concerning the application of the car parking formula. The council, for reasons other than to assist the Baptist Church, had in the meantime modified the parking code, and Gary encouraged us to reconsider our plans.

The condition of the old house had continued to deteriorate and it was decided to consider the more radical and expensive option of a complete demolition and replacement. Matt Ortiger had become the minister and was very keen for the church to improve the quality of our resources. We were also starting to experience the very pleasant problem of struggling to get everyone fitted into the church on a Sunday morning. Several short term measures assisted. There were interior walls in the church that created several spaces. The first to go was the wall that created the storeroom along the southern wall. It was surprising just how much extra space this removal provided. Consideration was given to a mezzanine level at the back, but it was thought the cost and available space were limitations.

The debate concerning an extension continued at a leadership level and at church meetings, but as usual things moved slowly and then an architect, Stuart Holman from Sydney (now an Anglican minister), was engaged to guide the discussion. He spent a weekend with the church and reviewed our requirements and ideas and gave us a report and suggestions. From this we developed a simple design and had Gerrit deBoer, the local draftsman, draw up plans.

Gerrit approached local builders, including the son of a couple that attended the church, but the prices were well in excess of the capacity of the church. With the encouragement of several church members who possessed a range of trade skills, and in particular Bruce Alexander, it was decided by 2004 to undertake the construction ourselves. Several years passed before starting.

For some in the church the most exciting event was the demolition of the old “77”! The youth group was given permission to run riot in the house prior to the arrival of the machinery. Anything of value had already been removed and the teenage boys in particular, took enormous pleasure in smashing bits of

rotten wall and using spray paint cans to apply graffiti to what remained. Several days later, a very large excavator took very little time to crush the shell of the house and to load the 25 tons of debris onto several tip trucks for removal. After about a century of life, the building disappeared in several hours.



**The remains of the demolished "77".**

Despite a run of wet weather, Bruce Alexander supervised the foundations of the new building, with help from church men, including Colin McIntyre. These foundations were quite significant, as it had been decided to build to a commercial standard, and to allow for further expansion by including foundations sufficient to accommodate a second storey. Thus the footings were both very deep and included a great deal of steel and concrete.

Local bricklayers were engaged for the walls, and progress was made, despite a severe storm late one afternoon, which caused a large section of the front wall (the wall of what is now the kitchen) to collapse and to smash the included window. This presented a problem. We were unable to get a replacement window without a considerable wait. However several years earlier, John Rogers had donated a group of windows, when the surgery had been extended. We had not been permitted by the council to use these as it had been stipulated when we submitted the building plans for approval that for aesthetic reasons the two front windows (now the kitchen and a Sunday School room) must be identical, and that the building should look close to symmetrical. We had ordered three identical windows, two for the front and the third one planned for the western end of the south facing wall (the window now facing the toilets), at the other end of the building. This third window was used to replace the broken front window, and one of the surgery windows was installed in its place.

At an early stage we made a modification to the plans. In the space that was created between the church building and this new hall we had only planned for a foyer which serviced each building and which also acted as a bridge or passageway between the two. However we reviewed the placement of the footings, and submitted an amended plan which created two offices in part of the remaining space, immediately west of this foyer.



**The roof truss team:- Robert French, Matt Ortiger, Josh Alexander, Richard French, Bruce Alexander, Linden Gould, Jan Kamstra and Nick Gould..**

Once the brickwork was completed, the church congregation began work. Ted Morton, a retired builder was the supervisor, and the subfloor structure and floor sheeting were installed quite quickly. In not much more than one very long day, a group of about ten men installed all of the roof trusses. Over a series of subsequent days Bruce Alexander and Robert French attached the insulation and roof sheeting while others erected the interior wall frames Ted Morton had constructed.

Between the various church members we managed roofing, some of the gyprocking, painting, concreting and carpentry. Phil Thring undertook a great deal of the electrical work. There were several highlights for me (Richard French). One was seeing how much our family and especially our son Robert was able get involved, a second was building the entry deck with Colin McIntyre and Bruce Alexander. It was Bruce's job to create the steel work and treads for the steps while Colin and I built the deck. Thirdly was the day that Matt and I broke through the wall into the church, creating the new entrance. It came through into the cry room. Then the cry room and the office walls were able to be removed, as we had created other spaces to undertake their role. This produced the significant increase in our seating capacity we required.

There were many members of the congregation who were involved in the work, but we owe much gratitude to Bruce Alexander. Others who were notably involved were Bruce's son Joshua, Lyndon Gould and his sons Tim and Nick, Bill & Jordan Summers, Jan Kamstra, Barbara and Graham Turvey, Colin McIntyre, Stuart Garrard, Phil Thring, Murray Kershaw, Ted Morton, Matt Ortiger, and all four members of the French family, Richard, Vicki, Robert and Hannah.





**Breaking through into the crèche from the new foyer.**



**Phil Thring installs electrical cabling in the new foyer.**

Inside the new building were two Sunday School rooms, originally known as the “red room” and the “green room”, due to their colour schemes. There was a bathroom, which for the first time included a shower, as we had had several groups use the church as accommodation, and thus needed a shower.

Staying after the service for morning tea had become a more significant feature and the congregation had been encouraged to remain and chat, and to make visitors feel welcome. However, prior to the new building, the location of the kitchen at the rear of the church had made provision of morning tea difficult, and the layout of the church meant that there was no particularly convenient place to serve it.

This problem was specifically addressed as a part of the design of the extension. The new kitchen was located at the front of the new hall but in addition to opening into the hall, it also had a roller shutter opening onto the deck that sat outside the foyer, and this made providing morning tea much more convenient.



**New kitchen with cupboards from the surgery and steel shelf from the Bowling Club.**

In the years since we started using the new kitchen, morning tea has grown to become almost longer than the service itself, and a major part of the church's fellowship. As a result of the enthusiasm with which the congregation stayed around to talk after the service, we added a roof over the deck, for shade in summer and shelter from the rare falls of rain, and we have continued to consider a larger covered area outside. With great encouragement from Vicki French, Bruce Alexander had made the steps of the deck wider than normal, thus creating sufficient space on which to stand and supervise the children on the lawn.





**Morning Tea in 2012.**

The new kitchen was created from a large set of cupboards and benches obtained from the Brook Medical surgery, with help from John Rogers. (These had recently been installed in several newly added rooms, but were not required by a commercial tenant who altered the use of the rooms.) Bruce Alexander and Steve Tuffin created an excellent kitchen and used some surplus units for cupboards in the adjacent Sunday School room. A stainless steel shelf purchased from the Bowling Club was transformed by Bruce into two units. This meant that the cupboards in the original kitchen behind the church could be removed, along with the overhead storage, and this produced a significantly enlarged usable space, which for some years became the crèche and is currently divided into the church office and a storage space.

The area created behind the new foyer was divided into two rooms. The first room became an outer office for a potential church secretary to utilise, and the back room became Matt Ortiger's office. The need for a new office was the result of the removal of the last of the internal walls, as mentioned earlier. After the completion of the new foyer, it had been possible to dismantle the walls that created the pastor's office, small foyer and the cry room. These three rooms had run along the eastern or Sydney St side of the church building. The removal of these walls significantly increased the seating capacity of the church.

After several years it was decided that the crèche (now meeting in the old kitchen) and office spaces (behind the new foyer) would be better reversed. This was due to a change in the way the church congregational seating was arranged. In the original building prior to 1986 we had faced north, away from Mitchell St as the entrance was on the Mitchell St side of the church. In the enlarged building after 1986, we faced west (away from Sydney St) as the new entrance was now on the Sydney St side.





**Mrs Pat Carson opens the new building on August 31<sup>st</sup>, 2008.**

Once the entrance was moved to the north-eastern corner of the church sanctuary, we experimented over some time with moving the orientation of the chairs. For a while we faced south (toward Mitchell St), and sometimes West (away from Sydney St) and then for some time we faced south-west at an angle of 45 degrees. This option minimised the wasted space at the front, but limited the space for the musicians. In the south and south-western facing orientations, the crèche was most helpfully placed behind the windows that had originally been the church's external windows but now opened from the church into these two office rooms. Thus the carers, usually mothers, in these rooms could have some vision of what was happening in the service. A speaker was installed in these rooms, and for a time we experimented with a camera and television screen.

At considerable expense, the space where the old "77" house stood was sealed and for the first time we had a completely weatherproof, kerbed, guttered and drained parking area. During the week it is very popular with the staff and customers of Garlick's Hardware next door. This has also given the church a very neat and modern appearance.



### **Framing up for asphaltting of the carpark.**

At the time of construction, the western or “front” internal wall of the church was painted Indian red, and the timber cross, which Lyndon Gould had built for the 1986 extension, was re-erected, but slightly to the right of centre. Some years later the wall was repainted brown, and more recently the whole interior has been painted a contemporary light grey.

In 2011 it was becoming apparent that the church building was again too small. We were struggling to fit everyone comfortably into the church, despite the re-orienting of the seats. Over the next few years the leadership and church meetings spent a great deal of time debating the options. The 1986 sanctuary had been constructed with four large steel hoop frames creating three bays. It was proposed to extend the church by adding another 2 bays.

As the process encountered delays, the church continued to grow and the concerns of Matt and the Pastoral Support Team were that visitors to the church would not return if they were unable to get a seat, and more particularly if families could not get seats together.

It was decided to move to two morning services. We had been holding our morning worship service at 10am. The two services were to run at 9:00 am until 10:15 and 10:45 am until 12.00 noon. The time between was to be a morning tea with both congregations. This was expected to run until we expanded the seating capacity.

The options of extending forward, towards Sydney St, and backwards, towards the Hunter River, were both explored and eventually it was decided to preserve the front lawn and to go backwards over the office space (the original kitchen) and over the space occupied by the garage of 2 Mitchell St. The Mitchell St house had been purchased in 1995 to give us options for

extension and depending on our resources, it was planned that the house would be demolished and a new Sunday School block be erected.

The car parking requirements to get approval for this extension were considerable, and a design creating more than 20 spaces on the land between the new Sunday School rooms and the river boundary of the Mitchell St block was drawn. To add complication, as this block sat adjacent to the river a study of the ecology and environment was required to identify any remnant riverine bushland. It came as no surprise to us that after being a housing block for more than a century, no remnant bushland was discovered.

Gerrit de Boer drew up the plans and guided the application process. The council approval, riverbank study and submission, plus the legal work to amalgamate the two blocks (to allow us to build across the boundary) eventually took just over two years. None of the planned work has yet been undertaken.

The budget for the project is included below and would have involved the sale of the manse in Wilkins St and a very large loan. During this period the church had two full-time pastoral staff and an unpaid part-time associate, plus a small amount of secretarial help. While we were able to cover the cost of this staff adequately for some years, by the time we were in a position to start the building, our attendance and budget had shrunk considerably and it was neither necessary nor feasible to proceed. The second morning service ceased and the church returned to one morning service held at 9:30am.

## Cash flow requirements for the church

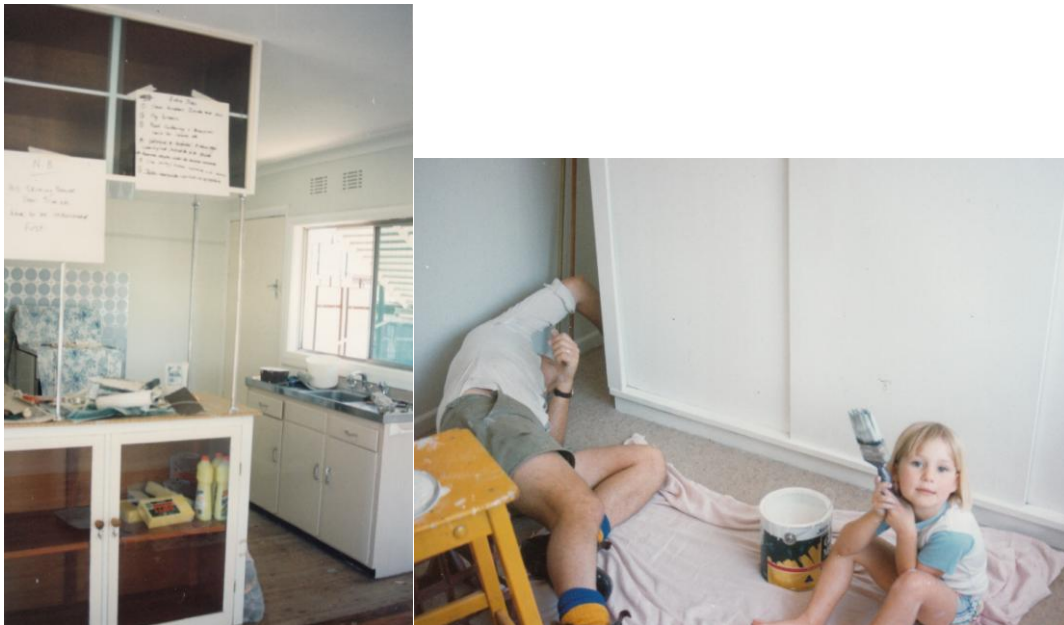
### Sanctuary Extension

<b>New Buildings</b>	<b>\$500,000.00</b>		Annual Cost
Loan at 6.5% over 10 years	\$5,600.00	per month	\$67,200.00
loan at 6.5% over 25 years	\$3,400.00	per month	\$40,800.00
 If we sell Wilkins St for	 <b>\$200,000.00</b>		 Annual Cost Incl Housing Allow
Loan is reduced to	\$300,000.00		
Repayments reduce to	\$3,400.00	p.m. -10y	\$60,800.00
	\$2,000.00	p.m. -25y	\$44,000.00

However the congregation's enthusiasm for construction was not entirely extinguished. The number of children playing on the front lawn and the concern for their safety led to plans for an enclosed playground. Fred Murphy and Tristan Hinds took charge of the operation and using the skills of Bruce Alexander and John Heald a series of commercial standard climbing frames were installed in a soft fall area during 2015 and later several solid timber benches were added for the watching adults. This was all enclosed by a child proof perimeter fence. It has been the source of great enjoyment and entertainment at the end of the church services, and is happily used by play groups and local children.

As part of a working bee in 2018, a change was made reflecting the orientation of the seating towards the south i.e. facing Mitchell Street. Darryl Spicer designed an improvement for the southern internal (now the “front”) wall. John Heald, with help from Darryl and few others, installed a wall made of rough sawn recycled timbers in the centre bay of the southern wall, with a cross shaped cut-out in the centre, which sat over the window. This produced a cross shaped window lit by natural light. This has significantly improved the interior of what is otherwise a fairly bland modern building. One visitor described it as ‘rugged but modern’ (I thought she was talking about Darryl).

The congregation has not only worked on the church, but also over the years on the manse. In the period prior to the arrival of the Nelson family, and then the Ortiger family, a great deal of work was undertaken to make the manse a pleasant and useful home for the pastor and his family. Over the years Bruce Alexander has put in a tremendous effort to keep the manse in usable condition.



### **Bruce Alexander's working bee on the manse 2003.**

However, while the manse is useful in that it had 5 bedrooms, allowing each pastor to have an office at home for at least part of their ministry, the lounge dining area is very small, and this made hosting events and even a bible study quite difficult for our pastors.

So in 2005 the Ortiger family decided to build their own house, one that offered the space to host church events and to complement their ministry. Matt and Monica purchased a 2 ha block in the Woodland Ridge Estate in Muscle Creek and the congregation assisted in its construction. Ortigers had a large concrete slab poured and purchased a kit for a steel frame home. The house was completed with a lot of work by Matt, with the help of Matt's father, Monica's father, Matt and Monica's siblings and a large number of men and women from the church. It not only provided a comfortable place to live, it did prove to be an asset to their ministry, hosting Bible Studies and regular 'Welcome' events for new families at the church.

## **Missionaries**

Over the second twenty five years of the church's life, the church has been involved in the support of a number of missionaries, working both overseas and in Australia. It was a particular pleasure to note that the individuals and families that we supported each had a significant connection to the church and most had been part of the congregation at some point. Here is an alphabetical list of our supported missionaries and a brief note about their work.

### **Gilbert & Ruth Appleby**

Gilbert Appleby and his brother Luke moved to Muswellbrook in 1988, and operated a sawmill in Muscle Creek. The two young men were part of a trio of young single males at our church, when almost everyone else was married. Gilbert ceased sawmilling in 1992 and spent two years at SMBC. Luke a little later, also decided to continue his education and trained as a radiographer and now lives with his wife Leanne and their family in Inverell.

At Iluka Beach Mission Gilbert met, Ruth, a medical practitioner, and in 1994 they were married. They then spent just over a year working at Rumginae (a town about 100km from the Ok Tedi Mine) in western PNG, Ruth involved in medical work, and Gil as station manager. However Gil had a heart for a deeper ministry role, and so they returned to Australia at the beginning of 1997, to attend SMBC and to train for overseas ministry. Upon graduation, Gil and Ruth were accepted as missionaries by Pioneers, and in 2002 they moved to Phnom Penh in Cambodia. Gilbert became part of the faculty at the Phnom Penh Bible School. Ruth, as a mother of young children, was also involved in some teaching at the Bible School and has at different times been involved in medical work, in the leadership of Hope School, which their daughters attended and raising two (and then three!) daughters.

Gil and Ruth's role changed in 2010 when they returned to Cambodia from a year of furlough in Australia, during which Gil completed his MA at Macquarie University. They were appointed Area Leaders for Indo-China for Pioneers. This is a pastoral role overseeing the work of the Pioneers teams working in their region. In addition Gilbert is still involved in some teaching at the Bible School. Their older daughters, Sarah and Joanna, have now moved to Australia for tertiary education and they only have their youngest daughter Lydia with them in Cambodia.

### **Paul and Carol Lukins**

Carol Lukins' brother is Ken Berry, Richard French's business partner. Ken and his family attended this church for about 20 years. Paul is an agronomist, and he and Carol became members of SIM in 2000 prior to working with SIM in Ethiopia.

The Lukins were involved in both agricultural and gospel work in Makki, Mursiland in a remote part of Ethiopia. Paul was involved in a series of agricultural projects with the Ethiopian government to aid the Mursi people, focussing on selecting better quality sorghum and maize varieties that the Mursi use for their cereal staple. He also evaluated and promoted the planting



of different types of trees that produce edible foliage. Carol, a schoolteacher, home schooled their four children due to their isolated location.

They were also involved in teaching the bible orally to the Mursi church leaders, and mentoring young believers and school students as they started to become literate in the mother-tongue school at Makki.

When their twin boys reached senior high school, the boys moved to a boarding school in Addis Ababa, followed the next year by one of the girls, and then the rest of the family joined them the year after that. Paul and Carol managed the boarding program for three years, and had other roles in SIM during that time as well. As their children completed school, they returned to Australia for tertiary education.

Paul and Carol returned to Australia in 2015 and relinquished their membership of SIM, but they continue in various roles with SIM from their base at Condobolin, in the middle of NSW.

### **Christine Platt**

Christine Platt moved to Muswellbrook in 1990. She worked as a cadet and then professional engineer at Liddell Power Station and became a part of this church. She left Muswellbrook in 1992, and then the electricity industry in 1995, in order to prepare for missionary service by studying at Sydney Missionary and Bible College.

Christine served with SIM for 10 years. She worked in Ecuador where she helped establish Radio Hope in a rural city to proclaim Christ to an area resistant to the gospel. This experience prepared Christine for her current role as CEO of Global Recordings Network Australia (formerly Gospel Recordings) whose purpose is to tell the story of Jesus in every language. She has now served in this capacity for 6 years.

### **Upper Hunter Christian Education Association (UHCEA) – Davinder Garbyal**

In 2005 a group of Christians in Muswellbrook met with a representative of Scripture Union to discuss the possibility of putting a paid SRE (Special Religious Education) teacher in the local High School. A significant proportion of those people, and the committee that developed, are a part of our church. There have been a number of teachers since the start of this work, but the current teacher is Davinder Garbyal, who has been a part of our church since 2013.

Davinder, who is trained as a teacher, moved to Muswellbrook, as his children were living here and accepted the role of SRE teacher in 2014. He spends two days per week at Muswellbrook High and another day a week at Scone High School. He is also has the chaplaincy role at the school, a role that is funded by the Commonwealth Government.



## **Christina Weston**

Christina came to Muswellbrook as a school student and completed her schooling at Muswellbrook High. She became a Christian as a result of a youth Bible Study at our church in 1992. After school she worked in retail in the town and was a part of our church for about seven years. During this time felt called to a life in ministry, and as a result spent some time in Malaysia. She started with Campus Crusade for Christ Australia in 2001, first as an employee, and then as a supported missionary.

Christina works in the Member Services section, which is responsible for Human Resources roles, the training, selection and preparation of new staff members for their ministry, and assists their “member” missionaries to fulfil their obligations to ‘Power to Change’ and their legal, visa and taxation requirements.

Since Christina commenced her work there, CCCA has changed its name to “Power to Change” as it is involved in a wider range of ministries than this name might suggest. The ministry has grown to include, school students and young families as well as university campuses.

Christina currently works in the office in Melbourne.

## **Bali 2008**

Following a period living and working in Indonesia, and some holidays in Bali, Graham and Janene Gageler began supporting the Widhya Asih foundation in Bali. This is an indigenous Balinese Protestant Christian mission group that operate a number of orphanages and community support projects at locations scattered across the island of Bali. The Gagelers and their extended family began to develop a strong relationship with the leadership of several of the orphanages and enlisted the help of a group of men from Muswellbrook to undertake a building programme. Ten of the twelve were from our church:- Graham and Jordan Gageler, Mal and Lachlan Rogers, Matt Ortiger, Jan Kamstra, Marty Parish, Jonathon Walsh, Richard and Robert French.

We travelled to Bali in September 2008 and were rewarded with a day’s sight seeing in Kuta, before travelling out to Widhya Asih Orphanage No. 2 at Blimbingsari, a small Christian village inland from the town of Melaya. The supports and a roof had already been constructed, and our job was to build the walls for a dormitory block. Some proved to be very good bricklayers e.g. Marty (a real surprise for an accountant to display such skills), Robert, Jan and Jono, but others failed. Thus Mal and Richard became the mortar mixers. In the absence of any machinery all was done by hand. When the truck load of sand arrived, it wasn’t a tipper, it was shovelled off by hand. There was no electric mixer for the mortar - just Mal, Richard and shovels. We (the mortar mixers) were convinced we had the toughest job, as there were constant shouts of “lulu luggi” [= “more mud”], which meant barrowing our newly mixed batches around to the scaffolds for the impatient bricklayers.

The bricklaying was a bit of a challenge as the bricks were of mixed quality and varied in size. They had all been made by Junior High School students at the Melaya orphanage, who mixed their own concrete ‘paste’ and then

hammered it into frames. This meant the bricklayers used lots of mortar to make up for the differences. This meant more work for Mal and Richard.

We ate alongside the children (though somewhat to our embarrassment we were given much larger portions and more meat) and visited their primary school adjacent to the orphanage site. A number of the carers at the site were single mothers who also lived in the orphanage, as they had no other place to go. We were supervised in the work by some Balinese tradesmen, who taught us how to lay the bricks and install the door and window frames. We managed to make them laugh a lot.

We finished with a couple of rest days back in Kuta, before returning home. Several of the Janene Gageler's family travelled to Bali soon after and rendered the walls ready for the children to move in.



The 2008 Bali Team with the Balinese builders who taught us to lay bricks. The walls we worked on can be seen with the window and door frames in place.

## **Bali 2011**

Two and a half years later Janene had another project for us. This time it was at the Orphanage at Melaya - Widhya Asih Orphanage No. 5. This was a high school aged group, to which many children moved after their time at Blimbingsari. It was built quite close to the local High School. The senior high school is at the neighbouring town of Negara, and several students had to travel there each day.

The second team had some new and some returning members, however this time it was a mixed group. Susan, Peter and Phil Thring, Clinton Baker, Dave Burgess, Peter Faulkner (Janene's father who would later spend several years living in Muswellbrook, looking after Graham and attending our church), Tim Gould, Jan Kamstra, Murray Kershaw, Jonathon Walsh and Robert, Vicki and Richard French. Graham Gageler was unable to come, as at the time of

the first trip in 2008 he had been experiencing muscle problems and there was a concern about Motor Neurone Disease. This diagnosis had been confirmed in the intervening period, and there had been a notable deterioration in his health and strength.

This time we were to construct a small house, which was for one of the married staff members and his family. It was quite a different type of construction, but again we had a local builder in charge. There was some site preparation already completed, but much was left for us.

The weather on this trip proved to be very hot, and this was accentuated by the lack of shade. At Blimbingsari we had been working under a roof, here we were in the full sun, and many struggled, finding the heat and humidity quite oppressive.

We commenced with a day preparing the site. There was a great deal of sand and rubble to move before we could start compacting the soil in the foundations and the floor spaces, prior to pouring the concrete floors. Both the mortar and the concrete were hand mixed. A square frame of about 2 square metres was made from planks, and then sand, cement (and stones for the concrete) were added and mixed as water was added. The resulting mixture was transferred to buckets and carried to the section of the building where it was required. Everything was done manually.

Again we were using bricks made by the students, but also boxing up formwork for the posts at the corners to support the weight of the roof.

Murray Kershaw made a significant impact for the children apart from involvement in the building work. He spent quite a deal of time repairing their musical instruments, especially the acoustic and electric guitars and improving the function of their computer system. He was often accompanied by an entourage of students.

When we had to leave, the building was far from complete, but the walls had reached much of their final height and all the floors had been poured. A local building team were to complete the job. Again we had a brief recuperation stop in Kuta before flying home. When Franky Wardana, the Widhya Asih Director, visited Australia and attended a service at our church later in 2011, he brought photos of the completed house.



## **The 2011 Bali Team in front of the house on which we were working.**

### **Bali – Mother and Daughter Trip to Bali 2010 by Leonie Rogers**

In the third term school holidays of 2010, Janene and Danielle Gageler, Leonie and Briana Rogers, Monica and Maddy Ortiger, and Donna and Breanna Wise headed off to Sydney airport.

The plan: Meet some more mother/daughter pairs from WA in Denpasar, Bali, and then board a bus to go on an orphanage crawl with the Widhya Asih Foundation. We also planned to visit a village in north eastern Bali where we'd been supporting the building of wells, and funding education for children who would not otherwise have continued on to high school. It proved to be quite an eventful trip.

First hurdle - how to fit all the stuff we wanted to take in our suitcases. Solution - take all our personal stuff in our carry-on bags. This required paring our personal luggage down to only the bare essentials.

Second hurdle - get all of us on the plane. On arrival at the airport, we proceeded to check in. Unfortunately, there was an issue with a passport, which necessitated Donna and Breanna missing the flight, and having to reorganise Breanna's passport, while the rest of us flew off to Denpasar. On arrival in Denpasar, we headed off to our hotel, discovering on the way that although Bali has road rules, drivers consider them as more like 'general guidelines' rather than rules to follow strictly.

Our first day in Bali involved heading off to a huge general store in order to stock up on things like noodles, cooking oil, and bulk quantities of Balinese snacks. Our driver for the day was a little intrigued that we'd purchased so much stuff, and he asked why. We explained, and it turned out that he was a graduate of the Widhya Asih system himself - and now a successful driver with his own car.

When the Perth crew arrived, we headed off to Untal Untal Orphanage which is girls only, and toured the orphanage, and then joined the girls for lunch. What looked like the most innocuous beans in the world introduced us to the Balinese love of chilli. We later learned that Melaya Orphanage goes through 2kg of chillis each week. From Untal Untal, we headed off to Melaya. It was a long, and also rather warm journey. Balinese roads are windy, and Balinese drivers are...fearless.

Melaya Orphanage welcomed us with open arms, singing, and many hands to carry our multitude of suitcases. We had a marvellous few days, with our girls sleeping in the dormitories with the Balinese girls while the rest of us slept in guest quarters in the orphanage. Melaya is an orphanage for teenagers, focusing on high school education, preparing the children for trades, and in some cases, university.

We became masters of the 'toilet water throw.' To flush a toilet in Bali, you throw a dipper of water at exactly the right angle and with exactly the right amount of force, or you get blowback, which is something to be avoided at all costs. The luxury of the guest quarters at Melaya is that the toilet is a 'sit on' not a 'squat on.' The day after we arrived in Melaya, Donna and Breanna Wise finally joined the rest of us, after having many adventures of their own (involving near riots by disgruntled airline passengers, trips in the middle of



the night with complete strangers, and sleeping in a place with bars), simply to get to Bali.

We then spent a day shopping with Franky and Puri Purie in the local market, spending money donated by various church members, and then went to the beach with the kids. They were careful to hold our hands and drag us rapidly across the major highway between Melaya and the beach. Clearly the children have a greater grasp of Bali road rules than those of us from Australia. On one of our days, we also spent an afternoon at Blimbingsari Orphanage, which is not far from Melaya, but has younger children.

During our time at Melaya, we learnt rudimentary Indonesian (except for Janene who could already converse quite fluently) and participated in devotions lead by not only the adults who care for the children, but the children themselves.

On one evening, we sang, Danelle Hamilton gave a devotion, and our girls painted everyone's nails. Then we topped our last night off with providing each girl with at least one new bra. This caused quite a lot of noise. It was then we realised that none of the girls had ever received a new bra. This might seem astounding to us, but when you consider the cost of underwear, and that the average Balinese earns about two Australian dollars per week, then it is easier to understand.

Our hosts then treated us to 'flaming coconut soccer,' which is rather exciting and played in thongs with a real flaming coconut, and topped the evening off by asking if they could pray for our children. We thought that was a marvellous idea, so our girls sat on the ground, while the orphanage kids gathered around them. And then lobbed water bombs and buckets of water at them. You can imagine what happened next - there was water flying everywhere, running, shouting, laughing, and a lot of fun. Kids are exactly the same everywhere.

We headed off to Singaraja Orphanage the next day, which was almost the hottest part of our trip. We Australians are accustomed to heat, but the Balinese heat has a life all of its own, fuelled by high humidity. We were treated to herbal tea, an orphanage tour, and inspected the recycling projects and batik projects. This orphanage operates its own shop.

From Singaraja, we bussed off to the village on the northeast corner of the island. This village is hot, dry, and terraced. At the local school, we gave away over four hundred pencil cases collected from the Upper Hunter, and then listened to teenagers thanking us for sending them to school, with a passion that was quite astounding. One girl in particular mentioned over and over her thanks that our God encouraged us to send her to school. This particular village is strongly Hindu, but that one girl knew which God had provided for her education, and despite the language barrier, and the cultural differences, it was a huge reminder of how great our God is, and how he transcends everything we can achieve alone.

Towards the end of our stay at Ahmed (near the village) we took clothing to the village of one of Janene's Balinese friends. It was possibly one of the most challenging moments of the trip, and required substantial crowd control in order to make sure things were distributed equitably.

We finished our island crawl with an extremely hot (no aircon) bus trip back to Denpasar, and a few days R&R. It was a marvellous time of getting to know our Balinese friends, appreciating the good they do for hundreds of children, and the amazing power of our God to change lives for the better. We were glad to have been a small part of that.

### **Bali – The Rogers Family Trip to Bali December 2011 by Leonie Rogers.**

Just before Christmas 2011, the Rogers family (Mal, Leonie, Briana and Lachlan), returned to Bali for an orphanage crawl. It was part of Briana's post year twelve trip.

When Briana and Leonie had been on the mother/daughter trip the previous year, they had discovered that none of the girls at the orphanage had ever had a brand new bra. This was something that had initially astounded them.

Briana decided that when they returned to Australia she'd do something about it. Over 2011, she arranged a 'Bring a Bra and a Buddy' night at church, and built a rather unique money box so that local people could contribute to the project. A local cafe was kind enough to pop the money box on their counter, and it proved to be an excellent talking point, introducing Muswellbrook to Widhya Asih Foundation.

The 'Bring a Bra and a Buddy' Night was a great success, with much fun, food and entertainment had by all. Each person brought at least one bra with them, and some brought multiples.







When the Rogers family headed off to Bali, we had eight suitcases between the four of us, containing over two hundred new bras, and close to fifty good (almost new condition) second hand ones, along with a variety of children's clothing in all kinds of sizes, and once again, some cash to spend on whatever the orphanages needed most at the time. Somehow, Jetstar had 'accidentally' allotted each family member forty kilograms of luggage. They did argue about it at the airport, however, with it written clearly on the tickets, Jetstar had no choice but to allow the eight suitcases as our luggage allocation. (We assume God organised this nice touch.)





We had a couple of days to acclimatise to Bali, and Briana and Leonie dropped some of the bras off at Untal Untal, and then we headed off to Singaraja, stayed overnight there in the accommodation huts overlooking the rice paddies, and spent time meeting the children and staff.

From Singaraja, we went to Blimbingsari for a couple of nights, and were hosted by Wayan, spending time ~~playing~~ being fleeced by the small children at Uno, pushing swings, and delivering clothing. We then headed to Melaya and arrived just in time to assist with the Christmas Celebration. We had a delightful (and very sweaty) time helping decorate the meeting area for Christmas.

Briana and Leonie then hosted a 'bra party' for the girls. Thanks to the generosity of not only Brookside, but the entire Muswellbrook Community, this



time each girl received at least three brand new bras. We also had plenty of bras for the adult staff as well. According to Mal and Lachlan, the noise was incredible.

When it was time for the Christmas party (funded by the Gageler family), we were treated as honoured guests, and assisted the handing out of the Christmas Gifts, before joining the children for a feast.

It was a marvellous time of celebrating Christmas with special friends, and one none of us will ever forget.

### **Thailand January 2016**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of January 2016 Barbie Turvey was made aware that the group who were to run the children's programme at a week long SIM Spiritual Life Conference for the members of their China teams had pulled out due to ill

health. Barbie sent e-mails to various church families. The conference was due to start in Chiang Mai on January 22<sup>nd</sup>, and the Children's programme team were booked to arrive on the 20<sup>th</sup> to set up. Barbie and Vicki French were keen to go and help. They then co-opted Murray Kershaw as their technology guru and leader for the older boys group and spent the next week madly organising travel arrangements, creating a programme of lessons and activities and liaising with the Conference director as to craft supplies etc. Richard French arrived mid way through the conference.

With some help from a couple of others, a programme similar to a Sunday School ran each morning for about three hours, and most afternoons and some evenings there were games and videos for the children of the team members who had review meetings with the SIM leadership and missiologist.

The team had about 30 children from about 2 to 14 years of age and there was very little time for relaxation, and very little space for outside play as it was a hotel in the middle of the city.

### **PNG September 2016**

Jim Dugan is a Word of Life missionary who works in Australia, but spends some of his time in PNG and the Philippines. Jim and his wife Lynda moved their home to Muswellbrook as they have a son, Jeremiah and his family, involved in the mining industry and living in Muswellbrook. They have been a part of our church since early in 2015. In September 2016 Jim took Richard and Vicki French and Peter Van Praag of Riverstone with him on a medical mission trip to Mt Hagen, of which he was the director. For a week, a team mainly from the USA ran a medical clinic in the grounds of the Temple Baptist Church. The team had two doctors, a dentist, chiropractor, several triage experts, specialty nurses, optician, pathology technician, Richard as pharmacist, and a team of evangelists. Vicki was there to be involved in children's ministry, but spent most of her time finding, begging and buying extra supplies of pharmaceuticals and medical and dental supplies from pharmacies and the hospital as we ran out.



**Richard & Vicki French, Jim Dugan and Peter Van Praag at the PNG mission, with Paias Wingti former PNG Prime Minister.**

While the people waited for treatment, and there were long queues, the evangelists spoke to groups and individuals and many made professions of faith, both new and renewed.

## **Thailand October 2016**

When Gilbert and Ruth Appleby heard of Vicki French's efforts for the SIM conference they e-mailed and asked her to run a similar programme at the Team Conference they were arranging which was also in northern Thailand, but this time on a sprawling resort in the countryside well outside Chiang Mai.

This time the team was Vicki and Richard French, and Sarah Appleby, who was in Australia after completing her HSC equivalent, and waiting to start university. There were also a mother and daughter who travelled from the USA, who were friends of another Pioneers missionary family. This conference was for all the Pioneers teams in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos, and there were more than a hundred people attending.

Again the programme consisted of a Sunday School type programme in the mornings, and games, activities and videos in the afternoons. This time there was plenty of space for outside games, but it was very hot and humid in the middle of the day. Again all the leaders returned home for a rest!

## **Special Events**

### **Men's Events**

During the 1990s we for some time had an irregular event held in someone's "shed". Usually held on a Friday or Saturday night, we sat in sheds belonging to various "blokes" while they told us a bit about themselves, and what went on in their shed. Some were quite surprising. I recall the evening in Greg Hanly's shed. One part was not surprising at all - Greg, who was at that time the Golf Pro at Muswellbrook Golf Club, taught us how to do minor repairs on golf clubs, e.g. replacing grips and shafts. The surprise was the remarkable LP collection that his shed housed. I'd never seen so many records all neatly lined up on his shelves.

This type of event was to return about 2012, when Phil and Ruth Fletcher purchased an HQ Holden Monaro and invited anyone interested to become part of what was to be a complete restoration. Many men from the church took part in what was a very long term project. The final result was a shiny yellow classic Australian sports car presented to Matt Ortiger. Getting it registered was as great a challenge as the restoration. You can ask Matt for those details.

In 2011 Dave Burgess invited a beef breeder and specialist butcher as a guest speaker and an extremely well attended "Men's Meat Night" was held on the verandah at "Gelston". We watched as meat was butchered, cooked and carved with advice on the best ways to enjoy a whole range of meat and meat products. Then we got to eat it, and hear a strong gospel message.





**The “Meat Night” in 2011.**

With that as a guide to what would attract the men, we moved into extremely brave territory for a Baptist Church, and arranged a “Beer Night” on the “Gelston” verandah. Mike O’Sullivan, from Sydney, brought up some samples of home brew and some of his brewing equipment and demonstrated some of the techniques that help to produce a professional tasting home brew. There was a tasting competition, which included small samples of a range of commercial beers, ales and lagers. The most discerning palate was...Sorin Timis who correctly identified the most products. For those who were amused and amazed at how seriously some men took the taste of their favourite brew, but didn’t themselves drink – there was a barbecue and plenty of soft drink. The evening included a gospel presentation and was very well received and we repeated it two years later.

As a follow-up to the meat night, in 2012 we held a sheep on a spit barbecue, this time down beside the creek at “Gelston”. In order to demonstrate all that is required, the sheep was slaughtered and skinned at the start of the event by Phil Thring and Richard French, and then cooked over a spit. While everyone waited for the feast, there were several hours of entertainment as a number of four wheel drive owners, most notably Matt Ortiger, pitted their driving skills against the water, gravel banks and mud of Sandy Creek. Robert French claimed victory for the creek when he dragged a number of trucks out of the creek with the tractor.

There have been several golf days over the years, and this has resumed recently. A quarterly Ambrose competition is underway and this has proved to be a popular social event.

In 2017 and again in 2018, we arranged two shooting events at “Gelston”. Over a number of years James Wiseman had taken various people from the church out shooting, but for each of these two occasions we set up skeet throwers and targets. The throwers launch small discs often known as “clay pigeons” and the aim is to hit them in the air with a shot gun. There were also stationary targets that were shot with air-rifles, small bore rifles and even a bow and arrow. Each night concluded with a barbecue and more games of accuracy on the billiard table.



## Ladies Events

The current women's ministry committee have orchestrated a full calendar of events to encourage and engage women of the church community and beyond. We had a wonderful Women's Conference in June 2017 discovering the truths in the book of Ruth. This was a wonderful day of learning, fellowship and fun with women across the Muswellbrook district. We have extended our Ladies Lunches to include discussion and learning about various topics such as prayer; loving others when it is hard and evangelism. We have also been serving community groups with donating personal products to support others in the area. Our inaugural 2017 Crafternoon was a big hit with people enjoying card making, jewellery making, board games or their own projects. Sonya O'Hara

### *Sam MacClean's memories*

We started our ladies night with a Chocolate night- with chocolate fountains, chocolate tasting quiz, chocolate knowledge quiz and chocolate making. The next evening was an Indian inspired evening where we had Indian dancing, Indian desert, jewelry making and henna tattoos. We also held a Cupcake decorating evening when we each were taught by a profession decorator and had 6 cupcakes to decorate and take home. Another event involved a Cooking class - we were shown how to make a curry by Davinder Garbyal, scones in the Thermomix by Mel Goodworth and fudge by Leonie Rogers. There was also a card making and craft event – in which we made Christmas cards, we sewed a pin cushion and made some bracelets. Candle making evening

Each evening generally started with a glass of bubbles on arrival and lots of fun and laughter.

## Catalyst Group



**The Catalyst Group at Aberdeen Highland Games in 2007.**

With the encouragement of Andrew Roberts a group was formed in the church and ran for a number of years as a part of the Micah Challenge. The aim was to promote the Millennium Development Goals, that comprise a plan that ran for 15 years aiming to halve global poverty in that period. Our group was

involved in lobbying politicians, making the issues known in the local community and in some local programmes. We collected unwanted furniture and gave it to families contacted through the food ministry. There was a lot of publicity for the programme at the middle point of those 15 years, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 and so we had a stand at the Aberdeen Highland Games to highlight the issue of modern slavery.

## Family Events

The church has regularly held events which were designed to involve the whole family. Many have revolved around food. We held several fun days on the church front lawn with inflatable equipment for the children and a sausage sizzles to feed everyone who attended.



**The family fun day in 2011 with Gakowskis, Boardmans, Naomi Barwick, Nicole Glenn, Monica Ortiger**

We have had many pizza meals, with a number being held at the “Lizard Park” a children’s adventure park beside Highbrook Oval in Muswellbrook. We have held family barbecues out at the farm of Michael and Mary Googe, and a series of sausage sizzles on the front lawn of the church and picnics at places like the Washpools and Burning Mountain.

## **‘Escapes’ the 4WD club** by Jonathon Walsh

In 1988 the church had held a 4WD weekend and in late 2013, our Associate Pastor, Tristan Hinds decided to use this as an outreach idea for the church. There were a number of families in the church that had an interest in 4wd and camping, so why not create a social group to promote family-friendly camping



and 4wd trips and open it up to the local community. Using Facebook to promote the group, the 'Escapes' club was born and within a short while the Escapes Facebook group had well over 100 members and the club even had an article written about it in the local newspaper.

### **Escape – Jonathan Walsh.**

The first planned trip soon arrived and in November the club was off to Sheeba Dam at Nundle for a weekend of camping and 4wd'ing. Apart from the nights being very cold, it was a great turn up for a first trip with many families attending, many of them not associated with the church. Apart from a number of weekend trips to places such as Gloucester Tops, Knorrit Flat and Myall Lakes, many day trips were organised as well.

Many lasting friendships were made between families within the church and the wider community through the Escapes club. Whilst the Escapes Club wound down with the departure of Tristan and a number of other key families involved, the club was able to do one last 'big' trip to Fraser Island in September 2015.

The group featured in the Muswellbrook Chronicle.

OCTOBER 30 2013 - 4:00AM

## **The great escape**

- **Dayarne Smith**  
News



**OUTDOOR ADVENTURE:** Escape members, from left, Lisa Hinds, Ben King, Tristan Hinds, Casey Gilbey, Alan Gilbey, Barry Turpentine and Mathew Ortiger.

When Tristan Hinds put the call out on social media to start a four-wheel drive and camping club, he didn't know what to expect.

But a month later, the group – aptly called Escape – has attracted about 150 members.

Club members recently took part in their first weekend camping trip to Sheeba Dam, near Nundle.

And, a day-trip to Barrington Tops is planned for November 30.

Mr Hinds, a pastor at Brookside Church, said the group wasn't only for experienced four-wheel drive specialists.

"Most people in our group don't even own a four-wheel drive," he said.

He said the aim was to have fun, meet new people and enjoy a few quiet drinks around the campfire, but he stressed that above all it was a family-friendly club.

Mr Hinds and his young family moved to Muswellbrook from the Gold Coast 18 months ago and he can't sing the praises of the town enough.

"Our initial apprehension of life without Westfields and Sushi Train quickly dissipated as we were inundated with offers from locals inviting us to spend time with them in what is one of the most beautiful and adventure-soaked parts of Australia," he said.

"I actually think Muswellbrook has a wonderful friendship and community culture and I want to accentuate that.

"Escape isn't about fixing anything or even filling a gap in the community, it's just continuing on in this wonderful Muswellbrook tradition."

The club will run camps and day trips throughout the year.

For more information or to join, contact Tristan through Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/escapemuswellbrook> or on 0431 254 557.

## **2010 Christmas Pageant**

During December 2010, with encouragement from Ken Clarke, we staged a Christmas pageant. This was held on December 20<sup>th</sup>, and a large number of members of the church dressed as characters in the Christmas narrative and we presented the story as a series of tableaux, or scenes, which were set in and around the church. We also had some very popular baby farm animals, jumping castles, sausage sizzle and after the barbecue we held a Carol Service staged on the front deck. It was very successful in involving a large proportion of our families and attracting many families from the surrounding area who even persevered through a light shower of rain. We concluded with a visit from Santa Claus aboard the McCullys Gap Fire Truck!



**The Playgroup item at the Christmas Carols 2010.**



For a number of subsequent years the church had Christmas lights displayed throughout December.



### **Muswellbrook South Working Bee**

It was suggested that as a community project we should support the primary school closest to the church. So a Saturday (October 31<sup>st</sup>, 2012) was set aside and about 20 men and women from the church spent all day at Muswellbrook South Public School working on the grounds. We removed many loads of fallen leaves and branches, cleaned up gardens and laid artificial grass in several areas where the natural grass would not grow. This was greatly appreciated by the school.



**Jan Kamstra and Matt Ortiger lay artificial grass.**



## **Drama Events**

The church has hosted the drama group Covenant Players several times, and had included drama events in the service and as special events, but in 2013, with great encouragement from Samantha McLean, a group of desperate but enthusiastic thespians formed "The Baptist Players". Over the next four years four murder mystery plays were presented and the funds raised donated to the UHCEA and other local charities. Each play was run as a dinner theatre with a trivia contest, both run by Vicki French based on the era of the play. The scripts chosen included a great deal of humour, which the cast adapted to local people and places. The first two plays were staged in the church with a makeshift stage and wings erected firstly on the western wall and then along the southern wall. For the third and fourth years it was staged in the hall of the Uniting Church, Muswellbrook.



**"Father Ciaran" staged in the church in 2013.**

The productions were...

2013 Father Ciaran – a murder during WWII with spies, ghosts and an inebriated priest!

2014 Dead Air – a murder at a 1960's radio station with big egos and jealousies amongst the stars.

2015 A Fete worse than Death – a murder in the midst of the fete's fiercest competition – for the biggest marrow, with a bumbling home detective and pickle grower Miss Parmenter.

2016 Miss Glossop Comes to Visit – Miss Glossop visits wealthy family friends for a murderous weekend and manages to completely confuse the local constabulary.

The plays were very popular and eventually ran over three nights. Over the years the cast included...Samantha McLean (and her mother), Anthony McLean, Gwen, Susan, Peter and Jason Thring, Tim Seymour, Murray Kershaw, Richard French, Darryl Spicer, Cheryl Wiseman, Emma Hordern, Mel Goodworth, Nathan Baker and Casey Gilbey.



ALEXANDER Bruce, Lynne



BAKER Clinton, Carolyn,  
Mitch, Luke



CARSON Pat



CUMMINGS Laurel



DE NYS Greg, Susanna



DIECKMANN Malachi,  
Bree, Isabella



DUGAN Jeremiah, Jess,  
Bella, Brooklyn, Hudson



DUGAN Jim, Lynda



ESDAILE Jeff, Joan



ESDAILE Matt, Nikki,  
Emma, Sarah



FIBBINS Julie



FRENCH Richard, Vicki





GARBYAL Davinder,  
Godawari, Binti, Sherjay



GARBYAL Ryan, Suzanne,  
Arna, Huxley, Addison



GLENN Nick, Nicole,  
Fletcher, Hannah



GOODWORTH Adam, Mel,  
Kayden



GOOGE Michael, Mary



GREEN Adam, Michelle,  
Lucy, Ida, Ellis



HARRIS Ben, Natalie, Mila,  
Ezra



HEUSTON Warren, Lynne



HOCKING Rob, Nicolette,  
Zanel, Lianka



HORNE David, Margaret



KERSHAW Murray, Jenny



LANGLEY Geoff, Sandra





LOITERTON Anna



MILLS Ben, Katie, Lachlan,  
Ethan



MURPHY Fred, Allison,  
Finn, Harry



NILON Barbara

It is with sadness that we note that a month after our anniversary Barbara joined her Saviour. She had been honoured on the night for her contribution to the church over 47 years, and she and Pat Carson were the longest serving members.



O'HARA David, Sonya,  
Daniel



ROGERS John, Chris



ROGERS Mal, Leonie



SINTON Paula



SPICER Darryl, Barbara,  
Hayden, Ethan



SUMMERS Bill, Janine



THRING Phil, Gwen, Jason,  
Chris, Dale



TIMIS, Sorin, Olympia,  
Andre





TURVEY Graham, Barbie



WALSH Jonathon, Janet,  
Alexis, Alice



WALSH Ray, Cheryl



WARNER Adam, Lauren



WESTGATE Brad, Kel,  
Eliza, Giselle



WISEMAN James, Cheryl

Richard French would like to thank those that have helped in the preparation of this book... Robert French, Vicki French, Jennifer Kershaw, Murray Kershaw, Sam MacClean, Sonya O'Hara, Matt Ortiger, Leonie Rogers, Darryl Spicer, and Jonathon Walsh.

This is only a brief summary of the work God has done in Muswellbrook. There is much more that lives in the memories of those who have been a part of this congregation, and so we say with the Psalmist...

My mouth will tell of your righteous deeds,  
of your saving acts all day long—  
though I know not how to relate them all.  
Psalm 71:15 (NIV)

Glory to God in the Highest

Richard J. French  
Muswellbrook 2018