DISCOVERING THE BALANCE

BETWEEN REASON AND EMOTION
ACTION AND REFLECTION,

As Scientist,
Parish Minister,
Village Consultant,
Prison Chaplain

A MEMOIR

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2nd Edition
Leichardt
October 2018

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Introduction

Three Threads in the Story

This story has three threads which develop in parallel.

The first thread is the story of what I did. Basically this involves my working career: I started out as a research scientist for three years, with one year on Macquarie Island in sub-Antarctica. Then I became a minister, with a big ambition of helping other people through working in the church; I worked in underprivileged parishes for fifteen years. While I was in my first parish I met Isobel; we got married and started a family, with three beautiful children.

Then I joined the Ecumenical Institute, a radical movement which came to Australia from Chicago and then went world-wide. I was with them for fourteen years. Isobel and our family came along, willy-nilly. After four years in Australia, we went to Chicago for two-and-a-half years, then Toronto in Canada for two years. Then my work changed: for three years I was a teacher or consultant in short-term events for people living in poverty, in rural villages over three continents. I was in India, in Venezuela and Chile, in South Korea and the Philippines, and other places. Isobel was doing similar work; sometimes we were together and sometimes she was separate, as e.g. in Japan. Then for two years we were based in Singapore.

By the early 1980s the Institute was crumbling, and finally it collapsed. We came back to Brisbane for two years, and then returned to church work. When we came back to the Uniting Church, Isobel was ordained as a minister, so we became a "clergy couple", which at the time was a rather unusual animal. We were at Whyalla in South Australia for three years, then back in N.S.W. Isobel took a parish settlement at Mascot, and I found a non-parish placement as prison chaplain. Finally we were close to our children, who were young adults by now.

The second thread is the story of my relationships, in particular my family.
The balance between work and family can often be rather precarious, and so it proved for us. When I was young I had a lot to learn about emotions and relationships, although I was bright; and so I tended to give priority to my work, whatever it was at the time. Life with the Institute carried this to extremes: work, "the mission", took priority always, apart from one evening a week (Mondays) as "family time". [One couple whom we knew told us, years later, that they had sex together every Monday night, whether they felt like it or not.]

Isobel travelled with me on a path far different from anything she might have imagined at the beginning; it has been my good fortune that she has stayed the course with me. It has been otherwise for Rebecca, Peter, and Cathy: they might have been in for a rough ride even as "preacher's kids", but their life was turned completely upside down, to pain and confusion, when we went into the Order Ecumenical. There was a covenant in the Institute that required that our teen-age children live in foster care, apart from us and separate from each other. As a result they endured loneliness and confusion; this also affected Isobel very much. It was a time of chaos and pain which lasted, roughly speaking, through all their high-school years, and which left permanent scars on them all.

So I lost the way in my relationships. With Isobel I was lucky, and we made a fresh start, premised on her growth, her strength, her independent career. With Rebecca, Peter and Cathy it wasn't so simple: we made such a mess of their lives that the period of recovery was long, slow and difficult – it moved out of my hands (and Isobel's), and they each had to try to rebuild their own foundations.

This part of the story will eventually move on and develop into their three separate stories as adults. By the time we came back to Sydney our children were in late high school or university, and now they have found good jobs and formed their own families. In recent years Isobel and I have been working to try to heal their old wounds: family, children and grandchildren, have been our main focus in our later years.

The third thread is the inner story: how I changed and developed to become a different person, and why I did what I did. What I did may seem to be the dominant theme, the larger part of the narrative – and without that there would be no story, it's true. But the story is more than that and deeper than that.

At the start, when I changed my life-direction from a life in science to a life in the church, I did it in order to "help" people who needed a bit of a leg up in life. Then, when I left parish work and went into the Institute, what I wanted to do was to "empower" people. This became a time of challenges, of new experiences which enriched me, especially in the villages. Yet what I had hoped to do with the Institute ended in failure, although my own career moved on to a fresh start.

I ran into some tough times too: twice I experienced a complete personal crash. The first was in India, while I was in the Order, and then again at Whyalla, after I had come back to parish work. My ego was challenged, and crushed; my recovery, my coming to some new understanding of myself, was very, very slow; I became a different person, gentler and less assertive.

After these painful shocks, my goal at the end – as a chaplain especially – was to "support" people. With hindsight, I think now that in the first two periods I was unconsciously operating from a position of power, an assumed capacity to be a leader, to teach people. Only in the third phase did I begin to recognise the position that they were in and respect it as a given, and seek with them to make the most of those given circumstances. So in a sense the third thread is the story of how I changed.

1. The Beginning Years

My Family of Birth

I was born in 1929, in Ballarat, just four weeks before the stock-market crash in New York, "Black Tuesday", which started the Great Depression.

My father, Ray Bishop ("Bish"), was from Ballarat, and my mother, Cath Downing, from Melbourne. They had met each other in a circle of young adults who used to go away together to the Dandenongs, to a holiday house of my Downing grandparents. Many of the men were returned soldiers: "Bish" for one and Cath's brother Walter Downing ("Jimmy") as another. They kept up their friendships, and people in that circle were important to Sheila and me in later years.

Bish and Cath were married in Melbourne in April 1928, in Collins Street Baptist Church where my grandfather Downing was a deacon. They set up house at 4 High Street, Ballarat, near Lake Wendouree. I was born on 1st October 1929, a Tuesday. It had snowed on the Saturday before, a fact which my mother remembered, because she didn't enjoy the cold Ballarat winters. I was born in a small maternity hospital. When my sister Sheila was born, in February 1931, the birth was at home with help from a midwife. I have since wondered whether this difference was because by 1931 the Depression was already tough, and home births were less expensive.

Whether this was true or not, the Depression affected our family severely. My Dad worked with his father Wesley Bishop, in the family business, Munro Engineers. Munros went bust in about 1932, the bank foreclosed, and Mum and Dad lost their home. Grandfather Wesley died soon afterwards, of a broken heart as the family said then, or as people might say now, from stress and grief.

Long afterwards my mother said, "Your husband is the one who sticks to you through all the troubles that you never would have had, if you hadn't married him", though of course the troubles came from the times, not from Bish himself. The house was gone, the business was gone, the Depression was at its worst. We went to Melbourne to live with my mother's parents, John and Celia Downing in Ivanhoe. We lived in the attic, all four of us upstairs in the one room. I remember taking baths in the tiny little bathroom, where the hot water came from a noisy chip bath-heater – you lit a little fire with scraps of paper and then fed it with wood chips.

Dad was out of work for two or three years, until through good fortune he got a job in Myers. He was in town, in Bourke Street, and he met his old colonel from the Sixth Brigade of Artillery, Colonel Cohen. "Hullo, Bishop, how are you going?" etc. When the colonel heard that Bish was down on his luck he pulled out his business card and said, "Take this round to the staff entrance at Myers," for he was a son-in-law of the owners of the Myer Emporium. So Dad got a job in the lingerie department.

Adelaide

About 1936 we moved to Adelaide, when my Dad got a job at the South Australian Farmers' Union. We lived at 19 Northumberland Ave., Tusmore; there was a rain-water tank in our back yard, and a few apricot trees. I went to the Rose Park Public School. Sheila went to Girton College, a private school for

girls where our aunt, 'Miss Edith Bishop B.A.', was headmistress; (Auntie Ede paid the fees because she did not want to see her niece going to a public school.) We went to church at Tusmore Presbyterian. We weren't Presbyterians but it was the only local option apart from Church of England or Catholic. My Dad didn't go; he hadn't been a church-goer since the War.

I remember two things from Adelaide.

- My father made friends with a neighbour, Mr Blackburn, who was completely blind – he had lost his sight in the war. His eyes were bleary and bloodshot and he seemed old to us, but could only have been in his 40s; he was friendly and humane and soon was just part of our usual landscape.
- In 1939 my cousin Bill Downing came to stay, during January school holidays. It was the summer when there was a record heat wave 117.5º Fahrenheit (= 47.5º C.); the three of us children sat out in the shade of a tree and Bill said, "I feel like a melted bag of bones!"

We Move to Sydney Later in 1939 we moved to Sydney. My Dad had a job with Buzacott's, farm machinery suppliers, as sales manager. He went ahead by rail, and the other three of us came around by ship. Our furniture was in the hold, and so was our dog, on a leash. We visited him every day; but when we stopped a few days in Melbourne Mum put her foot down and said that Micky had to be given away, he could not come on to Sydney. So that's what happened, and Sheila and I grieved over his absence.

We stayed first in a boarding house in Neutral Bay; when we went to the city it was by ferry from Kurraba wharf, a new experience. After a few weeks of house-hunting we moved in to a rented house at 119 William Edward Street at Longueville, also on a ferry route. Here we lived for about three years; I settled in to a new school and church and from here I joined the Cubs, the 2nd Longueville pack. Eventually Mum and Dad bought a block of land and built a house in Northwood. They were lucky in their timing, for it was one of the last to be built before new building restrictions applied because of the war effort.

School

I went to school at Mowbray House in Chatswood. It was a 'private' school, owned and managed by Lance Bavin, its headmaster; there were about half a dozen teachers and perhaps a couple of hundred pupils. I stayed at Mowbray until I did the Intermediate in 1943 *(about the same as today's School Certificate in year 10)*. I was happy there and it gave me a good grounding in English, History, Science and Maths. I remember two things about school during the war – in the playground they dug three or four large trenches as air-raid shelters, and there were sessions after school one or two afternoons a week when we made camouflage nets for the army in New Guinea. My mother was one of a handful of parents who came up to school to help in that war effort.

An Interesting Moment at Mowbray House School

Extract from a letter from Cath Bishop to Gwen Downing, (retrieved by Sheila Walkerden, 2014)

50 Cliff Rd, Northwood, Oct 24th (1943)

Thursday of last week Jim had his vocational guidance tests which took up all the morning. I had to go for an interview in the afternoon - the psychologist looked at me strangely and asked whose idea it was to have Jim tested & when I said I thought it would be a good idea to have the help of experts to guide us as to the trend he should follow in subjects for the Leaving, which he starts next year, he said that Jim was so remarkable at everything that he could do anything – so I replied that that was the problem we needed to solve! He said he was – a whole string of superlatives, & whereas the intelligence quotient of the average boy was 100, Jim's was 140. They tested eyesight, weighed and measured him, & made exhaustive enquiries re hobbies sport etc. We got a report which recommended civil engineering, research work in science, actuarial science or the diplomatic service! Jim was the centre of attraction at school next day & Mr Bavin said he expected him to end up as Chief Justice in the Supreme Court Bench!

Yesterday Jim had six boys for the afternoon & for tea – it is harder to entertain now. I thought to buy pastry for meat pies and sausage rolls, also cakes, to save work, but could get neither, so Sheila and I had a tremendous morning baking; I made up two pounds of flour into pastry, as well as dozens of cakes. Dorrie * promised some ice-cream towards the feast, and brought it over during the afternoon.

I planned a treasure hunt for the boys yesterday, all the clues taken from Twelfth Night which they are studying; we thought it would take them an hour, but they rushed through it in a quarter of an hour.

[* = Cath's other sister, Dorrie Connor, who lived in Longueville]

My Comment: I don't remember this incident. But I have long held the view that it is not necessarily an advantage to be bright; sometimes it can be a problem.

In 1944 I went on to Sydney Grammar School, on a scholarship; (Mum and Dad couldn't have afforded it otherwise). I went in by ferry to Circular Quay and took a tram to the Museum at the corner of College St., next to the school. The teacher I best remember was "Archie" Keeble, the science master. He developed our scientific imaginations and challenged us to think for ourselves. *["Imagine one cricket ball in infinite space. Put in another cricket ball, a long way away. What will happen?"]*

But on the whole the school valued sporting skills, which I didn't have, over student ability. I got my enjoyment through the Longueville Cubs and Scouts, and the church at St Andrew's, Longueville.

Scouting

The Scouts had a Hall set in a bush reserve on the edge of Longueville – it was about twenty minutes walk from where we lived, or there was a short cut in daylight on a track through the bush. I joined the

Cubs when I was about nine, and moved into the Scouts at twelve. The Cubs met on Tuesday night: opening ritual, noisy fun and games, then learning or quieter activities, all over by about 8 p.m. Then we would walk home together, until finding Dad as he was walking up to meet me on the way.
I remember a night when an air raid warden came to the Scout Hut and asked us to leave early and go home quickly, because there was an air raid alert. It was February 19th 1942, the night when a Japanese submarine came into the Harbour and shelled some Navy installations at Garden Island. In the Cubs I qualified with various skills and eventually wore two stripes on my sleeve as a "Sixer".

Not long afterwards I went up to the Scouts, where I was very small fry in a group whose leaders were sixteen or seventeen. In the course of time I became Assistant Cub Master in the 2nd Longueville Cubs, giving back something for what I had got. My firm friend Warner Johanssen was the Cub Master. It was a bit hectic and a lot of fun.

The Scouts gave me a start in camping outdoors under canvas, which gave me great happiness. We used to go away at Easter and over Eight Hours weekend, to Otford or to Pennant Hills or to "Bungaree", which was a bush site somewhere in East Gordon or Killara, long since developed as suburbia. We would splash around in the creek or the waterhole, cook sausages and damper, billy tea and so on over open fires, and (need I say) vigorously stir the breakfast porridge as it bubbled away in the billy over the fire.

One week-end we had an open day for parents, and as a special feature we cooked our food in a "Maori oven". You dig a pit in the ground and get a strong fire going in it, with a lot of stones about the size of a fist. Then you remove the fire, line the pit with the hot stones, wrap your raw food in green leaves – (mustn't use gum leaves because of the strong flavour!) – and cover the whole with soil. When the guests arrive, you just open the whole thing up, dig out the deliciously cooked food, and serve. (If quite a lot of sandy soil has worked its way in through the leaves and into the food … well, nothing's perfect.) I wish we'd had a camera to record the looks on our mothers' faces.

Church Life

St Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Longueville was perhaps twenty minutes' walk from our place in Northwood; we walked it regularly from about the age of eight. My Dad didn't have a car, except now and again at the weekend as a favour from work; some of the other fathers did, and quite a few did not.

The minister was Duncan McDiarmid, a Scot with a broad accent whom we all admired and who clearly loved all of us. The Sunday School was run by Mr (Lin) Palmer, a kind man with a breezy manner, in spite of a twisted face and distorted eye, the result of war wounds; he was not quite like any one else that I knew. John McConville, my teacher, was a quiet Scot who was more on my wave-length. They taught us plain-vanilla Bible teaching, not literalist so far as I remember. Once a year there was an anniversary, a big massed performance in church that took weeks to prepare.
In later years I learned that Mr McDiarmid was a professed "liberal" whereas Mr Palmer was a conservative, an evangelical – (not that I ever heard those words used). So it seems to me now that the minister's liberal views prevailed in our Sunday School, over those of his elder.

At about twelve we moved from Sunday School in the morning, to youth group - P.F.A. or the Fellowship, who met in the evening. The P.F.A. intention was to encourage a full rounded life, not just 'religious' development: the "four square" ideal was mental, physical, social and spiritual. There was a weekly meeting, and a social life of dances, concerts and so on, based on the North Shore District; it could keep you occupied most weekends if you chose. The PFA also liked to sing; apart from church items a lot of our repertoire was old Scots ballads and folk songs: "Will ye no' come back again?", Eriskay love lilt, and so on.

The PFA was autonomous, independent of the powers-that-be in the "adult church", and proud of it. They ran their own affairs both locally and as a state-wide organisation, with monthly meetings, an annual state conference, and the whole democratic apparatus. They were proud to have been doing so since about 1906. About 1950 some powers in the 'adult' church tried to rein them in; there was resistance (of which I was a small part), so the attempt failed. Every January there was a conference of state-wide delegates at Thornleigh; six or eight Longueville people would go to Thornleigh, two or three as voting delegates. So it came about presently that I was a member of the State Executive as the convenor of "Christian Social Order", roughly the same as what now we would call "social justice".

I was at Grammar for three years. I repeated the Leaving Certificate, because I was too young to go on to University at the end of 1945 – I was 16. In 1946 I got a good Leaving pass, and won the school prize for General Proficiency – top student. I was ready for university.

2. At Sydney University

Undergraduate Life

In 1947 I began at the University of Sydney as a science student. My first year subjects were geology, chemistry, physics and maths. Geology was new and I enjoyed it; there was quite a lot about New South Wales and the sandstone in the Sydney basin. The other subjects were old friends – in second year there was chemistry, physics and maths, maths and physics in third year, and then just physics for a fourth (honours) year. In 1950 I graduated B.Sc. in Physics with second class honours. I'd been hoping for first-class – it was a piece of bad luck that I got a severe case of jaundice during the run-up to my final exams of the honours year.

The Physics courses were housed in their own separate building, a little way south of Science Road, whose buildings are a bit older. During most of my student years the chair of Physics was vacant (there was no Professor). Dr Dick Makinson, Reader in Physics, was a senior and respected figure. He was a card-carrying member of the Communist Party, still possible in those days before the Party was outlawed. I remember him speaking strongly at a couple of political meetings, but it made no difference to his Physics that we could see.

In our building one of the rooms contained a *computer*! At that time there were perhaps four or five computers in all of Australia and New Zealand, just this one in Sydney. They needed a lot of space because they depended on "thermionic valves" or "vacuum tubes" to control their flow of electricity. A vacuum tube was about as big as half a banana (without the bend); it was made of glass, with some wiring inside and some metal terminals on its base. Nowadays the transistor has replaced it as a way to control and manage electric circuits and signals – much much smaller, and uses much less electricity. The first practical transistor was developed in 1947, the year I began at University; during the 1950s they revolutionized the manufacture of radios, computers and so on, and their inventors were awarded the Nobel Prize for Physics in 1957.

There was, of course, no internet: a computer was for doing calculations, not for communicating. The internet came later: it was developed in academic circles in the late 80s, and really took off during the 90s.

A sidetrack: **Two Reminiscences about Radio**

1. Crystal Radio When I was about eight, or younger, I remember my mother taking us to visit Auntie Lizzie Hopkins, her mother's sister, in Clifton Hill in Melbourne. She was very old – in her 70s or 80s – and she served a delicious afternoon tea. She had a radio such as I'd never seen before, and never saw again. You could only listen to it through head-phones, something I'd never seen before, and you tuned by moving a "cat's whisker" – a little wire, over a crystal. (The crystal meant it had no vacuum tubes, it dated from some time in the early 1920s, before vacuum tubes were in use!)

2. Our first radio I remember my Dad proudly bringing home our first radio and putting it on the mantel-piece in the lounge room. It was while we were living in Adelaide; about 1936 or 1937. It was not large, maybe half a meter wide and 30 cm tall, the top shaped in a semi-circle. We loved it.

Our physics classes must have been fairly routine; at this distance of time I recall very little detail from them. It was the extra-curricular activities that gave spice to life. To mention the Physics first, in my third year I was secretary of the Physical Society; we ran lunch-time lectures once or twice a month. Once we got a lecturer from the Med School on the topic "The Brain as an Electric Circuit" – it drew a big crowd of Medical students who wanted to hear it explained again in simple terms.

In December-January 1949-50 I went to Melbourne. I had a job as a technical assistant in the Bureau of Mineral Resources, a small government office with about six people, which was compiling and publishing maps about various types of geological and mining information. I stayed in the Melbourne YMCA hostel and lived a pleasantly independent life. I had the chance for some nice family visits with Aunt Gwen Downing, Frank and Rita Paton (my Dad's sister and her husband), and in Ballarat a couple of times with Grandma Kate Bishop. I really enjoyed getting to know all these Victorian relatives better, especially Grandma Kate. I remember a bad moment and a good moment. One morning I dropped a tray of type on the floor (our printing was done by type-setting the small metal letters into a frame); it took me about an hour to pick them up and sort them into the right boxes. But, in the last few days of my time there the boss took me to one side and said, "I've been watching you; I like your attitude to work. Would you be interested in a fullt-time job here when you graduate?" I was flattered, but said; "No. thanks."

Scouting Continues

Joining Sydney University Rover Crew followed naturally from Scouting at Longueville. The Rovers were active in camping and bushwalking; moreover they liked to sing. In the evening we would sit round a camp-fire, singing ballads and sea shanties which, I now recognise, were from at least a generation further back. We went to a big pan-Pacific Jamboree at Wonga Park, outside Melbourne, where we scrounged a camel from somewhere and rode it in all the processions. During these years I also kept active in the Longueville Scouts, as ACM *(Assistant Cub Master)* in the 2nd Longueville Cub pack.

The Rover Crew revived a tradition from before the war, of "Scientific Expeditions" during the May vacation. We would organise it in liaison with one or two university staff who wanted to do field work in some area of biology. They would nominate the area and bring their technical stuff; we would set up a camp and look after all the camp practics – meals, hygiene, transport and so on. The first one was in 1948 at Warrah wild-life sanctuary at Patonga on the Central Coast. The main scientist was Dr Noel Beadle, a botanist. Then in 1949 and 1950 we went to the Warrumbungle Mountains, west of Coonabarabran. Dr Charles Birch, a botanist with special interest in ecology and species inter-relationship, was one of the scientists. His extra-curricular interest was process philosophy (A.N. Whitehead): later he wrote books on Science and Religion and finally was awarded the Templeton Prize for Religion, said to be as prestigious in this field as the Nobel Prizes.

We felt these Expeditions were a worth-while piece of service. They were a lot of fun, and mind-expanding too as we sat around after dinner and talked about water-bugs or tree-ferns or whatever.

Sydney University Bushwalkers came naturally too: one time we went down to Nowra and climbed Mount PigeonHouse, so named by Captain Cook. On that trip I remember that on the descent, the way home, I was very tired and just stumbling along, until suddenly I got my second wind, and was swinging along the rest of the way.

Two Great Bush-walks

During my University days I went on major bushwalks occasionally, either with the University Rover Crew, or the University Bushwalking Club, or the Longueville Rover Crew.

- **Mount Pigeon House** On one walk we went to Mount Pigeon House, on the ranges above Milton on the south coast of N.S.W. [Captain Cook noticed it as he sailed northwards in 1770, and gave it the name because of its unusual shape.] One Friday evening we took the train from Central to Bomaderry (the end of the rail line), then a bus to Milton. It was late; we walked out to the edge of town, found a clear space, rolled out our sleeping bags and went to sleep. In the morning, we were in a grave yard at the local Methodist Church. It didn't seem to matter: there was no-one about, we tried to leave it clean and tidy as we got on our way.

  On Saturday we made it to the top of Pigeon House – about a ten-mile walk (16 km.) through the Morton National Park. That night we found a better spot to pitch camp, cooked a pleasant meal, yarned a while and then slept. On the Sunday we had the return walk, mostly downhill or on the flat, to get to the bus in Milton and so connect with the train at Bomaderry. It was a pleasant and successful walk.

  There were five of us, all males; I was the youngest (and, it seems to me now, the smallest). As we walked back on Sunday I was tired, my pack was heavy, I was bringing up the rear. Then during the morning, somehow or other I picked up strength. My legs began to swing more easily, I stood a bit straighter and taller under my pack, I moved up into the group and easily kept pace with the others. Whatever it was (I didn't analyse it), it was in the first place a happening in the mind, or the spirit; yet the effects were in the body, and they lasted for the rest of the trip. I felt stronger and better for later walks, too.

- **The Grose Valley** Another great walk was with a mate from Longueville Rover Crew, Warner Johanssen. We decided to walk, just the two of us, down the valley of the Grose River, which runs through the Blue Mountains. [With hind-sight, it was a risk to go as a party of just two. In current wisdom a party of at least three is safer – if someone has a mishap one can stay and help and one can go for assistance. We were lucky: we had no mishap.]

  From Blackheath railway station you walk out to Govetts Leap, a look-out at the edge of town with a spectacular view of wilderness to the north. You climb down a long set of steps into the Bluegum Forest, tall lovely trees on sloping terrain that feel as though they've been there for ever. At the bottom of that slope you come to the Grose River, not a large current when we saw it at that point, but running clear and strong. After that it was just walking down along the line of the stream for about three days.

  It wasn't long before the sides of the valley rose up high above us on both sides, forming a deep gorge. A couple of times we discussed what you might do to climb out of the gorge, if you had to; we decided that you couldn't, there was no way out except to keep going down, except perhaps to go back. In a few places the bottom of the valley got very narrow – we had to hop from rock to rock, or walk on stepping-stones and try to keep our balance.

  Eventually the gorge ended and we came out into open country, and very soon into farmland. We had been out for two nights and three days, and now we were near Grose Vale township.

Soon we met a local, a farmer; we asked him exactly where we were, and where we would find a public phone. He told us – a little further along, on the way to Richmond railway station. He asked us where we had come from, and seemed a bit impressed when we told him. We asked him, "How much do you need for the public phone, to ring up Sydney?" The answer (if I remember right) was 'Tuppence' (two pennies), and then he asked, "Have you got two pennies?" which we said we did.

So when we came to the public phone, we rang up Sydney to let our families know we had arrived safely. Then we walked on to Richmond and caught the train home, quite tired but very pleased with ourselves. Later I heard an extra bit from my Dad about a neighbour of ours in Cliff Road, Northwood, Dick Fitzell, who was quite an experienced bushwalker. He said to Dad, "I didn't want to say anything at the time, but I couldn't help thinking that was quite an ambitious walk for them. I'm pleased to hear they are OK." The memory of this walk was a bond between Warner and myself whenever we met – a warm and grateful memory of a deed well done.

The Faith Community

I kept active in the Longueville PFA *(Presbyterian Fellowship Association)*, as described elsewhere. In my third year at University I joined the SCM *(Student Christian Movement);* I hadn't previously belonged. My sister Sheila was already a member, and it was a surprise to many in our two circles that we were related: at first look most people thought otherwise. At about this time I made some decisions, and got baptised; just my Mum and Dad were present at a small private service in St Andrew's Longueville.

The SCM broadened my mind and expanded my reading habits, especially about science and religion. Through its big annual conferences, too, it exposed me to good speakers with something to say, such as D.T. Niles from Ceylon *(= Sri Lanka)*, later a president of the World Council of Churches.

There was a certain sap, a flow of juices, in the church in those days, which is hard to imagine now. Sunday worship was well attended and budgets were in surplus. The churches were busy buying blocks of land and building new churches in the suburbs as the city expanded. Times were good.

The World Council of Churches was full of promise, not yet a decade old. One of our PFA, Bruce Mansfield, had been a delegate at its inaugural Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948; later he was Professor of History at Macquarie University.

Not long ago, a wise old nun remarked to Isobel that when a beautiful rose is in its full bloom in the vase, at that moment it's beginning to die. She applied that figure to the church that she (and we) had known in the forties and fifties.

I went out from University with a brand new science degree, and a sense of confidence, of "can-do". It is true that I'd never done even one hour of biology, not even to draw a leaf or cut up a frog: it seems silly now, but that's how things were done. It was also true that my life-stance was focussed on action, on doing things; there wasn't a reflective bone in my body. In contrast to my high IQ, (as discussed earlier), my "EQ" or "emotional quotient", if such a thing could have been measured, would have been very low,. This too was typical of the times, for a young male person. This would have some hurtful effects in my family life, in years to come, but none of this was evident at this time.

3. Life in Armidale

[My Family Under Stress]

[About the same time that I went to Armidale, my Dad began to travel to Ballarat to look after Munro Engineers, the small manufacturing firm which had originally belonged to Wesley Bishop, my grandfather. Munros made various kinds of machinery and sold it mostly to farmers, and it was not doing well in care of Dad's brother Eric. Dad went down to restore it. As a result my mother and Sheila were by themselves in Sydney for most of the time; Sheila was an under-graduate in Arts and Mum was working (and working pretty hard) at Norman Distributors in George St. in the city. For Mum & Dad it was a tough time.]

Work as a Scientist

In 1950 I graduated from Sydney, B.Sc. in Physics. Early the next year I got a job as research assistant in the Department of Physics at New England University College (now the University of New England). The pay was £300 p.a., which was a darn good wage as far as I was concerned. I was in Armidale for two years, 1951 and 1952.

My supervisors were the two lecturers in Physics, Jack Somerville and Reg Smith; I worked for each for some time. Jack's research field was the flow of electricity through ionised gases; [it could be relevant in space, or to the upper atmosphere, or the valves inside the radio sets of those days.] It involved quite a lot of glass-blowing to make the tubes and channels which held the gas.

Reg's field was how radio waves are transmitted, in particular how they bounce back down to earth from certain electrical layers in the sky, and why this effect works differently by night and by day. He had a radio shack a bit away from campus where we used to go and twiddle, sometimes by day and sometimes by night. In season you had to take defensive precautions against two swooping magpies - quite scary until you learned what to do.

Fun with Science

One time when the College had an Open Day for the townsfolk we put our radio skills to good use in a special exhibit. We had read somewhere about a new idea called 'cooking by microwave'. We got a couple of oblong metal sheets about the size of dinner plates, we held them a few inches apart, secured with clamps. Then we hooked them up to a radio-thingummy on the bench, a box with glowing valves (now obsolete, but in those days the heart of any radio device) whose wires trailed to the metal cooking plates across a couple of feet of open space. It was safe, but it certainly looked a bit weird. Then when the people came to see we put in a couple of chops and turned it on; there was a hissing and a sizzling and sure enough the chops began to cook. Microwave cooking was a reality, but I doubt whether we persuaded many housewives.

Life Outside Science

Many of the students came from country districts of NSW, so there was a community of undergraduates in residence. Some lived in huts on campus, and there were half-a-dozen or so hostels in town, large houses where a few undergraduates lived with a young graduate as the

"warden". I was warden in one of these hostels, "Comeytrowe". Meals were at the College itself, a couple of miles from town, and there was a bus service to get to and fro.

In Armidale I bought my first car, a four-cylinder 1928 Chrysler, while a mate had a 1927 Dodge. We learned a lot as we took apart nearly anything in the engine that a spanner could shift, and then put it back together: the block and its cylinders, the sump, the carburettor and so on. The gearbox and transmission we left alone, as too complicated. My car blew up one night on a trip to Sydney, in a rainstorm. A piston had gone through the side of the engine block, and my car was "no more". I left it at Tamworth in a wrecker's yard and continued home by train; (after the heavy rains there were huge floods at Maitland and mine was the last train to get through for a week). I sold the wreck eventually for £15 over the phone, to a farmer who wanted it for parts.

I joined the Citizen Military Forces, now called the Army Reserve. It was the time of the Korean War; politicians were stumping the country about defence and preparedness in face of foreign threats, and so on. The local CMF was a squadron of the Hunter River Lancers; they used tanks nowadays instead of the horses of their predecessors, the Light Horse of World War I. We trained on Saturdays with occasionally a full weekend away at Uralla or Walcha or such. Once a year we went for two weeks camp to Singleton, where we did manouevres in 'Matildas', light tanks which were old and very liable to break down.

At University I was active in the Student Christian Movement (SCM), and in town I belonged to the youth fellowship at the Presbyterian Church (PFA). As well as regular discussion groups and so on, the Fellowship held a dance about once a month, perhaps in another town like Tamworth or Glen Innes. At Easter there was always a big Easter Camp, typically in a show ground where the boys slept on straw palliasses in the sheep pens, and the girls in a show pavilion. SCM held a big conference every January with high-profile speakers, in Adelaide or Geelong or wherever. Now and again a big overseas speaker included Armidale on his itinerary and addressed a meeting at the University, for instance David Read, a Scots theologian, and Lord Soper, a Methodist preacher from London.

My Mind Begins to Turn Elsewhere

During this time I began to change my mind about what I wanted to do. It was a slow process, intuitive brooding that is not easy to reconstruct at this distance of time. I remember the impact of talks by D.T.Niles, a Methodist from Ceylon (Sri Lanka nowadays). He was General Secretary of the World Council of Churches, and was chief speaker at a Student Christian Movement conference in Corio (near Geelong) in Jan. 1952.

There was also a long walk with Rev^{d} Fred McKay at an Easter camp of the P.F.A. in 1952. Important also was my memory of walks in 1949-50 from Redfern Station to the university, through Chippendale. They were my introduction to the different life that was the inner city, the slums as some still called them.

There were two strands of thought, as I look back. I wanted the Christian faith to be understood and explained in a way that was consistent with science; and also I reckoned that the inequalities so plain to see in the inner city were unjust, that something should and could be done about them. During 1952 I read a book about a response to the challenges facing the Catholic Church in Paris after WW2; it was *Revolution in a City Parish,* by Abbé Michonneau. He laid out a visionary yet practical experiment where a rejuvenated inner city parish aimed to reach and befriend the unchurched around them. If one single factor influenced my decision, it was this book.

However it came about, I found a sense of call to the ministry. I applied to the Presbyterian Church and was accepted as a candidate for the ministry. That would mean three more years of study: this time at St. Andrew's College within the University of Sydney.

Before I entered college I went to Macquarie Island for a year, and that's another story…!

4. Macquarie Island

How and Why I Went

When I went to Armidale in 1950 I was expecting to pursue a career in science, probably in research, although my ideas were pretty vague about where that might lead. I was there for two years. Towards the end of my time there I applied for two jobs in science – one with Antarctic Research and another one at the Rocket Range at Woomera. I had an offer from each, but I decided not to go to Woomera because I didn't want a job associated with war and weaponry. It was a fortunate choice: in later years it turned out that a lot of people who went there had had unsafe exposure to nuclear radiation through the atomic bomb tests.

However, as I have already explained, my mind had turned in another direction during my final few months in Armidale. I went as a candidate for the ministry, was accepted, and got a scholarship to St Andrew's College. I decided to go to Macquarie Island before I changed tracks.

In January 1953 I went to Melbourne, and then to Hobart for a couple of months to work with the cosmic ray team in the Department of Physics at the University of Tasmania. Then we sailed from Melbourne in the "Tottan" in March 1953. We came back on the "Kista Dan" in January 1954.

Background Information

The island lies as a speck in the stormy Southern Ocean, about 1600 km (1000 miles) south east of Hobart. It is long and thin, about 25 km long by 5 km wide (=15 miles x 3 miles).Its climate is sub-Antarctic rather than Arctic – cool and foggy with snow from time to time. It never gets very warm – one day in summer when the temperature went to 51° F. (= 10° C.), we all went down for a swim to enjoy the warm weather. It was rich in seals, albatrosses etc.: this is best seen in the photos and newspaper clippings.

Communication to Australia was by short-wave radio to Melbourne, mostly telegrams sent in Morse code. You sent telegrams to the family: 75 words per month were free, after that the cost was fourpence per word (5 cents). There was a book of coded messages, so that you could say things using less words; our families had the book too and would look it up to read our messages. For instance,

WUVNE Penguins have begun to arrive on the island

WYTVE I think about you all the time

YADYO We've just had a blizzard

YAMIG Have had a cold but nothing serious *And so on, for seven pages of code*

A.N.A.R.E. [Aust. National Antarctic Research Expedition] was set up in 1948 for scientific research, as well as weather observations, in the Antarctic and sub-Antarctic regions. No doubt there was an element of staking Australia's claim to the territories. There was another ANARE station at Heard Island, and in 1952 a base was established at Mawson on the Antarctic continent itself.

The predecessors – Douglas Mawson, Australian pioneer of Antarctic exploration, had a base camp on Macquarie Is. in 1911, for the purpose of relaying on to Melbourne the radio messages sent from his expedition on the Continent.

From 1911 to 1913 Mawson led the first Australian expedition to Antarctica. It was the first ever to go South for the main purpose of scientific discovery rather than exploring new territory. Mawson had been with Shackleton's Antarctic expedition in 1908-9, when he and two companions had made the first-ever trek to the South Magnetic Pole. He was a geologist at the University of Adelaide; (he went to High School at Fort Street in Sydney).

Some of Mawson's gear was still lying around: his radio mast still there on Wireless Hill, just north of the camp, and the rusty hulk of a small petrol engine from his generator. History said that his communications with Hobart were rather patchy, for they used "long waves", trying to send waves directly across the ocean surface, rather than "short waves" which go up to the sky and bounce down again by magnetic reflection. In those days these differences had not been understood, making radio something of a mystery and an adventure.

Before Mawson there had been the sealers. Here and there on the beaches was a big old rusty vat, as tall as a man and twice the girth, which had once been used for boiling down the blubber.

The bay where we lived was named after Captain Hasselborough, who was the first sealer. He discovered the island in 1810 and named it after Governor Macquarie.

Cosmic Rays

1953 was an International Geophysical Year, and so there was an emphasis on cosmic rays, on the Aurora Australis (the 'Southern Lights'), and on meteorology. Cosmic rays, not very well understood in those days, are large atomic particles which arrive at the earth in an invisible steady stream from outer space. In 1953 a number of research labs around the world linked in a joint effort to study them; the University of Hobart was one, and the data that I collected was to be part of their effort.

As cosmic ray physicist, I had a "cosmic ray telescope" to catch the "rays" arriving from space onto a special piece of equipment on my lab bench, about as big as a large book; it counted each one by registering on a number-counter, similar to the trip-meter on a car. A chronometer controlled a camera which took a photo every hour, to record how many had arrived during the hour.

The cosmic ray telescope consisted of a number of Geiger counters, arranged vertically, one above the other on a metal rack. Each Geiger counter was a glass tube, about the size of a banana (but straight), which contained a special gas, with some electric wires coming out the end. When a ray or particle travelled through the tube it produced a pulse, a spurt, of electricity in the wires. The circuits were designed so that only the rays/particles which passed through all nine Geiger counters were recorded; so the effect was that the telescope was pointed upwards to catch quite a limited section of the sky. Every pulse then went along various electric paths: it could be observed on the screen of a 'cathode-ray tube' (similar to a TV screen), and it registered on a number-counter, as mentioned above.

Each strip of 35 mm black-and-white film lasted in the camera for three days; then it was taken out and developed, then stored to be sent back to Hobart, where in due time the researchers could examine the variations in numbers, and thus the ebb and flow of cosmic rays.

[Electrical gear in those days was incredibly clunky, by today's standards. There were no transistors (= very small pieces that control & direct the flow of electric currents). The basic component was a

radio valve: (technically a “thermionic valve”, or just plain “valve” for short.) – a piece of glass tubing with wires inside, a bit like a light globe; it took up space and needed quite a bit of electric power to operate.]

What the Experience Did for Me

It was great to be in charge of all the equipment, on my own. As back-up there was a weekly conference, a “sked” or radio conversation (= a scheduled call) with the Dept. of Physics at the University of Hobart, and it was vital. When I was in a hole on some technical matter, they dug me out.

When the equipment was working properly it could run for three days on automatic, so from time to time I could get away overnight for a trip down the island. However at one time I was in deep strife for a couple of weeks because of equipment problems. Two of my boxes had fallen into the sea at the time of unloading, and as a result the number-counters weren’t functioning properly. I was often ‘on the blower’ to Hobart to work out what was wrong and how to fix it. The technician in Hobart toiled day and night to find a cure, and things were soon OK again.

There was a certain sense of adventure, too, in the camp living, and the climate, and in going further afield on an occasional longer trek. A real highlight was getting an albatross for Melbourne Museum. Russell Fraser and I walked the length of the island, sleeping one night each way in a tent. At the southern end there was a huge colony of penguins, millions of them, marvellous to see and hear. A mile or so away was a nest of a sooty albatross, halfway down cliffs that fell away into the ocean (next stop, the Antarctic continent). Russ kept watch while I climbed down to get it – it had no fear of me, but I had to get my own nerve up: I strangled it with a leather bootlace, and finished it with my knife.

The real benefit that I gained, that stayed with me, was the mixing with the rest of the crew. Fourteen of us, of mixed education and occupation, eating in one mess, beers and a movie every Saturday on our night off, developing tolerance and respect and what’s more, friendship.

My father brought me up in this style, but Macquarie Island grounded it and made it my own.

Other Work on the Island

There were 14 of us in the crew, technical or scientific blokes from all over Australia.

Our living quarters had three sleeping huts, a mess hall and kitchen, a number of work-places. We got light and power from a big diesel generator, and warmth from big kerosene heaters. Good meals from Jack the cook, who had been cook for a paddleboat on the Murray River. On Saturday nights there was a party – special food, an issue of beer, and a film to watch.

Six of the crew were to keep the station running. These were the O.I.C., who had been a senior officer in the R.A.A.F., an engineer to look after the generator that supplied our electricity, the cook, a radio technician and two radio operators, skilled in Morse Code as well as normal speech transmission. There was a team of three to collect weather information and send it back to Melbourne, and five were on various data-gathering projects. These were about cosmic rays (myself), the Southern Aurora (intermittent lights in the night sky), geo-physics which included a seismometer to watch for earthquakes, radio-

physics (phenomena in the sky), and biology, which was a second hat for John Sturrock who was also our M.O.

You go for a year, and that's it. The ship drops you off, with your stores – rations, diesel fuel, technical gear and so on – and sails away. In a year they'll come back to take you home and to bring down next year's crew. Until then you are on your own.

When the "Kista Dan" came to bring us home it brought our mail – the first for nearly a year. There were some great pictures of my sister's wedding. Not so welcome was a letter from Margaret, a special friend from Armidale days: she told me that she was married now, to somebody else. Oh, well. We berthed in Melbourne, I made some nice family visits, and headed off for Sydney and St. Andrew's College.

5. St Andrew's College – Studying Theology

The College

So I came back home to Sydney, and in a little while moved into St Andrew's College as a 'fresher'. For the first year I shared a room with Stewart Clements, who, like me, was a mature-age 'theologue'. He was a solicitor from Bathurst who had qualified by doing articles *[i.e. by doing exams while working in a solicitor's office, without going to University – not possible nowadays.]* Most freshers had just come up from school, and we were the exceptions. Both of us lived in Andrews on scholarships.

St Andrews is part of the University of Sydney. At that time it had about 140 students, men only of course. Perhaps half a dozen of us were theology students, others from all faculties, medical students prominent because that was a six-year course. The College occupies several buildings now but at that time there was just the one old sandstone block, built in about 1875. There were about 35 freshers that year, and we soon found out that we were the lowest form of life. For instance, this meant phone duty: there was just one telephone in the whole building, and we had to answer it when it rang, and then go round the whole building to find the person who was being called. Every now and again there was some special event to keep us humble, like a run around the whole University grounds late at night. On initiation night, when every fresher was quizzed about where we'd come from and so on, the MC made a threat to shave off my beard, which I had grown on Macquarie Island and was still wearing. I stood very still and said, "That's up to you", whereupon the bystanders shouted, "No, let him keep it", so for the rest of the year I was "Fresher Santa Claus". I shaved it off before my second year.

We were proud of being college men and the life had its advantages: being so close to things meant that you could go over for an hour's lecture and come home – not possible if you lived outside. We ate together in the dining hall; formal dinner was four nights a week, with academic gowns and grace in Latin *[Benedictus benedicat, per Jesum Christum Dominem nostrum – mediaeval origin]*. Chapel service was just before dinner, but attendance was half a dozen or less. There was a wild 'macho' side to College culture, and they took their sport seriously, but most of them took study quite seriously also.

I joined the College rifle club, picking up on my training on the .303 rifle from the CMF in Armidale. We used to go out most Saturdays to Holsworthy rifle range near Liverpool. In winter term there was the competition with the other colleges, but we didn't ever win during my three years. However, one year my name was inscribed on the "Cunningham Pot" trophy (a pewter beer-mug), when I managed the best individual score within the Andrews team.

In 1956, my final year, I was elected treasurer of the College Club. It was the year of the Melbourne Olympics: there was quite a discussion whether we could and should buy a *(black-and-white)* television for the Common room. We struck a special levy, £10 a head from memory, and I arranged to buy the set, which was installed in the common room and proved very popular.

The Theological Hall

The College Principal (known from of old as 'The Bird') was a Scot, Professor John McIntyre, and he was also Principal of the church's training for the ministry. He was a scholar and author of books, and we respected him as a good teacher; he was forty-ish with a young family. In 1957, the year after I finished, he went 'home' to the Chair of Theology in Edinburgh, so we were lucky to have been under him.

Candidates for the ministry were trained at the Theological Hall, in the College grounds, so it was just a short walk for us who were in college. The student body was about 60, Presbyterian and Methodist roughly half-and-half with a handful of Congregationalists; most lectures we did together. We had lectures four days a week, Monday to Thursday. The lecturers, other than McIntyre, were a pretty forgettable bunch.

The Methodists all lived at Leigh College in Enfield, and were required to remain single until they finished training. Presbyterians and Congregationalists mostly lived at home or in digs; many were married. Nearly all the Presbyterians were 'student ministers' at some suburban home mission station such as Harbord, Homebush or Padstow.

St Luke's Redfern

I was interested in an inner-city appointment, so I got to meet Doug Cole, the minister of the Glebe church, who was also superintendent of the church's Department of Social Services. His domain included the 'Group Mission', the churches in Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Redfern, Newtown and Ultimo: he sent me to St Luke's Redfern as student minister. I was there for three years, and in due time I was ordained to become minister to the Group Mission as a whole.

Parish work in the Group Mission churches basically followed the settlement house model, pioneered in London in the 1880s and introduced to NSW Presbyterians in Woolloomooloo about 1910 by a revered deaconess, Eva Holland. We had children's clubs, a mothers' club, a set time every week for "hand-outs" to men who were down on their luck, and the normal Sunday fare of Sunday School and worship. However the implicit stance was a handing-out-of-kindness-from-on-high; we were innocent of any intention or any skills to empower people or to raise self-esteem. The deaconesses did most of the real work; I was too green to be of much help, but I was there to learn. The deaconess at Redfern was Jean McKinnon, an old hand, wise and compassionate, from whom I learned much.

In a small cottage in the lane beside the church's back door lived Mrs Webb, stout of heart, loyal to the church, retired on the pension from a tannery in Botany, a battler and the salt of the earth. She had known her share of sorrows. She told me that once when she was struggling with the grief of bereavement she had seen an angel sitting on the slate roof of the church, facing her. "I saw him as clear as I see you now, Mr Bishop, and he spoke to me, he cheered me up and told me to keep going." Not for the first time I was reminded to be tolerant of theologies different from my own.

After three years studies were all done: I was ready for ordination. The service was in May 1957 in St Luke's Church. We painted and renovated inside the church for the service, part by working bee and part by tradesmen. At 4.30 p.m. on the day of the ordination service we were still dismantling the scaffolding, and I was in blue overalls: so I was sent home to scrub up and get dressed while

others tidied up. During the service the eyes of the minister of Randwick, sitting on the dais, were roving up and around and down again, from one freshly-painted white roof-beam to the next. Revd Alan Dougan preached me in and quoted a country folk saying, that in church work it's thirty years from sowing to harvest: "I don't think it will be any quicker here than it was in Balranald."

My manse was a housing commission flat in Raglan St Waterloo. My car was a little Renault, engine in the rear. My job was to minister in the five churches, in Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Redfern, Newtown and Ultimo. My colleagues were the five deaconesses appointed to each church from the Department of Social Services. I was ready to go.

6. My Life Changes: Minister of the Group Mission, and Our Marriage

My First Settlement as a Minister, 1957-60

I was ordained as minister of five inner-city churches, grouped together and named the "Group Mission". Mymanse was a housing commission flat in Raglan St Waterloo. My car was a little Renault, engine in the rear. My job was to minister in the five churches, in Woolloomooloo, Surry Hills, Redfern, Newtown and Ultimo. On a map they lay in a horseshoe around the centre of the city. Once upon a time they had all been separate self-sustaining parishes, but now the congregations were very small, they were linked together so that one minister could serve them all, and they relied on subsidy from funds of the church at large.

There was just one minister in the Group, myself, but each church had also a deaconess. We were all employees of the Social Services Department of the N.S.W. Synod, whose boss was Rev. Doug Cole in Glebe; he acted as my supervisor. The five deaconesses were all great people, hard-working and committed. They ran most of the weekday programmes (described later), and would preach locally from time to time when I was somewhere else on the Sunday.

How "My life" Changed to "Our Life"

The deaconess in Woolloomooloo was Isobel Milne. It was her first posting after study at the Theological Hall; previously she had been in the P.F.A. at St Stephen's Church in Macquarie St. She was younger than I was (most of the others were older; some were in some ways a mentor for me). As we worked together the magic of "propinquity" began to do its work, and in due course we became engaged. ("Propinquity" was a favourite term of Isobel's mother Violet.)

We were married in St Stephen's on 1st September 1959, just one month before my 30th birthday; Isobel was 23. After a lovely honeymoon on the South Coast, we moved in to the two-bedroom Housing Commission flat where I was already living, in Raglan St. Waterloo. It was a pleasant place, with some nice neighbours, but of course inner-city living is different from life in the suburbs: a noisy car crash at about 3 a.m., for example. Isobel and I both continued to work as before, until the time came to try something new in U.S.A.

The Group Mission

Each of the five churches had its own proud history, and some of it I began to learn.

The Ultimo church was the smallest, and had probably been the most modest even in its palmy days. There is a story about it in the autobiography of John Paton, the famous pioneer of Presbyterian missions in the New Hebrides. Paton, a Melbourne man, was visiting Sydney – this would have been the 1870s or 1880s – and he was looking for support. He called on the ministers of the prominent city churches, but no-one was interested. Tired and footsore, he chanced on the church in Quarry Street and knocked on the Manse door. The minister welcomed him, gladly listened to his story about the New Hebrides, and arranged for him to preach and to receive the offering for his work.

The Ultimo church was a group of hard-working local women, half a dozen to a dozen in number. Most of their menfolk had worked on the wharves, and they were intensely loyal. When one old person died who had no known relatives, they passed the hat to pay for a proper funeral. "No one in Ultimo or Pyrmont has ever had a pauper's funeral," they said.

The church in Surry Hills – "Fullerton Memorial" – had a more modern building than the others, made of brick, not stone. Rev[d] Dr Fullerton had founded it in the 19th century on a site at the top (southern) end of Pitt Street. That church was resumed about 1905 when Central Station was built as the railway was extended from Redfern, and a new church built in Surry Hills with the compensation money. The old manse is still there, a nice two-story sandstone house at the corner of Pitt and Campbell Streets. This church had done a great job in the neighbourhood in the Depression of the 30's, but the minister, Rev[d] George Cowie, had stayed on far too long, and the congregation collapsed as he grew frail, so that by now there was hardly anyone left. The Chinese Church shared the use of the building on Sundays, and eventually it was given to them completely.

In Woolloomooloo (Palmer Street) there was (and is still) a fine old stone building in the classic style, built in 1856. It had been founded by Rev[d] Dr McGibbon, who left Scots Church in the city to start his own church, after being assistant to the famous but temperamental Dr John Dunmore Lang. Inside, the church had been partitioned off: the fine pipe organ, the pews and so on were preserved at one end, and about three-quarters of the total space had been partitioned off to make a hall, at the other end.

Next to this church was the Manse, a two-story stone house which was tenanted. When I came to the Church my boss, Rev[d] Doug Cole, brought a court case to evict the tenant, Mrs Benbow, so that I could live there, but we lost. Rumour had it that Mrs Benbow was a madam, running a house of ill fame. If so it was a quiet affair – though of course we were never there at night.

On a good Sunday at Palmer St. we would get 10 at worship. On week-days we had mothers' club, run by the Deaconess, and children's club run mostly by myself. There were some fine women in this church who befriended and encouraged me and, later, Isobel – Mrs Harrower, a Scot, and Mrs Gurran, English from the North Country, come to mind.

On Tuesday afternoons we had a hand-out clinic for people who were down on their luck – mostly middle-aged men. I got to know some of them as regulars – they would tell me their stories; I heard about the "mad Major" who was in charge at the Salvation Army hostel in Foster St., who had a reputation for throwing people down the stairs if they misbehaved. I also met Arthur Stace, the *'Eternity'* man. He turned up at our place after a disagreement with the nearby Baptist church and we became friendly. He died not long afterwards, and I took his funeral, a simple pauper funeral at the graveside at Rookwood.

St Luke's Redfern, where I had been a student, was perhaps closest to a 'normal' church, in terms of congregation. It even had a bell in a small bell-tower, which we used to ring on Sunday evenings, half an hour before we started. There was a big rose window in the gallery, notable for its fine colours with an unusual deep blue, according to a knowledgeable friend.

St Luke's had been founded by one Rev[d]. T.J. Curtis, who was there for about 30 years from 1876; after he left they had never again been able to pay a full stipend. He had been well known for a time after a notorious gang rape case in the 1880s, in the sandhills that are now Moore Park golf course – he gave pastoral support to some of the young men, accompanied two of them to the gallows, and wept at their passing.

Notable in the Redfern congregation were a brother and sister, Jack Barber and Mrs Dalziel. Jack was an elder; he had been a local butcher until his shop in Elizabeth Street was resumed for public housing. Mrs Dalziel, a widow, had a son Allan in Canberra; he was private secretary to 'Doc' Bert Evatt, leader of the Labor Party.

> In 1954-55 a big fuss blew up over the Petrov spy case. Petrov was a Russian spy who defected. In a later Royal Commission some documents purported to involve Allan Dalziel and others, as sources of information for the Russians. The key document was written for the Russians by a prominent Australian Communist, Rupert Lockwood. The information

may have been false or perhaps not, but the whole Petrov affair was very bad news for Dr Evatt and eventually led to his undoing.

Mrs Dalziel, though a little rattled, stuck up for her son when most others were besmirching his name.

The programme was much the same in each of the centres – Sunday School in the morning, mothers' club, children's club, weekly interviews for hand-outs. The Mothers' Club programme was simple – a speaker or whatever, a cup of tea, and 'devotions' for the mothers. The 'Mothers' were all identities in their own right, loyal, mostly not young – they valued the fellowship.

Redfern was not yet the centre of Aboriginal life that it became later, but we had just one Aboriginal family in the Sunday School, the Stewarts. They lived in Alexandria (i.e., nowhere near the 'Block') and during my time they moved to the suburbs, I think to Eastwood.

St. Enoch's Newtown had once been a reasonably strong congregation, in the days when Newtown and especially Stanmore had been home to some fairly prosperous families. [Isobel remembers visiting her great-aunt Jane, a Killen connection, in Stanmore in the 1940s.] The congregation now was no more than a dozen, very run down and discouraged, but there were two elders who remembered those old days and pined after them, the Robertson brothers. They were twins, both bachelors, who had been ordained as elders in the early 1920s, well before I was born. "'Change and decay in all around I see', the old hymn says, and it's very true, Mr Bishop," one of them said to me once. As old-timers they didn't enjoy my ministry very much. I think that they were too used to an older, directive or authority-derived style that was not mine, and that may have (unconsciously) led to much of the awkwardness.

Many people in the PFA around Sydney (the youth groups of the Presbyterian church) knew me and took an interest in my work, and some of them decided to adopt the renovation of St Enoch's as a project. We had Saturday working-bees – scrapers and paint-pots, big ladders, the lot. We did improve the appearance quite a bit, at no cost to church funds; it was bad luck that one Saturday a ladder that I was moving fell into a leadlight window and broke a lot of glass, and that was a cost to repair. The Robertsons asked me to pay the bill myself, but I told them that on balance they were still the winners, and I refused.

Work in the Group Mission

The Session (elders' council) was our key decision making body. The Presbytery saw fit to appoint a few elders from elsewhere as extra voices and votes on Session, so that the old guard would not make things too difficult for me. (Elders were appointed for life, so the Robertsons were prominent on the Session.) There were two from St. Stephen's Macquarie St, one of whom was J.W. Milne, my father-in-law; the third was Bert Forrest O.B.E., an old-timer who was a real treasure. Some elders of my own generation came on board, too, mostly by joining in at St Luke's Redfern; among them were Doug Hewitt, a schoolteacher, and John Nicholson, a young graduate who presently got married to Jacqui with myself as celebrant.

Presently we employed a full-time youth worker, David Winter. He was a graduate of the YMCA training college in Strathfield; his origins were in Goulburn P.F.A. He worked to help the volunteer leaders, improve programme and attendance, and generally encouraged us. He wrote a short paper about his work, which analysed our situation and our prospects and opportunities. It showed that we had 12 clubs, attendance of about 180 people, and a contact pool of about 360 people. It talked about "Group Work" (as distinct from trying to focus on individuals) as the most effective style in the Inner City. While the members enjoy the club and have fun, it helps them to be independent, and can be a safeguard against delinquency. It builds better relationships with the community of faith, even for non-churchgoers – who were most of them.

At least once a year we would take a group of children to Katoomba, where the church owned a holiday house ("Berrycourt"). I ran a paragraph in the "N.S.W. Presbyterian" one time about an eight-year-old Greek boy, Theo, who cupped his hands and drank from the creek on a bush-walk – "from the fridge," he said contentedly. David Winter helped us to improve these children's camps and they were a valuable part of our whole ministry. After Isobel and I left in mid-1960, David did not stay long: he moved on to Tamworth.

The Group Mission relied on subsidy from the funds of the Social Service Department of the N.S.W. church. They placed one deaconess in each church and one minister among all of them. It was the deaconesses who kept the wheels turning in many ways: they ran the women's and children's clubs, did many of the 'interviews' when we dealt with requests for help, and took many of the services. There was Jean McKinnon at Redfern, June Chew at Surry Hills, Alison Todd at Ultimo, Mavis Wallis at Newtown, and Isobel Milne at Palmer Street, Woolloomooloo.

We had an ethos of service rather than a pushy evangel. Yet on the whole we worked with the people as well as for them. Although with the eyes of a later time we did a lot *for* them, to be sure, yet we respected their dignity, their autonomy, but in hindsight we didn't do much to empower or enhance them. [Not many people did, in those distant days.]

Progress

After a while we felt we had things moving along a bit, and we decided to run a Stewardship Campaign with the help of people in church offices (state headquarters) who were available to help. The chief of Stewardship was Alan Spalding, a former journalist who had been on the ship which brought us home from Macquarie Island in 1954. So Alan and I renewed our friendship, and we teased each other about the change from penguins to church life. The Stewardship went very well – we got enough income so that we built a budget which took the minister's keep off the Social Service subsidy. We felt good about that, and we were the headline story that month in the 'NSW Presbyterian'. *[See below.]*

Financially we broke even; in polity we gained our pride and independence. It was because in some way the people felt good about what we were doing. To be sure I had some additional crew on board who had joined because I had joined. However, those churches were long past their prime, and it has to be said that we did not arrest their decline. Let it be said also, that our parish environment was an advanced case of the urban, secular culture of the late twentieth century.

So my gizzard knew that something new was required. That's why I went to Cleveland and Glasgow, and at a later time that's presumably why I liked what I found in the Ecumenical Institute. I wrote away to East Harlem in New York, to Don Benedict at the Chicago City Missionary Society, and to Cleveland. Presently I got a job offer from Rev^{d} Bill Voelkel as an intern with the Inner City Protestant Parish in Cleveland. I quit the Group Mission, and we sailed from Sydney in the "Himalaya" in August 1960.

Inner City Churches Active

Successful Lay Evangelism programs in the inner City Churches of St. Enoch's at Newtown and Palmer Street, East Sydney during June will result in largely increased Communion Rolls. At least 32 people will join the Church for the first time and six more by re-affirmation or transfer. Thirteen decisions for Christ have been recorded at Palmer Street where there are at present 15 communicants and 25 at Newtown where the present roll is 44. Seven enquirers will attend the Communion classes during July.

The total communicant strength in the three inner city Churches should now exceed 120. Twelve visitors were recruited from within the two Churches concerned in the Lay Evangelism Programs and these were trained under the guidance of the Church's Department of Stewardship. It is

hoped that a planned campaign at St. Luke's, Redfern, will follow in a few months' time. From 60 homes visited, the visitors reported a cordial welcome in all but two. "I feel as if God had done everything necessary in these homes, long before we called," said one visitor on the last evening.

Two other changes soon to take effect will be a test for the Churches. On July 15th they move away from the previous close and friendly care of the Social Service Department and, at the end of the month, the Rev. J. T. Bishop leaves for experience in the U .S.A. However, the Session is in buoyant mood and hopes that ways will be found to provide a good ministry and continue the recovery of these gallant and historic congregations.

The visitation was the next step in the development which began with the notable 5tewardship campaign last November.

The N.S.W. Presbyterian
July 15th 1960, p.15

7. Cleveland 1960-61

The Inner City Protestant Parish

Rebecca is born

We sailed from Sydney on the *Himalaya* in August 1960. Isobel was expecting, due in December. Her parents came with us – they would make a trip of their own and then planned to be with Isobel for the birth.

We stopped in Manilla, where we visited an acquaintance of the Milnes, who lived in a rather posh "gated" suburb: (i.e. it was a separate enclosure and you could only get in through a locked gate.) We then stopped in Hong Kong, in Yokohama, and in Hawaii, where our entry papers for U.S.A. were processed. Finally we disembarked in Vancouver.

We were a couple of days in Vancouver, where I remember a very pleasant lunch in an outdoors restaurant in Stanley Park Gardens. Then we took the train, the Canadian Pacific, with lovely views as we went over the Rocky Mountains, and went as far as Edmonton, Alberta. We got off here, to visit some distant Killen connections (a brother and sister named Beth and Alan Killen). Here we parted from Isobel's parents; they stayed behind, and we took the plane and flew on to Cleveland. We connected with Rev^{d}. Bill Voelkel, the director of the Inner City Protestant Parish, where I was to work as an intern, and he settled us into a small, fairly modern apartment within the mainly black community on the east side of the inner city.

Cleveland, Ohio, is about the tenth city in the U.S. Its economic foundations were as a steel city. It was notable as the first U.S. city where the various helping agencies had combined into one co-operative federation. It also had some of the very first public housing in the U.S., built in the 1930s as part of the New Deal under President Roosevelt; some of it was quite close to where we lived and worked. At that time nearly the whole of the East Side of the city was black; most of its people had come up since World War II from the South, to get away from Jim Crow discrimination and white supremacy which still held sway down there. [The civil rights movement had not yet happened; it was to gather strength just a few years later.]

Bill took us to see the church where I was to work and the apartment where we would live. The church was St Philip the Evangelist, a black congregation in a storefront on the Near East Side in a fairly run-down neighbourhood. There were some new apartment blocks and we had a flat in one of them, on the top floor of a two-storey building.

Family Life

Isobel's parents made a base in a hotel not too far away; then they went on to U.K. and Europe for a couple of months until the due time for Isobel's baby. Isobel made contact with a doctor at the Cleveland Clinic, a top hospital about twenty minutes' drive to our east.

It got cold – icy conditions rather than soft flaky snow, as I remember. We had warm clothes, and everywhere indoors had central heating. Early in December Isobel slipped and fell on the icy footpath, but luckily she was OK. In due course her parents arrived back at their hotel.

On the night when she began to feel the pains, we called a cab at about midnight to take us to the Clinic; the cab driver was black (naturally, for that part of town). When he saw us, a white couple, I think he was a bit surprised, but all he said was, "I hope we make it in time. I hope this baby doesn't get born in my cab." In fact we did make it in time, and Isobel was well advanced when we got there, according to the doctor: Rebecca was born at about 3.15 a.m. on 14th December. At about breakfast time I called her parents at the hotel, to tell them the wonderful news. They stayed and rejoiced with us for a few days, then went on their way; Isobel came home and we began a new phase of 'normal living'. The nurses at the hospital expected that Isobel would not want to breast-feed the baby, so they gave her black coffee and offered to bind up her breasts; (she refused their help).

A little later Marilyn, Isobel's sister, came to stay for a couple of months, and of course she was a great help to Isobel with the new baby. The three of them made a couple of trips away: the first one early in the New Year, to Washington D.C. ; they saw the preparations for John F. Kennedy's inauguration as President a few days later. Isobel was very pleased that she was able to feed Rebecca on the bus. Later on they went to Newmarket, Ontario, to see their relatives Dora and Dick Hinton and their family.

While in Cleveland we met some of Violet's relatives, connections *via* the Youngs and Lyles. They were three sisters: in Canton there were Eileen and Clyde Corbett, and in suburban Cleveland there were Edith and Gifford Evans and a widowed sister, Alice. Edith Evans visited us in Sydney, years later.

About April 1961 I took baby Rebecca to see some family connections in Greenville Alabama. My mother Cath had visited them in 1922; they were her cousins on the Hopkins side. They were very pleased to see us and gave us a lovely time. It was a shame that Isobel was not well and couldn't go.

Church Work

We settled in. Partly, this was to get to know our local people and the job in hand; partly it meant getting to know the staff in the Inner City Protestant Parish, which had one other church on the east side and three on the west side. There were about six staff couples and four or five interns. Bill Voelkel met weekly with all the interns.

One time when the staff, with our wives, all gathered with one another was on Thursday nights. There was a psychiatrist, Dr Gerry Strate, who was a colleague and supporter of the Parish, who used to host everyone once a week at his place for coffee and palaver. Often someone would present a short paper on whatever from their recent experience; then we would talk about it and Gerry would inject some comments. We were, no doubt, developing our insights, but also these sessions were giving us indirect but effective support. We enjoyed the company as well as the stimulus.

So the neighbourhood where we lived was all black, and the congregation of St Philip's were all black.

When the police (two burly white constables) came to see me after I had been mugged (as explained below) they said to us both, "Why are you living here? This place is not for people like you, you should be living somewhere else." As we listened, we felt the comment had some prudent advice but also a

real element of prejudice. We decided to accept the risk and we stayed – there was a job to do, we had made black friends, we felt accepted and OK. And in fact we had a good time except for that one incident.

Charlie Glessner was a sign that I was in a new place. He was old (in his 60s perhaps), wizened, and friendly. His memory went back to people in his family (his grandparents?), who had been slaves. He liked a drop, and quite often was a bit drunk when he turned up to worship on Sunday, in which case the others just settled him down and looked after him, and he would sing one or two of his favourite old-time songs, such as *"Jesus Saviour, pilot me / o'er the world's tempestuous sea."*

St Philips was a solid group of people, about a dozen to twenty in number. I worked with Lily Douglas, a youth worker; she was a great person who was part colleague, part mentor. There were children's clubs, a women's meeting, some pastoral visitation. Nate and Esther Bolden, parents of two young boys, were the congregational leaders. Dr Harry and Mrs Lois Peat from the suburb of Cleveland Heights were regular at worship, and she also came down every week to lead the girls club. It seems to me now that, even though we didn't discuss it directly, people felt and valued something about our religion that was 'holistic', in contrast to the approach of the gospel churches.

I had the use of a car from the Parish – a big old Cadillac that someone had given them instead of trading it in. One day I was travelling home with Preston Kavanagh (another intern), each in our own car, when my engine caught fire; the cause was a fuel leak from a faulty carburettor. It was all over very quickly; the car was a write-off. Preston teased me for the cool 'British way' I reacted, (instead of running around yelling like a headless chook, I suppose), but henceforth I had no car. So I mostly walked around the parish, and to go further afield we usually got lifts from colleagues.

One day I was mugged in the street. I was carrying a couple of manila folders, walking back from a parish visit a few blocks from home. Two young black men jumped on me and got me down on the ground; they thought I was a rent-collector doing the rounds, and they wanted the takings. I did little to resist, and I didn't get hurt physically, just shaken up. They took my wallet; while they were looking inside and not finding very much, I told them who I was and where I worked, and I asked them to leave me my green immigration card and my passport. "They'll be no use to you, and I really need them," I said; so they gave them back. I thanked them profusely and made my escape. This incident led to the conversation with the police that I mentioned earlier.

The work in Cleveland was satisfying, and it was wonderful to be with such different people, but I think it is fair to say that the underlying principles of it were not much different from what I was already used to. It was an important benefit for me that I got used to different races. It helped me, too, to be in a team situation where the polity was fairly flat – there were quite a few of us and we all saw one another as equals. I came away feeling a bit more independent, more confident in myself. It was also quite an experience to live through the cold weather and snow of the winter!

By spring-time I began to look ahead, and I wrote to the Iona Community of the Church of Scotland. In their reply they offered me a post as assistant minister in a parish in Glasgow, which of course I was glad to accept. So in August 1961 we left Cleveland and flew *via* Toronto to Glasgow, and a new chapter was ready to begin.

8. Glasgow 1961-2

And The Arrival of Peter

Bridgeton

In Glasgow we were going to a Church of Scotland parish, where I was to be assistant minister for a year, St Francis in the East in Bridgeton, which was an old part of Glasgow, working class and inner-city. Rev[d] Bill Shackleton, a member of the Iona Community, was the minister. The Iona Community had a hands-on theology and a praxis which appealed to us; it was founded by Rev[d] George MacLeod in the 1930s as an attempt to meet the rigours of the depression,

Bill Shackleton was a single man, a few years older than myself. He was *The Minister*, and as such expected his word to prevail. This was quite similar to the way things worked in many places that I knew in Sydney, and in itself was no great cause for excitement, though as I look back now it was a contrast with the style of the ICPP in Cleveland. Another staff person was the youth worker, John Webster; we became good friends with him and his wife Jennifer.

When we arrived we stayed for a few weeks in Bill's Manse, a comfortable and fairly roomy apartment on the top floor of a solid old three-storey building, which had been built about the 1890s perhaps. It wasn't an ideal arrangement – for instance Rebecca could not yet walk but only crawl, and she shared the floor space with Bill's small dog, which was used to doing his poo on the floor in certain favoured places. So we were glad when we found a rented apartment for ourselves, a little way outside the parish in Harcourt Drive, Dennistoun. (The local people called it a "house", as they did all their own dwellings, but in fact they were what we would now call "home units".)

The housing in Glasgow was tenement buildings built in long rows, as in my photos of the London Road. As it happened, part of Bridgeton was a very early example of the style, built around 1880 and, we were told, the second oldest in Europe after some place in Amsterdam. It had been seen as a great advance in housing for workers in the factories, which made me shudder to think how they must have lived in the 1860s. The main door off the street opened onto a stairwell, then there were four floors, with three 'houses' opening off each landing (including the ground floor). In many tenements each 'house' was just one large room with one window, a coal stove, and two, or maybe three, curtained alcoves in the side walls with built-in wooden beds. Our place was quite high-class by local standards – we had two rooms and our own bath, with hot water from a pipe through the coal-fired stove which gave us heating and cooking. Out in the stairwell were three toilets shared among the twelve houses, and there was a 'midden' or rubbish area out in the small back yard. Most 'houses' had no baths; the City of Glasgow had some public municipal baths known locally as 'the steamies', and most families would have a bath once a week, on Saturday night maybe.

The parish work in St Francis, seen from this distance in time, was fairly routine. I did a lot of visiting; infant baptism took place once a month and I helped prepare many families for the baptism of their 'wains' (= babies); I worked with John Webster at the Youth House, which was a separate building with its own busy programme; from time to time I preached. It was all solid stuff, but not spectacular. Yet the church was embedded in the district – the Church of Scotland was the majority religion, the mainstream, and if there were a lot of nominal Christians still there were plenty who practised their faith. This gave a feeling quite different from Sydney or Cleveland, where church life was always just a few drops in an ocean of secularity.

The people were warm and friendly and there were plenty of young families; the Mums took Isobel into their hearts and made her one of themselves. They spoke a very broad Scots dialect. Presently we bought, second-hand, a small grey Morris van; it was easy to carry Rebecca's stroller in the back compartment. When I took it down to the Youth House one afternoon an eight- or ten-year old boy approached me and said something friendly, yet utterly incomprehensible. It became clear that he was asking me to take him for a ride, but I couldn't get the actual words at all, without help. He was saying (roughly), "Mus:er, wull ye gi'e us a hurrrl in your mo:or?", where : stands for the 'glottal stop', which is a break in the word, a fractional pause between the syllables, instead of a 't' in southern English. So it translates into "Mister, will you give us a hurl in your motor?" which works OK once you know that 'a hurl' is local idiom for 'a ride', and 'motor' for 'car' or 'vehicle'.

Visits and Excursions

Our visits and excursions were a memorable part of our time in Scotland. We did quite a few one-day trips around southern Scotland to see the sights: the old abbey at Paisley, a little way down the Clyde from Glasgow, comes to mind. We went to Iona – a train trip to Oban, then a ferry, a bus across the island of Mull and the ferry to Iona, with a taxi to take us (and stroller) to the boarding house where we stayed. It was a great few days – the old abbey recently restored after centuries of decay, indeed not quite finished in every detail; the worship, the community life, the tiny village; the island itself with hills, rocks, grass, beach, and the view to Scotland one way and Ireland the other way, whence St Columba had come. We were fed, refreshed, enlarged.

We visited Isobel's first cousin Diana MacGillivray and her husband Donald, at Tain, north of Inverness. We went at Easter time: I was chief speaker at an Easter youth camp, so Isobel went ahead by a few days. She drove the van, a bit under 300 km., with rest stops along the way because she was four months pregnant with Peter – so Diana gave her a very warm welcome. Then I came up by train a few days later. It was a great visit – we all talked our heads off; we saw the farm – a shorthorn cattle stud; they wanted to hear our doings + news from Australia for Di; we got to know Donald and the family. They had met when Diana had come over from Australia with sister Mary and her father Eric Killen to attend the famous Perth Cattle Show and sales, for Donald also came from a 'cattle family'. His older brother had been killed in action in the R.A.F. Donald himself played the bagpipes and for a time had been champion piper in all Scotland. Rebecca played with Malcolm and leaned a lot about the possibilities of walking. Then we came home together in the van.

Coming Home

At the end of our time in Glasgow we booked passage home on a Dutch ship, the *Willem Ruys*. We took a few days to tour through Rome, Geneva and Munich, then to Rotterdam and all aboard for Melbourne. After a pleasant trip home, we stayed a few days visiting family in Melbourne, with a side trip to Ballarat, then on to Sydney and the hospitality of my Mum and Dad at Northwood.

Isobel was close to her time, with Peter. One night she woke me and I took her to hospital (to RPAH, making very good speed over the Harbour Bridge). They wheeled her inside, and I was about to go home and leave her, when one of the staff called me back and said, "You'd better stay here, I think; she won't be long." So quite soon I had my chance to see our lovely new son; then I went home and quietly let myself in. In a couple of hours Dad was up and about, and I went out to tell him the news, and he rushed in to their bedroom to tell Mum; what surprised them most was that it was all over so quickly and quietly.

Within a few weeks we moved to Paddington.

9. Paddington, 1962-73

As Parish Ministry

Peter Arrives

In August 1962 we arrived home from Glasgow; I was looking for a job. The parish of Paddington was vacant after the retirement of Rev. Martin O'Doherty from a long ministry. He had been a Catholic priest (trained at Maynooth in Ireland), but had converted to Protestantism in order to get married (to an ex-nun), and he had the affection and respect of all the people at Paddington. I offered myself for the vacancy and was accepted.

We stayed with my Mum and Dad at Northwood for a few weeks, while the church arrangements were being sorted out. Isobel was heavily pregnant with Peter, and Rebecca was a year and nine months old. One night Isobel woke me in the middle of the night with her labour pains, so I drove across the harbour bridge to King George V Hospital. They delayed us a few minutes at reception until Isobel said, "If you don't take me inside I'm going to have this baby here, on the floor." So they took her inside; quite soon a nurse came out and said to me, "You'd better not go home, she's very close." Sure enough, in about 15 or 20 minutes she came out again to tell me that we had a baby boy. After a little while I went back home and went to bed. In the morning I was in the kitchen, and my Dad came out and said "How's Isobel?" So I told him what had happened, and he said, "Oh my goodness!" and ran back to tell Mum.

Violet Passes On

The service of induction at Paddington by the Presbytery of Sydney was set for a Thursday evening in October 1962. On the morning of that day, Isobel's mother Violet collapsed in a bus in Gladesville, as she was going shopping. The bus driver diverted and took her to a doctor's surgery, but she had already died. The induction service had to go ahead, there was no other option, and we carried it through in the midst of our grief. Then a couple of days later I shared in leading Violet's funeral service, in St Stephen's Church, Macquarie Street, with her minister Gordon Powell, and at the crematorium I took the whole service by myself. It was pretty tough going for both Isobel and me, but we made it through.

St John's Parish

Paddington was a great opportunity. It is an old suburb, terrace houses and wrought-iron lace, which was gradually changing from mostly working-class to a smart, 'gentrified' inner-city locality. One of the first was Gordon Chater, a TV star of the time, who moved into Bent Street, just a few doors along from our Mrs Millar. The change was pretty well complete by the time we left, ten years later.

The stone church was built in 1857. There is a tablet inside to its first minister, Rev^{d} James Milne, who was a relative of Isobel's father's family (although we don't know exactly what connection). Next door on Oxford Street is the old Manse, also of stone and built a year or two earlier; its front room had been used as a school-room for a little while. (There was no such thing as public education or public schools in those days.)

We lived in the 'new Manse', two storeys in brick, next to the church in the side street; it had been built around 1906. There were four bedrooms (one was very small), and a good back yard; it was a pleasant place to live. During these years, our family was established. When we came Peter was six weeks old and Rebecca was not quite two. Eighteen months later Cathy was born. By the time of the big change, described later, they were in primary school.

Isobel was kept busy running the Manse, which often meant answering the phone and the front door. Now and again the caller would be a man who was down on his luck; it was our policy to give food, but not money, so Isobel would make a sandwich and take it out to him on a bench on our front verandah. Presently we had the front door altered – we put hinges on one of its small windows, so that it opened separately like a port-hole; this allowed Isobel to look to see who was there, before she opened the door.

St John's was an inner-city church – it had survived some tough times and would survive more. The congregation was small, loyal and fairly open-minded to new ideas. There was a Sunday school, a small youth group, some loyal women in the PWA, about six elders. On Sundays we would have about thirty. A pre-school was in the church hall, run by Mrs Whitely, one of the church stalwarts, so we were OK for money.

The church building wasn't in great shape – some of the old sandstone was weathering, and the roof would develop a leak from time to time in the Welsh slates. The elders organised working-bees, and I would join them. We used to get up inside the ceiling and onto the roof, and crawl around looking for the weak spots; when we found one we would slide in a flat strip of metal to make it watertight.

Family Affairs: Cathy Arrives.

In mid-late 1963 I had the pleasant duty of telling the "Ladies Guild" (not yet called the "Presbyterian Women's Association") that Isobel was expecting again. The core half-dozen were all mothers themselves, though their children were not young, and they did what they could to affirm and support Isobel. In March 1964 the baby was running late; Isobel and I went downtown to have lunch in a Chinese restaurant as a treat, and (hopefully) to encourage her/him to come on down. While we were away the Manse was burgled – someone forced entry from the side lane through a window, and they stole some old rings and jewellery that was very precious to Isobel, along with a bit of money from the Sunday School. The police said it was probably someone from a building job a bit further along the lane; whatever, the stuff was gone for good. A day or two later Isobel went to King George V Hospital (part of R.P.A.H.) for an induction, and Cathy arrived – a wonderful gift.

Early in 1964 I enrolled for an Arts degree at University of New South Wales. My instincts told me that the inner-city called for a special understanding, and this had been reinforced by my recent time in Cleveland and Glasgow; so I had my eye on Sociology. It was an undergraduate degree, so it kept me busy enough, with lectures in the evening, from about 5 p.m. to about 8 p.m., a couple of days a week

It wasn't long before I was deep into it, under the guidance of a fine teacher, senior lecturer Audrey Rennison. I enjoyed it because the emphasis was on urban life, on how organisations and government came to be as they are and how they affect us. For instance, I got a new take on the idea of "bureaucracy": it was developed in late 19th century France as an improvement to the prevailing practice of nepotism – "I'll help my friends and family first", or "It's not what you know but who you know". Bureaucracy was meant to be guided by clear and transparent rules: everybody

gets treated the same; which was a big improvement. I also remember Tony Vinson, who lectured in criminology and later became quite a public figure in that field.

One night when I arrived home from lectures I found Isobel dealing with an emergency. Rebecca, aged 3½, had swallowed an open safety-pin, and Isobel was just about to get a taxi and take all three children down to St Vincent's Hospital. I arrived at the critical moment. Rebecca was distressed and frightened. I put her into my car and took her down. We went to the triage counter, and when I said, "My little girl has swallowed an open safety-pin," there was instant response. It seemed like no time until she was on a bed in a cubicle, and very soon the doctor was there. Then, as luck would have it, she had a coughing fit and up came the safety-pin. So we went home, OK and very relieved.

As they were old enough, the children went to Peter Pan Kindergarten, and then to Paddington Primary School. Both were good schools which our three enjoyed very much, and of course Isobel and I made friends and developed colleagues among the parents, which was good for us, too. A little later, Rebecca went to Woollahra Demonstration School (in an opportunity class) for two years, and Peter for one year.

Community Involvement

The Paddington Society was a group concerned with local issues (much like a Progress Association); many were school or pre-school parents. Isobel and I were members; now and again we would host a party in the Manse on a Saturday night, with 30 or so guests – some would be old PFA friends and so on, and many would be Paddington Society supporters. When it was proposed to widen Jersey Road and demolish many of its terrace houses, in order to extend an expressway, there was local uproar, led by the Paddington Society. There were pamphlets (one designed by Owen Tooth), petitions, and so on. There was a public meeting in Paddington Town Hall, which for some reason I was invited to chair. There was a big crowd, I had a few sticky moments, but we got through and made our point. Eventually the idea was abandoned.

Isobel and I were both members of the ALP. In 1963 there was a vacancy in Federal Parliament after the death of Eddie Ward, our local Federal member. The State member for Bondi, Tom Morey, came knocking on our door – he had come to invite me to run for pre-selection. I was quite surprised, but it didn't take much thought on my part to say, "Thanks, but no thanks." With hindsight, that could offered me another way for me to get busy and perhaps feel useful, but also it would have been another way for our family to have a somewhat dreadful experience.

So we were active in the community in lots of ways. At the same time I was doing my best to encourage the congregation which, though not large, certainly had some fine people. One of the women was married to the curator of the Sydney Cricket Ground, and another to a police sergeant living in police quarters close to the Courts at Taylor Square. The Women's Guild was very solid, loyal and hard-working; there were some fine men too. I also worked, naturally, at the normal aspects of parish ministry. I did the weekly rounds at two hospitals – the Royal Hospital for Women and the Scottish Hospital. I taught scripture (now called 'religious instruction') once a week at Sydney Girls' High and Sydney Boys' High. In Isobel's recollection I also went once a week to Glenmore Road Primary School, but not to Paddington where our own children were; (I confess I have no memory of this either way).

Thirty Years Later

A Story from Chris Cusack (March 2001)

In 1967 JTB Talk to scripture classes as Sydney Boys' High School and Sydney Girls' High School. As Presbyterian minister of Paddington he took over from an older man who was the Methodist minister.

In 2001 one of his pupils from that time, chris Cusack, rang him and said, "I've been wanting to speak to you for long time, to thank you for what you did for me then."

Chris is now a prison officer. He worked at Long Bay for a long time and in recent times at Silverwater. He is a general duty officer, connected with the works release program. "You became aware of how much they face when they go out again, and how little we have done, or can do, to prepare them."

He gave his account of his time at Sydney Boys' High. "I was in my final year and most of us did not take much notice of scripture by then; we regarded it as a time to catch up on homework or whatever. The other teachers went on about how God will catch up with you if you do this or that. You were younger than all of them, and a bit different (word got around that you'd been to the Antarctic)."

You came in that first day and said, "What do you want to talk about?" One of the wags said, "Sex."And you said, "All right, that a contemporary issue, let's talk about that."

I did not buy your line that year, but it stayed with me. It was something about. In the following years I tried going to church a few times, but no, it didn't work. Andlater on, about seven years ago, when I began to feel that I needed something, I thought about going to church again. So one Sunday night when I wasn't on duty, I started to go out. My wife said, "Where are you going? I said, "I think I'll go to church; and she said, "I'll come with you."

They found a church that taught the Alpha course and were converted. Then they joined a church. The Chris was sked to report on the Kairos course, when it was on trial as an option for inmates. He was doubtful in some respects but gave a report on it to allow it to go ahead. And it has done very well.

Now there is an inmates' choir of male voices; Chris is the Coordinator. The choir gets invitations to go out with permission, to sing in local churches, mostly on Sunday evening. Chris is often called on to speak, give a witness, or preach.

Hence, his thinking over how it all began, and the urge he felt to call me and thank me.

Inner-City Co-operation

In St. John's we were, naturally enough, friends with many of our neighbours in other inner-city churches. We all knew that the inner-city was a difficult environment in which to be a faith-community. This had been true for 100 years or more. In 1966 I wrote a talking paper – a "paper on policy" – entitled *The Church in Inner-City Sydney*; in it I quoted concerns in Britain going back to 1821 about church weakness, or "failure", in working-class areas. "In a score of the largest towns in England fewer than one person in ten attended any place of worship on census Sunday in 1851." [K

.S. Inglis [1].] Similar concerns post-war in the Catholic Church in France gave rise to the worker-priest movement which, as I have explained earlier, was a big influence on me in my deciding to enter the ministry.

Presently a group formed of ministers in several inner-city parishes, including Harry Roberts of Paddington Methodists, Jim Downing and then Dean Eland from the Congregational Mission in Redfern-Alexandria, Ron Denham, a Presbyterian in Redfern, and Bill McLeod from Glebe Presbyterians. Ron Denham was active in Aboriginal issues, for instance with Charles Perkins[2] in the Foundation for Aboriginal Affairs, in George Street near Railway Square.

We were looking for new approaches, so we worked together, and we pooled ideas. The approach that we had in common was that we wanted to relate to the community (the parish) as well as to the churchgoers (the congregation). Nowadays this would be a very common idea, but it was much less so in those days. We created a diagram, "diamond"-shaped, to represent our territories, round the edges of the Sydney CBD. Some of us went to Melbourne to get to know the inner-city people there and to see what was happening.

As our sharing developed, we decided to seek a formal arrangement; presently it was ratified by the 'powers that be' of all three denominations, and the "Uniting Church of the City of Sydney" came into being in October 1965. In Paddington after gathering at our own church we had a procession along Oxford Street to the Anglican Church at Centennial Park gates, past St. Francis Catholic and the Methodist Church, and then we had an inaugural service in St. John's. The *S.M.H.* published a lovely photo of the mixed group stopping at the gates of St Francis. [3] [4]

The Ecumenical Institute Arrives

In January 1967 I attended a conference at Wesley College in Sydney University, where the speakers were a team of three men and one woman[5] from the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago. This conference was organised by a group called 'Australian Frontier', who had already run two conferences with some radical thinking about the church. I had been to both these conferences and enjoyed them, along with some of my mates. So I went along the third time, as did Ron Denham, and my Methodist neighbour Harry Roberts, even though we had never heard of the Ecumenical Institute. We found that the Institute offered a new approach – a totally new way to talk about the faith, and about the practical life of the church, like nothing we had heard or seen before.

[Inevitably there are two strands in the story from now on. There is the story of what happened in the Institute and in the church (i.e. the 'task'), and there is the story of what happened to ourselves and in our family. At the time we were taught (some would say, 'brainwashed') to pay attention only to the task, and to put the family and our own feelings into the background. So the story from now on needs to take account of both these strands. It needs also to acknowledge the effects of my particular personality – strong on objectivity though not gifted with much emotional awareness.]

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[1] *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, London, Routledge & Kegan Paul 1963,
[22] A leading Aboriginal in their fight for recognition. He was the first Aboriginal to graduate from a University. He led the Freedom bus rides to Moree and other places, to protest against racial discrimination in many country towns.
[3] *S.M.H.*, 1st November 1965, p.5
[4] Isobel has a memory of a picture which includes her pushing Cathy in a stroller; she believes in an ABC news archive shown to us as a video clip. I don't know whether we could find this now, or not
[5] Joe Mathews, Joe Slicker, and Frank and Aimee Hilliard.

10. The Ecumenical Institute In Australia

How I Met the Institute

In January 1967 I attended a conference at Wesley College in Sydney University, where the speakers were a team of three men and one woman[6] from the Ecumenical Institute in Chicago. I went along, as did Ron Denham, and my Methodist neighbour Harry Roberts. We had never heard of the Ecumenical Institute, but we found that the Institute offered a new approach – a totally new way to talk about the faith, and about the practical life of the church, like nothing we had known before.

In Paddington when we came home, Harry Roberts and I were both very excited, very high. One of the Methodist women said, "Our ministers have had a Pentecostal experience". *[If you're not into the Bible, she meant the story of how, when the disciples were together after the risen Jesus had gone up from them, the Holy Spirit came and stirred them up so that they did amazing things such as talking in foreign tongues. (Acts chapter 20.]*

The Ecumenical Institute changed everything in my life, and in our family life, for ever. Even now, some fifty years later, there's a mixture of pain and remorse looking back, along with a memory of the surprise and the enthusiasm. For me at the time, it seemed to offer a whole new (and better) vision of my life-task, a way of working towards the kind of ministry that I had long been striving for. Yet at the same time it brought a new type of stress for Isobel, and indeed for our relationship, and over the next twenty or so years it brought pain to her and great loss, deep pain, for Rebecca, Peter and Cathy.

What Was the Institute?

The Ecumenical Institute was a radical community developed in Chicago a few years before. They began in Australia at the Frontier Conference in January 1967; there was a very warm response. At the end of that year they came out again with a series of week-end and mid-week courses across the country, starting in Perth and then in Adelaide, Melbourne, and Sydney. In Sydney they ran a week-end course for laity and a week-day course for clergy. Finally in December 1967 there was a ten-day course at Otford (south of Sydney) as a next step for people who had been to one of the earlier courses nation-wide. There were five in their teaching team: Joe Mathews, Joe Slicker, Fred and Sarah Buss, and Don Clark. At the end of this conference they sought and obtained an invitation to continue the work of the Institute in Australia, and so three of them stayed on in inner Sydney, as described later.

The Ecumenical Institute had the best curriculum of its kind in the world.[7] It combined a powerful new take on key religious words – God, Christ, Holy Spirit, Church, and so on – with practical ideas on what people could actually do in a local setting, while giving them the hope that at the same time they could actually make a difference on the larger scene. It drew on the best theologians of the time, as well as some of the best minds in other disciplines. Joe Mathews' four headlines were "theology, psychology, philosophy and sociology"; (of course these four were offered in advanced courses, not the two basic introductions.) It invited people to do something radical themselves – "to lay down their own life". It seems too good to be true – and of course it was – it all went bust in

[6] Joe Mathews, Joe Slicker, and Frank and Aimee Hilliard.
[7] This paragraph is a summary of some remarks by Isobel, June 2016

the end. But at the time it appealed, partly because of its very radicalism, its wildness. From the very first, some people were offended, and in the long run the major denominations couldn't handle it – they rejected it and turned away.

The E.I. people had, as their declared goal, the renewal of the church. Their main tools for this were their two introductory courses – RS-1 (Religious Studies 1) and P.L.C. (Parish Leadership Colloquy); they also worked in a small selected area of Chicago to rebuild the practical life of the church and its community, and they had a number of ways to build people's motivation, such as frequent singing.

Starting in Australia: Staying in Our House

They were looking for a way to start working in Australia, and they put it to a few of us in Sydney that we might become the home base for what was hopefully to be a nation-wide operation. So three of them stayed behind with the inner-city group that had formed in Sydney during the previous few years. Don Clark stayed as a lodger with Harry and Maisie Roberts in the Methodist parsonage, and Fred and Sarah Buss stayed in a vacant Manse in Redfern, with their two small children Elizabeth and Lindsey.

It was a fairly busy life, and a huge change for our children. In the morning we would all trek over to South Sydney, to the little church in Raglan St. Waterloo. There we would say the 'Daily Office' together and then have breakfast, then someone would take the children back to school and the rest of us would stay a while for a meeting, a 'collegium', before going off to wherever for the day. I think it is fair to say that our children' s early days in Paddington were a fairly happy time – a nice pre-school and then school (as mentioned earlier), good friends, a reasonably normal household. So this was quite an upheaval.

Our Family's Order Story

Child and Youth Care 1968-76

At Otford in December 1967 the Ecumenical Institutes Australia were born. Afterwards three people from Chicago stayed behind as a nucleus; Fred and Sarah Buss stayed in Redfern, 173 George St, and Don Clark stayed in the Methodist Parsonage with Harry and Maisie Roberts.

We began to meet daily in the Raglan St Methodist Church with the South Sydney colleagues. Each weekday at (was it 7am?) we had Daily Office and breakfast, then we took the children back to school at Paddington, and worked on through the morning until 11 am or lunch. Then on to parish work. This lasted from February to December 1968.

In July 1968 our family went to Chicago to the summer programme, as did the Ogilvys from Melbourne. Afterwards JTB stayed on about a week after the others went home. Rebecca climbed the space rocket, Peter wore little red clothes and didn't like it much, and Cathy was in the pre-school, under protest.

In January 1969 a summer programme was held at Nunyara, in the Adelaide Hills. Afterwards the Sydney Religious House was founded and out came a new crew, Joe and Carol Pierce with Mark, Bill and Barbara Alerding, and Vance Engelman. They lived with us in the Manse.

In 1969 Isobel went to Singapore to the first ITI, and JTB went to the summer programme in Chicago, and the three children went on a holiday with two heroic grandparents to Blackheath, to "Balquhain", a holiday home owned by the church.

About this time also, Rebecca went as a boarder to PLC Croydon for a few months, under Ms Freda Whitlam.

The summer programme was in Perth in January 1970. Two chartered busses went across from the eastern states. Then in 1970 the Institute expanded to a number of Religious houses around Australia, and the staff (Order) expanded greatly. There were, finally, seven houses - Sydney developed to two, Sydney Area and Sydney Region, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth, Brisbane, Darwin in 1969 which became Mowanjum in 1970 and then became Oombulgurri.

The children lived as the "emerging generation" of the Sydney Religious House. At first they had breakfast with us adults and a separate evening meal; later breakfast too was separate, as more children came. Some of the people who ran the structures were Donna McCleskey, Elsie Rippel, Jeanette Stanfield and others.

In 1971 the Bishops moved from the new Manse (1 Regent St) to the old Manse, 263 Oxford St, into a small room on the first floor. Our three children by now were sleeping in various dorms and were having breakfast in the pre-school kitchen. The Rippel family (two boys) were around at this time, also Kendra McCleskey.

In 1972 (was it April?) JTB resigned from Paddington charge and he and Isobel went to Chicago. [JTB vividly remembers a walk around Paddington with Cathy, including a stop at swings in Oatley Rd, as a poignant occasion of parting whether she knew much of it or not.] Rebecca went to Adelaide, fostered by Barry and Margaret Oakley, and Peter and Cathy went to Melbourne, fostered by Brian and Rhonda Robins. In December of that year the children came over to Chicago, accompanied on the plane by Steve Allen.

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There was a family style in the Order which seems quite strange, at this distance, so that one can wonder how it ever came about. How did we parents all get suckered?, to be blunt about it. The question has even more force now, when it is so evident that the House was shelter to flawed, damaging, and criminal relationships for our children.

Those who advised us held that relationships were (not unimportant, but) to be held in tension with a need to "do the mission". While family life and family covenants were allowed their place in the scheme of things, most of the time they took second place. [Not all the time: Monday nights and Sunday afternoons were different.]

So, there was a theory about family relationships, whether it was good or bad by today's wisdom. It had been worked out in Chicago and was brought to us as part of the package of received wisdom about the new way, about how Order life worked. It was certainly not played down nor hidden from us who entered the Order as parents. If we came into a House we knew and accepted its family style on our own responsibility, and there were those who did not enter for just this reason (for example, the Deans in Melbourne).

Whether any of us would accept such a view of the family now, I cannot say. Perhaps not, but I can understand how a few enthusiasts then could come to such a view based on good intentions, and how others of us could adopt their suggestions and expect that on the whole it would work out all right. What we did not allow for, as I see it now, was the probability that there would be a few bad apples in the group. On the 10% -80% -10% view of humanity there would be 10% with a good idea, 80% who go along in various degrees of acceptance, and 10% who are the poison. And we in the 80%, (that's all the Australian families as I see it, on this matter of family style), we had no defence mechanism against the evils that could happen because we naively did not expect them, did not entertain the idea of evil at all. So we took no precautions or preventative measures at all.

The additional fact which we now know, that Joe Mathews was a neurotic old s.o.b. who had not done well at bringing up his own sons, is a different issue, I think.

If true it may go some way to explain why the Order came to adopt its peculiar views of family life, but that wouldn't make much difference to my explanation of the Australian events. However it may well be that the Order was prone to attract a higher-than-average proportion of people with a kink of some sort, and then the risks would be greater because the potential harm-producers would be more than 10% of the whole.

All of us took damage because we adults put good relationships so far down the scale. Yet the scars are greatest on the people who were the emerging generation of that time. May they accept our apologies, let us recognise one another's sorrow, and may we receive forgiveness from them and from ourselves.

[Originally written in 1998]

Heresy Charge

In 1968 I was also the Moderator of the Presbytery of Sydney, chair of the monthly meeting and various bits and pieces in between, so there was a bit of juggling to keep that going. Some of my colleagues knew what I was doing and respected it, others were unhappy about it. A couple of them had a go at me for "heresy". Angus Holland, a bloke whom I had known in St Andrews College, a bit of a geek, got hold of a book which we used to read and recommend called "Saviours of God", by Nikos Kazantzakis. It was a poetic and fanciful whirl encouraging an adventurous use of the imagination; Angus wrote a long essay which dissected it literally and set out in great detail all the ways that it contradicted the proper teaching about God, (which wasn't hard, because it was basically a work of art, not literal prose.) Then a Professor in the Theological College, Crawford Miller, got hold of Angus Holland's essay and used it as the basis of an attack on the Institute, and on me, for heresy and for spreading false doctrine. That mightn't matter much to ordinary folk, but the Presbytery of Sydney had been the scene of a long pursuit of Professor Samuel Angus for heresy in the 1920s and 1930s, which had been very damaging and painful. So I made a long and vehement speech of rebuttal, basically mocking them because they couldn't see the difference between prose and poetic fantasy, and at the same time asserting my belief in all the 'correct' doctrines. Fortunately that worked, the vote went my way, and peace was maintained.

Across Australia

There was a network of key figures across the other states, mostly clergy, who helped to plan and organise local events. By February 1968 the Institute's courses were being planned and held across Australia, from Queensland to the Kimberleys in W.A.

In June 1968 our colleagues sent Isobel and me and the children to the big summer programme, "Summer '68" in Chicago. It was held in the black quarter on the West Side of Chicago, on a campus which had once been a seminary. As white people, we were given various cautions about how to conduct ourselves when off-site, so as not to give offence to black neighbours. There were several hundred people there, with many children; there was an active children's program. In the playground there was a big steel model of a space-craft, (space travel was very new), and I remember watching Rebecca as she played up on the high platform. About then I remember that Rebecca asked me "Dad, are there any women astronauts?"; I replied by telling her the story of Eve Curie, who helped to discover radio-activity, and I ended with something like "So there can be a first time for everything," and that seemed to satisfy her.

Life in Our Manse

In January 1969 the colleagues gathered at a conference in Adelaide – Summer '69; all our family attended. Afterwards the first "Religious House" was established in Sydney: two couples moved into the Paddington Manse with us and our life-style took a further radical step; (in the process we occupied the Old Manse as well as the New Manse). This was another upheaval; I remember how, previously, Peter would go and open the front door in the morning to bring the milk bottles in; now things didn't work like that any more. (At least we didn't have to go over to South Sydney every morning!)

Two American families lived with us – Joe and Carol Pierce, and Bill and Barbara Alerding. In the house we all took our turn at cooking and so on, and there was a roster of various adults to look

after the children. Isobel and I both went away from time to time to help teach their courses; I usually went during the week (Monday to Thursday) because I needed to be at church on Sunday, while she might be away either mid-week or for the week-end. It was important to have a woman at the mid-week courses, if possible, since many who attended were clergy, and at that time many men were still rather patriarchal in their outlook.

Two stories about the children: one year, when we were still just one family in the house, we gathered some friends in our back yard to celebrate cracker night, (5th November, Guy Fawkes night). The Lucas family was there; we had a lot of crackers and were ready for a lot of fun. Unfortunately one of the early jump-crackers ran wild after it was lit, and jumped into one of the waiting piles of unlit crackers. What a bang, what a mess, what a disaster! Peter in particular was very very upset and distressed, but as it turned out we had enough to go on, and we had a night that was more subdued than we expected.

Later on, in 1969, we had a family pet, a little dog called "Blackie"; at this time our immediate family was living in the Old Manse. One day Blackie ran out on to Oxford Street and was killed by a car; we didn't see it happen but someone retrieved the corpse. So there was a lot of grief. Joe Pierce took charge and he conducted quite a formal little burial service, with a homily, and we buried Blackie in the back yard.

The various big events such as summer programmes came along and our children lived through them somehow. (I remember at Otford in 1967 Cathy and Christine Lucas were walking along holding hands with Joe Mathews, one on each side. Christine said something like, "Why are you holding our hands?", and he replied "Because I love you.", and she said "No, you don't.")

Overseas and Interstate Trips

In mid-1969 Isobel and I both went overseas in different directions: I went to Chicago for the Summer Programme, and she went to Singapore for six weeks for the first "International Training Institute". Rebecca, Peter and Cathy went up to Blackheath for the school holidays with my Mum and Dad, who were both in their 70s (!); it was winter-time, too!

The Singapore I.T.I. (1969) was quite a remarkable event – 104 church people were present from many Asian countries, with 23 Australians including 3 Aboriginals. It had a great impact on Isobel: she still tells of the way Joe Mathews encouraged her to come out of her shell and take a lead (sometimes pushed her well beyond her comfort zone), or of a time when he partnered her as they danced over some Filipino dancing sticks. It was also important because a mosquito bit her on the right leg and planted an infection, 'filariasis', which led to a swelling in her leg, lymphedema. It was years before it was properly identified and diagnosed, and has been with her ever since.

List of (Australian) Summer Programmes: ('Summer' means a couple of weeks in January.)

Summer '70 was in Melbourne, and all five of us attended.

Summer '71 was in Perth, and all five of us attended. It was a long bus trip over the Nullarbor Plain. Perth was notable in that 24 Aborigines attended, mostly from Mowanjum in the

Kimberleys and a few from Arnhem Land (N.T.)

Summer '72 was in Sydney, at P.L.C. Croydon, and again all five of us attended.

*In January 1970 the personnel in the House changed. Some Australian families moved in – Rob and Ann Duffy (he was a Presbyterian minister most recently in Broken Hill), Brian and Rhonda Robins, and Barry and Margaret Oakley (these two men were Methodist ministers from South Australia). The Americans changed too – we had David and Donna McCleskey and Rod and Elsie Rippel. All five of these families had school-age children. We also had some singles. During this time Religious Houses were established in the other capital cities: Perth, Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane.

A memory from 1970: Lord George McLeod was the founder of the Iona Community, an avant-garde group in the Church of Scotland which aimed at a practical, justice-oriented and working-class-friendly form of religion. He came to Sydney for a visit, and I went to hear him at a speaking engagement. Something that I said in discussion-time caught his attention, and when I got home I got a phone call from his host/manager to say that Lord George wanted to come and see the Religious House, and would come out for lunch the next day. Well! It was a nice surprise and at the same time a bit of a shock, because the House wasn't all that clean – but we got to work and spent most of the morning vacuuming and so on, and by lunch-time it was looking pretty good. He came, and we had a nice visit. Afterwards we said to ourselves, "Wouldn't it be nice if we could live like that all the time!" – but of course things didn't turn out that way.

In October 1971 there was an Academy– a six-week training course – at Thornleigh which Isobel attended as one of the principal Australian teachers. It was quite a major event. Beforehand Isobel and a colleague went up to Northern Australia and visited several Aboriginal communities, recruiting for the Academy.

The work with Aborigines developed. Thanks to an introduction by Ron Denham, who was working for the Presbyterian Board of Missions (head-quartered in Sydney), some Ecumenical Institute staff went to live at Mowanjum in the Kimberleys. The story of Kimberley, and then of Oombulgurri, is another whole narrative. Subsequently two American colleagues, (Kaye Hayes and Russell Campbell), went up to Darwin to work with Aborigines, *via* introductions arranged through the Methodist missions.

List of Chicago Summer Programmes: ('Summer' means July.)

Summer '68. All five of us attended.

Summer '69. JTB attended. Isobel went to Singapore to the I.T.I.

Summer '70. Isobel and Jim attended. We built the "Local Church Experiment".

Summer '71. JTB attended. It was about the "New Social Vehicle", and "Primal Community".

Summer '72. Isobel and Jim attended. It was about "the Other World in the midst of This World".

While we were away in Chicago for Summer '70, Cathy was in care of John and Robyn Hutchinson, Peter was in care of Jonathon and Janeen Barker, and Rebecca lived as a boarder in P.L.C. Croydon for one term.

. From George Walters, [Email to OE listserve] 5 August 2011

About Jim Bishop and the "Ecumenical Parish"

The Summer Research Assembly in '70 produced the working documents for the Local Church Experiment ("LCX"). This followed many years of involvement with the local church, principally through teaching RS1 and

We Leave Paddington

In March 1973 I resigned from the Parish of Paddington, and Isobel and I left for Chicago. Our children went interstate to foster-parents in the other Religious Houses: Peter and Cathy went to Melbourne, to Brian and Rhonda Robins, and Rebecca went to Adelaide, to Barry and Margaret Oakley. It was another, even bigger, earthquake. I remember my Dad raised with me his disquiet when this change was proposed; I'm sorry now to admit that I said something like, "Mind your own business." Towards the end of 1973 they came to join us in Chicago; they flew over in the company of Steve Allen. This was a big relief; the separation had been hard on all of us, and especially so on the three young ones.

After the children arrived, and while they were in elementary school, they lived with us or near us in the Kemper Building. This was an eight story office building, originally occupied by an insurance company, in which every family had one room as a bedroom, with communal bathrooms on each floor, while the cooking, eating, daily worship and meetings etc., all happened on the first two floors. When children started high school they moved to separate quarters on the third floor, named the "Student House".

(We're beginning another quite different section of the story.)

"The Cost of our Care"

An extract from **Elaine Telford's family story.**

(In these times) the churches ran a series of workshops across the nation across denominational boundaries. Australian Frontier invited . . . Joseph Mathews to talk about the work in building primal community.

Many adults during the sixties had caught a vision of being actively engaged in social justice through the synergy of these times. They were excited by the prospect of new possibility and understanding of meaningful Christian symbols; a chance to be part of something which we felt would make a difference.

mer 72 was very significant in the Australian Spirit Movement's history. This is where the excitement became a serious question of decision which involved a BIG commitment. Australian people involved in the Spirit Movement were energetic and very receptive in these revolutionary plans for Australia.

The '72 Summer Program was the program where the necessary task became very clear! "If you want to be part of this revolution then you are the ones who will need to be in these Community houses you decided you needed yesterday!" Many of us had not played out this scenario! We were just enjoying being part of the plan primarily developed by the pioneering work done by people beyond our shores. . . . . .

(Following Ed Shinn's dramatic call) … couples were interviewed (coerced, encouraged, persuaded) to enlist and answer the call *(to join a Religious House)*. Some of us made provisos. Mine was that I'll consider if.....!! To my shock the small block of 20 acres we partly owned in partnership with another person, sold, and this was part of my delaying tactics. The block of land sold in three weeks of returning to our home town which dissolved my excuse and thus freed us to follow this call. Oh dear!

I began the transition or wrench and wrestled daily with what would be the repercussions of our decision, by packing our wedding gifts and treasures. Although it might be life long, I could not give up everything. We sorted out and packed things that could set up a new location and then we proceeded to sell all the excess items.

We packed the children's toys and they chose what they wanted to take and had to be packed. I felt strangely ill for several days with some unexplained causes and new effects. My body felt as though it was being torn apart. We all slept the last night in the lounge room - on mattresses or squabs I cannot remember but all the goods were packed and tied down on the trailer just outside the lounge window. The big deep freezer was filled with clothes. The lounge suite was tied on along all our other personal possessions.

The next day we set off to Adelaide for our Intern year.

From the CD "Bush Tracks" of E.I. Australia

11. Roving Overseas

Nine Years of Living in the Order Ecumenical

Life on the Move

In March 1973 I finished as minister in Paddington, and we went overseas to Chicago, not as a visit, but to live. It was the beginning of nine years of a radical new life-style.

On the way to Chicago we did a tourist trip. First we went to see Uluru (which was still called Ayers Rock). Then we travelled via Calcutta, Tashkent, Bokhara, Samarkand and Moscow. We saw some mind-blowing things – poverty on the streets of Calcutta was one, a tour of a Muslim seminary in Tashkent was another: it was a bit amazing to hear their ideas for world expansion, and in particular their plans about Australia.

For the first four years Isobel and I were in U.S.A. and Canada; then for a couple of years we were moving around in India, East Asia and Latin America; mostly we would be in one village for a few weeks or a few months, before moving on. Then we were based in Singapore for two years, and finally two years in Brisbane, from where eventually we returned to normal church life.

Living in Chicago

The Institute had a base, a "centrum", in Chicago and a network of "Religious Houses" across the States, half a dozen to a dozen people in each house. There were similar networks in Australia and Canada, and a few houses in U.K., Europe and Africa. Each community, each 'house', was "self-supporting": some people went out to work, and their wages went into a fund from which everyone was paid a small stipend.

When we arrived in Chicago we settled in and were put to work. We lived in an eight-storey building which had once been an office block; each family had one room as a bedroom, with communal bathrooms on each floor, while the cooking, eating, meetings and daily worship etc., all happened on the first two floors. The day started with worship at 6 a.m., and finished at about 9 p.m. Young children lived on the same floor as their parents, but they ate in a separate space before they went to school. When children started high school they moved to separate quarters on the third floor, named the "Student House".

A good deal of it was a life on the road. During the week some people would be out on the road on working trips around the U.S.; at the week-end most of us would be back home. Isobel and I were often on separate tasks; she would have a week on the road while I worked in Chicago, or *vice versa*. Later on, she went to Japan while I went to Chile, and so on

For the first couple of years our focus was on the church, inviting people to commit to a "renewal" in their local congregation so that, in their local parish, they could contribute to "making the world a better place".

Later there was a change of plan, a "turn to the world". Instead of working mainly with the church, we turned our focus to the local community, especially on rural villages in poorer countries. We

were after what we called “catalysis” (it’s usually called “empowerment” nowadays); in other words, we wanted to develop local leaders who would presently be able to run their own show, without help from us, and of course we wanted to reach out to as many people as possible.

The Summer programme was a major event every year. Normal routines stopped and everybody gathered in the centrum building for four weeks, for lectures, discussions, plans for the coming year, and so on. For the adults it often meant a change of assignment; for children it meant four weeks of different life in a special programme. In the summer school holidays (June and July, basically) the children would be taken on an excursion, usually to somewhere rural, where they would harvest onions or corn cobs or some such.

Life for Our Children

It was March 1973 when Isobel and I left for Chicago; in February 1973, our three children went inter-state to live with foster-parents; they went in February to be in time for the start of school term. Isobel went down and visited both schools with them, and met the teachers. Rebecca went to Adelaide Religious House, fostered by Barry and Margaret Oakley; she went to Adelaide Girls High School. Peter and Cathy went to Melbourne Religious House, fostered by Brian and Rhonda Robins; they went to South Yarra Primary School.

In December 1973 all three travelled to Chicago with an E.I. adult, Steve Allen. We met them at O’Hare airport. It was a very special moment to be all together again. When we left Sydney our children were 12, 10 and 8 years of age; so when they came to Chicago they were nearly 13, 11 and 9.

Rebecca lived in the “Student House” on the third floor, and enrolled at Lane Tech High School. Peter and Cathy lived with us on the fifth floor for the first year, Cathy on the eighth floor with us in a second year, when Peter went to the Student House. Peter went to Graeme Stewart elementary school, then to Joseph Stockton middle school (1975). Cathy also went to Graeme Stewart; the students were predominantly Hispanics (Puerto Ricans) and some blacks; she remembers how one of the boys called her his “strawberry short-cake”, because she was small and pink.

The children lived in their own “structures”. They ate their meals together, separately from the adults; at week-ends they did their own thing, together with a few supervising adults, and for part of the school holidays they went on special camps or outings. These were supposed to care for them, provide them with their own experience, and build a sense of confidence and independence.

There was, however, another reason for organising their lives in this way: so that the parents could be substantially free to get on with their own separate lives, including often being away from home for a short or long period of time; this had priority in the official line of thinking over attending to the needs of each child. As a result their parents, especially Isobel, were left feeling unnatural, and cut off as a mother.

The Student House was yucky. The children weren’t looked after in either structure, but the Student House was worse. Adults such as Isobel and me knew very little about what was going on there; if there were drugs or sexual abuse we probably wouldn’t have known. There certainly was a cold, hard atmosphere which we should have been able to recognise, even from the little we knew.

This is just another example of how the Order's thinking controlled our lives and distorted our emotional perspective.

When parents went from Chicago to another Religious House, as we did in 1975 to Toronto, their children would also move; they would be sent to a different Religious House, where they would have a designated "guardian". In 1975 Rebecca went to Winnipeg, with Art and Jean Smith as guardians; Peter and Cathy were in the Student House for a time, and then Peter went to Ottawa where Brian Fisher was his guardian, and Cathy went to Montreal (which was a French-speaking city), where her guardian was Sister Lucille Tessier. When we went to Toronto Peter went to the Religious House in Ottawa and went to Fisher Park High School (1976-77); then he was in the Student House in Chicago for the summer of 1977. When JB & IB went to Singapore Peter came to the Sydney Religious House, which was in Redfern and later in Summer Hill.

All this was very tough on the children, and the effects were profound. In Chicago we could spend every Monday night together (it was family night); in Canada we would see them more like two or three times a quarter. At a minimum there was loneliness, but when life got rough for whatever reason, we were not there to help; in fact we often wouldn't even hear about their troubles. In Winnipeg, so we heard later, Rebecca withdrew into her shell – long periods alone in her room, perhaps playing the 'cello. In Toronto at one point Brian Fisher called on Jim to come and visit Peter and talk things through, something to do with reluctance at school (if I remember right at this distance of time). In Montreal, we met Cathy once for a few minutes at the airport as we were passing through on our way to Venezuela, and she clung to Isobel as if she could hardly let her go.

Our family had some good times too. In August 1974 we had a camping holiday in Pennsylvania; we went from Chicago in my small second-hand Opel station wagon.[8] We had a bit of a rough start – Isobel remembers that just before we left I got mad with Rebecca, and I beat up on her, (I don't remember it). I remember that we hit some mechanical problem; the car broke down soon after we started, and Peter got very upset, though presently it got fixed OK and we were on our way. We went to Lancaster County in Pennsylvania, where the Amish people live – an old-fashioned Protestant community who won't use motor cars or electricity, radio or TV and who travel in horse-drawn buggies; we watched them with a certain sense of wonder. We rented a little cabin to live in, and had a very good holiday, with some nice activities, such as fishing (unsuccessfully) in the Conestoga River.

Work in North America

Summer '73 in Chicago was about the "guild" – what local church people can do at the place where they work. In September, after the Summer Program was over, I worked in the Academy – an intensive eight-week live-in course for people from all over U.S.A. It covered all sorts of topics, secular as well as religious – science, cultural studies, religious studies; we taught it three times during the year, there would be perhaps 80 participants, and in between we might go out in recruiting trips. During this year Isobel worked in the "Research" team; they were trying to develop some new ways to talk about religion and the inner life.
In December that year Rebecca, Peter and Cathy came to Chicago, as explained above.

[8] Opel was originally a German brand, but by now was (I think) a part of General Motors.

Summer ’74 was about the “ecumenical parish” – how a local church can see its local surroundings and work effectively in them. The following year, 1974-5, I worked in “development”, or fund-raising; this involved travelling to a city for about a week and visiting potential donors to ask them to give money. During this year Isobel worked in the “Local Church Experiment”; she would often be out for a four-day trip to Atlanta or Detroit or wherever. In February 1975 I was on a development trip to Alaska when word came through that my Dad had died. It threw me – I couldn’t do anything more that week. When I got home to Chicago our family gathered on our own in a quiet corner, and we held a little commemoration of Grandpa Bishop.

Then in Summer ’75 came the “Turn to the World”. We shifted our focus of interest away from the church and the quest for church renewal, to the secular local community. The Town Meeting, a one-day event to harness (and hopefully to unite) “those who care” – whether Rotary Club, school parents’ association, or whoever – was to be at the heart of this new approach.

Why the ‘Turn to the World’ Happened

From an article by Gene Marshall, 2016

As its name suggests, the Order: Ecumenical was a religious order. It saw itself as serving the institutional church by calling it back to itself, by revitalizing it through example and teaching. But by the time Gene and Joyce met each other, Gene and other long-time members of the Order no longer thought this was possible.

The Order's 1970 summer research assembly had developed an ambitious multi-year strategic plan for local church revitalization, with select local churches functioning as demonstration projects. By the end of the first year, it was clear that the project wasn't working. It wasn't being blocked by forces that were merely local or denominationally specific or lodged in outmoded doctrine, but by the entire economic and political structure that made churches recognizable as churches. "We could see then that what it meant to become a Christian movement in the local parish that did something for people there in a revolutionary way was going to take more than what you could do inside one of those old cocoons," Gene told me in his interview. "That's what we learned. So that was the first time that all we'd been doing sort of came apart for some of us."

The Order's response to what they had learned was the "turn to the world," which would do an "end run" around the local church to serve the world. Turning toward the world was precisely the turn taken by radical theology in its departure from radical orthodoxy. But Gene soon saw something missing in this approach as well. The issue wasn't the embrace of the secular and it wasn't the decision to serve the world directly rather than under the authority of the church. "The problem with the turn toward the world was it neglected the nurture of the order," he told me. "And because we did not solve the nurture issues, the Order passed away."

Canada

After Summer 75, in August, we were sent to Canada, to the Toronto House; we were there two years, until the spring of 1977. When we went to Toronto the children also moved to Canada, though to different cities, not with us and not with each other.

Rebecca went to Winnipeg Religious House. Later she went back to Chicago and finished high school.

Peter went to the Religious House in Ottawa and went to Fisher Park High School (1976-77); then he was in the Student House in Chicago for the summer of 1977. When Isobel and I went to Singapore Peter came to the Sydney Religious House, which at that time was in Redfern and later in Summer Hill. He went to Sydney Boys High for some time (end of 1977 & 1978). Then he came and lived with us in the Singapore Religious House (1979) and did correspondence education with the NSW Dep^{t} of Education, with a woman called Roxana Harper as his tutor. Then he went to the Religious House in Houston Texas, and went to high school there (Jesse H. Jones) until he graduated.

Cathy went to the Religious House in Montreal. It was a French-speaking city though the House was bi-lingual; Cathy's immediate guardian was Sister Lucille Tessier whose first language was French. When we left Canada Cathy stayed in Montreal for a bit, then she was in the Student House in Chicago for a while; then she came back to the Sydney Religious House which by then was in Summer Hill, and she went to Fort Street High.

For me, Toronto was a very different time from Chicago. We had about eight in the Religious House, and Isobel and I were the priors, or "first among equals". The "colleagues" in the region around us were a bit disheartened when we arrived, though they cheered up a bit by the time we left. Canada was in an interesting time: the French-speakers were unhappy and looking for change; some favoured complete separation, but eventually they reached a new look for their federation with equality between English-speakers and French-speakers, and with equal status for the French-speaking provinces such as Quebec.

In the meantime, during the time in Canada, I was moving around the state of Ontario, visiting local ministers to seek their interest and support, and conducting courses in local churches. During this time my mother, now a widow, came to visit us. We arranged local accommodation, and organised a gathering of all the family. What she thought of our arrangements I cannot imagine. In the opinion of my colleagues in the Order we were doing pretty well, I think, because my reputation seemed to be growing. My journals show that I went through some important changes while I was in Canada: I grew more reflective, and I felt that I learned a lot about working with other people, and listening to them.

One time we did a "consult" at Vogar in Manitoba, roughly 200 km. north of Winnipeg. [Isobel thinks that I may have taken Rebecca with me. My memory of this is zero].

In April 1977 we held a "consult" at Lorne, a small village in New Brunswick, not far from the mouth of the St Lawrence River. Earlier, Isobel and a colleague travelled around the Maritime Provinces (along Canada's Atlantic coastline); sometimes they stayed in convents overnight at no cost, because money was a bit tight. Lorne is a small village, population about 500 or so; the people there listened to our explanation of what we might do, and invited us to come. The consult takes a week; people talk about their ideas of what they'd like to see happen, they try to sort out what's feasible, and build plans to bring it into being. It's always good to have one "miracle", something spectacular. In Lorne the church's parish hall had burnt down a few weeks earlier, but there was no

fire brigade in the village, the response time had been very slow. The consult resolved that they needed a fire engine, they passed the hat round, and having found somewhere nearby who were buying a new engine, the Lorne people bought the old one, second hand. You can imagine the cheers as it drove slowly up the hill into the village.

Summer 1977, Chicago, ended our time in Canada. The theme that year was Expanding the "Global Servant Force". This followed on from Summer 1976 which was called "Global Social Demonstration", in other words selecting 24 sites around the world (two in Canada and one in Australia), where we would go into a village and work with the local people to make a way to change and improve things. The phrase "Human Development" implied that we would look at all aspects, the Economic, the Social and the Cultural, and work on them all at once according to particular opportunities.

At Summer 1977 Joe was ill; he died later that year. He arranged for me to give one of the main talks to the plenary. It was about Action + Reflection, which was to become one of my guiding themes. I have sometimes wondered if Joe was trying to set me up for bigger things, for a top role in the governance after he died, by putting me up on public display. If so, it didn't work out like that, and *thank goodness*!

India – The Start of Our Wandering

In August 1977 Isobel and I went to India, to the "demonstration village" in Maliwada, near the city of Aurangabad in the hills above Mumbai (it was 'Bombay' in those days). The Institute had chosen India for a special effort, centred on Maliwada and eventually spreading to dozens of villages in surrounding areas.

Maliwada was a cluster of adobe (= dried mud) huts with thatched roofs. They drew their water from wells and carried it home; there was no electricity, they used oil lamps for light. There were few toilets; people relieved themselves by going into the fields. There was a school, boys only; one of the things that happened fairly soon was to build a (fairly primitive) toilet block with two sections, so that girl pupils soon began to attend. The women cleaned their houses with a small bundle of rushes or straw, so they had to do it on their knees: there were no broom handles. We helped them with new developments, gradually – a health clinic run by a nurse for a couple of hours, twice a week; the Bank of India opened a branch for two hours once a week and offered "micro-financing" – borrow enough to buy your own cow and make repayments from the proceeds of selling the milk, until you owned it. They opened a factory to make "sukri", a snack food based on grains and sugar for school-children at play-time, which they sold on contract to the district schools.

An interesting feature in the village was that there was a separate section where the "Harijans" lived, with their own Buddhist temple. Previously they had been Hindus and had belonged to the lowest of all castes, (dalits or "untouchables"), until Mahatma Gandhi suggested a new name for them, and then many of them rejected Hinduism by becoming Buddhist.

In Maliwada I went into the team which was to teach the "Human Development Training School". Isobel travelled around other villages, where she played an important part as a role model for other women, many of whom could not read or write, or count. "We want to learn about numbers so we

can count our change at the markets," one of them said. Isobel went to Chicago in October 1977 for Joe's funeral; Jim didn't.

The H.D.T.S. was an 8-week live-in course, for village people from nearby villages. We spent two weeks each on 'Economic', 'Social' and 'Cultural' topics, with a view to helping the villagers not only to understand their options, but to be self-starters. We had about 80 participants and about a dozen faculty, a mixture of foreigners and Indians. The Dean of the H.D.T.S. was Ed Shinn; as time went on he and I fell out with each other quite strongly. One issue was that he wanted to change the name of the School to "H.D. Training Institute". He thought the term "School" didn't sound important or appealing enough, but I liked it as plain and quite sensible. Whatever: our disagreements were plain to all, the powers backed Ed, and I was removed from the faculty. This was a very painful moment for me: it provoked an interior crisis which affected me for some years. For the moment, I was sent out on field trips to other villages.

From India to South Korea

While I was in Poona, late in 1977, I got very sick with something gastric. I went back to Bombay by train, and lay low for a while, mostly in bed; then I went home to Sydney for a few weeks. I was in Sydney over Christmas; my Mum was glad to see me, though naturally very distressed to see my condition. I got better gradually, and right after Christmas I went up to South Korea and joined Isobel and the others at Kwang Yung Il, where we were preparing for an H.D.T.S.

Isobel was in South Korea for a few weeks before I got there. She spent some time in Seoul, and also travelled round on recruiting trips. She especially remembers going to a point on the border with North Korea: the suspicion, anxiety, and tension. Kwang Yung Il is a little village on the island of Jeju Do, at the southern end of the Korean peninsula. It was very cold at first, but the weather warmed up a bit as spring approached. We would sometimes go in and out on the bus to Jeju city; coming home was a bit tricky because a lot of different busses left from the bus terminal, until we learned to recognise the squiggles, the Asian writing, on the destination board of the bus.

An interesting participant was Colonel Peter Hu, a retired officer from the civil war in China; he had been in the Nationalist Army, which resisted the Red Army's advance, and lost. In Korea we learned to eat and enjoy their very hot 'kimchee' sauce, made from cabbage and red chillies, and we sometimes drank soju, the locally brewed equivalent of vodka.

Latin America

fter South Korea we were sent to Venezuela, to a Training School in Caño Negro village. We went 'home' to Chicago first; we must have met Rebecca, who was there at Whitney Young High School. Peter at this time was in the Sydney House with Jay Zahrt, in Redfern. Isobel organised her ticket to Caracas so that she travelled *via* Montreal (and then New York), so that she had a few precious minutes talking to Cathy, who was still in Montreal and who came to the airport to see her.

Caño Negro was a small group of simple houses surrounded by cacao (cocoa) trees. It was a few miles out from a small town on a dirt road; you either walked out or, if you were lucky, got a lift from the local priest, who had a car. Venezuela is a Spanish-speaking country, so the school was conducted in Spanish; the faculty was led by (Father) Rafael Davila, known to us Anglos as "Ralph".

He and some others translated for the rest of us and it worked fairly well. I found that my rusty schoolboy French helped me to learn a few basic words, but really that was just for fun, for my own amusement.

The villagers were very receptive, they were looking for something. They were eager to co-operate with one another, as we talked about vegetable gardens and a chicken industry, as well as the cacao. They decided to buy a truck so they could transport their own produce to market; it soon needed major repairs because of careless driving, but they got it fixed and things were OK from then on. One notable person was Innocenzia, who ran the local store with a stock of everyday needs; it was a bit unusual for a village like that even to have a store! She had taught herself to read from the various labels, such as "OMO" on the detergent.

One memorable moment was when a couple of villagers came running in from the local jungle, which was close to the village and quite thick. They were shouting something and so lots of us went to look, to see a two-toed sloth up in one of the trees – an interesting small animal, and rather rare even in those parts. It was about the size of a koala, maybe a bit smaller.

About this time my journal notes record a lot of discussion within the faculty, and the whole Order, about who we are, what makes us effective with other people, where are we heading in the future. Isobel and I parted company in May 1978, when Caño Negro ended. She went to Japan, to a village called Oyubari, near the city of Osaka, while I went to Chile, to Sol de Septiembre, a village not far from Santiago.

Sol de Septiembre was a place of market gardens such as spinach. It had irrigation channels controlled by gates made of hessian. Marketing in Santiago, and prices, were a real concern: one visiting consultant gave them a slogan to use which translated roughly as "our vegetables are fed with clean water from deep wells"; he said many of the other supplies at the markets were contaminated by sewerage. The villagers were hard working and enthusiastic; during the School they got some pre-fabricated building panels (I think they got them for nothing because they found a donor), and in two days built a new community centre.

Summer 78 in Chicago was again about making the "Social Demonstrations" work, i.e. the villages where we were trying to bring about a total change by tackling all the problems at once – the Economic, the Political and the Cultural, as identified in the first place by a "Consult" at the beginning.

Basic Themes in the Life of the Order

By Jean Long

There were at least five basic themes in our work, which we are still trying to clarify and understand.

The Band of 24, or the Human Development Projects. The strategy was to create a dramatic, tangible sign of renewed local community in every time zone around the world. Most of them were distressed villages in what we called the Third World.

Fifth City – the black community on the west side of Chicago: why we did it and how it worked (participatory methods). We will be telling stories of how it happened and how people were changed.

Imaginal Education – what it was and how we used our understanding of it to change people's lives. For instance, we knew symbol was key - so, in 5th City we worked with their deeply religious core and we came up with Jeremiah whom God sent into the desert. Jeremiah who said, "But I can't live out there." ...and God who said, "But if you come back you will be an Iron Man." And so the symbol of the Iron Man reminded them every day that they could stand in the desert and not fall.

Corporateness – the structures that allowed the committed ones to be responsible for physical, financial and spiritual care for the body. (In the Kemper Building we moved rooms every year.)

Spirit Methods – their purpose and how they continually reminded us of the profound, transparent and Other Worldliness that kept this world in perspective. (NRM - or as I say it now - the New Mode of the Religious.

From an e-mail to former members of the Order,
18th July 2017
Adapted and edited
[Jean is a member of the Global Archives Team, in Chicago.]

Singapore

In August 1978 Isobel and I were assigned to Singapore. This would be a centre for some excursions into Indonesia and the Philippines, and would allow us to make some visits to Australia also.

About this time our children left North America and came back to Australia.

Rebecca went to live with her grandmother (Cath Bishop) in Northwood, and she started University.
In this period, in mid-1979, she bought the flat at Kirribilli, with help from Michael Hobbs.

Peter came to the Sydney Religious House, which was in Redfern and later in Summer Hill. He went to Sydney Boys High for some time (end of 1978 & early 1979). Then he came and lived with us in the Singapore Religious House (1979) and did correspondence education with the NSW Dep^{t} of Education, with Roxana Harper as his tutor in the House. Later he spent a year in the Houston House with the Heckmans and Jay Zahrt, and then graduated from High School and came back to Sydney. He enrolled in Science at the University of NSW; he lived in Kirribilli.

Cathy came back to the Sydney Religious House at 10 Gower St. Summer Hill, and she went to Fort Street High with Jenny Robins. After finishing the HSC Cathy took a gap year in France.

In November 1978 we went to Sudtonggan village, on Mactan Island within reach of Cebu city, in the Philippines, as part of the faculty in an H.D.T.S. We were there over Christmas. The women further developed their rope-making, and the men their fishing, with an eye on the markets in Cebu city. I was especially struck by the power and energy of the young men, many of whom were leaders or managers.
A quote from my journal of 10th November 1978: "To walk home at 9 p.m., under stars with a light veil of cloud, and with a halo under the ¾ moon, is a great time and place to have happenings of consciousness."

In early 1979 we went to five different communities and ran a short training + involvement event; we called them "Methods Modules". The places were Murrin Bridge, an Aboriginal township near Lake Cargellico in New South Wales, Bubun in North Sumatra, Kelapa Dua in West Java, Serusup in Sabah (all three of these in Indonesia), and Bontoa in South Sulawesi (Kalimantan or Borneo) which is in East Malaysia. The purpose was "to make a visible difference in the village through staff and participants working together to create something new." In all five places we were well received and came home feeling that it had been a useful event. When I went to Murrin Bridge I took Peter with me and he took part in everything we did. Murrin Bridge was also notable in that one of the leaders' team was Owen Bull, a full-blood Aboriginal from Lake Tyers in Victoria.

Some Memorable Moments:

- Bontoa Access was *via* a ferry across a river – vehicles & pedestrians together; it was motor-driven and guided by a thick cable. The motor broke down mid-stream while we were on board and it was a rather tense and slow process to get us across and safely ashore; but it was all OK in the end.

- Cebu Another tricky ferry trip was when we were travelling from Manila to Cebu city, en route for Sudtonggan. It was an overnight trip; Isobel and I were lucky to have a small cabin, just to ourselves; (most people didn't). The weather came up very rough, gear was sliding everywhere, people were vomiting. We got there safely, eventually.

At Summer 79 in Chicago the work included developing a daily ritual, to be used every morning in the Religious Houses, which was based on some works of Rabindranath Tagore – in other words, it could be used by people of all religions or none, instead of the Christian daily office which had been developed in the very early days. At both Summer 79 and Summer 80 there was conversation about our long-range direction, and there was a lot of turmoil in the Order, over several issues. In fact the Order as we had known it was in the process of collapsing. It was feeling the absence of the single-minded yet all-embracing leadership such as Joe had provided. Those who took control removed all links to anything religious, and all use of Christian symbols, and tried to carry on what was left as the Institute of Cultural Affairs, concerned solely with secular organisations and offering something called the 'Technique of Participation', or ToP. This shift did not suit a lot of people including Isobel and me, and so we 'left the Order', or it left us, as it disappeared. Thus another part of the story began, and the way opened for a return to parish work.

Australia (To Brisbane)

By now we were getting fed up. We wanted back to Australia. The children had come already, as explained earlier. We went back to Chicago in about May of 1980 and I did a bit of work in Uptown, the neighbourhood around the Kemper Building, the Chicago "centrum". Then we came to the Brisbane House, in August 1980.

It felt so great to be back in Australia. Frank and Sandy Powell were the Area Priors. An important part of the job turned out to be going round the Brisbane region – travelling the back-blocks to meet church people and others. We bought a second-hand camper van, a VW Kombi, and went from one caravan-park to another. Once when we were in Rockhampton, a good day's drive north of Brisbane, we looked at the map and realised that we were closer to Melbourne than we were to Cape York. Queensland is a big state**!** A very interesting visit was in North Townsville: we called on Rev[d] Charles Harris, an Aboriginal minister in the Uniting Church. He welcomed us warmly, and I gave a short account of some of our work with Aborigines such as Oombulgurri and Murrin Bridge; he listened politely and then responded by telling us about recent developments in the Uniting Church which amazed me – some Aboriginal ministers and leaders had met together at a place called Crystal Creek, they had formed a network with the intention, basically, of running their own show, and it was flourishing. (Later it was known as the Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress of the Uniting Church.) We came away much wiser.

On our travels we visited lots of Isobel's cousins and kinfolk who were living on the land in various places in central Queensland. One remark, from John Peacey[9] near Longreach, struck me very much. "The feet of our sheep, with their sharp hooves, have done so much to cut up the soil and spoil the pasture; kangaroo feet are not like that." At one point, in November 1980 while we were staying with Bob and Joy Hickson[10], our Kombi van broke down. The repair bill was over $1000, and

[9] I remember the remark more clearly than who it was who said it.
[10] Again my memory is a bit fuzzy: I *think* it was Bob Hickson

he very kindly put it on his credit facility to allow me time to organise payment after we got home to Brisbane.

While I was in Brisbane I got the opportunity to be In Sydney for three months while I did a locum at Crows Nest Uniting Church, while my friend Rev^{d} Doug Cole took long service leave. I was there from January to April 1981; I lived at Kirribilli. There were two congregations – I was at Shirley Road (formerly Presbyterian), and Ross Smith was at Holterman Street (formerly Methodist). Morale was low, and there was not a strong feeling of unity, of being together, nor a sense of future direction. Ross and I organised a few workshops and joint ventures, taking care to include the insights of Parish Council, and the mood improved somewhat. I kept saying that the problems were soluble – that we could do a "Forum" or "Brainstorm"; finally a bright and friendly woman elder told me that my language was confusing people – that "Brainstorm" sounded like "mentally disturbed", and that I might try "Buzz Session". (This I did, and from then on it went down fine.)

During our time in Brisbane it was clear to everyone that things in the Order were changing. For our part, we were doing a lot of thinking about our role, our future, what we were good at, what we wanted to be and to do in future, and in the process we produced four different papers.

- *"PASS to the Future",* December 1980. [4 pp.] This is a "format for a corporate exercise in depth reflection." The name PASS was chosen "because we wanted an acronym. We meant it for 'Parish-Action-Spirit-Symbols.' For the "Group spirit" the spirit exercise is "to assess the mood, the struggle, and the spirit question of the group."
- *An Experiment in the Praxis of Prayer,* June 1981. [7 pp.] This consisted of four lists of topics for use in daily evening prayers: For 'wholeness' in wider society, for our responsibility to our own group, for depth understanding of our own individual lives, and for hope to be created in (whatever) social situation.
- *Time for Myth Factor,* October 1981, by Sister Isobel and Brother James. [11 pp.] 'Myths' are stories with significance, e.g. Gallipoli for Australians.
- *Stumbling into Community,* April 1982. [16 pp.] A 'Talking Paper' about putting spirit living into practice while living with other people. "One sentence statements are risky, but they're fun. Here's (one) attempt: Dynamical Living is living with one eye on the spirit and one eye on the context, and with both hands busy at their work – involved in the situation".

In January and February 1982 I went to Tonga, to be Dean of the "Pacific Training School", a variant of the H.D.T.S., along with Don and Mary Laura Bushman, Jaime Vergara, and others. It was held in Queen Salote College, and we worshipped at the big Methodist Church near the palace, where the music is provided by a brass band. Most of the participants were villagers, and the emphasis was on local issues, especially agriculture.

June 1982 we were in Warwick, getting ready for the 'wind-up'. My journal has notes on 'options for our radical intent.' About this time we returned to Sydney and began to re-engage with the church.

12 Home in Australia

The Order Closes Down

In June 1982 the Brisbane House closed; we had gone there in August 1980. The Order and the Ecumenical Institute in Australia were going out of existence; what was left was going to function as the Institute of Cultural Affairs. We left Queensland and came south to N.S.W.

I wanted to return to parish ministry, and Isobel wanted to become a minister instead of a deaconess. We were now in the Uniting Church; when we joined the Order we had been in the Presbyterian Church. [At the time of Union in 1967 we had signed papers to declare that our affiliation would be the new church, not the continuing Presbyterians. Isobel's two sisters Theodora and Marilyn chose to remain as Presbyterians.]

Bondi

I was offered the chance to do a 'locum' at the Chapel by the Sea in Bondi. It was a small building very close to Bondi Beach, with quite a ministry to locals who were down on their luck, as well as a normal congregation. We were there for a few months, during which time we lived in the unit in Kirribilli[11] which Michael Hobbs had bought for Isobel, at Rebecca's instigation. "The computer was installed at Kirribilli and we began to learn how to use it. Our mood and morale were good,"[12]

During all this time Isobel was considering her options, getting information, and applying to do a refresher course at the Theological College in order to qualify as a minister. [They said, "When you were training as a deaconess you did the same lectures and exams as the men. With hindsight it was discrimination, you should be qualified now to be a minister; but it was about 30 years ago, so a refresher course won't hurt you."] So she attended the College for a few months, during the time that we were at Thirroul.

Our Children's Movements

Rebecca eventually came back to Sydney and lived with her grandmother (Cath Bishop) in Northwood, and she started University. After that she lived for a while in our flat at Kirribilli, then she shared a flat in Potts Point with a friend. When JB & IB eventually came back to Sydney (to Mascot, 1n 1987) she came and lived in our Manse for a while. She was studying Economics at UNSW.

Peter went to the Religious House in Houston Texas, and went to high school there (Jesse H. Jones) until he graduated. He then started at the University of Texas in Austin, but after a year (1980-81) he came home to Sydney and enrolled at the University of New South Wales. He lived in our flat at Kirribilli – with Rebecca for a while, and then with a mate called Mark Kusmierski. By this time IB & JB were back in Sydney, at Mascot. He graduated B.Sc. from UNSW in 1986. He and Michelle joined each other in 1994. Joseph was born & died on 8th January 1996.

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[11] Our memories of where we lived at each point during this couple of years are sometimes a bit fuzzy.
[12] Note from my journal

When we left Canada Cathy stayed in Montreal for a bit, then she was in the Student House in Chicago for a while; then she came back to the Sydney Religious House which by then was in Summer Hill, and she went to Fort Street High. After finishing the HSC Cathy took a gap year in France. Then she worked her way through Sydney University, mostly during the time when we were in Australia but not in Sydney.

Thirroul

In 1983 we went to Thirroul for a temporary appointment, while the settled minister, Rev^{d} Roy Hildebrand, was sick. What I remember about the parish is how nice and normal it was! We were returning to parish ministry after some 10 years away. Our time in the villages had been good, satisfying work, but different. We needed to re-establish ourselves: to find out again how to work with local leaders, to build up the core, to touch the imagination of those on the fringe. We were also acclimatising to the Uniting Church, because we had been away at the time of Union.

Northern Illawarra Parish (Thirroul) was a great place to make our re-entry. The leaders were co-operative and supportive but they had a mind of their own. The congregations were lively, with a warm sense of community. There was a great spirit. I'm sure I had more to learn than I remember, but I do remember that people were kind to me even as they sometimes showed me a better way. Austinmer was a model for me, as I look back, of a smallish group who had learned to be independent and self-sufficient – the geography of the coastal townships almost requires it – yet their frame of mind was in no way isolated. It seems to me that they made use of lay preachers fairly often, and that we went there mainly for the Sacrament.
We look back on our time in Northern Illawarra with gratitude.

Paddington

We then spent a few months in Paddington – another fill-in while the minister was on long-service leave. We lodged upstairs in a two-story terrace, whose owner Miss Dulcie Hynds lived downstairs; she was a member of Paddington Church. On Saturdays there was a big and very lively market held in the church grounds. In July 1983 we organised ourselves to present a series of three dramas, "What is Christianity Now?", in the church building on Saturdays while the markets were open. The scripts were three stories of healing from the New Testament, and the cast were church members. They were a lot of fun and they did the church members a lot of good. We also had one outside speaker, each week.

The Next Stage

We then went to Bondi, a second time, for a short period. There was some re-organisation going on, especially in terms of their street ministry. By now Isobel had finished her work at the Theological College and was ready to go. We heard from the parish of Whyalla, where our colleagues Jonathan and Janeen Barker had been working, that they were leaving and there was an opportunity which could be suitable for two ministers. The pay would be shared, 60% for each, but we decided that would be OK; we said that we were available, they issued a call to the two of us, a "clergy couple", and the deal was done.

Isobel was ordained in Pitt Street Church, on 11th March 1984, and we set off for Whyalla.

13 Our Time in Whyalla & Gilgandra

1984-1986

Whyalla

Going to Whyalla felt like a thrilling new adventure. It was Isobel's first position as a minister, and we were working together in equal roles. Yet within three years it all ended in tears.

Whyalla is an interesting city. Until about 1937, it was just a small port on the end of a rail line to Iron Knob, which is one of Australia's richest iron ore deposits. Then it became a shipyard; the first ship built was a warship during World War 2. After the war it became home also to a large steel mill, and it grew to be the third city in South Australia, with population around 20,000+.

The Parish and Ministry Team

In the Uniting Church there were four churches linked as one parish, and there were four ministers. Isobel and I lived in the oldest manse and were settled in what had been the first two congregations, one originally Presbyterian and the other originally Methodist; we were on 60% stipend each. Two other congregations, each with a full-time minister, were in newer parts of town, and had a younger membership on average.

Isobel and I worked solidly in our congregations, with some productive results. Isobel looked after two places – one in town, St. Andrews, formerly Presbyterian, which was fairly small but active and very loyal, and another one at Iron Knob, a very small township about 30 minutes away. As she left for home after the Sunday evening service the elders would say, "Watch out for kangaroos!" (She did watch out, and she never hit one.) One of her St. Andrews elders was a pharmacist, a trans-gender woman who had been born a male; she was the first such person that we had worked with; for Isobel she was a stalwart.

I worked at Peters Street congregation, a fair-sized group of former Methodists. I was able to lead their elders into pastoral care and home visits, which they had not done before and which they came to enjoy. We also began to engage with people like the City Council and the Chamber of Commerce. One time one of the elders, who was not long retired from a life-time blue-collar job in the steel-works, was coming down-town with me on some appointment, and he stretched himself to his full height (he was quite short), and said proudly, "I feel like a business-man."

The two other ministers, each in one congregation, were Richard Carter, roughly the same age as myself, and Lee Olsen, a younger man who had trained in U.S.A. and had come to Australia fairly recently. There was quite a lot of interaction among the four of us, with a sense that we were trying to operate together as a ministry to the whole city. For example the parish ran activities called Communicare and Lifeline, which offered social-work-type support and telephone counselling.

The Crash

The ministry team met once a week, early in the morning. We worked at sermon ideas (from the common lectionary), we discussed plans and issues for our ministry. We recognised two separate strands, both important: religious & spiritual, and community work & secular. The operations of this team became a source of tension and disagreement; written records of the meetings haven't survived, and my memory isn't good on detail now, but several divergences between Richard Carter and myself were at the heart of it. Another factor was that money was tight and getting tighter, so the future of our ministries in Communicare and Lifeline looked shaky. Indeed it wasn't clear whether we could afford four ministers.

Whatever the details, they led to a painful outcome: someone called in the Presbytery, who are the supervising body over ministers and parishes in the Uniting Church. Three people from Presbytery duly came to town and held interviews with all the ministers and some of the lay leaders.

Their conclusion was that the ministry team had become dysfunctional, in particular that Richard and myself could no longer work together. So they sacked both of us, and they removed Isobel from her settlement also, on the grounds that if I went she could not stay. It was a tough ending, and I felt that the process had been unfair. The lay people of Peters Street were behind me: one of the older men wrote to the secretary of S.A. Synod to protest at the outcome; but there was nothing to be done but swallow it.

So we packed up, loaded the Kombi van, and drove back to Sydney.

This sacking was a doubly bitter pill because it happened not long after my misfortune in India. It hit me very hard. Yet something changed in me, this time: I softened, I gradually moved beyond putting my own views or my own needs first. This seemed to happen without my consciously sweating over it all – I just mellowed – not totally and not all at once; but without doubt I became a different person.

Gilgandra

After Whyalla we went to Sydney and waited. Then someone in Synod offered us a 'locum' in Gilgandra, where the previous minister had left in a hurry leaving a bit of a mess. We were glad to accept.

Gilgandra is in Central West N.S.W., about an hour north of Dubbo. The farms were a mixture of sheep and wheat. It was a very educational experience for me, a typical city boy, but the farmers were all very kind as they explained things to me; (for example, the different grades of wool and the importance of 'fine wool'.)

The Uniting Church was in turmoil: it was trying to keep two quite different groups together in the same fold. Some were middle-of-the road mildly conservative, while quite a number had experienced a 're-birth of the Holy Spirit' and so had recently taken a second baptism as adults. This was a result of the teaching of the minister who had been there just before us. Isobel and I worked at encouraging listening and conversation between the two groups, as well as steady pastoral

visiting, often over dirt roads a fair way out of town. Our work seemed to bear fruit: the tension and awkwardness seemed to die down a bit, though the two groups remained quite firmly distinct.

We were there about nine months – most of 1986. We could have stayed if we wished, but we wanted to be back in Sydney near the children, so we left and came home in late November. We were lucky: the parish of Mascot was vacant, its minister had just retired. We were offered the chance to do a 'locum', on the clear understanding that it would be temporary while they looked for a minister; in other words, that this was not a stepping-stone towards a permanent job. No matter, we were glad to accept.

14 Mascot and Prison Chaplaincy

Mascot

We arrived in Mascot in December 1986, and we were there 10 years. It proved to be a turning point in Isobel's ministry. At the beginning the congregation was a group of aging, if steadfast and loyal, ex-Methodists. When she left it had become a successful and self-affirming mixture of 'Anglos' and Tongans, with a lively Sunday School and youth group.

We went there on an interim ministry, in other words, to hold the fort during a vacancy; for about a year we shared the work. Then there was an elders' meeting to discuss a permanent settlement. We left the room while they discussed the options; when we came back they said, "We will offer the call to either one of you, or to both of you 50-50 – what do you want?" After a moment's thought we said, "Let it be Isobel". One or two male faces dropped a bit (women ministers were still a bit unusual), but that was the deal we did.

The story of Isobel's work in the church, and in the local community in such ways as being a driver for "Meals on Wheels", is told in her memoirs. One sign of it was the radical change in the make-up of the congregation mentioned above: the Tongans came, were welcomed, and were integrated. Another is the Mayoral Citation presented when she left, which is to be seen hanging on our bedroom wall.

The effect for me was that I needed to look around for some other work. For about a year I did a 'locum' at Bexley during a vacancy, but it became clear that a settlement in another parish wasn't going to be the answer: the locals wanted their minister to live locally, not in a Manse a few suburbs away.

Chaplain

Then a vacancy was advertised for a prison chaplain. I applied, was interviewed, and got the job. It was a great opportunity, another life-changing moment. It was at Parklea, a bit past Blacktown – but neither the inmates nor staff need be worried by the fact that I had to travel 30 or 40 minutes to get there from Mascot.

Before I began I did a short orientation course at the Corrective Services Academy in Eastwood. Then I began at Parklea, in the last week of 1988. My main job was working with the inmates, to get to know them, and after that to relate to the staff, who were pretty decent blokes, as I found them. Parklea was not long established, with a fairly new set of buildings; it was a campus with three main buildings ("wings"). There were three industrial workshops where the inmates worked at metalwork, carpentry, and so on.

Serious Offenders

When I went there it was a serious offenders' gaol. A lot of the people I met were doing fairly long sentences, sometimes for quite serious offences; a few of them had been headlines in the newspapers at some time. Day by day they gave me a good reception – some kept their distance, but quite a lot were friendly enough, and some half-dozen or so allowed me to get close and even guided me or supported me. My approach was along the lines of, "I'm into God, and I don't care who knows it; but I'm not trying to get you into God, I'm interested in helping you to get your life together." One of the men was serving three life-sentences, another who was doing 58 years gave me as a gift a copy of his book, titled "58 years", co-written with journalist Monica Attard. And so on – everyone had his own particular story, and I tried to listen without being judgmental. One of the local sayings was, "Gaol time is thinking time," and that was certainly true for many of them; quite a few had turned their outlook around during their sentence.

Once a month all the chaplains from the different religions and the various gaols got together to discuss what was happening and exchange ideas. As an example, there was only one Muslim chaplain, so when Ramadan came around, he would work with the rest of us to get a special diet regime organised for all the Muslim inmates. A time that I valued was when I met once a week with Eric Knight, the Uniting Church chaplain at Long Bay, for an early morning coffee.

A Riot, and Young Offenders

In 1991 there was a riot at Parklea, and much of the gaol was damaged by fire. It happened during the Rugby League grand final; the inmates reckoned that a lot of the staff on duty would be watching the match on TV. The gaol was closed for a couple of weeks, although I was still able to go in. In a little while Parklea was changed to be a Young Offenders' prison, and most of the 'heavies' were moved out to other high-security gaols such as Goulburn or Grafton etc.

Some special policies and programmes were developed to manage young offenders – i.e. people under 23 years of age. The prison officers were given special training; I went to one course myself – about a week at the Academy in Eastwood. In the new regime it was obvious that many inmates were Aboriginal, some from country N.S.W. but many of them from the western suburbs of Sydney. I used to say to myself, "What I'm doing is like ambulance work at the bottom of the cliff. What's really needed is a fence at the top of the cliff." What was needed, of course, was community building, support for families, and so on, all of which was sadly lacking in much of western Sydney.

Godcares

About this time I began talking to 'Fuzz' Kitto, who was Youth Director for the Uniting Church in N.S.W. He came up with the idea of young visitors going into the gaol, under supervision, to offer new activities to the inmates. We called it "Godcares". We took it to the Governor of the gaol, who liked it. We recruited and trained some teams of visitors, and began with courses on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in areas like Life Goals, Parenting, TV & Media, Guitar and Sport. A few times a year we organised a "Big Event", a concert, with a visiting band like "Glass Canoe" or "Guns of Fire". This work was very well received by the inmates, and seemed to be a help for many of them. The superintendent, who at the time was a woman, approved of it too, and even bragged about it a bit to her colleagues in other prisons.

It was 'Fuzz' who taught me the phrase "Relationships before Doctrine" as an operating principle in ministry. I hadn't heard it before, but it clicked for me the moment he said it. I've come to see it as describing the way I've worked since the very beginning, working more with non-religious than with religious people, through most of the 37 years of my working life.

"Sky Pilot"

An important aspect of the chaplain's job at Parklea was to respect the staff and to earn their respect.
Kevin Mitchison is one that I remember. When I began he was a sergeant, rostered as the duty officer at the main gate – a position of responsibility. Later he received his commission and presently was deputy governor – in charge of much day to day detail of management.

One time I brought an application to him to approve the regular entry of Allan Leggett, a third-year student at the Theological College who wanted to do a couple of semesters of field work in the prison. Normally there was an expected delay of a couple of weeks after applying, so that HQ could do various police checks etc., but Kevin made ready with his pen to sign an immediate approval. When I expressed some mild surprise, he said, "Look. This bloke's a trainee sky pilot, right?" I said, "Right." He said, "Do you think he's OK?" and of course I said, "Yes, I do." So he said, "Well, that's good enough for me. I'm approving it now. I'll send it away as a formality, but I don't need any more checks than that."

My reflections afterward were, first, that clearly Kevin had come to trust and respect me. Second, that it was a long time since I'd heard the term "sky pilot". I knew that it had been AIF slang for a chaplain, way back in 1914-18 when aeroplanes were a novelty, rather few and far between. So I identified Kevin as one of the old school, and respected him none the less for that.

Coordinator

In 1993 the Department said they wanted to have someone working full-time as Coordinator of all chaplaincy services. The chaplains discussed this, and they elected me: I had one full year in the job, 1994, before I retired. To some extent I was creating the job, finding out what to do, as I went along. It meant I travelled a lot more: I went to Junee, to Bathurst, and other places. At one place I found the superintendent quite unhappy with something that the chaplain was doing; we talked it over and got things straightened out between them. I also spent quite a bit of time at Head Office in the city, working things out with some of the top brass. There were a couple of evening events where the dress was 'black tie'; I hadn't had to dress like that since I was in St Andrew's College, so I hired a dinner jacket and charged it to my expense allowance.

Retirement

Finally at the end of 1994 I retired – "swallowed the anchor", one of the senior officials called it, who had been in the Navy. The chaplaincy had been a good job – I felt that I had made a useful contribution. In my later years I had learned some new ways to do things, and I had come to a more peaceful and peace-giving life. I had begun as an activist but I came to see the importance of a balanced life, of being reflective also.

By now Isobel was in Cabramatta. She was again working in a congregation which was learning to be sharing ‘across cultures’, this time Vietnamese, Cambodians and ‘Anglos’. We were close to our children, who were young adults by now. When Isobel retired we moved into an apartment, first in Glebe and finally in Leichhardt. Our two daughters with their families live in Leichhardt, and our son in Haberfield. We are very thankful to be close to them and engaged with their families. In recent years Isobel and I have been working to try to heal their old wounds.