

January
1972

BARKER COLLEGE (1972)

I accepted a position at Barker College, Hornsby. The official title of the teaching position was "master-in holy orders."

We lived in Marillian Ave., Waitara - immediately behind the school.

Mark attended the Barker junior school (no fees for staff members' boys) while Debbie went to Hornsby South Primary School and Janelle went to the kindergarten at St. Stephen's Normanhurst.

My teaching responsibilities were divided, more or less evenly, between History and Divinity and I occasionally preached in the chapel services.

1st March
1972

Susan Jennifer Cuthbertson was born at the Royal Women's Hospital at Paddington - completing our family quartet.

We worshipped at All Saints Church, Waitara but other commitments prevented us from getting involved in other church activities.

The work-load for my first year of teaching was extraordinary and included sports activities after school and on Saturdays. It was enough to convince me that I was not suited for a permanent teaching career.

I advised Archbishop Marcus Loane that I was available for a Parish appointment.

PEAKHURST (1973)

31st
January
1973

I was inducted as curate-in-charge of the Provisional Parish of Peakhurst and Lugarno.

The Parish had two churches - Holy Trinity Peakhurst and St. Stephen's Lugarno.

The Rectory was adjacent to the Peakhurst church on the very busy Forest Road just up from the Boundary Road intersection while my curate Tom Halls and his wife Claire lived near the Lugarno church in Old Forest Road.

My Mum & Dad and Val's Mum were very pleased to have us living so close to them - it was less than a 10 minute drive to come over to see the grandchildren.

Janelle (in kindergarten) joined Mark and Debbie at Peakhurst Public School. After school they would usually walk down a short street and wait for Val or I to escort them across Forest Road.

Throughout the year Val was kept busy caring for Baby Susie and, as in previous Parishes, assisted in the ministry in many ways. There is much truth in the light-hearted description of a Rector's wife as the unpaid curate.

I continued the previous arrangement in which I gave Tom Halls primary responsibility for children's and youth activities. We shared the services between the two churches as well as the teaching of Scripture at Peakhurst Public School and Peakhurst High School - along with a number of capable lay persons.

While our stay at Peakhurst was just under 12 months, I believe that

we had a positive impact on the life and growth of the church family which included quite a large number lovely Christian people. We also helped in bringing the Lugarno church closer to being able to stand as a separate parish.

However it seemed that I was destined to spend an inordinate amount of my time on building projects (as we had with the new Rectory at The Oaks). This time it involved major renovations and additions to the Rectory and later planning for a new church building at Lugarno. I tried unsuccessfully to convince the Parish Council to look for an alternative site for the Rectory in a quieter location.

With hindsight it was a huge mistake that we did not insist on having alternative accommodation while the Rectory renovations were carried out. With much of the house being pulled apart and tradesmen coming in and out all day from early morning, the pressures on both Val & myself resulted in a deterioration of our health.

we made the difficult decision that I should look for employment opportunities outside of full-time Christian ministry. An application for a position at the Wollongong University College in the "student services" Division. Before accepting the offer we struggled with the question of whether accepting the position (and leaving behind full-time ministry) was the right decision. I have clear memories of Val and I parked near the University - still unsure whether to go ahead - earnestly praying for God's guidance before we went into the University to indicate my acceptance of the offer.

I have often said that this was the most difficult decision I have ever made. When I was ordained I had seen this as a life-time commitment to full-time Christian ministry. For some time afterwards I felt guilt and a sense of failure in "abandoning" that commitment. I now realise that those feelings were not justified as we can see God's hand in that decision - confirmed when I had my first heart attack 6 months later at the age of 36.

Val and I are also very conscious of God's blessing in the ensuing years as we have become part of the wonderful Gerringong community and as active members of St. George's Anglican Church.

It is also a matter for reflection to think of the implications for our family - not only the schools, colleges and university they attended but the relationships, marriages and grandchildren as a result of living in Gerringong.

WERRI BEACH - GERRINGONG 1973

We moved into our Warri Beach house in December 1973. On the day we moved (a Saturday) Val left before me in her blue Morris Minor, coming down the hill towards the Omega crossing I was horrified to see the results of a collision between a train and a car. I could see the remains of a blue vehicle which had been carried some distance up the line. I was extremely relieved a few minutes later to find Val (and two? children) safe at our new home.

As I had committed to continue taking Sunday and Christmas services at Peakhurst until the end of the year I was so tired when I commenced work on the following Monday I briefly dozed off at my desk at one stage.

The house had been built more as a weekend and holiday home with four quite small bedrooms and a limited kitchen/dining/lounge area and was far from ideal as a family home - especially as the three children sleeping downstairs had to use the outside stairs to come up to the living area.

Initially we investigated the feasibility of selling the Warri property and buying a house closer to Wollongong but as Warri property prices were still quite low any house that we could afford closer to Wollongong would be far from ideal. We therefore began planning extensions which we were able to undertake in 1975. We were able to add a main bedroom, an en-suite bathroom and fairly large kitchen/living area with a double garage underneath. This was to be our family home for the next 39 years. What a blessing this has proved be - not only in providing a home but in allowing us to become part of the great Gerringong community and being members of the church family at St. George's.

THE UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

September 1973
I joined the administration staff in the Secretariat section of the Wollongong University College - until then a division of the University of New South Wales. Although still small (around 2000 students [many part-time] compared with more than 30,000 today) it was quickly outgrowing its beginnings based mainly on metallurgy and engineering courses to service the steel industry. Increasing a full range of courses in humanities, social sciences, mathematics and science were being offered.

At this time quite a large number of academic and administrative staff (including the Vice-Chancellor Designate Michael Birt) were employed in preparation for the College to become a full University. The University of Wollongong came into existence on 1st January 1975 and the first University Council meeting was held on that day. Shortly after the first Chancellor Justice Robert Hope (an inspired choice) was appointed.

Apart from arranging the last University of NSW graduation at Wollongong, I was responsible for much of the writing of the new degree regulations. In the early years before a legal officer was appointed I was frequently asked to interpret legal documents and to write papers dealing with legal issues. I suspect that this came about because of my pedantic (some might say nit-picking) approach to the accurate use of language.

Over my next 20 years at the University I was no doubt most often associated with graduations - I was responsible for the arrangements for the first 99 graduation ceremonies at the University of Wollongong. While I got great satisfaction in doing this.

it often involved spending long hours (sometimes at home) ensuring that all details e.g. on testamurs and in the booklets, were correct. I emphasised to staff working for me that a single mistake could spoil the whole experience for a graduand on this most important occasion. I also maintained that graduation ceremonies were among the most important public relations functions of the University as in many cases it was the first time parents and family members had visited a university.

Apart from graduations my main work was of a secretarial nature - servicing various academic and other committees by, where appropriate, researching background materials, preparing agendas and taking minutes. The most important of these was preparing background papers and agendas for the Academic Senate - the main academic decision-making body of the university. This required drawing together the recommendations from the faculties and other sources and proposing an appropriate "resolution" for each item. The less controversial proposed resolutions were normally passed without discussion, but even for those items which were debated, a high proportion of the proposed resolutions were passed without amendment. Where appropriate the Senate's resolutions were forwarded to the University Council for endorsement.

My Health. Some time after my first ^{heart} attack in 1974, angina episodes gradually increased in intensity and following another heart attack I underwent by-pass surgery in June 1985. Following another less severe heart attack

I had increasing concerns about the pressures of work affecting my health and in 1993 my cardiologist helped put together a case for early retirement. I was referred to the NSW Government Health medical offices in October 1993. To my surprise he ordered that my retirement should come into effect that afternoon. In fact the university agreed that I stay on for the rest of the week as we had four graduation ceremonies in the next few days. So just on 20 years of employment at the University ended as abruptly as that.

Being Christian in the Workplace in a secular organisation had very different challenges and opportunities to life as a "professional" minister. Knowing my background, one senior member of our staff often made life uncomfortable for me with cynical remarks about Christian believers - clearly directed personally at me. Another colleague took delight in attacking the views and beliefs of prominent Christians in the news, which frequently gave opportunities for positive discussions in the office about Christian beliefs and values. I remember a positive discussion taking place when it was suggested that for Christians to claim assurance of forgiveness was arrogant and a non-Christian present defended this as a basic belief for Christians.

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY

During the 70's and 80's Val and I had the joy (and sometimes challenges) of seeing our children grow and develop into wonderful responsible young adults. Many activities centred around school and sporting activities (including hockey, tennis and then Susie's horse events). They all attended Gerringong Public School and then Kiama High School. (The children's education details are set out in the appendices)

For almost all of the 14 years that any of them were at KHS (from 1976 to 1989) I was President of the P&C which involved attending state P&C conferences and twice meeting with the Minister for Education at Parliament House to lobby for much-needed developments at the school. At the end of this time I had the honour of being awarded life membership of the NSW P&C Federation.

Holidays while the kids were growing up included travelling to the Sunshine Coast (three times) and Adelaide once. Travelling with three - and later four - kids in the car sometimes strained relationships but any conflicts were always short-lived.

Mark and Janelle were both fortunate in gaining cadetships with BHP which supported them in their university degree courses (in Electrical Engineering and IT respectively) while Susie graduated with qualifications in accountancy. In 1985 Debbie began work at the Revesby Uniting Church Preschool and has remained there ever since.

As Mark, Janelle and Susie have married we have been delighted to accept their spouses as part of our family and each of them contributes to the unity of the whole extended family.

We have been delighted when each of our

seven grandchildren were born - bringing our immediate family (including ourselves, children, their spouses and grandchildren) to 16.

Our greatest delight as we reached the "empty nest" stage has been in spending much time with them. Since 2013 they have all lived within 15 minutes drive, but even before that when Aditi and Jude were further away we visited them quite frequently and they often managed visits "home."

One activity, though fairly brief, that we particularly enjoyed was taking each family group of grandchildren to the Blue Mountains, descending the "Giant Stairway" and going through one of the Fenolan caves.

It is also a great joy for us to see the love that the grandchildren all have for each other and, in spite of age differences they still enjoy spending time together.

CHURCH ACTIVITIES

Until 1988 Gerringong was part of the Kiama Parish with Rectors being Wesley Givran, Reg Pipes and Stephen Gabbott. During this time curates in the Parish were Paul Guirio-Jones (living at Jamberoo) and Duncan Pawley, David Pettett and Philip Kitchen (who all lived in "The Cottage" at Gerringong). In 1988 Gerringong was made a "Provisional Parish" with Philip Kitchen as the first curate-in-charge. Since then our Senior Ministers have been Leigh Roberts and Andrew Glover.

For many years I frequently led services and preached fairly often. At one time between curates I preached at all services for a couple of months. The need for my services in this way has diminished over the years with the appointment of extra staff and an increase in the number of retired clergy living in Gerringong.

In the late 1970's there were periods when I did "Sunday locums" at Bundanoon, Bowral and Mittagong and, more recently, I served in a similar way at Jamberoo... I took services at a number of other churches including Berry while it was part of our Parish from 1988 to 2010.

Our children became active members of the Kiama Church Youth Fellowship where they established some excellent friendships. As the Fellowship's main weekly meeting was on Sundays before the evening service, for some years I went with them and stayed for the evening service. For a few years I also had responsibility for the confirmation class which was run alongside the study part of the Fellowship meeting.

RETIREMENT

Retiring from work in October 1993 gave me more time for church and family activities. At one stage I had the joy of caring for Peter (about 18 months old) on a couple of days each week. Until Val retired in March 1999 I had more responsibility as "house-husband" but Val was never successful in getting me to take over the cooking of meals (I don't think she tried too hard). As the number of grandchildren increased (eventually to seven) there were increased opportunities to care for, and spend time with, them.

Travel We have had the opportunity to travel more widely and more frequently. While Garelle and Shray lived in Canberra (2005-2007) and Melbourne (2008-2011) our most frequent trips were to visit them.

Our overseas holidays have been to Beijing (1995); Europe and England - with Debbie for the latter half - (1996); New Zealand (1998, 2005, & 2013) and (with Debbie) a river cruise from Budapest to Amsterdam. ⁽²⁰¹³⁾ We have also been to Tasmania four times (including our honeymoon), Norfolk Island and an "around Australia" trip flying with Qantas with stopovers at Alice Springs, Uluru, Perth, Broome and Darwin. There have also been three trips to Western Australia on the Indian Pacific train - the last of these (in 2013) taking the car and driving back across the Nullabor.

Community and Social Activities

Kiama Council and South Precinct I became involved with the Kiama Council South Precinct from the late 90's and from 2003 I served 6 years as President, followed by

6 years as Vice-President and since then as Treasurer.

For a number of years I was the community member on the Kiama Council Road Safety Committee as well as representing the South Precinct on the Council Transport Committee.

Probus

In 2002 I joined the Gerringong Probus club and have enjoyed friendships and social activities with them since then. In 2007 I was President and I have been continuously a member of the Committee since then - first as Activities Officer for a few years and then as Speakers Officer.

SCRAM For quite a few years I have been secretary of a fairly informal group - The South Coast Retired Anglican Ministers - with great help from Val in typing and sending out reports.

Rotary (VAL)

When our son Mark was President of the Gerringong Rotary club surprise in 2009/2010, to Val's surprise he asked her to join the club. With some hesitation she accepted the invitation on the condition that she wouldn't be required to serve on any committees. Just two years later she was elected as President. Since then she has held several positions on the Board and has given huge amounts of time on activities such as being in charge of the barbecue at the monthly markets and in preparing and sending out the weekly bulletin. In 2017 her contribution to the club was recognised by awarding her the prestigious Paul Harris Fellowship. With all the family I am very proud of her ^{being} honoured in this way.

Church Activities

In 2009 Val and I recognised the need for a shorter service for older members of our church family who find the regular Sunday services more than they can handle. Since then once a month on Tuesdays we have provided morning tea followed by a reasonably informal (but definitely Anglican) service. Both Val and I get great satisfaction and enjoyment in sharing in this way with some of our older members (as well as a few from other backgrounds) - it has also reached out to a few people who hadn't attended church for many years. In recent years this has been our one official ministry activity.

Over the years we have belonged to various Bible Study groups. For some time Val and I have been part of separate women's and men's groups that meet on the same night each week. These groups have not only allowed us to come to a deeper knowledge of the scriptures and their implications for our daily lives but they also provide a more intimate relationship in which we can raise issues in our lives so that we can encourage and pray for each other.

It is also a great blessing and privilege to meet each week with God's people as we worship God and hear excellent preaching from God's Word. While our family was growing up we attended the mid-morning "family service," but for many years now we have preferred the more traditional 8 a.m. service. We recognise that the other services (10 a.m. Family Service and 7 p.m. Youth Service) which are much less formal than in our earlier days (as in most churches) are seeking to be more relevant to the needs of modern families and young people. While some older church members believe that some

desirable aspects of Anglican worship are in danger of being lost, what is most important is that God is glorified and His gospel is preached in a way that encourages people of all ages to put their faith in our Lord and Saviour and to grow in their Christian experience so that they will serve Him in their daily lives.