



Record of Service – Rev Richard Banham



Life began for Richard Banham in August 1955 at Northampton, England. Technically he was the second born to Joan and Cyril having been preceded by his older sister 5 years previous. We say “technically” because 5 minutes after Richard’s arrival his twin sister Diana was also born. Life in England was short, however, as the Banham family moved to Australia in 1961 as part of the great migration of the time.

One day when Richard was still a young boy (about 7) a couple of teenagers from the local Baptist church arrived at his home to ask if there were any children who would like to attend Sunday School. Richard’s parents were not religious but saw this as a way to get the kids out of their hair on a Sunday morning. This selfless witness by those two teenagers eventually led Richard to an Easter Camp at Tweed Heads on the Gold Coast where he gave his heart to Jesus.

Having spent 10 years in Brisbane, Richard joined the Royal Australian Navy at the tender age of 15 years and 4 months. Beginning as an Electrical Artificer at HMAS Nirimba located in Sydney’s outer west it was soon discovered that he had no great aptitude for grinding and filing and so was immediately considered possible officer material. Six months into his naval life he was transferred to HMAS Leeuwin at Fremantle WA where he began a grueling 18 months study regime to matriculate (having been six months behind upon arriving). After successfully matriculating he was transferred to HMAS Cresswell at Jervis Bay, ACT where he began his officer training. During this time Richard sought to be baptized as an adult and three naval chaplains undertook the task at a local Baptist church. Later research by the Anglican Chaplain at the naval college revealed that Richard was probably the first person to be baptized as an adult at a Royal Australian Naval ceremony.

Richard spent nearly 12 years in the navy rising eventually to the rank of Lieutenant. During this time his Christian faith grew significantly as he began to lead bible study groups and had fellowship with the small number of Christians who were on the ships at that time. Persecution including bibles thrown out of portholes and unkind ridicule helped consolidate Richard’s faith and leadership giftings.

In 1978 Richard married Shaun and during his time in the navy they had two children, Matthew and Heather. In 1983 Richard felt the call of God on his life and left the navy whilst he was stationed in Canberra. He took up a new job as a Research Officer for the Department of the Senate at Parliament House. His third child, Stephen was born shortly thereafter. The call to ministry eventually led Richard to candidate through his local church in Canberra at the time (O’Connor Uniting Church). Being a Canberra citizen, the Presbytery of Canberra sought to get Richard accepted into the Theological College in Sydney although he didn’t have any degrees. At the same time Richard’s minister, Rev Dan Armstrong strongly suggested Richard candidate through the SA Synod and go to Parkin Wesley. This meant that Richard had the distinction of candidating in two states at the same time. Eventually SA won out and Richard was accepted into training at Parkin

Wesley. Richard was ordained in December 1988 and began his first settlement at Pinnaroo Uniting Church in January the following year.

Richard spend 4 years at Pinnaroo which began with three congregations: Pinnaroo, Parilla and Peebinga. During his time there two congregations in Victoria, Murrayville and Cowangie (just across the border), asked to become part of the Pinnaroo Parish as they had many connections with the border community. This led to a merger and brought the new parish to a total of 5 congregations. Richard's time at Pinnaroo was his first and only experience of country living and taught him a great deal about the resilience of farmers and the anguish of poor seasons and plummeting sheep prices. Whilst at Pinnaroo Richard joined with the small number of clergy in the town to form the Mallee Hotline Service to assist those who were faced with tragic circumstances.

In January 1993 Richard took up his new placement at Glenunga Uniting Church. Sadly in his first year, having just moved into a newly built manse, Richard's marriage unexpectedly broke up. The congregation at Glenunga showed much love and compassion for Richard and his children during this difficult time and reaffirmed their call to him to be their minister. Richard will always be grateful for their ministry to him during these early years at Glenunga.

In late 1994 Richard met Jacqui and her daughter Rebecca. God's mercy and grace abounded in the year that followed, and Richard married Jacqui at the end of 1995 at Glenunga Uniting Church. The congregation welcomed Jacqui and Rebecca with much love and support and Richard once again felt Christ's love being demonstrated by His people. During their time at Glenunga the church went through a major renovation making it more comfortable and useful as a worship centre.

Richard has always been a computer nerd and with the cooperation of a local computer shop he began the Glenunga Computer Club to which locals of all ages would come to the church to learn about computing. Richard also put his computing skills to work in creating a web site for EMU (Evangelical Members of the Uniting Church) which grew out of a response to Resolution 84.

In mid 2000 Richard accepted a call to Sunset Rock Uniting Church. During his time there Richard became engaged with a number of Christian programs including "The Walk to Emmaus", Alpha, Network and Divorce Care. The placing of a cross on the "rock" overlooking the valley during his time there was a significant moment and has since become a much-used place of solitude and meditation by people from both within and outside the church. Richard's computing skills became apparent with the videos and other media productions that he created for significant occasions and particularly for Easter Services. Richard also won a competition to create a new logo for the church.

Approval was given to Richard to extend his time at Sunset Rock following a move in his 10th year to a newly built manse.

In October 2011 Richard began a new settlement at Tea Tree Gully Uniting Church. TTGUC will always have a fond place in Richard's heart because that was where Rebecca (Bec) met her husband to be, Matthew Driver. The wedding of the happy couple at TTGUC was wonderful and worshipful affair and Richard remembers with great delight walking Bec down the aisle.

Richard and Jacqui both have felt there was something “special” about TTGUC as the congregation showed such kindness and care for their leaders, for each other and especially for the newcomers to their midst. It was a church which had many generations of the same family attending which Richard struggled to keep up with. Even into his last years there Richard would discover a new connection between congregational members he had no idea about.

Richard will be remembered for a number of things at TTGUC but perhaps it is the one question he raised often in his sermons that stands out: “So What?”. Richard believes that unless you can answer that question at the end of a sermon then you failed to proclaim the Word adequately. Many times, especially during the end of his time at TTGUC, members of the congregation would call out “so what?” in response to a rhetorical question about to be posed by Richard.

At Richard’s ordination he shared his belief nobody was without hope when Christ entered the picture. This remains true for Richard today and he remains passionate about the need for us all to have a living relationship with the Risen Christ.

Covid-19 meant that Richard retired “quietly” in July 2020. His hope is that Jesus will receive all the praise for anything he may have done to help others in their journeys of faith.

November 2020