

Paul Thompson

What is the first thing that comes to mind when you think of Baptist College - Victoria Ave days?

Dr Bob Thompson leaning over the lectern with piles of books on either side! This is probably also the funniest thing that comes to mind!

What was the hardest thing about College or worst memory?

I don't have any particular "hard" or "worst" memories. I was never an 'A' grade student and had to work hard at the study, but I did make it harder for myself with challenges like doing Greek and Hebrew.

What was most significant?

The most significant thing for me was the year that I was assigned to work with the Baptist Māori Department in Pukekohe. I went to Baptist College sure that this was what God wanted for the next stage in my life, but not entirely sure where this was going to end up. In High School I had been heading to engineering. Through my years in Uni God changed this to working with people, but I wasn't sure in what context or how. The experience of Pukekohe convinced me that cross-cultural contexts were where I fitted.



What do you miss most or least?

I don't know that I 'miss' any of it. It was a good time, and I value the experience, but at the end I was ready to move on.

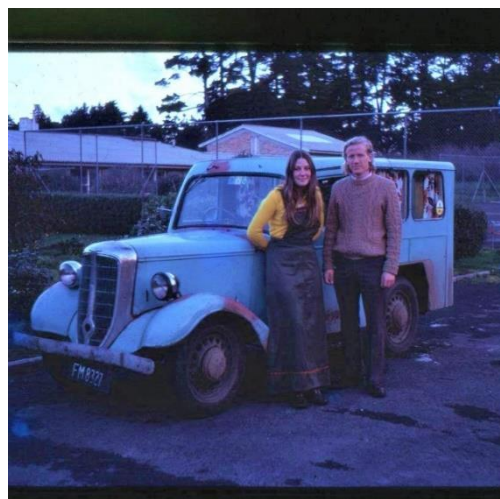
What thing about College has helped you most in last 50 years?

The four years of solid biblical and theological study gave me a solid foundation for the following 50 years. I don't think that I could have lasted the 20 years in

Bangladesh without that foundation! While I had been brought up in a Christian home with daily Bible reading the introduction to scholarly exegesis gave a wider perspective on the Bible and the history of the biblical period. History had not been a favourite subject in school, but I found church history interesting and important. Some of my fellow students found the introduction to liberal theologies unsettling, but for me they were a challenge to understand my own faith at a much deeper level.

Any story from College days that you can recall to share?

There is the story of getting married at the end of my second year and moving from my room in Driver Wing of the main building to the little flat on the end of North Wing!



Short synopsis of the past 50 years of your life and ministry...

Wellington Central Baptist: (1979) NZ pastoral experience before going to Bangladesh. Central Baptist continued as a significant supporter through our time in Bangladesh and became our home church on return to NZ.

Bangladesh: (1979-1999) Working with national church organisations in evangelism, church planting, training village pastors, publishing, development aid. Finishing as Team Leader for the NZBMS team in Bangladesh.

Included a sabbatical (1987) at Fuller, Pasadena completing every paper on Islam that was available.

Return to NZ: (1999-2000) Wellington Central Baptist welcomed us and gave enormous support for the resettlement process. Free accommodation in one of the Central House flats!

Scripture Union NZ: (2000-2005) My first job back in NZ was Promotions and Fundraiser for SUNZ, later moving to role of Deputy Director.

Refugee & Migrant Service (RMS): I was invited to be the Baptist rep on the board of RMS. RMS was established as “an alliance of churches and religious organisations” to assist church based and regional volunteers working to settle refugees in NZ. I was involved at various levels from 2000 until in October 2012 it was dissolved and all operations transferred to NZ Red Cross.

Return to Study: (2006-2007) When I decided it was time to move on from Scripture Union I wanted to get back to being involved with mission work in overseas countries. I enrolled back at Uni for a Masters in Development Studies. My thesis for this examined the opportunities of the **Freiset** style business model in development support.

Churches Agency on Social Issues (CASI): (2006-2007) To support self and family during the study I got a part time job with CASI. This was a joint agency of Presbyterians, Methodists, Church of Christ and Quakers. It was basically the equivalent of the old Baptist *Public Questions Committee*.

NZBMS/Tranzsend/Arotahi Council I was an elected member of Council from 2004-2007

Banzaid: (2007-2019) Initially the job was part time, shared with a role working for **Micah Challenge**. Micah Challenge was another multi-agency organisation, this time of Christian development agencies promoting development issues.

The Banzaid role was primarily managing the Wellington end of funding applications to the NZ Government Aid Programme. Over the 12 years we did this with a small but significant measure of success. TCDC (village savings and development); solar power for rural households in Bangladesh; rebuilding a school in Samoa after the 2009 tsunami; an attempt to help coffee growers in Papua New Guinea; support for the Freiset expansion from Kolkata to Murshidabad. This time included becoming involved with the **Asia Pacific Baptist Aid** group in the APBF, with participation in conferences in Bangkok, Fiji and Indonesia. I also served 6 years on the board of the **Council for International Development (CID)**. CID is the membership organisation for all NGOs (religious and secular) working in international development.

Retirement: (2019-present) In retirement I first took on for three years a 1 day/week role as Property Manager for Central Baptist.

I also took on the (5 hours/week) role of Secretary/Treasurer for the Lower North Island Baptist Association (initially Wellington Association, but expanded to cover Taranaki/Hawkes Bay down to Wellington). This keeps me a bit in touch with what is happening in wider Baptist scene.

We have four children and three grandchildren.



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