

BRACKEN RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH

The Story of the First 21 Years

© Bracken Ridge Baptist Church
47 Norris Road • Bracken Ridge 4017
Phone 3261 5045 • Fax 3261 5750
Email office@brbc.org.au

Table of Contents

Preface	1
Introduction	3
CHAPTER 1	
Birth	13
CHAPTER 2	
Infancy	15
CHAPTER 3	
Adolescence	19
CHAPTER 4	
Prime	23
CHAPTER 5	
Maturity	27
CHAPTER 6	
Activities & Organisations	31
CHAPTER 7	
The Ministry	47



The story of the first seven years of the Bracken Ridge Baptist Church has been previously written by Ralph Brett in his “Brief History of Development”. I have not attempted to rewrite this except in précis form. What I have done is attempted to set the story within a framework of development. I also thank Kris Forman for my making use of a College assignment written by him.

Many people have participated in this project, writing the story of the various organisations and ministries, and I sincerely thank them. Special thanks also to Catherine Freeman for doing the typing and layout. For my part is has been a labour of love because of my long association with Bracken Ridge, going back more than 21 years.

Melvin Williams

Life Cycles of Congregations

(This material comes from a module in the Leadership and Management Post-graduate Course conducted by Dr John Sweetman at the Baptist College of Ministries. I am using it as a framework for the story of the Bracken Ridge Baptist Church – Ed.)

Any living, changing thing whether it be an organisation, an organism, a culture, a community, or even a church, goes through a life cycle with various identifiable phases. Living things naturally are born, grow, plateau, deteriorate and die. This will naturally occur unless there is some intervention.

In this module we look specifically at the life cycle of a congregation with a view to discerning the various stages, characteristics of each stage, and the intervention necessary to assist progress (growth phases) or prevent deterioration (declining phases). While no congregation will match perfectly with the ideal presented, all congregations will display characteristics that can be identified with components of the life cycle.

There are a number of advantages in understanding the life cycle of a congregation:

- You understand the important issues that are confronting your congregation at their present stage of growth.
- You can better appreciate the history of the congregation.
- You can assess your own contribution to the ongoing growth of the congregation.
- You can discern what intervention is necessary to further grow the congregation.

The following congregational life cycle is based on a small book by Martin Saarinen (1986) and I will use his categories for convenience. But it is also informed by other reading on the life cycle of organisations and by my own ideas and experience. I will try to give illustrations from the life cycle of the Bracken Ridge Baptist congregation where appropriate.

The Gene Structure of a Congregation

Saarinen does not base his stages on chronological time but on the presence or absence of certain basic characteristics, which he calls the "gene structure" of congregational life. He advocates that the stage of congregational life is determined by considering the strength or weakness of four basic genes - energy, program, administration and inclusion.

These genes are defined as:

E - ENERGY. 'E' includes such things as vision and hope, excitement and enthusiasm, and a sense of potency and potential. It produces momentum and power for ministry.

P - PROGRAM. 'P' includes worship, learning, serving, managing and witnessing programs. P is located in externals. It provides ministry to the church family and community.

A - ADMINISTRATION. 'A' spells out the intentionality of the congregation and determines the effective and efficient use of resources. It co-ordinates, integrates, and sets boundaries.

I - INCLUSION. 'I' includes integration, relationships, ownership, involvement, conflict resolution, authority, and trust in leadership. It provides a sense of belonging.

Summary of the Congregational Life Cycle

1. Birth – Epai

(The designation Epai stands for high energy, low programs, administration and inclusion. A capital letter represents a high designation and a lower-case letter indicates a low level of that "gene.")

The birth of a new congregation is accompanied by great excitement and momentum (high E). The founder inspires a small group of highly dedicated followers who will put tremendous energy into the church plant and their enthusiasm is enveloping.

Usually the life of the new congregation is characterised by lively, undifferentiated activity and a multiplicity of images. Consequently it is not very intentional and there are low levels of program development and administrative capability. The structure tends to be dominated by the personality of the founder, not policies and procedures. The structure is flexible and radical and often-unexplained changes can occur frequently and with a minimum of difficulty.

Its sense of identity is limited by its need to include anyone to build a base of members and dollars to support a ministry. With such a diverse conglomeration of people it is often difficult to develop strong relationships in the church family. It is the mission that drives the commitment not the sense of inclusion.

The founder is known and remembered for his/her charisma and ability to draw people together and fill them with enthusiasm. They are often "prophetic" types with a strong vision but limited people-development skills. Their success is dependent on their ability to move quickly without regard to barriers, protests or administrative procedures. In some schemes, this stage is known as the "Man" stage where the key person in the organisation is the leader.

Some dangers of this stage are that the enthusiasm may dissipate if not enough progress is made; that the community may be unresponsive leading to a shortage of resources; or that the founder may alienate other members of the congregation by attempts at domination, lack of consultation, or unwise decision-making. The congregation needs to build the support base and try to include the new attendees into the tight network of the founders.

In December 1968, a Sunday School was commenced in the Bracken Ridge area. It continued successfully until 1976. In 1972, two churches jointly purchased land in the suburb with a view to commencing a church, but although efforts were made to interest people in the area, few responded. It took a "charismatic" layperson, a resident of Bracken Ridge, to muster the people support and energy required to run a survey in the area, lobby the Baptist Union, and organise a fledgling church. The first service was held in the local TAFE College in 1980.

Within a few months they had employed a part-time pastor, but much of the influence remained with the layperson that founded the church and was the source of inspiration and vision for many. The church was small, diverse, flexible, enthusiastic and full of hope. It grew steadily.

2. Infancy – Epal

The Infant congregation inherits a high level of enthusiasm and invites people to join who are willing to contribute (an indication that they have really bought into the dream). Because the direction of the congregation is now clearer, people know what they are committing themselves to and what is expected of them. The congregation has a strong need for survival and tends to remain open to new people. Everyone is needed; everyone has a part to play. This enlistment of new,

committed people and the subsequent increase in the sense of inclusion in the congregation is the major change that differentiates an infant congregation from one that is newly birthed. The quality of relationships now correlates with the levels of energy and enthusiasm.

The charisma of the founder continues to hold the congregation together and it tends to be an extension of his/her personality - enthusiastic but lacking managerial ability. The leader tends to command rather than consult or delegate and creates an organisation that suits his/her personality. The rapid growth and consequent disorder requires command decision-making. The goal of the congregation is growth and there is little administration with relatively few lines of approval.

However there is little room for uncommitted or needy people who don't contribute to the vision, and the lack of programs is an inhibitor of growth because the infant church can only meet a small number of needs. If the church does not progress to the next stage, people gradually get disillusioned with effort required and the lack of support available.

The "infancy" stage usually draws to an end with the early development of a range of programs. This sometimes spells the end of the dominant role of the church planter who may not have the gifts needed to develop, equip and support teams involved in a range of ministries.

Gradually the infant work at Bracken Ridge Baptist grew with the church calling a part-time Minister of Visitation in 1982 and becoming a fully-fledged Baptist church in 1983. The congregation remained enthusiastic and visionary, driven by their desire to have a church building and their own full-time pastor. The founder was prominent in both planning for the building and the selection of their first pastor who arrived in December 1984. With both dreams on the verge of fulfilment, disaster struck and the manifestly unsuitable pastor resigned in the middle of 1985. The church was in turmoil.

The church needed the healing of hurts and frustrations and a capable, widely experienced, interim pastor who stayed for eighteen months provided the leadership needed to refocus the congregation and encourage the building program. With the men and women of the church working tirelessly, the building was completed in December 1986. The church began to again grow steadily in numbers with membership reaching 94 and morning attendance about 110. The interim pastor led the congregation towards the next stage as they began to develop ministry programs. (Ministry programs at this point included a morning and evening service, a Sunday school, a week-night Bible study, and an informal ladies' work.)

3. Adolescence – Epai

The development of specific programs and services for the members and broader community signals the onset of Adolescence. To facilitate these programs, a

stronger structure emerges with assigned roles and responsibilities. People need to specialise. (In later Adolescence programs and services proliferate, sometimes without regard for the resources needed to maintain and develop them.)

Leadership becomes shared, delegated and increasingly collaborative. Growth is no longer just dependent on the enthusiasm, vision, and ability of the leader, but on how well he or she can facilitate the leadership of others and co-ordinate the efforts of groups with diverse interests. Essential leadership abilities include listening, delegation, co-ordination, and conflict resolution.

Congregations experience strong momentum in Adolescence. After the hard work of establishing the congregation, the rapid expansion (at least in ministry) of Adolescence provides self-promulgating momentum. It's a time of stress, excitement and accomplishment. It appears that the sky is the limit.

However, the emphasis on programs and services over people needs tends to be at the expense of people needs and therefore inclusion diminishes. This weakening of "I" is often imperceptible to the leaders due to the mesmerising effect of the high "EP" combination. But members feel stretched and, with all the energy going into expansion, little remains for care. They can also feel isolated from the leadership team who are heavily involved in ministry and are strongly committed to each other, but have little energy for other members of the congregation. Some only feel valued for what they contribute to ministry. It is important to broaden the assimilation of new people and strengthen their participation in leadership.

An emphasis on ministry creates a tension between explorers (those who are committed to growth and expansion) and builders (those who are committed to community). The explorers are excited by what is happening, but the builders feel neglected. The resolution of this tension is essential to moving to the next stage. The maintaining of unity now requires deliberate action. Conflict must be resolved.

Other difficulties are faced during Adolescence. If the founder of the congregation cannot adjust to a more inclusive style of leadership, he or she must be moved aside or sent out to plant another congregation. This seldom happens without significant pain. Also program proliferation and conflict over competing resources can result in the burnout of leaders.

Carl George calls another issue often faced during Adolescence, the "Berry Bucket Theory." This involves the reaction from the old-timers as the newcomers begin to have more influence and is dealt with later in this Module.

By the time I arrived at Bracken Ridge Baptist in September 1987, the congregation was moving into Adolescence. They now had a building (a base for ministry programs) and were looking to

expand their ministries. Within a few years we had added a youth work, home groups, prayer ministry teams, playgroups, men's work, and a seniors' ministry. We expanded our pastoral team from one to four (some part-time) and grew numerically to about 300.

My style of leadership revolving around teams was ideally suited to this stage of the church's life and I was able to hold things together as we expanded.

By the early 1990's we not only ran numerous regular ministries, but also used the holiday periods to hold outreach programs for children and adults. Many people were serving in two or three programs, but the adrenalin and excitement kept us going. New people had to come on board themselves because we had few resources left to integrate them into the life and ministry of the church. Generally they caught the vision. However it became apparent that we needed another experienced full-time staff member to cover the care and management of the church.

4. Prime – EPAI

The congregation in Prime optimally balances human and program concerns that are managed well by the heightened "A." It displays an optimum of energy, openness to others, responsiveness to members and the broader community, together with the ability to integrate and co-ordinate its activities around a clear vision with expanding resources. It has learned creative use of the inherent conflicts between vision and practice, emotion and reason.

This is the stage for which the congregation has been aiming. There are programs to cater for the congregation and the community, the various ministries work harmoniously together co-ordinated by the administration, everyone feels a part of what is happening, the energy and vision of the people remains high, and there is enough conflict and challenge to keep everyone depending on God and needing each other.

Often a congregation in its Prime is very attractive to people in other congregations. It therefore can achieve rapid growth from both the success of its ministries and the inclusion of disaffected or disappointed members from other congregations. While the rapid growth appears exciting at the time, sometimes the newer attendees do not have the same commitment or involvement of the old and so they tend to sit on the sideline, consuming the efforts of others. Prime congregations also attract very needy individuals who see the people and programs of the congregation as huge resources to meet their need.

The maintenance of a congregation in its Prime is a fine balancing act. For instance, it requires a balance between outreach and inreach, vision and support, leadership and management, and program and community. Any dominance by one polarity will endanger the effectiveness of the congregation. Therefore special interest groups and serious intra-church conflicts need to be well handled.

Another major problem caused by Prime growth is the loss of a sense of nearness. Leaders who worked together in the Infancy and Adolescence stages now find themselves leading large ministries with little opportunity for cross-fertilisation and friendship with the old team. New people in services (who become a ministry priority) make catching up with or even finding old friends more difficult. The division of support groups like Home groups to enable growth, distances people from those they love and enjoy. Towards the end of the Prime period the cry for greater intimacy and less change can be heard from the congregation.

The years from the early to mid-90s were Prime years for Bracken Ridge Baptist. Growth was continuous, programs continued to multiply, conflicts were quickly resolved, and structures continually changed to more efficiently handle the larger congregation (about 700 by 1995). Baptisms (mostly representing new converts) peaked at about 40 in a year and many other Christians found a renewed heart for God as they started to attend.

Additional staff contributed to the effectiveness of this period. The pastoral team grew to nine members (about half were part-timers) who were responsible for the ministries of the church. The number of Home groups increased rapidly and supported the assimilation of many new people into the congregation.

Our Prime period probably peaked with the opening of an extension to our building in 1995, which saw the congregation jump by about 100 in one month (mostly Christians from other congregations). These were exciting days in which many of our visions and dreams were fulfilled.

5. Maturity – ePAI

The Mature congregation is settled in its policies, programs, and procedures. Structures are well established and staff provide leadership and support. The congregation prides itself on its stability and relies on momentum from the past to carry it into the future. The congregation is well established and is easily able to hold its ground. There is an absence of stress, urgency and change. Members feel that the successes of the past can be repeated easily in the present and future and they have a strong sense of self worth. This makes the early Maturity stage a very satisfying time.

However new ideas are received with little enthusiasm or criticism (diminished E). The typical reaction to a new idea is, "If it ain't broke, don't try to fix it." There is a gradual shift from outward to inward focus. Maintaining the system, rather than the vision, becomes the driving force of the congregation, and complacency becomes an issue. Although the congregation is oblivious, they have entered the declining phase.

Leaders in this stage tend to be professional managers rather than visionaries. They know about finances, resources and systems, but would rather spend time on the computer than with people. They work hard, run a tight ship and

everything operates smoothly, but they offer no inspirational vision for which people are prepared to give their lives and energy.

A great deal of time is put into maintaining the programs and services that have proven themselves in the past (high P), but members are losing energy and prefer to spend time with each other. Towards the end of this stage great effort needs to be put into retaining ministries and members as people become less inclined to make sacrifices.

If the congregation is to grow and not decline intervention at this stage is essential. A lack of action will only enable the forces of disintegration to continue unchecked. The first step is to recognise that the congregation is in decline. While programs, administration and inclusion remain strong, it is often difficult to persuade the congregation that things have reversed. Without recognition of the problem, attempts to bring change will be regarded as efforts to destabilise the congregation.

The most essential task is to discern God's new vision for the congregation. Vision helps in a number of ways. It helps to create new energy and calls for effort beyond maintaining the status quo. It also provides a rationale for bringing change. Other areas to be considered include the development of new leadership, the effort invested in outreach, and the closing of programs that have outlived their usefulness.

As the Bracken Ridge Baptist congregation moved into the second half of the 1990s, we tightened up our management significantly by the appointment of administrators. Things were running smoothly, the major battles had been fought and won, most of the congregation were satisfied, and programs were effective. Our structure, which had been regularly changing, consolidated, and leadership stabilised. It felt good to see our dreams fulfilled and to take a breather after the frenetic effort of the last ten years.

However, by 1998 we realised that our attendance had plateaued, leaders were beginning to tire, and we were finding it difficult to enlist volunteers for the more mundane ministries. The leaders considered the problems in a Leaders' Conference and came up with three basic causes. Firstly, our vision to be a large-style, contemporary, renewal church had been achieved and we no longer had any major challenge before us, except maintaining what we had achieved (through God). Secondly, while we offered many different methods of evangelism, we had not found a way to enable our congregation to effectively evangelise. Further growth was now dependent on evangelism. Thirdly, although we had effectively equipped high-level leaders (most of our pastoral team came from within the church), we were not developing a strong lay leadership.

We have tackled two of these issues through the development of a new vision that majors on reaching out. We have asked each member to build God's community in their mission community and are equipping them to effectively do this. Time will tell whether new growth and energy emerges.

6. Aristocracy – epAI

By the Aristocratic stage, the busy climate of the Mature congregation has become stale. The momentum has waned and programs are reduced (low P) as committed people gradually withdraw from expending energy that appears to make little difference. In the absence of effective leadership, the people who take positions of authority often either lack the ability or are motivated by a desire for power rather than for service (the Aristocracy). With ineffective leadership, ministry teams begin to break down and programs disintegrate.

Efficient business practices (high A) maintain the congregation, but centres of influence become more insular and power is guarded. The "in" group (Aristocracy) remains highly committed to the church (high I), but others (especially those who would rock the boat) are excluded. This "in" group becomes more powerful, more cynical, and more protective. Often issues of theology are used by the Aristocracy to control the peasants and to decide who is suitable to be included in the congregation (that is, those who will not challenge the Aristocracy).

Change is opposed by the power players who long for a return of the good old days. They think that if they can just return to the practices of yesteryear, the congregation will once again be successful. The problems can be actually seen as the strengths, and the solutions as the problems. For instance, if a congregation grew on a foundation of grand worship, singing hymns to an organ accompaniment, they may see their adherence to hymns as their strength, and their ill-fated experiment with contemporary worship as the cause of their demise.

The Aristocracy sees the congregation as healthy and strong, but visitors will seldom stay. They notice the guardedness, the status consciousness, the exclusiveness, and the judgmentalism, and decide to invest their energy in a congregation that is more "on the move," more outward looking. The difficulty of attracting newcomers makes the Aristocracy more cynical and defensive. It seems to them that everyone is running to those who will "tickle their ears."

It is difficult to turn around an Aristocracy because the people in power will oppose change. You need to look at the congregation's history and show what really made the congregation strong in the past. Maybe it was their willingness to risk, their heart for evangelism, their willingness to obey what God said, their desire to seek God in prayer, their concern for the weak, or their passion for worship. Recall stories that illustrate these characteristics. By listening to the past, you show that you respect what God has already done in the congregation. You restore the sense of God's presence in the congregation's history and generate awareness of the congregation's vocation.

You also need to study the congregation's historical, cultural, and community contexts to perceive what possibilities for ministry occur in the present. For example, in an ageing area it may be a waste of time to start programs appealing to families with young children. You may need to accept the realities of the ministry context and concentrate on a seniors' ministry. This will affect many elements like your style of worship, approach to small groups, and church structure.

However if real change is to occur, eventually you have to challenge the Aristocracy. This is a painful battle and often results in a change of pastor and a weakened congregation. But an Aristocracy is dying and needs radical surgery if it is to survive. Sometimes you just have to work around the leaders by instituting a new program. But if you are successful, eventually conflict will occur.

7. Bureaucracy – epAi

The descent into the Bureaucratic stage is characterised by the disintegration of the unity of the congregation (low I). You no longer have a proud congregation waiting for a return to the glory days, but a group of individuals who can feel the boat disintegrating around them and are looking for a scapegoat. Blaming individuals for the difficulties is common and everyone is concerned about maintaining their own turf. The church is rigid, defensive, hostile and suspicious.

All that remains are the important structures, rules and policies (high A). Everyone does their own thing, if someone needs to know something, they can ask. People are disillusioned and disappointed. They have given up hope and wonder how long they can survive. There is little good communication. It is dashed by doubt, distrust and self-interest.

Because of their desperation and lack of accepted leadership, congregational Bureaucracies are often easier to turn around than Aristocracies. By this time desperation is setting in, and a leader that offers hope and vision may be given enough freedom to generate (through the Spirit) a new identity for the congregation. However the risks are great. There are not many resources left to work with (often with the exception of physical plant), and hurting people can be damaged considerably by dashed hopes.

8. Death – a

All that remains is the skeleton of the administrative structures and procedures. Everything else has died. A few despairing people are left, but they have no possibility of resurrecting a healthy church. There is no hope, identity or positive memories. The church needs to close well, and offer their resources to another congregation.

Birth

The first Baptist Church service in Bracken Ridge was held in the TAFE College at 9am on Sunday 31 August 1980 with 90 people present. Mr Fred Stallard – President-elect of the Baptist Union was guest preacher. The church dates its anniversaries from that first service.

However, the commencement of work in the Bracken Ridge area goes back to 1968 when members of the Sandgate Baptist Church approached their pastor, the Reverend Max Howard, with the request to start a Sunday School in the growing Bracken Ridge suburb.

As a result Ralph and Daphne Brett were appointed to commence the Sunday School which began in December 1968 at Taylor's home in Gawain Road. Others joined as teachers, as the attendance soon grew to 60 children. In 1972, Harry Lamprecht took over as leader for four years. The program was then changed to an after-school program but was not a success.

Meanwhile, in February 1972, the Reverend Melvin Williams, Pastor at Nundah discovered that 2.5 acres of land in Norris Road was available for purchase at \$10,000. The Baptist Union agreed that the land was suitable and approached the Sandgate Church regarding pursuing an outreach program in the area. Nundah Church contributed an eventual \$9,000 with \$1,000 coming from Sandgate. The land was secured but nothing happened immediately. Baptist families attended either Sandgate or Geebung churches.

But God had his time and his instruments. The move forward came from those attending Geebung where the Reverend Ron Nowlan was pastor. In June 1980 an extensive community survey was conducted through most of the area. Maurice Simpson was the motivating force. David Tonkin organized the teams and street visitation of over 1000 homes. With a favourable result the Baptist Union set up a steering committee with representation from the participating churches Geebung, Sandgate and Brighton, to commence a work.

BRBC - THE STORY OF THE FIRST 21 YEARS

Shortly after the first service, Pastor Ted Brett commenced as Pastor on a part-time basis, heralding a fruitful ministry of four years for the Fellowship (Fellowship status came on 24 February 1981). As well as Baptists, the initial group contained a variety of denominational backgrounds from Catholics to Brethren. A small number of the Sunday School contacts were included.

The Fellowship conforms well to the first stage of the life cycle. It was small, diverse, flexible, enthusiastic, and full of hope and ready to grow.



Ted and May Brett

Infancy

In January 1982 the Reverend Melvin Williams was appointed Minister of Visitation, the two pastors working as a team.

The first baptisms were held in the Tonkin's swimming pool when John and Irene Mulhall were baptised. Further baptisms were held at Sandgate Church. A portable organ was purchased. May Brett and Lorraine Heitmann played. Services were bright and informal.

In November that year, the Fellowship decided to apply for constitution as a church. At a combined service at Sandgate the deeds of the land were handed over to Bracken Ridge. Also a constitution was adopted on 16 January 1983. It provided for the appointment of Elders, and for Associate Membership for those not baptised by immersion as believers. The church was officially formed on 24 April 1983.



The first Baptism

An Administration Committee (like a Diaconate) replaced the earlier Steering Committee. First members were Maurice Simpson (secretary), David Tonkin (treasurer), Ralph Brett (deacon), Noel Gollagher (deacon), Madeline Williams and John Mulhall (committee members). Also appointed were Linda Tedman (Junior Church leader), Greg and Diane Osborne (youth leaders). May Brett and Lorraine Heitman were organists, with the beginnings of a small orchestra. The Ladies' Fellowship with a 20-25 attendance was very active. The first Church Family Directory was prepared at this time. Average attendance was about 75. The spirit and fellowship was good. A number of people who had been hurt in other churches attended for a 'recovery period' of three to six months before returning to their churches.

Another concern at the time was a socio-economic one. The Reverend Brian Jenkins, Baptist General Superintendent, had expressed the opinion that it would be difficult to weld 'classes' together in the church. Pastor Brett made special effort to do so, and on the whole the church has succeeded.

Immediate plans were made towards a building, as ministry was very limited at the TAFE College. A master plan was prepared and a Building Fund commenced earlier, had grown to \$46,000. Average offering was approaching \$400 per week by the end of 1983. During 1984 expectation grew. The Jim Wilson Crusade in July further inspired us to proceed both towards a building and towards a full-time pastor. Current activities included Junior Church, Junior Youth, Young Adults, Ladies' Fellowship, also Religious Education and Tape Ministry.

The year 1985 was a difficult year. The church had called the Reverend Hans Bohm from Tasmania. Pastor Ted Brett had resigned in December 1984 to make way for the new appointment. Unfortunately it wasn't a good fit from the beginning and divided the loyalty of the congregation. He resigned in June and left in September with the church very hurt and disappointed. Church members Melvin Williams and Ron Nowlan and others ministered for a few months until the 9th of November when the Reverend Neville Abrahams and his wife Miriam came to minister for an interim period. A wise and experienced minister, his active contribution to 'recovery' was much appreciated.

The other big disappointment had been the failure to get the building underway through the Commonwealth Employment Program, which declined assistance. The church however resolved to build the church hall using voluntary labour where possible. A Foundation Ceremony was held on 2 March 1986. The building program helped to bind the Church together. The first services in the new building were held on Christmas Day 1986 with the official opening on Saturday 14 February 1987. The



Foundation Day Service

18 month ministry of Neville Abrahams was followed by three months' ministry by the Reverend Colin Campbell during which the Church somewhat apprehensively approached the matter of again calling a pastor. It was ready for a new direction.

Memories of Building Time

- ♦ *Trenches filled with water on morning of pouring foundations*
- ♦ *Mavis Cartmill's loyal service as minute secretary*
- ♦ *Excellent response of workers, men and women, to project*
- ♦ *Maurice Simpson displaying his ability as a linesman up a long ladder fixing car park lighting to poles*
- ♦ *Noel Gollagher's ability in laying large storm water pipes*
- ♦ *David Underhill's acrobatic act to save himself from falling off roof*
- ♦ *Madeline's excellent morning teas*

Rex Dodd



Who is supervising?



Team Effort



John and Debbie Sweetman

Adolescence

A new phase dawned with the arrival in September 1987 of the Reverend John Sweetman, wife Debbie and two young sons.

The choice of a young man with great promise was deliberate – it was hoped that pastor and church would grow together. Before issuing the call, the Church noted that John was the product of a well-known Baptist family; had taught in country high schools before entering the ministry; was well qualified academically with degrees in science and divinity, and was well respected in his work as Youth Pastor at Kenmore Baptist Church. Before accepting the call, John said his call to come to Bracken Ridge was very clear. He also asked that he be allowed to experiment and innovate, and gained such permission from the Committee and the Church – a wise move indeed.

Services then were held at 9am and 6pm – the evening one having begun on a weekly basis during the ministry of Reverend Neville Abrahams. These services immediately began to grow in numbers to equal the morning congregation of about 150. The Annual Report at June 1988 showed a Membership of 106, a budget of \$1177 per week, which was over-subscribed. Junior Church was led by Merle Gollagher with 50 children attending; a new Young Adults Group of 40 was led by Geoff and Narelle Samuels; a Junior Youth program with 12 and up to 30 attending. Beryl Potheary now headed up the Ladies' Fellowship, which reported extensive activities and raised \$6600 for church property.

If Adolescence is the age of change and development, Pastor John's impact in the early years was seen in the following developments.

1. There was concentration on developing an 18-30 years Young Adults Ministry. This was done principally through the evening service, a Young Adults group and later, in Home Groups. No church in the area specifically catered for that age group with the result that young adults came in droves. It had good social and spiritual impact.

2. Small Groups offering the opportunity for deeper personal relationships and pastoral care were introduced. Twelve groups operated in various homes. Pastor John challenged the Church to a change in loyalty by promoting the concept of attending one church service and one home group, instead of morning and evening services.
3. Leadership changes were gradually instituted, aimed at involving the new people who were coming into the church, and also at giving a wider spread to the concept of Leadership. Church leaders would be those who filled an area of responsibility, rather than election to an office. New activities would not be started until adequate leaders were forthcoming.
4. The need for further staff soon became apparent. The first appointment was the Reverend Ron Nowlan as Associate Pastor. Ron and Dorothy were foundation members of Bracken Ridge. Ron had served and recently retired as Secretary Deputationist for the Leprosy Mission. It was expected that he would minister more particularly to the mature and older people of the Church, which he has continued to do.

Pastor John continued to develop his gifts in preaching, teaching, vision and leadership. Debbie developed her own ministry in the home, in entertainment in the music ministry, and in a home group. Marjorie Watson and Peter Westoby were engaged as Student Pastoral Workers – a practice that was to continue and grow as students from the Scripture Union and Bible Colleges were given practical experience in part-time positions.

By June 1989, the morning service had grown to 200 and the evening to 180. 150 people were now involved in home groups. The first church conferences were held. These allowed for Pastor John's input and feedback with a wider group of people. On the other hand quarterly church meetings were confined to formal business. Conversions and baptisms became more frequent in church life. Goals and themes were set for each year. For example, for 1989/1990 goals set were:

Conversions	30
Baptisms	30
New Members	30
Church attendance AM	230
Church attendance PM	200
Home Group attendance	160
Finance	\$1600 per week

The growth of departments and main activities are separately reported elsewhere. But in addition, in a typical year there could be a church camp, a church picnic, kids' holiday program, social activities and crusade participation.

BRBC - THE STORY OF THE FIRST 21 YEARS

Though the church constitution allowed for the appointment of Elders, Pastor John was at first reluctant to proceed in that direction, so it was in 1989 that the first two elders were appointed. They were Reverend Ron Nowlan and Mr John Robson. John Robson and his wife Irene were much loved by church people. John was a great help in the difficult year of 1985 and to many afterwards with his counselling gift. His greeting of people at the door with a friendly word was superb. Their large home was used to great advantage and they were much missed when they moved from the district.



Ron and Dorothy Nowlan



John and Irene Robson

The pressures of growth were showing in other ways. The search for a second full-time pastor during the year had (at the 1990 annual meeting) been unsuccessful though the subject of much prayer and search. A pamphlet for that year outlines the problems of space. The recently established church office operated in the small vestry near the pulpit, while some Junior Church classes had to meet outside. Staff all had to work at home. The decision was made to build an office block with four rooms plus a church office costing \$65,000. The main appeal was through the Annual Offering, which had a target of \$40,000.

There was also a huge garage sale called a Spring Fair in September, organized by Graeme Jones. He did such a good job he was asked to repeat it for some subsequent years. The office block was built and given the name of the Resource Centre because it housed the church library, but when the library was later moved it has become the 'office block' again. Iris Westoby began her valued ministry in the church office.

The expanded leadership was quite obvious at this time though still in transition. There were Co-ordinators, still called Deacons, for the main areas of church activity. Those listed in July 1990 were

Worship and Planning	-	John Sweetman
Administration	-	Noel Gollagher
Finance	-	Barry Watson
Property	-	John Mulhall
Pastoral Care	-	Graeme Jones
Christian Education	-	Arthur Conomos
Christian Ministries	-	Glenda Simpson
Outreach	-	Barbara Myers

Each co-ordinator had sub-leaders and a range of activities to supervise and encourage.

Prime

With continuous expansion, changes had to be made in pastoral staffing and administration.

In 1991 Greg Peckman was appointed to the staff. Both Greg and his talented wife Ruth had wide experience in Christian work though not in the pastorate. They fitted in well. After Greg's first year with the Church, he was appointed the first Administrator, an office that in later years became full-time. Meanwhile, the Baptist College of Ministries had become anxious to secure Pastor John as lecturer for two days per week, in the areas of preaching and leadership. With some reluctance the Church agreed to this. John has continued to serve the College in this way. He also began studies towards a Doctorate.

The idea of calling persons from the congregation to serve as a pastoral team was a comparatively new phenomena in Queensland Baptist churches but was to become a common practice. At Bracken Ridge the first such was Brett Gottle. Brett grew up in the Church and became actively involved in the young people's work and showed a gift for it in his work with teenagers and young adults. In 1993, in recognition of his good work, he was appointed Associate Pastor on a part-time basis. He also later commenced studies at the Baptist College of Ministries. Those who knew him were pleasantly surprised at the development of his preaching gift. In later years others were to follow this lead, of being supported in their practical training by the Church while studying for the ministry. These included Stuart Russell and Brent Sweeney. Normal church activities continued. An increasing number of the younger generation were challenged in the matter of Christian service and moved into Bible College and interdenominational activities. These included Ross Fraser who went to Zambia for one year and Nerilee Sowter. A number went on a Central Australia mission trip.

1993 was planned as a year of outreach. Letterbox drops were made; Christianity Explained training was well in place; community services were upgraded. In home groups 210 persons were involved in 17 groups; holiday clubs were held in January and June, while the first Christmas Carols was held in December 1992. New faces were seen every Sunday. Average attendances that year were 8.30am – 193, 10.00am – 96, 6.00pm – 199. Church membership increased from 196 to 210.

Accompanying all this was a big change in the leadership/administration. The original Steering Committee had become the Executive Committee with little changes in personnel. Several co-ordinators stepped down as Pastor John brought in a CHURCH COUNCIL made up of pastoral staff and elected members. After a trial of one year the changes were incorporated into the Church Constitution in 1994.

The five elected members of the 1994/95 Council were Richard Wray (Chairman), Ralph Brett, Graeme Jones, Greg Turnbull and Annette Buchholz. These together with Pastors John Sweetman, Greg Peckman and Jack Sweetman, made up the Council. Later Geoff Samuels replaced Annette, who resigned.

This structure has served us well right up to the present. Another change was the coming of Mr Jack Sweetman to the office of Administrator. Jack, who was Pastor John's father, with wide experience in church and business life was to grace this office in a special way.

Two other important events occurred in 1994. One was the amalgamation of the Brighton Church with Bracken Ridge. After many years as a smallish, happy church, things started to deteriorate in the nineties. A number of key families mindful of their children's welfare transferred to Bracken Ridge. This left the Church struggling to support a full-time pastor. Pastor Warren Keir was their student-pastor. He had concentrated on developing youth work with some success. After weighty consideration the decision was made to amalgamate and they joined with the Bracken Ridge congregation in December. Pastor Warren came onto staff and served well for a year or so.

The other event was EXTENSION TO THE BUILDING. During 1993 the building was filled to capacity. A quick solution had to be found and it was decided to extend the building outwardly over the driveway. Once again some of the work was done by voluntary labour. The builder was Mr Ted Kerr, and the cost about \$350,000. Following the 'Opening' there was a large influx of people filling the larger auditorium. Not all stayed, but the Annual Report at June 1995 showed there was 22 persons baptised for the year and an increase in church membership by 20 to 270. Pastor John puts the end of the PRIME period here (see Chapter 1) but I would put it about two or three years later, so I will include them in this chapter. The pastoral team continued into 1996 with little change. Iris Westoby's status was increased by joining the pastoral staff. Glenda Simpson was also appointed as Pastoral Assistant. The other addition was Brent Sweeney as Youth worker while Pastor Brett Gottle moved to Young Adults and other responsibilities.

The pastoral team performed well and very much as a team. Pastor John continued to give the vision and inspire. The search for an Executive Pastor to assist Pastor John was begun, but after many months search was eventually abandoned. Stuart and Annette Mathieson were commissioned for service in Vietnam with Servants. There

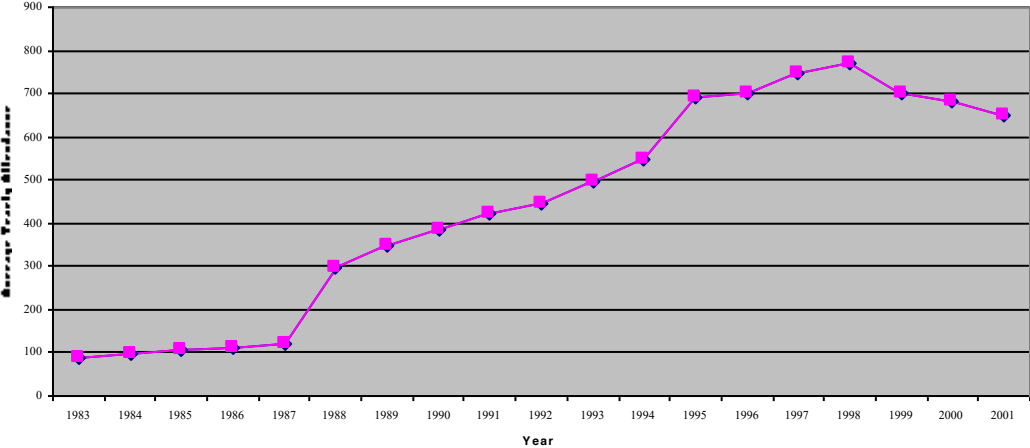
were 9 people training in Bible Colleges and 5 home workers in full-time service. There was again an overall increase in giving with the budget for the year again met, and a 10% increase in congregational size. Brad Suosaari became Chaplain at Sandgate High School, a position that Brett Gottle had held previously.

At the end of the year 1996, Pastor Greg, Ruth and Stephen accepted a call to the Birkdale Church and were farewelled in February. Pastor Jack Sweetman stepped down from Administration to a less rigorous ministry in Pastoral Care. Mr Les Shakespeare, from the church fellowship, was called to the administration, but was called Church Manager. Madeline Williams was appointed as an additional member of Council as the Council had become all male. The year to June 1997 saw two services at 8.00 and 10.00 in the morning re-introduced with a further but smaller increase in attendance. Annual garage sales continued to raise funds for future building (\$8,000 that year).



With the beginning of 1998 there were two changes in the pastoral staff. The Reverend Peter Broadbent, his wife Margie and sons Simeon and Naaman arrived from Warrnambool, Victoria. Pastor Peter's job was primarily Pastoral Care. Stuart Russell, doing studies at College, was added to part-time staff but left at the end of the year to become associate with Pastor Greg at Birkdale.

Sunday Attendance 1983 - 2001





Maturity

The mature congregation, says Pastor John, is settled in its policies, programs and procedures – the congregation has arrived.

In writing to the Annual Report for June 1998 he described the past year as a “year of consolidating and laying the foundation for God’s challenges for the future”. As most of this period is recent history, I will move over it more quickly. Pastor Jack and wife Joan, with some reluctance, concluded four years’ ministry in May. Options to buy land for relocation were extensively investigated but to no avail. New members moving in were balanced by the same number moving out. The total Sunday attendance had peaked at 800.

In the June 1999 Annual Report, Pastor John wrote “some of our earlier church years I would describe as a roller coaster ride, but this year I would see it more as a ferris wheel”. During the year Pastor John with Debbie went to England to minister at Spring Harvest. Pastor John gained his Doctor of Ministry degree from Denver Seminary.

Conversions and baptisms continued at a steady rate. It was noticeable that many of the initiatives in the church life and auxiliaries were in the hands of the comparatively newer members of the congregation. Another indication was seen in the composition of the Church Council. That year Madeline Williams, Ralph Brett, Graeme Jones, all old hands, and Greg Turnbull stood down and four newer members were elected.

In the year 2000 there were changes to the pastoral team. Les Shakespeare moved in February to a new ministry with Gideons in Canberra, while Pastor Brett Gottle moved to wider fields as Senior Pastor at Arana Hills Church of Christ. But happily, three new appointments were made with much satisfaction by the church. Arthur Conomos, from the congregation, was welcomed as Pastor for Ministry Coordination, which incorporated the role of administrator and some pastoral care. Susan Ballard from the congregation as Pastoral Assistant (children’s work), and Kris Forman as Pastoral Assistant (youth work). Kris is also doing College studies. More than 20 babies were born to church families in 2000!

As I write the Church is celebrating 21 years since the first service. It is an opportunity to give thanks for what God has done. Michael Frost, author, theologian and lecturer, is speaker for the occasion 25-26 August. Pastor John has also announced his resignation, concluding over 14 years ministry, at the end of the year.

It is time to look back and note the many factors in Pastor John's successful ministry. These are personal comments that others may state differently.

1. Pastor John's spirituality and personality. These two go together. He is devoted to his calling, his family and his church.
2. Pastor John's preaching and leadership gifts. His preaching is warm and contemporary, Biblically based. It calls for a response. His leadership style is of the 'shared' variety – not a 'one man band' – though he keeps overall control. The team ministry has been more successful at Bracken Ridge than in many other churches. He is very innovative but draws back if any change appears to be not acceptable.
3. In developing a multi-functional church he has attracted a broad spectrum of singles and families from other denominational backgrounds, but also a number of people who would be termed 'inactive Christians', such as young adults who have been 'away from church' since childhood. Aggressive evangelism is not his style, and is not made use of. Instead he makes good use of specialized approaches such as 'seeker services' and 'healing services'. Outstanding conversions do occur but not at special times.
4. An external factor has been the continued growth of Bracken Ridge as a suburb. Population growth in the early years approximated 8% per annum, with 4% in the later years. The suburb is now built out. As the residents mostly live in houses (not units or apartments) and in 'family households', this has been a favourable environment for church growth.



This mission statement of the Church as been revised over the years, but at present reads

“This church has been called of God to be a contemporary, diverse church that, with integrity, reaches, heals and equips our church family, our local community, and mission communities in which we are involved.”

I believe it is fulfilling that commission. Besides home groups there are nearly thirty activities catering for the needs of all ages and spiritual conditions. They range from door-knocking outreach to Solitaires for singles. The main activities are reported on separately. The replacement for Pastor John will not be an easy task. The new man will need to maintain a high standard of preaching, have different gifts and style, and move towards more adequate permanent buildings. We trust God as we always have.

Chapter 6

Activities & Organisations

The following is a current list of the main activities and organizations within Bracken Ridge Baptist Church.

A description of each activity or organisation has also been provided, by the following:

Worship Ministry	-	Debbie Sweetman
Pastoral Care	-	Ron Nowlan
Junior Church	-	Melvin Williams
Youth & Young Adults	-	Brent Sweeney
Home Groups	-	Arthur Conomos
Men's Ministry	-	Arthur Conomos
Women's Ministry	-	Glenda Simpson
Missions Committee	-	Peter Broadbent
Mid-week Services	-	Ron Nowlan
The Minglers	-	Ron Nowlan
Girls' Brigade	-	Kylie Weber
Boys' Brigade	-	Michael Ballard
Christmas Carol Services	-	Melvin Williams
Playgroups	-	Sue Ballard
Others	-	Melvin Williams

Worship Ministry

We first attended the Bracken Ridge Baptist Church in the old TAFE college days. To get a picture imagine Narelle Samuels playing the old Fender Rhodes keyboard and leading the singing with Dave Hobson and others, Geoff strumming on guitar, and Mick and Brett Gottle on bass and drums. Narelle often blessed the church family with beautiful solos (like a David Meece or Sandi Patti number). When the church building was opened the ladies set about to buy a beautiful Beale Grand Piano. Shirley, Trevor and Lorraine played the organ and after we arrived I shared playing the piano.

Music practices were not heard of and people simply turned up and grabbed a mike to sing if they were on, or they were there! A very young Andrew Robbins used to drum along.

As worship was one of John's passions, the new pastor set about harnessing the wonderful talent of Bracken Ridge. Gradually structures were put in place that meant Sunday morning and afternoon practices. When we went to two services for the first time, a team feeling developed in the 10.00am service under Rachelle Russell's leadership. Eventually we moved to the three team system that we have now. Like all major changes, this was a challenge but has ultimately provided a consistent standard of music for each service, plus a manageable and predictable workload for musicians.

When we moved to two services the second time we added Thursday night practices because of the limited rehearsal time before the 8am service. This has meant some lovely team worship times and an extended time to practice the new songs. The choir (now chorus) is an integral part of our worship team and sings about four times per quarter. They provide a choral and also very visual lead to our worship.

Dance has also enriched our worship services, both rehearsed items and occasionally spontaneous dance. Marj Hetherington has used her significant gifts in Drama for many years after taking over from Jo Gottle and Kylie Conomos. How could we ever forget Peter Wilson and his plate spinning. The drama team's contributions to the evening services recently have been alternately thoughtful and hilarious but always challenging.

The most recent development in the worship area is the appointment of a part-time ministry assistant. Sue Bethune works on equipping new musicians, organisation of music, and oversees all creative areas. Ridgecam (Bracken Ridge Creative Arts Ministries) is a newsletter published with every three monthly roster. Steven Wray has faithfully edited this for many years, as well creating and looking after his baby (the sound system) with Neil Moodie and Steve Waygood.

Each roster a number of new songs is introduced, including in the last few years, songs written by members of our church family. Late 2000 we produced a CD of original worship music, a home grown, written, recorded and produced effort that nonetheless has touched many people. Other churches are even using our songs in their worship services. This is not surprising because from the beginning worship ministry at Bracken Ridge has always been contagious. The first service we attended was led by a clown so you would have to say worship here is often fun. There are over 100 people involved so that speaks of a wide involvement. We are intentional in being an equipping church by continually training new people (who often move on) and helping out in other churches. We try to reach the best standard possible and to be truly sacrificial in our attitude to serving God in the worship music area.

Debbie Sweetman

Pastoral Care

Before the church was constituted when it was still a Fellowship meeting for worship in the TAFE College the Administration Committee moved to provide Pastoral Care. Pastor Ted Brett was Moderator. He had officially retired from full-time ministry but was willing to provide oversight of the fledgling church and preach the sermons. He did not feel called to the role of pastoral care. At that time Reverend Melvin Williams, with his wife Madeline, had moved to Bald Hills and began worshipping at Bracken Ridge. Mel was approached by the Committee with a view to teaming with Ted and providing pastoral care for the congregation. He was appointed and enthusiastically ministered by visitation in the homes of the people, visiting those in hospital and following up new contacts. Mel and Madeline also gave strong support to the subsequent building program on Norris Road property. Mel also made a valuable contribution to the pulpit ministry. He continued pastoral ministry until the first full-time pastor was appointed in 1984. In the middle of 1985 the first pastor resigned. Reverend Neville Abrahams served as interim Pastor for eighteen months and Mel Williams again assisted in pastoral care.

The Church was officially constituted in 1983 and occupied the new building in 1986. Reverend John Sweetman was called and commenced his ministry in September 1987. As the church began to grow he soon realised he would face a huge task of pastoral care along with all the other roles he would be required to fulfill. He approached Reverend Ron Nowlan who had retired from The Leprosy Mission in 1986 and had just completed an interim at Caboolture to join the staff in the main role of pastoral care. Ron began in February 1988. As the church continued to grow so the need for pastoral care expanded. A book written by Mel Steinbrohn entitled "Can the Pastor do it alone?" was placed in Ron's hands by John who said "this may have some help for us". The experience of a church in the US delegating pastoral care responsibility to its lay members was introduced to Bracken Ridge. The late Barbara Myers shared in the implementation of this concept. It worked well wherever Barbara was able to pursue the training and commissioning of lay workers. Sadly she was overtaken by an incurable illness and subsequently passed away. Greg and Ruth Peckman came to the ministry in 1991. Included in their many roles was pastoral care, both through the Home Groups and as a specific ministry for Greg. As Greg's ministry scope increased Ron's role was to concentrate on pastoral care for Seniors. A strong and much appreciated complement to pastoral care was exercised by Jack and Joan Sweetman during Jack's term as Church Administrator.

The current phase of pastoral care commenced in 1998 when Peter Broadbent joined the staff. He has continued to build on the foundation laid in the first 18 years of the church's life. New elements of care have been added such as specific prayer ministries and crisis care exercised by Jeff and Annette Myers. Professional support for these ministries and other special needs is provided by Peter Brown, practicing psychologist. Maurice Simpson with his wife Glenda have provided a unique form of care for a broad spectrum of people within the church family from the beginning of the church to this

present day. Pastoral care has always been recognised by the leadership as central to and essential for the health of the whole body.

Ron Nowlan

Junior Church

Junior Church has changed both in name and format over the years. Junior Church began within a few weeks of the first service with Linda Tedman in charge. It catered over the next few years for ages 3-12 years. Barbara Manion served briefly until Merle Gollagher was elected in the position. During her time alternating teaching teams were introduced. Junior Church also sponsored the first picnic at Petrie Paper Mill, a practice that continued for some years.

The next leader was Cameron Brett who led a team of 10 teachers and 36 children. In February 1987 Cameron was transferred to Malanda (Cameron later entered the ministry). Merle Gollagher again took over. With the church building now available it



Kids' Holiday Club

became possible to expand slightly. The 1989 annual report indicates 70 children on the roll with an average attendance of 50. That year there was a Kids' Holiday program led by Richard and Marilyn Wray. A Kids' Club was started initially under the leadership of Barbara Myers. It served a need for some years.

With the opening of the Resource Centre in January 1991 some relief in teaching space was provided. Trevor Buchanan was now leader. In 1992 due to expansion the Church moved to two morning services with Junior Church being offered at both the 8.00am and 10.00am service, with a total attendance of 95 children. In 1996 Richard and Marilyn Wray accepted the responsibility. During the next few years innovations in the teaching programs were introduced, and the name changed to Ridge-Kids as a leadership team took over.

The year 2001 saw a new teaching program OASIS launched, which appears to be well accepted. However, staffing the various programs and the crèche is proving difficult and changes are contemplated.

Melvin Williams

Youth & Young Adults

The Youth & Young Adults work at Bracken Ridge had a very informal beginning. People initially gathered at the Gottle residence in Barrett Street in the form of a youth homegroup. Each week the group would do bible study and social activities. Geoff and Narelle Samuels led the ministry during the early days.

When the church building was constructed the ministry became more formalized. The group was divided into a teenage/high school and young adult sections. Marjorie Watson was employed by the church as a youth worker during this period and she worked closely with Brett Gottle. In time Brett was employed as the youth worker and he developed ministry teams under which the ministry grew on Friday nights.

During the early to mid nineties a clear division was established between the youth and young adult (18+) ministries. The Youth Council was established to oversee the ministry area. This team included Peter Caitens, Stuart Russell, Janet Caitens, Nat Whincop and Brent Sweeney. This team ran regular social events and camps throughout the year. In 1995 Brent began working part-time in the teenage area. He worked in partnership with Brett in the high school ministry until 1997 when he took on full responsibility for this ministry. When Brett left the church at the end of 1999 Brent took on full responsibility for the ministry. Kris Forman was added to the team to work with teenagers at this time.

Brent Sweeney

Home Groups

The home group ministry at the church really started after John Sweetman's arrival in 1987. Not long after John's arrival four home groups were started. Over several years the number of groups grew, and the leaders were supported by various co-ordinators and members of the church diaconate.

It was in the early to mid 1990's when Ruth Peckman took over the co-ordination of the home groups, that there was a significant change in the level of co-ordination and leadership support in this ministry area. Ruth worked particularly hard to make the groups more accessible to new members of the church, and supported the leaders with intentional training sessions. During Ruth's time the number of home groups grew to the number we currently have ministering in the church. Family home groups were also introduced during this time.

When Greg and Ruth Peckman moved on to Birkdale Baptist Church, Les Shakespeare took over the role of co-ordinating the home groups. Les performed that function for about one year before Toni Cagnoni was employed to look after home groups. Toni brought a particular emphasis in the areas of leadership development

through prayer retreats and developing a real sense of community in the young adult home groups. Since Toni moved on to undertake theological studies in the Anglican Church our home groups have been overseen by Arthur Conomos.

The current emphasis is on trying to ensure that our groups maintain a missional focus, as well as trying to ensure that the leadership of the groups is shared as much as possible within the group. There are now 33 home groups in the church, ranging from adult, young adult, family, men's and KYB groups. These small groups have played an essential part in ensuring the ongoing spiritual development and pastoral care of our church family.

Arthur Conomos

Men's Ministry

Over the last 21 years there has been an active men's ministry functioning at most times, but in a variety of formats. In the early years (1989) Jeff Myers, Max Green, Neil Hudson and Noel Gollagher were all involved in arranging activities and occasional camps for the encouragement and spiritual development of men in the life of our church. In later years Greg Peckman and Peter Harrison were also involved in co-ordinating the men's work in the church. This period also included a number of Father and Son camps, and dinners and breakfasts with challenging speakers.

In the mid 1990's John Ziemek took over co-ordinating the area, bringing a lot of energy and commitment into encouraging them in the church. Through camps, breakfasts, men's Home groups, worship nights and Promise Keepers' events and materials, the men of the church were encouraged to spiritually lead their families.

Since John moved on, the area has been overseen by Les Shakespeare, Geoff Schultz, Dave Denison and now Arthur Conomos. Whilst the area of men's work is currently not as active as it has been in the past, a recent men's camp run by Steve Woodhead was both well attended and a great encouragement for those who attended. The "Backyard Blitz" program designed for men to help people in our church family and in our community has also been a rewarding ministry for those involved.

Ralph Kerswell is currently running a men's homegroup, and some of the men in our church are also involved in "Search for Life" programs.

Arthur Conomos

Women's Ministry

The Women's Ministry is one that is constantly evolving. Ecclesiastes 3 talks about there being a season for everything. The group has largely been able to do and be what has been needed for the various seasons of our exciting and eventful 21 years.

Our ladies first began meeting as a group in October 1980, within two months of the commencement of the fledgling fellowship. Much keenness was apparent as 15 “pioneers” met to dream a little and lay some foundations for possible future directions. May Brett, the first leader, gave a devotion from John 15 entitled “Bearing Fruit”. What a prophetic word that has proved to be, although only God knows the extent of the reaping.

In the early TAFE College days the Ladies’ Fellowship met monthly in various homes – actually mostly under them, in rumpus rooms of brick veneers, the in thing in housing in the 70/80’s. Programs often consisted of demonstrations (cooking, gardening, health etc.), speakers (often missionary) and participation. Previously “sheltered” Christians learnt to share their lives with other women, in these warm and friendly gatherings. Although this was a bonding time for the new group, a stated aim and practice was to have some activities suitable to invite friends and neighbours to. This has largely continued to this day.

President Madeline Williams was the second leader (that auspicious title was used in the “old days”). She took it upon herself to train this keen but rather “motley lot” for works of service. Failure of a certain task was no excuse to teacher Madeline. So try again you would if your first effort was less than successful. Her perseverance paid off, as women learnt to serve God and others, more effectively in future years.

The ladies saw to the creature comforts of the new fellowship. They raised funds for these, for missionary support and towards the cost and fitting out of the proposed new building. Tens of thousands of dollars were raised to this end. Although many people were involved in this effort, Mavis Cartmill, the quiet achiever who went to be with her Lord in 1997, was the driving force behind this huge effort. Our “stalls” were legendary. Handcrafts, preserves etc. for sale, were of a high quality. Stalls were set up at church functions, in the street or anywhere there were people with purses. Many different types of fundraising were done.

Winnie Sampson was one of our early stalwarts. Although in her 80’s, her energy, cheerful participation and gifts (Rosella jam making, growing cut flowers) were a blessing and encouragement to all. Beryl Potheccary led the women very capably in the 1986/87 transition period into our new building. During this time many items (including kitchen sinks!) were provided for our lovely new multi-purpose building. The women’s work was to change dramatically with the availability of space.

The amazingly talented Debbie Sweetman took the leadership role from 1988 for a period of about eight years. This was a period in which we had a new pastor, vision and building. Many new groups for women emerged (i.e. Home groups, KYB’s, Health & Fitness, Craft), most continuing to this day.

Our evening women’s functions had an outreach focus, with many of our community ladies attending. They usually had a theme, and were of such a high standard that they were a real talking point in our neighbourhood. Often they were reported in our local

newspaper. A dedicated team of women often worked for days on room décor, food preparation and presentation, music and a suitable message.

Beverly Jones and Merle Gollagher spearheaded much of the effort of functions and dinners, with Debbie Sweetman and Narelle Samuels assisting musically, and Marilyn Wray and Barbara Manion undertaking the huge catering tasks.



Highland Night at Ladies' Dinner

Although Ladies' Dinners had been an early tradition, during this period they reached mammoth proportions. The attention to detail and wonderful creativity made these events always a complete sell-out. The help of our men with catering, technical know-how and their song and dance routines, was invaluable. Also, some of our fantastically talented youth assisted with production, music and drama. The dinners were highly successful in reaching those quite outside the usual circle of church influence. Through the concern, vision and efforts of many dedicated people, they turned into a four-night outreach program touching over 600 people. It seems everyone has a favourite. Was it Highland Fling, Medieval Banquet or Spring Symphony? These dinners ran for about 10 years until combining with a whole-of-church major event, which became "Theatre Restaurant". A book was produced describing in detail the outreach dinners ("Come out with us").

With many specific ministry groups operating in our by now large style contemporary church, the need for the Women's group to produce frequent large functions had passed. So, onto another season. It was time to join with other groups of Christian women for seminars, camps and special speakers to receive helpful spiritual input and to enlarge our vision. For two years from 1996, Living Water, a spiritually sensitive group run by three of our women, met fortnightly and many ladies were greatly blessed. Some evening functions were held three to four times a year. Meryem Brown, a well-known psychologist presented a whole year series of four related talks. Nancy Dick led the work very efficiently during this period. The presentation and detail of our activities under Nancy's direction, was always of a high standard. The Christmas event has become quite renowned, with Bethlehem Markets replacing "the stalls".

Over the years some things have remained constant. Our women do like meeting together (as evidenced by always good attendance numbers) – and they want somewhere they can bring their non-church friends (mission community) to, in a non-threatening and welcoming atmosphere.

Some wonderful seasons have come and gone – some things remained for a while to almost become traditions. Then, albeit with a tinge of sadness, it was time to move. To hear a new call and to redefine the response to love, serve, support others of our church family and wider community.

May God richly bless Leonie Purcell and her team as they adapt, innovate and serve in 2001 and beyond.

Glenda Simpson

Missions Committee

From the time of its founding as a congregation until the amalgamation with the Brighton Church, the Bracken Ridge Church's energies were focused on becoming established in the local community.

When the congregations merged in 1994 several members of the long-established Brighton congregation brought with them a strong awareness of missionary outreach beyond the Church's community. The Eveans family were already missionaries in PNG with New Tribes Mission and Cheryl Fellows had been with the Brisbane ABMS office for two years. Julie Robinson (nee Michael) returned from a term with YWAM in USA and was on the Church's Staff from 1992 to 1994. Ron Nowlan had been taking care of correspondence associated with missionary work, but this was passed to Julie as part of her duties. With the enthusiasm gained from her experiences in Montana, Greece and Bulgaria, Julie joined with Cheryl to encourage the Church to expand their mission vision. The first to go into full time mission service from Bracken Ridge was Ross Fraser who went to Zambia.

It was around this time that Stuart and Annette Mathison returned from their travels in Asia with a strong sense of the mission imperative. This was communicated to others, and about ten people formed a team that visited the ABMS work at Kalkaringi in the Northern Territory. The Mathisons went on to serve in Cambodia with Servants and are now back with further insights for the Church.

A Missions Committee was formed with Billie Patrick as Secretary. It included the Mathisons, Cheryl, Julie, Jenny Phillips and Barry Watson. When Jack Sweetman took on the task of Church Administrator, he was designated chairman of the Missions committee and took over Julie's responsibilities. Others to join the committee in 1996 were Warren and Lynne Packer and Bill and Leonie Purcell. More recently Bryan

Wiseman, Graeme Folling and Trevor and June Buchanan have contributed to the committee's work.

Jack moved on to his next challenge, and the mantle was passed to Peter Broadbent. One of Peter's projects has been the formulation of a coherent Church Mission Policy. As part of her internship, Ros Clark recorded the meetings' minutes until she too was called into further service in a mission capacity in Tonga.

An annual Mission Weekend was established even before the Committee's emergence. The concept was to arouse Church members' awareness of missions with an emphasis on a specific area. The first event promoted ABMS work in Bangladesh. Ensuing years have seen the Church grounds being converted into a PNG and Cambodian marketplace with folk purchasing their dinner with market money. An Australiana evening with campfires and tucker focused on ABMS' work among Aborigines and the next year the Church was converted into a jumbo jet and the participants "flown" to PNG and Cambodian mission fields to experience some of the food and culture, including being accosted by beggars. Most recently, Asian food was served as part of the focus on the region where our "People Group" lives. The Monday night of each Prayer Week has had a Missions emphasis, and specific attention was paid to the situation ranging from Zambia and aspects of social justice to the needs as reported by our missionaries.

There have been quite a few folk attend meetings with the Committee to share their plans. This has given members the opportunity to contribute their insights and prayers and to allocate the available funds to the various works. These include Keith and Joan Albury (Victoria), Lindie Bernas (Europe), Nerilee Sowter (YWAM), Brett and Annette Hunter (India), Brad Suosaari (High Schools), Anne Homer (Philippines), Marilyn Wray (Russia), Amanda Baker (Columbia) and Sherie Zammit (Thailand). If it were comprehensive, this would be a very long list indeed, so inevitably, not all those who have gone out on mission have been mentioned.

The Committee has been learning about People Group Adoption for several years, and since last year this has become a key focus. An Indian missionary couple, Muana and Villy have moved to Thailand to learn the language and to live among northern Thai village people. They will be our first point of contact with the People Group to whom our Church will be reaching out in the future. With a substantial proportion of the Church's income (now 20%) designated for mission outreach, Bracken Ridge Baptist Church has moved rapidly in recent years into a very effective ongoing program of promotions and support.

Peter Broadbent

Mid-week Services

A mid-week service began in 1996 held on the fourth Wednesday each month at 10.00am. The aim was to meet a perceived need to provide a service for people unable to attend the Sunday services or who appreciated a more traditional style of worship. The Senior Pastor, John Sweetman, introduced the idea, although he was unable to participate regularly due to other commitments. Mr Jack Sweetman was Church Administrator at the time. Advertising the services in the local free newspaper and enthusiastically promoting it within the congregation, Jack did an excellent job in launching the service. Some of those who came to the first service are still attending five years down the track.

Almost from the start two of the mid-week services were held at Neville Road Chapel, Bridgeman Downs. Some of the mid-week congregation lived in the area. Their spiritual roots were with the Neville Road Chapel. The new owners of the property undertook to maintain and refurbish the Chapel and were very keen for it to be used. Our church obliged by holding Easter and Christmas services there each year. The 70th anniversary of the Chapel was held there in April 2001.

Two services a month on the second and fourth Wednesdays were tried in 1997. The attendances were about the same, but it did affect one of the home groups that normally met on Wednesdays. In 1998 we returned to the monthly service.

In the early days the Lord's Supper was observed on special occasions only. It has now become a regular feature of each service. Bible readings, hymns and sermons aimed at teaching continue to be the normal style of service. Grateful acknowledgement of faithful service rendered by Pastors, musicians, servers, car drivers who transport aged and disabled, and ladies who provide the always welcome morning teas is gladly recorded. The offerings taken at each service are directed to the support of missionary work. Chris and Debbie Turner working with Fusion Australia and John and Sylvia Nowlan working with Wycliffe Bible Translators receive support from the offerings.

Ron Nowlan

The Minglers

Who are The Minglers? The Seniors. The "Oldies". The traditionals. The retired. All these names are used. But how do you define a group of people who range in age from 60 plus? A group of people whose "get up and go" has not yet "got up and gone"? They have not always been called The Minglers. Before the first building was erected on the property at 47 Norris Road the seniors were treated to an annual dinner, or was it luncheon? The venue was the family room in one of the church member's homes. One of these occasions was in Maurice and Glenda Simpsons' home. We were all invited to talk about our early days at school. Another occasion we celebrated

Winnie Sampson's 80th birthday at Snow and Beryl Pothecary's home in Warrimoo Street. This was probably after the group became an official entity within the church. We are working from memory but it appears the embryo of the idea was birthed by a number of ladies around 1988. Barbara Manion was one of these ladies. She felt it was her ministry to the older folk. Beryl, Marlene and Glenda all encouraged Barbara to "go for it". The vision became a reality!



Winnie Sampson's 80th Birthday

Activities of The Minglers include outings by car and bus to favourite venues. Exhibitions of craftwork, photography and memorabilia create great interest. Toowoomba's Festival of Flowers and Laidley's Chelsea Flower Show delight the busloads of Minglers and friends. Celebrations of special occasions such as Christmas are always popular, forming the basis of fellowship, love and enjoyment.

Why are we called "The Minglers"? Sometime after the group was up and running we were all invited to submit a name for identification. By popular vote the name submitted by Dorothy Nowlan was chosen. The idea of people meeting together, spending time with each other, sharing experience with one another in an inclusive manner is expressed in the name. In a Christian environment interpersonal relationships are nurtured by mutual respect and pastoral care for each other.

We do not have room in this thumbnail sketch to mention names of all who have supported and in various ways contributed to the success of The Minglers. We would acknowledge, however, the excellent leadership of Barbara, with her Yorkshire humour and her organisational skills, coupled with marvelous catering abilities, she has been our faithful leader for the past thirteen years. Barbara would be the first to acknowledge that she could not have done it without the loyal support of many others of The Minglers. One of this number is Marlene Ball who never misses a birthday with a greeting card, also John Kielly with his historical notes appropriate to every occasion.

Ron Nowlan

Girls' Brigade

In 1991 Joan Afflick had a vision and a heart that the Church was to start a Girls' Brigade. In February 1992 the company started and was commissioned as a company on 22nd March 1992 to be known as 41st Brisbane. With 5 leaders all enthused with her vision and about 26-28 eager girls the Company met on Monday evenings in the Church building.

In 1996 Mrs Debbie Venables stepped in as Captain. Joan and her husband Keith Albury moved into their next mission field working in Christian Camp Sites. In 1996 Melissa Mulhall became the company's first Queen's Awardee. In May 1999 Kylie Weber became Captain.

The past two years have been exciting and challenging. We have lost some girls after many years of attendance but God is always supplying new members, most from non-church families. In November this year Kathryn Park will receive her Queen's Award. We currently have 4 leaders, 3 auxiliary workers and around 36 girls in attendance. Next year will be 10 years since Joan's vision. We know that since 1992, many seeds have been planted into girls' lives and pray that in the future years we will be able to witness into the lives of many young ladies as they come through our company.



41st Brisbane Girls' Brigade

Officers/Leaders past and present:

Joan Afflick (Albury), Sharon Afflick, Lyn Dippel, Gail Wakerley, Michelle Stonebridge, Sharyn Gollagher, Tanya Gollagher (Bertrand), Sandra Couchman, Trudi Ivins, Laura Dehaan, Linda Gollagher (Robbins), Margaret Sims, Wendy Afflick, Kylie Weber, Debbie Venables, Ruth Edwards.

Chaplains:

Barbara Myers, Annette Buchultz and Barbara Brown.

Auxiliary Workers past and present:

Ellen Hudson, Amy Warren, Susie Dehaan, Melissa Mulhall (Lawrence), Averil Dinnison, Janelle Gray.

Some highlights during the past nine years:

- Mothers Nights of Bridal Fashion Parades, Dinners and Games nights
- Fathers' Nights with a BBQ and games
- Camps, Sleepovers, Family Picnics
- Climbing Mt Warning
- End of year breakups to Wet & Wild, Dreamworld and Mystery Bus Trips
- Competitions – Bible Quizzes, Drill, Cake Icing, Volleyball, Swimming Carnivals and Dancing.

Kylie Weber

Boys' Brigade

Boys' Brigade became part of Bracken Ridge Baptist Church officially in November 1998 and was part of the vision of the then Youth Pastor, Brett Gottle.

In the beginning, Boys' Brigade was led by a very small team of mainly inexperienced leaders who knew very little about running a Boys' Brigade Company. As the group of boys grew larger so did the number of leaders, and very soon we were winning pennants at sporting competition, going on camps and generally becoming part of the worldwide movement of The Boys' Brigade.

As with all things, our company has had to endure changes. Firstly, Phil Meech received a calling to go to the USA to work with Operation Mobilisation, and then Chris and Barbara Brown had to resign as Chaplains due to their commitment to the Alpha Program. But as always, the Lord does provide and we were blessed with some energetic, if not experienced leaders with a real heart for children and youth ministries.

The 49th Brisbane Boys' Brigade now has around 30 boys and 7 Officers/Leaders attending with a large number of boys coming from non-church families. These boys are a testament to the children's programs such as Sonzone etc. that are run by the Church. Through Brigades' social activities, sporting competitions and dinners, the opportunity has arisen for many parents to get their first contact with the Bracken Ridge Church family in a non-threatening environment.

The future for our Boys' Brigade relies very heavily on the commitment of the Officers and Leader, for without them the Brigade cannot operate.

Michael Ballard

Christmas Carol Services

The well-organised and spectacular Christmas Carol services have highly benefited the church's public relations and outreach into the community as the community have responded.

They began in a humble way in 1993 on the church lawn with the children's items being crowd-pleasers. The next year about 600 people crowded onto the church lawn, repeated in 1995 and 1996. In 1997, to better reach the community the service was moved to the grounds of Norris Road School. The oval was transformed into a giant theatre with special equipment being hired. Arrangements were made by Pastor Brett Gottle and Geoff Samuels with Debbie Sweetman training the choir. An estimated crowd of 3000 attended. It has continued with similar success with involvement from Peter Wilson and Pastor Brent Sweeney. Children's choirs (with a little help from local schools) and the adult choir have featured. Fireworks have concluded the celebrations each year.

Mevin Williams

Playgroups

Our playgroup ministry commenced in 1998 when Marilyn Wray and a group of mothers and children began to meet on Thursday mornings. Tuesday group followed in 1990 with Barbara Lingwood as leader and Monday group started in 1992.

During these years we have seen many lives touched by God and quite a few families have joined our church through their playgroup membership. Many of our little ones have "graduated" onto our Brigades, Holiday Clubs, Ridge Kids and Youth Group.

Playgroup continues to prove itself as an effective ministry with a great reputation in our local community.

Sue Ballard

Other Activities

A number of activities appear briefly in most church annual reports. Some are not continuous but serve for a time. These include Holiday Clubs and church camps, bush dances and picnics. Also, ministry to special needs like "Growing Kids God's Way" and "Solitaires".

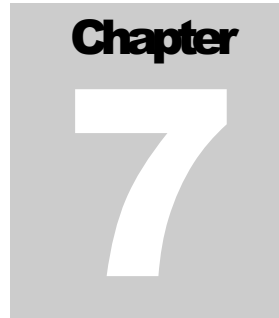
Then there are those that operate over the years because people are committed to serve. These include the Elanda Point Beach Mission held each December for many years up until 2000; Religious Education in up to six State Schools at times, but mostly

BRBC - THE STORY OF THE FIRST 21 YEARS

focused lately on Brighton State and Norris Road State Schools. Pastor Brett Gottle served as High School Chaplain at Sandgate and Brad Suosaari has served similarly for over five years.

To help increase bible knowledge there have been two KYB (Know Your Bible) groups, a DLS (from College) course, also Christianity Explained and Alpha more recently. Sports teams have come and gone, while Craft seems to just increase. The church has had strong links with Scripture Union, assisting with their training program and through Christine Brett who serves so well in the office.

Melvin Williams



The Ministry

Those who have served as Pastors are:

Pastor Ted Brett	1980 - 1984
Reverend Melvin Williams M.A., B.Sc., B.D.	1981 - 1984
Reverend Hans Bohm B.Th.	1985
Reverend Neville Abrahams (Interim) Dip. R.E	1986 - 1987
Reverend Colin Campbell (Interim)	1987
Reverend John Sweetman B.Sc., Dip. Ed., B.D., D. Min.	1987 - 2001
Reverend Ron Nowlan	1988 -
Pastor Greg Peckman Dip. T., B.Ed., St., M.Ed.	1991 - 1997
Pastor Brett Gottle	1993 - 1999
Pastor Warren Keir B.Th.	1994 - 1995
Pastor Jack Sweetman (Administrator)	1994 - 1997
Pastor Les Shakespeare (Manager)	1997 - 1999
Reverend Peter Broadbent	1998 -
Pastor Brent Sweeney B.Ag.Ec., B.Min	1998 - 2015
Pastor Stuart Russell B.Min.	1998
Pastor Toni Cagnoni	1999
Pastor Arthur Conomos (Ministry Coordination) B.Com, CPA	1999 -

BRBC - THE STORY OF THE FIRST 21 YEARS

Those who have served as Pastoral Assistants are:

Barbara Myers	1992 - 1993
Glenda Simpson	1992 -
Iris Westoby	1997 - 2001
Brent Sweeney	1997
Stuart Russell	1997
Toni Cagnoni	1998
Susan Ballard	2000 -
Kris Forman	2000 -

Others who have served on staff are:

Merle Gollagher
Sue Bethune
Rachel Rees
Jeff Myers
Annette Myers
Laurel Davis
Janelle Peach



Pastoral Team 2001

BRBC - THE STORY OF THE FIRST 21 YEARS

Those who have served as Church Secretaries are:

Maurice Simpson	1983 – 1985
Ralph Brett	1985 – 1990
Noel Gollagher	1990 – 1992

(Duties taken over by the Office and Administrator.)

Those who have served as Church Treasurers are:

David Tonkin	1983 – 1985
John Nolan	1985 – 1987
Max Park	1987 – 1988
Snow Potheary	1988 – 1990
Barry Watson	1990 – 1993
Cora Latter	1993 – 1994
Warren Packer	1994 – 1997

(Duties taken over by the Church Manager.)



Pastoral Team 1998

