



Alumni News

Bringing together friends and former staff, for mutual support and encouragement.



Scott's Update

Dear friends,

Welcome to the second edition of the new Baptist Mission Australia Alumni News.

You may be aware of our recent name change to Baptist Mission Australia, and the reasons for doing so.

Many of you will know that this is not our first name change! In 1913 we became The Australian Baptist Foreign Mission, when the different State organisations joined together. In 1959 the name was changed to The Australian Baptist Missionary Society. And in 2002, we became Global Interaction.

We are returning to a name familiar, but new. Like one supporter mentioned, "old things become new." **But throughout those name changes one thing has not changed: we are still committed to people coming to know Jesus in a way that makes sense to them.** And you've been part of that – as intercultural workers, staff members and volunteers. You've all been part of helping people come to know Jesus in ways that make sense to them.

We are thankful to everyone who attended the Alumni Zoom at the end of last year. It was a real privilege to catch up with previous intercultural workers, staff, and volunteers.

As individuals and as an organisation, we all faced challenges in 2021. I'm sure you can imagine the difficulties COVID has created for our intercultural teams!

But it was also a tremendous year of blessing. **We are very thankful that 2021 has had the most new supporters since 2016.** And it is the first year in a while that the number of church partnerships increased, rather than fell. We are thankful for God's continued grace.

We also give thanks for the alumni who passed away during the last year. We are thankful for their commitment to serving our Lord Jesus. May they rest in peace and rise in glory.

As we move through this year, our name might have changed, but we continue to be driven by our core purpose. As a result we will have the most intercultural workers and candidates we've had since 2014.

This includes new workers in the Silk Road Area, Mel; new workers in Outback Australia, Danny and Beth; new workers in South East Asia, Ally and Kate; **and an exciting ministry opportunity we haven't explored in nearly 30 years: candidates to work in Urban and Regional Australia.** Daniel is preparing to serve among First Nations communities in NSW, and Siddique and Fozia will be working among a Muslim community in NSW. We are thankful for the continuing work God is doing and the new work He is growing.

I am grateful to Gwendy Ridden, Wendy M and Barry and Lois Downes for their contributions to Baptist Mission Australia's work in sharing the Gospel in this edition.

Grace and peace,

Scott Pilgrim
Executive Director

How does God light up our path?

Wendy M, together with her husband Andrew and three children, served in South East Asia from 2010-2018. Wendy worked in the National office during 2020-2021. She now works as a Lived Experience family and carer consultant in Mental Health services of Austin Health in Melbourne.



I like to have rhythm in life. As a trained nurse, married to a strategic planner, we took pride in planning and preparation. Minimising risk was part and parcel of how we did life. We had three children within about three years,

so we needed to be orderly – we needed to plan!

When Andy and I were called to work overseas, the planning and preparation was still essential, but many details were out of our hands. This was rather confronting at times, but our calling was strong, so we sought to roll with the lack of control instead of fight it.

On the ground when we arrived in South East Asia, this pattern continued. We made plans. Circumstances changed and we reset. This could be overwhelming as the effort required to reset with every set of unfulfilled expectations was tough – there was grief in the disappointment. It took me a while to learn the lesson.

I never felt far from God in this process. I still feel like I was seeking God and walking along the journey as a follower of God. But I was holding on too tight.

Fairly early in our journey overseas, a very familiar Bible passage in Psalm took on a new life for me.

*Your word is a lamp to guide my feet
and a light for my path.*

Psalm 119:105

The general intent of God's guidance coming to people through the word of God was clear. But I was not sure that I had truly taken in their deeper meanings. I began to ask questions.

"...a lamp to guide my feet..."

How much light can a lamp provide to guide feet?

A lamp does not usually have strong illumination. The light required for feet to be guided is not much. When we walk through a dark cave by torchlight, we hope to have sufficient light to take the next step.

"...a light for my path..."

How much light is adequate to light the path?

Similarly, to the cave, I have a sense that the light may be more like what is necessary or 'just enough' to safely see the path.

What does the word 'path' designate?

Synonyms for the word 'path' are track, or trail, with a sense of narrowness and where what is around the corner cannot be seen – yet!

I have reflected on this verse and on my experiences. The lesson that has repeatedly remained has been that God promises enough light for us to see where to place our feet as we walk as followers of Jesus. The pathway should be visible; however, I should not expect any type of floodlighting with a fully illuminated pathway, or a wide, long road (or highway).



God allows us to join in a journey where He is already at work. I believe that often I am not yet ready to see what lies ahead. If I could see what is around the corner, I might run away. But as I walk down the current path and situation, I grow, deepen my faith and readiness for what God has in store.

I seek to maintain a soft heart, asking for a sensitivity from God to know where I need to engage and connect each day with the people around me. When I plan ahead, at times, I feel like I am too focused on the long-term view that I miss what is right around me.

In my Member Care role during 2020/2021, I found the lens of viewing and holding plans loosely to be useful for many encounters with workers. **For intercultural workers, it can be extremely challenging to move to another culture, live within different rules and requirements, and have unexpected, sometimes unreasonable, and unpredictable requirements thrown upon them, which can uproot their stability (and potentially safety).** Visa requirements can change and suddenly someone (or even a whole family) does not know the next step.

Intercultural work has always been a call to uncertainty, with layers of sacrifice. Some of these layers are quite clear, and we can work through them. But other layers are unpredictable and, like grief, can catch us unaware.

As I journey through life with a refocused lens – looking for the next steps on my path rather than looking for the highway – I have become more flexible and adaptable, and I've experienced less grief in unfulfilled expectations.

I approach life with a bigger picture awareness. I hold plans far more loosely. This has been interesting as I returned to life in Australia. Our Australian culture seems to strive for good planning, seeking to join the dots and knowing what to expect.

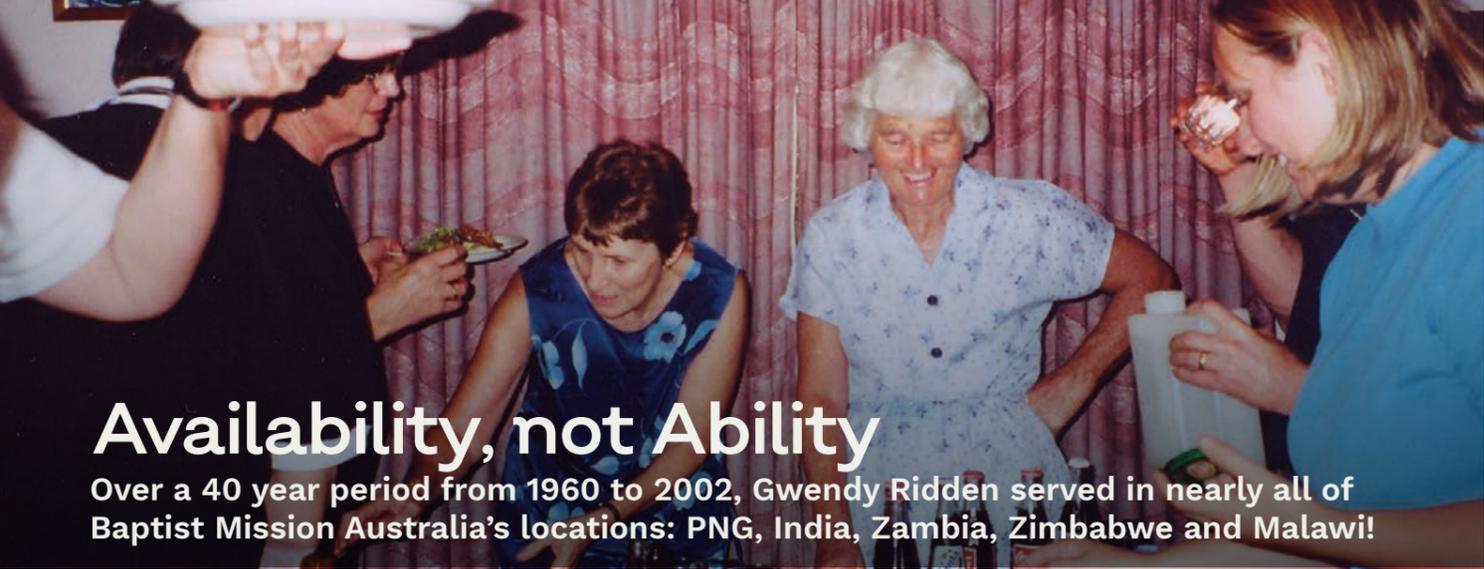
Continually walking with God, seeking first to be a follower of Jesus, keeps me orientated to God and entrusting the unknowns to Him.

I can't confess that I always respond well as I still let the worries overwhelm me at times. However, I know that when I am grounded in my strong foundation in Jesus, the worries of life, even when significant, become a little less poignant.

Somehow, I am able to remain on my feet, putting one foot into that place where the lamp is providing just enough illumination.



Wendy and Andy, and their three children (2008) while they were Candidates preparing to serve in South East Asia



Availability, not Ability

Over a 40 year period from 1960 to 2002, Gwendy Ridden served in nearly all of Baptist Mission Australia's locations: PNG, India, Zambia, Zimbabwe and Malawi!

As part of my missionary program, one Sunday I visited an isolated African church for the morning service. The pastor moved to the platform and invited an area leader and I to join him.

As worship progressed, I was quietly informed, "You are the preacher today." I can preach in English," I replied. "No one here can translate," was the firm reply. **I whispered to myself, "I can't do THAT!" As yet, my language fluency was limited to work with children, and hadn't stretched to sermon preparation.**

Praying for help, I read Bible verses and told the story of Jonah, seeking the Lord's direction to draw out the teaching in familiar words. God used His word, and people with various needs responded for prayer.

Leaving the area leader and me to counsel them, the pastor went to start a baptismal service. **Among those who responded was a young man who trusted Christ as his Saviour.**

Ready now, we scrambled down the steep slope to join the others. It opened onto a cool stream, with tall, shady trees and huge grey boulders forming the bank. The believers moved into the water. But wait, what was the delay? After all, we are not called to be successful, but faithful.

There were five young men with only one baptismal outfit! That was no problem. Disappearing behind the rocks, they passed the wet garments along until each one had his turn!

The young man we had counselled stood on the bank asking for baptism. The area leader gave his consent and he too was baptised.

I joined the hymns of praise and shouts of joy as we climbed back up the slope. What a thrill it was to have a tiny share in that wonderful day!

When tempted to say, "I can't do THAT," I hear God say, "I know you CAN'T, but I CAN. Just be available and trust Me, you will be capable."

There was medical work without a doctor, testing our nursing skills. Some roads seemed impassable, narrow high ridges edged by deep drops, but people needed the Gospel and isolated servants of God needed some encouragement.

Approaching our destination one day, we came to a fragile looking bamboo bridge. Steeling myself to face the inevitable, I prayed and cautiously drove to the opposite bank. In sheer relief and gratitude, I broke down in tears, much to the surprise and concern of my passengers and the welcoming villagers!

God does not guarantee an easy road or ask us to be foolhardy, but what joy and blessing floods my soul when I just make myself available to Him!



Gwendy Ridden, Zambia in 1995

Where Are They Now?

Barry and Lois Downes served in Outback Australia from 1968 to 2004.



Barry and Lois Downes faithfully served in Outback Australia, in ministry amongst First Nation's Peoples from 1968-2004. They joined the

Baptist Mission Australia (formerly known as the Australian Baptist Missionary Society) Team in 1984. They served at Mount Isa, Alice Springs, Kalkaringi/Dagaragu, and Lajamanu.

Since finishing in that particular season of God's calling they have been living in Queensland, firstly pastoring an MTQ church at Mareeba, then joining the pastoral team at Rockhampton Baptist Church in an honorary capacity. They are also enjoying time with their families.

Lois and Barry currently live in a retirement village in Townsville near some of their family. They reflect that sometimes it feels like 'time rolls by', especially as they observe their grandchildren growing up.

Their oldest grandchild has just completed Year 12 and their youngest is just entering Grade 3. **Lois wonders, "How did that little fella grow up so quickly, and how did we get so close to 80! (No, not there yet!)"**

Like many of you, they have observed how Covid has drastically changed our world, and how busy, and focused on devices people seem to be. **But they say that in these times of change, Isaiah 41:10 provides good advice: "Fear not, for I am with you. Be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you. Yes, I will help you. I will uphold you with My righteous right hand."**

Their family continues to be involved in Christian ministry. Their eldest, (Chris and wife Bron) is Pastor at Murgon Baptist Church, their middle son (Steve and wife Jackie) is the Principal of Calvary Christian College in Townsville, and of course many of you will be familiar with Tim and Melanie who serve with Baptist Mission Australia in Malawi.



The Downes family at a recent gathering

Alumni Connect

We know people may want to be in contact with other alumni. Would you be able to help? We would love to have a contact person for each state. If this resonates with you please get in contact with Tim Collison at tcollison@baptistmissionaustralia.org

Share Your Story

Our current plan is to publish Alumni News twice next year. If you would like to contribute a story, devotional thought, or Where Are They Now section, please contact Tim Collison at tcollison@baptistmissionaustralia.org.

If you have feedback, questions or do not want to receive this newsletter you can also contact Tim.

Gone to Glory

This is a list of workers who passed away in recent years. If anyone has been missed, or details are incorrect, please contact Tim at tcollison@baptistmissionaustralia.org

First Name	Last Name	Date of Birth	Date of Death	Spouse (D denotes if confirmed deceased)	Service Area	Year of Service
Noel	Melzer	8/07/1933	20/07/2019	Elaine Melzer	Indonesia-Papua	1960 -1974
Annette	Gillman	21/04/1940	4/11/2019	Phillip Gillman (D)	East Pakistan	1963-1970
Dorothy	Humphreys	25/07/1923	13/02/2020	David Humphreys (D)	PNG	1956-1962
Agnes	Alcorn	10/04/1920	26/02/2020	Bob Alcorn (D)	India / East Pakistan	1940-1951
Don	Warren		23/04/2020	Jean Warren	PNG	1977
Warren	Brown	23/03/1937	24/05/2020	Carmel Brown	PNG	1963-1972
Mary 'Betty'	Shinkfield	13/08/1920	10/08/2020	Desmond Shinkfield (D)	South Asia	1950-1957
Nola	Hodgson	15/08/1919	2/09/2020	Ralph Hodgson (D)	India / East Pakistan	1945-1952
Marilyn	Kime	28/02/1938	2/09/2020	Jim Kime	NT / PNG / Silk Road Area	1962-1969, 1997-2001, 2004-2005
Valerie	Bricknell		11/09/2020	Keith Bricknell	PNG	1961-1972
Stephen	Venz	17/12/1948	16/11/2020	Glenda Venz	Zambia / Malawi	1980-1998
Ian	Gruber	25/02/1925	7/12/2020	Irene Gruber (D)	PNG / Jayapura	1955-1960
Stanley	Davey	4/03/1937	23/01/2021	Elaine Davey	PNG / Malawi / Mozambique	1964-1975, 1997, 2010
Peter 'Hoa'	Stone		12/04/2021	Hien Stone	Indochina	1998-2010
Lindsay	Smith	11/08/1936	19/06/2021	Meryl Smith	PNG	1965-1983
Jan	Dobson	15/02/1945	26/6/2021	Reg Dobson (D)	SE Asia / Papua	1972-1974
Lola	Henderson	14/06/1924	26/06/2021		East Pakistan	1951-1968
Ruth	Watterson	8/12/1930	18/07/2021	Arthur Watterson	PNG	1957-1966, 1969-1971
Margaret 'Robyn'	Wootton		22/07/2021	Barrie Wootton	PNG	1969-1971
Grace	Munro	17/07/1946	2/09/2021		Zambia	1973-1991
Desmond	Shinkfield	9/05/1925	20/10/2021	Betty Shinkfield (D)	South Asia	1950-1957
Joan	Webster	16/10/1929	8/11/2021		Assam	1958-1968
Arthur	Kelshaw	21/11/1921	7/01/2022	Jean Kelshaw	PNG	1951-1953, 1955-1959
Jim	Thomson	18/02/1934	13/01/2022	Helen Thomson	PNG	1969-1975
Leslie	Merrin	6/05/1931	21/01/2022	Valmae Merrin (D)	Thailand	1984-1991
Clive	Heaysman		6/02/2022	Janice Heaysman	South Asia / PNG	1995, 1998-1999, 2003
Ian	Flatters		22/04/2022	Jill Flatters	PNG	1966-1980
Frank	Cleary		27/5/2022	Gladys Cleary (D)	Bangladesh / PNG / Zimbabwe Philippines	1973-1977, 1978-1982, 1983-1989, 1991-1993

For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.

Rev 7:17