As we approach 2015, Whitley College enters its 50th year. It is of course much older if we add the full title ‘the Baptist College of Victoria’.

Rev William Whitley was invited to come to Australia to found the first training college for Baptist pastors in this country. The College began in 1891, meeting in some rooms at Collins Street Baptist Church. The basic motivation in founding the College was that local church leaders should be well trained, but that training needed to be local and fitted to the life of the emerging nation. These convictions are still important for our own situation.

Whitley himself was an historian and relished his new work. He engaged actively with the dynamic debate in the 1890s about Federation—and in fact wrote his doctoral thesis for the University of Melbourne on the theory and practice of federations, ranging from ancient Greece to several contemporary situations. His thesis (copies of which are in the College library) made a number of suggestions for the formation of the Commonwealth of Australia.

A concern for the life of our nation and especially its commonwealth or body politic has been an important part of the life of Whitley College. The founding vision of Mervyn Himbury was that this college would raise up people who, like William Whitley, would make a contribution not only to the church but also to the wider society. Himbury was a social democrat, shaped by his own upbringing in the Welsh mining communities and his experiences of the struggles of so many people immediately following the Second World War. He had, for instance, been part of a student group visiting post war Germany and saw desperate hunger first hand. That made an impression on him, as did his own experience of fellow students who simply did not have enough to eat. These things made him strongly concerned for a society of justice and opportunity for all.

In the early years of Whitley College, Himbury fought hard for the vision of an integrated community, where theological students lived with people undertaking other tertiary programs, such as law or medicine, commerce or science, and all learning from each other. He had a vision of people debating over the meal table the issues of the day: war and peace, equal rights for women or indigenous Australians, and so on. They were heady days and College life tapped into the national debate, just as Whitley had done decades earlier.

The vision was not simply for College life for its own sake, though. It was about what people would do with their lives. I recall Himbury once saying: ‘Don’t go and get lost in the suburbs’—meaning lowering our sights to a private life of home and family (not that he disparaged those things, not at all). What he meant and hoped was that Whitley’s community would provide a foundation for people to be what the Bible calls ‘salt of the earth’, meaning people who help to preserve what is good and make it even better. The vision was and is for people who will contribute, through professional and community life, to a world that is indeed just, providing opportunity for all.

As we recognize fifty years of this College’s life, we can indeed celebrate so many who have engaged with this vision and whose contribution, like Whitley’s and Himbury’s, remains an inspiration for us all.
The death of Dr Geoffrey Blackburn on 13 July, aged 99 years, was an event of great significance, not only for his immediate family, but also for the Baptist churches of Australia and throughout the world. We mourn his passing and extend deepest sympathy to his family but also acknowledge with deep gratitude to God his remarkable contributions to the Baptist community. Any summary of his achievements must be inadequate so we are grateful that in 2001 he published his memoirs, ‘Beyond Imagining: 65 Years in the Christian Ministry’. Written with typical humility and literary skill, Geoff’s autobiography also offers unique insights into almost a century of Baptist life.

( Taken from ‘Tribute written by Rev. Dr. Ken Manley’. Photo by John Woudstra: Final sermon after 78 years of service )

Whitley Global Partnership

Rev Dae Hyun Kim, the President of KBC (Korean Baptist Convention) and delegates visited the School of Ministry 2014 to establish a strong connection with Whitley. Rev Dr Frank Rees, Principal of Whitley College and Whitley delegates made a return visit to Korea in September. On this trip, the global partnership was further strengthened. Frank Rees signed an MOU between Whitley and KBTUS (Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary) for a student, faculty and staff exchange program. Also the delegates visited Kyungsung University in Busan and enjoyed a productive meeting with representatives of the university.

The signing ceremony of MOU between Whitley College and KBTUS
(Korea Baptist Theological University/Seminary)
(Left to Right) Dr. Kuk-Won Bae, President of KBTUS/ Rev Dr Frank Rees, Principal of Whitley College

Business meeting with Kyungsung University in Busan, Korea
(Left to Right) Justin Park, Community Relations Manager of Whitley College/ Oh-Young Kwon, Faculty at Whitley College/ Frank Rees, Principal of Whitley College / Chung-Man Kim, Chaplain at Kyungsung University/ Shin Young Chai, Director of International Program at Kyungsung University

Visiting Whitley College
In July, Rev Dr Frank Rees, the Principal of Whitley College, welcomed the Delegation of the Korean Baptist Convention.

Preaching and Promotional Events
Frank preached several times at KBTUS, Kyungsung university and Kangnam Joongang Baptist church during the visit to Korea. Oh-Young delivered a special lecture for the postgraduate students and Justin promoted Whitley College during the trip.
It has been a memorable year with many highlights from the arrival of 61 new residents in O Week through to Valedictory Dinner. The girls’ netball premiership, making it three in a row, was a very exciting event. The WARTS production of “Bat Boy” provided much entertainment and horror. Genevieve and Mario gathered our talented musicians and engaged professional friends to support our end of year soiree with Raymond Yong and Sally-Anne Russell. Boat Cruise was enjoyable though, despite being held earlier in the year, not a lot warmer. The second SPARTS dinner at the Colonial was a fitting celebration of Arts and Sports in the life of Whitley. Congratulations to Jonathon Manus for winning the Spirit Award for his support of all kinds of Whitley events. The Arts Participation Award was presented to Ryan Jones. The Sportswoman of the year was awarded to Clare Browne for the second year in a row and Max Bayly was awarded Sportsman of the year.

Our new Tutors Jasmine, Rami and Caitlin participated in many social events and played on the sporting teams and involved themselves in the game of Assassins, in addition to their teaching roles. Many of the Tutors have travelled overseas this year to present at conferences, conduct orchestras and further their research by working with international colleagues. Mayuri travelled to Japan, Jasmine to the US, Mario to China and Caitlin to the UK.

Valedictory Dinner was a wonderful finale as we farewelled our eight Valedictorians, students who have lived at college for three or more years and have been friends, mentors and leaders. These are Nathaniel Ballinger, William Stanley, Shaun Pye, Hajin Song, Nathaniel Taylor, Zoe White, Rebecca McLarty and Jithmi Peiris. In addition Bee Ellis, Joses Nathanael and Sam Lam who are valedictorians again, having changed their minds and stayed on at Whitley, or returned from overseas exchange, as in Bee’s case. Our speakers were Nicola Delahunty and Rowan Lester who were former Whitley residential students: Nicola, a Senior Student in my first year and Rowan, who was Student Club President that year, 2006. Nicola used the metaphor of slow release fertilizer to explain how Whitley’s influence continues over the years after residents leave the donut. Rowan spoke of the leadership skills he developed at Whitley and how they assisted him in his career.

Awards were given out to honour those residents who have excelled artistically and academically and served the community with dedication. Congratulations to The Academic Award winner: Clare Browne. The Arts Award winners: Liesl Ho and Rey Dayap and the winner of the Community Service Award: Nathaniel Ballinger.
On Friday 7 November our musical students and very special guests, internationally acclaimed mezzo-soprano Sally-Anne Russell and pianist Raymond Yong treated students, staff and friends to a delightful performance. Students had prepared pieces as part of their preparation for exams and engaged in master classes with Raymond and Sally-Anne. The students rose to the occasion and, accompanied by Raymond, performed at their best. Their performances were interspersed with two brackets of songs by Sally-Anne and Raymond. What a privilege and a pleasure it was to witness these two musicians, masters of their crafts, performing for us in the intimacy of the Whitley Chapel. We are grateful to them and to our music students for sharing their talents with us and to Mario Dobernig, Music Tutor, for organizing this wonderful celebration of musical talent.

As part of our Industry-Student Mentoring Program, Genevieve Leach, Deputy Warden, hosted a dinner on Monday 17 November for the 2014 Mentors and Mentees. The topics of discussion were: the purpose of mentoring and sharing ideas and advice about the world of work and making the transition from being a student. The program is for our students who are in third year and above and involves linking with alumni who are working in various professional fields. We are looking forward to expanding the program in 2015 and would love to hear from alumni and friends who are interested in giving back to Whitley students and helping them prepare for, and begin, their chosen careers.

We celebrated the end of the academic year in the Residential College in November. Past students from 2012 and 2013 returned to catch up with the students from this year over food and drinks in the courtyard.
Rev Dr Gary Heard

The end of the academic year provides us with an opportunity to reflect on our progress. As marks are released, there is an obvious indicator of the depth of learning undertaken and of further paths to explore. It is important to remember that our learning is more than academic. The study of theology is meant to form our lives and our faith, which are much harder things to measure. If we know all the theories of atonement, but never experienced or shared the reconciliation which flows from it, our study is in vain. It is our hope at Whitley that learning about God leads us into deeper relationship with God, and into more creative and authentic expressions of serving God and our respective communities.

The teaching theme for 2014 has been Love and Justice, aligned with the Gospel of Matthew. Exploration of this theme has touched on many aspects and expressions of life in 2014 as the connection between study and practice unfolds. One of our students – Tri Nguyen – undertook a remarkable journey this year. His father had made a replica of the boat in which his family journeyed to Australia from Vietnam seeking asylum. After adding wheels to the boat, Tri walked it from Brunswick to Canberra, where it now sits on display in Federal Parliament, inviting people to remember the welcome which God gives to all seekers. This is but one of many examples of Whitley students living out their learning in the community.

At Whitley’s annual Celebrate event in November, we take time to honour, not only the work of students who have completed their studies, but all those who have sought to integrate their life, learning and faith in diverse settings. We have seen this through service, through the arts, through worship and in various community settings. Tri’s story is one of many we could tell.

Gareth Fuller was honoured as a University of Divinity Vice-Chancellor’s scholar at the graduation ceremony in March, in recognition of excellence during his Bachelor of Theology.

In both word and deed, Whitley students give expression to the call of Love and Justice in a world which calls for a future different – better and fairer – than the present.

Whitley launches into 2015 with the theme: Faith and Ministry, the year of the Gospel of Mark. Significant effort has been expended to enable greater access to theological study, with new diploma studies in Bible and Mission, a new diploma program for school leavers, and greater opportunity to study online. These are expressions of our commitment to forming and equipping leaders for a different world.
The 2014 Religious Arts Prizes focused on the theme of ‘Hope and Love’. At the launch in October the prize was awarded to Libby Byrne and the judges also awarded special mentions to Aileen English-Rees and Thomas Harper. The inaugural Music Prize was awarded to Tri Nguyen. The Prizes were awarded at Celebrate 2014 in November.

Libby Byrne
Tri Nguyen
Aileen English-Rees
Thomas Harper

Libby Byrne
Aileen English-Rees
Thomas Harper
Samuel Lam
John Lustre
Craig Schneider
Nathaniel Taylor

(Left to Right) Frank Rees (Principal), Tri Nguyen (ROSS LANGMEAD PRIZE IN MISSION/First Prize – Music), Pauline Tudball (FLORENCE SIMS PRIZE FOR BIBLICAL LANGUAGES), Matthew Thorp (DEAN’S PRIZE IN CHRISTIAN THOUGHT AND HISTORY), Jarrod Thomas (HJ JENKIN PRIZE), Catherine Cudlipp (DAVID FARR BEQUEST), Julie Hunt (RUTH SAMPSON SCHOLARSHIP), Aileen English-Rees (Special Mention - Religious Art Prize), Elizabeth Huglin (DEAN’S PRIZE IN PASTORAL STUDIES), Libby Byrne (First Prize - Visual Art), Alexandra May (DEAN’S PRIZE IN SPIRITUALITY), Gareth Fuller (University of Divinity VICE CHANCELLOR’S SCHOLAR Whitley College, 2014), Jordan Davis (BASIL BROWN PRIZE IN BIBLICAL STUDIES), Gary Heard (Dean) / (Not Pictured: Samasoni Moleli (MERVYN HIMBURY SCHOLARSHIP))
Do you want to explore your faith at a deeper level, but you’re not sure about studying at degree level?

Whitley recognises that students who study at Whitley have opportunities to continue their studies through to the highest level possible. The decision about which pathway of study is right for you is in part a matter of discernment: together, we will consider which is the best combination of units for you to be doing, in light of your gifts and calling together with possible future areas of service or leadership.

* Whitley’s unique TransFormation program is a good starting point for Church leaders from all denominations of non-English speaking backgrounds.

* Whitley’s innovative NEXT program is designed for young adults who have just finished secondary school, and can become the first step on a pathway towards a Bachelor Degree.

* 12WATTS is a challenging program offered at Camp Wilkin, which will provide opportunities to stretch yourself in body mind and spirit, through studies in a range of disciplines, and involvement in the camping program.

* In 2015, Whitley introduces new diploma level units in Bible and mission which seek to integrate practice and reflection. The first instalment of eight semester units to be delivered over the next two years is available in 2015. These units represent an initial pathway in studies that can be extended into degree studies.

At Whitley College, we are committed to living the gospel, equipping Bible-shaped communities and engaging society in the freedom and responsibility of the Baptist tradition.

Our primary educational focus is on the formation of missional leaders and disciples in the Asia-Pacific region, in both church and society.

Visit us at www.whitley.unimelb.edu.au