

SERVICE OF THANKSGIVING FOR



Frederick Bruce Watkins

15th March 1940 — 9th November 2024



THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER, 2024
TOOWOOMBA CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

ORDER OF SERVICE

Statement of purpose and opening prayer

David Baker

Chorus

The Kindness and Love of God

Words of comfort

Lachlan Perrin

Bruce's personal testimony and Cathy's reflection

David Baker

Ministry song

Whenever You Turn

Testimonies and reflections

Daniel Parkinson, John McLatchey, Nathan Smith

Lachlan Perrin & David Baker

Chorus

The Life of Jesus

Ministry word and reflection

Victor Hall

Chorus

I Will Sing of the Hope Set Before Me

Statement of thanksgiving and closing prayer

David Baker



Extracts from Bruce's Personal Testimony

“The Lord met me for the first time at the age of 14 and I sought to walk in His ways from that time. What I did not understand was that the path I took was totally legalistic, which caused me to struggle in my spiritual walk for much of my life. I did not understand justification, sanctification, the baptism in the Holy Spirit and, most of all, I did not know that Christ had walked my whole life for me, and that the sufferings He suffered were caused by me!”

“I was trying to save myself, not knowing about the finished work of Christ. I did not realise that the faith I had was *my faith* and not *His faith*. So I was constantly hounding the Lord as to why I was not being changed in the way I thought I should be; not knowing that Christ had already done the work. I needed to come to peace and embrace His finished work for me, so that the Father could do the work in me that was necessary according to His plan for me.”

“The Lord met me a second time, enabling me to live after a heart valve replacement which almost took my life. I knew that He had given me time to finish the works I had not yet done. He began to open my eyes to understand truths in Scripture that I had not seen before. I came to embrace the finished work of Christ, and that I could not save myself. The most wonderful blessing was that I began to learn about genuine fellowship.”

“All I needed to do was to be yoked to Christ. He had already walked out my whole life, with all its struggles and failures, learning for me the obedience I needed so that I could walk on the highway of holiness as I walked with Him.”

“Only others can comment on the changes that they have observed in my life, but I know I am being changed; not by my efforts, but by my obedience to the proclaimed word.”

“Relational independence is the curse of the Christian life. There is no capacity or opportunity for the love of God to be manifest. Our marriage became one of two people walking parallel, not being one. But the mercy of the Lord began to change that, so that Cathy and I learnt to be one in Him.”

“I would like to express my thanks to the Lord for directing me into the fellowship of the Presbytery. I was very uncomfortable in Presbytery because I had such a poor self-image. But praise the Lord, He has brought me through to the point where I now know who I am and can sit comfortably under the ministry of the word I hear, even if, at first, I may not understand the implication and application of what is being said. The Lord's mercy has been that He has given me understanding as I waited on Him.”

“The God we worship is a great God! His love is way beyond anything I can explain.”

“Thank you to all who have persisted with me and given me fellowship.”

FREDERICK BRUCE WATKINS was born in Murwillumbah on 15 March 1940 to Keith and Betty Watkins. Bruce had two older brothers, Ian and Warwick, who both predeceased him.

In 1946, after Bruce's dad returned from the war, the family spent a year in Goondiwindi where Keith was employed on a sheep station. They then moved to his mother's family home at Milton in Brisbane. Bruce attended Milton State School and then the newly built Indooroopilly State High School. Bruce was the first member of his family to receive a university education and, having always loved country life and pursuits, graduated from the Queensland University in 1962 with a degree in Agricultural Science.

Bruce's growing up years were very uncomplicated and happy ones. The family on his mother's side were very close. The cousins spent many wonderful times together, both on the uncle's farm at Gayndah and their holiday 'shack' at Deception Bay. Bruce was always proud of the fact that he didn't wear shoes, except to go to church, until he went to High School - something quite unthinkable in today's society. Bruce also often spent time at his maiden aunt's home in Kyogle doing lots of odd jobs, and was very proud when Aunty Trixie treated him, at age 15, to his first tailored jacket - pale blue!

The Watkins boys were taught many practical skills at home, and if there was a job to be done around their local church, they would be there. This culture of practical service remained with Bruce for his entire life.

Bruce met his future wife, Dorothy, while he was still living in Brisbane. Bruce and Dorothy were married in 1963 in the Nanango Presbyterian Church where Dorothy's father had been appointed as the minister. Bruce and Dorothy welcomed two daughters; Ruth in 1965 and Helen in 1969.

Bruce began his working career with the Department of Primary Industries in Warwick in 1963 and after 8 months was transferred to the Toowoomba office. Bruce worked as an Agronomist, initially testing new varieties of corn, barley, safflower and sorghum. When the opportunity arose to work specifically on the problem of wild oats in cereal crops, he jumped at it as no one else was working in that field in Australia. Bruce worked on this project for six years at the Toowoomba Wheat Research Centre [now the Leslie Research Centre] attaining to the level of Research Agronomist.

While living in Toowoomba in those early years, the family attended the West Street Presbyterian Church [now a Buddhist Centre], where Bruce became an elder in that church, and leading the All Age Sunday School, after Ian Barlow left to train for the ministry. In 1970 Bruce felt a call to Christian ministry, giving the Department a year's notice so that a replacement could be found to carry on his research work. The headline in the local Toowoomba paper at the time was 'From wild oats to the ministry'!

Bruce completed his training in Brisbane in 1973. The family moved to Springsure in 1974 where Bruce took up his first appointment as a minister and remained there until 1977. It was during this last year in Springsure that Dorothy was diagnosed with cancer. Dorothy's surgery was extensive, but despite the many difficulties and inconveniences she suffered, Dorothy was able to lead a fairly normal life and supported Bruce and the family well. At the time, there were not the aids available to assist after such surgery and Bruce found it necessary to use all his ingenuity to make life as normal as possible for Dorothy.

Both Bruce and Dorothy knew that there was more to the Christian life than they had so far experienced. Bruce sought the Lord over many months, and slowly became involved in the Charismatic movement. He thought that the baptism in the Holy Spirit might be the solution he was looking for. However, this experience alone did not satisfy Bruce. There was still something missing.

At the commencement of 1978, the family moved to the Bell Presbyterian Church, remaining there until the end of 1980. Bruce's growing hunger to understand God's word eventually meant that he could no longer adhere to his ordination vows, particularly in relation to water baptism and worship, so he tendered his resignation.

This began an amazing journey! Having unsuccessfully sought work in the district, Bruce sought the Lord for the next step. Through the generosity of like-minded local folk, and particularly Ian and Rae McClelland, the family was able to build a house in Bell. In fellowship with the Presbytery in Brisbane, the Bell Christian Fellowship was established. The word of God was now alive to him, and what he had sought for many years began to become a reality in his life.

At the end of this same year, Dorothy's cancer returned and she eventually went to be with the Lord in late 1982. With the support of local church friends, Bruce remained in Bell caring for his two daughters. As you can imagine, Bruce carried out many domestic duties, both during and following the time of Dorothy's last illness. Even when the girls spent some years at boarding school in Toowoomba, Bruce ensured that there were the necessary supplies of homemade 'yummies' for consumption in the school dorm! Bruce was unphased by the various necessities of bringing up teenage daughters and tackled the matter of shopping for clothing. 'Poppy', as they called him at the time, did a most commendable job.

During Bruce's weekly ventures to Presbytery meetings in Brisbane, he began to notice a certain young lady who worked in the BCF office. Eventually, with some gentle encouragement, he ventured to ask her out for dinner. The rest is history, and Bruce and Cathy were married in July 1984. Cathy moved to Bell and joined Bruce in his travels, averaging around 1000 kms a week for several years, to visit people in Tara, Chinchilla, Emerald, Dirranbandi, St George, Gayndah and Maryborough.

The Bell Christian Fellowship moved to Dalby in the early 1990s. In 1994, it was felt that the ministry to the whole district would benefit more if Bruce and Cathy moved to Toowoomba so that he and other brethren could minister as a team. The move to Toowoomba began a period of immense change for Bruce. The Lord's pruning process was particularly evident when, due to ill health, Bruce resigned from the ministry in 2003.

When faced with some quite humbling circumstances, Bruce learned to let go of his previous ministry ambitions and aspirations. He quietly and faithfully gave himself to whatever his hand found to do across many practical areas of the church. He was greatly involved with the maintenance of the church property. He cleaned the church building, weekly, by himself for many years. He appreciated being able to work behind the scenes, and to stay active in the life of the church. Bruce also loved working with the vibrant TCF Seniors group.

Following a significant time of change for TCF in 2015, the Lord gave Bruce another opportunity to be involved in the work of preaching and teaching the word. He took full advantage of this opportunity and, in his own words, threw himself into studying the word of present truth. As the Lord continued to change him, his mode of preaching also changed from being theological to an expression of testimony.

In January 2017, Bruce had major heart surgery to replace his mitral valve. While the surgery was successful, it came with many other problems, and it was a lengthy recovery. His heart condition stabilised, but the damage to his heart was permanent. Importantly, the Lord used all of these health problems to bring about further changes in his life. He learned to minister in weakness and to rely upon the Lord's grace to complete his work each day. Bruce continued to teach in the national Bible School program until two weeks before his death.

Bruce knew the reality of the resurrection life of Christ and came to learn how to live one day at a time. He appreciated the longsuffering and mercy of the Lord as he testified about the Lord's work in his life. Fellowship with the Lord and with the Lord's people was Bruce's greatest joy!



The Kindness and Love of God

By Joshua Hay

When the kindness and love of God appeared
The kindness and love of God our Saviour
When the kindness and love of God appeared
The kindness and love of God our Saviour

(Ladies) He saved us, not by works that we have done
(Men) He saved us by His mercy
(Ladies) He saved us, not by works that we have done
(Men) He saved us by His mercy

(Together) Through the washing of regeneration
Renewing by the Holy Spirit
Jesus Christ our Saviour has poured out on us the Holy Spirit
Now we are heirs of the hope of eternal life
We are heirs with Jesus Christ



The Life of Jesus

By Luke & Nadine Pomery

For Your name's sake, we are delivered
Unto the dying of Jesus Christ
As we are counted as sheep for the slaughter
We overcome the world

For the life of Jesus, the life of Jesus
Is bringing us back from the dead
The life of Jesus, the life of Jesus
Is bringing us back from the dead

Unless I'd believed, unless I'd believed
That I'd see Your goodness in the land,
in the land of the living
O I am persuaded neither death nor life
Shall separate us from Your love, O Lord

Whenever You Turn

By Melanie Perrin

I waited patiently for the Lord
His ear He inclined to me, He heard my cry
I waited patiently for the Lord
And He brought me out of the clay which was mire

He has set my feet upon the rock
Let this be written of me in His book
That I have delighted to do His will
All my life His plan I'll seek to fulfil

Do not withhold Your compassion from us
For we are preserved by Your lovingkindness
Though evil beyond measure thus surrounds
Each morning we see new mercies abound

Many O Lord are the wonders You've done
Who can compare with You, Lord, there is none
Many O Lord are Your thoughts unto us
Blessed the man who in You puts his trust

Whenever you turn to the left or the right
Your ears will hear a voice from behind
Lift up your eyes and behold the teacher
A word from behind is calling all hearers
This is the way, walk in the way
Your steps He'll direct and your paths He'll make straight
This is the way, remember I pray
That whenever you turn, you'll remember the way



I Will Sing of the Hope Set Before Me

By Lachlan & Melanie Perrin

I will wait patiently for the Lord
Whose name is Redeemer, Wonderful Counsellor
He will incline His ear to me
I'll look into His face and see
The glory of who I'm named to be

As I meet Him eye to eye
The fiery trial reveals my lies
Faith becomes the doorway to believe

I will sing of the hope set before me
And mourn for Him who died to sin
And put a new song in my mouth
I will sing of regeneration and renewing
Brought forth in His image
I will sing praise to our God



*'Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying,
"This is the way, walk in it,"
Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left.'*

ISAIAH 30:21

Thankyou

The family would like to express their thanks to all who have come from near and far to attend Bruce's Thanksgiving Service. Please join us after the service for light refreshments in the Function Room.