

C O N N E C T

*Shaped by His word, serving His world*

WINTER | ISSUE 21 | 2020

## KEEPING THE 'SOCIAL' IN SOCIAL DISTANCING

WHAT LIFE LOOKS LIKE IN A RESIDENTIAL THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE DURING A PANDEMIC

**Two years ago, Cynthia was happily going about her life in Tasmania—working, going to church, spending time with friends, and not planning any big changes. But God had other plans for Cynthia, and today she finds herself living on-campus at a theological college nearly 2000 kilometres away from home in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.**

Cynthia is working towards a Masters of Divinity, a four year course full-time.

"The trigger that brought me here was a Word from God one Sunday afternoon in July 2018," Cynthia says. "While journaling, I had a strong sense God was saying 'there is another chapter to your working life' and after further prayer, that chapter seemed to be Christian service. This was a big deal, because I had only worked in 'secular' settings throughout my life and I thoroughly loved my current job. However, God's Word was strong and it got my attention."

Cynthia found BST online, applied, flew to Brisbane for her interview and was accepted into the college. She packed up her life in Tasmania and arrived in Brisbane for the beginning of the 2019 academic year, moving into our on-site residential accommodation.

Cynthia quickly settled into the daily routine of life at BST. "I absolutely loved the natural bush setting; nature is where I best commune with God and 'defrag'. I also enjoyed the weekly variety of lectures and independent study. And, sipping afternoon coffee on the deck outside my unit, whilst



"God's word was strong and it got my attention."

completing weekly readings, seemed positively decadent. I felt spoiled and very, very privileged. Last year was very much a break for me, after working thirty-four years in full, active jobs."

### And then came 2020.

In January, John Coulson took over the role of Acting Principal—in addition to his roles of lecturer and Academic Dean—while Rev Dr Richard Gibson departed for six months of study leave.

"In terms of time and pressure, it was already a huge semester," John says. "And then, in February, the realisation accelerated rather rapidly that COVID was coming and that we couldn't ignore it and we had to do something about it.

"My immediate assumption was that we would have to move onto Zoom immediately to do our lectures."

Unlike many theological colleges, BST has always maintained a firm commitment to face-to-face learning and community connection, rather than online learning. This has remained a distinctive of the college for more than 75 years, but this meant a great many changes for the college and BST's students in a very short timeframe.

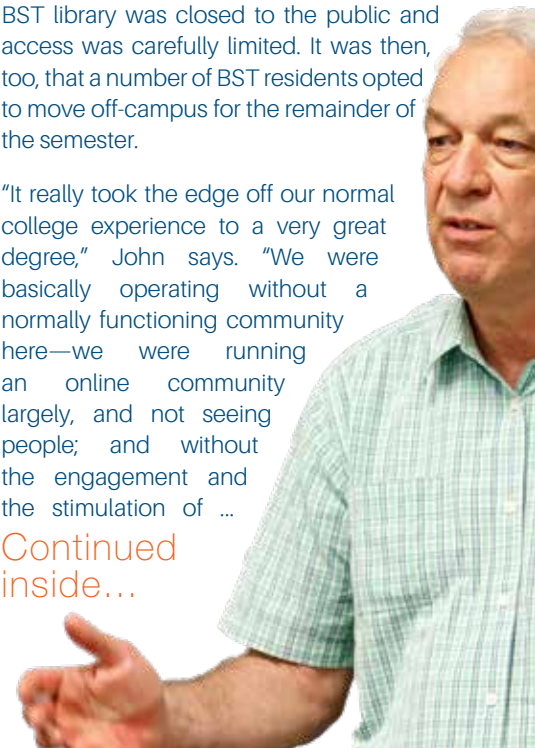
"The thought at that stage was that we would be able to run in dual mode (online and in-person) until the end of term, but by early March things began to happen really rapidly and we realised that we didn't have that time," John says. After only one week of trialling a dual mode approach, BST switched over to an entirely online-based learning platform for the first time in its history.

"Part of the grief of the whole thing was that basically we were shutting that down immediately in one fell swoop, and with only about one or two days' notice for students—but that's been a characteristic of the whole COVID situation; you have to make very quick decisions. It was an emotional struggle, but it's what had to be done."

In response to the crisis, community lunches, chapel services, face-to-face lectures and fellowship groups were all put on hold, the BST library was closed to the public and access was carefully limited. It was then, too, that a number of BST residents opted to move off-campus for the remainder of the semester.

"It really took the edge off our normal college experience to a very great degree," John says. "We were basically operating without a normally functioning community here—we were running an online community largely, and not seeing people; and without the engagement and the stimulation of ...

Continued inside...





# REV DR RICHARD GIBSON

## BST PRINCIPAL

**“ BUT THE WORD OF GOD INCREASED AND MULTIPLIED.” ACTS 12:24**

**In the book Acts, Luke punctuates his account of the growth of the early church with regular summaries like the one above. Again, and again, Luke points to the unstoppable progress of the word of God.**

Again, and again, these progress summaries come after there has been crisis for the churches that threatens to tear them apart. When conflict between Greek- and Hebrew-speaking believers had the potential to divide the emerging movement into two factions, Luke records the resolution that restores unity, and adds, “And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (Acts 6:7).

When ferocious persecution saw the execution of James, son of Zebedee, and the arrest of Peter, it seemed capable of wiping out the apostolic leadership. But after Luke records the sudden

death of arrogant Herod Agrippa, he adds the summary above (Acts 12:24). After encountering and subduing evil spirits and the practice of magical arts in Ephesus, Luke points out, “So the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily” (Acts 19:20).

**“In this new phase of hybrid teaching... it is hard to know what the college community will look like and how it will function in the future...”**

Many families, businesses and ministries find themselves sifting through the ruins created by the COVID virus. They have lost loved ones, profits, employees and traditional opportunities. BST finds itself in remarkably good shape, thanks to the commitment of students, the prayers and generosity of our gospel partners, and the provision of the federal

government’s income support.

In this new phase of hybrid teaching, catering for students present in the classroom and those best served by Zoom, it is hard to know what the college community will look like and how it will function in the future. Some of the decisions to be made in planning strategically for the future are perplexing.

What we can be sure of is that God’s word will continue to grow, spread and prevail. We can be sure that the program issued by Jesus “in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8) will continue to be fulfilled. It will be fulfilled, not because of the impersonal force of the word, but because the risen Lord Jesus will ensure it through His sovereign rule over history, and the Holy Spirit’s empowerment of His faithful people.

So, despite uncertainty and confusion about many things,

the mission of BST remains crystal clear: to serve the risen Lord Jesus by providing a context in which students are shaped by God’s word and equipped to serve His world.

**“What we can be sure of is that God’s word will continue to grow, spread and prevail.”**

As our graduates persevere in preaching Christ, teaching his word and praying for people to turn to God, we know that the word of God will increase and multiply. As Acts reminds us, our Lord Jesus and his Father will ensure this comes to pass, through the power of the Spirit.

So, emboldened by Acts, please join with us, our students and our graduates, in begging the Lord to add “to their number day by day those who are being saved” (Acts 2:47)

## SUSAN’S JOURNEY TO LIVING WHOLENESS

*Earlier this year, BST launched our first Living Wholeness courses, providing multi-level training for God’s people who are seeking to support, help and provide care for those around them, whether in a congregational, mission, ministry or professional setting.*

*Susan Upham recently finished her training in ‘The God-Centred Change’ course, and we caught up with her afterwards for a quick Q&A...*

**Q: Can you tell us a little more about yourself?**

**A:** I’ve been blessed with four daughters, three of whom are married, and have given me the joy of being a grandmother to five grandchildren aged 1 to 6 years. It’s a wonderful season of my life where I get to have a lot of fun with the grandchildren and am able to support their families in practical ways.

I’m married to John and we have just celebrated 40 years of marriage and adventure together. Prior to COVID we loved to travel.



My professional background is Social Work and Public Health. Since the beginning of 2020 I am semi-retired and just do a small amount of contract work for Emerging Minds as an Implementation Consultant. Much of this work is about developing online learning resources and supports for professionals to promote child mental health.

**Q: What drew you to Living Wholeness and prompted you to get involved?**

**A:** I’ve known about the Living Wholeness Community for a number of years... I was curious to know more about the Living Wholeness framework and I jumped at the chance to do the God-Centred Change course at BST earlier this year. I was at a point in my life of wanting to deepen my relationship with others and with God... I also wanted to be better equipped to support others that might be struggling in some way.

**Q: What were your impressions of the course? Was it useful and beneficial? What did you enjoy most about it?**

# LIFE DURING A PANDEMIC (CONT'D)



(Continued from page 1)

... that community on campus, that made it hard for everyone."

This sense of isolation and separation has become the trademark of the coronavirus lockdowns around the world, but Cynthia has found more than one silver lining to the new reality.

"Paradoxically, COVID seemed to engender a much closer sense of community for me, as a smaller number of residents spent more time together," she says. "Also, on Zoom I felt I got to know more about all my classmates, rather than just interacting with those I sat next to in a face-to-face lecture. I enjoyed seeing the faces of my whole class on Zoom, and felt I was interacting more with them as a result."

"While I am hugely and respectfully aware that COVID has been very hard for many staff and students, I must confess that there were not really any hard parts for me. I enjoyed the more relaxed breaks during lectures, sitting on a comfortable seat in the sun on the deck, and chatting with fellow residents who were also on breaks."

By early June it was clear that—at least for now—Queenslanders had done the hard work

of containing the coronavirus outbreak, and BST began looking to the future.

"We were required to have a COVIDSafe plan in place for our students by the Australian College of Theology, which has been approved," John says. "We've worked out a lot of the nuts and bolts of how lectures, chapel, lunches and fellowship groups will work. We've worked out how many people can fit in all the spaces, and what we need to do in terms of hygiene."

"We're operating in dual mode for lectures now, and we want to do it as excellently as we can. We've purchased extra technology to facilitate that. We're wanting both audiences to have a sense of full inclusion in what is going on, to actually feel part of the one class regardless of whether they're present physically or via Zoom. We're going to be talking about how that's going, and improving it along the way and learning from each other."

Cynthia has the following advice for anyone considering studying at BST in the future.

"It helps heaps to know that God wants you to be here, even though you might not know why. It is a wonderful comfort to return to this fact in prayer, when the going gets tough."

"I don't really know what I want to take from my time at BST, perhaps because I don't know why God has me here. Another picture he has given me is that of a cocoon, and the word that I am 'in transition'. Throughout my Christian life, God has tended to reveal his plan for me in small steps, usually just one at a time, and it is often only with hindsight that I have seen the whole picture and purpose of that plan. I suspect that the same may be the case for this current 'chapter' of my life."

The COVID crisis has not gone away, and no one can know what the future may bring, but John says the lockdowns have had at least one positive effect.

"It brought home to the majority, I think, the value and the joy of what they were missing, and the reason why they choose to come to BST, which is for the experience of theological education in community, and fellowship in community. It really highlighted what kind of college we are, and the majority of our students are very keen to come back. That was a very significant factor in our decision to get back on campus as soon as we could safely do so."

***With many students now back living and learning on campus, we would value your ongoing prayers and support. Thank you!***

"It really highlighted what kind of college we are..."

**A:** Overall, the course was both useful and an enjoyable experience. Given my professional background, I appreciated the bringing together of biblical truths and the psycho-social model of health and well-being... We were a diverse group and between us there was an array of rich and varied life experience that enhanced our understanding of the concepts. Because I am a very visual person, the 'shape' concepts that underpin the Living Wholeness framework really stuck with me. It's given me a framework that helps me to better understand myself and others.

**Q: Considering the original intention was face-to-face but COVID pushed everything onto Zoom, how did you find the experience?**

**A:** I started the course with a couple of face-to-face sessions at BST, which was really helpful in getting to know the other students. It certainly helped to cement the relationships and made the transition to the Zoom platform less difficult... The presenters did a great job trying to maintain engagement with each of the students and there

was the opportunity to have discussions in break-out rooms on Zoom as well as larger group discussion.

I was paired with a prayer partner for the second part of the 12 week course and we met weekly outside of class time via Zoom to share about the application of the course material and reading as well as pray for each other. This was a really special and supportive experience—all done on Zoom—and it wasn't until several weeks after the course that we met face to face for the first time. We plan to continue meeting on a monthly basis.

**Q: What would you say to someone considering doing a Living Wholeness course in the future?**

**A:** This is a course everyone can benefit from! The presenters bring a wealth of experience and are simply wonderful people to engage with. I learnt so many practical skills from the course over the 12 weeks and would highly recommend it to others who want to improve their relationships or improve their skills in supporting others...

***BST and Living Wholeness are operating a number of courses throughout the year.***

***Call BST on 07 3870 8355 or email [info@bst.qld.edu.au](mailto:info@bst.qld.edu.au) for more details.***

# CAC IN FOCUS

## KEEPING CHRIST IN THE CENTRE



**Alongside continuing to develop a Strategic Plan for 2021-2025, the past few months has seen our Centre for Asian Christianity focusing on two main areas—events and resources.**

We had two events planned for April and May—a Conference in Sydney for Chinese Churches and our annual fundraising dinner—both of which have been rescheduled until the second half of 2020.

With the ongoing impact of COVID-19 we will now be running our Culture, Chaos, and Christ Conference online, in conjunction with the Sydney Chinese Christian Churches Association, on Saturday 12th September. This year our conference will explore the differences in how the first generation Chinese church (Mandarin/ Cantonese-speaking) and the Next-gen Chinese church (English speaking)

understand and practice power and authority in the church context.

The goal is to establish a dialogue between both groups to create better understanding of how each one thinks, so that they can best work together and encourage one another in the task of the spread of the gospel.

As well as keynote addresses we are looking to have discussion groups in Cantonese, Mandarin, and English, as well as a question and answer session with a panel of respondents. We would value your prayers that this might be the first of many conferences helping the 1st and 2nd generation Chinese churches.

We have continued planning for our annual Fundraising event in October, where we will share not only what the Centre has been doing, but is Strategic Vision for the next five years.

Part of the CAC vision to become an Australian hub for the acceleration of gospel growth in the Asian Church is to have a website that functions as something of a 'one-stop-shop' in regards Asian ministry across Asia as well as within Australia. So we have begun writing and sourcing articles and blogs on Asian Christianity, as well as exploring possibilities for being able to reprint with permission helpful material on Asian Christianity.

We have begun thinking through how to feature short courses in Asian Christianity developed by some of our ministry partners and how CAC might contribute to that. We also have many more ideas for the website for making it a valuable Asian ministry resource.

*If you'd like to connect with us or suggest ideas, I would love to hear from you too.*

Rev Dr Andrew Prince, CAC Director

CAC CENTRE FOR ASIAN CHRISTIANITY SYDNEY CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCHES ASSOCIATION

# Culture, Chaos & Christ CONFERENCE

## 12 SEPTEMBER 2020

9am-12pm

ONLINE via ZOOM

FOR MORE INFO OR TO REGISTER, VISIT  
若要知道更多信息或註冊, 請瀏覽以下網頁

[BST.QLD.EDU.AU/CAC-CONFERENCE2020](http://BST.QLD.EDU.AU/CAC-CONFERENCE2020)

## The Centre for Asian Christianity Vision Fundraiser

*See what's around the corner...*

Tuesday, 22 October 2020  
From 6:30pm

CAC CENTRE FOR ASIAN CHRISTIANITY

BST  
Brisbane School of Theology

Register online today at [bst.qld.edu.au/cac-dinner](http://bst.qld.edu.au/cac-dinner)

# Y O U R S U P P O R T I N A C T I O N

In June, we asked for your help: our Chaplain's Residence was in need of some significant renovations and repairs, and we asked friends like you to give a total of \$22,300 to meet this need.

The response was overwhelming. Within a month of launching this appeal, we received an incredible \$66,000 in donations—nearly triple what we had hoped for.

"We've been absolutely blown away," Jonny says. "It's spoken volumes to us about the love and support this community has for us and for each other. We know this wasn't a small thing, for people to give so generously in the midst of this coronavirus crisis, so to see this result and to be able to get into the work knowing that so many people have our back, is just incredible.



Please visit [bst.qld.edu.au/donate](https://bst.qld.edu.au/donate) to help meet our ongoing building needs.

## C H A N G I N G O F T H E G U A R D

This May, Ian Case, stepped down as Chair of the BST Board after nearly 10 years.

Ian joined the Board back in 2003, and will continue on as a Director until the end of 2020. Ian has worked tirelessly over the last 17 years, seeing the college through its transition from Bible College of Queensland through to BST, helping to appoint two Principals, and supporting the development of our Centre for Asian Christianity. We thank Ian, and his wife Christine, for their loving and godly service.

Going forward, we are excited to see Terry Leister take on the position of Chair of the Board. Terry was appointed to the BST board in May 2015 and became Company Secretary in November 2015. Terry brings over 30 years of experience in Enterprise Management Systems. He has served as a non-executive director of the Sydney Anglican Schools Corporation, St Andrew's Cathedral School, Sydney and St Lucia Bible Church where he and his wife, Julie, currently attend.

We are also delighted to welcome onto our Board four new members, Sumi An, Ian Cameron, Vivienne Ip and Scott Waddell.

Sumi is a qualified lawyer with over 13 years experience working in criminal law and civil litigation in Australia, and serving in various international and cross-cultural liaison roles for local government officials in South Korea.

Ian is a Chemical Engineer and Professor Emeritus at The University of Queensland where he was involved in process systems engineering and educational innovation. Prior to arriving at UQ he worked in the process industries for many years and for the UN in Argentina and Turkey. He is a co-founder and director of Daesim Technologies—a Brisbane based company.

Vivienne has worked in the financial sector for the past five years in Chartered Accounting in areas of external audit and business advisory across a diverse range of industries. She now works in commercial accounting in the health sector, and is a member of Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand.

Scott has over 25 years of experience in resources roles and has held a range of senior board and executive positions in various ASX listed companies.

His corporate roles have included his current role of director and executive for Metallica Minerals Ltd, CFO and Company Secretary for Metro Mining Limited and Cape Alumina Limited, and various finance and executive management roles with Anglo Coal Australia and Rio Tinto Alcan.

Please pray for our Chairs of the Board, past and present, as we move together into the future!



# WHAT STORIES WILL WE HEAR?



**Taking holiday pictures has never been as easy as it is today. But as a tour guide once commented about his tour members, "They have lots of pictures, but no stories."**

To be fair to the tour members, perhaps their photos do say something, such as "I have been there" or "See, I look nice, don't I?"

But if these are the purposes, it does not matter if they take a selfie at the Niagara Falls or a group picture at the Eiffel Tower, the story would never really change.

Life events can be likened to holiday photos. We rush from one event to another, like rushing from the Eiffel Tower to the Champs-Élysées. Every one of them seems important. Perhaps they are—the question is: what story do they tell? Just to say, "I have been there?" or "I looked nice there, didn't I?" Isn't that everybody's cliché?

Mitch Albom's best-seller *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*

is a fictional recounting of a man's experience in heaven. There he meets five people whom he knew in his life and is shown events related to them. The images make him realise that life events are not random or isolated experiences but interconnected and forming meaningful stories.

A few years ago, I had a similar encounter myself (not in heaven but on earth—and I'm quite definite about this because I'm still here writing this story).

After preaching in a church, someone came up to me and asked: "Still remember me?" I said, "I'm sorry, have we met somewhere?"

He said: "I was one of the kids in your Sunday school class 35 years ago," and he added, "Thank you for leading me to Christ." 35 years ago! I had even forgotten that I was once a Sunday school teacher!

It was a little town known for being a hard soil for the gospel, so I

didn't expect any conversion. What surprised me was the little boy was now a godly Christian. Later that night he took me out for dinner and gave me a bigger surprise: his parents and siblings were there, and they had all come to the faith!

I just wonder, when we get to heaven, how many people will come up to us and tell us our earthly stories? And what stories will they tell?

*Rev Dr Sam Goh is Lecturer in Old Testament at BST, teaching in both our Chinese and English program.*

*More blogs and academic articles are available online at [bst.qld.edu.au/blog](http://bst.qld.edu.au/blog).*



## E V E N T S

### CULTURE, CHAOS & CHRIST CONFERENCE

**SATURDAY**

12 SEPTEMBER 2020

Join us for the first Culture, Chaos & Christ Conference, hosted by the Centre for Asian Christianity, exploring the issue of 'Culture, Authority & Church: Why Don't They Listen To Me?'

**Delivered via Zoom**

**Speakers:** Rev Ying Yee, Dr Devin Yu, Grace Lung, Rev Herbert Chan, Ps Adam Ch'ng, Rev Dr Andrew Prince

### OPEN NIGHT

**THURSDAY**

8 OCTOBER 2020  
6:30PM-8:30PM

Thinking about theological study? Wanting to explore God's word in a new and deeper way? Join us for our BST Open Night to participate in a lecture, meet some of your fellow students and lecturers, and find out more about our college and community.

Visit [bst.qld.edu.au/opennights](http://bst.qld.edu.au/opennights) for more information.

### CAC VISION FUNDRAISER

**THURSDAY**

22 OCTOBER 2020  
6:30PM-9PM

The Centre for Asian Christianity Vision Fundraiser is a key event in the life of BST, and a chance to gain new insights into Asian ministry both in Australia and around the world.

Visit [bst.qld.edu.au/event/cac-dinner](http://bst.qld.edu.au/event/cac-dinner) for more details

### OPEN MORNING

**TUESDAY**

27 OCTOBER 2020  
8:30AM-1:30PM

Join us at our Open Morning for a taste of college life at BST. You can come along to our Tuesday chapel service, sit in on a morning lecture, hear a short presentation, then join us for one of our famous community lunches. It's free to come along!

Visit [bst.qld.edu.au/open-morning](http://bst.qld.edu.au/open-morning) for more details

To register for these events, visit [bst.qld.edu.au/events](http://bst.qld.edu.au/events)

For more information on upcoming events or contact us on (07) 3870 8355.