

# Baptist The Recorder

The Journal of the  
Baptist Historical Society  
of New South Wales

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April 1996

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## NEXT MEETING:

**When:** Thursday 2 May 1996 at 7.30 pm

**Where:** In the in the Lounge Room, Morling College, Eastwood

**Speaker:** Dr Michael Chavura

**Topic:** *Daniel Allen—Calvinistic Baptist Leader in N S W*

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BAPTIST HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF NSW

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**Minutes of General Meeting held 1 February 1996**

The meeting was opened in prayer by the Chairman at 7.30 pm with thirty-one members and friends present (details in attendance book).

**Apologies**

Apologies were received and accepted from Mr P. and Mrs R. Blair.

**Minutes**

Minutes of the previous general meeting held on 2 November 1995 were confirmed.

**Correspondence**

Details of the following correspondence received were given:

1. Royal Australian Historical Society — latest publication.
2. Miss A. Robinson supplying information on 50th Anniversary celebrations at Randwick Baptist — forwarded to achivist.
3. Mr P. Young had received a letter from Mr J. Church requesting that the Society give consideration to publishing various papers which had been presented at Society meetings — referred to the Executive.

**General Business**

*Future Meetings*

The Chairman reminded all members of the Annual Meeting to be held on 2 May with Rev M. Chavura to be the speaker.

Details of other meetings have been finalised:

1. August — Rev E. Archer "Baptist Presidents and their emphases (3)"
2. November — Stuart Pigin or Robert Linder.
3. February — Ron Robertson "This is my story"

**Treasurers Report**

Attached report tabled.

**Archivist's Report**

Rev E. Archer detailed recent activities of the archivist and a sample of the enquiries he had received.

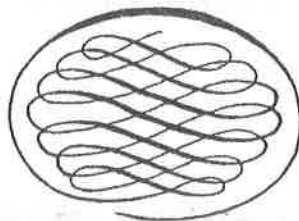
Rev B. Thornton presented to the Society for its archives a photo of Rev C.J. Tinsley and a 1909 souvenir of the Chapman-Alexander mission giving stories of the crusade.

**Speaker**

The Chairman introduced Arthur Lockley, our guest speaker, who addressed members on the topic "Frank Starr at Petersham".

After the address many of those in attendance recounted their memories of Rev F. Starr and testified to his faithfulness and the effect he and his ministry had had on their lives.

The meeting was closed in prayer by the Chairman at 9.00 pm.



O C Nannelli  
(Secretary)

**Baptist Historical Society of NSW**  
**Financial Statement: 1 October 1995 to 31 March 1996**

Income	General Fund		Expenditure
Membership Subscriptions	70.00	Postage and Stationery	
		October	33.00
		January	33.60
			66.60
		Baptist Historical Society of Queensland Research fee	20.00
		Royal Historical Society Annual Subscription	68.00
Total Income	70.00	Total Expenses	154.60
Balance b/fwd 1 Oct 1995	2524.60	Balance c/fwd 31 March 1996	2440.24
	<u>\$2594.60</u>		<u>\$2594.60</u>

	Publications Fund		
Book Sales	15.00	Postages	9.40
Interest	117.82		
Total Income	132.82	Total Expenditure	9.40
Balance b/fwd 1 Oct 1995	2006.79	Balance c/fwd 31 March 1996	2130.21
	<u>\$2139.69</u>		<u>\$2139.61</u>

**Essay Competition Fund**

Balance b/fwd 1 Oct 1995	\$98.96	Balance c/fwd 31 March 1996	\$98.96
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**Summary of Balances**

General Fund	2440.00
Publications Fund	2130.21
Essay Competition Fund	98.96
	<u>\$4469.17</u>

**Held as follows**

Nat. Aus. Bank—Cheque A/c	1548.57
Nat. Aus. Bank—Term Deposit	1235.60
Nat. Aus. Bank—Term Deposit	1885.00
	<u>\$4469.17</u>



# The Ministry of Rev F H Starr at Petersham Baptist Church

Abridged Version of a Paper by Arthur Lockley

Rev F H Starr was inducted as the minister of Petersham Baptist Church on Sunday 12 June 1949 by Rev G.H. Morling (then Principal of the NSW Baptist Theological College) and served that church until his farewell on Sunday 25 March 1961, a period of almost 12 years.

In June 1942 during the ministry of the Rev Joshua Robertson, the Church at Petersham celebrated the Diamond Jubilee. Austerity was then the order of the day and blackouts of the night and the celebrations were simple and scanty.

Following Joshua Robertson's resignation in October 1945, Rev Allen Brooke was called to the ministry at Petersham and served for a period of 2 1/2 years, the shortest ministry in the history of the church. His resignation (for personal reasons) was accepted in a resolution which expressed profound regret.

Young people were returning home to a rapidly changing community and economy. *The Australian Women's Weekly* of those years featured homes that could be built for the princely sum of £2,000, but buying an old house in Petersham was too expensive for these ex-service people. The post-war period saw many people leaving the membership of Petersham and going out into the outer suburbs of Caringbah, Clemon Park, Eastwood and Epping, a trend that would last for the next 30 years or so.

The church minutes of 6 April 1949 record the following resolution: (Moved J.A. Young, Seconded H. Piggott) — "That a call be given to Rev Frank Starr to the pastorate of the Church at a stipend of £450 per annum, a car allowance of £2 per week, together with occupancy of the Manse rent free, and the usual amenities".

On his return from several years of active service on the battle front in New Guinea as a Chaplain, Frank Starr had accepted a call as

Assistant-Pastor to Dr W.L. Jarvis at Central Church, and there it was that Petersham's call came.

The service of induction and a public welcome were arranged for June 1949 and so Frank and Beryll, Joan, Barry and Eira came to Petersham.

What did we expect?

"He's a missions man ... his wife will be a real Lady of the Manse ... he has a daughter who sings like a Lark ... he has a haircut like Jack Kramer ... he plays cricket ..."

I heard the last phrase over and over again ... he plays cricket ...



News filtered through, as it always seems to do with a new arrival in a church, of a young man who had played representative cricket for a NSW Junior team and had a promising cricketing career ahead of him. Rather like C.T. Studd he had entered the ministry, by-passing a sporting career that would always remain an important part of his life.

The post-war years saw the arrival of the English Cricket team in Australia. As a young lad I had been taken to see my first cricket match. Bradman and Barnes at their best, Keith Miller attacking Messrs Hutton, Edrich and Compton with his fiery bowling, Johnson and McCool tying the Englishmen in knots rather like a 40's version of Shane Warne! I was hooked for life!

The church had entered a team in the NSW CCC during the ministry of Allen Brooke and it had become a part of Church life for the young men. Now we were to have a minister who played cricket!

Rev George Morling preached at the Service of Induction on Sunday morning and in the evening came the moment we'd waited for ... (I was 16 at the time) ...

Frank Starr's opening words were:

"I greet my friends of the Church as your pastor and friend. My wife and I are coming among you to serve in any way we can and we come, conscious of our high privilege in serving our Lord Jesus Christ and of our own limitations". Then, the punch line: "However we and you know the power of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus, and we say from our heart with deep conviction, 'We are determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified'".

The words hit home in a way Frank Starr would never have anticipated!

No cricket! All he's going to do is preach about Jesus Christ Crucified! The rest of the words were a blur ... but he continued:

"The preaching of the cross has been demonstrated as the Power of God since New Testament times, and we have proved that it is the only message God uses in our ministry. And so we come to you, not with

wisdom or excellency of speech, but with the word of the Cross and absolutely dependent upon God".

It wasn't long before an ardent but misguided teenager realised what Frank Starr was saying. On 1 January 1950, Mr Starr preached on the topic of 'The Grace of God' ... I became a Christian and along with two others was baptised and entered into the membership of Petersham Church. In the first eight years of his ministry, 96 names were added to the Church roll, 62 of them by baptism.

It also soon became apparent that he took time and delight in playing cricket and did many other things apart from preaching. Some of the older ladies did however note "He doesn't tend the Manse roses as well as Joshua Robertson ..." Everyone has peculiar priorities!

What were the resources of Petersham Baptist Church when Frank Starr arrived?

There were human resources in abundance. The roll-call reads like a list of denominational 'heavies'. The secretary was the esteemed J.A. Young who was an inspiration to all who knew him. His son, Peter Young, one of the new deacons, needs no introduction; Harry Morton (H.B.), long time editor of *The Australian Baptist* and worker with the Home Mission Board; Rupert Petschack (whose service as treasurer was of inestimable value to the church); Horace Simpson, a man of evangelical fervour and an inspirational Sunday School leader, the incomparable organist A.T. Iliffe (Bert); Harry Butler; Albert Foster and many others. Young deacons like Allen Palmer, Ted and Hugh Piggott (and Ted Harris) were to blossom during the coming ministry as well. H.B. Morton remarked once that although it was not always a case of 'Softly may we all agree, touched with sweetest sympathy', the diaconate at Petersham had never had a major 'eruption', always managing to find a solution to problems in a manner agreeable to all.

The sweet influence, allied with common-sense of saints like J.A. Young, Bert Iliffe and Albert Foster ensured a spirit of harmony and set a standard for leadership in

the Church for many years to come. With women of the calibre of Flo Harris and Nell Young (our two missionaries), May Simpson, Merab Young, Gladys Mackenzie, Ada Garforth, Millie Butler and Millie Harris, the church was indeed rich in human resources. No wonder that early childhood memories were of gracious, smiling ladies hosting fellowship days in their homes and in the church.

For physical resources the church owned a prime site on the corner of the Boulevard and Hunter St. It had a church, a School Hall, a manse and two fine tennis courts.

The Church of 1949 had active groups that met for prayer and Bible study, a strong SGMU and BMWU, a large Sunday School, Endeavour groups and a congregation eager to share in fellowship with the new minister and his family. A monthly 'newsletter', *The Petersham Messenger*, edited by Mr Peter Young, provided articles of interest for all sections of the church. It is today a source of valuable history of the Church at that time.

In the December issue of 1949 it records that F.H. Starr top-scored for the cricket team with 74 and took 3-87 in a match against St Stephens, Hurlstone Park. The same issue records a performance of the 'Messiah', an article on Remembrance Sunday and many items of personal interest.

In December 1994, on the occasion of Frank and Beryll's 60th Wedding Anniversary, I asked them what was their greatest achievement/memory during their ministry at Petersham. Some would have specified renewed missionary interest, the forthright preaching of the Gospel or the growth in numbers baptised. Frank Starr looked at me and without a moment's hesitation replied, "Fellowship!". We spoke briefly and recalled the people we had known and of shared experiences with both young and old, the older members linked to the young in ties of Christian fellowship that will not easily be forgotten, and whose product is still in evidence in churches around our country.

Several years ago whilst attending a concert party at Orange Grove in Sydney, Canon Jim Glennon's centre for people in need, I met a former friend from Petersham, whom I'd not

seen for 40 years. Now in service with the Anglican Church, Carole spoke of a special group of young people at Petersham with whom we'd both grown up and recalled the happy times of fellowship shared. 'Koinonia' was certainly the theme of many a group gathering but in spite of her fond memories and clear recollections, I think Carole was wrong.

'Fellowship' was in my mind too, but as I reflect on the church of the time, I am convinced that there was no unique quality of the group at all. Rather do I think that Frank and Beryll Starr were able to work with a group of very raw young people and through the guidance of God's Holy Spirit were able to lead them to commitment to Christ and a deepening sense of fellowship and understanding of the Christian life. 'A noble army of ... matrons ... men and maids' were there to support them. Mrs Starr spoke frequently of the joy she experienced as she saw the out-working of the Holy Spirit in young lives. Under their guidance, the Church experienced a fellowship of kindred minds, that were it to be duplicated in all our churches, the possibilities for God's kingdom on earth would be limitless. How wonderful that so many of our churches have this 'Koinonia' experience.

Let us then examine how this fellowship was achieved and what the wider results were. Then perhaps we can have a better understanding of what Frank and Beryll Starr did for Petersham. How DOES fellowship occur? By accident? by instruction? By training? I believe that it is by inspired training and splendid example that real fellowship comes into being.

Frank Starr recognised and nurtured talent. He gave opportunities for service to many people, even on occasions resorting to 'press-gang' tactics. As a young Teachers' College Student I was approached by him and guided into the service in the Sunday School. I was given the chance and never turned back. Ray Martin, who has given so much of his time and expertise in denominational matters spoke of being 'given a go' as a singer.

Ray was the original 'Johnny-one note' and as all good Choirmasters know, was assigned to

the Bass section of the choir to grunt and groan, but ... he learned his craft well ... someone gave him an opportunity. A few years later he was to sing a solo at a BYF meeting with great aplomb and in tune!

His gifts in other areas were soon recognised and he became a leader in church and denominational service.

One of FHS's innovations was a Teacher-Training scheme, where teachers met for one hour each Wednesday evening for preparation. Each department met separately and under their leaders followed certain agonising procedures. One 'victim' prepared the story for the following week and told it to his peers as they sat in the traditional Sunday School Circle. Constructive criticism (hopefully) then followed, discussion about suitable music and other activities ensued and at appropriate times Sunday School Examination Books for teachers were studied. By a strange coincidence, Frank Starr arranged that these teacher meetings preceded the Church Prayer meeting ... We were all encouraged to attend.

Not long into the ministry, it became a custom for us to attend the monthly Baptist Youth Crusade meetings held at Central Church, led by John Drakeford, Bill Thitchener & Co. This was the model then for our own monthly Baptist Youth Fellowship evenings held in our church at Petersham.

Joan, Barry and Eira have each commented that they felt the strength of their father's work at Petersham was among young people.

A second innovation was the election of a Youth Council to coordinate youth activities in the Church. One representative from each major organisation was nominated, and several others were elected to fill the vacancies on this council. One Saturday evening each month was the BYF meeting, attended by young and old alike, but run entirely by the young people. Compere, Chorus Leader, Musicians, Quiz Master, arrangers of speakers and feature items were all allocated. What a training time! In later years I recall seeing some rather amateurish

attempts to run such meetings by people five years our junior and was brash enough to address certain remarks to Mr Starr. He promptly but kindly reminded me of how raw our efforts had been at the start. Such is the confidence of youth. We'd thought we were good.

The following day after the Sunday morning service, the Youth Council met in the vestry and part of the procedure was an evaluation of the previous night's program. "More co-ordination needed between pianist and song-leader, quiz session far too long, compere too frivolous, lack of transport arrangements for older people, speaker or film unsuitable etc" ... Oh Yes, there was great encouragement and positive feedback as well, but we were kept on our toes.

A fellowship Social in the hall was another monthly feature, once again an opportunity for various leaders to try their hand. Then there was that coming together of young and old as we regularly invaded the homes of church-folk prepared to face the onslaught of 'Squashes'. People opened their homes to music, to have Bible studies, and to meet missionaries. Saturday nights and Sunday evenings were busy and rewarding. In our minds Baptist Ladies led the world in cooking-prowess and hospitality, an example to all who participated in their culinary delights and shared their genuine Christian warmth. Frank and Beryll Starr were always with us, but never dominated proceedings.

Church picnics at places like Bronte and Collaroy were another feature of fellowship at Petersham. It seemed that every church family was present. Flo Harris and the older ladies sat under their umbrellas, surveying the cricket and softball games, watching the dashes to and from the beach, young and old mingling together, enjoying something perhaps that they were not always aware of, a fellowship of kindred minds. It was a time of growth for all.

Frank Starr is a wise man and built on the foundations laid by his predecessors. A healthy group of Christian Endeavourers had always been in evidence at Petersham. Circumstances were making it difficult for some of these to arrive at YP Endeavour on time (quite a few lived in distant suburbs) so

a Thursday dinner was arranged by the ladies of the Church. A fine baked dinner with 'accoutrements' was presented each week by a rostered group of ladies. The cheerful faces of women like Mrs Starr, Mrs Young and my own mother made it a time to remember (the tantalising odours of the food probably helped).

The dinner was followed by the training that YP Endeavour gave in prayer, Bible study and public speaking. In those days, no-one ever stood up in church to read, speak or sing unless they had been thoroughly prepared at Endeavour or BYF meetings. Eira has noted that when young people gather today as a group, their most common activity is sitting down to watch videos. They rarely experience the fellowship developing activities that were so common to an earlier generation.

Choir practice followed Endeavour from 8 pm to 9.30 pm and naturally enough, a goodly proportion of the choir came from the Endeavour Society. Young joined old to sing and fellowship together. Petersham Church has always been noted for its good singing (and a marvellous organ). Ruth Simpson, James Young and Michael Khlentzos were people of musical talent, talent recognised and used to train others.

Bruce King commented recently that on his early visits to Petersham to hear a youthful F.H. Starr preach, he was surprised to see the minister leave the pulpit, mount the conductor's dais and lead the choir in the anthem of the day. In his Annual Church Report of 1951, the secretary commented:

"The contribution of the choir has been of a standard seldom obtained, we believe, in our Baptist Churches, and we are grateful for the service. We pray that the gifts with which God has endowed them may ever receive prior attention in the music of the sanctuary. To organist (Bert Iliffe) and choir master (Frank Starr) we are equally indebted".

It should be noted here that our prince of church organists also took notice of future talent and encouraged young Barry Starr, who later gave such valuable musical leadership as organist and conductor at Petersham, Frenchs Forest and Central. The

choir performed difficult cantatas and anthems on a regular basis including: 'Bethlehem', 'The Nativity', 'Messiah', 'Crucifixion' and 'Olivet to Calvary'. Later choir masters and organists owe much to the training given by Frank Starr and Bert Iliffe.

One of FHS's innovations was the formation of a concert party which visited other churches to assist their church programs. Kurri, Clemton Park, Leichhardt and other places kept the band of musicians in regular practice.

In 1951 an excerpt from the secretary's report read: 'The world of business is prosperous. Employment was never so high. There is an abundance of all things needful for our daily existence. Shall it be recorded in the future history of our church that these were the dark days of prosperity?' What did J.A. Young mean? In context, it was linked to the church's giving both at home and away.

The early years of Frank Starr's ministry saw an increased interest in missionary work and part of it came from factors already evident in church life of the day. In the *Petersham Messenger*, the pastor reported (1949) that: "The *Indian Field*, the present organ of the Australian Baptist Foreign Mission, is being replaced in January next by *Vision*, a 32-page magazine incorporating *The Ropeholder*. This will be a much more fitting record of our foreign mission adventure".

Church minutes of 29/3/50 record that a Welcome Home Banquet to Miss Flo Harris, our missionary in Bengal, would be held on Thursday 13 April 1950. The annual report of that year also noted: "Hearts were made happy with the return of Flo Harris after so many years work in India. Excluding brief sessions on furlough, Miss Harris has been on the Indian field approximately 30 years and we rejoice in the her safe keeping and in her bright and cheerful homecoming. We pray that her gracious influence may continue with us to the glory of God".

The words from Romans which sent Flo Harris to India were to become a watch word for the missionary program of the Church. "I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy acceptable



unto God, which is your reasonable service.

The combination of Frank and Beryll Starr's missionary fervour, Flo Harris and a little later, Nell Young (from a mission in Borneo) ensured that Petersham was a missionary Church.

Activities ranged from Missionary Pageants, Conventions, strong work in the SGMU, BWMU and Zenana societies and the establishment of the young men's Missionary Union. One lost count of the number of missionary visitors to the church. After their early forays into the Highlands of New Guinea, Albert Kroenert and Albert Dubé followed by Betty Crouch, Eileen Tucker, Edna Hale and many others. FHS was a missionary enthusiast excelled by none. He shared with the young men of the church problems that faced that Mission Board and sought our advice. We felt totally involved. He encouraged all to listen for God's call to overseas service and taught the church to pray effectively and for specific needs. He was annoyed by prayers that said little more than 'God Bless the Missionaries'. If there was a new venture in missions such as the move into the Baliem Valley, we were kept informed with 'up-to-the-minute-news' and needs. Frank Starr taught the Church to pray intelligently.

Many will recall services when he called for financial giving. One night in response to a need for the Tinsley Hospital, he left the pulpit, stood at congregation level and outlined specific need and cost. Before anyone quite knew how it happened hands were raised offering amounts of money so that the needed funds were raised quickly. Flo Harris told us of a time in Biri Siri when the Garo leader, Belu Babu looked at the results in the offering plate: "This is an insult to the Lord, send the plate around again". Frank and Belu were practical men. FHS looked forward to the day when the church would give at least 50% of its annual finances to work outside the local church.

A report on Mrs Starr's work as a delegate to the Annual Assembly said: "With refreshing simplicity Mrs Starr unfolded her thoughts on the New Guinea enterprise. Her appreciation of the romance of the task, the opening of the door and the eager response to what we

believe to be a definite direction from God, left us with a determination to support this great adventure".

What else could Petersham be, but a missionary church?

Frank Starr had a vision of the whole mission of the church. At a church business meeting held on 26 May 1954 it was decided to purchase the property situated at 40 Hunter St, Lewisham (next door to the church) for a sum not exceeding £6750. Under Frank Starr's guidance this led to the establishment of Morton House, a hostel for young men. The official opening was on Saturday 20 November 1954. Visitors were welcomed by Allan Palmer (the church secretary), after which the opening ceremony was conducted by R.W. White on behalf of the Baptist Union.

The establishment of a youth hostel at Petersham for young men to be followed in years to come by the venture of Flo Harris Lodge (in the ministry of Roy Henson), was a landmark in the life of the church. Frank Starr and the deacons of that time were men of vision! The hostels have provided homes for young people from all over Australia and young families who have now settled in the inner-city have become the nucleus of today's church. Without the foresight of F.H. Starr, Bert Iliffe, Rupert Petschack, Harry Morton, Peter Young and Allan Palmer, it would not be far off the mark to say that Petersham Church could easily have suffered the fate of many a struggling or defunct inner-city church.

An evaluation of Frank Starr at Petersham would be incomplete without reference to his cricketing prowess. A team that could boast such names as Peter Young, Ron Jarvis and Frank Starr could always be guaranteed of their fair share of wins, but in typical manner, FHS gave young players a go. Two future captains recalled their earliest efforts with bat and ball with a degree of embarrassment, but Frank persevered. He forsook his wicket-keeping gloves and became a valuable left-hand bowler for the team. He secured the only hat-trick obtained by the church team in over 20 years of cricket. In addition, he scored many runs with his aggressive batting. It was a great

privilege and experience to bat with F.H. Starr.

Frank drove a little Ford Prefect (BY843) at that time. (Baptist Youth?) and always had a couple of young team members in his car each week. Many stories could be related about pedestrians and other drivers who attracted attention on his way to cricket matches.

In this whole evaluation of the ministry at Petersham, I have tried not to be negative. Like any other minister or leader, FHS had his critics. Some would have liked him to visit more and drink copious cups of tea, but he gave time to those in real need; some may have preferred the eloquence of sermons from men like E. Clatworthy or Dr W. Jarvis, but Frank preached clearly and with great power; some would have preferred him not to always open the bowling but he took more than his share of wickets and knew his cricket; his roses may not have been quite as good as Joshua Robertson's, but ... The trivialities mentioned show perhaps how little there was to criticise in his ministry. One of the finest tributes comes from his own children. Each has said that they never felt like children of the Manse, where unreal things were expected of them. Their home was open to all. Joan spoke with fond remembrance of her first big birthday party at Petersham, when Church friends were invited to the Manse: It was a new, extended family for her. Eira and Joan didn't mind at all when Dad was away on occasions (it appears it was a time of indulgence with chocolate pudding for the family), but they loved the times when the whole family could sit down for dinner together. Barry, Joan and Eira appreciated the direction and opportunities given to them in music and church service and it is a tribute to Frank and Beryll that each member of the family is now a committed Christian and fully involved in

churches in Sydney and the Blue Mountains.

What conclusions can we reach? By nurturing fellowship through training, by recognising talent and giving people a go, by faithful preaching of the gospel and encouraging the church to reach out to others in missionary enterprise a bond was established so that his own family was linked inexorably to that of the church. 'One in Christ' was a reality and has remained so for many years for those who were fortunate enough to share in the ministry of Frank and Beryll Starr.

As FHS left Mascot to board a plane for deputation work in New Guinea, the church-folk gathered to farewell him, burst spontaneously into song: "Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love, the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above".

God has blessed Frank and Beryll Starr in their ministry together over many years and a whole generation of people rise up to call them blessed.

I don't think Frank will be comfortable reading what seems, perhaps, to be a paean of praise. After a few mutters about the author I can imagine him saying, "Thank you ... but remember, 'To Him alone be the glory and praise. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, that sits upon the throne to receive honour and glory and praise'.

I'll go along with that.

Frank told me one day that his boyhood view of heaven was a place where you could play cricket all day. I'm sure God has created a heaven like that for Frank Starr (with Beryll close by), but in breaks of the cricket he will be running around, still encouraging young things to grow.

