



Eulogy for Ron Clark (full version)

**Funeral - Wednesday 9 January 2019 at
10.00am**

Creek Road Presbyterian Church

**Authored - Toni Cash with input from Sharon; Paul;
Coby; Rhi and Jeevan**

Welcome and we are so glad to see so many of you here today at this time of year when so many are away on their holidays. Thank you also to the many people who have contacted us in the last week and a half or so to let us know that they can't be here and to tell us stories that have contributed to THIS story ...

And welcome to Creek Road Presbyterian Church – this is my home church and the good folk of this church have loved and supported me. And in true Presbyterian style, Dad's church family in the Presbyterian church across the state have shared the joy and privilege and the challenge of organising a funeral to do honour to a good Man of God who has gone home to his Lord.

Please – have a look around you At all the people here. You are all folks from his or our lives come here today to pay your respects and support us. There are people here who didn't know my dad at all – except through us and our lives and the stories of our dad. And there are people here who know my dad well. Look there is Daniel who is Sharon's best friend for decades. And there are Julie and Steph and Rachael and all the other "friends of my heart" who have walked beside me for so many years. And Pauls family and his friends who are here because they love him. And there are our colleagues from all our work places who will help to "hold" us as we return to our "usual" lives in the coming days and weeks and months. And Rhi and Jeevan's friends and family are here too – to love and support them as they begin their married life with the huge challenge of facing the death of a beloved grandpa. And Coby's friends who are keeping an eye on him at this tough time and are such a great bunch of young people.

And the people of Dad's church family are here –

- his fellow Ministers and people of God; the session clerks and the elders of the church who shepherd this community of Faith in

Queensland and Australia and the wise women of the church who lead and nurture and teach;

- Folk from the various committees and Boards on which he served the church throughout his life and most recently in the Clerk of the Assembly role;
- And the people who were part of his congregations – the churches he shepherded over the decades he has been in service to God; and the churches where he was a member of the congregation including the people of the church where he worshipped these last few years – Wynnum Presbyterian.
- And the people from Church office who were his day to day supports and contacts and beneficiaries of his sense of humour and his own peculiar ways of doing things! Michelle, Christina, Suzy, Lesleigh, Peter You all know who you are.

And there are people here from the other parts of his rich and varied life – in person and by the stories they have told us because they couldn't be here in person today – his magic world; 4MBS where he announced for many years; and his friends from all over Australia who couldn't come today.

So – think about all the love and support and the depth of that love and support that is here for us today – and know that we will be all right. We will be sad ... but we will get less sad over time. We will remember this lovely man – our father, father-in-law, Grandpa – with love and laughter and we will pay tribute to his life with ours.

Now that you know who is here - Let me tell you a bit about the life of this remarkable man – **Ronald Clem Clark**.

He was born on 18th of January 1934. So he was just shy of 85 when he left us. His father was a milkman at the time he died when my dad was 2 years old. So he was really raised by his Mother (our Nana) and, as was common at that time, his aunts and an uncle had a fair hand in his raising. He had one older brother – our Uncle Cec who was 15 years older than him and really played the strongest male role model figure in his life. Uncle Cec went to war when my dad was only a little boy and Dad knew that they were blessed that he came back to them. He grew up in East Brisbane and I catch the bus home past his street often and think about his life as a little boy and the stories he told us. He went to East Brisbane Primary School and then to Brisbane High School when it was in the city next to the Gardens. Dad's mother and family were nominally Anglican but didn't go to church so he never attended Sunday School and this perhaps accounts, in part, for some of his really strong interest in

children's and youth ministry. His mother, his family and his upbringing did instil in him a strong moral compass that remained with him throughout his life. As a teenager he had significant health problems (significant Kyphosis) – and the treatment for that at the time was to spend 12 months of his life lying on his back strapped to a board. It was during this time he developed his life long love of drawing – and if you have a look at the table up the back you can see one of his recent efforts – his latest drawing of one of Sharon's border collies.

He didn't finish high school but his brother supported him to go to art college where he studied commercial art with an emphasis on figure drawing and cartooning. In the years preceding television he gathered together a group of artists to create an animated cartoon studio (initially under Nana's house) which produced the first colour animated cartoon in Queensland and the second animated cartoon in the state. Again – have a look on the table up the back there and you can see some of the art work he did as a teenager and young man. While he was developing the studio he also had a job as a clerk (tee hee) for the Brisbane City Council. And he was a gregarious young fellow with lots of friends and a busy social life who (can you believe it?) played a very decent game of tennis!

Dad talked about his search for meaning as a young man and that he knew there was a purpose to his life. He found that purpose and the central tenet of his life – his faith in God – at a Brisbane Drive In where he went with a group of friends – including some Christians – to see the movie "A Man Called Peter" and was converted to be a follower of Jesus. The book is up there at the back on the table with other bits and pieces ... and both of us read it as teenagers.

After his conversion he looked around for the church that was "right" for him and he chose the Presbyterian Church. You who know him well know he was a man of intellectual and moral rigour. And that was to be seen when he worked out how to live his life of faith and walk with his God – he researched it and decided that the Presbyterian Church was the church for him – he loved the structure of it and the law and the strong bible teaching – from the beginning to the very end – he loved the Presbyterian Church and his church family. His first church was Holland Park Presbyterian Church and there he met our Mum. Shortly after joining the Presbyterian Church he was accepted as a candidate for the Ministry – training at the Queensland Theological Hall (now Queensland Theological College – where he later taught) and the University of Queensland – he hated Greek and Hebrew. During this time he served as a Home Missionary and was a student minister at Kedron, Bald Hills and

Townsville – forgive me if I have left any charges out of that list. On exiting the Hall he was ordained and inducted into the charge of Bell where he served from 1965 – 1970. My earliest memory of Dad is from this time – I remember sitting on the steps of the pulpit playing with the fringe on his stole while he preached! Robes, stoles and clerical collars were all the done thing back then!

In 1970 they were called to Coorparoo where he developed his real interest and skills in the area of family and youth. We remember the “coffee shops” in the hall and the bands that developed out of that ... He was a very cool man for a minister! It is during this time that we remember the beginnings of magic as part of our life and as part of his ministry – we regularly had magic tricks as part of the childrens talk in church. He was also a ventriloquist and a puppet names Jo Jo lived with us ... he regularly came out for conversations with Sharon and me (and various friends and others) in our home and probably the first time we sang in public was with Jo Jo in Church at Coorparoo. Lots of puppets came to live with us (and him) over the years.

He served as Children/Family Worker with Scripture Union from 1975 – 1978 and that time really deepened the skill and use of these tools as ways to give the message of God to people. And beach mission ... and camps ... became a regular thing for us ... we were often away on camps with Mum and Dad during this period.

In 1978 he came back to his Presbyterian Church as the co-joint Director of Home Missions and Christian Education - following Union. This was a state wide role and he travelled often and was heavily involved in pastoral work to Home Missions staff; and the development of church planting strategies. And he LOVED the publications work, the camping ministry and the congregational missions and Vacation Bible Schools. Quite a few of you have been telling me your memories of VBS in the last little while ... we have lots ourselves as we got to go with him to lots of these in our school holidays. He continued in that role right up until he retired in 1999. He wasn't really ready to retire – but Mum was unwell and so he retired to spend time with her and to care for her until her death in 2003.

After Mum died he returned again to work for his beloved Presbyterian Church and was appointed Assembly Clerk by the 2004 Assembly – he was on sick leave from this role that he absolutely LOVED when he died. He also accepted the appointment as Assistant Minister at Ann Street which he held for 10 years from 2004 – 2014 when he retired from that bit of his job (his children were asking him to perhaps simplify his life a little bit).

His other great love in his life is his family – and the two were not separate. Jesus lived in our home growing up. He was there with us for our meals; for going to bed and sleeping peacefully; in stories and in games and in life lessons; and he went with us everywhere; he was spoken with and of openly and all the time.

Dad loved our mother to bits. He was 26 (just short of 27) when they married on 30 December 1961. Dad was still a student Minister and Mum was a teacher. Mum was 20 and her mother died shortly before they were married. Gwen (our Grandmother) LOVED Dad to bits and as we have started to sort through his books and treasures we have found notes and books from our Grandma to Dad about her hopes for them as a couple in serving God. She wanted a good man of faith as a partner for her daughter – and that is what she got although she was not there to see it. When Mum died in November 2003 we really worried that he might just give up ... but he was determined to get life going again and he went on to live another 15 years. The things that he went to keep going after mum died were –

- His love of magic and he was able to indulge that ... my children grew up with Grandpa doing magic shows at child care and school and birthday parties; Christmas things at both Sharon and my workplaces benefitted from magic shows and he has done many of these shows for many of you over the years I remember a Christmas one for Missie Hannah a few years back. Sean Taylor, a long term friend from the magic world, told me that when he first met Dad after knowing him for several years only by phone he was shocked at how old Dad was – his “gushing enthusiasm” for magic had led him to believe Dad was a much younger man. Many of you have told us that sort of story as well - often using the word “enthusiasm” as you talk to us about Dad.
- And there was his love of radio – he went to 4MBS to volunteer and worked for many years as an announcer on a weekly classical music show and the silver memories station that goes to Aged Care Services in Queensland. Gary Thorpe – the General Manager at 4MBS – said Dad was “*a real gentleman and always brought an air of joy to his announcing*”. And that announcing gave him great pleasure. He only gave up announcing a couple of years back. As we have been on our travels I continued to be astounded by how much Dad knew about radio stations all over the country and we frequently went to visit community radio stations where he spent happy hours talking with like minded people and I spent happy hours

enjoying his energy and enjoyment of it all (which might have looked to others like blankly gazing into space?).

- And there were his travels. There are two major parts to this –
 - the annual trip to Tasmania. This started shortly after Mum died and Sharon and dad went on a trip to Tasmania because it had been his favourite holiday with Mum. He has been every year since then with some configuration of family and friends. He loved the trips with Lesleigh Hall because Lesleigh shared his love of trains and he delighted in the times they managed to see a train on the line and the lengths they went to to do that. Both Rhi and Coby have been with Dad and Sharon or me ... and the year Dad turned 80, Dad, Sharon and I went together on a very special trip. As many of you will know this annual trip for him was like others going to the beach each year. We used to try to get him to go somewhere different – but I have come to think that was more for us than him and a few years ago we gave up on that and just enjoyed having the time with him in this special context. And, of course, he made friends there as well. His friends from a B&B we stayed at every year, David and Irene, commented that *“it is very sad when men such as Ron depart this world ... he was absolutely delightful and a role model on how men should behave, maybe old fashioned but the world would be a better place if more men were like your Dad”*. He decided a little while back not to make the trip in 2019 ...
 - And the other bit of his travels was his short trips – he loved to drive and he liked to take short breaks away from Brisbane. From his regular short drive out to Laidley which he did with all of us and with his good friend Lesleigh; to the weekends away which I was so blessed to join him on ... he had great joy in doing driving trips. Our last one together was to Childers and the little Pharmacy museum there and Bundaberg for the Hinkler museum. We also planned this year to go on the train to Longreach to see the Qantas Museum. He would have loved it! Ask me anytime ... there are many trips to think back on and enjoy again in my heart and mind for the years to come. Although I will no longer go away on my weekends with Paul and say ... I think Dad would like this ... we could come for a weekend.

He loved me and Sharon. He and Mum, who served others themselves, raised two daughters who serve others – I am a social worker and Sharon

is an Occupational Therapist. And he was pleased with our choices – although he would no doubt have been pleased with whatever it was we did. He wanted us above all to love and serve God and he knew we could do that in anything we did. And he wanted us to use our God given gifts and our intelligence.

After Mum died he and Sharon sold their separate houses and bought a house together at Tingalpa, close to Paul and I just here at Carina, and they shared that together ever since - along with Sharon's family of Border Collies. Holly was his favourite but he loved them all and they loved him. He enjoyed watching them learn and do their tricks and routines with Sharon. He said to me that he got the joy of having a dog without any of the work! And Sharon has to learn to live her life now without him going about his busy life in his "wing" of their shared place.

He loved Paul; and he and Mum were delighted with him and welcomed him to our family without reservation. And there he has remained for more than 30 years since Dad conducted our wedding when he was Moderator in 1986. Paul is handy with things and my dad was completely not that ... so Paul often did the fixing of things – particularly that damn computer or other "modern" things that broke (like the TV) or mainly just didn't do what he wanted them to do when he wanted them to do it. Mum used to say that Paul was the son they got "the easy way" and Dad thought that was hilarious and agreed!

And he loved and delighted in his grandchildren. I found this the hardest bit of this eulogy to write ... and have had to work hard to keep this a bit contained or we will all be here for days while I go on and on about how much he loved them and illustrate that with endless stories that have meaning to me.

Rhiannon and Coby delighted Dad from the moment they were born and he teased them relentlessly (as he did us when we were small). He did magic for them (and was magic for them) and he tried to create sense and meaning for them in the world. He prayed for them at their respective dedications as babies (and ever since) that they would grow to know and love Jesus – the picture of him on the order of service is of him praying at Coby's dedication in our back yard at home. Both of these young people are intelligent and gifted and are forging their own paths in life with the great role model of their grandpa as a "good man" in their background. When she was a teenager, Rhiannon would come to me and ask me tricky questions like "I don't understand the Trinity– how can God be one person and the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?" I am not my father's daughter in terms of theology so I would send her off to talk to her Grandpa ... from

which she would return satisfied! And Coby he taught magic as this little boy tried to work out - how did Grandpa DO that? I would say go and ask him. Sometimes Grandpa said "A magician never tells his secrets" ... but as he got older he delighted in showing him how it was done! And these two shared a love of story and how story was made and used in our world – most recently they were into the Disney telling of Lewis Carroll's Alice in Wonderland.

Recently he delighted in and was delighted with Jeevan coming to join our family. Rhi and Jeeven were only recently married on the 15 December and many of you were also there for that lovely wedding service. By the Grace of God, Dad was able to join us even though he was, by then, very unwell. Dad thought Jeevan was the perfect partner for his beloved Rhiannon and said to me, after they were engaged, that they were going to be a strong force together for God and that he would be interested to see where their faith took them in the future. Something that we can all watch ... but he won't see from this side of the divide between earth and heaven.

These three were with him almost to the end. We all saw him and sat with him and talked on the Saturday before he died. He knew that he was close to going home to God and he probably knew better than us how close. His three grandchildren stayed late into the night after Sharon and Paul and I had gone home. Rhi prayed with him when she and Jeevan went home. And Coby stayed with him until the hospital finally got pain management that worked and he was able to go to sleep. He didn't wake again; going home to God early in the morning on Sunday 30 December 2018 – an amazing feat of timing because that was Mum and Dad's wedding anniversary. How amazing is that and what an awesome anniversary for all left behind to mark each year.

And he loved all of you. He just loved people - as he was called to do. So whether he knew you or he didn't ... he loved you and he is glad you are here today. So are we. So sit back now and pay attention. You are privileged to join us in this tribute to him ... a proper good old fashioned Presbyterian worship service. He prepared this order of service for us to follow today and Rhi found it, where he said it would be, next to his desk and tucked into the top of his bible. We will pray the Lords Prayer among the prayers we pray; we will hear scripture read to us by Rhi and Jeevan; we will hear the message of faith sung to us in solo by his good friend Ron Gibson; we will hear the message of God preached to us by the Reverend Peter Barson who is a brother minister and loving friend; and we will sing the message in three hymns that he loved and that another of his bother

Ministers described as three “cracking” hymns; and we will sing the benediction and the magnificent three fold amen and escort him from this place of worship to God on his body’s final journey on this earth. And this is all as it should be to honour a good man –

- A man of enduring faith in his God
- A faithful man of service who has served God and the church in his work and his leisure and his family
- A man of rigorous intelligence
- A gifted man who used his gifts of magic and music and story to serve God and love others
- A loving man who loved us ...

And to finish us off his beloved Coby is going to read us a reflection by Lewis Carroll –

“Be sure the safest rule is that we should not dare to live in any scene in which we dare not die. But, once realise what the true object is in life – that it is not pleasure, not knowledge, not even fame itself, ‘that last infirmity of the noble minds’ – but that is it the development of the perfect Man and then, so long as we feel that this is going on, and will (we trust) go on for evermore, death has for us no terror; it is not a shadow, but a light; not an end, but a beginning!”