



UCA Historical Society Newsletter

March 2016

Editorial: Prompted to go back...

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You can receive this newsletter via email. Send your email address to ucasahist@chariot.net.au and we will send you our up-to-date news and other items of interest

Special Point of interest.

2017 marks the 40th anniversary of the formation of the Uniting Church in Australia.

As part of a decision made by the Assembly Standing Committee, a Uniting Church History Association is being formed. This will take place at a national history conference here in Adelaide on the 2017 June Long weekend.

As plans are formulated there will be more details released. Mark the dates in your diary.

The Society has finalised arrangements for its 2016 programme. On first impressions the five very different events that we have scheduled seem to have little in common. In planning this programme I have been wondering about the point of it all! Five very diverse topics and yet each one is a response to the church's past, a prompting to revisit that which is now part of history.

Our workshop in April will be run in conjunction with History SA and is designed for people who are thinking about documenting their church's story and reflecting on how this fits into the broader context of church history of SA. The workshop will provide guidance and ideas on how to access and work with the resources that are available, the different mediums that can be used to present our stories, and the challenges and pitfalls of research and publication. We anticipate that it will be an invaluable experience for those hoping to take advantage of our annual grants programme, which provides financial resources to support the production of local histories.

In May, as part of SA History Month, we will be launching a new publication which brings together three significant reflections of those who, in the early 1970s, were instrumental in developing a new curriculum for religious education in state schools. This work provides important insight into some historic and ongoing issues about the relationship between the church and state. This is still a lively topic in schools although the context has changed dramatically as our society has become religiously and culturally diverse.

At our annual meeting in June, the Principal of the Uniting College for Leadership and Theology, Rev. Professor Andrew Dutney will speak about his recent research which involves revising and reinterpreting important documents that were produced at the time of Union. This work reflects his recent experience as President of the UCA and is being prepared in anticipation of the 40th anniversary of the UCA in June 2017.

In September, Rev. John Watt will help us focus on the importance of local history as he reflects on the extensive work undertaken to form the West Lakes congregation just over 40 years ago.

Finally in October two doctoral researchers, Rev Brian Chalmers and Dr Jenny Hein will take us back even further to the early experiences of revivalism in SA from the 1880s.

Our underlying aim in planning this varied programme is to make sense of who we are now by discerning the way the past informs the present context in which the Uniting Church lives and ministers. How did we arrive at this moment and what can we learn from the experience? By pausing and reflecting on the road we have taken, we discover insights into the future before us.

Rev Dr Dean Eland. Editor and Secretary.

The UCA History Centre at
44A East Ave Black Forest is open
on Wednesdays , 1- 4 pm

Phone
8297 8472

E mail
ucasahist@chariot.net.au

Web site
historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au

History Month Book Launch 29 May

In 2016 the UC SA Historical Society is publishing two major research papers on the church's commitment to education and lay ministry. On Sunday 29 May at Woodville High School, Dr Don Hopgood, former deputy Premier and ex Moderator of the UCA, will launch the three-part report, "Exploring Religion in State Schools: The Story of the Religious Education Project". Each of the three authors, Malcolm McArthur, Alan Ninnes and Peter Russell have documented this significant project that followed the decision of SA churches to withdraw from the scripture instruction (RI) in state schools.

The first chapter by Malcolm McArthur, "Ministerial Migraines: Churches and State Schools (1940-1990)" examines the political and educational twists and turns from the passing of a Parliamentary Bill on Religious Instruction in state schools in 1940 to the provision for Religious Education in the 1972 Act, to the printing of resource material and the institution of chaplaincy in state schools.

Alan Ninnes, the second author was appointed Coordinator of the newly established Religion Education Project Team in 1974 and his chapter is titled, "Religious Education without indoctrination: a new approach to teaching about religion in state schools". Alan had been a Senior Master in Science and had also studied religion in the USA and had worked in the Methodist Department of Christian Education. This chapter explores the drama of the Religious Education Project Team's efforts to provide religious education which avoided indoctrination and the consequent cross-fire from both conservatives and radicals in the years which followed.

The third chapter from Peter Russell is based on extensive interviews with many teachers who were involved in implementing this new approach and is titled, "Implementing Religious Education in state schools: the rubber and the road". "The Education Department was faced with implementation of a new subject that hitherto did not exist, even in church schools. This chapter contains stories of those of us who trialled the first courses and went on to develop the teaching materials and resources; how we, as a group of writers and advisers and curriculum resource developers, went about the writing of the resources, the in-service programs, the challenges, the 'on the road' experiences and what we achieved. As practising teachers we were patently aware that our job was to support teachers teaching students about religions and their place in the world."

Why meet at Woodville High School? This school has recently celebrated its 100th anniversary and was a place where RI once happened. The current principal, Meredith Edwards is a strong advocate for building a community that is inclusive and respectful of a variety of cultural and religious traditions. While the current context is very different from the 1970s it is an opportunity to reflect on the links between the past and the present and reminds us that history never stops.

We are planning to launch the second research project at the AGM on 19 June and this collaborative work, "Living Stones: Lay members and their ministries in the Uniting Church in SA" is being edited by David Houston. This work is a review of the way education and ministry training programmes in the Uniting Church and its antecedents have enabled lay members to develop and use their gifts for Christian leadership and ministry.



Historical Society
Council Members
2016

(from the left) Norah Norris,
Barbara Hayes, Ken Hayes, Val
Canty, Glenys Edwards, Gaye
Brown, Judith Raftery, Doug
Hosking, Dean Eland (was the
photographer). Absent : Brian
Chalmers

A Forty Year Cycle of Congregational Youth Activities

A reunion of the Congregational Youth Fellowship in September 2014 demonstrated once more that church friendships and activities of our adolescent years remain indelible and powerful. Almost 200 former CYF members gathered at Clayton Wesley Church, Beulah Park (formerly Clayton Congregational) to relive those precious times and to renew friendships. A further 25 sent their apologies.



Jonathan Barker for the Planning Committee compered the afternoon, encouraging people from the different decades to trace the Fellowship's activities from the CYF's inception in the early 1930s. Joelle Hancock outlined the roots of the Fellowship by describing her father's formative years at Clayton Church.

Ken Leaver, who would have turned 100 around the time of the Reunion, not only benefited by the church's youth activities but was appointed the first part-time CYF Director in South Australia in 1942. In his teens, the church was central in his life. In the 1930s he, along with many others, went to church four times on Sundays as well as several times during the week. Church, Sunday School, Bible Studies, Christian Endeavour, concerts, drama and tennis all provided regular opportunities to meet people his age, to reflect on role models, study the Bible and sort out who he wanted to be.

According to the Congregational Union's Year Book of 1933-34 a Youth Council had been set up in 1933 and met fifteen times over that year. The Council organised the Bible Class Movement, including annual Scripture Examinations, whose results were published in *The Advertiser*.

Records at the UCA Historical Society Centre reveal how Sunday Schools were the precursors of these youth fellowship activities organised at the state level. At the beginning of the 20th century there were few children in South Australia who were not attending Sunday Schools. In 1909, for example, there were 5,420 scholars and 614 teachers in this state's Congregational churches. At that time regular State Conferences and Rallies were held for the leaders.

After the First World War young people across various denominations in Australia (and the United States) joined the Young Worshippers League. In 1922 in our state, 2,000 YWL certificates were sold in Congregational churches. Christian Endeavour groups were also active at the time of the League, with as many as 25 Societies in the Congregational Churches in 1923.

It was in 1934 that the first Youth Fellowship Easter Conference was held at Mount Lofty for Sunday School and Bible Class staff. The Conference was reported to be "an unqualified success in every respect" and included

"study of a text book and considerations affecting the spiritual life of youth".

Easter camps were subsequently held every year from then until 1962, the numbers attending increasing through the 50s to over 1,000 in 1960. Most people at the Reunion attended at least one Easter Conference – at Macclesfield, Mount Barker, Victor Harbor or Angaston – where bible studies and themed discussions continued to challenge beliefs and thinking. Youth Rallies, dances, concerts, tennis and football were other regular events across those 40 years.

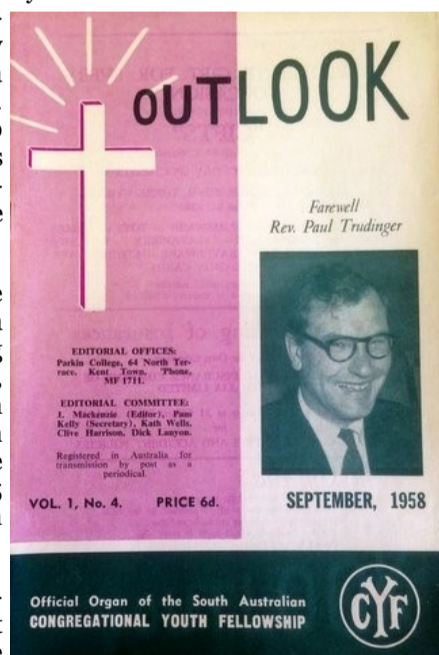


The Reunion acknowledged the groups of former CYF members from the different decades. There were several groups of former CYFers now in their 80s with very strong and fond memories of Rallies and All-day Conferences from the 1940s. The ten years from '46 to '57 were the years when Peter Mathews as full time Youth Director not only built the CYF into a powerful youth movement in this State but also initiated the first National CYF Conference in 1949, with former PM Bob Hawke as National President. Peter Mathews' energy and vision led to a Young People's Department of Australia and New Zealand, a CYF badge, flag, blazer, handbook and songbook. There were nation-wide drama competitions, a Visual Aids Library, a Quarterly Newsletter, Leadership Training and Bible Study. In our State the Macclesfield Conference Centre was built, largely by volunteers working on weekends, and the Annual Work Day for Christ helped pay for a full-time Director, a car and also contributed to the Macclesfield Centre.

These were heady days when two subsistence workers, Marney Webster (now Forward) and Betty Smith, worked without pay for youth in Congregational Churches for a year.

At the Reunion the various CYF activities from the 1940s into the 1960s under Youth Directors Paul Trudinger and John Bodycomb were illustrated by a power-point presentation. These included Youth Week, the CYF Ball, Miss

contd. over the page



News items

2016 Grants Programme and the History Writing Workshop

Applications for 2016 history grants will close at the end of April as we are encouraging budding authors to take part in the history writing workshop on Sunday 10 April.

The 2015 programme included \$1,000 grants for a rewriting project by St Andrews Strathalbyn, a photographic record for the UC at Golden Grove, the storage and preservation of documents for Pilgrim Church and the Adare Conference Centre for a historical display. A special grant of \$2,000 was awarded to Wesley Church Kent Town for their 396 page 2015 history, "The House of God-The Gate of Heaven" by Marlene E. Edwards.

The aim of the annual grants programme is to support those documenting church history in SA including congregations, agencies and groups that have a story to tell about ministry and mission. Local histories are one way to develop our appreciation of the way past experiences inform the current ethos and character of congregations. Grants will assist authors to meet the cost of producing printed histories or may assist in the presentation and preservation of heritage items.

The workshop will run from 2–4.30 pm. Those planning to attend the workshop on 10 April at the Church of The Trinity, 318 Goodwood Road, Clarence Park should send a note to our e mail address ucsahist@chariot.net.au as this will assist with catering.

ACC to go on Trove in March

Membership of the Society is \$20 (1 year), \$80 (5 yrs), Individual Life Membership \$250, Congregational Life M/ship \$250.

The *Australian Christian Commonwealth* was the South Australian Methodist newspaper from 1900 to 1940 (when the name was changed to *SA Methodist*). The ACC was issued weekly.

It is an extremely valuable resource for congregations seeking the background to their heritage when preparing for significant anniversaries. It is also a mine of information for families involved in compiling their histories.

We are delighted to learn that the ACC is to be available on Trove (the search engine of the National Library—trove@nla.gov.au). This is great news—but there is also some bad news.

"A consequence of the 2015 Mid-Year Economic and Fiscal Outlook Statement is that libraries, museums, archives, historical societies and smaller institutions across Australia will be unable to add their digital collections to Trove without paying." (from information received 22 March from History Council SA).

If anyone wishes to send a letter to the Leader of the Opposition seeking support, contact us at ucsahist@chariot.net.au. A letter template will be forwarded to you.

AGM Sunday 19 June at Church of The Trinity.

The immediate past President of the Uniting Church, Rev Professor Andrew Dutney, will be the speaker. The meeting will include elections of Council members. At present there are 10 members, whereas the By-Laws allow for up to 16. More nominations are needed.

(from the previous page)

CYF, Talent Quests, Drama Festivals, CYF Choir, Adventure Camping and the Youth Ministry of the 60s and 70s up until the formation of the Uniting Church. Marney Forward, Helen and Bruce Martin and others shared personal experiences of their times in CYF.

Despite there being over 1,000 CYF members in 1960 with over 300 young people attending Easter Conferences that year, the records reveal some serious questioning in 1963 of the purpose of CYF with the State-wide theme of 'Together – but why?' Rallies and Conferences were no longer drawing large numbers. The Year Book of 1963 records that "a more realistic and honest approach is needed".

No doubt youth work continued well past that date but the heyday of the Congregational Youth Fellowship had passed. However, it was clear that for many who attended the Reunion, those days in the CYF were among the most memorable of their lives.

Joelie Hancock (Leaver).

