



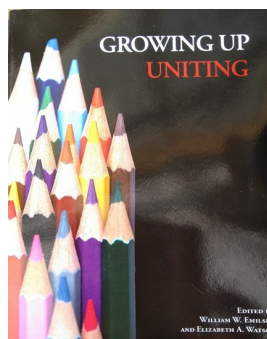
# Uniting History SA September 2021

**Guest Editor: David Houston**

## ***Growing up Uniting***

I remember the anticipation I felt among a packed St Peter's Cathedral, awaiting the commencement of the South Australian Synod's Service of Celebration following the National inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia on 22 June 1977. It was an expression of ecumenical recognition of this new Australian Church by the Anglican Church of SA and the Archbishop of Adelaide at the time, Rev. Dr Keith Rayner. It was a celebration of an historic moment. What would become of this new entity?

Forty-four years later, twenty members of it, aged between late teens and early forties, tell us something of what they have experienced over this time. Their stories have been drawn together by William Emilsen, one of our Church's eminent historians, and sociologist Elizabeth Watson, in a book entitled ***Growing up Uniting*** and published by MediaCom Education.



The book title became the theme for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Biennial History Conference of the Uniting Church National History Association held at the Uniting Church's Centre for Ministry in Paramatta New South Wales in June this year. The book was launched and reflected on enthusiastically by Rev Charissa Suli, President Elect of the UCA National Assembly.

William Emilsen says, "... [these members] represent the first two generations of the Uniting Church who were born into and grew up in the Uniting Church. The Uniting Church is their spiritual home." There are two South Australian contributors to this collective narrative, Michelle Harris and Sarah Williamson.

Every story carries a personal and candid reflection. They love this young 44-year-old Church enough to be both joyous about it, and critical of it, at the same time. They are enthusiastic about belonging to it and all describe the way in which family, friends and members within local congregations have helped to shape their Christian discipleship and vocational experiences. I hope many people will read their testimonies and find themselves somewhere in the 'belonging, becoming and being' so evident in their stories.

Some contributors reflect a belief that, while the Uniting Church in Australia has a well-defined structure, it was called into being to be more of a movement than an institution. Craig Corby from NSW is one who believes this when he refers to paragraph 3 of the Basis of Union suggesting that the idea that we are a pilgrim people "always on the way towards a promised goal" with "no continuing city but seeks one that is to come". He suggests if this is truly fixed in our vision, it will lead us to be an adaptable "movement" of inspired people of the Spirit who have a heart for mission that is always changing. (GUU page 30)

### **Why Uniting ?**

What's in a name? Those of us who felt the enthusiasm of being a part of a '*uniting*' rather than a '*united*' church knew there was an important reason for this new name. **Peter Son** of Korean heritage and a member of the UCA in Sydney doesn't want us to forget its significance.

He says: "Naming generates meaning. A name is not just a mere label, or tag. The symbolism behind a name embodies and articulates its function and purpose. And the Uniting Church is not '*of*' Australia but '*in*' Australia." He believes our church came into being to embrace many traditions and cultures where we prioritise our identity as followers of Christ. A '*United*' Church reflects a fixed and finalised institution. Peter reminds us that 'the present continuous tense '*Uniting*' expresses how we are to seek unity with God, and each other'. (pp 176-177)

(continued on page 4)

### **The History Centre**

The Centre at 44a East Avenue, Black Forest, is open on Wednesday afternoons, 1:00pm to 4:00pm.

Volunteers continue to serve the church and the wider community by providing advice and assistance for those involved in researching church, local and family history.

The centre welcomes volunteers to help manage the large and growing collection of documents, memorabilia, books and records of churches and agencies.

(Other contact details can be found on page 2.)

## The UCA History Centre

Open Wednesdays 1 - 4pm

44A East Ave

Black Forest

Website:

[historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au](http://historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au)

Facebook:

[www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA](https://www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA)

### CORRESPONDENCE:

E: [manager@ucsahistory.org.au](mailto:manager@ucsahistory.org.au)

Post: UCA Historical Society

44A East Ave, Black Forest, SA, 5035

Phone: 08 8297 8472

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

Judith Raftery (President)

David Houston (Vice President)

Robert Backhouse (Treasurer)

Vacant (Secretary)

Jonathan Barker

Gaye Brown

Pat Button

Val Canty

Diana Chessell

Darryl Dyson

Judy Eland

Don Hopgood

## From the President...

Greetings to all our readers.



It has been good to see some of you at our two most recent public meetings. Our June meeting, held in conjunction with the AGM, was at Morialta Uniting Church (formerly Magill Methodist), in the heart of the nineteenth century village of 'Makgill'. The programme included a walk, led by Ruth Pitt, around the historic local cemetery. Judy Eland's well-researched overview of the early decades of the church is reprinted in this edition of the newsletter. About 60 people attended the August meeting, held at Unley Uniting Church, to explore the history of the Uniting Church's involvement with the reconciliation movement. Stimulating input from Dr Deidre Palmer, Rev. Dr Jonathan Barker, Rev. Dr Auntie Denise Champion and Tarlee Leondaris led to good discussion. We hope to print some of the contributions in our next newsletter.

Back in June, eight of our members – Janeen and Jonathan Barker, Leanne and Scott Davis, Judy and Dean Eland, David Houston and I – attended the third biennial conference of the Uniting Church National History Society, held at the Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta, NSW. About 50 attended in person, and others, including the locked-down Victorians, attended via Zoom. The theme of the conference was 'Growing up Uniting', and paper presenters, including Jonathan, Dean and Leanne, responded to this in a variety of innovative and insightful ways. Judy presented a treasure from our collection at the archival 'show and tell' session, Janeen and I chaired sessions, and I participated in leading the Sunday worship – all in all, an impressive contribution from South Australia. Please read, elsewhere in this newsletter, David Houston's reference to a book written by UCA young people and published in conjunction with the conference.

I hope to see many of you at *Exploring the History of the Sunday School Movement and its role in the Uniting Church* at Hope Hall (Clayton Wesley UC, 280 Portrush Road, Beulah Park) on 24 October, for our final public meeting for 2021. This will focus on history that has been part of the lives of all of us: The Sunday School Movement.

Warm wishes,  
Judith Raftery

You can receive this newsletter via email. Send your email address to [office@ucsahistory.org.au](mailto:office@ucsahistory.org.au) and we will send you our up-to-date news and other items of interest.

### Membership of the Society

Individual—1 year	\$20
Individual—5 years	\$80
Individual—Life	\$250
Congregational—1 year	\$30
Congregational—Life	\$250

Contact the Centre for more information.



From the August meeting (L-R): Dr Deidre Palmer, Tarlee Leondaris, Rev. Dr Jonathan Barker, Rev. Dr Auntie Denise Champion

# Exploring the History of the Sunday School Movement and its role in the Uniting Church

**Sunday 24 October 2021—2:00pm**

*Hope Hall*

*(rear of Clayton Wesley Church—280 Portrush Road, Beulah Park\*)*



The Moonta Mines Methodist Sunday School Kindergarten Department entitled "Opening Exercises" (circa 1895)

- Rev. Dr Malcom McArthur will recall the origins, development, structure and purpose of Sunday School.
- Dr Don Hopgood will recount his own experience and some of the significant people within it.
- Malcolm McArthur will describe the influence of post WWII demographic and social change and the decline of the movement.
- Rev. David Houston will illustrate a 'positive postscript' to the period during and following the introduction of the Christian Life Curriculum.

Come ready to share a memory from your Sunday School days. You are invited to bring photos of school rooms, anniversary and demonstration days from your church or your collection for table display.

Afternoon tea will be provided by members of the Society.

\* Corner of The Parade. Parking is available onsite behind the halls.



(from page 1)

**Richard Telfer**, presently in Darwin, adds to this when he reflects on Jesus, described in Mark's Gospel as being on his way somewhere important. Someone stops him. They interrupt him, and Jesus responds by changing his immediate plans to love the person in front of him. Richard says, 'I think this is the Uniting Church way of doing ministry; we make plans but are willing to change because of the needs of those around us. ... this strength is part of our DNA ... in the BoU paragraph 11, we are committed to hearing the Spirit at work in our community and remain open to 'confess our Lord in fresh words and deeds'. (p 186)

**Michelle Harris** describes the experience of uniting this way, ... 'We recognise that the work of the Churches that were uniting [in 1977]... didn't end there. Rather we are called to be continually uniting people together as a people of Christ ... It will always be more than just us'. (p 131)

### **Belonging to all-age communities of Faith**

All of the contributors witness to the importance of the congregation being a place where Christian faith is experienced and nurtured. **Tim Bickerstaff** suggests that there is something unique about the modern church where people gather regularly together. He says, "I have been blessed by the relationships I have had with people much older than me that have taught me so much ... I have worked with people much younger than me as a leader of youth and children's groups ... [and] one of the strengths of the Uniting Church is its emphasis on ... communal expressions of faith... Most of the notable experiences in my Christian life have been shared with others. Participating in, planning and leading worship, camps, youth groups studies, social events – all of these have been part of my journey, and without any of them my understanding of the faith would be different." (p 26)

**Graham Corkhill** recounts: "Growing up, I attended church mostly with my mother and was a member of a Sunday School that consisted of around five kids. The Sunday School was led by a series of faithful members of the congregation. While we were out of the service for our activities, I felt we were valued members of the community as we always shared what we did after services, and there was a genuine interest in our learning and work." (p 40)

**Emma Halgren** says: "Through countless conversations over a cuppa and biscuits after a service, I learned so much about straightforward care of others – about building a community and sticking with it. It was a wonderful foundation for my faith." (pp 122-123).

**Glenda Downie** describes how St Andrew's Uniting and Kurrajong Heights Uniting invited her and her friends to participate in a Sunday evening youth service. It was small but it was welcoming, friendly and encouraging. She says: "I felt at home there and began to flourish in the faith. A youth group was formed (all six of us) which met on Sunday afternoon leading into a tea

and the evening service. Our leaders gave us opportunity to grow and serve ... they guided and encouraged us but also gave us freedom to learn from the mistakes we were bound to make." (p 74)

**Elizabeth Alia** fondly remembers her minister who wore "colourful dangly earrings" and "spoke of God like a woman". Ellie (as she names herself) comments: "I will be forever grateful to have grown up in a church where gender was not a stumbling block to imagining myself in ministry." (p 85) And **Elvina Kramer** draws on the biblical story of the prodigal son to express her gratitude: "I feel I will always be welcomed into the church regardless of the length of time I have been inactive ... or whether I have accepted Christ into my Life." (p 150)

### **Learning to Lead and engage in Mission...**

The importance of mentoring and valuing role models is a recurring theme in these narratives. **Elizabeth Elia** offers an example of it. "When I was 15 years old I decided to start a youth group. One of the greatest gifts the Uniting Church gave me was space to explore my own vision and leadership. Stephen, an elder in the church, quietly worked behind the scenes ... I can trace back my earliest sense of call to this experience. God's call doesn't come to an individual alone, it comes in a community which makes it possible and safe for us to step out in faith." (p 86)

**Sarah Williamson** watched her mother, Jan Trengove a leader in a small rural congregation become a key leader at the local, regional, then the synod level as Moderator of our church in South Australia. She saw her share ministry leadership with others in her congregation as a Lay Ministry Team for their congregation. Like many rural congregations they were unable to financially support the appointment of an ordained minister. Sarah says: "My mother's leadership and her encouragement of other women and indeed *everyone* to use their gifts and step up to leadership in the church was fundamental to me in my understanding, both of the Uniting Church and of a faith-filled life itself." (p 203)

Turning to a First Australian's story. **Justine Ganwanyawany** offers many inspiring anecdotes from her journey of 'Growing up Uniting'. Among them, she speaks of her mentors at Nungalinga and her opportunity to attend NCYC and National Young Aboriginal Leaders conferences. "I learnt new things that I could take back with me. When you meet other young people and hear how God has changed their life - that's so great and we can share the different ways God is working in our lives." Later she says, "Being a Christian leader is all about serving others. At Nungalinga we learnt about servant leadership. Good leadership in my language is *djamamirr*, working for the Lord and for God's people, not being a *bungawa*, who wants others to serve them." (p 91)

Ways in which congregations have engaged in 'mission and ministry' in local communities are regularly

described. **Andy Corkhill** describes his experience of working with the Church of All Nations in their African Families Program. These families live in housing estates near the church. Their children are tutored by University student volunteers, the parents participate in English conversation and computer skills classes. Within the church complex there are job placement services and access to emergency food. Andy says: “the congregation is clear on its mission. It knows what it is called to do. ... sharing a common vision, and having a commitment to that vision, made that church a wonderful community to be a part of.” (p 45)

### **Valuing Children’s and Youth programs that nurture Christian Faith and Discipleship**

Many contributors emphasised the importance of attending KUCA (Kids in the Uniting Church in Australia) events and NCYCs (National Christian Youth Conventions)(NCYCs) and what they were for them. Their formation in Christian discipleship and their sense of ‘growing up into Christ’, and invitations to participate in the mission and ministry of the Church in the world, all stemmed from these events. Their message is that we must not neglect these important areas that nurture ‘growing up Uniting’.

For **Michelle Harris**, being a young leader at Annual Kids’ Camp Outs (KCOs) led naturally into opportunities to attend NCYC events. She says, ‘... they were important in my development as a young Christian’. And what circled around these experiences? With her parents. Margaret and Bill Harris (now a retired Deacon of the SA Synod) she grew up sharing and learning from their experiences of ministry in both remote and local ministry placements. Then, as a young adult, with the support of the Synod, she served as a Volunteer in Mission for 12 months in Thailand, another year with the Order of St Stephen in International Mission Resourcing, then as a secretary to the Children and Youth Ministry Unit of the SA Synod.

And **Sarah Wilkinson**. From NCYC involvement she describes how she was given opportunity to participate in About Face (First Nations) projects, and as a Volunteer in Mission in Thailand. Then came co-leading a VIM project in the Solomon Islands, then on to attending Conferences such as the Christian Council of Asia. She says, ‘As a young person I felt I was being shaped and challenged and nurtured, and given opportunities to contribute ... to important mission programs.’ (p 204)

### **A Final Observation**

As you read these testimonies you will note areas of concern are raised. They include the need to keep building caring, inclusive faith communities ... as described in Loretto sister Deidre Browne’s words – ‘Come as you are; that’s how I want you. Come as you are; feel quite at home ...’. And some say, the size of a congregation won’t matter. There is the challenge to be attuned to demographic and social change and listen for

the Holy Spirit’s guidance for adaptive ministry strategies, and renewing our commitment in the support and nurture of smaller congregations through our regional Presbyteries. There is also a call to rediscover our investment in leadership development for children’s and youth ministries through our ministry training centres and KUCA and NCYC structures. And, now is the time to grow and strengthen our relationships with the UAICC and our CALD faith communities. And one other - recover the best spirit and purpose of consensus in decision making in all the councils of the Church. It is meant to enable maximum agreement and goodwill around decisions, not division and delay.

So, *Growing Up Uniting* offers a significant diverse reflection on the 44 years of the life and mission of the Uniting Church in Australia. It is provided by 20 members who love and care for our Church. It is a really valuable historical review. We thank William Emilson and Elizabeth Watson for drawing it together.

David Houston

References William W. Emilsen and Elizabeth A. Watson, *Growing Up Uniting*, MediaCom Education Inc. Unley South Australia, 2021

*Growing Up Uniting* is available at MediaCom Education’s new location - Building 4 (Across from Perk Up Cafe) 32-56 Sir Donald Bradman Drive Mile End Adelaide, SA, Australia

### **A note about Rev Charissa Suli ...**

Rev Charissa Suli is one of the National Consultants in the Assembly Resourcing Unit. In her role. Charissa Suli spends her time in the many different cultural communities across the Uniting Church, encouraging UCA members to be disciples of Christ and building networks of trust along the way.

Charissa brings experience in mentoring youth and young adults and is committed to investing in their personal growth by creating space for them to lead in the Uniting Church. She is a second-generation Tongan Minister of the Word.

At the recent National Assembly of the UCA, Rev. Charissa Suli was elected as President-elect of the Uniting Church in Australia. She is the youngest and first person of colour to serve as President-elect, and the second ordained woman and will begin her term in July, 2024.



---

# *The Religious Journey of Geoffrey Taylor*

*David Hilliard*

In South Australia the path from Methodism to the Roman Catholic Church was not a well-travelled one, apart from those who converted as the result of marriage to a Roman Catholic. Two well-known figures in the mid-twentieth century who were raised in South Australian Methodism and later joined the Church of Rome were James Govenlock, who for many years was organist of St Francis Xavier's Cathedral and founded the Corinthian Singers, and John Menadue, son of the Rev. Laurence Menadue, who had a distinguished career in the Commonwealth public service, notably as head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet in 1974–76. The Rev. George O'Neill, a Methodist, then Uniting Church minister in Adelaide, joined the Roman Catholic Church in 1991. It was even less common for a Methodist minister or candidate for the ministry to end his life as a Roman Catholic priest. The only one in Australia I know of is Geoffrey Taylor who began his Christian life at Highbury Street Methodist Church in Prospect and ended up as a priest in the Catholic archdiocese of Melbourne.

Geoffrey James Taylor, son of Percival (a non-churchgoing Anglican) and Esther (a devout Methodist) Taylor, was born in North Adelaide on 1 December 1926. He was baptised on 10 July 1927 at Highbury Street Methodist Church, Prospect, where Esther was a member. After schooling at North Adelaide Primary School and Adelaide Boys' High School, Geoffrey matriculated to the University of Adelaide and in 1945 began (though did not complete) an Arts degree. Meanwhile, he had become deeply involved in the life of the Methodist Church. In 1942 he was enrolled as a member of Highbury Street Church and the following year was appointed leader of a boys' Sunday school class. In 1944 he sat for the Local Preachers' examination, passed, and preached his first sermons. Soon he was preaching one Sunday evening every month. Meanwhile, Geoffrey found himself attracted to Anglican liturgical worship. He first encountered it at St Cuthbert's, Prospect – then one of the largest Anglican churches in Adelaide, which he attended occasionally with his Anglican aunt – and at St Peter's Cathedral.

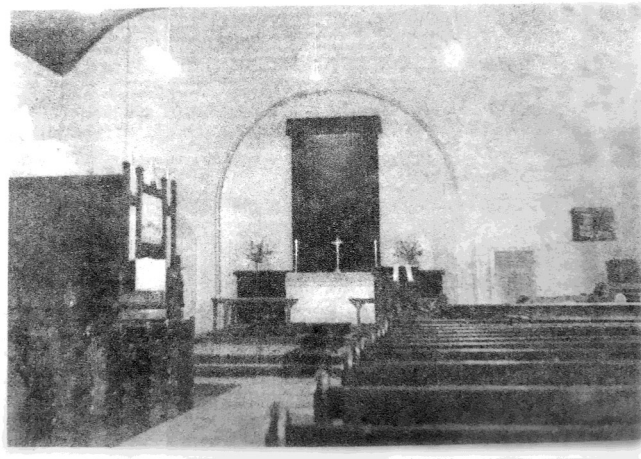
Geoffrey felt a call to the Christian ministry but in which denomination? By upbringing he was grounded in Methodism but he was drawn emotionally to Anglicanism in its 'Prayer Book Catholic' expression that was dominant in Adelaide at that time. He opted for Methodism. In

February 1946 he was received by the South Australia Conference as a candidate for the ministry, to be supported at Wesley College by a Chapman-Alexander (CABI) scholarship. Among his contemporaries at the College were men who later became prominent ministers of the Methodist and Uniting Churches in South Australia: Don Howland, Robert Vawser, Everleigh Tregilgas and Kyle Waters.

In 1949 Geoffrey was appointed as a probationary minister under the Rev. Dr Frank Hambly, superintendent minister of the Pirie Street Circuit. Geoffrey was assigned to Madge Memorial Methodist Church in Halifax Street, which served Methodists in the south-eastern corner of the city of Adelaide. This church (closed in 1960) attracted a significant number of young people who lived in boarding houses and nurses' homes in the area. Ray Beanland, who had been appointed church organist in 1937, made it his mission to transform the interior of this plain preaching house so that it expressed the insights of the modern liturgical movement and implemented the ideals of the Methodist Sacramental Fellowship (founded in England in 1935) which until that time were almost unknown in South Australian Methodism.

At Madge Memorial Church there was an emphasis on dignified liturgical worship with the choir robed in cassocks and surplices, the psalms were sung to Anglican chant, and there were regular celebrations of holy communion, drawing upon the sacramental teaching of John and Charles Wesley. The communion table, with candles, was placed at the centre of the sanctuary and the pulpit was moved to the side. At this church Geoffrey found a satisfying combination of Methodist piety and Catholic sacramentalism but he had serious doubts whether he really belonged in Methodism.

Finally, in 1950 Geoffrey was compelled to resolve his personal dilemma. He was appointed for his final year of probation to Penong on the Far West Coast of South Australia. This was the most isolated posting in the South Australia Conference. Presumably it was intended to remove the young high church Methodist to a tough place where he would be fully tested. Geoffrey refused to go. This was the issue that made him decide to resign as a candidate for the Methodist ministry and join the Anglican Church.



Interior of Madge Memorial Methodist Church, about 1950

Geoffrey was received into the Anglican Church and confirmed by Bishop Robin



on 5 April 1950. Having been accepted by the diocese of Melbourne as a candidate for ordination and credited for his theological studies at Wesley College, he moved to Melbourne where he boarded at the vicarage of St Peter's, Eastern Hill, and studied at Trinity College. The vicar of St Peter's, Father Farnham E. Maynard, was a leading figure in the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Anglican Church. At St Peter's Geoffrey absorbed the theology and liturgical life of a busy inner-city Anglo-Catholic parish. He was made deacon in February 1951 and ordained priest in March 1952.

During the following years Geoffrey was curate of All Saints', East St Kilda, went on a long visit to England, then was vicar of St George's, West Footscray. In 1959 he returned to St Peter's as assistant priest at St Peter's, Eastern Hill. Following Maynard's retirement in 1964 he was appointed to succeed him as vicar. This was a demanding position. St Peter's was the original Anglican parish church of Melbourne and one of Australia's principal Anglo-Catholic churches. Maynard – a powerful personality and a scholar – had been there since 1926. It was time for a change. Geoffrey was a conservative moderniser. He implemented liturgical renewal by simplifying the liturgy and the accompanying ceremonial and reshaped the interior of the church to reflect the new emphases. He encouraged the congregation to look beyond itself and to become involved in practical ways in social mission.

Unlike many Anglo-Catholics, Geoffrey was sympathetic to the ecumenical movement. He instigated monthly meetings of the clergy of the city churches, invited Sir Irving Benson from Wesley Church and Professor Robert Anderson from Ormond College to preach at St Peter's, and looked forward to the possibility of reunion between Canterbury and Rome. At the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration of St Peter's in 1971 he invited clergy from all the city churches to attend High Mass and receive holy communion. His pulpit style, with his emphatic delivery and booming voice, owed much to the Methodism of his early years.

After twelve years at St Peter's Geoffrey felt the need for a move to a quieter parish. At the invitation of the bishop of Bunbury, in 1979 he was appointed to the parish of Albany in Western Australia. In 1982 he returned to Melbourne to the parish of Christ Church, Essendon, and in 1986, aged 60, worried by signs of deteriorating health, he retired from active parish ministry.

This was a time when the Anglican Church of Australia was entering a turbulent period as it debated the ordination of women. Anglo-Catholics were deeply divided between the liberally inclined majority who supported the move and conservatives who opposed it. Geoffrey, who held a traditional view of the Catholic priesthood, was definitely on the conservative side. He regarded the call for women's ordination as driven by militant feminism and a secular demand for sexual equality.

After the first women were ordained to the priesthood in Australia in 1992, Geoffrey felt he could not remain in a Church that had 'knowingly and wilfully departed from both catholicity and apostolicity as I have known them'. Members of the Uniting Church may find this view hard to understand; Geoffrey had moved a long way from the Methodist theology he had been taught at Wesley College. In 1993 he resigned his Anglican orders and soon afterwards was received into the Roman Catholic Church. Geoffrey was not the only one. During these years, because of the ordination of women, some twenty Anglican priests in Australia joined the Roman Catholic Church or one of the Orthodox churches, and in subsequent years more followed the same path. After several years as a Catholic layman, Geoffrey was ordained priest in the Catholic archdiocese of Melbourne in August 1995. He assisted in the parish of St Joseph's, West Brunswick, until his retirement in 2002. He died on 26 July 2015.

Unlike some Roman Catholic converts of earlier years, Geoffrey Taylor never denigrated his religious past. He saw continuity between each stage in his religious journey. Although his theology of the church changed he always valued many aspects of the Methodism in which he had been reared at Highbury Street Church, Prospect.

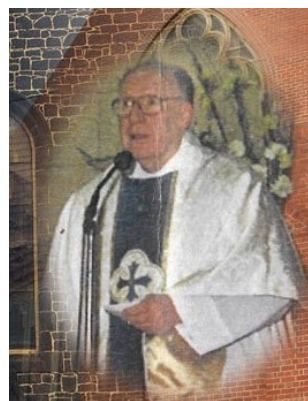
### Sources

Gareth Grainger, *Down in Adoration Falling: The Journey in Faith of the Reverend Geoffrey James Taylor* (Bungendore, NSW, 2007)

Colin Holden, *From Tories at Prayer to Socialists at Mass: St Peter's Eastern Hill Melbourne 1846–1990* (Melbourne, 1996)

Keith Smith, *The Methodist Pilgrimage via Pirie Street* (Adelaide, 2012)

Prospect Methodist Circuit records, State Library of South Australia, SRG 4/79



Fr Geoffrey Taylor (1926-2015)  
(Photo: <https://www.clergy.asn.au/>)

---

# *The Morialta Story*

*Judy Eland*

On 27<sup>th</sup> June, the UC Historical society was pleased to meet at the Morialta Church for their AGM followed by a presentation on the significant history of the churches which now make up the UC in this area and their current service to the local community. In compiling this story I have drawn on the extensive records kept by former local members.

Our emphasis is the ongoing strong connections with the community. The early years of the church and family connections with local institutions and industries followed by impact of social change in the 1950s and 60s, and then the mergers that led to the formation of the Morialta congregation and lastly the congregation's current mission and outreach ministry will be described.

## **The early years**

After the official proclamation of the SA settlement on December 28<sup>th</sup>, 1836, the population of free settlers in the new colony grew rapidly. By 1838 surveyors had marked out subdivisions with new villages including Payneham, Kensington, Prospect, Mitcham, Marion and Makgill known by 1848 as Magill. It was considered that these areas were healthier than the polluted water and air closer to the Torrens.

Amongst the early settlers in the Magill area were a good proportion of Methodists who commenced meeting at Magill and Montacute in 1841 as part of the Adelaide circuit. We can celebrate here in 2021 180 years of continuous fellowship. Before the first church was built in 1855, services were held in homes and the original Magill Public school which was erected in 1846. This school was the first provider of public education in the whole of the Burnside area.

The current worship centre where the Morialta Congregation meets today was built in stages from 1875 to 1884, presumably as finance became available. It was a modest building in contrast with say Payneham or Kent Town, reflecting the local population of solid primary industry and agricultural workers. The 1855 Sunday School building continued to be used for Sunday School until it was destroyed by fire in 1962. It was topped by a ship's bell placed there in 1859, which rang out calling people to services and Sunday School for more than 100 years. The bell can be seen in the courtyard and still rung if required!



Over the ensuing decades there were several different circuit arrangements with Kent Town, Norwood, Newton and Kensington. In 1855 the Australian Methodist Conference was constituted and therefore no longer directed from Britain. As the first building on this site was erected the same year it suggests there was considerable optimism and growth of the denomination in the colony.

## **Why did Magill village develop so quickly into a thriving centre?**

The location nestled into the foothills, providing land for local industries, good soil and fresh air led to the establishment of a self-contained village with school, Institute and The Tower Hotel.

An omnibus service in 1882 provided easy access to the city. A second hotel, closed in 1909, was named "World's End" reflecting that the village was the end of the line! Even today this enhances its residential desirability as there are no major through roads.

Several prominent colonists purchased large tracts of land and built substantial mansions. The most significant of these was Murray House in 1862 that became part of Uni SA some years ago. The current congregation continues to support tertiary students with the provision of excellent accommodation next door.

## **Links with local industries**

This growing region had the advantage of nearby employment, housing in workers' cottages and places to meet and support education and social life. Many members of churches in Magill were employed by local industries. Foremost among these was Penfold Wines. Dr Christopher and Mrs Mary Penfold with their daughter Charlotte migrated in 1844, established their medical practice at Grange cottage, planting vine cuttings possibly from France along with other plants for medicinal purposes. Family lore has it that my GG Grandfather, John Reuben Warner, a farm labourer living in Chapel Street, helped Dr Penfold to plant the more extensive vineyard in the late 1850s.

My mother's family were faithful members of this church for more than 100 years. My Grandfather James Warner, lived, worshipped here and worked for Penfold Wines in Magill for his whole 97 years except for nine years at the Eden Valley Cellars.





Typical of many members of this congregation, my grandfather started work with Penfolds in 1893 as a mail boy, worked with the firm for 65 years, finishing as a winemaker in 1958 at the age of 80! Three of his brothers, builder carpenters, also spent their whole working lives with the company. In 1895 he had joined the Band of Hope and assured us that he never swallowed when tasting and blending wines!

The Bennett family were foundation members of this church and continued their association for at least five generations. Charles Bennett was the first apprentice potter in the colony, working with Trewenachs until he and his brother took over the business and set up the current site in Bryant Road with the plentiful supply of soil rich with terracotta clay.

Woodforde House was built by Joseph Uren, a well-known retailer and repairer of high-class leather goods in Rundle St. He and his descendants the Uren and Nightingale families were prominent members of this congregation for many decades.

The Wadmore family was another well-known family involved from 1849. They started an omnibus service and later a popular grocery store, known as Servwel on the corner of Lorne Ave and Magill Rd which continued until 1970.

Edward Wadmore served for 21 years on the Campbelltown council including 8 years as mayor. Mrs Margaret Wadmore was president of Margaretta Ladies Guild for 23 years which started meeting in the home of the Headmaster of Magill School, underlining the strong connection between the church and local education.

### **Links with wider church and community**

The Magill congregation had strong links with the denomination from the beginning. The first Methodist minister to SA was Rev William Longbottom, shipwrecked on the Coorong on his way from Hobart to Perth in 1838 but accepted an appointment to the first Wesleyan congregation known as Pirie St. After his early death in 1849 Mrs Elizabeth Longbottom moved to Magill, acquired an old cottage, rebuilt it for herself and her son's family, renamed it "Home Park" where the family lived until 1906. It eventually became Romalo

House.

She was by all accounts a short but formidable member of the congregation and "some folks called her Lady Longbottom. Becoming old and bent and unable to do much walking, she made beautiful sunbonnets and hassocks with pieces of print and carpet begged from local Methodist Drapers. Wherever you went in the village you were sure to see women wearing the old lady's bonnets and all the money proceeds went to missions." The family donated the first pipe organ for this building and three fine stained-glass windows (known as the Longbottom windows) placed over the front door. A reconfigured version of them is now on the east side of the nave.

There was also a close association with the mission outreach of Maughan Church. In 1910 the Central Methodist Mission needed larger premises for caring for children. They set out to find "a new home near a Methodist Church, within easy reach of a public school and not too far from an electric car!" Elevated aspect and clean air above the Magill village fitted the bill. Six acres were purchased for 650 pounds and a large purpose-built dwelling was built in 1912 named after the generous donors from the Greenslade family. The complex grew over the next decades, the children attended services and various fellowship groups provided strong support for them.

Miss Roper, whose grave you can see in the cemetery, was matron for 22 years, wearing a black string around her neck for keys. When the Greenslade house was later occupied by girls, and the Cann home for boys it was said "never the twain shall meet!" Later the shift to cottage homes in the 1940s where children could live in more natural family groups was new for the time. Rev W H Cann, Samuel Forsyth and later Wesley Gilding and his wife all became supervisors or cottage parents in retirement.

There was a long association with local public training institutions from 1849. The Industrial School for neglected or destitute children was built at Woodforde in 1866. This later morphed into a reformatory which operated in various forms until it was demolished in 1967. Local ministers often provided support.

From 1939 until the 1960s the RAH had an annexe nearby on St Bernard's Road, probably because of the perceived cleaner air. Nurses in training were rostered on to care for long-term patients, usually cancer cases.

### **Growth of housing and services**

In the 1900s the ready access to public transport made further subdivisions viable bolstering the already thriving village. These included a 1920 subdivision adjoining the property of Dr Duguid on Magill Road followed by Finchley Park in 1924. In 1925 Newton Methodist was built on Montacute road.

In the baby boomer years denominations believed that

“church extension” involved new sites in growing suburbs. The Hectorville Congregational church started as a home fellowship in 1950 and by 1953 a chapel and hall were built on Reid Avenue. Later the Stradbroke Congregational church (later Rostrevor) was established in 1964 and in 1970 Hectorville merged with Rostrevor.

Presbyterians established the Finchley Park church in 1961. Deaconess Walkley served the congregation and community for 14 years supported by a loyal band of church members until they combined with the Rostrevor Congregation in 1975. In 1982, Montacute joined with Newton.

### **Some Significant events in the life of the church.**

From 1896 until 1916 there was a gap without ministerial settlement, most unusual for a substantial congregation. After the completion of the current building in 1884, several prominent families left the district, leading to financial difficulties in supporting a minister and meeting the building debts. The conference was asked to leave Magill without a resident minister. The Norwood minister worked the whole circuit while the parsonage was let to the Police department. During this difficult time the church was greatly helped by the retired Rev. Charles Lane who assisted for 17 years and became known throughout the district as “Father Lane”. His memorial can be seen on the southern wall at the front.

In 1893 a contentious issue arose about the use of fermented wine for communion. Various committees were appointed until finally in 1905 when Joseph Gillard (who as well as manager of Penfolds was the church treasurer for 40 years!) was asked to suggest a suitable unfermented substitute! This reflected a state-wide movement to limit alcohol consumption, as demonstrated by the establishment of the Band of Hope and the conversion of the World End’s hotel into a coffee palace in 1909.

In June 1905 Jubilee celebrations involved special services and an Art, Floral and Industrial Exhibition in the Magill Institute. The anniversary event culminated in a choral concert and a museum display of curios from overseas. Funds raised went towards the reduction of the church’s debt.

Great optimism was expressed that Magill had seen dull days but there were surely good times coming! No-one anticipated the impact of the coming war years when many young men from this district enlisted. And in common with other regions WWI was followed by the depression and widespread unemployment.

### **Social Change in the 50s and 60s**

As has been well documented, the advent of motor cars, television, children’s sport and a growing level of education and freedoms led to the reduction in the importance of local congregations as the primary focus for worship, social and sporting life.

The Uniting Church of Australia came into being in 1977 with all local congregations voting for union. Following Union, moves towards mergers were made possible by increasing mobility and in 1991 culminated in the formation of the Morialta Parish.

Over many decades churches in this area have responded to the needs of the community with many and varied organisations providing opportunities for worship, music, Bible study, social and sporting life. This continues today. Contemporary worship, a Men’s Shed, 17 netball teams, a community garden, Wednesday lunches and a very significant residential provision for tertiary students are just some of their current commitments.

### **June Meeting**

The meeting concluded with afternoon tea and an optional guided tour of the nearby burial ground which was in the care of this congregation for more than 100 years. The weather cleared and Ruth Pitt led an informative and enjoyable tour of the cemetery where the graves of most of the founding families of the church in this area are located.

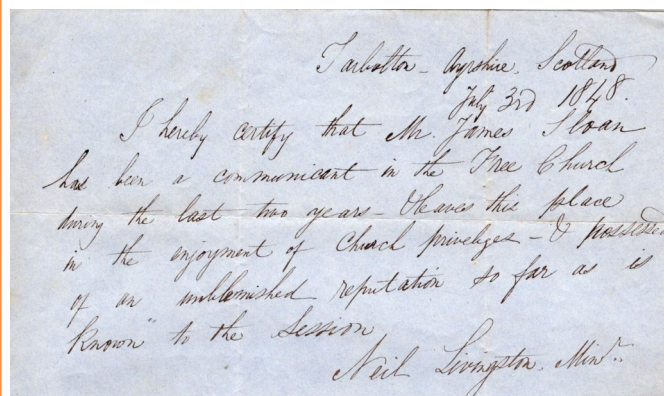
### **References.**

Gibbs, R M. “Under the Burning Sun. A history of colonial South Australia, 1836-1900”. 2013. Pg. 81.

Lillywhite, S. “Magill Methodist Church centenary 1855-1955.” October 1955.

### **In our collection...**

This letter of reference is part of the collection we have for Strathalbyn Uniting Church (formerly St. Andrews Presbyterian Church). A number of these were received by the church for the early members. The transcript follows.



Tarbolton, Ayrshire, Scotland  
July 3rd 1848.

I hereby certify that Mr. James Sloan has been a communicant in the Free Church during the last two years. He leaves this place in the enjoyment of Church privilege & possessed of an unblemished reputation so far as is known to the Session.

Neild Livingston, Minister

---

## History Grants Program 2021

The aim of the grants program is to support the cost of promoting church history in South Australia. Congregations, agencies and groups have a story to tell about their ministry and how the past has influenced our current ethos and character. The History Grants program assists local churches and groups to meet the cost of producing printed or audio-visual histories, mounting historical displays, preserving heritage items, etc.



submitted at any time to the UC History Centre at 44A East Avenue, Black Forest (or by email to [office@ucsahistory.org.au](mailto:office@ucsahistory.org.au)).

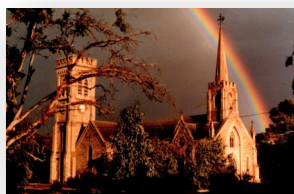
Grants will be awarded to congregations, agencies and groups who are publishing histories of the church in South Australia which are consistent

with the Society's objectives, including:

- Publish historical articles and lectures;
- Generate interest in and promote the study and discussion of the history of the Uniting Church and of the three churches existing prior to union;
- Promote the collection, preservation and exhibition of historical documents, records and memorabilia.

The Society has allocated funds which will generally be distributed up to a maximum of \$1,000 per project. Each application will be carefully assessed by the Grants Committee. Funding is by way of reimbursement.

Applications forms are available from, and can be



From our collection: Strathalbyn Uniting Church (formerly St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church)

In 1956 two of the spirelets were blown from the top of the church tower in a storm. The remaining two were removed in 1957 as a safety precaution. The first photo (unknown date) shows the tower without the spirelets.

In 2001, four new spirelets were placed back on the tower, returning the appearance of the church to what it had been.

---

## Update on our Oral History Project...

As readers will be aware, the Uniting Church South Australia Historical Society wants to add to its valuable collection of historical records by embarking on an oral history project.

Oral history uses structured interviews to enable people's memories, insights and stories, perhaps especially those that are not recorded in other ways and therefore sometimes overlooked, to be preserved and made accessible to others, including future researchers. It allows interviewees to share their experiences with an interviewer, and have them recorded in their own words, without interpretation or judgement. It means that their voices and ideas, and their own accounts of their lives, will endure and speak for them when they are gone. We are sure that there are many people, both lay and ordained, whose stories of their experiences and involvement in the Uniting Church and/or its antecedent denominations are eminently worthy of preserving in this way. However, setting up the process whereby we can put them and some effective interviewers together is proving



more challenging than we had imagined it might. We thank the very small number of people who have already indicated their willingness to be interviewed and ask you to be patient for a bit longer.

The good news is that we have recently identified someone willing and able to be our first interviewer, and so are confident we will soon be able to get the show on the road.

If this update has encouraged you to think you would like to be involved please contact us by:

- ringing History Centre co-manager, Gaye Brown, at the History Centre (Wednesdays, from 1:00pm to 4:00pm) on 8297 8472
- ringing Historical Society President, Judith Raftery, on 0422 101 879
- emailing the History Centre at [manager@ucsahistory.org.au](mailto:manager@ucsahistory.org.au)



## 2021 Calendar of Events

### Sunday 24 October—Exploring the History of the Sunday School Movement and its role in the Uniting Church

When: Sunday 24 October at 2:00pm

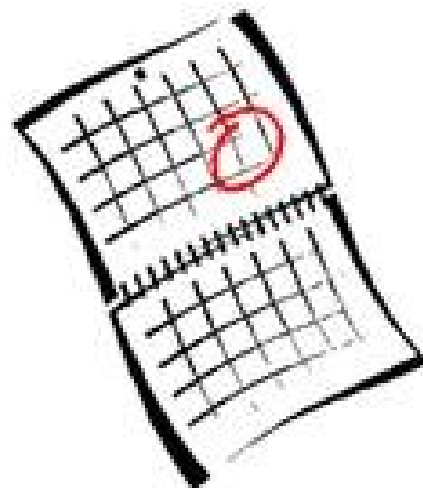
Where: Hope Hall, Clayton Wesley UC, 280 Portrush Road, Beulah Park

(Please refer to details on page 3.)

### Wednesday 8 December

The History Centre closes on this day for our break over Christmas and New Year.

We will reopen on Wednesday 2 February 2022.



## Introducing our new council members...

### Diana Chessell



I studied Social Work at the University of Melbourne and later History at the University of Adelaide. My first job was at the Brotherhood of St Laurence, a radical Anglican Welfare Agency in Melbourne.

Since then my life has been full of surprising turns. I designed the Community Development Degree for the University of South Australia, and arranged diverse field placements, especially for Aboriginal students. I'm presently an Adjunct Research Fellow at the UniSA Justice and Society Unit, and coordinate the Social Work Historical Collection. I have run a Migrant Editing service for 16 years.

While doing research for a recent work publication, *Adelaide's Dissenting Headmaster: John Lorenzo Young and his premier private school*, I discovered connections with what is now Pilgrim Uniting Church, and learnt a lot about dissenting principles.

Diana Chessell  
Adjunct Research Fellow  
UniSA Justice and Society  
University of South Australia



### Pat Button

I am a country girl, having lived in small communities before moving to the city in 1984.

Forty years ago, my husband Malcolm Button was given a brief outline of his ancestors. We recognised the names of some people but had no idea they were relatives. So began my quest for information!

I have been a member of Genealogy SA for 39 years. During that time, I researched the passenger lists of the early emigrants to South Australia resulting in the Society publishing *A Free Passage to Paradise*. Since then, I have found church records are a valuable source for a genealogist. Without the opportunity to go through minute books, Sunday School Rolls, etc. at Pilgrim Church, Marilyn Hyde and I would not have made the connections we needed to identify all the names on the WWI Honour Boards of the former Stow and Pirie Street churches. This led to assisting my cousins in their publishing *Diggers from the Dust*, detailing all service personnel with connections to the Willowie and Amyton area.

I have been a library volunteer at Genealogy SA and am currently involved in database checking of their School Records Project. Now I am pleased to be volunteering at the UC History Centre, filing records of ordained ministers and prominent lay leaders.

Pat Button