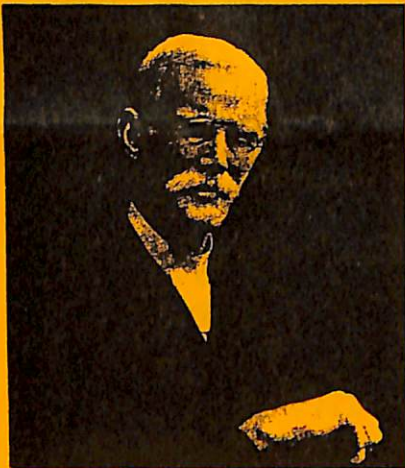


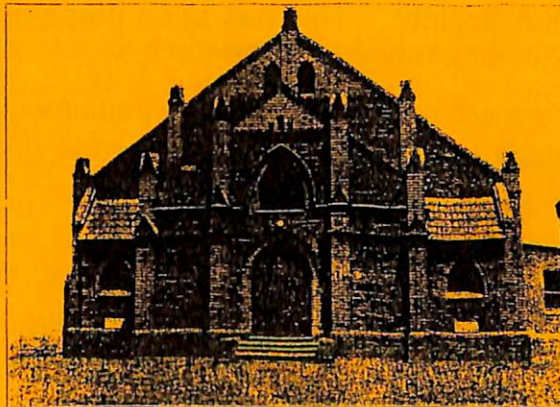
The Historical Society  
of the  
Uniting Church in Australia  
South Australian Synod

EDITOR:  
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NEWSLETTER  
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The Rev'd Robert Mitchell  
and his wife, Jessie,  
and the Presbyterian  
Church, Goodwood, S.A.,  
named Mitchell Memorial,  
in memory of their life and  
work



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## *Editorial*

As we move toward the Easter Celebration, we are reminded of how much we are on a journey of faith. The stories and memories of how the Christian faith has been celebrated within the Uniting Church in Australia is also a cause for celebration. As we face the new structures in the church, this becomes an opportunity see the church continually being transformed, rather than 'changed'.

This enables us, as people concerned with the preservation of the history of the Uniting Church, to see it from a wide perspective. Our history then becomes for us not just a celebration of what we have been but who we are as God's people **now**, helping to contribute to the future church.

With this in mind, it is exciting to have contributions from our Congregational and Presbyterian heritage in this publication. The first is by Rev'd Geoff Pope, who gives us an informal historical overview of Congregationalism (and apologises for any errors).

The second is by Nancy Mitchell, a member of the Council of our Society, who is a granddaughter of the Rev. Robert Mitchell, the first missionary to the Smith of Dunesk Mission in Outback South Australia. The late Rev. R.J. Scrimgeour wrote comprehensively about Robert Mitchell and his work in South Australia in a book published a few years ago. This month marks the 120th anniversary of the founding of the Goodwood Presbyterian Church which came to be known as Mitchell Memorial, after the very long and devoted ministry of the Rev'd Robert Mitchell and his wife Mary, from 1899-1922.

We are also pleased to publish a tribute to Mr A.R. Mills of Kanmantoo, a past well-known member of the Society. This has been prepared by Tom Dyster of Dunn Memorial Church, himself a member of the Society.

In our next issue, there will be an article on the implementation and development of Cluster Ministries which are, as yet, quite unknown to a large proportion of Uniting Church people.

As we all know, hymns and hymn singing have played, and continue to play, an important role in our worship. Look below for details of the forthcoming lecture on Methodist Hymnody by Kelvin Hastie. Come and enjoy!

*Ruth Threapleton*

**The Biennial Gordon Rowe Memorial Lecture  
will be given on**

**Monday, 23rd April, 2001 - 8 p.m.**

**in the Westbourne Park Uniting Church**

**Sussex Tce, Westbourne Park**

**By Kelvin Hastie**

**Secretary, Organ History Trust of Australia**

**His topic: "Australian Methodism and its service music:**

**Background, attitudes and practices"**



## ***Congregationalism : Yesterday and Today***

**By  
Geoff Pope**

The Congregational Church is the post-Reformation expression of a concept, or variety of concepts, which have persisted from New Testament times (more often in the deemed "heretical" sections of the Church than in the main stream). Its most essential belief was that the source of Ministry, and all other aspect of the Church's ordering, was not a matter of personal endowment or initiative but was derived from the gathered company of committed Christians and was exercised by persons called and set apart by and on behalf of the whole congregation.

Probably all Protestant Churches believe in the "priesthood of all believers" as a counter to the Catholic and Orthodox teaching that the priestly function and authority resides only in those individuals on whom it has been bestowed by their formal and episcopally-derived and conveyed Ordination. But, whereas most Protestants understand the "priesthood of all believers" as meaning the same as the priesthood of **each** believer, the Congregational emphasis was more on the priesthood of the **totality** of believers. And it was this status and function, which lay in and was derived from the covenanted gathered congregation, which the chosen leader or Minister expressed.

I find the recent rise of local parish ministry teams an interesting 21<sup>st</sup> century re-emergence of this aspect of classical 16<sup>th</sup> century Congregationalism.

English Congregationalism after 1662 was the merging of two, previously in some ways similar but in other ways disparate, traditions.

When Henry VIII broke the link between the English Church and the Church of Rome, many of the clergy of this newly-emergent Church of England were sympathetic to the teaching of the Lollards (successors of the mid 14<sup>th</sup> century John Wyclif). Others had been influenced by the Continental Reformers (especially John Calvin) and wanted the Church of England to become a lot more radically reformed than Henry had allowed it to be.

When Elizabeth I came to the throne (after the temporary backward step to Rome under Mary), their desire for more radical change **from within** became stronger. This reforming element, within the established Church, has become known to us as the Puritans. A large proportion of them had a Calvinist theology, and while many of them wanted to see the Church of England reformed along Presbyterian lines, there was another significant group who wanted it to be reformed along Congregational lines.

But there was another group of would-be reformers who were so impatient with the lack of, or slowness of, reform within the English Church that they left it and formed their own covenanted gathered congregations. I think it no accident that, at least initially, more of these congregations were discovered in the areas in which Lollardy had been most active previously.

These "Separatists" (from the established Church) or "Dissenters" (from the teaching of the established Church) were regarded as traitors to the State and were at constant risk of imprisonment and death.

Stories of the sufferings and faithfulness under torture of these early Congregational martyrs match the sagas of loyalty and endurance that have come down to us from other times.

*[contd. over page]*

Inevitably, under an oppressive and persecutory political system, it was natural that the fewer people, outside the membership, who knew of a particular gathered congregation's existence, or where and when it met, the safer for all involved. This lack of connection between one congregation and another, necessary as the price of survival at a particular period in England's history, has sometimes been assumed, incorrectly, by non-Congregationalists to be an essential feature of its nature in perpetuity.

One of the Separatists who was among the most cogent to urge 'reformation without tarrying for any' was Robert Browne (in the last quarter of the 16<sup>th</sup> century). For a while Independents/Dissenters tended to be called Brownists, but it is wrong to regard him as the founder of Congregationalism. He was merely one, though possibly one of the more able, of the many apologists of the movement.

Browne was a puzzling historical figure. He had wealthy and influential connections who at times were able to intervene and save him from the gallows. Nevertheless he was imprisoned over 30 times and reported that on occasion it was so dark he "couldn't see his hand in front of his face". It would appear that his sufferings and privations led to a psychiatric breakdown and Browne dropped out of history for about a decade. When next his life was recorded he had been reconciled to the English Church, was curate in a country parish, was teaching eccentrically in the parish school and was also minister of a local Separatist congregation.

As persecution increased in England, many of the Separatists/Dissenters fled to the Continent, especially to Holland, and ultimately to America. One of the central tenets of the early English Congregationalists was that the Church should be "Independent" from the State (i.e. that the Church of England should not be "established"). It is interesting that in the new world, initially at least, in some of the New England states, the Congregational Church quickly became the State Church! "Independent" is another term which non-Congregationalists tended to mis-interpret. It was meant to mean non State established, **not** independent of each other.

As the political scene changed, initially under Cromwell's Commonwealth (mid 17<sup>th</sup> century for about a decade) and later in the more tolerant atmosphere of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the previously secretly-existing congregations were free to become aware of others nearby and develop opportunities for corporate meetings and worship. As freedom increased and transport became easier synods were formed (in England.)

In America, because there was religious freedom (at least for Congregationalists!) in the original New England States, very soon local congregations had formed regional councils. These synods and councils were regarded as being in the form of another type of gathered congregation and having within themselves the capacity and responsibility to determine their own life under Christ. Later, as transport became easier, other gatherings of members from local congregations and synods were commenced.

In England (and Australia) these were called "Assemblies", in America they were called "Conferences", but their nature, competence and responsibility was still that of a "Congregation". In South Australia (before the establishment of the U.C.A.) the Assembly called as its leader an "Executive Minister", who exercised a ministry on behalf of all the members of all the Churches. (The last Congregational Executive Minister was the Rev. Michael Sawyer). [...next page]



The Uniting Church in Australia regards itself as having a conciliar structure made up of Congregations, Presbyteries, Synods and Assembly. But in official parlance these are "Courts", each able by their definitive decision to define or limit the scope or action of a 'lower' court.

In my mind, I picture the U.C.A. as a quoit-like set my children had. There was a central pole and a series of circular plastic "quoits", each with a central hole, which were placed (not thrown) over the pole. Each quoit was about 3cm bigger in diameter than the one next to it, so that by the time the quoits were assembled correctly they formed a circular pyramid (or inverted circular pyramid) – depending on whether the smallest or biggest was on the bottom.

Congregationalism was also conciliar (con-centric is probably a better word.) The inner circle represents the local congregation, the next and larger circle the synod (in S.A. we called them "District Associations"), a further circle the assembly and the outer circle (in Australia) the national assembly. (I don't know the U.K. set-up but I would imagine that the synod would be at county level and the assembly national.)

The important thing to realise is that each group of people assembling did so as a gathered congregation with the competence and responsibility to order its own life under Christ. One 'congregation' could not *ipso facto* dictate what another type of congregation did, because it was not 'above' it in power – only (possibly) in represented insight/understanding, i.e. the model would be only two-dimensional.

I began by saying that because ministry/priesthood etc. resided in the gathered congregation, each church called and set apart a person to exercise this gift on its behalf. Once a more free political situation obtained and members of various congregations attending synod were able to discuss their respective ministers, it wasn't long before congregation B wanted to poach the minister from congregation A and set him apart to minister for them instead.

So gradually 'setting apart' to exercise the ministry residual in a congregation (= Ordination) moved from a matter of concern only for the congregation at the local level to that of the 'congregation' at synod level (and eventually to that of the 'congregation' at assembly level.)

Thus when, in 1952, I was ordained, every local congregation in S.A. had had the opportunity to be represented at the congregational meeting (we called it the 'Council') at which that decision was made and thus, to a degree, was implicated in the decision. Nevertheless, if the congregation at "X" did not have someone to exercise its ministry on its behalf, I couldn't just walk in and announce I had been sent as their minister. First they had to decide, themselves, if that was what seemed right.

This leads to a central characteristic of Congregationalism, viz. the **Church Meeting**. Many non-Congregationalists (and unfortunately some Congregationalists too) regard this as an aspect of Church governance. It wasn't (or at least it wasn't intended to be)! Originally it was the fourth component of Congregational worship.

- \* The Word was **sought** in Scripture,
- \* the Word was **proclaimed** in Sermon,
- \* the Word was **enacted** in Sacrament and finally
- \* the Word was **applied** as a result of the meeting. It was the Church (*Noun*) Meeting (*Participle*), **not** Church (*Adjective*) Meeting (*Noun*). [...next page]

In the Church Meeting, at its best, the principal item on the agenda was, "We have heard the Word in scripture and preaching, we have participated in its enactment; what now are its implications for us as individuals and as a congregation?" But that was a difficult question to confront and too often the Church Meeting degenerated into a discussion on the colour to paint the church gutters!

Early Congregational churches had **Elders** (of whom the Minister was one) to attend to pastoral and "spiritual" matters and **Deacons** to attend to matters of the administration and fabric of the church. (Possibly this was copied from Presbyterianism.) But pastoral and "spiritual" matters are more difficult to cope with than property ones and it wasn't long before many local congregations had their minister as their only elder.

At the time of the formation of the U.C.A. I am only aware of three Congregational parishes in S.A. which had a group of elders. I was a member of the Joint Constitution Commission preceding the formation of the U.C.A. and, while supporting strongly its initial establishment with both "elders" and "deacons" (the name was changed later), I recall expressing a fear that the role of elder would be found too demanding and eventually diminished, as had happened generally in Congregationalism. What prescience!

In concluding, I want to address the question of **authority** in Congregationalism. Congregationalists respected the Scriptures as witnesses to the Word of God, who in the person of Jesus the Christ "took flesh and dwelt among us." Because Eternal Life is found in Jesus and not scripture *per se*, Congregationalists have often been in the forefront of biblical study and research.

They also respect the historic creeds and declarations of the Church as finite attempts to express the Infinite and always imperfectly expressible truths of Faith at particular moments of history. (The Savoy Declaration is one of the classical English Congregational statements.) But, at the same time, Congregationalists believed that, led by the Holy Spirit (especially in Church Meeting), they were challenged constantly to a fuller understanding of, and deeper commitment and new obedience to a relevant expression of their faith in the Eternal and yet always contemporary Christ.

There are similarities between Congregationalists and Quakers in the priority of leadership they attribute to the Holy Spirit *vis a vis* time-dated formulations of belief but Congregationalists would tend to place greater emphasis on the corporate experience as a possible corrective of individual enthusiasm.

*(Apology: this brief article has been written in haste and without access to standard reference books, such as R. W. Dale. If my recollection of my "Congregational History and Principles" lectures, audited 50 years ago, is in error at some points: I apologise.) G.W.P.*

◇ ◇ ◇

*Goodwood Presbyterian Church Inc.*

*(Mitchell Memorial)*

*By*

*Nancy Mitchell*

Early in 1880, the Rev. Alexander Fraser Knox, who was supplying the pulpit of St Andrews Church, Wakefield Street, Adelaide, held the first Presbyterian service in Goodwood at a house in Albert Street. In the following year, several more families from Scotland settled in the new suburb of Goodwood. Before long, 56 people in Goodwood petitioned the Presbytery, praying that they might be formed into a congregation.

Because of the cost of having the church built, it was decided to erect a structure of wood and iron. Work was commenced at once by the men of the church, and only such labour as could not be done by those connected with the church was paid for.

The new church was opened on Sunday, 24th April, 1881, when the Rev James Lyall and Mr (later the Rev) William Gray were the preachers. On 8th May, 1881, the Sunday School commenced. Later in that year, a special meeting was held for the purpose of adopting rules, electing Trustees and Elders and a Board of Management. The first Communion Service was held on 26th June and was conducted by Dr Paton of Chalmers Church, who was the Interim Moderator.

Mr Gray continued his work in Goodwood until February 1882, when he resigned in order to move to Tanna in the New Hebrides, as the Missionary of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia. After Mr Gray's departure, the services were conducted by Mr James Anderson, who served the Goodwood Church well.

The Rev John McIntyre was inducted as the first Minister of this charge in March 1884 and continued in this position until August 1886. (Twelve months of the time of his appointment were spent on holiday in Scotland!)

The Rev E Rorke of St Andrews Church in Adelaide was appointed Interim Moderator. He relinquished this position in June 1889, when the Rev J Hall Angus was called. Five Elders were elected in September 1889. Mr Angus stayed until October 1890 and, following his resignation, Mr Rorke conducted services. He also held a Bible Class and prayer meeting every Thursday evening and spent a good deal of time visiting members of the congregation. During this period, the church was enlarged by the addition of a stone front and the inside walls and ceiling were improved. Mr. Rorke moved to Victoria in 1891.



GOODWOOD PRESBYTERIAN  
CHURCH  
(The Old Building).

Various ministers ( Dr Paton, the Rev James Lyall and the Rev J T Robertson) filled the position of Interim Moderator.



A very fruitful period in the life of the Church followed the appointment of the Rev Lockhart Morton in 1893, but he resigned in 1895. The choir had held a concert to raise money for the church funds and Mr Morton felt that he could not accept payment for his services when the money was from such a source.

Late in 1895, the Rev Peter McLeod of Spalding was called and settled in the charge. Unfortunately, he died in January 1896 – a great blow to the church and the people, who had looked forward to the beginning of better times.

The well-trained choir helped to keep the church together during these difficult years. Mr John McLellan took up the position of conductor of the choir in 1895 and Mrs Culliford that of organist.

During the vacancy, a committee of the church waited on the Home Mission Committee to see if the services of the Rev John Nairn, a visiting Methodist evangelist and an acceptable preacher, could be secured for a period. The Home Mission Committee emphatically refused.

The Rev Robert Mitchell had taken several services in 1898 and it was decided to write to the Convener of the Smith of Dunesk Committee to find out when Mr Mitchell would be released from his present charge (the Smith of Dunesk Mission in Beltana). As the Convener's reply was that no successor had been appointed to take Mr Mitchell's place, it was decided, at a special congregational meeting, to name the Rev Robert Mitchell definitely in a call. He accepted and was inducted into the charge on 24th January, 1899. He purchased an historic home in Victoria Street, Goodwood. This was a personal transaction and the house remained the Manse until he retired in February 1922.

During Mr Mitchell's ministry, the oversight of the Presbyterian Church at Hawthorn was transferred from Chalmers Church to Goodwood. The Church at Hawthorn was commenced by the Goodwood people five years previously.

When Mr Mitchell retired there were a number of church organisations firmly established: Sunday School, Choir, Kindergarten, Presbyterian Women Mothers' Union, Junior Endeavour, Young Men's Bible Class, Young Women's Bible Class, Boys' Gymnasium, Girls' Fellowship Society, League of Young Worshippers, Girls' Guild, Hockey Club, Tennis Club and Men's League.

The Rev David Chapman of Millicent was inducted into the charge on 27th April, 1922. A manse was purchased, the Incorporation of the Church arranged and a new seal purchased, Mr M F Culliford (Session Clerk) being appointed Seal Holder. Approval was given to commence building a Memorial Hall in memory of the men of the Church who served in the Great War.

In 1927, Mr Chapman accepted a call from Hawthorn Church and the Rev E A Davies of Woodille was inducted into the Goodwood charge on 13th July, 1927.

At the Annual Meeting of the Church on 30th January, 1929, the matter was again brought up of building a new church. After discussion and a further meeting of the

congregation, it was decided to build the new church and call it the Mitchell Memorial Church in memory of the life and work of the Rev Robert and Mrs Mitchell. Neither lived to see the new church built.

[....next page]



Mr T Leonard was the builder and his quote was £1,590 (\$3,180) with an extra £245 (\$490) for furnishings. A loan was arranged with the S.A. Superannuation Fund. The builder moved the old building – except the front wall – on rollers, to the northern edge of the property, behind the Memorial Hall, to allow it to be used as a Kindergarten hall. The new building incorporated the front stonework, with extensions to the sides.

Various methods of fundraising were adopted: one asked members to pledge 6<sup>d</sup> (5c) per week for a year, another was the purchase of bricks with a certificate being issued (5/- [50c] for sixty bricks) - see certificate below. Fetes were also organised to raising funds for the building.

Mr A J Harvery (of Thompson and Harvey, glass merchants) and his family offered to donate nine stained-glass windows. The Mitchell family gave the pulpit and other items of furniture were donated by various families, most as memorials.

The Opening took place in front of the building on Thursday, 12th February, 1931, with the ceremony performed by Miss Annie Mitchell (Robert Mitchell's eldest daughter). A Dedication service followed in the church with the minister, Rev E A Davies leading. There was a dedication of the gifts and a collection in aid of the building fund. The preacher on that occasion was the Rt Rev H G Dwyer, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of S.A.

Special services followed during the week and on the two subsequent Sundays which were also part of the whole celebration. On Sunday, 15th, the Rev E A Davies preached in the morning and the Rev D Chapman (from Hawthorn Presbyterian Church) preached at the Family Service held in the evening. A special Service of Holy Communion was held on Wednesday (18th) when Rev W M Gray gave a "Pre-Communion address" and Rev S Martin a "Post-Communion address", while the Rev N L D Webster (from Scots Church) presided at the service. On the 22nd, the preachers were Rev J G Jenkin (from Pirie Street Methodist) in the morning and Rev D F Mitchell (Flinders Street Baptist) in the evening.

|   |                                    |    |
|---|------------------------------------|----|
| 60  | Goodwood Presbyterian Church, Inc. | 60 |
| <b>BRICK CERTIFICATE</b>  |                                    |    |
| THIS is to Certify that <u>Nancy Mitchell</u> has purchased 60 BRICKS and donates them as a free gift to the Goodwood Presbyterian Church, Incorporated, towards the cost of building the "Mitchell Memorial Church." |                                    |    |
| For and on behalf of the Goodwood Presbyterian Church, Inc.   |                                    |    |
| Date <u>Nov 8 1932</u>  | <u>[Signature]</u><br>Treasurer    |    |
| PRICE—4s. 2d.<br><u>10<sup>0</sup></u>  | <u>[Signature]</u><br>Secretary    |    |

**JN MEMORIAM:**

**A..R. MILLS**

**By**

**Tom Dyster**

A devoted son of the Church and a true witness for Christ went to his reward when, on Friday 24th November last, nearly 300 people attended the funeral service for Mr A R (Dick) Mills of Millbrae, Kanmantoo.

The historic Dunn Memorial Uniting Church at Mt Barker was packed to capacity for the service conducted by Rev Dr Ross Gaskin, several score of friends being obliged to listen from outside the building.

Born at Millbrae, Native Valley near Nairne, Dick lived there all his life. He became a third generation owner of the grazing property. He was fifty years a local preacher, a distinction achieved by few. His association with the church before and since union included worship and witness in congregations and fellowships at Nairne, Callington, Rockford and Mt Barker itself.

As studmaster of the Millbrae Merino stud, he farmed successfully and was in great demand as a judge of sheep at agricultural shows all over the country. A dedicated conservationist, he set about revegetating his land with trees long before it became fashionable to do so.

Among his other activities were the Mt Barker branch of the National Trust, of which he was chairman for 15 years, the S.A. Farmers' Federation, the Bremer Catchment group, the Mt Barker Tourism and Heritage Committee, the Kanmantoo Progress Association, the Callington Land Care Group, the Mt Barker High School and the S.A. Branch of the Liberal Party.

His enthusiasm for local history was legendary. The author of some seven books on the history of the Hills, he was long regarded as the ultimate authority on the history of the larger Mt Barker area.

Dick carried his Christian witness into a wide range of local activities. He had a great love of his fellow men and women. He sought always to speak well of everyone and took with him everywhere he went his remarkable capacity for compassion, his genial good nature and courtliness, and above all his strong dimension of Faith.

R.I.P. Dick Mills ..... a true Christian gentleman!

***"the memory of the just is blessed"***  
*Proverbs 10:7*