



Uniting History SA March 2020

Guest Editor: Judith Raftery

2020 Vision

A new year, especially one with such a pleasingly balanced date, invites reflection. In my part of the Uniting Church that reflection has concentrated on two things: firstly the pressing issue of global climate change, the urgency of which has been brought into sharper-than-ever focus by the bushfire emergency, and secondly the ongoing challenge of getting right the relationship between the first and second peoples of our nation, a challenge that is with us every day, but which comes into clearer focus around Australia Day. In other parts of the Uniting Church, new year reflection will have focused on different issues, perhaps to do with the formation of the new non-geographical presbytery, or with evangelistic outreach, or with various questions to do with gender and sexuality, especially same-sex marriage. And some will have tried to wrestle with all of the above, and more.

To deal with these challenges, we need 20/20 vision – including rear vision – plus courage, imagination and analytical skills. The tricky thing is that as members of the Uniting Church, and as citizens, we don't all understand the issues and challenges in the same way. Some of us will readily think of some of them as political, economic, environmental and social issues, but struggle to see how they might also be seen as religious or spiritual or ecclesial issues, or at least as issues about which Christians might be particularly concerned. Others of us will not be comfortable with those kinds of distinctions and, for example, reject a view of the religious or the spiritual that doesn't encompass the political and the social.

I argue that all these apparently separate categories of issues are not unconnected. Certainly we can separate them in order to think about them, but in fact how churches and Christians see specific social questions, and how they understand the church's relationship with society, is to a very considerable degree dependent on how they have already answered religious and spiritual questions – or, to put it another way, it depends on the theological perspective that they have adopted. These complexities are worth unpacking, and looking back into recent history can help with that process.

A hundred years ago the churches were engaged with many issues, including those that were then, as now, often thought of as social issues. It goes without saying, that, in 1920, the issues that they focused on did not include climate change or reconciliation with and constitutional recognition of first nations people. What did they include? Researching the

preoccupations of the major denominations in South Australia between the two world wars, I identified six dominant social issues: alcohol, gambling, Sunday observance, religious instruction in schools, responding to 'welfare' issues such as poverty and unemployment, and war and peace. Certainly these were all social issues in the sense that they were concerned with "the structure, functioning and well-being of society which the churches, or at least significant numbers of Christians, regard[ed] as important, and with which they believe[d] they should be involved as a consequence of their Christian faith"¹. However, many Christians today, no less concerned than their forebears about the interaction of the churches with society, understand these issues differently, and want to add other items to the social agenda.

The denominational press, and the reports of conferences, assemblies, and church agencies and organisations of a hundred years ago make it clear how the churches understood their relationship with society. Early in 1920, the Methodist paper, the *Australian Christian Commonwealth (ACC)*, struck a solidly spiritual note, regretting that Christian nations, as well as individuals, were "losing their souls", and proposing "the Incarnation, the Cross, the Risen Life of Jesus" as the antidote. The paper regularly featured dense evangelical sermons, reports from local churches, mission fields, and church agencies, some of which, like the central missions, were clearly concerned with social issues. In addition, a column headed 'Current Topics'

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News from the History Centre

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.

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

(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

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA

CORRESPONDENCE:

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44A East Ave, Black Forest, SA, 5035

Phone: 08 8297 8472

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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You can receive this newsletter via email. Send your email address to 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—Life	\$250

Contact the Centre for more information.

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proffered analysis of some social issues, the most pressing of which, in early 1920, seemed to be a “devilishly engineered”, “insane” and “lawless” strike. The column deplored the use of “direct action” rather than the arbitration system to deal with industrial problems. It did not specify what the strikers’ issues were, but, once the strike was over, declared that while there were still “dark clouds on the horizon of our national life . . . industry, camaraderie, and frugality with abstention from gambling and drink would quickly put a different face on things”. The easy transition here from the social and political to individual virtue and morality is striking. (No pun intended!) It was also typical of the churches’ responses to many issues.

In his 1920 Presidential Address, the Methodist Conference President, Rev. William Potts, demonstrated an understanding of the social as being subsidiary to the spiritual, and of structural issues as being merely individual issues writ large, that characterised much of the thinking and action of not just Methodism but most denominations at this time:

The church while sympathising with all efforts in the direction of better conditions of living must always insist that the reorganisation of the soul is essential to the reorganisation of society. Let us have better houses, better towns and cities, better laws, better international relationships . . . but above all we need the prophet who is the supreme interpreter of the spiritual. It is faith, faith, faith that conquers the world. . . The church stands for principles as against programmes, motive power as against mere machinery, love as against legality.

In reality, all the denominations mounted programmes, established machinery, and sought changes to laws in their attempts to conquer the world’s ills, while simultaneously clinging to the conviction that it was the sins – and eternal destinations – of individuals that were their chief concern. Their analysis, by focusing on individual salvation, failed to confront the structural elements of the ‘social evils’ they tried to deal with, and failed to acknowledge the extent to which these problems were not amenable to change via individual reformation. For example, abstinence from drink or gambling by individuals might have significant benefits for them and their families, but it could not raise insufficient wages, improve inadequate housing, or guarantee jobs in a context of severe economic depression, however much the central missions implied that it could. The churches’ tendency to focus on saving individuals rather than transforming social structures also meant that they sometimes failed to recognise allies or to align themselves with strategies that might have supported them in their undeniably genuine desire to create a better world. Sometimes they did better than that, of course, and achieved an effective meshing of the individual and the structural approaches. For example, while preaching total abstinence from alcohol as the goal and indeed unswerving commitment of individual Christians, they threw themselves behind campaigns to restrict community access to alcohol through the mechanisms of reduced hotel opening hours and restriction of liquor licences, even though, for them, this was merely “an instalment of prohibition”.

Are things different in 2020? Yes and no.

- Over several decades, the Assembly body UnitingJustice demonstrated an impressive capacity for policy and advocacy work, articulating the theological significance of social issues not previously seen as part of the churches’ remit, and developing strategies for action – but it’s been dismantled.
- Some Synods, congregations and individuals are prepared to own their complicity in the creation of

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A 1933 "Appeal to Youth"

How would this go down today?

An Appeal to Youth

GAMBLING.

Gambling is a "Kill Joy."

Because it makes more people sad than glad.

With the loss of money through gambling and betting comes the loss of self-respect for being such a fool as to bet.

Too often the money gained by betting proves a curse to the winner.

It is tainted money—uncleanly won.

Gambling is a Mug's Game.

Because it makes more people poor than rich.

In Gambling, Reason is Cast Aside and blind chance is accepted.

It is a tragedy when a person loses reason by misfortune;

But to deliberately cast reason overboard is the action of a lunatic—actually, that is what the gambler does.

Gambling, in the Light of Moral and Ethical Standards, is Wrong

and you cannot wrong right by making it respectable or popular or by giving it the sanction of law for the sake of the class or for the purpose of revenue.

Gambling is Dishonourable to the Gambler and His Victim.

It alienates man from man.

It cuts right across the family spirit of the human race and the truth that we are our brother's keepers.

Lord Baden-Powell says: "Gambling is a dirty way of making a living."

Gambling Contributes Nothing to Good Citizenship.

It tends to produce the law-breaker. The gambler is never concerned about the highest social and moral welfare of his fellows.

If anyone applied for a position of trust and responsibility, he would not be game to say that he was an expert gambler.

Young People, the Fight is on, and it Concerns You!

THINK THIS OUT.

An amount equal to **more than half the total purchasing power** of the people of Australia is wasted each year through

LIQUOR GAMBLING IMPURITY

£30,000,000 is squandered over liquor bars.

£160,000,000 is wasted through gambling.

£50,000,000 is lost through lust.

FOR 100 YEARS this waste has continued, varying with population and economic conditions.

ALL THE GOLD gathered in Australia from the moment the first speck was discovered until today would not pay

AUSTRALIA'S VICE BILL for the last two and a half years.

YOUR INDUSTRY Suffers, and YOUR EMPLOYMENT is affected because this money, which should have bought your products and kept you in a job, bought **Poverty, Crime, Disease, Shame.**

Now YOUR INDUSTRY and YOUR INCOME

are heavily taxed to provide for those whose purchasing power you lost and whom vice ruined.

Do YOU Concern Yourself about the Social Perils?

Remember, that through this waste

**YOUR INDUSTRY
YOUR JOB
YOUR HOME is menaced.**

—

This Department expresses its sincere thanks to the ministers and circuits who have forwarded the following amounts for Social Service Department work: Pirie St. Mission, £2 2s.; Minlaton Circuit, £2; Two Wells Circuit, £1 7s. 6d.; Port Broughton Circuit, 8s.; Yacka Circuit, £2 5s.; Malvern, £6; Mr. R. S. Kennedy, 10s.

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some of the evils they now seek to address – but are still accused by others of inappropriately ‘meddling in politics’.

- The coherence of the Uniting Church is being challenged by division which may appear to be about stances taken on specific social issues – but this reflects an underlying theological divide about the church’s core business and its relationship to society.

Perhaps these divisions will always be with us? Certainly ‘social evils’ and the church’s mission to respond to them aren’t going to disappear. Getting our response right remains the challenge. That will take a lot of hard thinking and hard work, but, for me at least, the goal and yardstick remains what Jesus called abundant life for all.

Judith Raftery

¹Judith Raftery, ‘Till Every Foe is Vanquished: churches and social issues in South Australia between the two world wars’, unpublished PhD thesis, Flinders University, 1988, p.9

² *Australian Christian Commonwealth (ACC)*, 9 January 1920, p.627

³ *ACC*, 23 January 1920, p.665; 13 February 1920, p.713; 27 February 1920, p.745

⁴ *ACC*, 27 February 1920, p730. For detailed analysis of the views of South Australia’s eight largest denominations, and their separate and combined action in relation to social issues in the 1920s and 1930s, see Raftery, ‘Till Every Foe is Vanquished’, *passim*.

⁵ South Australian Temperance Alliance, *Facts for Reformers*, Adelaide, 1910

Under the Skin? Contesting the Bible in Australian History

The Uniting Church in South Australia Historical Society is delighted that **Dr Meredith Lake**, author of the prize-winning *The Bible in Australia: a cultural history*, and presenter of Radio National’s “Soul Search” will be its SA History Festival speaker



You are invited to hear Dr Lake speak on ‘**Under the Skin? Contesting the Bible in Australian History**’

Sunday 24 May

2:00pm

**St John’s Anglican Church,
Halifax Street, Adelaide.**

Please bring with you a copy of the Bible – perhaps one with an historic inscription, or a chequered past, or anything that makes it special for you.

Afternoon tea provided.

Gold coin donation.

**SOUTH AUSTRALIA’S
HISTORY FESTIVAL**
1-31 MAY 2020

National News

The **Uniting Church National History Society** (email: uchistory@nat.uca.org.au; website: <http://assembly.uca.org.au/history>) is in good shape.

- We are now producing an e-newsletter which you can access through our website. We encourage UCASA Historical Society members to read it and to contribute to it.
- In Western Australia, in Queensland and in the Northern Territory, where there are no UCA historical societies, members of the board of the national society, and others, have been nurturing signs of interest in matters historical. In Western Australia, a small informal network has been formed, thanks to the commitment of WA board member, Alison Longworth and WA UCA archivist, Sheena Hesse.
- A date to save: Our **2020 AGM** will be held in Brisbane on 22 October. The associated public meeting, which those not physically present will be able to join through Zoom or other technology, will focus on UCA Redress, the UCA's response to the Royal Commission into child abuse in church institutions. The discussion will be led by people currently involved in UCA Redress and by scholars who can provide historical and theological context.
- Another date to save: Our next **biennial conference** will be held over the June long weekend in 2021, at the Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta, NSW. The theme will be 'Growing up Uniting' and plans are afoot to involve as many young people as possible in the development of the conference program.

Have you collected your free copy of the proceedings of the 2017 National Conference? If not, it's waiting for you at the History Centre. The proceedings of the 2019 conference will be available for purchase soon.

SA's representative on the board of the UCNHS is Judith Raftery. Please contact her if you have any enquiries.



Can you help?



This is one of the older photographs we have in our collection at the History Centre.

We have no information about the photograph or the woman who is featured.

We would love to hear from you if you know anything about her—especially her name.

Did you notice her 'brooch'? Instead of decorative jewellery, she is wearing a spray of fresh daisies.

Calling all treasure hunters and puzzle enthusiasts...

Do you enjoy...

- ◇ Treasure hunts;
- ◇ Solving mysteries and puzzles;
- ◇ Learning more about people, places and events?

If you answered yes to these, you might like to consider volunteering at the History Centre on Wednesday afternoons.

These are the sorts of tasks that our volunteers undertake each week.

We never know what treasures might be found as donations to our collection are unpacked, sorted and catalogued, and volunteers help other researchers with their queries.

Get in touch with us at the History Centre if you'd like to help.

2020 Membership Fees

For those members who pay their membership each year, membership for 2020 is now due.

For those members who have a five-year membership and are unsure of its renewal date, please contact Leanne at the History Centre (phone: 08 8297 8472 on Wednesday mornings or email: office@ucsahistory.org.au) to check the status of your membership.

We thank everyone for their ongoing support of the work of the Society through their membership fees.

The Value of History

“Why do you bother about history?”

“The past is the past. You’d be better off focusing on today.”

How many times have you been on the receiving end of such statements? Some helpful responses are suggested by the following statement, which was adopted on 3 July 2019 by the History Councils of New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia. It draws on the work of history organisations in the USA that promote the relevance and value of history through their ‘History Relevance’ campaign. The four Australian History Councils have, with permission, adapted the USA ‘Value of History’ statement for all Australians to use.

The Uniting Church South Australia Historical Society recommends it to its members...

The study of the past and telling its stories are critical to our sense of belonging, to our communities and to our shared future.

History

- shapes our **identities**,
- engages us as **citizens**,
- creates inclusive **communities**,
- is part of our **economic** well-being,
- teaches us to **think critically** and creatively,
- inspires **leaders**
- and is the foundation of our **future generations**.

Identity: History nurtures identity in a world characterised by difference and change. History enables people to discover their own place in stories of families, communities, First Peoples, and nations—individuals and groups who have shaped the world in which they live. There are stories of freedom and oppression, justice and inequity, war and peace, endurance and achievement, courage and tenacity. Through these varied stories, the systems of personal and community values that guide approaches to life and relationships with others are shaped.

Engaged citizens: History helps people craft solutions that meet community needs. At the heart of democracy are individual citizens who come together to express views and take action. Understanding the history of contemporary issues that confront our communities, nation and world can clarify misperceptions, reveal complexities, temper volatile viewpoints, and open people to new possibilities, leading to more effective solutions.

Strong communities: History lays the groundwork for strong, diverse and inclusive communities that are vital

places to live and work. Communities are wrapped in human memory: Indigenous knowledge, family stories, oral histories, social customs, cultural collections, heritage and civic commemorations. These all strengthen our connections and commitment to one another. History supports a sense of community identity and place; and that in turn promotes social cohesion, individual and collective wellbeing, and resilience.

Economic development: History is a catalyst for economic growth. People are drawn to communities with a strong sense of historical identity, material heritage and character. Cultural heritage is a demonstrated economic asset and an essential component of any vibrant local economy, providing an infrastructure that attracts talent and enhances business development, including cultural tourism.

Critical skills: History teaches independent thinking and vital skills for the twenty-first century. Historical thinking requires critical approaches to evidence and argument and develops contextual understanding and historical perspective, encouraging meaningful engagement with concepts like continuity, change and causation, and the ability to interpret and communicate complex ideas clearly and coherently.

Leadership: History inspires leaders. It provides them with role models to meet complex challenges. Personal stories of leadership reveal how women and men met the challenges of their day and can give new leaders the courage and wisdom to confront the challenges of our time.

Legacy: History is the foundation for future generations. It is crucial to our future because it explains our shared past. When we preserve authentic, meaningful and significant stories, places, documents, images and artefacts, we leave a foundation upon which future Australians can build.

Call to action

We call on individuals and organisations in Australia to endorse, share, and use this statement on the value of history in contemporary life. With common agreement, commitment, and open conversation about why history is important, we believe the historical community can better articulate history’s critical role in the public sphere.



SPIRITED WOMEN:

11th Annual Conference of the Australasian Centre for Wesleyan Research.
Brisbane 7-9 August 2020.
Keynote Speaker: Dr. Priscilla Pope-Levison.

Churches in the Wesleyan, Holiness, and Pentecostal traditions have sometimes congratulated themselves on the licensing and ordination of women for ministry and yet gender inequity remains an entrenched reality. Though John Wesley (somewhat reluctantly at first) gave limited permission for women to preach, it took more than a century for Methodists to begin to ordain women as elders/presbyters.

The nineteenth-century Holiness Movement, informed by a Spirit-focused doctrine of ministry, gave rise to an unprecedented number of women preachers, evangelists, pastors, missionaries and teachers. A similar pattern emerged in early Pentecostalism. These were not only 'Spirit-filled' women but 'spirited' women – feisty, courageous, disruptive figures who were quite prepared to stand up to patriarchal authority in order to follow their calling. In the succeeding period beyond this radical beginning, there was a return to more male-dominated authority.

Today, there are fewer women in positions of authority in Holiness and Pentecostal churches than in the earlier formative period. On the other hand, Methodist and Uniting/United churches have increased the number of women clergy and The Salvation Army has sought to address gender inequity.

Papers are invited that focus on the theme of 'Spirited Women' from a range of disciplines including gender theory, feminism, biblical studies, history, systematic theology and all cognate disciplines.

For more information and the call for papers, please refer to <http://acwr.edu.au>

From our Historical Records Officer...

One of my duties as Historical Records Officer for the Historical Society involves working with the Synod Records Officer, Malcolm Wilson, to ensure that congregations that have recently closed, or are about to close, are aware of requirements for dealing with archival and historical material. To facilitate this process, we offer the following:

- We are available to meet with you and discuss your situation.
- We can provide you with an information letter outlining the procedures to be followed.
- We can also provide guidelines on determining which documents are mandated by Assembly for preservation (Such items are currently archived at the State Library of South Australia.) and which documents and other items are suitable either for retention by the church or for deposit at the History Centre.
- We are also available to visit continuing congregations to assess their archival and historical materials, and to work with relevant congregational representatives to ensure the efficient management of these materials.

If you or your congregation – closing or continuing – would like assistance with any of this, or if you have any questions about the processes involved with archiving and storage of materials, or if you would like to arrange a visit from Malcolm and me, please contact me and I will be happy to help.

Rosemary Hocking
8297 8472 (Tuesdays and Wednesdays)
records@ucsahistory.org.au

History Grants Programme

Do you have a history project in mind? Do you need some support?

The Society's History Grants programme provides grants of up to \$1000 to assist local churches and groups to meet the costs of producing printed or audio-visual histories, mounting historical displays, preserving heritage items, etc.

You don't have to be concerned about deadlines for your grant application: you may apply for a grant at any time.

If you would like more information about these grants or an application form, please contact us at manager@ucsahistory.org.au

2020 Calendar of Events

Sunday 24 May—History Festival Event

Our special SA History Festival event: lecture by Dr Meredith Lake, ABC Radio National presenter and author of the prize-winning book, *The Bible in Australia: a cultural history*.

When: 2:00pm—4:00pm

Where: St. John's
Halifax Street, Adelaide



Sunday 28 June—Annual General Meeting

Join us for our Annual General Meeting followed by historical exploration of a suburban church and its community.

When: 2:00pm—4:00pm

Where: Morialta Uniting Church
26 Chapel Street, Magill

Friday 18 September—Modern Music Movement

Developments in music and hymnody from the 1960s until now: hearing from (and singing along with) some key players

When: 7:00pm—9:00pm

Where: Church of the Trinity,
318 Goodwood Road, Clarence Park

Wednesday 9 December

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

We will reopen on Wednesday 3 February 2021



Cuttings and Clippings *News from the papers*

Norwood St Giles Presbyterian Church

“... it is 50 years ago since the first Presbyterian Church was established in your midst. It hailed from the United Presbyterian body—a name which in the light of subsequent events was a happy omen. It was followed by a church associated with the Established Church of Scotland, and after a while by another connected with the Free Church, as time went on churches were multiplied throughout the colony in connection with these three divisions of the church, so that at last Presbyterians had to face this state of affairs—that if they did not take care they would have a number of churches preaching the same doctrine, the same faith, and the same morals, and yet divided ... and so the ministers of the various denominations, agreeing no longer to glory in their differences, set to work to bring about that happy consummation which resulted in 1865, when they

coalesced and formed the Presbyterian Church of South Australia ... Referring to the name chosen for the church, he said he disapproved of calling churches by the particular street in which they stood. He preferred to see them called after respectable saints. Not much is known about St. Giles, but he was believed to have been a respectable saint. (Laughter)” [*Advertiser*, 23 Sep 1889]

Narridy Bible Christian Chapel

“The two evangelist ladies, Misses Nesbit and Green, gave two services on Sunday afternoon and evening in the Bible Christian Chapel, which was so crowded that many had to remain outside. They again held services tonight; the chapel being again crowded. The earnest manner of the ladies is in great contrast to the half-hearted manner of most preachers who come to the country districts.” [*Adelaide Observer*, 17 Sep 1892]