



# Uniting History SA December 2020

Guest Editor: Brian Chalmers

## *Methodist Evangelism and the Oxford Group Movement—1930s*

In this issue (page 10), reference is made to the forthcoming *The Modern Christian Music Movement of the 1960s* celebration re-scheduled for 19-21 March 2021. The three-day event will be celebratory in nature, providing opportunity for presenters and participants to analyse and reflect on the important contribution made by music and hymnody from the 1960s to the present.

In the August 2020 edition of the newsletter, Jonathan Barker's *Personal Memoir* provides the reader with an insightful look into some of the changes that affected church music in the 1960s. According to Barker, 'the common vision was that "modern" worship would motivate young adults to stay with the church because it was deemed relevant (a buzz word of the period) for an increasingly secularised society'. The desire of churches to appeal to all ages, including youth and young adults, is relatively well accepted. This article will focus on the 1930s and examine how South Australian Methodists embraced a new form of evangelism fashionable with young people. It will also suggest some early parallels between the emerging youth and young adult culture of the 1930s and that which became more dynamic in the 1960s and 70s.

In the post-First World War era, at a time when churches were grappling with the intellectual challenges of liberalism and modernism, it was hoped that new forms of evangelism, more receptive to the times, would emerge. By the 1930s, aspects of cultural innovation such as a new-found freedom for youthful self-expression, and a readiness to digress from once widely accepted revivalist practices, influenced South Australian Methodism as it experimented for a more effective evangelistic medium.

The most innovative form of evangelism in the 1930s was influenced by the Oxford Group Movement. Methodism's predisposition for evangelism in the 1930s was a blend of an unchanging belief in people's need for salvation, merged with methodological pragmatism, which enabled it to embrace warmly the influence and methods of the Oxford Group.<sup>1</sup>

The Movement had its origins with the American Lutheran minister, Dr. Frank Buchman, who

developed the principles and practices of the Movement while undertaking evangelistic work. This included visits to Oxford and Cambridge universities in 1920. After a mission to South Africa in 1929, he and his followers became known as 'the Oxford Group'. The Movement influenced British Methodists and by 1932 was having an effect on South Australian Methodists.<sup>2</sup> British historian, David W. Bebbington argues that the Movement reflected the influence of cultural modernism, characterised by 'Expressionism' or self-expression, and the 'arbitrariness of language'.<sup>3</sup> Cultural modernism was a reaction against the rational and objective nature of modern society, and found expression in the arts and literature.<sup>4</sup> It was also affected by the depth psychology of the inter-war period.<sup>5</sup>



Rev Percy H  
Chennell

One of the earliest practitioners of the Oxford Group Movement within South Australian Methodism was Rev. Percy H. Chennell who conducted weekly Tuesday evening testimony meetings at Goodwood Methodist Church during 1932. Among those who 'stood up and told in simple words of what Christ meant in their own lives, of new power over sin and a new joy greater than any

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### News from the History Centre

The Centre at 44a East Avenue, Black Forest, will close on December 9 for our Christmas/New Year break. We reopen on Wednesday 3 February, 2021.

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:

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### COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## From the President...



At the end of this challenging year, it seems appropriate to note that the Historical Society is still in good health and can claim some achievements. Throughout the COVID lockdown, our staff members, Rosemary and Leanne, worked from home and we were grateful for the federal government's support via the Job Keeper program. History Centre managers, Val and Gaye, continued to work at the centre while it was closed to the public, and once regulations were eased, the centre re-opened and we were pleased to welcome back other volunteers as well as enquirers and researchers. Our planned public meetings could not go ahead of course, but we are glad that we will still be able to offer them as part of our 2021 program (see the program outline in this newsletter).

Meanwhile, the Property Planning Committee was able to implement some immediate practical changes, while continuing to engage in thinking about planning and development for the long-term. Thus, we now have a new and more efficient photocopier installed at the History Centre, and solar panels installed on our roof. You can't see these panels from the road, so please don't endanger your life or those of other road users by trying to catch a glimpse of them as you drive past. But be assured that they are there and that they have already made a significant difference to our reliance on the grid and to our power bill.

I would like to thank members of the Historical Society Council, and especially the Vice-President, David Houston, for the care, understanding and 'time off' they have offered me this year as I have dealt with my husband's illness and death. I send my warm wishes for Christmas to all members of the society, and look forward to your active involvement in our activities in 2021. You will always be welcome at the History Centre, as will your ideas about potential additions to our public program, your participation in our meetings, and your contributions to the newsletter.

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—Life	\$250

Contact the Centre for more information.

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earthly joy' were university students, former 'drunkards and gamblers'. In addition, the Kurralta Park, Keswick, and Unley Methodist churches hosted either worship or testimony meetings.

In early 1933, the Congregationalist, E. S. Kiek, principal of Parkin College, undertook the first assessment of the Oxford Group Movement. In a series of three articles, Kiek outlined the Group's history, teaching, and practice in the *Australian Christian Commonwealth*. Kiek understood that the Oxford Group had the potential to deliver a revival at a time when there existed 'considerable suspicion' of 'American methods of evangelism'. The Group's alignment with Evangelical Christianity, its 'striking resemblance to early Methodism', and its priority on individual conversion as the way to achieve a righteous nation appealed to Methodists.



Rev. E. S. Kiek

Later in 1933, Rev. W. A. Potts, then a retired Methodist minister, wrote of his experiences attending Movement 'house parties' and meetings while in England. He too provided a succinct but ringing endorsement, that the 'Movement is of God'. Maurice Wilmshurst, a student at Wesley College, offered perhaps one of the most telling of assessments when he noted the Movement's benefit to the local church:

The church did not mean less to those who had found help and victory through the agency of the Group; on the contrary, they threw themselves whole-heartedly into the work of their church, making a real contribution to the vitality and evangelistic power of their denomination.<sup>8</sup>

The Methodist Church's almost total endorsement of the Oxford Group Movement was complete by the middle of 1934.<sup>9</sup> The Movement's influence on Methodists was partly due to the widely read book, *For Sinners Only* by A. J. Russell, an English author.<sup>10</sup> The book's use of revivalist language appealed particularly to Methodist evangelistic and expansionist sentiments.

In May of 1934, Rev. W. J. Bailey, director of the Methodist Young People's Department, saw the Movement as not only a vehicle for revival, but as the means by which young people might be 'challenged to follow Christ and serve Him'. Bailey warned of the possibility that the Movement could develop into a sect independent of the church. Sounding a note of alarm, Bailey implored Methodism to fully embrace and 'contain this new life'.<sup>11</sup> The demise of the old massed revivalism precipitated the urgency.

To incorporate a movement within a denomination proved a challenge. The Movement possessed little of the structure of a denominational church, save the informal group meeting. Often referred to as church 'house parties', the first two meetings held in Australia, according to Rev. E. A. North Ash, took place at Unley

Park Baptist Church and St. John's Anglican Church in the city of Adelaide in June 1935. Modelled on British and European lines, the early Adelaide 'parties' conducted on church premises included home billeting for travellers, hospitality, and, common to all 'parties', featured informal times of testimony and 'sharing' of spiritual experiences. An important practice, known as 'confession', enabled participants to reveal to the group personal transgressions of one or more of the four Oxford absolutes (purity, honesty, love and unselfishness). The relaxed atmosphere of the meeting allowed participants to spread themselves around a room, sit on a chair, table, or the floor. A hymn or song might be sung, a passage of Scripture read, an occasional audible, but mainly silent prayer. Such meetings were considered suitable particularly for young people, who, through the house party, it was hoped, could find a 'ready desire to learn about and to know Jesus Christ as a living Reality and to express Him by an infectious radiance'.<sup>12</sup>

House parties occurred in rural areas as well as in Adelaide. The first 'house party' on Eyre Peninsula took place at Port Lincoln in October 1935. Conducted on Movement lines, about sixty young people attended from Port Lincoln and Cummins. Testimonies from a number of those present bore witness to a changed life and the place of Christ in the new believer's life. It was a time of 'great spiritual uplift'.<sup>13</sup> In 1936, a survey of the spiritual life of sixty-six circuits conducted for the church's centenary celebrations reported a number of 'definite Group meetings'. One of those was at Berri, on the River Murray, 230 kilometres north-east of Adelaide, which produced on one occasion five out of the six new church members and so convinced Rev. A. E. Vogt of their value that he declared, somewhat prematurely, that 'the revival is here'.<sup>14</sup>

Criticism of the Movement was sporadic and limited until an article entitled 'Hitler and Buchman' appeared in a January 1937 edition of the Methodist weekly paper. Written by the American theologian Reinhold Niebuhr (1892-1971), the article was critical of the morally inadequate and utopian idealism of the Movement. Niebuhr had nothing but contempt for the Movement's social philosophy, which continually espoused a belief in worldwide salvation through 'bringing the people who control the world under God-control'. Hence, Niebuhr's disdain for the Movement's emphasis on the powerful, so-called 'big men' of industry and politics. Set in the context of the overt abuse of power with the rise of European Fascist states before the outbreak of the Second World War, Niebuhr labelled the Movement as 'pollyanna religion' and concluded that it was 'bourgeois optimism, individualism and moralism expressing itself in the guise of religion'.<sup>15</sup> Predictably, the editor of the *Australian Christian Commonwealth*, an enthusiastic proponent of the Oxford Group, labelled Niebuhr's critique as 'too bad-tempered to be judicial and constructive'.<sup>16</sup>

How widespread, however, was the Movement within the Church? As the movement was without structural form, its growth and spread

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throughout South Australian Methodism are difficult to assess. A. J. Russell made clear at the outset of his book, *For Sinners Only*, that the Oxford Group Movement was 'not an organisation. None can tell their number. For in their own words: "You can't join; you can't resign; you are either in or out by the quality of the life you live"<sup>17</sup>. It did, however, receive extensive coverage in the secular press throughout most of the 1930s, as well as ongoing, though increasingly less generous, denominational reporting. Given the non-denominational stance of the Movement, the daily secular press provided the medium of choice for letters to the editor, news on overseas developments, and the occasional reference included as part of 'church news'. This indicated a measure of interest well beyond the boundaries of formalised religion.<sup>18</sup> Within the Methodist Church, as in other denominations, the degree of interest and engagement with the methods and principles of the Oxford Group Movement depended to a large degree on the attitude of the local minister.

Dissemination of the Movement's ideas and practices occurred largely by unofficial contacts, and occasionally by groups of members from various denominations.<sup>19</sup> The Congregationalists, aided by the advocacy of Principal E. S. Kiek of Parkin College and a number of ministers, including L. C. Parkin, J. D. Northey, and H. S. Grimwade, sought to introduce the Movement to their denomination. Parkin, in particular, used non-church occasions such as Rotary and health club meetings to further the Movement's cause. The dissemination of information occurred by quiet influence and slow permeation. The aims of the Movement, according to Kiek in 1933, were in accordance with the fundamental ideas of Evangelical Christianity.

The Movement appealed to young people, with its informality and lack of structure, emphasis on divine guidance, expressionism and spontaneity. The Movement assisted in laying the groundwork for charismatic renewal in the 1960s and 70s. Its lack of institutional form was both a strength and a weakness. Although some Methodists lamented the Group's preference to drop hymns in order to appear culturally relevant, it foreshadowed the emergence of new forms of self-expression and music associated with the counter-culture of the 1960s. Some Methodists were unmoved by the religio-cultural demands of generational expressionism, while others found it helpful.

Following its transition to Moral Rearmament in 1938, and the outbreak of the Second World War, the Oxford Group Movement virtually disappeared from South Australian Methodism. The Movement was not a precursor to revival, or the agent of revival in South Australian Methodism in the 1930s. It had little effect on church membership statistics during the decade, which remained relatively static around the mid-27,000 figure from 1933 to 1939. Unlike Britain, where the Movement had a 'major impact on religious life', its South Australian Methodist experience was diffuse, localised, and barely discernible against the highly structured and visible entities of the denomination. As a movement

encompassing Christians of various persuasions, it worked to engender mutual respect and understanding. For those without or with little contact with the church, the Movement supplied the basis for a non-denominational simplified Evangelical religion, based on the easily remembered four absolutes.

Rev. Dr. Brian J. Chalmers

<sup>1</sup> South Australian Methodists preferred the term 'Oxford Group' rather than the term 'Cambridge Group' which, for a while, was the Methodist version of the group in Britain.

<sup>2</sup> Arnold D Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), 345-346.

<sup>3</sup> On cultural modernism and the Oxford Group Movement, see D. W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), 233-242.

<sup>4</sup> On cultural modernism's impact on British Christianity in the 1930s and 1940s, see Giles Watson, 'Cultural Expressions of Christian Doctrine in Britain, 1937-1949', *Lucas: An Evangelical History Review*, 21 and 22 (June and December 1996), 61-90.

<sup>5</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, 237.

<sup>6</sup> *Australian Christian Commonwealth (ACC)*, 20 January 1933, 14.

<sup>7</sup> *ACC*, 27 January 1933, 5, 13; 3 February 1933, 5; 10 February 1933, 4-5.

<sup>8</sup> *ACC*, 29 September 1933, 14.

<sup>9</sup> At the opening ministerial session of the 1934 Methodist Conference, the incoming President, Rev. J.C. Hughes, claimed that the Oxford Group Movement heralded a coming revival. See *Advertiser*, 28 February 1934, 16.

<sup>10</sup> A.J. Russell, *For Sinners Only* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1932). The book was available from the Epworth Book Depot (Methodist), Adelaide, from at least January 1933. See *ACC*, 20 January 1933, 14.

<sup>11</sup> *ACC*, 18 May 1934, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Advertiser*, 18 May 1935, 22; 28 January 1933, 7; 11 August 1933, 14. *ACC*, 24 March 1933, 14.

<sup>13</sup> *ACC*, 29 November 1935, 16.

<sup>14</sup> *ACC*, 14 February 1936, 13.

<sup>15</sup> *ACC*, 29 January 1937, 1.

<sup>16</sup> *ACC*, 29 January 1937, 1.

<sup>17</sup> Russell, *For Sinners Only*, 1.

<sup>18</sup> See for example articles on the many ways individuals experienced changed lives for good at the *Advertiser*, 4 January 1936, 23; 7 July 1936, 20; 1 November 1937, 18.

<sup>19</sup> *ACC*, 11 September 1936, 14.

<sup>20</sup> *Advertiser*, 30 January 1933, 6; 1 February 1936, 17; 29 February 1936, 23; 25 March 1936, 14; 16 May 1936, 25; 4 June 1936, 19;

<sup>21</sup> *Advertiser*, 29 February 1936, 23; 4 June 1936, 19.

<sup>22</sup> *ACC*, 11 September 1936, 14.

<sup>23</sup> *ACC*, 8 November 1935, 3; *Advertiser*, 28 January 1933, 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Advertiser*, 5 April 1938, 11.

## ***Collection of a Lifetime delivered to UC History Centre***



On Wednesday 9 September documents and records of the Congregational Church in SA collected by the late Brian Jones were delivered to the UC History Centre. On behalf of Brian's family, the Pilgrim history team have been working for many weeks to ensure the safe-keeping of this collection of a lifetime.

Thank you to Chris Ward, Margaret and Christine Boyce who have met regularly to sort and ensure that the 184-year story of the church in this state will be better informed and enriched through this collection.

Rev Dr Dean Eland member of the SA Uniting Church Historical Society reports that this is one of the most important and carefully preserved denominational collection of year books and reports ever donated. Information in these records will now be accessible at the History Centre, 44a East Ave Black Forest for those enquiring about family and churches in SA.

Rev. Dr. Dean Eland

## ***Membership Update***

It goes without saying that this year has been a most unusual year. In light of the effect that COVID-19 has had on all that we might have planned in 2020, the UC(SA) Historical Society Council have unanimously agreed that membership fees for 2020 will be carried over to 2021. All current financial members in 2020 have had their membership details updated to reflect this decision.

A membership year runs from January to December, and is open to individuals or congregations and organisations. Membership fees for 2021 are:

### *Individual:*

- 1 year \$20.00  
(new members joining after 30 June \$10.00)
- 5 years \$80.00
- Life Membership \$250.00

### *Congregation/Organisation:*

- 1 year \$30.00
- Life Membership \$250.00

## ***Yarns from Green's Plains... Some minor misadventures***

(From the *Adelaide Register* - Saturday May 26, 1923)

... The services were wonderfully well attended, the exception being to find any one missing. Local brethren usually officiated, with an occasional visit from a minister from one of the mining towns. There being no organ, nor even a piano to lead the singing, it was customary for some able bodied man in the congregation to start a tune, or as near as possible to something that might fit the hymn about to be operated on. The starter might, of course, hit it first try, or might be a few inches too high, or too much to one side, and before he could get back to the starting point some one else might have a shot at it. Brother Billy Tammias, a well-rounded and somewhat aggressive-looking individual, with a fine boisterous-looking voice, by his own consent assumed the role of chief precentor and master of musical arts, and claimed the right of first try, in fact, of three tries; and if he failed to strike the right gauge, or to hit a tune that they could go on with, then, it would be time enough for some one else to have a go at it, but not before. With the view of adding a little more style, and maybe getting a better all-round start, Brother Tammias brought down a tuning fork, which he rapped smartly on a desk, and then applied swiftly to his ear, but it unfortunately happened to be the wrong ear, and of course he went off on the wrong tune; and next time went off before the fork did, and was wrong again, and at the third attempt jabbed the thing nearly up to the handle in his offside ear, and pit his tunes so badly mixed up that in disgust he threw the fork on the floor, where it bounced about for a time; and tried to start several tunes on its own account. Some evenings later Brother Renfrey came along with a self-starting flute and a tune book, which he fixed up on a box, with a candle on one side and a glass of water on the other, and proposed with these appliances to give a lead to the singing. But through some mishap to its inner workings the flute missed fire twice, and then the performer put his top lip too far over the side of the blowhole, and missed again, and before he could reload Brother Tammias had got the tune going, and was looking sideways disdainfully at the unfortunate man with the flute. Even at its best, the new innovation could scarcely be called a pronounced success. Sometimes it would work all right for a spell, but more times it would not, and one evening, after a series of brilliant discords, the exasperated flautist placed his mouth all over the mouthpiece, closed his eyes and bulging his cheeks to their utmost holding capacity, blew a terrific blast into the windpipe of the instrument with such telling effect that a tight wad of paper shot out of its southern end with a startling report, which snuffed out the candle and badly scared a couple of two year-old children that were not expecting anything like that. Later on Green's Plains had a new church and a new organ, and a splendid choir...

## Archivists preserve valuable Church and SA History

*Edited by Patricia Rademaker  
(Publicity and Promotions Co-ordinator, Pilgrim Uniting Church)*

This article originally appeared in the Pilgrim Uniting Church newsletter. It is reprinted here with permission.

There is a wealth of historical material from the early days of the churches, Stow Congregational and Pirie St Methodist Church. These two churches came into union to form Pilgrim Church.

Pilgrim archivists Margaret Boyce, Chris Ward and Christine Boyce have spent the last twelve years ensuring the rich history is well preserved and accessible.

The staunch friends have been guided in their work by a 2008 manual provided by a consultant professional archivist and collectivist manager. Margaret says, "She did a manual of what we need to do, all the steps and how to catalogue, collate and store the items properly." Margaret had worked with the heritage committee at the Women's and Children's Hospital for 15 years and she realised that work needed to be done at Pilgrim. Chris Ward was interested in joining Margaret after giving up committee meetings and Church Council but still wanted to do something for Pilgrim. She was also very interested in the history of the church because of its association with the history of SA. "My family came to SA in the 1840s so I have a personal interest in the formation of the colony."

Christine came on board with a long interest in history. Chris says, "The three of us work together well and we have slightly different skills but the coordination is wonderful and we have two other helpers who come in on an ad hoc basis".

They aim to document what is available but as Margaret says, "We keep getting little parcels from people, like this morning, when a mail parcel of CD's and photos arrived. We have to go through them, identify the ones that pertain to the four churches and those that are repeats of the ones we already have. When Pirie St joined with Stow Memorial much was lost or went to Mortlake Library. They are gaps in the information." I asked them what keeps them going with the mountain of information to sort, then resort, then catalogue.



They can't see an end in sight but they get excited about the very old



documents going back as far as 1837. "Sometimes our focus shifts a bit," says Chris, "when we find interesting material. For instance, we found Rev. Thomas Quinton Stow's original pulpit Bible in a bad state on the floor of the safe gathering dust. We received a small grant from the church to restore it." (Rev. Stow was the first Congregational Church Minister in SA).

So much of their work is really connected with the history of SA as well as the church. They come across names that are very familiar historically in SA, e.g. Charles Todd.

The group have received two grants from the Uniting Church South Australia Historical Society which helped to buy archival boxes. The Historical Society of Adelaide is very supportive. Two members of the Society attend Pilgrim Church. They have also helped host a national conference for UCSA Historical Society.

Margaret has scanned nearly all of the photos, has put them into proper archival order and onto computer for people to access. The computer and printer were donated by two anonymous members of the church. "Without the support of those two people we probably wouldn't be where we are now. It is essential equipment to do this work," says Chris.

Some of the reference books they have at their disposal are the Minutes of the Deacons' Meetings from August 1850 to 1890 from the Congregational Church which moved from North Terrace to Freeman St before it came to Stow Memorial Church. Freeman St is now Gawler Place.

Currently, they are working on finding information about the reconditioned portrait of Rev. Thomas Quinton Stow, including the name of the artist. Rev. Quinton Stow died in 1862.

They are sourcing this through the register of The Formation and Transitions of the Congregational or Independent Church, Adelaide, first meeting held 19 December 1837.

They meet on the first and third Monday of the month.





## ***Oral History: Speak up (and listen up) now or forever hold your peace....***

The Uniting Church South Australia Historical Society (UCSAHS) is planning to add to its valuable collection of historical records by embarking on an oral history project in the first half of 2021.

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 a trained 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.

In the case of this UCSAHS oral history project, the focus of the interviews will be on interviewees' experiences as members of the Uniting Church and/or its antecedent denominations in SA. For this to work, we need Uniting Church people – whether members of the Historical Society or not – to volunteer as interviewers or be prepared to be interviewees.

- Interviewers will need training (approximately one day) and the UCSAHS will organise this in cooperation with experienced oral historians associated with Oral History SA and the State Library of SA.



- Interviewees might be life-time or shorter term members of the UC, and their involvement might be as lay people, ministers, ministers' spouses or children, Sunday School teachers, Synod Moderators, organists, those involved in church agencies, former missionaries, youth leaders, 'ordinary' members - the list goes on. Everyone is worthy!

UCSAHS staff and volunteer are in a good position to come up with an initial list of potential interviewees, but we would like to hear from you:

- if you would like to be on the interviewee list, or have suggestions of others who might be, and/or
- if you would like to be involved as an interviewer.

We are excited about this project and look forward to your involvement. Please let us know soon of your interest, or of any questions you have about the project, by

- ringing History Centre co-manager, Gaye Browne, 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).

From the Muntoora Sunday School in 1914:

*Miss Stephenson, who in the absence of any capable men, had undertaken to superintend the Sunday-school during the year, spoke a few words of thanks to the parents for co-operation in sending the children so regularly, and to her loyal band of lady teachers for their unswerving devotion to the school's interests.*

## ***Uniting Church in Australia Collection—available online***

An online repository of documents, reports, minutes, photos, and 432 theses about the Uniting Church and its former denominations is being developed jointly by the Camden Theological Library NSW and datacomIT.

*They note that this is a ... Gateway to the history of our churches, treasured memories of local faith communities, reflective output of our faith people, and decision-making of Assemblies and Synods. Recording inspiring lives led, communities enlivened, and projects undertaken. Keeping the memory, recognizing values, and letting go. Uncovering difficult truths – allowing the light to enter. Holding in trust the treasures of faith and of the Church -- a gift for future generations.*

Online records include over 7,000 Methodist and nearly

1,700 Congregational items. The UCA Assembly office and the Camden library staff are now processing an extensive collection of Uniting Church records since 1977.

This collection is continually being added to and can be accessed at <http://illuminate.recollect.net.au>.

Rev. Dr Dean Eland

## Celebrating Mission Connections



L to R: Jenny Young, Brian & Winsome Ball, Sue Ellis, Cathy & Lawrie Lingood, Jenny Charlesworth

Photos: L Davis

In chapter 6 of her 2020 book, *Perseverance: on awe, wonder and things that sustain you when the world goes dark*, Julia Baird reflects why she has kept old boxes of records from her days as a student in Sydney. She refers to this journey of the mind as, *The Activist's Attic*.

“What is crucial to understand is that keeping records is to insist on significance: by doing so, you place something on record, and assert that it is of note. You are saying that it is something people should remember, that they may want to find out about at some point.<sup>1</sup> For me the piles of documents and memoranda in an archivist’s attic are stories of perseverance. If you have leaned your weight against something disturbing or unjust and it apparently remained unchanged, remember this: weight is cumulative.”<sup>2</sup>

On Sunday 11 October 2020 UC members met at Burnside Uniting Church to recall and celebrate stories of significance and perseverance. With the support of the Synod’s Fellowship and Mission Support (FAMS) group and the UC Historical Society, former moderator, Rev. Sue Ellis, invited a number of former mission workers to share their experience. In serving these churches the Uniting Church is now committed to “special relationships with Churches in Asia and the Pacific.” (Paragraph 2 The Basis of Union).

Interviews began by recounting some of the challenges faced by those who found themselves in an unfamiliar place, a new cultural context, not knowing the customs, language, and traditions of the host community.

Jenny Young, a young Congregationalist from Bordertown found herself in a new world on her arrival in Papua in 1962 to serve as a teacher for the LMS. Jenny Charlesworth from the Methodist Overseas Mission also went to PNG as a teacher and she shared her story of returning many times to support the work she began.

Rev Brian and Winsome Ball were Presbyterian Christian educators in Thailand, and they recalled some of the challenges with language and culture. Lawrie and Cathy Lingood shared something of their early married life with a new baby, involved a three-year stint teaching English in South Korea. Cathy shared the story of needing a hospital for her baby, and the angel that came in the form of a Korean woman who spoke English and helped them.

There were many returning co-workers among the gathering at Burnside, including FAMS co-chairs, Jill and Brian Polkinghorne, who led devotions. Rev. Mark Schultz, Team Leader of the Synod Mission Resourcing Unit, spoke about the ways international mission happens today within mutual partnerships, and outlined how these partnerships were being progressed even in these difficult COVID-19 days.

The Moderator Bronte Wilson concluded the meeting with a prayer for our mission partnerships before people were served afternoon tea and exchanged stories over a display of mission artefacts from the Historical Society and from Mission Resourcing storage.

In preparing for this event it became apparent that there are mission artefacts in storage, whose stories remain a

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(from page 8)

mystery. Over time the Historical Society will post photographs of these items in their newsletter and online, inviting those who hold the story to share it with us.

“Archives”, in addition to written records, involve collecting the experiences we carry in our heads, the events, struggles, achievements, and failures. Oral history and the stories we remember contribute, along with memorabilia, badges, posters, diary notes, photos, and recordings, to our stories and archives.

Readers will be interested to know that oral history stories of several UCA ministers, now living in Australia and who were formerly leaders of partner churches in the Pacific, will be included in the December edition of the *Australian Journal of Mission Studies*. These articles are personal reflections of those who are now helping the UCA to be missional by affirming and becoming a multi-cultural church.

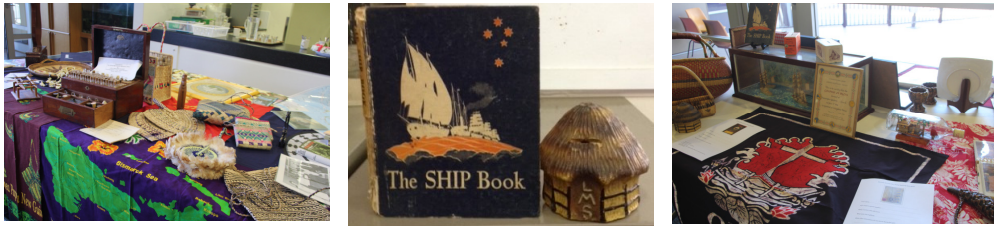
In one of the articles the Reverend Sui Juliette Maua’i reflects on the relationship between gospel and culture,

“For western culture to recognise and accept that in the sharing of the Gospel with our Samoan people, who are brought up with learning about the Gospel since the missionaries in Samoa in the 1800s, is that Gospel and culture are inseparable to our people. Yes, Gospel and culture hold challenges but both are inter-related and inter-connected on many levels for Samoans. We are born into the Faith/Gospel and our culture.”

By working with and learning from those now living in Australia the UCA is discovering anew how important it is to explore the relationship between gospel and culture. This relationship is significant for the Australian church now called to be missional, living and serving in a post-Christian context.

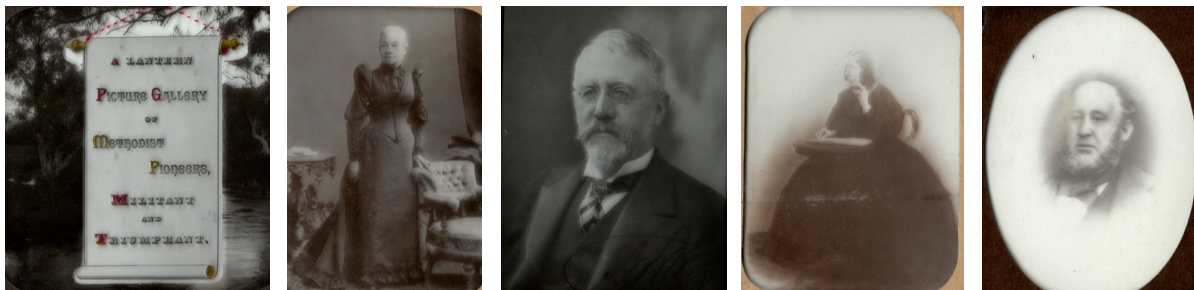
Rev. Dr Dean Eland

<sup>1</sup> Page 103  
<sup>2</sup> Page 104



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

Our collection at the History Centre includes a large number of glass slides (and the projectors that display them). The slides cover a range of topics, including a number of the “Methodist Pioneers” in South Australia. A few of these have been included here...



Left to Right: Collection Title, Lady Mary Colton, Sir Samuel Way, Mrs Elizabeth Draper, Rev. Daniel James Draper



## **Modern Christian Music Movement**

Readers will want to note this event in their 2021 diaries. It will present the program envisaged for 19-21 September 2020 but postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions.

We will be considering the developments in music and hymnody from the 1960s until now, and hearing from (and singing along with) some key players; celebrating the Creative Singing Group with a reunion; hosting the launch of a new song book; and taking part in the Blackwood UC Occasional Series as we look at movements in and meaning in music since the 1960s.

### **Friday 19 March**

#### **History Society Panel Discussion—Major Developments in music and hymnody from the 1960s to now**

Church of the Trinity—318 Goodwood Road, Clarence Park—7:00pm

The UC(SA) Historical Society's public meeting exploring 'Developments in The Modern Christian Music and Hymnody from the 1960s to 2020' with a panel of key contributors. The focus will be on the historical and theological context that inspired the changes in music, on its appeal to congregations and on how it has fared over time.

### **Saturday 20 March**

#### **Creative Singing Group Reunion (1:00pm) and song book launch (4:00-5:30pm)** Pilgrim Uniting Church—Flinders Street, Adelaide

The Creative singing Group (CSG), a multi-arts performing group, burst onto the church music scene in 1970 with powerful new expressions of worship. It was created by Rodney Boucher, Douglas Simper, David Woods (who will all lead on the day) and the late Neil Quintrell.

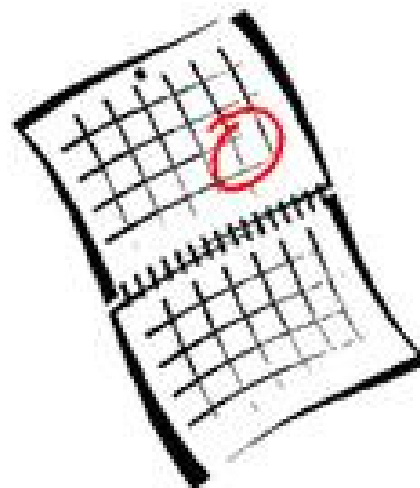
The afternoon will include the launching of *Singing the Journey—100 contemporary Christian songs* published by MediaCom Education Inc. Adelaide. The songs are the work of Douglas Simper composed in the period 1968–2020 in collaboration with various writers including Neil Quintrell, Donald Bell, Bruce Prewer, Brian Wren, Shirley Murray (and also his own words).

### **Sunday 21 March**

#### **Blackwood UC Occasional Series—Meaning through Music** Blackwood Uniting Church—266 Main Road, Blackwood—5:00-7:00pm

Well known composers Robin Mann, Leigh Newton and Douglas Simper will share their insights.

## 2021 Calendar of Events



### Wednesday 3 February

The History Centre reopens at 1:00pm after our break for Christmas and New Year.

We will be open every Wednesday afternoon (1:00pm–4:00pm) until Wednesday 8 December.

Where: 44A East Avenue, Black Forest, SA

### Friday 19 to Sunday 21 March—History of Contemporary Music

Over the three days there will be a number of gatherings to discuss and celebrate the history of contemporary music (please refer to notice earlier in this newsletter).

When: **Friday 19 March at 7:00pm**

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

A public meeting exploring developments in Modern Christian Music and Hymnody from the 1960s to the 2000s with a panel of key contributors.

When: **Saturday 20 March 2021 from 1:00pm**

Where Pilgrim Church, Flinders Street, Adelaide

Creative Singing Group reunion and sharing, and the launch of Douglas Simper's new song book, *Singing the Journey* on Saturday afternoon and evening.

When: **Sunday 21 March 2021 at 5:00pm**

Where: Blackwood Uniting Church

A Blackwood Uniting Church Occasional Series event focusing on Movements in Music since the 1960s.

### Sunday 16 May—"Under the Skin—the Contested History of the Bible In Australia

When: Sunday 16 May at 2:00pm

Where: St John's Anglican Church, Halifax St, Adelaide

Dr Meredith Lake will be the speaker at this History Festival event.

### Friday 11 June—Sunday 13 June— Third Biennial Conference

Where: The Centre for Ministry, North Paramatta, New South Wales

Join us for the third biennial conference of the National UCA History Society. The theme of this conference will be "Growing Up Uniting".

(See page 12 for the *Call for Papers* details.)

### Sunday 27 June—Annual General Meeting

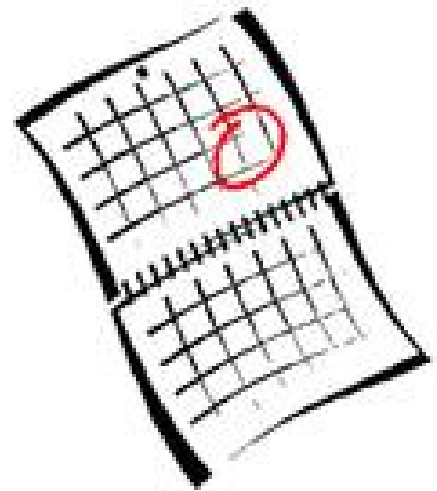
When: Sunday 27 June at 2:00pm

Where: Morialta Uniting Church, 26 Chapel St, Magill

The Annual General Meeting will also include a presentation and discussion on the histories of the congregations that came together to form the Morialta Parish.



## 2021 Calendar of Events (continued)



### Sunday 22 August—The Reconciliation Movement

When: Sunday 22 August at 2:00pm

Where: To be confirmed

The Reconciliation Movement...

How did it happen? Is it advancing? Included in this discussion will be the history of the United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress.

### Sunday 24 October—The Sunday School Movement

When: Sunday 24 October at 2:00pm

Where: To be confirmed

The Sunday School Movement—the rise, decline and demise of this movement in our preceding denominations and the Uniting Church following Union.

### 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.

## Third Biennial Conference



The Third Biennial Conference of the Uniting Church Nation History Society will be held at

The Centre for Ministry,  
North Paramatta, New South Wales

11—13 June 2021

The theme is “Growing Up Uniting”.

The Call for Papers is currently open. Contributors are encouraged to approach the conference theme creatively. It could mean growing up Uniting in a secular age, or growing up ecumenically, theologically, spiritually, proudly, liturgically, multiculturally, hopefully, and joyfully. It could also deal with the various struggles faced by young (and not so young) people growing up in the Uniting Church.

Papers may be presented in person or online.

Please send paper proposals of no more than 300 words to William Emilsen and Patricia Curthoys at: [ucnhs2021conference@gmail.com](mailto:ucnhs2021conference@gmail.com).

The keynote speakers will be Dr Deidre Palmer, Associate Professor Ruth Powell, Rev. Dr William Emilsen and Dr Elizabeth Watson.



*The Committee and History Centre Volunteers and Staff would like to wish you a very blessed Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year.*