



# Uniting History SA September 2024

**Editor: David Houston**

## ***Searching Old Records to Unearth 'Living Stones'*** **The story of the Henley Beach Temple Uniting Church**

*[The History Centre's Historical Records Officer, Rosemary Hocking, encouraged Murray McLennan of the Henley/Fulham Congregation to offer his reflection on the work of researching the history of the Henley Beach Temple Church for publication in this newsletter issue as an encouragement to other congregations recording their histories.*

*David Houston (Editor)]*

In early 2022 the Henley-Fulham Church Council asked for volunteers to help document the history of The Temple Church (formally Congregational) and produce a book to be distributed to members of the church and to the wider community. I stepped forward and a committee was formed comprising myself (Murray McLennan), Rev. Bill Service, Mrs Elaine Jenkins, Ms Julie Young and Rev. Christa Megaw. It became my job to write up the history, and research any documentation, with other members of the team providing suggestions and editing.



The first problem arose, when at the beginning it was to be a history of the 100 years of The Temple, and then after early research and documentation it was deemed that we should have a complete history of the church from 1883. And so, the initial document had to be considerably expanded.

I was able to access records of the church held at the SA State library and spent days going through the records held there. Also, the staff of the Uniting Church History Centre were also very helpful, and a lot of The Temple and Henley-Fulham documentation was also held there.

I was very impressed with the unpublished record of all the South Australian Congregational Churches written by Rev. J.R. Digance in seven volumes detailing major

events of these churches up until Church Union. I was told he had made this his life's work, and was also informed that a copy is held in the SA State Library. The Rev. John Cameron's book ("In Stow's Footsteps") was also a mine of information. I was

also fortunate to have a copy of the book "Three Quarters of a Century" which I obtained from an old cupboard at the church before it was thrown out with other old books in about 1995. Trove (digitised newspapers) was also very helpful in detailing the early years of the church and some interesting articles were included in the book. The church had a large celebration of the first 100 years in 1983 and a small book was produced on the history up to that time. I used this book as the basis of the new history and significantly expanded the story.

So, the story in the book progressed and included photographs of the stained-glass windows and all the

(continued page 3)



The Temple Uniting Church –2023

### **The History Centre**

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

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

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

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

## The UCA History Centre

Open Wednesdays 1 - 4pm

44A East Ave  
Black Forest

Website:

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

Facebook:

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

### CORRESPONDENCE:

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

Post: UCA Historical Society

44A East Ave, Black Forest, SA, 5035

Phone: 08 8297 8472

### COUNCIL MEMBERS

Dean Eland (President)

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Don Hopgood

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

### Membership of the Society

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

Contact the Centre for more information.

## From the President...

I hope you have the chance to view the six-part ABC documentary series ***I Was Actually There***. The episodes sum up the story of defining moments in our recent history told “through the eyes, ears and voices of those who witnessed them firsthand”.



Over the past few months churches have participated in SA's History Festival events and it's been encouraging to discover new forms and mediums to share the story of congregations across the state. Members of congregations have a sense of place being located in neighbourhoods and towns and have witnessed social change and discerned ways to adapt and respond. Landscapes, biographical, local and family history all create memory in place.

We have an extensive collection of historical records of congregations, ministers and prominent lay leaders. Yes, it's also important to record our oral history and add newsletters, minutes and photos to our archive collection. Records are being scanned and can be sent to you for church anniversaries and other important occasions.

Insights about family, local and church history are about remembering and knowing how we have travelled over the years and arrived at this moment. Exhibitions, art work, storytelling, archiving and our online “On this Day...” enhance our appreciation of what others have done and the challenges they faced.

Our AGM on Sunday 23 June was another moment to stop and reflect. Thank you to the three former SA Moderators who shared their insights on their time in office: Dr Don Hopgood (1997-1999), Dr Deidre Palmer (2010-13) and Rev. Sue Ellis (2013-2016). They reflected on three questions:

- What was a surprise to you in discovering something about a congregation that you did not know before?
- In your term as Moderator what did you discover about the significance of church anniversaries and the importance of celebrating the gifts and commitment of those who served and witnessed over many years?
- Yesterday we celebrated the 47th anniversary of the Uniting Church. What could the UC SA Historical Society do in the next three years to assist congregations prepare for the UCA's Jubilee in June 2027?

We are thankful for the support we receive from volunteers and staff. All our contact details are on the left, and you can get in touch with us in any of those ways.

Rev. Dr Dean Eland  
([president@ucsahistory.org.au](mailto:president@ucsahistory.org.au))

memorials including those transferred from Henley Beach Wesley when that church closed. I considered that any memorials should be shown and documented, as some of them are now quite old. I was very conscious of backing up my work, and so each update was refiled on my hard drive and further backed up (e.g. Version 1.1, 1.2 ... 2.8 ... 4.0). In the end I had 58 different large documents before the final copy was sent to the printer.

It was interesting to read of the early Congregational Churches in that equal representation was given to the men and women in the church, and this attracted some of the very early members at Henley Beach who were previously Quakers, as that church had a similar philosophy.

The early church commenced in private homes and with a Sunday School, and very quickly it was decided to build



The early Henley Beach Congregational Church (circa 1916)

a chapel. A block of land was purchased in early 1883 and the church building was dedicated on the 5<sup>th</sup> November of that year. The members and minister of the Hindmarsh Congregational Church

provided a lot of help and support to this early congregation. In 1898, owing to an expanded congregation, the building was expanded from three windows a side to five windows a side. There is a story giving the impetus to an enlarged building: people who came to the church services, seeing the building was full, then departed. The church became the centre of the community at Henley Beach with dinners, plays and evangelical witness and good speakers. The church was very quickly able to support its own minister and a manse was built adjoining the church. A hall was built to house the Young Men's Bible Class, and it is sad to reflect that of the members in 1914, eleven enlisted in the military and two were killed in action. So, this church along with many other churches and organisations at that time were severely impacted by the events of WWI.

So, we now have a church history of 140 years for future generations to read and wonder at the work of many Christian folk in the early years of the church at Henley Beach.

If others want to write a history of their churches, then I would refer them in the first instance to the Uniting Church History Centre at Black Forest, and to be proactive in the protection of various church documents, for if they are lost, then past and interesting stories cannot be told.

Murray McLennan  
Henley-Fulham Uniting Church

### A Postscript: The History Centre is 'Here to help you'.

- Readers would have noticed that Murray spoke of the value in contacting and visiting the History Centre, 44A East Avenue, Black Forest. Rosemary Hocking - our Historical Records Officer; and Gaye Brown and Val Canty - our History Centre Managers - are available on Wednesdays 1-4pm for visits or calls on 08 8297 8472.
- Our team of volunteers are ready to help you locate existing records and information related to a history of your congregation.
- A visit to your Church can be arranged to advise you on selecting and archiving your registers, minute books, stories and artifacts.
- The Centre has experienced volunteers to record oral histories from key older local members. Again, contact the Centre for this.
- The Society will be holding an elective at the October SA Synod Meeting along with displays, handouts and the planning of events for 2025. We look forward to seeing you at this special event.

### Membership

A membership year runs from January to December, and is open to individuals or congregations and organisations. For those with annual membership, renewal for 2024 is now past due. Membership fees for 2024 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



## ***Building Renovations Update***

We are advised that the Unley Council have provided Planning Approval for the proposed modifications to our East Avenue property. These plans include demolition of the baptistry and raised altar area, increased sorting and storage space and installation of another compactus. A new entrance with access for variously abled people is another part of the redevelopment.

Our architects, Hodgkison, have provided detailed drawings to three building firms with an invitation to submit a tender for the project by the deadline of 3 September. We are pleased to have reached one further step in the renovation process and look forward to evaluating the respective tenders for the project. Tender enquiries have commenced. We look forward to updating readers as the project proceeds.

Robert Backhouse

## ***Gordon Davidson CBE— A Life given to Church, Community and Politics***

Gordon Davidson (1915-2002) was brought up in a Presbyterian home, nurtured in the worship and work of Saint Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Strathalbyn, involved in Sunday School and PFA activities and became a Lay Preacher. He became an elder and then session clerk, and was also very involved in community affairs and in local government as a district counsellor. Church work always delighted Gordon and he loved to preach and to speak.

Davidson's family were farmers at Angas Plains. His primary education took place at the small Angas Plains School, before attending Scotch College. He worked on the family farm and was elected to the District Council of Willunga serving there from 1942 to 1950.

His membership of the General Assemblies of both South Australia and Victoria and his involvement in many Church organisations gave him the experience and contacts that were to be invaluable to him in later years. As his interest in the life of the Church and public affairs broadened and deepened, beginning as a lay preacher in his home church in Strathalbyn, he eventually would come to address and/or preach at Assemblies and both urban and rural congregations throughout South Australia, interstate and overseas.

On his return from two years overseas in 1952, he was invited to accept the position of organising secretary of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia. There were no job specifications, no guidelines and no predecessors to follow. He was the ideal person for the task, having the organising ability as well as wide experience in both church, and public affairs. His enthusiastic approach to the mission of the Church in the wider community fitted him for the task. He served in this office until 1965.

Progressing the development of the Dunbar Presbyterian Homes for the Aged, the work of the Australian Inland Mission, Scotch College Council and Saint Andrew's Hospital Board were all part of his work, together with his engagement with parishes and other Assembly Committees. The introduction of his 5KA Radio broadcast *Presbyterian Corner* was a well-received



innovation. This weekly Sunday session ran from 1955 to 1969 and played a significant role in promoting the mission and ministries of the Church. The developing ecumenical movement was claiming his attention and he advocated for the shared goals of inter-church objectives. He attended the Second Assembly of the World Council of Churches at Evanston in 1954 and became active in the Australian Council of Churches councils and programs on return.

This led to his enthusiasm to promote the Christmas Bowl Appeal in South Australia. The appeal was commenced by the Rev Frank Byatt, minister at the then Williamstown Methodist Church at Christmas in 1949. It was to become an A.C.C. Overseas Aid Appeal, now known as 'Act for Peace' Appeal and is 75 years old this year.



Gordon helped to initiate the 'opening' of the annual Appeal each year on the North Terrace pavement in front of Scots Church, North Terrace using a giant 'gift bowl' for the passer-by donations. Other outreaches,

with which he was actively involved, included the Bible Society, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and the Outback Children's Homes.

Gordon Davidson became Liberal Party member of parliament, first entering the Senate in 1961, and continuing as a member of that house for 18 years – 1961, 1962, 1965-1981. He filled a number of roles in the National Parliament and headed many Senate inquiries. He distinguished himself as Senate Committee Chairperson and was known for his collaborative approach across the Parliament in this leadership. He maintained an interest in water management and served on several committees and delegations in this area, including chair of the Senate Select Committee on Water Pollution. He also served as chairman of the Education, Science and the Arts Committee and examined the need for a multicultural and multilingual broadcasting service.

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For a number of years he was Chairman of the Parliamentary Christian Fellowship, with which he drew together senators and members for special occasions of fellowship and devotions. At the close of his term, he was described as one of the Senate's most experienced Chairmen. On the eve of his retirement in 1981 he was appointed a Companion of the British Empire.

Gordon Davidson when speaking as guest of honour at the 1981 Scotch College speech day underlined that while the church must continue to care for its members and all their needs, it was essential for it to be concerned for the public affairs of the nation and its needs. On his debt to the church over the previous 50 years he said, '... no institution has done so much for me. The Presbyterian Church has reared me, educated me, provided me with every conceivable opportunity for developing towards the public life I have been privileged to lead.'

Gordon Davidson has helped to repay that debt by making a very considerable contribution to the Presbyterian Church in South Australia, and the Ecumenical Movement, including the years leading into

Union of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian Churches. His ecumenical spirit truly reflected Jesus' wish in his prayer to the Father in John 17:11 '...*may they all be one, just as you and I are one.*' And one is not surprised at his ecumenical spirit as he married Patricia Emma (Pat) Newman in the Moseley Street Methodist Church, Glenelg in 1952.

[This article is sourced substantially from the work of Robert Scrimgeour, the principal historian of the Presbyterian Church in SA prior to Church Union in 1977.]

David Houston

Sources:

- Robert J Scrimgeour: 'Some Scots Were Here'. - A History of the Presbyterian Church in South Australia. Lutheran Publishing House, 1986
- Biographical Dictionary of the Australian Senate – Elizabeth Kwan 2016
- Wikipedia Notes and References, 2022

## *Picnics and Family Camps...*

Church and Sunday School picnics, and Family Camps, have always been popular events in congregations. They have been a time to get together and have some fun. Here is a small collection of picnic photos from across South Australia, and across time.



Birkenhead Sunday School (around 1925)



Clarence Park Methodist Church (1911)  
- Titree Oval, Belair



Erskine Sunday School Picnic—1941



Rosefield UC Family Camp (date unknown)



Islington UC—Centenary Picnic—1982



Cornerstone UC Picnic—2005



Playford UC Family Camp (Walkers Flat) - 2016



Littlehampton UC Guild Picnic—Monarto Zoo



Merriton Methodist Sunday School Picnic (undated)



## Whyalla Methodist Church—13 Barter Street



[Editor's note – Peter Wenham is a Uniting Church member and retired Architectural Draughtsman/Builder who is known for his work with the Methodist and Uniting Churches in the 1970s and 80s. This is the first part of a piece of 'hobby' research he has undertaken. His story demonstrates how the History Centre can assist researchers with relevant photographs and references. Peter also demonstrates how State Library and Land Titles documents help to build and illustrate this type of research.]

Most people who have known Whyalla for any length of time have difficulty in believing that this is actually a photograph of the corner of Peters Street and Barter Street. [Stand on this corner now and compare the scene]

It is hard to credit that the photo was taken as recently as 1943 ... less than 80 years ago!

But the story of the building begins even earlier than that. MOONGI. Ever heard of it?

It's a locality in South Australia that not many know of and fewer can point to on a map. The name, according to Manning, derives from an Aboriginal word meaning 'a favourite resort', though I suspect something may have been lost in the translation. The label was adopted by pastoralists in the late 1800s and referred to both a pastoral lease and the general locality in northern Eyre Peninsula.

In the early 1900s more and more farms became established in the district, bringing with them the need for more localised community services. In 1924 the Public Works Department created a 26 million litre reservoir (dam) to service the surrounding area at Moongi - Hundred of Buckleboo.

With a secure water supply available [notice the tank in the rear centre of the photograph on the right], the Education Department installed a one-roomed, one teacher school on crown land near the dam. The Moongi School operated between 1928 and 1946. [Photograph courtesy of Uniting Church SA Historical Society]

As the area of land under crop increased, so did the necessity for improved transport (particularly to get the produce - mainly wheat - to markets). By 1913 the railway from Port Lincoln had reached Kimba but there was a great need to extend the advantages and facilities offered by the railway to cover a larger area north-west of Kimba.

It wasn't until 1923 that a Railways Standing Committee examined the possibility of extending the line from Kimba to Moongi via Buckleboo. The Town of Buckleboo was proclaimed on 17 December 1925, and by 1929 Buckleboo was the terminus of the Port Lincoln – Kimba line. It seems that the building of the dam in 1924 and the opening of the school in 1928 were in anticipation of Moongi becoming the next rail-head.

Prior to the proclamation of the town, all the necessary surveys for roads and the rail corridor had been carried out and land set aside. It was all crown land anyway, so they could plan for whatever they wanted. Besides the existing school being assigned the land it already stood on, it was allocated a nearby area for future expansion. There was a large area set aside for recreational use, with the largest strip in the centre of the town for use by the railway.

A small section to the west of the rail corridor was subdivided into thirteen ¼ acre housing blocks. Two of these were set aside for government use – the remainder made available for private purchase. I can only find evidence of the purchase of three of these allotments ... all by the Methodist Church! Lot 16 and Lot 17 were purchased by a group of local men – as trustees for the Church.

On the same day, 15 December 1932, a third parcel (Lot 15) was purchased by three office holders of the Methodist Church of SA. W.O. Harris was at that time the General Superintendent of Home Mission in South Australia. Something important for Moongi at that time becomes important for Whyalla ten years later. There are some wonderful copies of documents and maps that accompany this story.

Part 2 will follow in the December issue.

Peter Wenham

[Editor's note: And, with Buckleboo a part of the story, we are reminded that it was here that as a young farm labourer, Edwin Broomhead entered the Methodist ministry, and became a significant Biblical scholar, teacher and preacher. On his return from WWII in 1945, having been a Prisoner of War in Italy, he wrote his weekly 'Going My Way' column in the Sunday Mail for 25 years.]



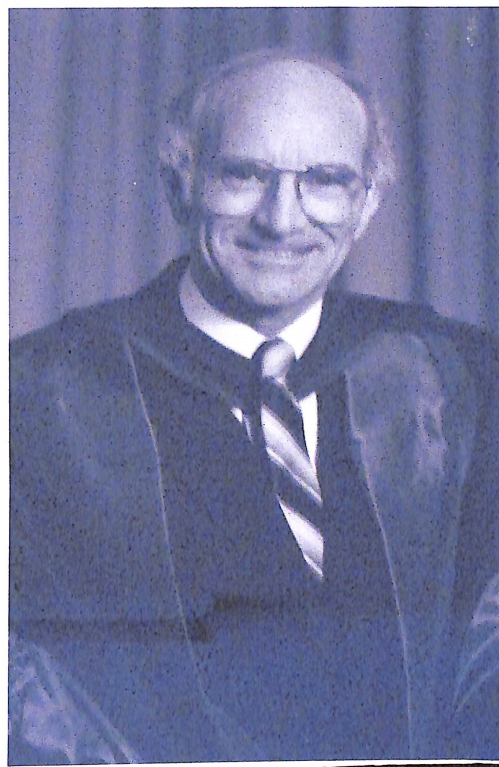
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## Remembering Rev. Dr Charles Biggs

We briefly acknowledged the passing of Charles Biggs in the June Newsletter but publishing timelines did not allow us to reflect on his contribution to our Church in South Australia. A quietly spoken, ever-thoughtful young man searched his way through God's leading for his life to become a leader in Christian Ministry education for over 40 years.

In presenting the Tribute at the Service celebrating Charles' life, Rev. Dr Ian Price referred to Charles call to ministry. *'... He told me that in those years he felt a bit lost regarding his future. His local minister said to him, "You know Charles, you have a good speaking voice. Have you ever thought about the ministry?" Hardly the most mystical of callings, and at first, he thought the idea crazy, but as it sat with him for a while gradually a firm call emerged, and in 1955 he entered Melbourne University and Queen's College. This required him to study a language ... He chose Hebrew. It turned out to be one of those sliding doors moments, as it was to shape his future as we all know. In 1966 the family moved to Adelaide for him to take up the position of lecturer in Biblical Studies at Parkin Wesley College and eventually he accepted the call to be principal. He was awarded his PhD from King's College London in 1973. He was an outstanding academic and teacher, held in the highest esteem by his students.'*

This leads us on to acknowledge his important contributions to ministry education in South Australia. Firstly, his thoroughly engaging approach as Lecturer in Old Testament Studies from the moment he was appointed to the position along with his own published commentary on the Book of Ezekiel. Secondly, his creative leadership during the twenty years he was Principal of Parkin Wesley, and the mentoring role he



played in the development of his students beyond their College years.

Charles' influential leadership led to the formation of the Committee of Theological Colleges (CTC) in 1974 and laid the foundations for the quality theological education that was to follow. His enthusiasm in this venture led to the establishment of The Adelaide College of Divinity (ACD) in 1979. In the 1990s Charles again brought his skills for collaborative planning to the establishment of the Adelaide Theological Colleges Campus (ATCC) on a common site. Although he was to retire before the plan was realised, his insights and energy clearly led to the Brooklyn Park Campus opening in 1997.

Charles has also given us the history of the establishment of the ACD in a carefully documented record entitled *"An Ecumenical Adventure – a History of the*

*Adelaide College of Divinity 1979-2009"*. His work was published by the ACD and UCSA Historical Society in 2011. Copies of this are available at the History Centre.

Another acknowledgement will always be for his pastoral leadership of the UCA in South Australia during his term as Moderator (1986-87) and his contribution during our Synod's early formation years.

We continue to give thanks for Charles' life and work. At the same time we remember Margaret for the partnership she shared with Charles across more than 60 years of ministry while pursuing her own gifted caring work through Medical Practice. We pray for God's continued blessing for her and Helen, Andrew, David and their families.

David Houston  
Vice-President of the UCSA Historical Society

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## National Society Update...

The next newsletter of the National UC History Society will include an address by Dr David Hilliard given at Port Adelaide Uniting Church, at the Western Suburbs Organ Festival (3 January 2012). The address was titled *The History of Port Adelaide Congregational/Uniting Church*. David includes reference to the congregation's third minister, the Rev. J C Kirby. Kirby was minister of the Port for 28 years and led several major social campaigns including the social purity movement, women's suffrage, temperance and public education.

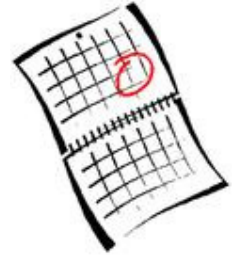
If you would like to know more, please contact the History Centre. We can send you a copy of the address and other information about Kirby.

Information about becoming a member of the National Society can be found on that society's web site: <https://uniting.church/uca-national-history-society/>.

Plans are well underway for the 2025 national history conference to be held in Canberra in October. 2027 will be the UCAs Jubilee year and ideas are being shared about the significance of that year for all members.



# 2024 Calendar of Events



**Wednesday 11 December, 2024**

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

## From our AGM

### Former Moderators Forum

**Dr Don Hopgood (1997-1999)**  
**Dr Deidre Palmer (2013-2016)**  
**Rev. Sue Ellis (2016-2019)**

### Special Moments

**Don** recalled an incident when two couples were denounced from the pulpit. Dispute over a minister's call and a meeting of 200 members. The pastoral role of the Moderator helping congregations to accept diversity and differences with Christian love was important.

**Deidre** was delighted to be at Oodnadatta with its UAICC ministry to the community with an open table. Julia Lennon is a very creative pastor to her people. A highlight was the early morning baptism of nine members in the local waterhole followed by Holy Communion.

**Sue** remembered prayers being written on the floor under the carpet at Playford, imagining it as a foundation ministry. Good outcomes are built on prayer. She also remembers the joy associated in a same gender marriage celebration. And, a recognition that country ministers are part of the community and on duty every day and at every event. Some struggle to be part of the UCA. She recalled for us Serena Thorne Lake's 1898 quote re her thoughts on Methodist union and has posted it on our Facebook page.

### On Local Anniversaries

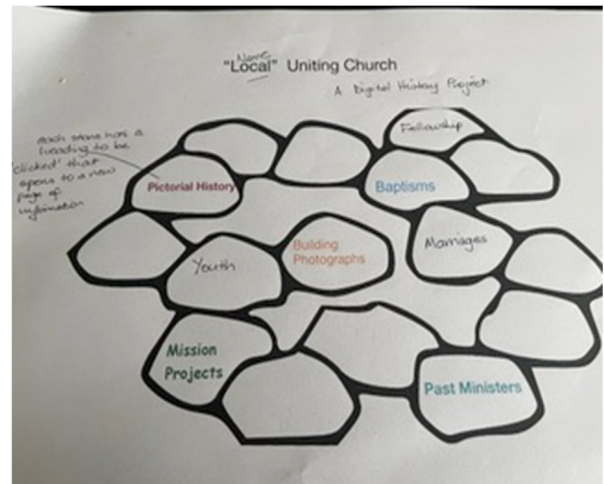
**Don** recalled a Pt Pirie anniversary that involved others, opportunities to include people of other faiths, and went for three days.

**Deidre** spoke of the gifts and books received at church anniversary events as the congregations were *remembering* people of God. Deidre reminded us we need to tell the stories of hope that continue to encourage us.

**Sue** experienced joy of going to anniversaries. People return ... and, "Hear the pennies dropping" is part of their stories. Anniversaries provide the opportunity to go back to the moments before we were disciples and 'called' to follow. There is always a need to celebrate the past so we can move into the future.

### What can we do towards 2027 UCA Jubilee?

**Sue** suggested proposing a Living Stones Project - giving every congregation a poster template (card or digital) to create a history page of stones using photographs, quotes, scripture verses and historical paragraphs/lists of leadership and significant disciples and leaders. This would be like a time capsule/digital brick, to house the history and comments as part of the Jubilee. The wider church could access these 'living stones' stories web and Facebook pages. Large wall board stories could also hold the stories.



**Don** posed the question. Do people know what the UCA does? We need to tell that story and *make* more noise about who we are and what we do! Our ministries in social services and aged care are enormous.

**Deidre** suggested we ask our congregations three questions: What are your stories of hope? What adaptations have served church well? What aspects would you take as you walk into the future?