



Uniting History SA March 2025

Editor: David Houston

The Story Behind This Mystery Window



In the June Newsletter of 2024 we made a call out to readers who may have had an answer to the Church location and story around this photo. It is a 1960s style Church structure and window with four large stained glass memorial panels set within it.

The answer is that it was the Narthex window in the 1985 extension to the **Tusmore Park Uniting Church** (formerly **Tusmore Presbyterian**) and is

now the **Austral-Asian Christian Church**. By coincidence I was the minister there at the time the extension of the Church was undertaken. The church is situated on the corner of Kennaway and Barr-Smith Streets, Tusmore. The story that follows is a short history of the life and witness of five significant early members of the Tusmore Presbyterian congregation.

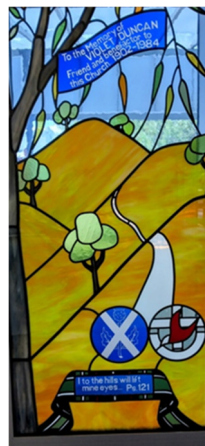
St. Giles Church at Norwood grew the Tusmore congregation. St. Giles was formed in 1883 with the Church being opened in 1890. It served the Presbyterians living in the general Tusmore area until 1925 when a new congregation was formed in Tusmore in the home of Mr and Mrs. J Thomas of Statenborough Street. The initial church building was opened on April 11 1926. A Sunday School commenced the following Sunday, and Mrs David Woods began a Day School in the church hall in 1928.

Over the next 50 years Tusmore Presbyterian outgrew its parent church and became one of the strongest Presbyterian congregations in Adelaide with sustained interests in Overseas and Home Missions. The congregation had a particular relationship to the Ernabella Aboriginal Mission from its commencement in 1937.

The 1985 extension to the Tusmore Church provided both a new gathering area for worshippers before and after worship as well as an extension space for the growing congregation. The new window would be used

to carry memorial panels to significant members leadership over time. The five people remembered are - Olive Duncan (centre left), Lois Jeffery (upper right), Bruce Collette (upper left), Frank Grove (placed later) and Arthur Philpot (lower right).

In 2011, the memorial panels were removed and relocated in one of the entrance corridors of the new **Burnside City Uniting Church** which was established by the uniting of the Tusmore Memorial, Tusmore Park, Beaumont and Kensington Park congregations. The new Church now holds the memorials and histories of these four congregations. Some reference now to these Tusmore Park memorials:



Olive Duncan was member of the congregation for almost all its fifty years prior to Church Union in 1977. She was a great benefactor to both the local and wider Church including the Ernabella Mission and Dunbar Homes for the Aged. She had a great love for her Presbyterian heritage but became an equally ardent supporter of the Uniting Church. That the new Church would be called the 'Uniting' Church affirmed her belief in Jesus' prayer that his followers 'be one', and that they join together with Him in the mission of love and service in the world. The words on Olive's memorial

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The History Centre

The Centre at 44a East Avenue, Black Forest, is currently closed to the public due to our extensive building works.

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

Facebook:
www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA

CORRESPONDENCE:

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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—1 year	\$30
Congregational—Life	\$250

Contact the Centre for more information.

From the President...

Past, Present and Future



Members of the SA Uniting Church Historical Society are committed to preserving records and sharing stories of those who went before. As members of congregations we are also aware of present challenges, changes that have taken place in the past few years and implications this has for the future.

At our first council meeting of the year we noted that the next three years, 2025 to 2027, is a time for the Uniting Church to look forward and prepare for our Jubilee Year. In 2027 we will be invited to remember and celebrate the formation of the UCA on 22 June 1977.

Jubilee year in the Hebrew tradition (the year after 7x7=49 years) was a “time to re-establish a proper relationship with God, with one another, and with all of creation, and involved the forgiveness of debts, the return of misappropriated land, and a fallow period for the fields.” (Leviticus 25:8-13).

Anniversaries and commemorations are a time for congregations to move on with a clearer sense of who they have been, a time to discover that past, present and future are closely connected and interrelated. Moments of insight are like discovering more about family legacy, those who went before, what’s happening now and wondering about the future that we may share with our grandchildren, nieces and nephews. When we “retired” 20 years ago Judy and I found time to discover more about our grandparents and great grandparents and we now have a better sense of where we came from, our values and character, our DNA.

First Nations people continue to remind us about a sense of place, locations and families who experienced belonging and community. They have also affirmed that those who carry and embody tradition are “called to be relentlessly innovative in ways that preserve the life-giving character of the tradition”.

While the UC SA Historical Society has specific and long-term objectives (check out our 2025 brochure), this year we are addressing several major tasks to ensure that the history and records of congregations will be secure and accessible to those who will join with us in the years ahead.

A Prayer for all who those who preserve the past and plan ahead:

God of our forebears we remember and give thanks for all the archivists, historians and helpers who have preserved, recorded and handed on the heart of our stories for the life of our churches, our communities, institutions and the world.

Rev. Dr Dean Eland

The Church as a Prophetic Voice in Australian Society - Past, Present and Future

National Conference 3-5 October 2025

UNITING CHURCH NATIONAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Email: ucnhs2025conference@gmail.com

Society Website: <https://uniting.church/uca-national-history-society/>

CALL FOR PAPERS

We invite papers, of 20 minutes in length, that address the conference theme. Papers may focus on the period covering the life of the Uniting Church (1977-2025) but may also refer to the history of the three denominations that formed the Uniting Church, or indeed of other denominations. While some may deal primarily with the work and achievements of church agencies, services and programs, we are also encouraging all papers to engage with some of the following questions:

- How, through their public presence, have the church/churches acted prophetically, both domestically and/or intentionally, i.e. in ways that challenge and critique the surrounding culture in the light of gospel values?
- What alternative approaches have they offered in relation to a range of issues, e.g. welfare, justice, equality, social inclusion, racism, the common good vs individual rights, etc.?
- What changes in political, theological, sociological stances have driven different approaches over time?
- What have been the pluses and minuses, gains and losses resulting from these changes?
- Has the church failed to act prophetically at some times and in some circumstances, and what has driven this failure and resulted from it?
- How is the church preparing to maintain/strengthen its prophetic witness in the future?

Please submit proposals for a paper, with an abstract of no more than 300 words, by the end of March 2025 to the email address above.

Membership

Membership is open to individuals or congregations and organisations. A membership year runs from January to December. For those with annual membership, renewal for 2025 is now due. Membership fees for 2025 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

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window are from the Scottish Psalter paraphrase of Psalm 121 : *I to the hills will lift mine eyes*'

Lois Jeffery was the Superintendent of the Kindergarten department of the Sunday School for more than 30 years and is remembered for her contribution to the early childhood Christian Education she coordinated for the Church. Her husband, Ivan, was the Church's Treasurer for many years. The text on her memorial reflects her ministry with children -



'Suffer the little children to come unto me' from Mark 10:14.



Bruce Collette and his family migrated from Sri Lanka in the late 1960s and joined the Tusmore congregation. He was elected an Elder early in their time and served with great faithfulness until his death in 1987. His contributions to worship, pastoral visitation and prayer support for members is well remembered. His son Patrick has been a member of the Music ministry team at Blackwood Uniting since the early 90s. Words

from Isaiah 40:31 reflect his ministry. *'They who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength'*,

Frank Grove, also an Elder, is remembered for his care and development of the church property. An experienced builder, he supervised the erection the early Sunday School, Fellowship Room and the new Church Hall in 1958. It was to be a hub for more Sunday school, youth and adult group activities for the following 50 years. He is also remembered for using his utility to collect children from the district for Sunday School. His memorial was installed some time after the Duncan, Jeffreys. Collette and Philpot panels. The Scripture text that reflects his ministry is from Psalm 147, *'Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labour in vain.'* The window reflects the simplest of forms and comprises two colours, Red and Blue revealing a mix of loyalties – his local Church and his beloved Norwood Football Club.

Arthur Philpot On February 4, 1943, Arthur married Olive Thorpe, the niece and adopted daughter of Mr and Mrs W. Trowse, members of the Tusmore congregation. He would go on to have a long and influential role within the congregation, the wider Presbyterian Church, the School of Architecture in the Institute of Technology and the Architectural community around Australia.

He was born in 1915 in Western Australia to English migrant parents. He began his studies in Architecture there in 1936, completing them in Adelaide in 1944. Working for the Commonwealth Government he was involved in the design of the Salisbury Munitions Factory. A partner in the Architectural firm of Evans, Bruer and Partners, he became a senior partner in 1953, attracting Eric Von Schramek among others to join the

partnership. It was during this time that he took on commissions for the design and planning of four Presbyterian Churches: Ernabella Mission (1952), Clearview (1954), Tusmore (1956) and most notably The John Flynn Memorial Church at Alice Springs, also in 1956. The history of that Church and its congregation is deserving of a separate article. But for now, Philpot was its architect. He was also an artist, and with the assistance of Adelaide Sculptor, Max Textor, he created the acclaimed 'Mantle of Safety Mural' in the Flynn Memorial Church.

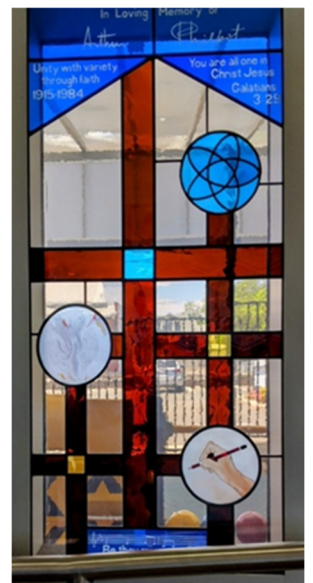


The Tusmore Church has some similarities to the Flynn Memorial Church in the form and style of the roof and nave (the main body of the church) but on a smaller scale and a much smaller budget.

In the sanctuary area, Arthur created a reredos carrying the image of 'The Golgotha Crosses' as shown in this photo. It was an

inspiring work using low cost material - specially selected weldtex grooved plywood panels. He shows great insight into the Crucifixion scene as described in Luke 23:38-43. The penitent thief's acknowledgement of Jesus and his plea to be remembered is pictured in his cross, on the right, rising up and through the cross arm of Jesus' cross - carrying the symbolism of Jesus' affirmation and promise- *'today you will be in Paradise with me'* (Luke 23:43, GNB). By contrast the unrepentant thief's cross, on the left, while linked with the upright of Jesus' cross is a lesser form and stays short of reaching Jesus' cross arm.

In the mid 1990s a beautiful stained glass form of the reredos but smaller in scale was set into the sanctuary wall replacing the original. As with the memorial panels this window is now in its new home at Burnside City Church. It is in the smaller prayer and fellowship Chapel in the south west corner of the Worship Centre.



A separate article could be written on Arthur Philpot. He not only led a leading Architectural Firm, he taught a range of subjects in the School of Architecture within the SA Institute of Technology, he was an artist of note, and an inventor. It was said of him – *'He always had a pencil in his hand.'* He was also a fine singer having studied at the Elder Conservatorium, a musician who created novel instruments that made real music and, not least, was full

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of humour. Above all he was a faithful and intentional Christian who was ready to help anyone at any time. He was an Elder in this congregation for over 30 years. Arthur died on 4 February 1984. This is a photo of the memorial window now in the Burnside City Church. In the top righthand corner of the window are the words from Galatians 3:23 'You are all one in Christ Jesus'. And at the bottom – the first line of music and the words of the 8th. Cent. Gaelic hymn 'Be thou my vision, O Lord of my heart.'

Next time you are in the Burnside area with an hour to

spare, visit Burnside City Church and look at these memorials along with those from the other three active congregation who intentionally came together in 2010 to be the faith community they are today.

Rev. David Houston

Sources:

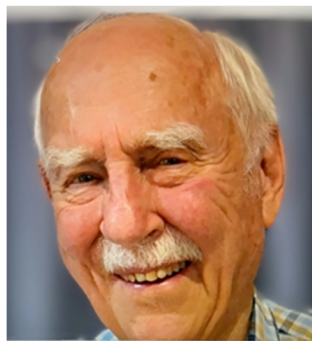
Alison McDougall, 'Philpot, Arthur Alfred', Architecture Museum, University of South Australia, 2015 The Architects of South Australia.

Robert J Scrymgeour (1985) *Some Scots were Here*.

All Saints at Plympton... Some personal reflections on part of this faithful Congregation's journey David Farrow

[Editor's introduction: We often tell the stories of our Church Centenaries or a landmark anniversary but rarely tell them as a congregation closes after 177 years of life and witness in a community. In this article David Farrow, a longtime member of All Saints does just that.

From across his 62 years of membership David offers a storied blend of thoughtful historical recall and some 'Max Fatchen-like' story telling. Humorous situational moments with people will remind you of moments in your congregation's story.



This Newsletter presentation is a shortened version. Several copies of his complete paper will be held at the History Centre as part of the All Saints folders and available to visitors for reading. In sections of the paper not included here David reflects on issues related to maintaining a large ageing property with a declining and elderly membership in a cogent realistic manner. [Photo supplied by Jan Martin, Church Secretary.]

In 1997 "*Plympton Uniting Church 1847-1997: Caring and sharing from City to Sea*" was published by the Church. It is an excellent publication, full of great stories about gifted ministers and equally gifted lay leaders. The place of adult, youth and children's groups is well recorded. The key role this congregation had as a hub for sport and recreation for the wider

Plympton community is well recorded. Adults and young people walked or rode bikes to cricket, netball, football and calisthenics to participate in this accessible program. David does not list many programs and names in his article because the earlier history has done that well.

The abiding reminder of this congregation's story shows it is the lay members whose earnest faith, sense of mission and ministry enabled it to begin, they carried it through its high and low times, then provided the dignified and thoughtful leadership required to bring it to its close. One of our Assembly's former Presidents, Rev. Dr Andrew Dutney, has said. "*The leadership of lay men and women has always been integral to the life and service of our churches. They show that it has never been about 'filling in' in the absence of those members who have been ordained ... there has always been vital complementary relationships between their ministries.*" (1) **Ed.]**

David writes ... In the 1840s the land in the Plympton area consisted mainly of gently rolling sand hills. Marion road in front of the Church was little more than a meandering goat track. The early settlers were striving to build a new life in a new land.

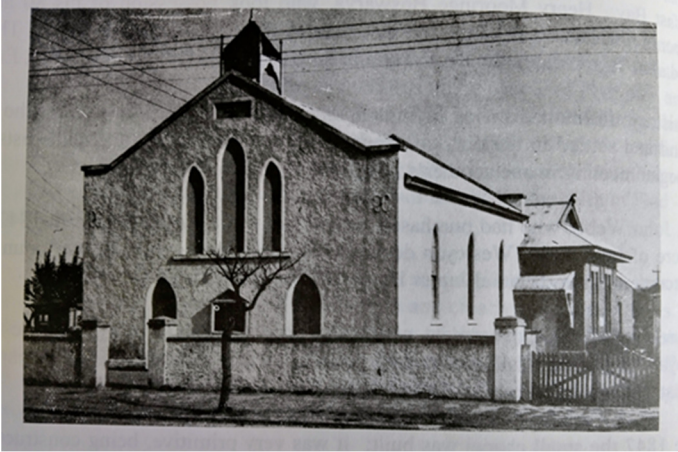
One of the things many of them missed most of all was their Church. The Methodists started to meet in small groups for worship in their own homes. As numbers grew these folk decided to build a Church, primitive as it might be.

This first Church was in fact a wattle and daub "hut". As numbers grew, however, a larger

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more permanent building was needed. A new Church made of bricks was built over the top of the "hut". When it was completed the original wattle and daub "hut" was dismantled and thrown out through the open windows of the new building, the inscription on the front of which simply reads "1856".



The new Church flourished. As the years rolled by it became necessary to build a hall in 1914 attached to the Church. Rapid growth continued, so another hall had to be added in 1939 and then yet another in 1958, with several annexes, for use by both the Church and Sunday School.

By the time my wife and I arrived as a newly married couple in April 1962 this little Church, formed by that small but dedicated group of Christian pioneers, had grown to a very large congregation of well over 100 every Sunday and still growing exponentially to eventually cater for crowded Sunday services at 8am, 9:30am, 11am, and 7pm. Sunday School had over 600 children. Depending on whose memory one relied upon, the teaching staff numbered between 50 and 100.

Two objects were prominent features in our Church at this time - the Pipe Organ and the Baptismal Font.

The Pipe Organ ... The Trustees had negotiated the purchase of the pipe organ of the Madge Memorial Methodist Church in the east end of Halifax Street Adelaide and about to close. The task of transferring the organ to Plympton and installing it fell to Gordon Gunn, Gwyn (later Rev. Gwyn) Williams and several other willing helpers.

Gwyn told me this task included the use of several cars, each with a pack rack on the hood with several organ pipes strapped onto each car. The pipes were placed to play a tune as the wind whistled through them. As the convoy sped down Anzac Highway they attracted a lot of attention!

A word or two about Gordon Gunn. He was an organ builder with his own business Gunn Star Organ Works. He was an organist at the Church for 70 years, on a purely honorary basis. On one occasion, when pressed by Church Council to accept some form of remuneration, he reluctantly agreed to accept about two pounds to purchase some organ music. For that 70 years Gordon also serviced the organ free of charge.

Gordon was the most shy, self-effacing person one could ever wish to meet. He is a legend in the history of our Church.

The Baptismal Font ... The other object I mention is a very large, antique, ornate, stone baptismal font. As time passed, it developed a leak to a point where ultimately it leaked like a sieve. To overcome this defect it became necessary to place a large bowl of water in it whenever it was used.

On one occasion when there was to be a baptism, I as steward on duty, suddenly remembered, about five minutes before Church was due to start, that there was no water in the font. I rushed out to the adjoining kitchen and returned with a bowl of water. Disaster averted, you might think. Sadly, not so. The officiating Minister also noticed at the last minute that there was no water in the font, and came rushing out to rectify the oversight. The end result? We collided heavily, in the kitchen doorway. The bowl of water went skywards and the Minister got drenched. I was NOT popular. To the best of my knowledge this would be the only time in the history of our Church that both the baby and the officiating Minister have been baptised on the same occasion!

The New Church ... Some readers may know that the new Church is built, in part, over a small cemetery in which some of our pioneer members



are buried. This and several of the stained glass windows in the Church remind us that many of our early members were also prominent

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in community affairs. Thus locally we have Streeters Road, Parkin Court, Boswarva Crescent, Wheaton Road, Wheaton Street etc. as testimony to this.

The Weekly Offering ... Talking earlier of Steward's duties, on one occasion as I was taking up the collection, I handed the collection bag to a gentleman with the expectation he would take it, put his offering in, then pass it along the row. He took the bag and put his pledge envelope in it. Unfortunately it got stuck half way, so he pushed it in further. His hand got stuck. He waved his arm around frantically trying to remove his hand. I could not contain myself. I lent in and whispered in his ear, "We don't give change here mate !!!"

A Sunday School Teacher? I remember standing in the foyer on the first Sunday I attended this Church in 1962. A gentleman in a vivid yellow waist coat (his "trademark" as it turned out) shook me by the hand and greeted me. "Welcome. Have you ever taught Sunday School?" His name was Peter Rosser and he was General Superintendent of the Sunday School. I had to admit that I had some limited experience. "Good." he enthused. "you have got yourself a job!" With that he turned to a lady standing nearby and announced to her, "Doris, I have got a new teacher for you." The lady in question was Doris Porter a retired Matron of Nursing - and Superintendent of the Intermediate Department of the Sunday School. No doubt wanting to know whether the new teacher was male or female she asked, "Is IT a gentleman?" Peter swept his arm in my direction and said, "This is IT! Judge for yourself!!" Doris carefully looked me up and down and then said doubtfully, "I suppose he will do."

One Sunday I was team leader in our Intermediate Department. The lesson was on Jonah and the whale. In order to try and keep the kids' attention, I took an old sleeping bag to Church. I persuaded one of the kids to get in to the bag and wriggle around on the floor, and make out he was in a whale. He entered into the role with great gusto. All the other kids clapped and cheered wildly. This only spurred the young actor to greater effort.

When it came time for Jonah to emerge, I nudged him with my foot as arranged. It seemed the little blighter was having a great time, so I nudged him a little harder, but still he did not emerge. Indeed he wriggled around quite violently. It finally dawned on me that Jonah COULDN'T get out. The zip on the sleeping bag was stuck! Panic stations. Eventually some one produced a pair of scissors and we cut poor Jonah out. Contrary to the biblical

version of events, on this occasion Jonah was delivered by caesarean! Doris was right to have reservations about my suitability for the job.

The Sunday School Anniversaries ... In those early days I would take eight kids, all from our street, to Sunday School each Sunday. My car had bench (not bucket) seats and of course in those days no seat belts. One of those kids was little Annie (an only child) from across the road.

Annie's parents were not Church people. However, one day her mother announced to her father that they were going to Church the next Sunday. "I am not," he shouted. "Yes, we are," "No, I am not." They argued back and forth for the whole week. "You well know Sundays are my day with the horses, the dogs and the bookies. It is my gambling day. I am not going to Church."

"Yes, we are. It is the Sunday School anniversary and our Annie is in it. "She will be up on the platform looking out for us." The debate raged on.

On Sunday we could not get to Church fast enough to see who had won the argument. We went in to Church and there was Annie's dad, immaculate as he always was for social occasions, in a Harris tweed jacket and neatly pressed grey melange slacks BUT he had the Sunday Mail racing pages spread out on his lap, a copy of "Best Bets" hanging out of the side pocket of his coat, a pencil behind one ear and a transistor radio plugged into his other ear! Little Annie was waving furiously from the platform. Glancing along the row and seeing me he gave me his usual toothy grin and a "thumbs up." Who won the argument? We decided to call it a draw.

These were the stories from the 60s and 70s when All Saints had three Services a Sunday and a Sunday School of 600 children. Let me fast forward through the years. Around the second Millennium (2000) as with a lot of Churches our membership had been drifting due largely to old age, a growing social diversity in the area, therefore fewer newcomers and, with this, decreasing financial support. Our minister at that time felt we might only last another ten years. When this Minister retired he was followed by two further Ministers who each served us well and faithfully for about five years. We still had reasonable numbers, but it became increasingly obvious we could no longer afford a full time Minister. How would we continue our mission and ministry?

A Changing form of Ministry over the final years ... Over some years we had appreciated the ministry of a visiting Lay preacher, Dr, Rodney Fopp. He was a senior lecturer in the Psychology

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Department at Flinders University. After conversations and negotiations Rodney was appointed as our Lay Pastor (to be employed part time – three days per week). His wife, Joan, a gifted organist was appointed to the position and in a voluntary role assisted with a wide range of secretarial support. In short she was a “go to” person, a “fix-it” person that every Congregation needs. The Rev. Bill Dow (a retired minister and member of the congregation) together with his wife Hildegarde and other Church members undertook pastoral care, one day a week. On the Sundays that Rodney was not planned to lead worship, he prepared material for Lay leaders to use in the conduct of the services. We entered into an experience of vitality even with smaller numbers.

At a social gathering after Rodney’s induction I bumped into a young lady who was on her own. “Let me take you to meet our new Minister,” I offered. To my great surprise she burst out laughing. “Let me introduce myself. I am the newly appointed Priest at The Church Of The Good Shepherd. Rodney was my lecturer in a couple of subjects when I was studying for the Ministry.”

Eventually, after more than ten years, we had to say farewell to Rodney and Joan. There is absolutely no doubt at all in my mind that we would have had to close much sooner but for the dedicated years of service given to us by Rodney and Joan.

Conversations with the Presbytery and Synod Placements Committee led to us securing the ministry of the Reverend Geoff Tiller on slightly less than half-time pay, in conjunction with him undertaking another half-time appointment at a Church on the other side of the city. Despite our multitude of problems, Geoff brought a cheerfulness with him that was infectious. Over time Geoff became not only our Minister, but our Treasurer, our Chairman of both the Church Council and the Congregation, chauffeur for those who needed rides to/from Church and meetings and, perhaps best of all, a good friend to us all.

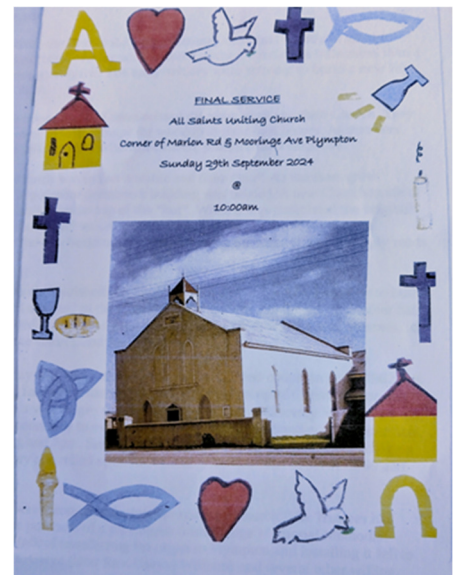


[The Congregation in its closing weeks – Photo supplied by Jan Martin, Church Secretary]

Our Closure ... With our diminished numbers the planning and preparation for our final service fell mainly to Bea Julian, Jan Martin and Rev. Geoff Tiller. Bea designed the creatively illustrated Worship Booklet. The guest preacher for the occasion was Dr. Rodney Fopp, who in retirement became an ordained non-stipended Anglican Priest. Jan Martin’s task included dozens of hours tracking down past members to invite. Many of these calls rekindled some fond memories and some hilarious stories from the past.

All this fantastic effort resulted in a great final service, with a full Church of about 130 people. Rev. Geoff Tiller led the service, Rev. Rodney Fopp preached, and various members of our Congregation took part. Our organist, Robert Coomb, presented an interesting time-line sketch across 177 years and played his beloved organ. The Congregation sang with great gusto. After the service a sumptuous lunch was enjoyed by all. People had come from far and wide for this very special occasion. Old friendships were renewed.

Many stories were told. One lady had come to visit the grave of her great-great-grandfather in the cemetery under Pioneer Annex. Some old Sunday School scholars got together and organised to meet in future, as did other friends from the past. So, with relief in a sense, but at the same time, after 177 years of faithful service to our Lord and to our community, we closed the doors of our Church for the last time with tears of great sadness. BUT “WELL DONE, ALL YOU GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS”. We may have lost our Church but we have not lost our faith.



[Special Note] In the full text of David’s article he reflects on a disappointment that two very viable groups using the property alongside the congregation prior to closure would not be able to continue after closure. One was a strong Sunday morning Indian Pentecostal Congregation with a Sunday School. The Uniting congregation had developed a bond of fellowship with them. The other, the Callisthenics Club of 140 members using

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All Saints Hall facilities midweek for sixty years. This group had contributed many thousands of fund-raised dollars and volunteer hours for local church property needs over that time. The Club wanted to stay and keep playing their role in the community. All Saints members hoped the Synod Property Committee would consider retaining these two groups in their plans.

A couple of questions to ponder. When the Uniting Church (through our Synod) is retaining the property of a closing congregation for new community missional use, could or should a strong

and viable continuing community organisation using the property at the time of closure be considered as part of a 'new use' plan? And, where a site like All Saints is well placed geographically to serve a local community's well-being and welfare, does the relevant Presbytery have a part to play in the consultation and planning process? **Editor.]**

Reference:

1. Andrew Dutney in the Foreword to *By Word and By Deed* - David Houston et al. (2017), MediacomEducation Inc. Unley SA

Building Renovations Update

Work is well underway on the History Centre renovations.

The asbestos floor tiles have been safely removed; walls have come down; flooring has been removed. New footings have been created, and new walls and floors are being built.

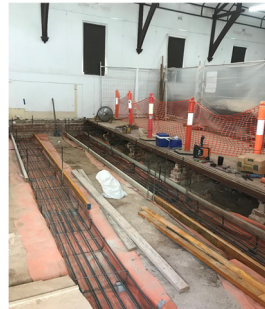
Thank you to Rosemary who has been popping in to check on progress and has shared these photos for the newsletter...

Before and early work in the area that had the photocopier, and was also used for storage.



Before and early work in the hall/main room.

Left to right:
Wall framing behind the arch.
Formwork and reinforcing for footings (earth under floor very compacted and dry so very easy to work with).
Interesting detail of construction of old walls & arch—wire mesh with clay infill exceptionally strong.



Left to right:
New floor joists and beams in front of the arch—getting ready for more compactus storage.
The photocopier area.

Remembering Rev. Gowan Armstrong BA, LTh., Dip. Anth.



On January 21 this year a large congregation gathered at the Modbury Uniting Church to celebrate the life and ministry of Gowan Armstrong. He was aged 97 and a much loved minister within the Methodist and into the Uniting Church for 72 years. We are acknowledging Gowan in our

Newsletter for his twelve years' contribution to mission and ministry training among Aboriginal communities at Maningrida over 10 years, and at Nungalinga College in Darwin for two years prior to Cyclone Tracy in December 1974. Then, from 1991, we record his support of the UAICC and Covenanting, and his leadership and advocacy in establishing the Training Aboriginal Christian Leadership programs known as TACL [Photo supplied by John Armstrong]

Those who took part in the service were the Rev. Geoff Tiller, the minister at Modbury, the Moderator of the SA Synod, Rev. Peter Morel, Rev. Peter Fuller, a retired minister and close friend to Gowan, Rev. Tony Goodluck, Acting Moderator of the Northern Synod, Cate Baker, Pastor of the Para Vista congregation, Nelson (Snooky) Varcoe, a student and friend of Gowans.

The Moderator began his tribute by saying, 'A hearty laugh, a genuine interest in people and a strong faith in Jesus are notable characteristics of the valuable and pastorally focused ministry of Gowan Armstrong'. Born at Robertstown on 17 May 1927 ..., Gowan was raised on the family farm. His call to the ministry began with the influence of Sunday School, growth in personal prayer, and through friendship with a freelance children's evangelist. While serving for two years in the Royal Australian Naval Reserves, Gowan qualified as a local preacher in the Canberra circuit and presented as a candidate through the NSW Methodist Conference. He was still in the Navy on his first day in Wesley College in February 1947. ... He was ordained at Kent Town during the 1952 Conference.'

[An interest of Gowan's in his early ministries at Mount Gambier, Hallett and Port Augusta, was to play football. This included helping to start a new Club at Willsden in 1957. Willsden was a large and growing new suburb. His energy was boundless and his ability more than average. The objective – to involve people and to build a sense of community. He enthused others, a Committee was formed with him as its playing Vice-President. Beyond his time, the Club went on to have a good 41-year history.]

Port Augusta ... 'Much happened for Gowan and the church at Port Augusta during those years of ministry (1956-1961) accompanied by rapid population growth which was generated by ETSA, and the movement of people from Quorn to Stirling North Railway

Settlement. New church halls were built at Willsden, Stirling North and Port Augusta West.'

With his 'community building' skills he seemed to be the right person for that time. A bonus for Gowan was that he met a gifted schoolteacher, Shirley Symons. He won her hand and they were married at the Woodville Methodist Church in February 1960. Shirley was a primary school teacher at Port Augusta West. She was to be a gifted partner with Gowan in all their ministry together.

'Gowan's call to offer for 'overseas' service was triggered by a slide, shown by Gordon Symons, of an Aboriginal football team on a boat in Arnhem Land. In 1962 the Mission Board moved Gowan and Shirley to Sydney (All Saints College) where Gowan studied anthropology for one year in preparation for his move to Maningrida.'



This is a family photo of John, Gowan, Shirley and Roslyn in the Mission's house at Maningrida in 1966. [Photo supplied by John Armstrong]

At Maningrida ... communication with the locals was initially limited and difficult as there were about nine languages spoken (Gowan learnt Burada, one of the most used). Money was needed to provide amenities for the people, so Gowan decided to take over the job of organising sales of locally made arts and crafts. This craftwork enterprise developed into a big business which required Gowan to spend much time in its administration. Gowan, however, felt it was time well spent as it enabled him to build close relationships with Aboriginal people and helped him to learn their language. It brought him in touch with people he might never have met and assisted him in his anthropological studies. Gowan was continually encouraging the local community in renewing their interest and pride in their traditional craftwork.



Maningrida's first baptismal service for Aboriginal Christians took place in 1966, two years before this Church was opened. There was a procession through the camps, in the way of the morning star corroboree.

Leading the way was a young man who carried the cross with great dignity and behind him walked the eight candidates for baptism, followed by a great crowd of adults and children. Each candidate had undergone six months of training and probation. At every main camp the procession stopped, and a hymn was sung

culminating with the baptisms in a creek on the edge of the settlement. These baptisms had a significant impact on people in the church and wider community.' (Photo supplied by John Armstrong)

Darwin ... In 1972 Gowan became the foundation Registrar and Senior Lecturer at Nungalinga College in Darwin at the time when Gough Whitlam's 'self-determination' legislation was proclaimed. Gowan helped to facilitate Courses in Darwin and in outlying Aboriginal communities with an emphasis on helping Aboriginal Town Councils prepare for their new role. Government Personnel, Police, Health Department staff and people from Roman Catholic missions also attended courses.'

In this foundational role his creativity in planning collaboratively and team teaching courses with Catholic and Anglican colleagues, Government agency linguists, former missionaries and representative Aboriginal leaders, set the stage for what has become an important Indigenous educational institution. In 1973 Dr. Keith Cole, an Anglican, was appointed to be its first Principal.

Returning to Adelaide ... Gowan, Shirley with John and Roslyn moved to live at Athelstone with Gowan serving the congregations at Athelstone and Dernancourt. Their final ten years, 1982-1992, were spent servicing the Prospect North and Clearview congregations. Gowan's skills as a pastor and educator were still evident. Younger and older members alike received well informed training in lay preaching, worship leadership, youth group and kids' club leadership. His ecumenical interest was shown in his establishing a local Ministers Association and in him representing the Synod on the Uniting Church/Baptist Dialogue Working Group.

Approaching his retirement, in 1991 Gowan turned to giving time to his passion for Aboriginal Christian leadership training. In April that year he facilitated a meeting of representatives from the Anglican, Catholic, Lutheran, Churches of Christ, Uniting Church, the UAICC and Aborigines Friends Association to discuss their interest in a new specific Aboriginal Christian Leaders Course. Following several meetings, a three-week pilot course was held in mid-July 1991 at the UCA Lay Education Centre, Parkin Wesley College presented by an ecumenical team of teachers. (This photo of Gowan supplied by John)



Training Aboriginal Christian Leaders Gowan describes the approach, *"The Nungalinga Certificate of Theology course material was used and taught by representatives of the churches who had experience in working with Aboriginal people. It has a tested and tried foundation to it. Notable contributions were made by experienced Aboriginal ministers – Rev. George Rosendale of the Lutheran Church in North*

Queensland and Rev. Max Wright of the Churches of Christ. The measure of success in this pilot course led on to arranging regional courses at Ernabella and Ceduna." From these successful initiatives the structure for a Training of Aboriginal Christian Leaders program (TACL) emerged.

Training courses were arranged for suburban students in various places such as the Catholic Otherway Centre (then in Pirie St.), the Greenacres UC Church Hall and the Anglican Church Hall in Gilles Plains. These courses were led by a team of retired ministers. Anglican Bishop, Bruce Rosier, was one of them. The students also travelled to Darwin to attend short courses at the Nungalinga College benefiting greatly from meeting students from a range of places in the N.T.



Nelson (Snooky) Varcoe, a graduate from both the TACL and Nungalinga programs, a gifted artist and singer was one of many students Gowan tutored. Nelson's testimony to Gowan's work at the Thanksgiving Service was inspiring. He reflected on Gowan's messaging ability to enable his Aboriginal sisters and brothers to know

and see themselves as people of God, blessed by Jesus Christ while celebrating and maintaining their culture, history and place in the world. A dot painting of Nelson's entitled, *'The Way that leads to Life'* is a feature in the Nungalinga Room within the Uniting College Campus. (photo by Rev. Dean Whittaker, first contributed to *'By Word and by Deed'* 287)

Rev. Dr Denise Champion, of Port Augusta, a former co-ordinator of UAICC in SA, and her sister, Noeline, were early TACL students. They completed some of their work by Distance Learning. Gowan travelled to Port Augusta for periodic tutoring sessions to support them in their studies. Denise is well known today for her own status as a theologian, writer, teacher and leader in Aboriginal Christian ministry and spirituality.

TACL continues to be a significant ecumenical program for Christian Leadership Education and Gowan Armstrong has been a quiet, persuasive presence across its development. His special gift was in his ability to partner with both ministers and lay members to build faith-filled Christian communities. We extend our love and sympathy to John and Roslyn and their families as we give thanks to God for Gowan's long and fruitful life.

Rev. David Houston

Sources:

1. The Thanksgiving Service at Modbury Uniting Church
2. The text of the Pastoral Address of the Moderator, Rev. Peter Morel (in *Italics*)
3. Reports and Reflections of Gowan's describing developments leading to the establishment of the Training of Aboriginal Christian Leaders (TACL) in SA. *'By Word and by Deed'*, David Houston et al., published by Mediacom Ed. (2017)

2025 Calendar of Events



Saturday 17 May, 2025

The SA Church History Network will be holding a half-day forum, starting at 2:00pm, at the Church of the Trinity (318 Goodwood Road, Clarence Park). The forum topic will be: *Christian Churches and Social Welfare in South Australia c. 1990-2025: interrogating the last thirty-five years.*

The forum will be chaired by Dr Judith Raftery, Peter Sandeman of Anglicare, and Ross Womersley, current CEO of the SA Council of Social Services.

Sunday 22 June, 2025

Open Day at the History Centre (44a East Avenue, Black Forest), from 2:00pm to 4:00pm. Come and see the renovated centre.

Sunday 29 June, 2025

Our AGM will be held at Clayton Wesley Uniting Church (280 Portrush Rd, Beulah Park) and will begin at 2:30pm, Following the meeting, our speaker will be Dr Geoffrey C Bishop, author of the 2006 history *The Spire on the Parade: Clayton Wesley Uniting Church 1856—2006*. Geoffrey is well known for his interest in SA history and has been an active member and officer of the Historical Society of SA.

September, 2025

Date and time: To be confirmed

Planning is underway with the SA region of the United Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress (UAICC) for an all-day visit to Raukkan and the Coorong on a Saturday.

3-5 October, 2025

The UCA National History Society's Biennial Conference will be held in Canberra on this weekend (the October long weekend). The theme of the conference is "*The Church as a Prophetic Voice: in the past, now and in the future.*" (Refer to page 3 for the *Call for Papers*).

Information about the National Society can be found at <https://uniting.church/uca-national-history-society>

One of the many scrapbooks we have in our collection came from the family of the late Rev. Alfred Charles Newbury. He was a minister in the Congregational church, and over time collected photographs of the Congregational Churches in South Australia. We don't know when the photos were taken, but it is likely it was in the 1920s, 30s and 40s (Rev. Newbury passed away in 1948).

We are thankful that the family chose to donate the album to the Historical Society to preserve this record of churches from the first half of the 20th Century.

Here are some of the pages from this album. You can see the full album at the History Centre.

