

Uniting Church SA Historical Society Report

1. Executive Summary

2021/2022 has been a productive time for the Uniting Church SA Historical Society, and the relaxing of COVID-related restrictions has enabled us to resume many of our normal activities and to embark on some new ventures. We continue to manage the History Centre, host regular public events, work with the SA Synod to carry out Assembly policy on maintenance of archival material, respond to public enquiries and support those committed to recording and sharing the story of the church in SA. The Society's Council plans and oversees these activities and explores new avenues to engage with congregations and agencies.

2. Introduction

The Society continues to maintain its educational program, encouraging churches to record their past experiences by publishing and sharing stories of discipleship and documenting the faith and resilience of local congregations. We have explored new ways to be good stewards of our considerable financial resources and to support those with a passion for recording, sharing and preserving records and memorabilia.

2.1 Council

The Society is governed by an elected Council that meets bi-monthly. Current Executive Officers are Dr Judith Raftery (President), Rev. David Houston (Vice-President), and Robert Backhouse (Treasurer). The position of Secretary is currently vacant following the resignation, from that position, but not from Council, of Darryl Dyson in June 2021. The Council is grateful to Rosemary Hocking, who, while not a member of Council, has been acting as Minute Secretary since the Secretary's position became vacant.

Other Council members are Rev. Dr Jonathan Barker, Gaye Brown, Pat Button (elected at AGM June 2021), Val Canty, Diana Chessell (elected at AGM June 2021), Judy Eland, Dr Don Hopgood.

Retired since last report: Rev. Dr Brian Chalmers, Glenys Edwards, Rev. Dr Dean Eland, Rev. Bill Harris, Barbara Hayes, Rev. Doug Hosking.

The Council is continuing with its efforts to recruit a new Secretary, and is also seeking nominations for President, in light of the constitutional requirement that Judith Raftery relinquish that role at the AGM in June.

2.2 History Centre

The Society's office is located at the UC History Centre, 44a East Ave, Black Forest, SA 5035, and is open to the public on Wednesday afternoons from 1.00 until 4.00pm, except during the summer break from mid-

December until the end of January. The History Centre is managed by volunteer co-managers, Val Canty and Gaye Brown, and other volunteers assist with enquiries, and work on specific projects.

Contact details are:

Ph: 8297 8472

Email: manager@ucsahistory.org.au

Website: historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au

Join us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA

2.3 Staff

Our part-time (3 hours/week) Administrative Officer, Leanne Davis, continues to assist with the Society's administrative workload, especially in relation to publicity, newsletter production, membership records and maintenance of our website and Facebook pages. We acknowledge Leanne's commitment to the society, beyond her formal work role, and her growing interest in and knowledge of UCA history, exemplified by her valuable contributions to conferences and public meetings.

Leanne can be contacted at office@ucsahistory.org.au

Our part-time (15 hours/week) Historical Records Officer, Rosemary Hocking, continues with sorting and cataloguing incoming material, stock taking, liaising with the Synod Historical Records Officer, developing processes whereby congregations can be better informed about what they should be doing about archival matters, providing specialised internet searching for volunteers engaged on special projects, and maintaining a weekly backup of all documents on the shared drive and of everything on co-manager Val Canty's computer. She has been the driving force behind the society's initiatives in getting some of its valuable records digitised, working with volunteers from Genealogy SA (see below) and with the UCA National Assembly's digitisation project, 'Illuminate'. Her broad knowledge and experience, and her proactive way of working are real assets to the society.

Rosemary can be contacted at records@ucsahistory.org.au

3. Summary of Key Activities and Outcomes 2021/2022

3.1 Newsletter

Guest editors from among Council members, and others – Brian Chalmers, Leanne Davis, David Houston, Judith Raftery – have ensured that the society's newsletter, *Uniting History SA*, which is available to all members via e-mail or in hard copy, is published quarterly.

3.2 Uniting Church National History Society

Eight members of the society attended the third Uniting Church National History Conference held at the Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta, in June 2021, with three of them delivering papers and others chairing sessions and participating in leadership of the worship service.

Judith Raftery continues as Secretary of the national society.

3.3 Property Development

The Property Development Committee (Robert Backhouse, Gaye Brown, Dean Eland) has continued to meet, and after seeking guidance from relevant Synod officers, and conferring with the Historical Society's Council, staff and volunteers, has engaged the services of architectural firm Hodgkison, who have now provided several initial plans, development advice and quotes. There are complex issues to be decided on and discussions continue among all the interested parties.

3.4 Cooperation with Genealogy SA

A team of volunteers from Genealogy SA have been regular attendees at the History Centre, where under Rosemary Hocking's guidance, they have been digitising records, many of a fragile and ephemeral nature, from our collection of diverse material relating to congregations and individuals. This process renders these records more secure and guarantees them a safe ongoing life, as well as making them more readily accessible to staff, volunteers and researchers. The Historical Society is delighted with this important example of collaboration with a community organisation.

3.5 Public Meetings (2021)

The first three of these had been planned for 2020, but postponed because of COVID.

March: history of the contemporary music movement in the UCA and elsewhere

May (as part of SA History Festival): The history of the Bible in Australia, with special guest, historian and ABC radio religious affairs presenter, Dr Meredith Lake

June: history of a local congregation and its relationship to its geographic community (Morialta UC)

August: History of UCA involvement in the Reconciliation Movement in SA

October: History of the Sunday School movement

Public Meetings (to date, 2022)

March: Women in the church and in public life in colonial SA

May (as part of SA History Festival): North Tce plaques walk – tracing the contributions of prominent Christians to SA history

3.6 In Memoriam

The Historical Society has been saddened by the loss, in March, of David Greig, a key member of our History Centre team of volunteers.

We note also the death of well-respected SA historian, and member of Cherry Gardens Uniting Church, Rob Linn.

Tributes to David and Rob will appear in the June 2022 edition of *Uniting History SA*.

4. Forward Thinking

Making more progress with our property development project, and recruiting office- holders to fill current and impending vacancies are priorities for the year ahead.

Public Meetings planned for the rest of 2022 will focus on Protestant preaching and worship in 1890s Adelaide (June, in conjunction with AGM), and the history of youth movements in the UCA and its predecessor denominations (September).

5. Involvement in the Historical Society

We are always happy to recruit new members and to have current members become more actively involved in our public events, as well as in the conferences and other activities of the Uniting Church National History Society. In addition, volunteers are always welcome at the History Centre to assist with the sorting, indexing and storing of important church records or to work on special projects.

Dr Judith Raftery

President

May 2022