

# Uniting Church History and Heritage

Uniting Church National History Society: Vol. 2 No. 3 September 2020

## UnitingRedress

Compassion & care

Redress offered for survivors of sexual abuse within the Uniting Church

### Applying for Redress

The Synod of NSW and ACT provides an **UnitingRedress** interim policy to anyone who has experienced sexual abuse as a child in Uniting Church institutions such as schools.

### What is Redress?

There are three areas for redress based on Royal Commission recommendations.

1. Counselling and support.
2. A verbal and/or written response.
3. Financial redress by way of an ex-gratia payment, where eligible, in recognition of the pain and suffering caused as a result of abuse.

### Contact

To find out more about **UnitingRedress**:

- Please Call: **1800 713 993** (Mon to Fri 8:30am - 5:00pm)
- Email: [unitingredress@nswact.uca.org.au](mailto:unitingredress@nswact.uca.org.au)
- Go to the website: [www.nswact.uca.org.au](http://www.nswact.uca.org.au)

Enquiries and applications are confidential and are treated in a timely and sensitive way by our experienced social worker.



## This edition

### National Redress Scheme

The Uniting Church's national redress scheme which was developed as a consequence of the Royal Commission was the subject of the webinar that was held following the Annual General Meeting on the Society on Thursday 10 September. A summary of the presentations by the three speakers has been prepared by Alison Longworth.

### Rev. Frank Byatt and the Christmas Bowl

The Rev. Dr D'Arcy Wood tells the story of the Rev. Frank Byatt and the beginnings of the Christmas Bowl.

### Call for Papers

Planning for the 2021 Uniting Church National History Society's biennial conference, to be held in Parramatta NSW has reached the stage of calling for papers. Please see the detail in the advertisement later in this edition.

It is important to note that you don't have to be a professional historian to submit a paper. It is not necessary for papers to be peer referenced.



## Editorial

*We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.*

It has been a sad discovery for many members of the Uniting Church to discover in the wake of the Royal Commission on Abuse of Children that our church's preceding denominations historically have not been free from the evil of child exploitation and sexual abuse.

We are in a time of truth-telling. We are becoming increasingly aware of our church's history of wrong-doing. Wrong doing didn't just happen centuries ago in the Crusades or in the persecutions and burning of so-called witches or heretics. The treatment of the First Peoples of this land during the process of colonisation and the participation of churches and church-going people in that process has been a sorry part of our story.

Truth-telling is an essential part of the journey towards forgiveness and reconciliation, and we cannot start from the assumption that we are in 'the right'.

- Robert Renton

## President's Notes



The Society held its Annual General Meeting on Thursday 10 September and I began my report by thanking God for each member of the UCNHS Executive, each of whom has faithfully volunteered their time to ensure the smooth operations of the Society over the last year. It's appropriate for me to also thank them here in the pages of *Uniting History and Heritage*. The Executive switched its mode of gathering to Zoom (even before the lockdown hit) and, after a short settling in period, this has proven to be an effective means of staying connected across the great distances between us. On behalf of the Executive and the whole Society I want to express our deepest and most sincere condolences to our

Secretary, Judith Raftery, whose husband, John passed away in June this year. This loss has been felt even more keenly because of the physical distancing brought on by the global pandemic. May the comforting grace of Christ continue to uphold you, Judith, and please be assured of our prayers and support. Robert Renton helpfully stepped in to the role of Minutes Secretary but we are pleased to report that Judith has now picked up the secretarial role again.

The reporting process of the AGM gave us an opportunity to review our activities and to note some significant gains over the last year. We have seen an increase in membership to 91 and a healthy balance of funds. In an effort to attract a younger constituency, but also to better serve our present members, we have established a social media presence with a Facebook page that has attracted 275 followers and 263 'likes'. Our Twitter feed has 42 followers and our website, hosted on the Assembly webpage, carries basic information on the Society, news items, Conference Proceedings and our regular newsletter in PDF format. The dissolution of the NSW/ACT Synod Historical Society and the transfer of most of its membership and all of its assets to the National Society has greatly strengthened our viability. Synod historical societies in South Australia and Vic/Tas continue to operate in partnership with the National Society and the West Australian and Northern Synods remain meaningfully engaged under the leadership of Alison Longworth and Steve Orme. Julia Pitman has also managed to establish a fledgling Queensland Synod Historical Society where one did not exist before. The UCNHS is not in competition with any of these other activities and many people share membership in both their Synod Societies and the National Society. The National Society belongs to this network but has the additional responsibility and scope of reporting and being accountable to Assembly. The Executive of the UCNHS has representatives from all Synods and the rotating of our Biennial Conference and Annual Lectures is designed to give us a good national presence. (This year's AGM and Public Lecture were to be held in Brisbane in association with the Queensland Synod until COVID intervened.)

William Emilsen and Patricia Curthoys are heading up the Planning Committee for our Third Biennial Conference to be held from 11-13 June 2021 at the Centre for Ministry in North Parramatta, on the theme *Growing Up Uniting*. A concerted effort is being made to include younger members of the UCA. The keynote speakers at the conference will be the President of the Uniting Church (and our patron) Dr Deidre Palmer, the Executive Director of the National Church Life Survey, Associate Professor Ruth Powell, our own Dr William Emilsen, and social scientist Dr Elizabeth Watson. Plans are in place to accommodate distance participation via Zoom. Projecting forward we've made an approach to the Northern Synod, with the hope of holding the 2023 Conference there.

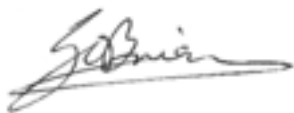
The Society's Annual Public Lecture was held on the evening of 10 September and took the form of a Zoom Webinar on the topic of UCA Redress (the Uniting Church agency set up to respond to the federal government's Redress programme in response to the findings of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse). Members of the interdisciplinary panel were: Sarah Lim, National Director of UCA Redress, Dr Janice McRandal, public theologian, Wesley Mission, Queensland, Emeritus Professor Shurlee Swain, historian, Australian Catholic University, and Ms. Melia Benn, UCA Redress board member, who provided an Indigenous contribution and response. Each spoke impressively from out of their areas of expertise. The webinar was very well attended with representation from most Synods. Assembly staff in attendance included the President (and our Patron) Dr Deidre



Palmer, and the President-Elect, the Rev Sharon Hollis. It's particularly pleasing that we had an all-woman panel of experts which follows the pattern of last year's Conference when two out of three keynotes were women scholars and the planned 2021 Conference when three out of the four keynotes will be delivered by women. The webinar, co-sponsored by the University of Divinity, was recorded and will soon appear on the Assembly's YouTube page.

Some have expressed surprised that the History Society should see a panel on UCA Redress as within our sphere of activity. For historians the past is not only something of antiquarian interest or limited to questions of heritage. It continues to shape and inform the Church's response to present issues of urgent significance. Facing up to the historic crimes against children that are at the centre of the Redress scheme is certainly one such presenting issue. Perhaps, as you read the offerings in this current edition of the newsletter, you can discern ways in which the historical reflections given here also inform our present witness and mission..

Yours,



(Associate Professor Rev. Glen O'Brien, President, UCNHS)

## GROWING UP UNITING

**3rd Biennial History Conference: 11–13 June 2021**

### DATE SAVER AND CALL FOR PAPERS

Contributors are encouraged to approach the conference theme 'Growing Up Uniting' creatively.

It could mean growing up Uniting in a secular age, or growing up multiculturally. It could mean growing up ecumenically, theologically, spiritually, proudly, liturgically, 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.

***Please see the full notice and details of the conference at the end of this newsletter.***



## UCA National Redress

### **Uniting Church National History Society Report on Panel on UCA Redress held via Zoom, Thursday 10 September 2020 at 5.00 pm WST (7 pm EST)**

#### **Introduction**

In his President's Report at the AGM of the Uniting Church National Historical Society (UCNHS) the Rev. Associate Professor Glen O'Brien admitted that some people had expressed surprise that the History Society should see a panel on UCA Redress as within the sphere of activity of the Society. He defended the choice of topic stating "Historical study helps the church engage with presenting issues of urgent significance." UCA Redress Ltd is a company established as the national body for the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA) to respond to and provide support for children and vulnerable people who have suffered sexual abuse at the hands of the Uniting Church or its institutions. Truth-telling is an important component of the enquiry, and certainly an aspect relevant to the work of the Society. Due to the global pandemic of Covid-19 the Annual General Meeting and Public Lecture of the Uniting Church National History Society could not meet in Queensland this year as intended. Instead it met via Zoom.

#### **President Glen O'Brien chaired the Panel**

O'Brien welcomed the Society Patron, Dr Deidre Palmer, President of the UCA, and introduced the members of the panel, who were all experts in their field of work. Each presenter was allocated fifteen minutes to speak, with opportunity for questions following each presentation. In this report I will endeavour to summarise the main points and include some personal responses.

#### **Sara Lim, National Director of UCA Redress Ltd from Brisbane, Queensland**

Sara Lim brings a strong commitment to social justice and institutional safety of vulnerable people, including children, to her role. In her opening remarks Lim acknowledged the National Redress Scheme as particularly relevant to Aboriginal people throughout Australia. Lim described the recurring theme captured in stories

shared at the Royal Commission. All those who found the courage to share their painful stories did so in the hope such abuse would never happen again. The survivors want to know children are safe.

On a positive note, Lim acknowledged that the Royal Commission has seen an improvement in policy, practices and regulations. For example, the National Safe Church Unit was established by the Uniting Church and demonstrated a commitment to ensure that all parts of the Uniting Church are places where people can feel safe. UCA Redress Ltd began in March 2019 and is committed to right wrongs of the past. The scheme comprised three components: survivors can apply for counselling, receive a monetary payment capped at \$150,000, and receive a face-to-face apology from the institution involved in the abuse.

Irrespective of progress, the impact of child abuse is life-long. New groups of survivors coming forward imply that there is a greater trust in the current scheme, but there are probably many survivors who have not come forward yet. Incidents of abuse continue in the present time. Listeners were assured there is no room for complacency.

#### **Emeritus Professor Shurlee Swain**

Shurlee Swain is an historian from Victoria who has published extensively in the field of social welfare in Australia including a focus on women and children, religious and Indigenous history. Swain provided a brief summary of the history of previous enquiries. Whereas earlier enquiries minimised scandals, recent enquiries have focused on survivor testimonies. These include inquiries into Removals of Indigenous Children, Child Migration, Forgotten Australians, Women and Adoption Practices and the continuing Aged Care and Disabilities enquiries. It has emerged that attitudes have changed over time. In regard to religious organisations, enquiries at first were cautious. Now the voice of victims is dominant alongside a hostile public who concentrate on power exercised by powerful men. The national enquiries recommended redress, but monetary redress is only one aspect of appropriate response. Memorials, preservation and access to archival material and the 'Find and Connect' web resource (for which Swain is the main

historical investigator) are also meaningful to survivors and their families.

Swain observed that child sexual abuse always emerges as a dominant issue, although other forms of abuse have also created significant problems for survivors. The Uniting Church shares in the condemnation for failing to report abuse. Swain provided listeners with much to reflect on when she described a perversion of theology where victims are advised to forgive, especially if there is no redress provided by perpetrators. The presentation concluded with the observation that this is still a work in progress.

**Dr Janice McRandal, public theologian at Wesley Mission, Queensland**

In her presentation Janice McRandal focused on the finding of the Royal Commission and the Christian churches. She was also critical of the churches in general and a theology that resulted in abuse and cover up. She was shocked by the self-justification and defensiveness exhibited by the churches. Similarly, McRandal suggested pastoral care has focused on protecting the perpetrator with the church inclined to blame the victim. McRandal asked "Are steps being taken to prevent such abuse occurring again? The church might be terribly sorry but what does that achieve?" Survivors want more. They want to see institutions reformed and true repentance. When the government set up the Royal Commission it took the state to confront the church with its own evil. This statement was confronting and gave much scope for further reflection on theology and past and present practise.

**Melia Benn, UCA Redress Board Member**

Melia Benn, is a descendent of the Mamu and Gunggandji peoples from North Queensland and was called to the Bar in 2018. She provided a First Peoples' response on the Panel. Benn emphasised that she could not represent all Aboriginal nations, but had permission to share some of her family stories. She told of her great-grandparents enticed to Yarrabah Mission in North Queensland, of children removed from family with the goal of assimilation, of sexual abuse that cannot be verbalised because the memory is too painful. Although applicants for redress include First Nations people, issues such as racism, inadequate education, over-representation of Aboriginal children in out-of-home care and confusion over

redress schemes have prevented many First Nations people from applying. There was a need for more culturally appropriate publicity to encourage those who had been abused to apply for redress.

Benn referred to the 1994 Covenant Statement between the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and the Uniting Church in Australia when the President of the Uniting Church Assembly lamented the dispossession, violence and injustices that continued to the present time. At that time the UCA President apologised for the wrongs done to First Nations people by the church, sought forgiveness and asked the UAICC to help the church make amends. That Covenanting process is ongoing. In the 2017 Uluru Statement from The Heart, Benn found a generosity that yearned for "Makarrata, a coming together after struggle". Truth-telling is an important part of that coming together.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, I thank Glen O'Brien for his skill in chairing the panel and each of the presenters for sharing their expertise and commitment to justice. The fifteen minutes allocated to each speaker began a process of information sharing, but the presenters were clear that there is no room for complacency and more work is required from the church. At times I was uncertain when comments related to the Christian church as a whole or specifically to the Uniting Church. Similarly, it was not always clear to me if statements related to the Uniting Church nationally or to one Synod. Here is an opportunity for further investigation into the way each Synod within the national Uniting Church is responding to its unique history.

The panel has challenged the Uniting Church National History Society to ensure that the history is not forgotten. We have been reminded that historians are the story keepers, story tellers. In the issue of institutional child sexual abuse truth-telling is very important and hopefully the process of listening and responding appropriately will move us towards healing.

—Alison Longworth

### **The Uniting Church's response to the Royal Commission: a statement from the President of the Assembly**

President Dr Deidre Palmer has affirmed the Uniting Church's commitment to the National Redress Scheme and acknowledged the pain caused for survivors.

"For anyone who was abused in the care of the Uniting Church, in our churches, schools or agencies, I'd again like to apologise sincerely. I am truly sorry that we didn't protect and care for you in accordance with our Christian values," said Dr Palmer.

"Please be assured that we are working to make amends and to ensure that our Church has a strong and robust culture of child safety that empowers children and adults in our care."

#### **Leadership statement**

In the Synod Victoria and Tasmania, the following is a statement that all leaders in the church are asked to commit to and sign.

"We are committed to implementing the Keeping Children Safe Policy of the Uniting Church in Australia, Synod of Victoria.

All children who are involved in any of the Uniting Church's activities, services, events or programs have a right to feel and be safe.

We are committed to providing safe environments where children are cared for, respected, nurtured and sustained.

We have zero tolerance of all forms of child abuse and will do all in our power to safeguard children from abuse.

We are committed to creating and maintaining a child-safe culture to ensure the care, protection and safety of all children engaging with the Church in any of its entities.

Abuse thrives on secrecy. To prevent child abuse across the Church, we are committed to providing clear leadership and open and transparent governance to combat secrecy.

We clearly affirm the Church's commitment to upholding the law. This includes the requirement to report abuse to the appropriate authorities.

We commit to the following actions, as appropriate in our situation, to keep children safe:

- Promote strong leadership and governance and a culture of child safety
- Promote access, equity and diversity
- Promote appropriate behaviour amongst adults and children
- Recruit, train and supervise workers well
- Manage risk, promote safety and respond to concerns
- Promote child, family and community participation.



*The above image is from the Synod of Victoria and Tasmania's Safe Church Participant's Booklet. (Reproduced with permission)*

## Frank Byatt and the Christmas Bowl

### Rev. Dr D'Arcy Wood

Francis Fythe Byatt was born in England in March 1897. His father John Byatt was a teacher in London County Council schools. The family migrated to Australia in 1900, just before the Australian states joined in a federation to form the Commonwealth of Australia. The family settled in Hawthorn, Victoria, and John Byatt worked with the Victorian Education Department. They joined the Denham Street Methodist Church (near Burwood Road) and Frank later described this congregation as his "spiritual birthplace and home". After attending a local State School, Frank went to Melbourne High School which was and still is one of the leading government schools in Victoria.

He was evidently a good student and was accepted into the Civil Engineering course at Melbourne University in 1915, taking up residence in Queen's College. Having completed his third year, and having served in the University Rifles, and then the Australian Engineers as a lieutenant, he enlisted for war service toward the end of World War I. There was considerable pressure in those days for young men to "join up", whatever their profession or course of study. Frank became a corporal in the 22<sup>nd</sup> Battalion and served just two years, being discharged on 13<sup>th</sup> March 1920, as he was turning 23. The war ended in 1918, so why was he not discharged until 1920? The answer is that he was on a ship which took him to England as the war was ending, so he was stationed in England, doing a two-month refresher course in engineering in 1919 before returning to Australia, via the United States, in November of that year. In several American cities he visited the slums, thus gaining an insight into poverty in First World countries. Back in Melbourne, he completed his Engineering degree with honours. One of his lecturers, George Higgins, said that Frank "displayed ability, perseverance and trustworthiness throughout his course". The Master of Queen's College, the influential Dr E.H. Sugden, also wrote a reference, saying "I can

speaking in the highest terms of his character, ability and industry".

Frank had developed a strong Christian commitment and was interested in missionary service. He had his eye on the South Pacific but this move never eventuated. He offered as a candidate for the Methodist ministry and was accepted, being placed on the "President's list of reserve", a peculiarly Methodist category for those who were accepted as candidates but not yet doing their theological training. Frank wanted to use his engineering skills as well as engage in missionary service and the opportunity to do both came up in the Federated Malay States (the nation of Malaysia not having been formed at that time). Frank was employed as a surveyor in the Revenue Survey Department of the large State of Pahang, an area of some 14,000 square miles. The President of the Methodist Conference of Victoria and Tasmania, Percy Bladen, said in April 1921 that Frank was a probationer "and will engage in Christian work as opportunity offers". As a probationer Frank was now progressing toward ordination rather than being in cold storage, so to speak, on the President's list of reserve. He had to tread carefully in his Christian witness, as there was an agreement between the British Government and the Malay States that Christians would not attempt to convert the Malays from Islam to Christianity. But there were a few Christian congregations in Frank's area, and he travelled to them to preach and to lead singing, using an auto-harp. Most of the Christians, I think, were Indians, with a few Chinese. The Malay Methodist Conference appointed him as "supply" minister although he was not yet ordained.

Frank had met Katherine Tuck while in the army in England, through a YMCA hospitality scheme, and they married at Wesley Church in Singapore in April 1923. Katherine, known as Kitty, had done both teaching and nursing. They were to have five children, the fifth dying at the age of nine months in 1930.

After four years in Malaya, Frank moved with his family to England where he took a two-year appointment as "assistant minister" at the Greenwich-Deptford Methodist Mission. You can see a pattern emerging in Frank's life: he had international experience and commitment, with



three periods in the UK, four years in Malaya and visits to various other countries. When working in England in 1925–26 he gave lectures on Malaya and Singapore. Incidentally, he said that 95 degrees Fahrenheit in Malaya was equivalent to 120 degrees in Australia because of the Malayan humidity.

I am fairly certain that Frank did no full-time theological study. In the Methodist system some probationer ministers, in preparation for ordination, instead of going to college, would do supervised reading for a period of years, then in the final year have rigorous examinations, orally and in writing. The final stage was to give testimony to their Christian experience and calling in front of the whole Annual Conference. In his testimony in March 1927, Frank said: "I feel that I am here under the compulsion of God...." Ordination took place that same week.

Three months before, the Byatts had returned from England to Victoria and Frank was appointed straight to the Methodist Circuit of Sea Lake. In that era Methodist ministers would usually move from one appointment to another every two to four years, so Frank moved with his family from Sea Lake to Elmore in 1930, then to Nathalia, followed by two appointments in Tasmania (Glenorchy and Westbury) then back to Victoria in Moonee Ponds and Williamstown. While in Williamstown he was a Naval Reserve chaplain, which is interesting in the light of his strong anti-war views.

Frank was in full-time parish work for 24 years in a total of seven parishes (which the Methodists called "circuits"). When he transferred to Inter-Church Aid (ICA) full-time in 1951 he was well prepared, both by his international experience and by his knowledge of the workings of local churches, to undertake promotion, interpretation, education and fund-raising.

As far back as 1938 Australian churches were alive to the growing refugee problem in Europe. From 1941, while at Moonee Ponds, Frank joined the Victorian International Refugee Emergency Committee (VIREC) and later became its chairman. This was 10 years before he took on ICA work full-time. During World War II Australians were sending food parcels to Britain (which I can remember) and Frank was active in appealing for money both for refugees and for food aid. Frank's five-year ministry in Williamstown was evidently very successful. He was popular with young people and when the time came for him to move into ICA full-time, he received the warmest thanks for his work in that circuit.

At this point I want to sketch the national and international situation of the churches. The inauguration of the World Council of Churches (WCC) was set down for 1938, but the threat of war intervened, so this significant event was delayed until 1948. When the first Assembly did convene, in Amsterdam, the refugee crisis was a major issue. The Australian

## **Insights and Recollections: Members of the First UCA Assembly held in Sydney June 1977.**

The Third Biennial Conference of the National UCA Society will be held at the Centre for Ministry, North Parramatta, N.S.W 11-13 June 2021. The theme chosen for papers and conversation will be "Growing Up Uniting".

I am currently undertaking research on the background and recollections of those who were members of the first Assembly held in Sydney June 1977.

Forty three years ago 216 members were present including 70 from each of the three denominations and six from the United Church of North Australia.

If you are interested in assisting with this work I am able to send you a summary of the research to date including the names of those who were present and the church and State they represented.

Your thoughts and recollections about those who were members of the Assembly will make an important contribution to the study.

Rev Dr Dean Eland

0419 112 603

[djeland@bigpond.com](mailto:djeland@bigpond.com)





delegates brought back stories of the need to support churches and communities in Europe: church buildings were damaged, congregations were dispersed, refugees were on the move and there was widespread hunger. The Australian Government developed its own overseas aid and refugee programme, and co-operation with the churches began. Even before 1948 a grouping of churches established what was called The World Council of Churches: Australian Section, inaugurated in November 1946. A name-change followed and it became The Australian Council for the World Council of Churches (AC/WCC)—a cumbersome name but an accurate one. There were eight churches at that stage, Protestant and Anglican, and they set up a programme to settle refugees in Australia, with some funding and diplomatic support from the Federal Government. (Orthodox churches joined the Council during the following years, but not at this stage.) This period 1946 to 1948 marked a major development in that, instead of just committees of the like-minded, churches became officially involved. More research should be done on this period of rapid change.

I find it sad that the Government and the churches, who were 'on the same page' from the 1940s to the 1970s, are now far apart in the way they see the needs of asylum seekers and refugees. We are now (2017) in the middle of the biggest refugee crisis since the period following World War II and our Government is mainly concerned with "border control" and keeping people out rather than processing asylum seekers quickly and fairly and admitting genuine people into our country. The French philosopher Michel Foucault tells how language determines the way we see reality, and in this case, by calling people 'illegals', the Government sets up a negative perception among Australians so that asylum seekers are deprived of normal human rights.

To return to the post-war story, the needs of war-torn countries in Europe were addressed, in Australia, by the churches' International Relief Committee, of which Frank was the initial chairman. Representatives of the Victorian Committee (VIREC) joined that committee. Appeals were made to the churches and to sympathetic citizens to support this work. By 1948, as I said, Protestant and Anglican churches were officially committed. The Christmas Bowl appeal was

launched in 1949 as the main fund-raiser for Inter-Church Aid (the same name was used by the WCC for this relief work). Frank Byatt was the first to encourage people to put money equivalent to the cost of their Christmas dinner into a bowl on their dinner table—and of course to send the money to ICA. The first Bowl raised £17/10/0—and one Christmas cake. I think that was 1948, one year before the Bowl was officially launched. The launch was in October 1949 and a national target of £100,000 was set, which in today's money would be close to \$1 million. It was called the Remembrance Bowl Appeal, presumably to 'remember' the suffering of people in Europe. A link with the annual Remembrance Day observance on 11 November is also apparent. The name "Christmas Bowl of Remembrance" began to be used, and in the course of time, by the late-1960s, the simpler name Christmas Bowl was adopted.

The 1949 appeal realised only £1,808, a long way short of the ambitious target. More realistic targets were then set. By about 1970, when I was on the Australian Council of Churches (ACC) staff, it was realistic to set a target of \$1 million, and this was reached soon after. The Christmas Bowl appeal for 2015–16 realised \$2.5 million, which was the biggest total for about 30 years.

Back to 1951, a break-through came when Frank was appointed full-time. His title was "Australian Secretary of the WCC Commission for ICA in Europe". Although the focus was Europe, by the end of 1951 Frank was mentioning the Middle East and Korea as recipients of aid. By mid-1952, Frank reported that there were 75 million refugees worldwide and he listed the following countries as receiving aid: East and West Germany, Austria, Spain, Yugoslavia, Greece and Korea. The international name "inter-church aid", used also in Australia until the 1970s, shows that aid was given 'church to church', which was not always the case in later decades. In 1958 Frank described the purpose of ICA in these terms: "... to undergird the Church and replenish her resources in areas of loss following natural disaster or earthquake, or man's tragic inhumanity through political action or war, to enable the continuance of her normal ministry of the Word and Sacrament of the Gospel which is her evangel". (*The Spectator*, 5 February 1958) Aid at that time was largely for churches. In the 1940s this meant rebuilding damaged church buildings

plus food aid and the relief and re-settlement of refugees. In the course of the 1950s this expanded somewhat to include education of ministers, scholarships and helping communities with food production. In 1955 the total international effort raised £40 million (British or Australian?) which is perhaps \$800 million in today's Australian dollars.

Frank was busy preparing printed resources and giving broadcasts. He visited all states on speaking tours. In the mind of church people the urgency seemed to decline by the late-1950s, perhaps because both Australia and Europe were becoming more prosperous. Frank decried the fact that the Australian total declined by £5,000 in 1958.

In those days overseas aid organisations co-operated more than they do today. Frank encouraged church people to give to Freedom from Hunger (FFH), and indeed some Christmas Bowl money went in that direction. Community Aid Abroad (CAA) also arrived and some church people supported that body. Then came World Vision in the 1970s, with more expensive and professional advertising. World Vision targeted the general community, playing down any church connection and stressing the overseas situation. Their style attracted a lot of support and still does today. World Vision is a Christian organisation but is not accountable to any of the churches. Aid organisations in those years consulted together in the Australian Council for Overseas Aid (ACFOA) and co-ordinated their approaches to government. There was even some agreement as to which part of the year would be the main appeal for each aid organisation. All of that has now, sadly, gone by the board. Another problem which developed was that some ACC churches set up their own aid body, the Anglicans being first, followed by the Uniting Church. (The Catholics and Lutherans were not members of ACC until 1994.) ICA operated pretty much on a shoe-string for decades, whereas World Vision spent a lot of money to raise a lot of money. Today, of course, there are thousands of charities in Australia seeking the charitable dollar.

In the early decades of our story, ICA was strongest in Victoria, but was increasingly organised from Sydney. Frank, as national secretary, had no wish to move to Sydney, so became the full-time Victorian secretary from 1963. He was required by the Commission of ICA to apply for this new and restricted role. As he commented in a letter, this was humiliating for him. Politics are found in the churches and not only in Canberra!

At this time a new Constitution and a new name were adopted for the parent body in Sydney, now called the Australian Council of Churches (ACC). ICA became a 'division' of ACC (known, for short, as DICARWS, the full name being Division of Inter-Church Aid, Refugee and World Service). I joined the staff in 1969, not in ICA but as secretary for Studies and Communication. In the 1970s ICA became World Christian Action (WCA) and later changed again to Christian World Service (CWS). It is now known as Act for Peace. These names removed the term 'inter-church' from the title, for good reason, as aid was no longer directed exclusively to church bodies overseas but to various other aid bodies and to projects not under church control. These days, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ACT Alliance, an international organisation of more than 140 churches and other agencies, facilitates co-operation and a quick response to emergencies.

A major change took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s which I now want to describe. This was the arrival of 'world development' as a major focus. The United Nations had promoted a Decade for Development and the churches followed. World development means developing the capacity of under-developed countries through education, through community development and through supporting projects which enhance the strength of their economies. The aim is to lessen the dependence of the weak on the strong and to promote justice and prosperity.

The key event for the churches was the WCC Assembly held in Uppsala, Sweden in July 1968. Two years before, the WCC had held a World Conference on Church and Society which paved the way to some extent, and then, in April 1968, the Roman Catholic Church joined with the WCC in sponsoring a conference in Beirut called "World Development: the Challenge to the Churches". The stage was set for

a major debate at the Uppsala Assembly and the catalyst was a stirring address by Barbara Ward. She was an economist of international repute, an adviser to governments in Europe and Africa, and a committed Roman Catholic. She was also known by the name Lady Jackson, as the British Government had conferred a peerage on her. The UN Decade for Development had the aim of strengthening weak economies and the means to that end was a growth target of 5% p.a. The developed economies were asked to transfer 1% of their national income to developing countries, not as relief aid but as development aid. Trade policies were also part of the plan, but the Decade was generally considered a failure. During the 1960s the gap between rich and poor countries actually widened.

It was in this context that Barbara Ward addressed the Assembly. Discarding her prepared address (which was soon published in the *Ecumenical Review*) she gave what she called “some remarks”. The remarks were in fact a full-throated appeal to the churches to get involved in economic and social development, along with the UN. Here is a sample of the so-called remarks:

“If, 150 years ago, the conscience of Britain could be roused enough by the abolitionists to get rid of a system of slavery in which massive vested interests were involved, we can hope that comparable work and pressure might begin to repeal our current slaveries—malnutrition, sickness, ignorance, unemployment, the death of children, the despair of breadwinners, the deserted misery of old age. The only defeat is not to try.” (*Ecumenical Review*, October 1968, p. 129)

Unusually for an economist, she said that the churches had a theological task in front of them, because the doctrine of creation and the unity and dignity of all human beings were involved. She quoted from Jesus' parable of the man who built bigger and bigger barns, and imagined Jesus saying to the wealthy churches (in language reminiscent of the prophet Amos):

“Go away, and until you've done something about the starvation of the world, until you've done something about this incredible gift of creation that I've given you, until you've caught up with my ideas—keep away, because you are an abomination before me. You say 'Lord, Lord', and you do not the things that I say”. (*Ecumenical Review*, October 1968, p. 353) In an uncorrected market, she said, the “rich stay rich and get richer”. (*Ibid*, p. 367) This all sounds like the international market capitalism that we still have half-a-century later.

Barbara Ward was calling for radical change. This call was echoed by President Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and by Prof S.L Parmar of the United Church of North India, the latter saying this: “Rightly understood, development is disorder because it changes existing social and economic relationships, breaks up old institutions to create new, and brings radical alterations in the values and structures of society.” (World Council of Churches, *The Uppsala Report*, Geneva, 1969, p. 42)

The concept of development as radical change explains why there has been so little progress since 1968 in “re-balancing” (B. Ward) the economies of the world. Local politics in the rich nations and international struggles for power have inhibited any fundamental change in the operations of a market economy. The poorer nations too often get the short end of the stick in free trade agreements and other trade arrangements. In Australia we are a long way short of devoting 1% of GDP to the purposes of aid and development. When it comes to an election campaign, the situation of poorer countries simply does not rate well against local and national pressures on the national budget.

In my reading I was struck by the cordial and co-operative relationships between the churches and the Federal Government in the 1940s to the 1960s compared with the distinct cooling off of relations when the churches began calling for more radical change.

The role of the Roman Catholic Church became more and more important. The Second Vatican Council (1961–65) changed many things including the modernising of the church and a reaching out to other churches. The Decree on Ecumenism set out a new direction, but it was almost 30 years after Vatican II before the Roman Catholic bishops in Australia agreed to join the revamped ACC under the new name National Council of Churches in Australia (NCCA), but in the meantime there was much co-operation. In my time on the staff (1969–73) Catholics were involved in nearly every programme that I organised,



and, in the field of overseas aid, Australian Catholic Relief (ACR) worked with ICA fairly closely. A joint scheme called Force Ten (a set of monthly projects to which members of Force Ten could donate) operated for many years. But because the concept of development was not well understood by the churches at that time, another effort was required, so the Catholic bishops and the ACC set up a joint committee called Action for World Development (AWD) which published a lot of material and promoted study groups throughout the country. Hundreds of these groups met, in all states, some for a period of months and others for several years, studying 'third world' countries, looking at the economic and social issues, and encouraging congregations and church synods to get behind moves for world development. The success of AWD was remarkable and it has never, to my knowledge, been researched properly. It was a milestone, both in the engagement of people with issues of justice and in the relationships between Catholics and other Christians.

The full participation of the Roman Catholic Church in ecumenical activity in Australia, through local, state and national councils of churches, has changed the whole landscape. Whereas Frank Byatt, in his addresses, often used the phrase "except for the Roman Catholic Church", we now have a Catholic sister, Sr Elizabeth Delaney, as general secretary of the NCCA. The Lutheran Church, likewise, which was not a member of the ACC/ NCCA until 1994, now plays a major role with other churches.

The change in focus on aid between the 1940s–60s period and the 1970s onward is seen to some extent in the themes chosen for the annual Christmas Bowl appeals. In 1958 the theme was "Hungry mouths need helping hands" and in 1965 it was "You care when you share through the Christmas Bowl to meet human need". The emphasis here is on feeding and on immediate need. The contrast with the later period is seen in three later themes. In 1973 it was "Share life: give to the Christmas Bowl"; in 1982 "Help restore the balance" (recalling, perhaps, Barbara Ward's idea of re-balancing), and in 2000 "Give peace a hand", drawing attention to the link between development and peace. The visuals with raised hands holding an empty bowl suggest, to me anyway, aid in the form of food, whereas more recent years have seen a greater emphasis on justice, on education, on empowerment of poor countries and a strengthening of communities both here in Australia and overseas. This does not mean that emergency aid has stopped, of course, because the churches are well equipped to act quickly when there is cyclone damage, drought or dislocation of people due to war. The refugee situation, so huge after World War II, and once again in our own time, still calls for action by the WCC, by the Vatican and by churches here in Australia. Many things change in life, but the migration of people and refugee crises are pretty constant. The task is in some ways getting harder, illustrated by the hard line of Donald Trump and the election of One Nation representatives to Federal Parliament.

The record of Australians in welcoming refugees has been good—until recent years. Housing refugees was part of our effort. The ACC had, at one stage in 1963, four houses for White Russians. The White Russians were refugees from China after the Communist Revolution of 1949.

I finish where I began, with the ministry of Frank Byatt. He continued to expand his knowledge and expertise throughout his years in ICA. He was influenced by the New Delhi Assembly of the WCC in 1961, during which he kept a hand-written diary of 32 pages. He consulted regularly with the committees of the WCC. He was quite strongly anti-war, despite his service as a soldier. He said at one stage: "It is not easy to link Jesus with war", and again "We have to seek the causes of war; we have, as a world, to remove them". (*The Spectator*, 4 November 1931) His nephew Geoffrey Grinton says he was not, in the strict sense, a pacifist, and during his ministry in Williamstown he was a chaplain in the Naval Reserve, but he did realise that the progress of developing countries was impeded by war.

His views were exposed in the talks he gave on the Yarra Bank. I should explain that for some years, perhaps several decades, speakers would set themselves up on the north bank of the Yarra

(now called Birrarung Marr) on Sunday afternoons, try to gather a crowd and argue a case. They each had their favourite spot, and they varied from Catholic Action and the Voice of Methodism to the Communist Party and the Rationalists. I used to go sometimes with my father who had a monthly gig with the Voice of Methodism. Frank Byatt also spoke from time to time, arguing the case for poorer countries, for peace and for a practical Christian faith. As he often wrote: "The evangel is complete only when the *action* of the Gospel matches the *message* of the Gospel". (*The Spectator*, 5 February 1958)

As I have said, relations between governments and the churches were better in Frank's day, and he was awarded the OBE (Order of the British Empire) in 1964. In the peculiar terminology of the Methodists, he was listed as 'resting' from 1951 to 1966, that is, he was not engaged in parish work but working for ICA for 16 years. On retirement at the age of 69 he returned to parish work part-time, first in Hawthorn (his home territory), then Malvern South and then Malvern. He died in 1981.

His nephew Alan Grinton, brother of Geoffrey, recalls Frank as "gentle and affable". A colleague Rev Bernard Langford, who was later a colleague of mine also, described Frank as "shy and unassuming" but also as a very effective speaker. Frank did not work alone of course. He worked with other pioneers, and I think their work should be researched. I believe Professor Renata Howe is working on a biography of Margaret Holmes, an extraordinary worker for refugees. Other notable people were, in Frank's time and a little later, the Hon. John Dedman and Elsie Needham in the field of refugees, Vaughan Hinton, Alan Ife and Doug Hewitt in overseas aid and ecumenical promotion, and two outstanding general secretaries of the ACC, the Rev. Harvey Perkins and the Rev. Frank Engel.

In sketching this picture of Frank Byatt, I have been helped by the Rev. Dr Sandy Yule, by the Uniting Church Archives people in Melbourne (especially my sister Janet Secomb and the Rev. Peter Aumann) and by Frank's nephew Geoffrey Grinton who lent me some wonderful family photos and documents. Frank Byatt was a remarkable minister, dedicated to his family, to his Church, to the ecumenical cause, to overseas aid and to world peace. We in Australia have benefitted from his legacy and so have many countries overseas.

(The original version of this article was delivered as the second Frank Byatt Memorial Lecture at St John's Uniting Church Essendon on 13 November 2016.)



Photo of Frank & Katherine Byatt's wedding in 1923

Uniting Church National History Society  
Newsletter

Contributions to this newsletter are welcome, but please send them via email and in MS Word or Apple Pages format only.

Editor: Robert Renton  
([robert.renton@bigpond.com](mailto:robert.renton@bigpond.com))

## A letter from Frank Byatt

In an August 1959 letter to Father Tucker, the founder of the Brotherhood of St Laurence and a social justice activist who pioneered many programs to address poverty, Frank Byatt wrote some insightful commentary on the situation in Australia as he saw it. The following is an extract.

He was concerned that at meetings of the committee of "The Australian Commission for Inter-Church Aid and Service to Refugees of the Australian Council for the World Council of Churches" the proceedings were dominated by the "minute hour of the clock" and that "too often time is consumed on the minutiae of operations that should be handled at office level". Instead, he argued for time to be given to "seriously ... relate the Mission of the Church with the Service of the Church" and its theological and biblical basis of ministry.

"There are evidences that public men and clergy are conscious we live in a world under judgment and seek the voice of a prophet to say, "Thus saith the Lord" — in relation to the appalling disparity between levels of living in Australia and Hong Kong, a free world and Palestine, a conscience-stricken world and expanding Woomera Nuclear Rocket Ranges while men starve and no birds sing.

What is the Word of God for His Church in this historic situation and how far can that Word be said by Inter-Church Aid? Is Inter-Church Aid the voice of the diaconia in the sense that if Inter-Church Aid does not say that Word, it cannot be effectively said elsewhere? Is there not a sense in which today Inter-Church Aid is the keeper of the soul of the nation? And is not the nation in peril of sinister forces of self-centredness, self-prosperity and self-security? Has Advent any relation to the refugee on the doorstep of the church and state in the light of "when ye did it to one of the least of my brethren ye did it unto me..."? And is not Inter-Church Aid the source of the service to refugees by the churches at whose door they knock? Must we allow a Dives-Lazarus relationship to persist between Australia and Asia? ...."

*I wonder what Frank Byatt would say about today's church meetings and the present state of Australian life? (Editor)*



Worth thinking (and acting) about...

*In 2015, WWF analysis concluded that more than 80% of deforestation between now and 2030 – up to 170 million hectares in total – is expected to take place in 11 deforestation 'fronts'. One of these is Eastern Australia, which ranks alongside the Amazon, Borneo, Congo Basin and other threatened tropical regions for the extent of forest at risk.*

(Editor)



Uniting Church National History Society

# 3rd Biennial History Conference



Uniting Church in Australia  
ASSEMBLY

## DATE SAVER AND CALL FOR PAPERS

# GROWING UP UNITING

## GROWING UP UNITING

**11–13 June 2021**

Centre for Ministry  
16 Masons Drive  
North Parramatta  
NSW 2151

Contributors are encouraged to approach the conference theme **‘Growing Up Uniting’** creatively.

It could mean growing up Uniting in a secular age, or growing up multi-culturally. It could mean 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.

Young people from various Uniting Church CALD communities, for example, have proposed that some contributors might explore growing up Tongan Australian, Korean Australian, Fijian Australian, Samoan Australian etc in the Uniting Church. Some contributors might also consider what it means to grow up disciples or to explore growing old gracefully 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)**

► [SPEAKERS ON NEXT PAGE](#)

## Invited Speakers will include



Uniting Church in Australia  
ASSEMBLY



### DR DEIDRE PALMER

#### **'Roundtable Conversations with Uniting Church Young People'**

Dr Deidre Palmer is President of the Uniting Church in Australia. She has served in this role, since July 2018. Prior to becoming President, Deidre served as Moderator of the Uniting Church in South Australia.

Deidre has been involved in theological education for much of her life. She has served on the faculty of the Adelaide College of Divinity, Flinders University School of Theology, the Uniting College in South Australia and Perkins School of Theology, Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas.

Deidre is also a social worker. She worked for four and a half years with Uniting Communities as a counsellor with their Childhood Sexual Abuse Counselling team, prior to becoming Moderator.



### ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR RUTH POWELL

#### **'Growing up Uniting: an inside out perspective'**

Dr Ruth Powell is Director of NCLS Research, a research centre that focuses on church vitality and community spirituality and wellbeing.

She manages the five-yearly National Church Life Survey (1991 to present), a large and comprehensive database on church life. Ruth also holds a position as Associate Professor and Research Fellow, Public and Contextual Theology Research Centre, Charles Sturt University, as well as Honorary Professor at Alphacrucis College.

Her research interests are congregational studies, leadership, and spirituality in the wider community.



### REV DR WILLIAM EMILSEN AND DR ELIZABETH WATSON

#### **'Growing Up Uniting: Insights to ponder; lessons to heed'**

**William W. Emilsen** is an Honorary Associate Professor in Church History and World Religions at Charles Sturt University and a Principal Researcher with its Public and Contextual Research Centre. He has recently written *Fighting Spirit: A History of Christianity at Waruwi, Goulburn Island* (2016) and *Charles Harris: A Struggle for Justice* (2019). He has had a long-term interest in the history of the Uniting Church. He lives in Leura in the Blue Mountains with his wife, Carolyn.

**Elizabeth Watson** is a retired academic who holds degrees in Anthropology and Sociology from the University of Sydney, the Australian National University and the University of New South Wales. Her research and publications have focused principally on women's unpaid work, especially caring work. She grew up within the Congregational Church and has been an active member of the Uniting Church since the 1980s, serving on the Board of the United Theological College for several years until its disillusion. She is a long-time member of Amnesty International and served for a number of years as National President of the Australian Section.

**GROWING  
UP  
UNITING**

Uniting Church National History Society

**3rd Biennial  
History Conference**



United  
Theological  
College