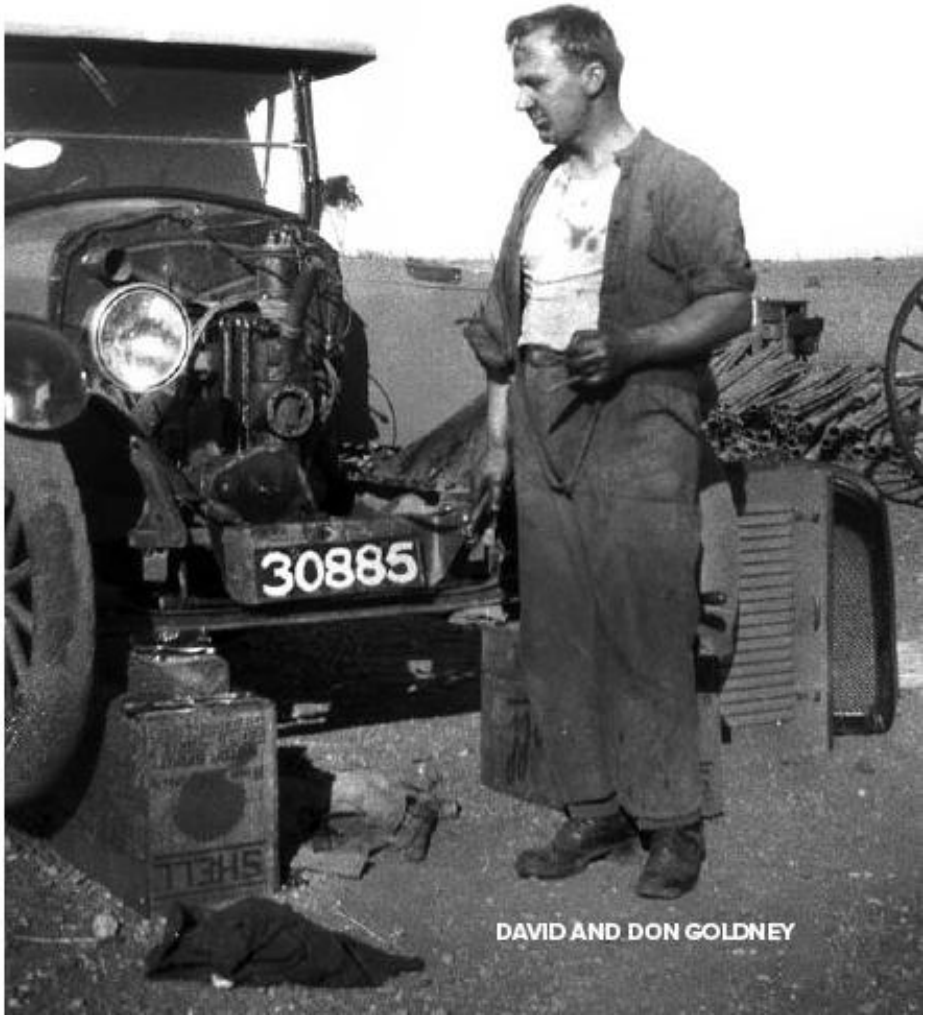
# Uniting Church
## History and Heritage

Uniting Church National History Society: Vol. 5 No. 1 March 2023

## IT MAKES ONE SMILE AND IT MAKES ONE WEEP

The untold story of pioneer Methodist Home Missionary, Reverend Victor Henry Goldney (VHG) ministering to the scattered people in the outback station country of the South Australian northwest, 1924-1927

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# FROM THE CHAIR

**Rev. Professor Glen O'Brien**

My history professor at Asbury Theological Seminary used to say, 'Not even God knows how many Methodist denominations there are in the world'. Of course, God does know this finite number and from 1 May 2022 has had to take account of one further. The Global Methodist Church was launched after the United Methodist Church, the largest Methodist denomination in the United States (responding to COVID conditions) postponed its 2022 General Conference which was to consider The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation. This Protocol would have allowed an amicable separation of those traditionalists in the denomination who desired to exit the UMC because of its unwillingness to enforce its own official position that 'the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching.' This position was reinforced at the 2019 General Conference, in spite of strong progressive voices against it. These events represent the most significant Methodist schism since the 1845 division within the Methodist Episcopal Church over slavery. Where the nineteenth century was a century of Methodist division, the twentieth century was the ecumenical century in which Methodists made significant achievements both in healing their own divisions and merging with other Protestant denominations to form new Uniting and United churches. Are we now seeing this pattern reversed and a new era of schism and disunity arising?

Closer to home, The Assembly of Confessing Congregations (ACC), a reform movement within the Uniting Church in Australia decided in March 2023 to cease its operations. It had long declared that the Uniting Church was apostate because of the 15th Assembly's pragmatic recognition that there are two doctrines of marriage in the Uniting Church – marriage 'between a man and a woman' and 'between two persons.' In November 2022, the ACC appealed to the Global Methodist Church as precedent in its declared intention to separate from the Uniting Church. Now it appears that such a measure will not take place. Could the schism that resulted in the Global Methodist Church, the first major split in American Methodism for 150 years, have been prevented if Traditionalist and Progressive Methodists alike had remained convinced of their own opinion, allowed others to be equally convinced of theirs, and agreed to offer only love to each other and to all people? How is it that a particular view of human sexuality has been elevated to the point that it became the legitimation for a church schism?

John Wesley's 1755 sermon on a catholic spirit demonstrated his theological method of transferring concerns from argument *about* faith to faith itself and its consequences. He sought clarity on the essentials of the faith and liberty of opinion on non-essential matters, allowing that Methodists 'think and let think.' The formation of the Global Methodist Church represents the failure of some twenty-first century Methodists to live out of John Wesley's catholic spirit. In elevating views on human sexuality to a church-dividing principle, the Gospel as a revelation of God's reconciling work for the world, has been displaced from the centre of Methodist discourse.

Wesley never left the Church of England and worked hard (with mixed results) to foster among Methodists a love for and loyalty to the Established Church. This was in spite of the fact that theological heresies of all kinds could be found within Anglicanism, even among some bishops, including Deism, Socinianism, and Arianism. Yet Wesley never urged a separation from the Church or claim that it was an apostate organisation. He would have considered any schism to have been a deep wound to the body of Christ. The United Methodist Church of today is not unlike eighteenth-century Anglicanism in this respect. Its official doctrinal authority is constituted by Holy Scripture, the 25 Articles of Religion and Wesley's Standard Sermons. Undoubtedly, many United Methodists, including among the Episcopate, do not hold fast to the doctrines contained in these standards, and there is a lot of theological diversity in the Church. Officially, however, the historic Christian faith is enshrined in these official standards. Yet, *The Protocol of Reconciliation and Grace through Separation* developed out of the frank admission that United Methodists could no longer live together with difference over human sexuality. Even in a best-case scenario, in which the defections are much smaller in number than anticipated, the present schism is an unmitigated disaster for Methodists and a tragic reversal of its ecumenical achievements of the last

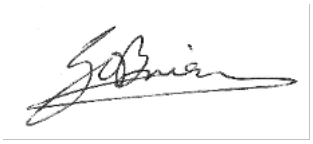
one hundred years. Perhaps the closing of the ACC is a sign that the UCA has had more success in living together with diverse views on non-essential issues, though its unity will still need to be carefully and lovingly guarded.

John Wesley's advice to eighteenth-century Methodists, 'If we cannot think alike, we may love alike,' has been severely tested in American Methodism and in the global areas represented in the General Conference of the United Methodist Church. What if Methodists (and all other Christians) were to follow Wesley's lead and transfer our focus from arguments *about* faith in Christ *to faith itself and to its consequences*? We might then find that Christians of diverse sexuality possess the same faith as straight Christians. They have been given the same Holy Spirit as straight believers. They are recipients of the same grace of God. They are justified by grace through faith. They are sanctified and will be glorified in the new creation. By baptism they have been incorporated into the body of Christ and by the Spirit ordained to the priesthood of all believers. Some have been set apart through the laying on of hands as ministers of Word and Sacrament. They are the children of God, heirs of God and of Christ.

Retired Anglican Bishop Peter Jensen told a 2018 GAFCON Conference of 'traditional Anglicans' that two different views of human sexuality constitute 'two different religions.' The ACC also made this move, referring to the 15th Assembly as having promulgated 'a new gospel' in its allowing of same-sex marriage.[1] Yet, surely to make sexuality determine the shape of the Gospel would be the genuine heresy since the Gospel arises from and is grounded in the free grace of God alone. I learned from the Fijian theologian, the Rev Dr James Baghwan that in Pasifika culture, when a new sail is woven, in much the same way as grass mats, the strands must be loose enough to pick up the wind of the Spirit but tight enough to keep the vessel seaworthy. Sometimes we have to engage in some theological weaving, drawing together Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience to shape a church that will hold together while catching the wind of the Spirit to journey to new places. Debates about inclusion speak to the core message of the church, not only among Methodists but in the church catholic. They represent a crisis in the Christian church, but also an opportunity. It is the hope of the UCNHS, and of many others, that historical study will continue to play an important role in this conversation moving forward.

[1] 'Declaration of Faith and Intent of The Assembly of Confessing Congregations, Inc.' 27 November 2022. https://confessingcongregations.org.au/announcing/ last accessed 4 April, 2023. 'We believe that R64 has instituted a new gospel that is void of the transforming power of the 'Word of God on whom salvation depends' (BoU paragraph 5; Romans 1: 16).

Yours,



(Rev. Professor) Glen O'Brien

Chair, Uniting Church National History Society

## EARLY NOTICE

Very soon you will hear more about the Geoff Barnes Memorial Prize.

For many years, this prize was awarded to a student studying church history in NSW.

It will now become available to any study studying church history (in a broader sense) at one of Australia's Uniting Church theological colleges

The details are now being worked out by the Board of the UC National History Society (which is now responsible for its management).

You will have the opportunity to contribute to this prestigious prize that will be a suitable memorial to Geoff.

UNITING CHURCH NATIONAL HISTORY SOCIETY

# 4th Biennial History Conference

# Truth Telling: From Colonising to Covenanting

***Keynote Speaker***

***The Hon Yingiya (Mark) Guyula MLA***

***HIGHTLIGHTS OF THE CONFERENCE WILL INCLUDE:***

Welcome to Country & Smoking Ceremony by Traditional Owners the Larrakia Nation

Tour of Nungalinya College

Visit to Chung Wah Chinese Temple & Museum

Celebration of 150 years of continuing ministry in Darwin

Evening at Darwin Festival Park (optional)

UNITING CHURCH NATIONAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Conference 2023 webpage
https://
ucnhs2023.my.canva.site/

Rev Steve Orme
Convenor, Organising Committee
Mob: 0447 148 744
Email:
ucnhs2023conference@gmail.com

This Conference will have a focus on the history of the Uniting Church and its predecessors in Northern Australia.

It coincides with the 100th anniversary of the commencement of the Methodist Mission at Milingimbi in Arnhem Land and the 150th anniversary of the commencement of the Darwin congregation of the now Uniting Church.

## Thursday 24th August
## to
## Sunday 27th August 2023

## DARWIN, NORTHERN TERRITORY

**Venues include:**
**Darwin Memorial Uniting Church, Smith Street, Darwin CBD**
**Nungalinya College, Dripstone Road, Nakara**

**REGISTRATION INFORMATION**

**FULL CONFERENCE FEE**
**$260**
**EARLY BIRD***
**$220**
***Early Bird registrations close 30 April 2023***
Includes access to all conference sessions, most meals, transport between venues

**Conference On-line Fee**
**$80**
Includes Keynote Speaker Opening address, Conference sessions Friday morning & afternoon Conference sessions Saturday @ Nungalinya

**Registration through Trybooking**
**https://**
**www.trybooking.com/CGJUQ**

Unity Through Enterprise
The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

The Uniting Church National History Society Conference Organising Committee gratefully acknowledges the support of
The Arnhem Land Progress Aboriginal Corporation

# Decolonising my mind

## Ian Higgins

Over many decades I have been probably unconsciously moving from a British colonial mind set to a postcolonial way of seeing reality, especially history in this land. This has not been easy, because it has involved that strange combination of both unlearning and learning.

At primary school in Brisbane over eighty years ago, much was made of the peaceful settlement of Australia by the British. There was never mention of massacres, no concerns raised about the unnaming/renaming of the geography of this land, so evident in so many names, as for example,; Point Danger, the Whitsunday Passage rechristened or was it EuroEnlightenment naming, maybe a mixture as here.

So it goes on, as in two other names of days in the week along with Thursday Island, all named by Captain Bligh.as he sailed through the Torres Strait, itself being the name of a Spanish voyager.

Before Lieutenant James Cook, the Dutch had renamed so much of the rest of the of New Holland.

Once permanent British occupation was being established, this naming really gathered momentum. The charismatic Sydney Presbyterian preacher, John Dunmore Lang in a lengthy poem, *Colonial Nomenclature* rails against the Macquarie name; as in street, place, port, fort, town, lake, and river: then goes on to write,"

> I like the native names, as Parramatta,
> And Illawarra and Woolloomooloo;
> Nandowra, Woorarra, Bulkomatta"…..

He goes on relentlessly to name another 17 Aboriginal place names. Most of the British conquistadors (never calling themselves such) usually thought otherwise. Amazingly many indigenous names do persist and thankfully at out time there can be a process of restoration

Only in my thirties did I become aware of this by reading about names as symbolic indicators of conquest. This was in my reading Blainey's, *The Triumph of the Nomads*. As I recall the last page, he writes about the white sails on the horizon and a wind that would sweep across the land tearing off so many of the earlier Indigenous names.

In so many primary school stories of the Anglo Australian explorers, Aboriginal persons were scarcely mentioned, with such bizarre assertions that this explorer was the first man to set foot on a particular piece of land. Some years ago in a historical museum in Northern Queensland, I asked the person in charge why there was nothing about the Aboriginal People to be told, "They never were here." And that was that.

In terms of Queensland Primary school education in Queensland in the late 1940s, concerning white exploration, there was from an Aboriginal perspective, one exception, which has fascinated and haunted me to this day. It has always seen by me as more horrific than the Burke and Wills story. This is about Galmarra and Edmund Kennedy who in a party of thirteen were to trek from Rockingham Bay, near present day named Cardwell, to the top of Cape York.

Towards the end, the Anglo explorer and Galmarra are the only two left on the journey. Then almost with sight of the waiting ship, Kennedy is speared in the back, to die in his companion's arms, giving Galmarra the Journal

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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)

## Subscriptions now due for 2023

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to take to ship, which he does: despite being initially ignored by the crew on the ship, while he yells on the beach. Later in searches for survivors, only two out of the twelve were found alive. A plaque in St James Anglican Church in Sydney records the name of Edmund Kennedy with the pejorative Jacky Jacky.

Later in secondary school, in history and geography and literature the curriculum was virtually exclusively British. We learned the geography of countries of the British Empire: South Africa with Cape town and the Tableland, India and the Deccan, Canada and the Rockies, New Zealand, the Land of the Long White Cloud. The poets were all English even on into the English first two years of English at the University of Queensland. Later in my life at Monash University, Australian History was all Anglowhite.

Once a child I had to fill out a form the required nationality. Mum said, "Write British." Some of her generation still referred to England as home. They read English magazines and journals, such as *The Illustrated London News* and very expensive art books all with art from the United Kingdom.

Before being part of the Queensland Primary education system in Brisbane learning such things British, I had been born in Rabaul. However before we ever arrived in Brisbane from Rabaul because of, "the imminence of war", which words are in a Government letter to Mum, written well before Pearl Harbour and the outbreak of the Pacific War. I had been in Toli country on the Gazelle Peninsula on the Island of New Britain. Rabaul then was the centre of Administration for this Trust Territory of Papua and new Guinea. In many ways it was the mini equivalent of the Indian Raj, "run" by Australian ex-pats. All my life I have never been afraid of indigenous persons, possibly because I was nursed and raised as a little child by what was called Indentured Labour.

In the last twelve months in Central Queensland, having become involved with a Pacifica Celebration, I discovered the words Indentured labour were a euphemism for slave labour. I found it very distressing to discover I had been raised by slaves, possibly Highland Papuans taken to Toli country, where they could not be, "any trouble" because they did not speak the local language, only theirs and Pidgin. Mum taught one to speak, "the King's English" and was promptly ostracised from sectors of the white society.

When I tell this slavish awakening to my friends, which is a dark epiphany for me, they invariably change the subject.

These servant/slaves people were usually called boys (sometimes spelt boiys), because as, incongruently as it seems to me, my Mother said, "They might imagine they could rise above their station." This very sentence remains inscribed in my memory to this day, assuming my recollection is correct. Well, many nursery rhymes from that time in my life are likewise, despite the perils of oral histories.

Once twenty years ago returning to Rabaul, a Toli man discovered I had been born there. Immediately he hugged me and said, "You are my brother" then adding, "despite your hair and the colour of your skin."

This would later resonate with further significant words, far more disconcerting by a Larrakia Nation man, Waly Feijo, a minister of the Uniting Church.

My wife Barbara and I were for three months volunteers at Nungalinga College in Darwin. For weeks we were driving so many of the students to the hospital, or worse still the infamous jail. Every student seemed to have relatives there, despite all the years of reports, commissions and recommendations.

One day I said to Wally, "I've been here a while and don't seem to be learning anything."

"Until you get off your high horse, you will learn nothing."

"But I don't think I am on a high horse."

"You are! You are!"

I asked what could I do. "Go over there and ask that young man how he's going fixing his car. Begin with the Yolnu word for brother."

And this immediately changed my relationships as a Balander with the male students.

# A prayer for peace

Peace be with our struggling spirit
Peace be with our struggling spirit;
that we may find rest in your presence.

Peace be to our reforming spirits;
that we may bring justice to life in our world.

Peace be to our anxious spirit;
that we may be bold in following the Way of Jesus.

Peace be to our praying spirit;
that we may find our place in serving our world.

Peace be to our hungry spirit;
that we may be fed by the bread of God's Spirit.

Peace be to our lonely spirit;
that we may continue to find companionship with people of hope.

Peace be to our loving spirit;
that we may respond to the rumours of God amongst us.

*Karel Reus*
*from* Conversations with God:
Handcrafted explorations in prayer,
*February 2021 (Reproduced with permission)*

Generously Wally organised us to be guests at a day seminar in Darwin University, designed to introduce recent medical graduates about to work in remote communities. The professor was another Feijo.

The day began with short lecture in a lecture room whitefella way, but very soon we were out walking through in the coastal bush lands, learning as we walked about plants for food and medicine, as well as local creatures and the dreamings associated with the Nungalinga dreaming The whole in valuable event reminded me that Jesus also was such a peripatetic teacher.

Once home in Melbourne, I had another disconcerting experience My ancestors on both sides of the extended family had come to Australia very early in White times. My wife and I had ancestors on the *David Clark*, which had the first free migrants to sail from Greenock on the Clyde to the Port Phillip District within the colony of New South Wales, an address title as good as the full name of that pueblo we now call Los Angles. It was 1839.

I had imagined in terms of dispossession my family, except as being later beneficiaries, we were innocent in terms of the dispossession and dispersion of Indigenous people. Looking through some old family 'stuff' in a nineteenth century sea chest, I came across an obituary of my great grandfather Higgins, in a yellowed newspaper cutting, which said among other things, this gentleman on his property in Western New South Wales, "had trouble with the savages". Adding however, "He dealt with this very well." What does that mean? Presumably I will never know, only wonder.

Over decades the writings by Henry Reynolds and William Edward Stanner of "the great Australian silence" have influenced me, so too has works of art by Aboriginals in the Queensland Art Gallery, which have raised my consciousness. One-piece metres long, spells DISPERSED, the D consisting of bullet casings, indicating once again the use of misleading euphemisms

Also in that Art Gallery, once I saw a beautiful carved, decorated shield, presumably from a rainforest fig tree buttress. The design was exquisite, so easy to look at aesthetically: well until I began to discern bullet holes through it, probably from the American invented Snider Rifle much used during the nineteenth century in the British Empire, replacing muzzle loaded predecessors. Who ever held that up for protection did not stand a chance in the frontier wars. I wrote a

free verse poem about this, circulated it among friends. Not a single response; without my questioning, and then rather vague ones. Indicative again of how we can deal with unpleasant historical issues.

One way of refusing to consider such issues occurred on last Christmas Eve in an article, in the *Herald Sun* written by Tony Abbott, who railed against urbanised Aboriginal social activists who want, "to rewrite history " My impression is that he believes that White Oz history has been well settled (sic) and must not, cannot be, disturbed. Surely, at least to anyone who studies historiography, history is frequently rewritten as new perspectives arise to concern us. For those who have never studied such, there is that adage, "History is written by the victors". Which may be well so: until voices once silent clamour to be heard, as is happening in our land now, sadly not without a backlash by those whose do what want their tranquillity disturbed, who never heed the motto of Monash University *Ancora Imparo*, in English "I am still learning."

I have struggled to do so all my life

Yet not all is lost. Near Rockhampton across the plains towards Yeppoon are two volcanic trachyte cores, in shape like those we call the Glass House Mountains. Until very recently, one was called Jim Crow, the other, Mt Wheeler, the latter after a person involved in massacres. They have now reverted to the earlier names, Baga and Gai-i. Both belong together in a dreaming story of the Darumbal People., the outline of which can be read on the Internet.

In Rockhampton city itself, on the riverside of the wide river that flows through Rockhampton and has the largest catchment on the eastern side of the Great Divide, you may read both names of the river, the British and Darumbal, namely Fitzroy and Toonooba.

Slowly, slowly different perspectives on the histories of this continent are not only awakening our awareness of the need to decolonise our minds: or if you prefer the South American Liberation theological concept: the process of *conscientizacion* is happening, which carries with it the necessity of praxis (action) which we can see in these geographical naming reversals.

I still wonder about our hymnology and theology, so supersaturated with imperial imagery, largely derived from ancient Rome when Emperor Constantine and Emperor Diocletian appropriated/ misappropriated the teachings of Jesus for imperial domination, mental and physical. When do we begin to decolonise that?

I now longer imagine Jesus as King: much prefer spiritual Companion along the road and now in my eighties, I seek to follow in the way of Jesus our Liberator.

My hope is that later this year In Darwin, many of us will further participate and proceed in these processes of decolonising our minds and our actions, painful though it may be. #

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Ian Lindsay Higgins was born in Rabaul New Guinea in 1938 a year after the 1937 eruption, which resulted in hundreds dead and a new volcano, Vulcan, emerging from the Harbour floor. He became a Presbyterian (later Uniting) minister in Queensland. Ian was a Chaplain at, Haileybury College, Methodist Ladies College, Wesley College, as well as a Minister in parishes in Queensland and Victoria. He is a poet, and has recently published *A Gallimaufry of Poetry and Prose*.

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*Whenever you find yourself on the side of the majority, it is time to pause and reflect.*

*Mark Twain*
*30/11/1835-21/4/1910*

# LIFE IN CHEERFUL OBSCURITY: GRACE GRIFFIN'S EXPERIENCE AS A MINISTER'S WIFE 1936–1971

## Cheryl Griffin

This exploration of my mother's life as a Methodist minister's wife began early last year, almost twenty years after my mother's death. For months, during my much older brother's long last illness, we spent hours each week reminiscing about family life.

As we laughed (and cried) over shared memories and he told me about people, places and events I hadn't known about, David (my brother) became more focussed on our mother's story. To him, hers was an extraordinary life, not only within our family, but also as a woman of her background who had 'made good' through her desire for something more than was on offer to her in Launceston during the 1930s Depression.

So after David's death in August last year, I continued our quest and this piece is just one outcome.

A little background

My grandparents Charlie and Mary Beckett lived in northern Tasmania and when my mother, their first child, was born in April 1916 grandpa was a farm labourer and grannie a domestic servant at Quamby in Hagley. Grandpa enlisted when mum was a few months old but contracted meningitis and typhoid in camp and was discharged as medically unfit. He was too sick to work and with another child born nine months after his discharge, the family was in a very difficult position.

Eventually, in September 1921, grandpa was granted a Soldiers Settlement block at Dunorlan. There were now four children to support and 151 acres to tend. It was too much and after three years they left and returned to Hagley where they

### Current UCNHS Board members

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New Board members are **Ken Barelli** who is the current chairperson of the managing committee of the UC Historical Society for the Victorian and Tasmanian Synod. He is completing a PhD on Methodist history in Victoria.

**Damian Palmer** is a sessional lecturer in Church History at United Theological College, North Parramatta, NSW, and his current research interests are in the history and theology of the Uniting Church.

### An encouragement to contribute

This newsletter is open for contributions from all members of the Society and beyond. It is not an academic journal. Some material is submitted by professional historians, but other, equally interesting and valuable material is submitted by people who have a story to tell. Modern historiography recognises that there are many sources of historical information, including Indigenous history which can be in a unique form that requires a different set of parameters of understanding and appreciation.

In a recent book by Anna Clark (*Making Australian History*), she says that "history is something we *do,* as well as something that *happened*. The porousness and changeability of those boundaries is critical…. Methodologies and platforms such as oral history, memory studies and historical fiction have presented radical challenges to traditional disciplinary strictures built on 'fact' and 'truth'".

Have you got a story to tell? If so, don't hesitate too long over deciding to send your story to the Editor, robert.renton@bigpond.com or on paper to 15 Buffalo Crescent, Manor Lakes, Vic. 3024.

struggled on until 1928 when they moved to Launceston.

This was a home where every ounce of energy was expended in survival. There were no books and the children were not encouraged to read (the opposite, in fact). My grandparents were suspicious of books and learning, believing that it would give their children ideas above their station. They believed firmly that you should 'know your place'.

It was when the family moved to Launceston and the children started school at the Wellington Square Practising School that mum's horizons began to widen. She was twelve by then and in her last year of primary school, but someone must have encouraged her and at the end of the year she won a scholarship to the high school and by some miracle her parents allowed her to go.

At the end of three years, she emerged with her Intermediate Certificate, passing in five subjects. It had not been easy going. But she got through, and a few years later one of her younger brothers did, too. So it's possible to survive and thrive even in the most dire economic circumstances.

There is another story running parallel to this that becomes important in my mother's life story. It was at Wellington Square that she became involved in the Paterson Street Methodist Church, an involvement that opened up a whole new life to her, even if she didn't know it then.

At Wellington Square mum met a woman called Sister Grace, a church worker who came every week for Scripture Union lessons. Sister Grace Bennell was based at the Paterson Street church and it was not long before mum and her friends spent their weekends there, helping with various church events, singing in the choir and teaching Sunday School. Her parents were nominally Church of England but they were not church goers and it was only mum and her younger brother Bert who made the commitment to a Christian way of life.

These were uncertain times and in 1932, a recent school leaver with better academic qualifications than anyone else in her family circle, mum found that the only work she could secure was at Paton & Baldwin's Woollen Mills, work she hated. Then she got a job as a shop assistant in a dress shop. She worked there for nine months and hated every minute—it was so boring, she told me once. There seemed no future in it. Surely there must be something better. What she did not mention—not once—was the fact that she worked as a live-in domestic servant for 18 months after the dress shop and this must have been the final straw. There really was no future if this was the only job she could secure.

STRANGER

As long as he could remember,
he was a stranger:
somehow different.
Flowers, rocks, birds,
spoke to him.

The shimmer of an electric blue
dragon fly,
wings translucent in the sun:
orange and black of the butterfly's
open shut wings against the sky.

Others did not hear,
voices of Aboriginal ancestors
in the trees,
beside the White Pioneers' graves.

Somehow he saw things
at an acute angle,
quite oblique.

One song spoke to his soul.
just one phrase,
the Stranger from Galilee.
He too was a stranger
from somewhere else.

*Ian Higgins, from* A Gallimaufry of Prose and Poetry, *2023 (Reproduced with permission)*

So, in August 1935, aged 19, she plucked up courage and visited her old headmaster and asked for his advice. He thought she'd make a good teacher, but she needed one more subject to qualify for teacher training and was too old to begin work as a junior teacher. However, the Department was starting a travelling dentist service in the north, so why not apply for the job.

This she did, using the minister at Paterson Street, the Superintendent of the Sunday School and a former State President of the Tasmanian Christian Endeavour Union as her referees and she got the job.

She began work almost straight away. It was while working with the dentist in Lilydale, Tasmania, that she met my father, who had been the Methodist Minister there since April 1935. They boarded at the same place and when dad left in April 1936 to take up an appointment at Ouyen they were engaged. Mum followed in late August, in time for their wedding at Healesville on 2 September 1936.

Life in the Parsonage

Life in Ouyen was a shock. It was remote in a way that places in Tasmania were not. It was dry, dusty and she was unprepared for life as a wife, let alone as a minister's wife. Not only that but she became pregnant straight away, so had to endure a long hot Mallee summer and cope with a first pregnancy far from friends and family.

By early 1937 they were on the move—to Byaduk near Hamilton—and it was there that my brother David was born in July 1937. There followed Boronia, then the war years when dad served in the RAAF (my brother Peter was born during those years). Then it was Scottsdale in northern Tasmania as a Presbyterian Home Missionary. A few years later dad returned to the Methodist ministry—at Yanac, then Kerang, Ballarat, Coburg and finally East Preston. We stayed seven years in some places, and as ours was a spread out family, my younger sister and I didn't share many childhood homes with our older brothers.

There are many geographical locations in our family's story and like many parsonage families there have been friendships that endured over the thirty-five years my mother spent as a minister's wife. As a child I had so many aunties and uncles who were what I imagine 'real life' aunts and uncles were like. We had no extended family in Victoria so these were the people who supported and listened and sometimes scolded. And from what my mother said, it was the same for her, especially as a young, inexperienced twenty year old who had no idea how to run a household, let alone live under the constant scrutiny of her husband's parishioners. It was 'life in a fishbowl', as one website I discovered while preparing for this piece dubbed it.

Yet she survived and eventually she thrived. There was no money, but when had there ever been? Stipends varied from place to place, but country parishioners were generous. I have mum's ledger book dating from the late 1940s and in it she has listed page after page of food gifts—cream, butter, bags of wheat, honey, grapes, marrows, milk. And so it goes. If a farmer killed a beast, some cuts of meat made their way to the parsonage. One man bought his wife a kerosene fridge and one for the parsonage, too. The garage owner next door at Yanac had electricity installed—and ran a lead through to the parsonage. Generosity at every quarter.

Then from the early 1950s, the family moved to Kerang and life took a different turn. My parents decided to add to their family. In November 1952, nine years since the birth of their last child, I was born and three years later my sister Helen was born. Eighteen years between youngest and oldest, although the oldest had already left home to make his own way in the world. Working outside the home was unacceptable at that time, but having boarders was not, so from the early 1950s until the mid 1960s, we had at least two, and often more, boarders living with us, mostly young men and in Ballarat mostly young Asian men who were studying at the School of Mines on the Colombo Plan. Our family life was greatly enriched by the boarders' presence, but the workload for mum must have been overwhelming at times.

I have mum's diaries from the middle 1950s onwards and it makes me tired just reading them. They're appointment diaries, so not designed to reflect or comment, but they tell a story of a woman juggling multiple responsibilities—wife, mother, daughter, sister, friend, housekeeper, minister's wife, drama group member (even with two babies she carved out time to pursue a

personal interest). Nothing new there, I suppose, but it's a dizzying array of commitments.

*At Missionary Exhibition, Wesley Hall, Ballarat, 1956. Left to right: Rev Colin White, Grace Griffin, Rev George Goldsmith*

We were at Ballarat from April 1956 to the end of 1961. David had left home, but Peter was home and at high school. I was at primary school and my little sister was a toddler who went to meetings with mum until she, too, was old enough to go to school. Household tasks were onerous, especially clothes washing—that old wood-fired copper was a trial. I don't think mum was at all chagrined when she (accidentally) set fire to the lean-to that housed it. Or when she returned from a visit to Tassie after a family bereavement to find an electric washing machine in place. (I'll bet she thanked Sister Lilian Mott who'd looked after us in her absence and who made such a to-do about the antiquated laundry arrangements that the 'new' machine miraculously appeared without argument.)

That was one side of life in the parsonage at Ballarat, but for mum there was also her life as a minister's wife. This was a life that took her out of the home and gave her the opportunity to speak in public, to show leadership and to bear witness to her beliefs through her words and actions beyond the home. She went to many, many women's meetings at numerous places in Ballarat itself and in the surrounding countryside Then there were her preaching engagements—at Sunday School Anniversaries and at regular Sunday services.

As someone who listened to both my parents preaching, I always had a sneaking suspicion that my mother was a better preacher—more at the level of those she was speaking to—but that's just an impression and I know that both parents were appreciated. At Coburg, for example, the whole extended family vibe continued. The younger members of the congregation (an active YAGs group—Young Adults Group) called them Mother and Father Griff with great affection and my mother signed off her column in the church magazine as 'Her Next Door' (The Lady of the Parsonage). I was a teenager by then and not so keen on

the open door policy that seemed to be a feature of our parsonage life, but looking back I see that this was something special, indeed.

As I said earlier, my mother was a preacher, too, and a talented one at that. I'm not sure how many minister's wives did preach in those years (I'm thinking of the 1950s and 1960s), but the range of topics she covered reflects her concerns: Lydia, The Small Woman, The Gift of Love, The Wesleys, The Mark of a Methodist, What does it mean to be a Christian?, Crazy Mixed Up Kids (July 1966), Marriage Guidance (mid-1960s when she was doing a Marriage Guidance course to become a counsellor).

*Members of the Pleasant Street congregation Mr J.A. Jelbart and Jeffrey Dunstan farewell Eric and Grace Griffin*

In June 1964, a year before she 'retired' from life as a minister's wife, my mother gave an address at a Ministers' Wives Association. As usual, her positive attitude is clear. Her message? "It is exciting to be a minister's wife. It is exciting to be a real person. It is a pity to be less. It can be painful, but it may surprise us what can happen when we

stop playing a role and become real persons in real situations. Relax! Be a real person! Lucky you, working amongst people—the friends we do not know!"

For her, the life was a rewarding one, but one that had to give way to a new and daunting challenge.

By the mid-1960s, with her youngest child newly diagnosed with a serious illness and the need for greater financial security, mum faced the displeasure of some of the Coburg congregation and left her (unpaid) job as Minister's wife for a paid office job at Myer in the city. Dad took over the day meetings—Ladies Guild, etc.—lured by the promise of delectable afternoon teas, no doubt. It seemed to work, but represented a change in family life that must have made it difficult for mum to be involved in dad's work at his final appointment at East Preston.

Once retired and living at Croydon, and after my sister's death aged seventeen in 1973, mum resumed her involvement with the church—local preaching, Council of Elders and its Chair on at least one occasion. She wasn't one to sit on the sidelines.

So what do I take away from this exploration? Well, here was a woman who as a teenager felt that there must be more to life and went out on a limb to find that life. She left her home, her family and moved to an unknown state that seemed as far away as the moon when she arrived in August 1936. She committed to a marriage with an older, university educated man, eleven years her senior, a man she hardly knew, but a man who had a worthwhile purpose to his life and a man whose work and personality allowed her the space to grow into the woman she became.

My aunt (her sister) once told me that mum was a timid, shy girl who wouldn't say boo to a fly. And as a teenager, full of bluster and busily espousing my views on the world, I felt her quietness was a weakness. My aunt and I were both wrong—it was her strength. She knew how to listen. She knew how to say stay silent when it was appropriate and to speak up when it was important to be heard. Her actions were never ill-considered, her words never hurtful.

When her dear friend Glory Atkins wrote John Wesley's words in mum's autograph book in March 1948, she pretty much summed up my mother's life:

Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can.
What more needs to be said?

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**Dr Cheryl Griffin** is an historian, a Fellow of the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and a member of the Uniting Church Historical Society of Victoria and Tasmania Managing Committee. She presented this paper to a Zoom audience of UCHS members in 2020 and it was subsequently published in the *Proceedings of the Uniting Church Historical Society, Synod of Victoria and* Tasmania, Volume 27, No. 1, December 2020.

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# History in the Archive

## Marissa Krajcar

The Uniting Church in Australia, Western Australia's Perth Archive, celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2022. From its beginnings in 1982, more than 60 people have contributed to the preservation of the history of the Uniting Church in WA. Preservation that provides important evidence of the Church's history, memory, and identity, while supporting its ongoing accountability and transparency.

Prior to the formation of the Archive in 1982, the Congregational, the Methodist and the Presbyterian Churches in Western Australia had been responsible for their own collections of records. Today, the Archive holds a significant collection of items, spanning from the earliest years of settlement in Western Australia, through to present day digital records that preserve our online presence.

The records that arrive at the Archive take the form of Marriage and Baptism registries, architectural plans, photographs, minutes of meetings, musical items, books, letters, autobiographies, artworks, church items, furniture, and personal items such as school records and religious certificates. Stained glass windows, memorial stones and once, even a set of dentures have all found their way to the Archive. All of these items are then assessed, cleaned, accessioned into our database and then either conserved in our Archive or transferred to the J.S Battye Library of West Australian History.

After 40 years of archiving the Uniting Church's Western Australian records, our collection is now one of the Battye Library's largest Private Collections.

I began as the UCWA's Archivist in 2021, following on from the remarkable Sheena Hesse, who had led the Archive for 18 years, through the relocation of premises, enormous growth of the collection and a strong presence in the Archive community. I come to the Archive with a History background and a strong interest in Western Australian history, having completed a History degree, some years ago now, that interestingly involved researching a church in Fremantle, Perth's port city, for a unit on Western Australian history. Interesting in that I had no way of realising at the time, that this was a foreshadow of my career work to come, decades later. The ten years that followed my study, were spent as a History teacher before a desire to focus increasingly on Western Australian history, rather than teaching, led me to Post Graduate study and the completion of a Diploma in Records Management and Archives. This formalised my processes and methods to preserve the history of the Uniting Church in Western Australia.

Currently the Archive has 10 volunteers who join us each week to work on projects of varying natures. They are a very dedicated and enthusiastic bunch. One of our volunteers celebrated an amazing 30 years of volunteer service to our Archive last year, with others reaching 25years, 20 years and 15 years of service. Their archival tasks include entering data from Baptism and Marriage registries, maintaining the Archive library, digitising photographs, managing people and place information, collating materials for the annual deposit to the Battye Library, transcribing audio records, answering research requests, locating documents, and the conservation of museum items.

There is always a sense of appreciation and gratitude in our Archive, for all those people who have contributed in some way to preserving the records of the Uniting Church. When a request comes through that is historical and perhaps personal or familial, and which once found, acquaints, or reunites someone with a record that that in turn solves a puzzle, or enlightens one on a time or a person long passed, then our work in Archive has meaning and value and ensures that we are best placed to face the future. To be involved in connecting people today, to the people and events of the past, is what makes the Uniting Church Archive such an interesting and enjoyable place to be.#

*Marissa Krajcar is the Archives Coordinator at the Uniting Church in Western Australia.*

## AN INVITATION…

The Uniting Church Historical Society of Victoria and Tasmania invites you to join our 2023 programs via Zoom or in person, if you happen to live in Victoria.

**Sunday 4 June: 2pm "Hymns of the Nineteenth Century"**

Rev Dr D'Arcy Wood will follow-up his remarkably popular session earlier this year and present hymns from the golden age of hymnody. This event includes your participation and you are encouraged to join the singing – hymn books provided. This will be held in the Stonnington Community Church, 59 Burke Road, East Malvern and will also be broadcast by Zoom.

**Sunday 6 August: 2pm "Victorian Methodism"**

Professor Graeme Davison will talk about his most recent book which explores more of his family history and its close involvement in Methodism. This is a follow-on to his book 'Lost Relations' and explores the other side of his family. This will be held in St John's Uniting Church, cnr Buckley Street and Mount Alexander Road, Essendon and will also be broadcast by Zoom.

**Tuesday 19 September: 10am Church tour in Geelong (In-person activity)**

Led by Geoff Paterson (RSVP is essential — 0447 320 398). The three churches being visited are Christ Church (Anglican); St Mary's Roman Catholic; Wesley Uniting Church. More details will be available later but please plan a BYO lunch with beverages provided. Transport will be available from Geelong Station.

**You will need to contact Robert Renton to receive the login details.**

**Robert Renton (robert.renton@bigpond.com).**

# HIGHLANDER REACTION IN NEW SOUTH WALES TO ALLEGED ERASTIANISM IN THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

## Barry Bridges

The British monarchs and much of the Scottish aristocracy had a strong dislike for the Scottish Church as an instrument for Presbyterian social levelling. It promoted ability and effort too much for those who wanted personal significance to depend upon birth. The system of patronage was designed to put into parishes 'Moderate' clergy, loyal to crown and laird. To this extent there was a decided Erastian[1] element in arrangements—as there was in the contemporary Church of England.

The Moderate party controlled the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland until early in the nineteenth century.

Expansion of population in the Lowlands made the number of parishioners in some charges unworkably large. Instead of subdividing parishes, subsidiary 'chapels-of-ease' were built within parishes. The ministers of chapels at first had no seats in church courts. When this was changed and they were given seats, the Evangelical party could sometimes muster a majority. Evangelicals favoured filling vacant ministries by calls from the people, sometimes rejecting a candidate presented by a patron. The 1830s saw the onset of serious conflict as Moderates defended the rights of patrons in the civil courts, bringing forth strong Evangelical accusations of Erastianism.

Evangelicals asserted that in appealing in the Court of Session (Scotland's supreme court) Moderates were recognising the state and its secular courts as in control in matters of religion: the sin of Erastianism. However, appeals were based on asking the Court of Session to require Church of Scotland judicatories to make decisions which were in accord with the Church's own laws. On this account it seems to me that the charge of Erastianism fails.

According to the Rev. John Dunmore Lang, in the early 1840s about half of the New South Wales Presbyterian population derived from Scottish Dissenting denominations. In addition, there were Ulster Presbyterians and adhering Congregationalists and Baptists in area where these denominations could not maintain a formal presence. For these people the conflict between factions in the Church of Scotland was irrelevant. Its importation to New South Wales was divisive and weakening as well as irrelevant. The state in New South Wales did not intrude into ecclesiastical matters and had ceased for all denominations to extend state aid to incoming clergy and church building.

It was a core problem that in the period to the formation of the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales in 1865 no minister serving in New South Wales was native born and only one locally trained. The great majority of them arrived from Scotland in the period of high conflict and many were imbued with Scottish partisan attitudes. Because most of the colony's congregations were very small and heterogeneous in composition minister contentions over external matters appeared self-indulgent.

For much of the eighteenth century the religious outlook in Highland Scotland was divided between Roman Catholicism, Presbyterianism and pagan cults. Gaelic, the language of the people, was only beginning to be put into written form. Evangelicalism came late to the Highlands, although the Church of Scotland asserted that it was the proper sphere for such missionary activity that it could afford financially. Translation of the Bible began late. It was not until 1828 that there was a Gaelic

A REMINDER… 2023 SUBSCRIPTIONS ARE NOW DUE — $25:
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version of the whole Bible available at a price that most people could afford.

The Highlanders who came to New South Wales were frequently late converts and fanatical adherents to a very narrow puritanical form of evangelical Presbyterianism. This religion became the focus for their lives as the world they knew crumbled as they were displaced from the land by the clearances. Gaelic poetry of the time is reported to encapsulate their great bitterness. The Gaels' religion provided the consolation of hope of compensation for their earthly troubles in heaven.

In 1837 the first shipload of starving Highlanders from the Isle of Skye arrived in Sydney aboard the *Midlothian*. These people were bounty immigrants —their passages were paid by colonists on condition of taking employment on arrival. As a group they refused to accept the obligation. They claimed that they had been promised that they could settle together. It is likely that this promise was made by John Dunmore Lang without any authority to do so. Ultimately, the colonial government permitted the Highlanders to settle as tenants on smaller leases on the estate of Andrew Lang in the Maitland district.

Also on the *Midlothian* was the Rev. William McIntyre, who made the voyage as chaplain to his fellow Gaels. McIntyre was able, intent always on dominating, and an extreme exponent of the Highlanders version of evangelical Presbyterianism. McIntyre was to remain the most significant Highlander in New South Wales until his death in 1870. From the start McIntyre denounced Moderates as Erastian sinners no genuine Presbyterians could abide.

Andrew Lang's Highlander tenants attempted to follow their old life as cattle herders. Their leases were far too small for this to be practicable. The Highlanders annoyed neighbours by spending much of their time recovering cattle which had strayed onto their properties.

Subsequently, the Highlanders took to clearing leases further up the Hunter Valley. They saved enough money to buy smaller properties along the banks of norther coastal rivers where they were being settled. The banks of the Clarence River between Grafton and McLean came to have the highest concentration of Highlanders in Australia.

The small Gaelic communities in the Hunter Valley and northern rivers were sufficiently concentrated to form small congregations, build small weatherboard churches and continue to live in their old manner. The church, expounding the Highlands version of Presbyterianism, was the focus for communal life.

Later, a significant number of Highlanders became tenants on the great Shoalhaven estate of the Fife-born magnate, Alexander Berry. They had the services of the Rev. William Grant, who had 'gone out' in the Scottish Disruption and, although a Lowlander, was fluent in Gaelic. He considered himself a friend of McIntyre. After Berry's death in 1873 his brother David inherited the estate. He was so inefficient in making leases that Highlander tenants were able to raise enough money by the sale of remaining periods of their leases to purchase farms on the northern rivers and expand the Gael population there.

News of the Disruption of the Church of Scotland in May of 1843 did not reach Sydney in time for it to be considered at the annual meeting of the Synod of Australia in October. Ministers were divided on the proper response. Factions began lobbying. The Rev. John McGarvie, a Moderate, persuaded the Church of Scotland to secure British government agreement to recognise only the colonial body connected to the Established Church of Scotland, and limit any continuing state aid to its members. By this means McGarvie succeeded in keeping most of the Synod of Australia members in line. McIntyre urged that it was essential to reject Erastians and associate with the Free Church of Scotland.

There existed in Sydney a small congregation made up of people who had deserted McGarvie and of Highlanders who were resident in Sydney. McIntyre insisted that its minister, the Rev. Thomas Mowbray, must declare for the Free Church. Mowbray was one of two minister holding to the line that it was the Synod's duty to preserve its own peace and unity by not getting involved in extraneous matters.

McIntyre called on the Highlands to secede. In doing so they rendered the congregation no longer viable and punished Mowbray by destruction of his ministry there. This event showed McIntyre the potency of organising a united Highlander response. He was to use it on

occasion to demonstrate his ecclesiastical importance.

The crunch came at the annual meeting of the Synod of Australia in October 1846 when that body disrupted. McIntyre and the Rev. John Tait formed the Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia (PCEA) in friendly association with the Free Church of Scotland. McIntyre always insisted that the PCEA was an independent church, as it had to be to conform to the Presbyterian polity. However, it took its formularies verbatim from the Free Church, following its practices and recruited new ministers only from the Free Church. Colonists in general came to view the PCEA as an integral part of the Free Church of Scotland, despite McIntyre's efforts to assert that it was an indigenous church.

Virtually all the Highlanders aligned themselves with the PCEA. For them, the disruption of the synod was an opportunity to show moral superiority. They, almost alone, were remaining faithful to God and God's church. They would qualify for a place in heaven and receive solace for their woes in the current life.

Highlander ministers and the more ardent of their supporters when reporting the state of Presbyterianism in New South Wales insisted that the PCEA was the only Presbyterian church. In one statement it was said that theirs was the *only* Presbyterian church in the capital. Actually, there were five. Similarly, when giving the number of Presbyterians they counted only people adhering to their congregations. The Rev. Alan McIntyre (older brother of William) took to refusing the sacrament to anyone having any dealings, however slight, with a non-PCEA Presbyterian. ('Other sinners' were apparently less guilty, not having had the same opportunities to see the light.)

From 1846 most lay people sat at the feet of the nearest settled minister, regardless of his synodal allegiance. Normally churches were so far apart that this was a requirement for attending church.

It is agreed on all sides that the laity as a whole disapproved of the minister division and the infighting which lowered esteem for Presbyterians in the general community, and was achieving nothing positive. In the decades of division there were some ministers who from their location might have participated in the synod's meetings and affairs but did not do so. This invites a suspicion that they agreed with the laity in deploring the clerical divisions and wanted no part of them. A number of ministers arriving late in the period of the division declined to join any ecclesiastical body. However, they said they would join a united church—which, in 1865, they did.

After 1846 the Synod of Eastern Australia expanded at a greater rate than the Synod of Australia. Most of its incoming ministers were Lowlanders. The Free Church of Scotland "Australia Letters" in the National Library of Scotland and the Kinross Papers in the National Library of Australia show graphically the dislike and disdain for Highland ministers felt by those Lowlander ministers who were their closest associates.

In the 1850s leading figures in the Established and Free Churches of Scotland came to a realisation that they had inflicted great damage on colonial churches by insisting that they take sides over the Disruption. Moreover, these churches could no longer supply new ministers in anything like the number required. The leaders took to urging reunion on colonial churches wherever an acceptable basis could be agreed upon.

In 1849 the Rev. Alexander Salmon arrived in Sydney to be the PCEA minister in the capital. Salmon was a personal friend of the Rev. Dr John Bonar, convenor of the Free Church of Scotland Colonial Committee. Salmon seems to have believed that he had been sent out to lead the PCEA. William McIntyre was determined to remain the leading figure in the church that he had founded and hitherto controlled. The two men became rivals on an ongoing basis, with disruptive effect in the synod.

In 1854–1855 McIntyre returned to Scotland as commissioner of the PCEA for a recruiting drive. He was coolly received and given little assistance. Had McIntyre not persuaded two of his brothers and a non-Gaelic-speaking nephew by marriage to return to Sydney with him his trip would have been a complete failure.

McIntyre continued to inveigh against 'Erastians' as people with whom one should have no dealings. Bonar adopted a policy of altering the balance of opinion in the PCEA. He sent out as minister recruits Lowlanders whom he felt that he could rely on to support union.

William McIntyre could not go into a general union without becoming a much disliked member with little influence. He had for so long and so consistently worked to imbue his Highlander following with a fear of Erastianism and belief that the Synod of Australia ministers were Erastians that they would not consider union. He had made himself a prisoner of his following.

During long drawn out negotiations for union extending over a period of years McIntyre professed willingness to enter a union if a proper basis could be agreed upon. However, whenever concessions were made to him he would shift his ground. McIntyre seemed to be relying on a general desire to bring in the Highlanders and a hope that by drawing out proceedings the Synod of Australia would in frustration end negotiations. Ultimately, McIntyre insisted that the Synod of Australia ministers must confess sin in associating with the Erastian Established Church of Scotland and refuse any further dealings with it. This made it quite clear that McIntyre had never really been willing to enter a union. It was time to proceed to form a new church without the Highlanders.

It can be argued that the small number of preservers of the continuing PCEA in 1864 were justified by later developments. The PCEA, the oldest of Australian Presbyterian churches, has preserved the doctrinal orthodoxy of the historic Scottish church. Union required leaving as open questions matters upon which agreement could not be achieved, and opened the way to extreme laxity.

After the decision in 1864 to form the Presbyterian Church of New South Wales and the refusal of the PCEA rump to join, the Free Church of Scotland refused to have any further dealings with it. #

[1] Erastian— a supporter of the doctrine that the state should have supremacy over the Church in ecclesiastical matters (wrongly attributed to Erastus).

*Dr Barry Bridges is now retired after a lifetime of education in schools and universities. He has researched and written extensively about the Presbyterian Church in New South Wales.*

## INNER STRENGTH

If you can start the day without caffeine or pep pills,

if you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains,

If you can resist complaining and boring people with your troubles,

If you can eat the same food everyday and be grateful for it,

If you can understand when loved ones are too busy to give you time,

If you can overlook when people take things out on you when, through no fault of yours, something goes wrong,

If you can take criticism and blame without resentment,

If you can face the world without lies and deceit,

If you can conquer tension without medical help,

If you can relax without liquor,

If you can sleep without the aid of drugs,

If you can do all these things,

Then you are probably the family dog.

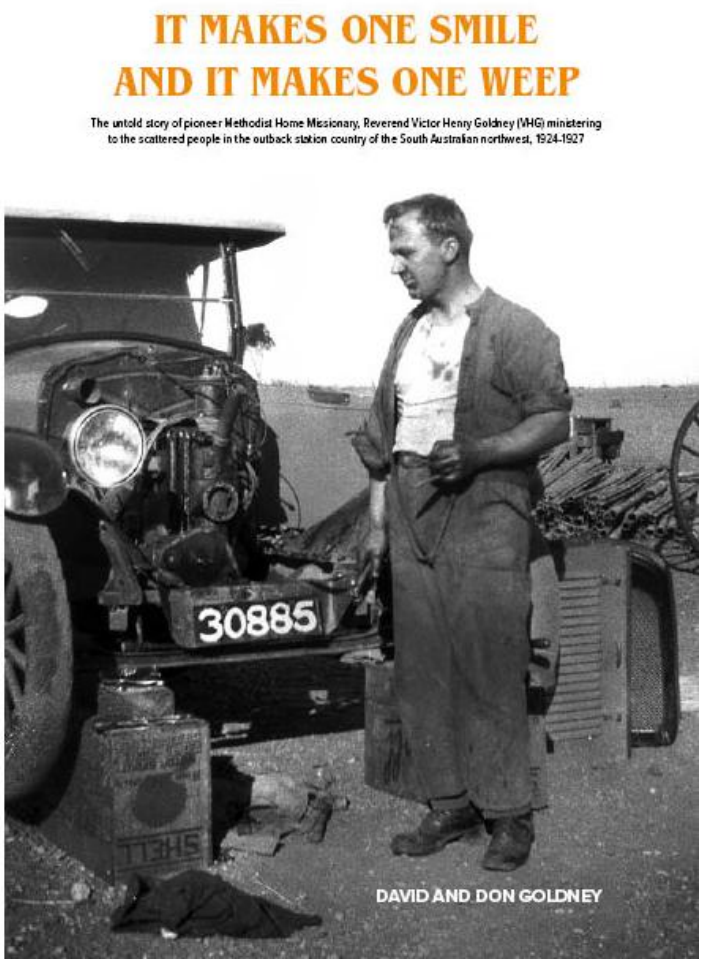
WOOF!

# Review

David and Don Goldney, *It Makes One Smile And It Makes One Weep: the untold story of pioneer Methodist Home Missionary, Reverend Victor Henry Goldney (VHG) ministering to the scattered people in the outback station country of the South Australian northwest, 1924-1927* (Bathurst, NSW: Cenwest Environmental Services, 2022)

Paperback, 197 pp. (A4 format), maps, photographs, timeline, bibliography, RRP $39

*Review by Dr Judith Raftery, President, Uniting Church South Australia History Society*




Many readers will find a great deal to interest and engage them in this carefully researched book, written by brothers David Goldney and Don Goldney, especially perhaps if they are South Australians and former Methodists. *It Makes One Smile and It Makes One Weep* is much more than a comprehensive and affectionate account of the life and ministry of their father, Rev. Victor Henry Goldney, 1891–1972, though it is certainly that. While it contains sufficient detail to allow the reader to trace many aspects of Goldney's family life, war service, theological training leading to ordination in 1920, circuit ministries and leadership in numerous denominational and community organisations up to his retirement in 1960, its primary focus is his work as a pioneering outback Home Missioner in the 1920s.

The book sets Goldney's personal story in several appropriate contexts. It deftly sketches the "spiritual landscape of Methodism" that shaped him during his formative years, and notes the influence on his thinking of key Methodist leaders, especially Dr William Torr, head of the Methodist Training College at Brighton, who recognised and encouraged Goldney's talents and potential. It provides insight into the theological and pastoral rationale for the development of Home Mission activity within Methodism in the 1920s as well as into the mechanics of how it worked. There is a strong focus on the multi-skilled, knockabout nature of Home Mission work, and on Goldney's supreme fitness for this role. His story reveals both the mundane aspects and hard slog of outback Home Mission work—there is a whole chapter devoted to the technical challenges of his relationship with his 1924 Chevrolet Roadster, "the fiery gospel chariot", which he relied upon to traverse the vast distances of the Northwest Mission to which he was appointed as the inaugural missioner in 1924 – as well as the pastoral challenges associated with preaching the gospel in the bush.

In September 1924 VHG shared some of his early frustrations and insights about his ministry with readers of the Methodist weekly, the *Australian Christian Commonwealth (ACC)*. He wrote: "Now that shearing has begun in earnest, I am confronted with presenting the Message of Christ in the most acceptable manner to. . . men whose daily labour drains nearly every ounce of energy". He had "no desire to argue that the preacher can ever be dispensed with", but revealed his capacity for empathy with people whose lives differed significantly from his own: "When men are. . .too tired, or too prejudiced or too something else to listen to a sermon", he discovered that "they will

gladly take the Sankey's (hymn book) and sing with vigour for an hour or more". The "power of music and song", he contended, "has a wonderful way of rousing men to new interests and new thoughts of God".[i] Years later, when he had returned to less remote sites of ministry, he recalled the complex attractions of life in the outback: "The north-west has a lure all of its own. It draws the bushman like a magnet. It is certainly not the ease or comfort! It is a land of hard work and hard facts—it is the element of uncertainty which appeals to the spirit of adventure".[ii] This assessment echoes that of other Home Missionaries who, while not denying its down-to-earth challenges, also wrote, sometimes in florid language, of its romance, glory and terror.[iii]

The area covered by the North West Mission was, of course, Indigenous country, home to a significant population of Indigenous peoples. In an honest and measured chapter that has benefited from appropriate consultation with other scholars, David and Don Goldney acknowledge that this presented their father with "a cross-cultural experience for which he was ill-equipped". Although he was, in their judgement, "very much a pastor who sought the common good", and despite his spending the years 1924–1927 in closer contact with Indigenous people than did many other Australians, he remained "like most Australians of his generation. . .largely ignorant about Aboriginal peoples and kept so, as the great Australian silence embraced him and his Methodist peers".[iv] In the context of this silence, and of the truths that still wait to be told in relation to church attitudes and actions towards Indigenous people at that time, the Goldneys' analysis of their father's role is of considerable value.

Other chapters deal with the many challenges and opportunities of the outback Home Missioner's life, and in the process present a fascinating survey of the geography, social and economic conditions, patterns of settlement and employment, and technological advances of rural South Australia in the 1920s. The text is supplemented by many excellent maps and photographs, a timeline of Goldney's life and ministries, and a detailed and helpfully ordered bibliography. All of this contributes greatly to the value of this book, which has been handsomely designed and printed by Openbook Howden, St Mary's, South Australia.#

[i] David and Don Goldney, *It Makes One Smile And It Makes One Weep: the untold story of pioneer Methodist Home Missionary, Reverend Victor Henry Goldney*. (Bathurst, NSW: Cenwest Environmental Services, 2022), 60

[ii] VH Goldney, *Australian Christian Commonwealth*, 16 June 1933, 12

[iii] See, for example, G.Bellamy Stribley, 'The Glory and the Terror of the Bush', *Australian Christian Commonwealth*, 7 September 1923, 7

[iv] Goldney and Goldney, chapter 5, 'Venturing into the Great Australian Silence', pp.64–83. The chapter heading refers to William Stanner's influential ABC Boyer Lecture, *After the Dreaming* (Sydney: Australian Broadcasting Commission, 1969).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