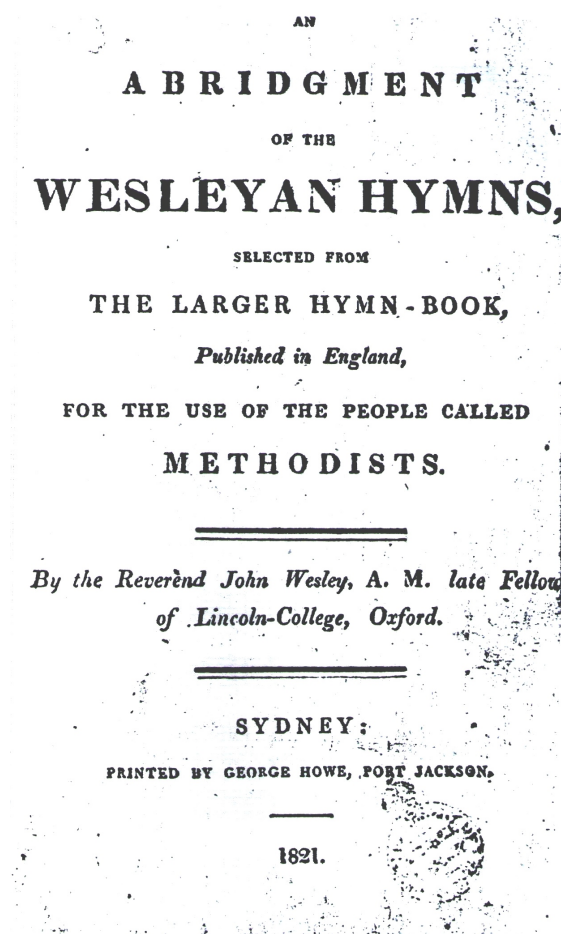


# Uniting Church History and Heritage

Uniting Church National History Society: Vol. 3 No. 3 September 2021

## A Wesleyan Hymn Book



### Church history post-pandemic?

This edition has been prepared at a time when New South Wales and Victoria are entering the final weeks of long lockdowns and are trying to anticipate what it will mean to be 'living with Covid19'. What will future church historians be writing about regarding the effects of the pandemic, the lockdowns and the mandatory vaccinations on churches and their congregations? How has the church responded to these unprecedented conditions, challenges and expectations of its people, of the community? It's time to reflect on these questions and perhaps write some history. (Robert Renton)

## The Society

We have been pleased to welcome two new members of the UC National History Society's board.

**Lauren Merritt** is a wife, mother of four adult daughters, with one new granddaughter, and she began working with Darwin Memorial Uniting Church in January 2016 as their



Community Engagement Pastor. In her role she is privileged to be able to share the history story of our church and listen to peoples' stories who come to visit. She was co-opted to the Board so that she can be involved in the planning of the conference in Darwin in 2023.

**Richard La'Brooy** is a Pastor in the Uniting Church and is currently ministering as the College Chaplain at Newington College in Sydney. He has grown up in the Uniting Church and has served on many



boards and committees. He is currently a member of the Assembly Standing Committee. He is also a History teacher, and as an historian as well as a religious practitioner he is interested in the study of church history, in particular Uniting Church history and the history of its predecessor churches. A particular focus of his is how our history might speak into the current context and help shape the future direction of the Church.

## Words from the President



New South Wales has a new Premier in Dominic Perrottet and much has been said in the media about his 'conservative' religious beliefs. Historically, religion has not figured prominently in the public profiles of Australian politicians, but in more recent times it appears to have become a point of contention. The Pentecostalism of Prime Minister Scott Morrison has given rise to a good deal of unfounded hysteria about the country being 'run by a religious cult,' and Tony Abbott once felt called upon to insist that he had never allowed a single one of his religious beliefs to influence his policy making decisions. This was a rather odd way of putting things (some of us wish he had allowed them a little *more*

influence, at least in certain directions) but was presumably prompted by the concern that he might use the Prime Ministerial office to foist his own religious convictions on to an unwilling public.

I have recently been researching the influence of John Wesley's thought on Australasia, Oceania and Asia, part of which has included a consideration of Wesley's influence on politics. Wesley died three years after the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay, and what little interest he showed in the Southern World was marked by some degree of incredulity. In November 1773 he read James Cook's account of his voyage to the Pacific and encountered a description of Tahitians 'coupling together' under an open sky. This was dismissed as fantasy in the mode of the utopian novel, *Robinson Crusoe*. In his 1783 sermon, 'The General Spread of the Gospel' he described the people of 'the South Seas' as 'heathens of the basest sort, many of them inferior to the beasts of the field'. Europeans fared little better in Wesley's exaggerated language, being deemed as far away from the character of Christ 'as hell is from heaven'. Thankfully, this dismissiveness was not reciprocated, and the impact of John Wesley and his thought has been enthusiastically embraced throughout the Asia-Pacific world of which Australia is a part.

The early Australian Labor Party (whose origins date to the 1890s) was heavily represented by Methodists which reflects the pattern found in Britain at least from the age of the Chartist reforms. Of Australian Prime Ministers, very few have been devoutly religious. Though the Presbyterian Robert Menzies (1894–1978) had some involvement with Methodism in his childhood, and John Howard (b. 1939) was raised Methodist, there is nothing to suggest that John Wesley's thought meant anything to either of them. The most theologically literate Australian prime minister has been the Labor PM, Kevin Rudd. In a widely read 2006 essay on 'Faith in Politics' he referred to early Christian martyrs, to Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Luther, Thomas More, Stanley Hauerwas and, of course, to Jesus but not to John Wesley. He did, however, quote Wesley on the 'world parish' to explain his internationalist perspective in a 2010 speech to the Australian Christian Lobby only weeks before he was ousted in a coup led by his Labor Party colleagues.

The only committed lifelong Methodist to hold the office was Joseph Cook (1860–1947) who was prime minister from 1913–1914. Cook had been a Staffordshire Primitive Methodist before emigrating to Australia around 1885. He was elected leader of the Parliamentary Labor Party in October 1893 but had moved in a decidedly more conservative political direction before he was elected a Liberal Party PM. According to F.K. Crowley in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry on Cook, he was 'hard-working, physically tireless and shrewd ... incisive and combative in debate, with a thorough grasp of parliamentary manoeuvring, but he could be irascible and was always humourless.' This description coincidentally resembles aspects of John Wesley's character, although Wesley had a wicked sense of humour most often expressed in sarcasm.

Thought not often invoked in political discourse, theological appropriation of Wesley in Australia has been far more significant. Edward H. Sugden (1854–1935), the first Master of Queen's College in the University of Melbourne, and an important civic figure, was a keen collector of first editions of Wesley's sermons. His critical edition of Wesley's *Standard Sermons* first appeared in 1921 and remained in print throughout the twentieth century. Sugden's annotations are still very valuable, however, in their attempt to connect Wesley's eighteenth-century ideas to modern (and 'modernist') directions in theology. Sugden also wrote a short booklet on *Wesley's Influence upon Australia*. Its sixteen pages focus upon Australian

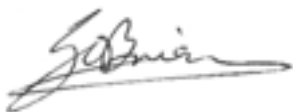
Methodism's ecumenical spirit, its social and educational activities and its missionary outreach. There is a characteristically Wesleyan rhetorical flourish in Sugden's expression of hope that 'ere long all the Protestant churches may be reunited in organisation, as they are in faith and love.'

One of the trends in the post-WWII period in Australia was a greater orientation toward the United States, notwithstanding continued strong ties to British culture and institutions. One expression of this in Australian Methodism was an increasing number of intellectually gifted church leaders completing their doctorates in American universities. Of all those who engaged seriously with John Wesley's thought none did so more extensively than Colin Williams, whose *John Wesley's Theology Today* (1960) predated the work of Albert Outler, both in stressing the importance of Wesley as a theologian and in describing the elements of what would later be dubbed "the Wesleyan Quadrilateral" of Scripture, Reason, Tradition and Experience. Williams insisted that Wesley should be taken seriously as a theologian, not just as an evangelist or a preacher, and also that his work was significant for Methodism's ecumenical future.

The combination of evangelism and social justice in the ministry of Alan Walker (1911–2003) evidences characteristically Wesleyan features applied directly to the Australian context. Like Wesley, Walker was an evangelist with a keen social conscience, who experienced a moment of religious awakening that propelled him into a mission designed to awaken the church and the nation to its spiritual need. Walker's left-wing politics, his pacifism, anti-nuclear, anti-apartheid, and anti-Vietnam war activism were unusual for an evangelical. His combination of the old school passion of the Methodist preacher with radical social activism, and his utilisation of the mass media in the cause of the Gospel created a potent mix that won him many admirers but also many detractors due to a Cold War suspicion of anything that leaned in a Communist direction.

Wesleyan Christianity is booming in some areas of the Asia-Pacific region, though it has receded in settler societies such as Australia and New Zealand. Diaspora Methodist communities from Asia and the Pacific are often the healthiest and largest of the congregations in their host countries. In spite of this, the Uniting Church has found it difficult to shift from seeing CALD (Culturally and Linguistically Diverse) congregations as needing assistance and recognition, to seeing them as leading the way on church renewal. The election of the Rev. Charissa Suli, a second-generation Tongan leader, as President-Elect of the Uniting Church (for the term 2024–2027) is a positive sign in a decolonising direction. Suli is the youngest person and the first person of colour to serve in the role. As the centre of gravity has shifted to the Global South it continues to be clear that the future church will not be European but Asian, African, Latin American, and Pacifika. Methodists have a way of being able to renew themselves, not only through revivalism but also through the application of long-standing social principles and a world-facing engagement built on its optimism of grace. This aspect of the Uniting Church's DNA is a rich resource and indications are that Wesley's thought will continue to shape the southernmost portions of the world parish well into the future.

Yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Glen O'Brien', with a stylized, flowing script.

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

## Australia's first hymn book

Kelvin Hastie

### British background

The preface to the 1933 edition of *The Methodist Hymn Book* states that "Methodism was born in song. Charles Wesley wrote the first hymns of the Evangelical Revival during the great Whitsuntide of 1738 when he and his brother were "filled with the Spirit and from that time on the Methodists have never ceased to sing".<sup>1</sup>

Although John Wesley had produced a hymn book as early as 1738, it was the so-called "Large Hymn Book" (*A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists*) of 1780 that became the most commonly used volume among Methodists in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries.<sup>2</sup> This volume contained texts only, with the greatest number coming from the pen of Charles Wesley. Other authors were represented, including Isaac Watts and John Wesley, the latter contributing a number of translations from German sources alongside his own writings.

Tunes used by British Methodist came from a wide variety of sources, including existing metrical psalm tunes used in the Church of England, German chorale tunes, contemporary folk song tunes, popular 'repeating' tunes (featuring the repetition and interplay of vocal lines) and adaptations of melodies taken from oratorios, operas and well-known instrumental pieces. Not all such tunes met the approval of Methodist preachers, so in 1742 John Wesley arranged for the publication of a 36-page collection of melodies (without harmonies) entitled *A Collection of Tunes, Set to Music, as they are commonly sung at the Foundery*. John Wesley later published *Select Hymns with Tunes Annexed: Designed chiefly for the use of the People called Methodists* (1761) and *Sacred Harmony* (1780).<sup>3</sup>

Hymns were sung according to the 'lining out' method, whereby a preacher, or appointed precentor, after announcing the tune and reading out the first two lines, would sound a gathering note with the assistance of a tuning fork or pitch pipe. The congregation would then respond in kind with the same words sung. Choirs and instruments were discouraged, as they were viewed as a distraction from the fervour of congregational

song. After years of fierce debate in the late eighteenth century, the British Conference finally regulated their use, delegating final authority to local Superintendent Ministers.<sup>4</sup>

### Developments in New South Wales

In 1812 laymen formed the first Methodist class meetings in Sydney and Windsor and within a decade five ministers (Samuel Leigh, Walter Lawry, Benjamin Carvosso, Ralph Mansfield and William Walker) were preaching in the fledgling colony. The first chapel was opened at Castlereigh in 1817, followed by those at Windsor, The Rocks (Prince Street), Sydney (Macquarie Street) and Parramatta.<sup>5</sup> At these locations, and also in less formal settings, worship comprised powerful sermons, Bible readings, extempore prayer and hymn singing.

Musical activity in New South Wales reflected the above pattern right through to the mid-1840s, with the Rev. Walter Lawry's account of the opening of the chapel at Windsor in 1818 providing an idea of the scale of activity:

I rode up from Sydney in company with Mr. Leigh and Miss Hassall of Parramatta. At 5 o'clock in the evening we laid the foundation ... the congregation was about 100 souls. I began by singing, reading a Chapter and praying. Mr. Leigh then delivered a lively sermon from the appropriate text, Ezra, 3-11.

After Mr. Leigh had finished, I sung [sic] a hymn and read my text, Exodus 25-8: "Let the people make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them."

So we lifted up our voices and rejoiced with singing.<sup>6</sup>

One of the early converts was Robert Howe (1795–1829), whose father George Howe (1869–1821) had been transported to the colony in 1800 after a conviction for shoplifting in Alcester.<sup>7</sup> George Howe had been trained as a printer and soon after arrival in Sydney was appointed government printer. In 1802 he issued the first book to be published in Australia and in the following year produced the first newspaper, *The Sydney Gazette and New South Wales Advertiser*. Well educated and articulate, he operated a stationery store and tutored in reading, writing and grammar. Robert assisted



AN  
**ABRIDGMENT**  
 OF THE  
**WESLEYAN HYMNS,**  
 SELECTED FROM  
 THE LARGER HYMN-BOOK,  
*Published in England,*  
 FOR THE USE OF THE PEOPLE CALLED  
**METHODISTS.**

By the Reverend John Wesley, A. M. late Fellow  
 of Lincoln-College, Oxford.

SYDNEY:  
 PRINTED BY GEORGE HOWE, FORT JACKSON.

1821.

**ADVERTISEMENT.**

**I**T has been long a subject of regret, that the great scarcity of Hymn-Books in this Colony, particularly in the interior Towns and Districts, has given rise to many serious inconveniences among the Worshippers of God in the Wesleyan Congregations. Nor would the evil meet with an adequate remedy, even were the large Hymn Books for sale sufficiently abundant; as their PRICE would place them beyond the reach of many sincere Christians.

To obviate these inconveniences, and to meet the large and increasing demands of their Congregations, the Wesleyan Missionaries have been induced to make, from the larger Book, A SELECTION, which, though it must unavoidably preclude several admirable Hymns contained in the original Work, will, it is hoped, be found replete at once with poetic elegance, and with devotional fervour. The humbleness of its price will put it within the reach of the poor; and its general adoption in all the Congregations in the interior, will make its public utility equal to that of a larger and more expensive edition.

The Missionaries deem it unnecessary to give this little Assistant to **JEHOVAH'S WORSHIP** any other recommendation than that of earnestly commending it, with every other effort for the cause of Zion, to the acceptance and blessing of HIM, to whom, ultimately, "every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess."

Sydney, New South Wales, }  
 January 1, 1821. }

his father in the printing business and joined a group of Sydney Methodists after experiencing a spiritual awakening in 1820.

After his conversion, Robert Howe doubtless looked for ways in which he could use his talents to advance the Methodist cause through the printed word. In 1821 he published the first periodical printed in Australia, *The Australian Magazine; or Compendium of Religious, Literary and Miscellaneous Intelligence*.<sup>8</sup> It was in that year that his father printed *An Abridgment of the Wesleyan Hymns, selected from the Larger Hymn-Book, Published in England, for the Use of the People Called Methodists*.

The frontispiece and editorial advertisement of this volume (see left) give a clear picture of the reasons for the publication, notably the scarcity and cost of the 1780 hymn book, coupled with a desire to meet local needs and to promote devotional fervour. Comprising 130 pages, this small volume commenced with ten verses of Charles Wesley's "O for a thousand tongues to sing" (eight being reprinted - see next page).

The hymns were set out according to the pattern established in the 1780 volume which, according to John Wesley, were not "carelessly jumbled together, but carefully ranged under proper heads, according to the experience of real Christians. So that this book is, in effect, a little body of experimental and practical divinity."<sup>9</sup> As a result, "Part First: Section I" was entitled "Exhorting Sinners to Return to God", followed by a further six sections, with "Part Second" describing both formal and inward religion, "Part Third" dealing with repentance, "Part Fourth" dealing with the Christian life and "Part Fifth" intended for the society meeting. The metre of each hymn is listed above each hymn, to allow the preacher to select a suitable matching tune, so "O for a thousand tongues to sing" is listed as C.M. (common metre, or 8.6. 8.6).<sup>10</sup>

The Sydney volume obviously proved its worth, as reported by The Revd Benjamin Carvosso, when he wrote to the Wesleyan Missionary Committee in 1821:

WINDSOR, Sunday ... when at Emu [Plains] a few weeks ago I left two or three of our abridged Hymn Books for the benefit [sic] of the prisoners who might be inclined to use

## AN ABRIDGMENT, &amp;c.

—000000—

SECTION I. *Exhorting Sinners.*

## HYMN I. [C. M.]

- 1 **O** FOR a thousand tongues to sing  
My great REDEEMER'S praise !  
The glories of my GOD and KING,  
The triumphs of his grace !
- 2 My gracious MASTER, and my GOD,  
Assist me to proclaim,  
To spread through all the earth abroad,  
The honours of thy Name.
- 3 JESUS ! the Name that charms our fears,  
That bids our sorrows cease :  
'Tis music in the sinner's ears ;  
'Tis life, and health, and peace.
- 4 He breaks the pow'r of cancell'd sin,  
He sets the prisoner free :  
His blood can make the foulest clean ;  
His blood avail'd for me.
- 5 He speaks,—and listening to his voice,  
New life the dead receive ;  
The mournful, broken hearts rejoice ;  
The humble poor believe.
- 6 Hear him, ye deaf ; his praise, ye dumb,  
Your loosen'd tongues employ ;  
Ye blind, behold your Saviour come,  
And leap, ye lame, for joy !
- 8 See all your sins on Jesus laid :  
The LAMB of GOD was slain,  
His soul was once an offering made  
FOR EVERY SOUL OF MAN !

them. Today I was informed by the Superintendent, that several of them have since met together in the evenings, to improve themselves in singing. I was further gratified to hear that most of these who thus meet together, to sing the praises of God are steady characters; and for their good conduct are made overseers ... with much pleasure I preached to a large and attentive company, assembled in the shell of a temporary granary. I suffered them to sing hymns of their own chusing [sic]; namely "Wherewith O Lord shall I draw near", and "Lo! He comes with clouds descending": and such orderly, spirited singing I have scarcely heard since I left England.<sup>11</sup>

One can assume that the method of unaccompanied singing followed the lining-out method, described above. In terms of the tunes selected, that for "Wherewith O Lord", being L.M. (long metre, or 8.8. 8.8) cannot be determined, although one can be fairly sure that "Lo! He comes with clouds descending" would have been sung to the tune "Helmsley", Methodist in origin and long in association with

this text. John Wesley's 1780 volume lists the metre as P.M. ("peculiar metre"—in this case 87.87.47 extended), the rarity of this metre ensuring the ongoing pairing of text and tune.

Unaccompanied singing using the lining-out method was not to last in New South Wales, for as congregations grew in size it became obvious that some sort of instrumental support was required to keep the congregation together in terms of both tempo and pitch. In 1828 Mr John Onions was paid a salary for "raising the tunes" in the Macquarie Street Chapel and he was permitted to make use of a string instrument to assist his duties.<sup>12</sup>

In 1838 it is recorded that the same chapel was using a seraphine (an early form of reed organ), with a similar instrument in use at the Prince Street Chapel in the early 1850s.<sup>13</sup> The first pipe organ installed in a local chapel was purchased second-hand from St Mary's Cathedral in Sydney, being installed in the Macquarie Street Chapel in 1839. It was later relocated to Methodist buildings in York Street and then Tryon Road Lindfield, where significant parts of it survive today, following rebuilding and enlargement over its 180-year history.<sup>14</sup>

The introduction of instruments (including organs), the establishment of choirs and changes in the mode of singing were all the subject of intense debate in the 1860s and early 1870s. By 1880 musical practices and worship styles had largely settled on a format that became a mainstay of city, suburban and regional Methodist worship for the century that followed.

Much of the repertoire contained in *An Abridgment of the Wesleyan Hymns* has passed out of use in the 200 years that have passed since its publication. The language and imagery of the eighteenth century is, in many instances, neither appropriate nor relevant for present day congregations. That said, a significant body of hymns written by Charles and John Wesley, together with the work of other eighteenth-century authors, remain available in the repertoire today. Some 41 texts of Charles Wesley appear in *Together in Song: Australian Hymn Book II* (Melbourne: Harper Collins Religious 1999), with most revised to remove archaic or non-inclusive language. While this volume has



been widely distributed across the country, it is more than likely that it will be the last printed and bound hymn book to be circulated for use in Australian churches.

The use of technology to project words onto a screen has given congregations access to a much wider range of material, especially in support of the growing use of worship songs in popular contemporary style. While much of the hymn repertoire is now beyond recall for many, it will survive in the wider church and among those congregations where it is included as a part of music ministry.

1 Methodist Conference Office, *The Methodist Hymn Book for use in Australasia and New Zealand* (London: Methodist Conference Office, 1933), iii.

2 A history of early Wesleyan hymn books is contained in John Telford, *The Methodist Hymn Book Illustrated*, 3rd ed. (London: The Epworth Press, 1922), 2–7 passim.

3 A detailed discussion of these books and the musical repertoire of early Methodism is contained in Kelvin Hastie, “Music Making in the Wesleyan Churches of New South Wales, 1855–1902: origins, attitudes and practices”. M.Phil. thesis, Music Department, University of Sydney, 66–89.

4 John Spencer Curwen, *Studies in Worship Music* (London: Curwen & Sons, 1880), 29–34.

5 Kath Whitby and Eric G. Clancy, eds. *Great the Heritage: the story of Methodism in N.S.W. 1812–1975* (Sydney: Methodist Conference of New South Wales, 1975), 8–11.

6 Journal of the Rev. Walter Lawry (1818–25), 6 November 1818 (Mitchell Library, Sydney).

7 <https://adb.edu.au/biography/howe-george-1600#>, accessed 12/09/2021. (Note that the article was published in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Vol. 1, [Melbourne University Press] 1966 and outline in 2006.

8 Ibid.

9 John Wesley, *A Collection of Hymns for the use of the People called Methodists* (London: John Mason, Finsbury, 1780), preface, 4.

10 While this hymn has been sung to many different tunes over the years, it was commonly sung to *Winchester Old* in the nineteenth century and this is the set tune in both the 1876 and 1904 Methodist books. Milgate records that Methodists in Australia commonly set this hymn to both *Lydia* and *Lingham*, both tunes being composed in the nineteenth century. See Wesley Milgate, *Songs of the*

*People of God* (London: Collins Liturgical Publications, 1982), 74–75.

11 Benjamin Carvosso to Wesleyan Missionary Committee, 20 July 1821, Bonwick Transcripts, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

12 Lillian MacDonald, “Accompaniment to a Century of Methodist Praise: An Historic Pipe Organ”, *Journal and Proceedings of the Australasian Methodist Historical Society*, No. 95, September 1975, 1379–80.

13 Ibid, and Emily G. Pickering, “The Beginning of Wesleyan Methodism in Sydney and the First Chapel”, *ibid*, No. 46–47, January 1946, 651.

14 MacDonald, 1379–91, and Graeme D. Rushworth, *Historic Organs of New South Wales: the instruments, their makers and players, 1791–1940* (Sydney: Hale & Iremonger, 1988), 38.

## Kelvin Hastie

Kelvin Hastie is a music teacher, examiner and organ consultant by profession and has a Ph.D. in Music from the University of Sydney. He has supervised the restoration or rebuilding of about 70 pipe organs in NSW, including the famous Sydney Town Hall organ. His work in the area of pipe organ conservation led to the award of an OAM in 2009. He is a director of the Organ Historical Trust of Australia and was a member of the former Uniting Church (NSW Synod) Music Committee.

## Current UCNHS Board members

Rev. Associate Professor Glen O’Brien (President) (Victoria)

Rev. Dr Julia Pitman (Queensland)

Rev. Dr Alison Longworth (Western Australia)

Dr Judith Raftery (Secretary) (South Australia)

Rev. Steve Orme (Northern Territory)

Mr Bob Coote (Treasurer) New South Wales

Pastor Richard La’Brooy (New South Wales)

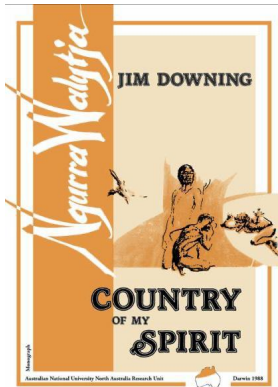
Pastor Lauren Merritt (Northern Territory)

Rev. Robert Renton (Editor) (Victoria)

We meet by Zoom six weekly.

## Book review

### NGURRA WALYTJA: COUNTRY OF MY SPIRIT - Rev. James H. Downing



The Uniting Church in Australia Northern Synod is proud to support the publication of the second edition of “Ngurra Walytja: Country of My Spirit”. The original monograph, published in 1988, was based on the Rev. Jim Downing’s years of experience working with Indigenous people in Central

Australia, Arnhem Land and North-Western Australia in establishing outstations. The book was written in conjunction with Jim’s colleague and cultural advisor, Mr Munti Smith of Fregon, S.A.

It is a study of the ‘Outstation’ or Homelands movement—a movement of Aboriginal people away from larger settlements into small communities in remote areas, generally in their own tribal ‘homelands’, where there are many areas of sacred importance to the ancestor/creation stories of their clans. They desired to ‘look after’ those places by tending the sacred areas.

The 2021 edition was edited by Dr Wendy Beresford-Maning with an introduction by Mrs Shirley Downing. James Downing worked in the Northern Territory for over 50 years as clergyman, cross-cultural social worker, language teacher, friend and supporter to Indigenous and non-Indigenous people both inside and outside the church.

We trust it will become, once again, a valuable resource for those interested in the history of the homelands movement.

The book is available to download for free through ANU Open Research Library at <https://openresearch-repository.anu.edu.au/handle/1885/237934>

Judy Orme

Synod Archivist & Administration Assistant, Northern Synod Ph: 08 8982 3400 M: 0407 828 495

## Fijian cricket tour

### Ken James

On 5 December 1907 a team of 14 cricketers from the island of Bay arrived in Sydney on the *Atu* for a three month tour comprising 26 matches—12 in New South Wales, one in Queensland, two in South Australia, two in Tasmania, and eight in Victoria. They returned home on 31 March 1908.

The team was captained by Ratu Kadavu Levu, the manager was G.V. Allen, and the coach/director was Lieutenant Marsden of Melbourne, who was also the team wicket keeper. They played barefooted in a cricketing shirt and a sulu (kilt-like garment). No hats were worn.



*Ratu Kadavu Levu is seated in the centre of the front row with Lieutenant Marsden*

The tour was very popular with the general public, with match reports being reproduced in newspapers around Australia. Attendance at matches was mostly described as being good or very good, and in some instances, a ground record. In the match against the Victorian Eleven, the Governor-General spent part of the first day at the MCG, where the match was played, as reported by the *Weekly Times* for 14 March 1908, p. 20.

The tour was self-funded, so manager G.V. Allen negotiated with the cricket associations for the team to take a



percentage of the overall takings of a match. The most common split was 50/50; however, sometimes the team received more—at Broken Hill the income was £308 and the Fijians received 80%. But a number of matches in country centres and in Western Australia never came to fruition because the local cricket association wasn't prepared to provide an acceptable share of the takings.



*Ratu Kadavu Levu*

Arthur J. Small, Chairman of the Fiji Methodist District of the Australasian Methodist Church wrote an open letter to ministers and churches commending the tour. It was published in *The*

*Methodist* on 14 December 1907. An article in the same edition said:

An invasion of Australia by a team of Fijians, under a grandson of King Thakombau, is an occurrence of interest .... They come—not to give battle, but to play cricket. They have brought with them, not a heathen priest, but a native Christian teacher. ... They have already shown their purpose to observe the Sabbath by declining to attend a surf-bathing exhibition Sunday last at Bondi, and the pity is that anybody should try to make capital out of them in any way at the expense of their religious scruples or convictions as Fijian native Christians.

The team attended Sunday services at local Methodist churches and/or were entertained at socials. In some instances they performed in fund-raising concerts.

When the team was in Hobart they were entertained at the American Consulate, and in South Australia they met Dame Nellie Melba (who was well known by Ratu Kadavu Levu).

A tour of England in 1910, including matches at Lord's and the Oval, were organised by

Future date claimer

## ***4<sup>th</sup> Uniting Church National History Conference***

**Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> August to Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> August 2023**

**The conference will begin on Thursday evening and conclude on Sunday afternoon.**

**It will be held in Darwin, Northern Territory.**

**The theme for the conference is:**

***Truth Telling: from Colonising to Covenanting***

**Look for further details in future issues of our newsletter.**

**Plan to come and participate,**

**then stay to explore the Top End in the dry season.**



**Milingimbi Church in 2017**

**Milingimbi Mission established by M.O.M. in 1923**

Lieutenant Marsden, but was cancelled at the last minute by the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Lord Crewe). A Sydney newspaper report (*The Star*, 19 August 1909, p. 1) concluded:

Captain Marsden kept wicket for the Fijians in most of their matches here, and the team was a great attraction. It seems a pity that their visit to the old country should have been cancelled. At this end it is difficult to find a reason for the embargo. Some racial point may be involved, but it would appear to be a rather obscure one.

On 23 December, when at a Newcastle beach, Ratu Kadavu Levu noticed two swimmers being swept out to sea in a rip. A younger man was supporting an older man. Ratu Kadavu Levu brought the older man back to shore, thus freeing up the younger man to make it back to shore by himself. The story was repeated in newspapers all around Australia. Ratu Kadavu Levu received two telegrams of thanks and congratulations from the governors of South Australia and New South Wales.

[For the record, the results of matches were 13 drawn, 5 lost, and 5 won by the Fijians. Batting averages ranged from 26.1 to 4.1 for the Fijians.]

### Ken James

Ken is an historian with a wide ranging interest in the history of rural and regional churches in Victoria. He is a regular contributor to the UC Historical Society (Vic/Tas) journal, *Proceedings*.

The above text is an edited extract from a longer article produced for the Vic/Tas journal.

### 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  
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### A note from the treasurer

Dear members, I am pleased to report that the majority of you have paid your 2021 membership fees. Thank you.

A reminder that membership fees have been set at \$25 as from 1 January 2021.

If you are sending a cheque please write the society name in full on the cheque "Uniting Church National History Society" This is a request from my friendly bank teller. Post to The Treasurer PO Box 2 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782.

A reminder about bank transfer details

BSB: 032-828

ACCOUNT NO.: 301985

ACCOUNT NAME: Uniting Church National History Society.

Don't forget to put your own name on the transfer so we know you have paid!

*Grow on me, O God,  
Grow on me, O God,  
as skin grows onto burns  
and buds grow onto branches  
as grass grows over graves  
and lichen over rocks,  
as passion grows to love  
and I grow into faith.  
Grow on me, O God,  
that with each rising sun  
I'll surely see  
a little more  
that you and I  
should be as one.*



*"Grow on me, O God"  
by  
Karl Reus  
from  
"Conversations with God"*

## What the records sometimes reveal

### Robert Renton

What are your church histories like? So often they talk about ministers and leaders past, founders and the struggles of early days, building plans, fetes and the waxing and waning of the congregation. Occasionally, however, you will come across stories that reveal something of the difficulties and disputes that are inevitably part of any human story but which frequently don't find their way into official church histories. And rarely do they mention the people from whom the land was taken without compensation and sometimes with violence.

The story of the establishment of the Presbyterian cause in North Williamstown (Victoria) casts a light on the not-so-generous behaviour of the original Williamstown (Cecil St) Presbyterian Church. The Board of Management minutes of the North Williamstown church reveal an increasingly tense tussle between themselves and the leadership of the Cecil St congregation.

Apparently there was land designated in Ferguson Street, a couple of kilometres away, for a second (North Williamstown) Presbyterian church, but the North Williamstown people wanted not to settle there but had moved to the current location on Melbourne Road, several kilometres further away where new housing had started to develop. The Ferguson Street land must have been held in the name of the trustees of the Cecil Street congregation. The North Williamstown minutes of 12 March 1883 indicate that the North Williamstown Board appealed to the Presbytery seeking the proceeds from the sale of the Ferguson Street land. Actually, at that stage the land had not been sold.

By 17 September the same year the land still had not been sold, despite North Williamstown receiving the support of the Presbytery. However, by 5 March 1884 it appears the Ferguson Street land had been sold for £225 but the money had not been handed over to the North Williamstown cause. Again, North Williamstown sought to make a representation to Presbytery about this.

The North Williamstown minutes of 23 July 1884 recorded this.

Resolved to write to Dr Nish informing him that no communication has been received from the congregation of South [Cecil Street] Williamstown with respect to the payment of £225 to the congregation of North Williamstown as ordered by the Assembly. Dr Nish to be asked whether he communicated the decision of the Assembly to the South Williamstown congregation, and whether we are not entitled to interest on the amount from the time that the Assembly met in November last.

(I noted that at the time £225 was the equivalent of 10 working men's annual salary.)

At the 3 August 1884 meeting of the North Williamstown Board it was noted that Dr Nish had replied yes to notifying South Williamstown, and furthermore he suggested that North Williamstown make a complaint to Presbytery. So a resolution was passed to write to Cecil Street congregation asking "when the amount that the Assembly ordered to be paid in February last to the trustees of this church will be available".

Seventeen days later, the North Williamstown Board received a letter from Cecil Street stating that "all correspondence in connection with the amount ordered to be paid to you by the General Assembly must be carried on through the Clerk of the Assembly, Dr Nish, and that it is premature on the part of your committee to make a demand before the congregation of the South church have acquiesced in the order of the Assembly". Mr Russell moved and Mr Scott seconded a resolution unanimously agreed to

that whereas our Secretary wrote the Secretary of the South Williamstown church about three weeks ago asking when the amount that the Assembly ordered to be paid in February last to the trustees of this church will be available ... it is hereby resolved to report to the Melbourne Presbytery that the South Williamstown church is setting the authority of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria at defiance in neglecting to hand over the sum of £225 to the trustees of this church as ordered.

At the 18 September 1884 meeting the North Williamstown Board received a reply from Dr



Nish “respecting the requirement from the Williamstown Presbyterian Church” and resolved that “in the event of the payment not being made on or before the 25<sup>th</sup> of September to notify the Clerk of the Presbytery to this effect”.

Apparently nothing happened, so on October 22 the Board again wrote to the Clerk of Presbytery about the lack of action on the part of Cecil Street.

Finally, on November 21 1884, a long minute recorded both the history of the General Assembly's actions and the North Williamstown Board's thanks for his representation of the North Williamstown congregation and the “able manner in which he looked after our interest in the General Assembly”. There are no more references to the £225, so it seems that the payment was made at long last.

The minutes of the North Williamstown Presbyterian Board of Management and the Session do make for interesting reading. I noted that in a local historian's account that the minister, L.M. Weir gave notice of his resignation in October 1884, and finally leaving in December. He had been there only 16 months, so he was obviously involved in the midst of the bitter struggles over the £225. He stated the reason for his resignation as the need for an improvement to his wife's health, but undoubtedly the pressure of the struggle would have weighed on him as well. The congregation wanted him to stay, and in February 1885 they sought permission from the Presbytery for the vacancy to remain unfilled for six months.

Disputes in the congregation and the Board of Management and Session were recorded in the minutes, sometimes over things that now seem somewhat trivial (like the appointment of an organist). In 1885, a dispute broke out in the Board of Management, and members resigned, apparently over the appointment of an organist. A Presbytery deputation was received and on October 7 1885 the minutes recorded the following:

Mr Ballantyne and Thomson, having settled the differences that had arisen, the following was moved by Captain Moore and seconded by Mr Kidd that “regarding the want of harmony in the congregation it was resolved to bury the past in oblivion and that no reference should be made

in the future to any causes of difference that had existed in the past”.

Later disputes in 1886 and 1887 were also briefly mentioned in the minutes.

There is little in the later minutes to indicate that more cordial relations were ever established between the two congregations, and in 1977 the North Williamstown congregation joined the Uniting Church while the Cecil Street congregation remained with the continuing Presbyterian Church.

### Robert Renton

Robert Renton is the editor of this newsletter and a member of the UC National History Society's board. During a year of supply ministry at North Williamstown, he began reading through the records of the congregation for interest's sake and came across this story. It wasn't in any of the congregation's previous histories.

#### Blessed is our mother Earth

Blessed is our mother Earth  
when she knows that she is deeply loved,  
not a 'thing', a 'resource', to be used,  
but our papakainga\*,  
our only home.

Blessed is our mother Earth  
when indifference is countered by passion,  
and the parched and abused ground  
is tended by our tears,  
and resolve to restore.

Blessed are we when finding  
wisdom and courage,  
memory and resilience,  
and non-compliance,  
for the facing of these hours.

*\*papakainga is a Maori word for original home, village, home base.*

*Final verse reflects verse 1 of “God of grace and God of glory” by Harry Emerson Fosdick.*

From *A Book of Blessings* by Glynn Cardy (Bayswater: Coventry Press, 2021), 66. Go to [www.coventrypress.com.au](http://www.coventrypress.com.au) 0477 809 037.