

All of this is us



40

Personal Reflections
from
North Lake Macquarie Uniting Church

A Reflection on my 40 years in UCA

As a former member and Lay preacher in the Presbyterian church I was well informed on the basis of Union 40 years ago as I had voted for the formation of the Uniting church that would bring together the 3 denominations from such rich heritages to create a fully Australian Church with a true ecumenical approach. I realised of course that it would take at least one generation for it to really become a reality when no one would remember or be pining for what was before . I had experienced a United Church in country NSW as a young teacher and was astounded when I saw people would only go to church on the Sunday their denomination had a service, for it was beyond my comprehension that people who called themselves Christian and follow the way of Jesus would be so unecumenical.

22 June 1977 was a day of great change for us as a family. Our girls were only 5 and 3 years old and we decided to move from the new Charlestown Uniting Church to Cardiff Uniting Church in order to go to the church closer to where we lived. Together with 2 other families we came from Charlestown Presbyterian Church that day to Cardiff with a spirit of optimism and we left behind a building we loved, a hymn book we knew and a fellowship of people we knew because we believed it was God's call to us to move .

There have been ups and downs, disappointments and regrets, laughter and tears highs and lows just as there are in any one's 40 year journey, but God has certainly been faithful and we have been privileged to have shared our lives with many wonderful people that we probably would never have met and worked with as a result of joining the Uniting church. Today our girls have both come to faith and are actively involved in their churches, and we give thanks to God for that.

I still see the UCA as a church willing to move forward , address and realistically face with compassion the issues people face in an ever changing world. I see it continuing to be the voice in the community for

the homeless, the marginalised, the refugee and the indigenous etc. as it claims *to be a pilgrim people on a journey with God.*

I have no idea what the future will bring for UCA, but I believe God's Church will continue to be and maybe one day all who claim to be followers of Jesus will indeed see a Uniting Church in Australia where all who belong witness to the love and acceptance of God.

June Cameron

My Experience of the Uniting Church at The Willows

By Margaret O'Malley

Twenty five years ago my daughter, aged 36 passed away and my caring neighbours knew how I was feeling so it was not long before Rhelma Willis came over and invited me to come along to the Women's Fellowship at the Howard Street Church.

I was so grateful and soon became a regular member there. Then my husband passed away in 2003 and as the church was moving to The Willows I came along to the Sunday services. From that day I have been so grateful for the help and love given to me, that now I share the fellowship and give service as I welcome visitors and friends at the door. I have also been asked to be a Bible Reader and this has helped me to know God and Jesus and see how they work in everyone's life.

I also love the Hand of Friendship Group and the Care and Share meetings as well as coming each Sunday and helping others in any way I can for this is one way I can share and show love to others as it was shown to me.

*Now my prayer each day
Is Lord be with me everyday
Help and guide me in every way
Guide my hands and my eyes
And let me help others whenever the need arises*



Sincerely Margaret O'Malley

From Judy & Barry Annesley

We were based in the Northern New England Mission based in Inverell. There was a continuing Presbyterian church, however about 45 to 50 adults with children came across. On the day of union people were every where nearly in the pulpit. Later if one was late they would have to sit with a robed junior choir. We did many things across the town including Christmas and Easter cantatas. Barry and the Presbyterian minister remained friends during our time together.

BECOMING A PART OF THIS CHURCH

Grev and I grew up in the low Anglican diocese of Sydney. Grev attended St. Clement's Mosman (where he was a junior choirboy), and then St. Andrew's, Summer Hill, where he prepared for confirmation (the service was actually held in St. Andrew's Cathedral in Sydney). He and his brothers played in the inter-church cricket competition, and attended a large and active youth fellowship. I was baptised at All Saints, Petersham, then attended Sunday School and fellowship at St. Andrew's, Summer Hill, where I was later confirmed, and where Grev and I were eventually married in 1964.

I had lived and worked in Goulburn during 1962-63, and found it somewhat difficult to integrate into the formality of the high Anglican cathedral I attended. Visits to the Presbyterian church there felt more familiar.

After Grev and I moved to Lismore as newly-weds, we occasionally attended the Anglican church in Lismore, but it still didn't feel "right", nor when we came to Newcastle in mid-1966 and tried the local Anglican churches (we moved a few times before coming to live in Eleebana in late 1970).

Then, thanks to the encouragement of Glenis Mann, our family began attending the Methodist Church at Howard Street, and to me it immediately felt like "home". Grev felt loyal to the Anglican church for many more years,

despite the local high-church influence, but eventually he began attending Howard Street too.

Having grown up in typical Sydney metropolitan area 19th century high-Gothic-style Anglican churches (like small cathedrals), with huge pipe organs, and stained glass windows, the tiny weather-board building at Warners Bay was a bit under-whelming, but there was no difference in the atmosphere of the place, nor in the warmth and commitment of the members, and their genuine “caring” about one another.

It didn't take very long to get used to not having to kneel (and given the state of our knees these days, we're now extremely grateful!), and we missed the very familiar set liturgy from the Book of Common Prayer that we had grown up to know by rote, but the music was always wonderful. There were so many familiar hymns, and everyone sang with such great enthusiasm! I found the Sunday School songs familiar, too, including many “Methodist” ones I'd learned to love when I frequently stayed with my Methodist cousin when a child. I soon became involved in the Sunday School, under the fine leadership of Dawn Marriott, and over the years got involved in many other aspects, especially music.

My mother, a professional soprano, had been a church soloist at Summer Hill, singing wonderful solos, especially as part of the many oratorios our church choir performed (myself and my girlfriend sometimes giggling in the altos) but *never* were any performances acknowledged inside the church. The first time a soloist was applauded during a service at Howard Street (our dear Bronwyn Pope, accompanying herself on the guitar) was quite a surprise, but at the same time so appropriate! It is very humbling to be part of a church which so openly acknowledges the many and varied contributions of individual members.

One important aspect was the welcome we received on Day One, and of existing members making our family feel we automatically “belonged”. I expected I would have to attend confirmation classes as a prerequisite to formalising my membership of the newly-developing union, but was advised that my previous confirmation instruction was sufficient qualification.

I was honoured to have Bronwyn as my sponsor. Grev and I continue to feel a part of the Uniting Church of Australia.

Lyndy Booth

NORMA WEBB WRITES....

The first time I heard of “Uniting” with other denominations was when I was in my appointment in the Central West. The circuit had invited the President General, of the Methodist Church, Rev Dr H Wood, from Melbourne Victoria to come and speak over one weekend. It was 1958. Our circuit like many more had the central church in town and a number of outlying preaching places where a small wooden church would be found in the middle of farmland. Sometimes the church belonged to a denomination, sometimes it was built by the community and was used by all denominations. Basically each denomination was responsible for worship, one Sunday a month. People came each Sunday regardless of the denomination. Unity was already there and working in these remote areas. The same applied to the small one and two teacher schools. Religious education was given to all unless there was a request to be excused which was rare. In town ministers helped one another, by filling in for each other when needed. Combined services were held over the long Christmas break and pastoral care was given to all.

Why was this concept for suburbia needed? How would it work? Would people be willing to leave one church to worship at another? People became so attached and possessive of their particular church.

1977 Union came with the congregations of the Congregational and Presbyterian Churches deciding individually to be part of or refuse and stay as they were. With the Methodist it was all in, no longer a Methodist Church in Australia. For sometime smaller churches with not a lot of leadership, found it was very difficult to change thinking from your denominational way of doing things and understanding and adopting the new.

For some a lot of time, work and influence was lot adjusting to the new concept, the church seemed to be in limbo while a new process of doing things had to be adopted, a new identity, while others, there was little change and the running of the church seemed to carry on as usual. In some cases it brought small divisions where there had been close association and working together.

Under the banner of “Uniting” who could have seen so many multicultural churches, the direction, input these new members would give to the life of the church. How the churches outlook and lives have changed over these years. But more importantly our Nation has changed dramatically with their attitude to the church. We cannot depend on councils and communities being sympathetic let alone supportive. The church no longer has the importance in the community it once had nor the respect.

Do we have a message that will change people’s lives and turn them to God? How important is Easter with the message Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins to our community?

Local strong Godly leadership is a constant need with a voice of caring, love and hope that we have in our faith to be shared in the community. I guess we have to prove ourselves to our community that what we say and do agree with each other, and are not in conflict.

Lord revive and inspire your people.

Norma Webb



BILL WILLIS REMEMBERS....

There was a keen sense of anticipation as well as some concerns as we approached the moment the inauguration of the Uniting Church on Sunday, 26th June, 1977.

Some months before that date the Provisional Presbytery of the Hunter appointed a Committee of eight people, ministers and lay people representing the three churches, which I had the privilege of chairing, to take total responsibility for the organisation of the event in Newcastle. It was a large and challenging task and, despite some of the members not knowing one another in the beginning and their varying expectations, it welded into a very fine team and, once decisions were made, individual members took responsibility for the detailed arrangements.

The first problem was to find a suitable venue to accommodate the event and eventually we settled on the Great Hall of the Newcastle University. The tasks before us were many and varied – arranging the format for that day, the Order of Service, publicity, printing, seeking the cooperation of the various ministers and congregations, invitations to Civic Leaders and Leaders of other denominations, parking, including arrangements for buses which some congregations hired and also accommodation for those people in the Hall, together with many other lesser matters.

Eventually it all came together with a wonderful day, the weather was kind and the response great as the Newcastle Morning Herald reported on the front page of Monday's paper with picture and story which said that 2000 people had filled the Hall and overflowed into the foyer. There was great singing, contributions from a Combined Choir, The New Life Singers, The Covenant Players and individual people. The Chairman of the Presbytery, Rev Keith Brooks, delivered an inspiring address and there was a moving period when those present committed themselves to the task ahead of the new Church. Our congregations

were very well represented on that day. A truly memorable occasion.
Bill Willis

VICTOR MOYMOW RECALLS....

In early 1976 I began attending a non denominational American based congregation that met on Sunday evening at the then Paddington Methodist and soon became part of the music team. We had a choir of assorted talents and temperaments accompanied by an ageing fragile pipe organ. This was my first experience with both. I was fortunate to befriend the music director (still friends to this day) and in 1978 he became the music leader for the Paddington UC which met in the morning and it was around this time I was vaguely aware of the Uniting Church coming in to being.

In 1981 when he resigned to do further music study at UNE, Rev Rex Matthews, from the UC, asked me to fill in at the organ until a replacement was found and so my involvement with the UC began. Another organist was never found or even sought and I remained at both congregations until 1985 when we moved to the Blue Mountains. It was a unique experience to play for the UC of 20-30 in the morning (in a building that held well over 200) and the evening service of well over 130 as both services were of vastly different theology and socio-economics! The UC members and the minister would often attend the evening service but the reverse rarely happened.

The Paddington UC Parish comprised of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches with members, at that time, from all three traditions. Each of the three churches had its own church, hall and manse. It was a wealthy Parish property wise but financially relatively poor, at that time. Rev Rex did his best to incorporate traditions, liturgies and hymns from all three churches in his services which was not an easy task as there were very strong personalities from the three traditions with even stronger opinions.

Keith and I became members of the Paddington UC in the latter part of 1981 and it wasn't long before we both were 'co-opted' into the general running of the church. Rev Rex was a former Congregational minister, a staunch supporter of the UC with a good understanding of the Basis of Union with a drive to do everything 'by the book' which was not necessarily liked by all! Every committee and organisation within the church was well run with every Wednesday night set aside for the monthly committee meetings, mostly the same few people in different roles! Rex had good relations with our neighbouring churches—Pitt St UC with Rev Dorothy McCrae-McMahon and South Sydney UC with Rev Harold Smart and pulpit exchanges were a regular occurrence.

Rev Rex diligently attended Presbytery and Synod meetings regularly along with the elected delegates, whether they wanted to or not!

Until 1981 worship was held between the Methodist and the Congregational Church buildings on a three monthly rotation. This had been done since 1977 to 'ease' the members from the three churches into the UC. The Presbyterian church had been turned over for community letting so it was unable to be used for worship. Towards the end of 1981 it was decided to use the Methodist Church building full time as it was in a highly visible position on Oxford St and also it was where the Paddington Markets were held every Saturday. I was sad to see that happen as the (Jersey Rd) Congregational Church had a much better organ and a nicer building with several stained glass windows in memory of the Fairfax family.. This church building suffered a fire in 1989 and the organ destroyed. It was a significant loss in pipe organ circles as it was just one of five imported to Australia by Forster & Andrews Organ Builders in 1877. The shell of the church was saved and later sold and turned into a suite of upmarket apartments.

Early in 1983 I became the full time Administrator of the Parish and Paddington Markets and in mid 1984 Keith became the office secretary, first point of contact and general clerk. This position was the highlight of my working life as it was very rewarding experience.

The church ran many activities including a mid week service, Paddington Markets on Saturdays, a Drop Inn centre 6 days a week, a youth refuge, two preschools a shared house as well as the letting of the three halls and two manses out for community and general use. Keith and I cooked for the Sunday Drop In lunch many times and it was quite an experience to run from playing the organ out to the kitchen to get lunch started, the hall and tables organised. On Sundays everyone would sit at one long table and eat together as opposed to individual tables and various times on weekdays!! On some occasions we would get the meal started before church and the cooking odours would waft into the church via the organ blower which was directly opposite the kitchen exhaust!!!

Although at that time Paddington was a reasonably wealthy suburb with its trendy cafes, restaurants, boutique shops and pubs, it had a large share of 'down and outs' and the Drop Inn Centre catered for those folk with a subsidised meal 6 days a week, a trained social worker available 5 days a week and generally somewhere to gather. So much of the work there was social based as opposed to the 'preaching of the gospel'. It was here that I learned to deal with dead bodies found on the premises (rather incongruous given a later career change), drug addicts and alcoholics.

Both Keith and I had a good grounding into the UC at Paddington and I often wonder what our experience in the UC would have been if not for the Paddington Church and the Rev Rex Matthews and team. We have many fond and not so fond memories of our time spent at Paddington UC. Lots of friendships were formed, some separated only by death.

We thank God for the opportunity to have served the Paddington Community through the UC on this stage of our Christian journey.

“To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

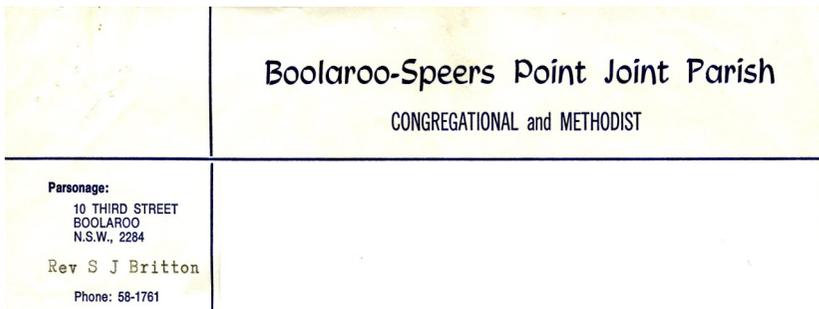
Victor Moymow

DULCIE HIPWELL RECOLLECTS....

The Congregational Church at Speers Point had formed a joint Parish with Boolaroo Methodist under the guidance of the Rev Sam Britton about two years before the Uniting Church came into being. Our two Sunday Schools had merged, with classes meeting in both churches. This made our transition to the Uniting Church very smooth and I enjoyed the larger congregation to which we were welcomed. Only two families transferred to Boolaroo UC and a few went to Warners Bay, Most of the Congregational folk scattered back to their local churches. We had a good youth group of 20+ in those days and my girls enjoyed that fellowship.

Today sadly we have no younger folk so I wonder “what is our future?”

Dulcie Hipwell



Thoughts on the 40th Anniversary of the Uniting Church

from Erica Allsopp

Harold and myself were appointed to Stockton, which was part of the very large Raymond Terrace Circuit in January 1976. We had been at

Coonamble where we commenced a 'Joint Parish', as the then Methodist & Presbyterian churches there had decided to combine to form one church. This gave us a good idea of what the Uniting Church could achieve.

Stockton Congregational Church had closed and joined the Methodists, and quite a number of the Presbyterian folk had also joined in, so by the time June 1977 came around we were all set up.

I will never forget the service held in the Great Hall of the Newcastle University to celebrate the inauguration of the Uniting Church, and I still have a tape recording (the only thing in those days!) of the service. It was most awe inspiring to proclaim that the Church felt led by God to commence this great venture.

I am very proud of a lot of the things that our church has achieved in the last 40 years. Yes, there have been mistakes, but that is part of any journey isn't it?

We, as a church, are the largest provider of Aged Care in Australia, we have welcomed women clergy into the ranks, which the Presbyterian Church had already done. Our church was the first to set up a safe injection centre in Sydney, amid a lot of controversy, which has saved lives, and enabled many to get off drugs and do something worthwhile with their lives.

We were the first Church to openly welcome homosexual people, and treat them as 'children of God', not outcasts.

We have had to change a lot of our terms of office from Methodist days. Like Elders, Parishes instead of circuits. Conference (The great gathering of clergy in Methodist days) is now Synod and not all clergy are required to attend. Our Parsonage became a "Manse" overnight! Our Parsonages were always furnished, so after Union, that changed also and we had our own furniture etc as the other Churches did.

The Sacraments are administered differently also. In the Methodist Church we went forward to the Communion Rail to receive the elements, Presbyterian & Congregationalists took the Sacrament to the folk in the pews.

It has taken quite a while to perhaps, adapt to 'new' ways of doing things, but overall, I feel that we have been richly blest by God and become a stronger church, one which recognises peoples gifts and talents, and realises that we are all ministers in God's great design.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY UNITING CHURCH

May we always be "A Pilgrim People" and go forth with God into the future.

Erica Allsopp

THE CHURCH WITH OPEN ARMS....

Our journey into the Uniting Church began in the Methodist Church in our childhood in England. When we arrived in Australia in 1968, we were met in Sydney by a Methodist minister who took us to a hotel to shower and tidy up, then to the train for Newcastle.

We stayed in Mayfield for six months and attended the Methodist Church there. The members were very kind and helpful. They lent us some household items , as our stuff was coming by sea.

When we moved to Cardiff, we soon became part of the Church Family. At our first service we sat behind Helen Palmer and her infant son who gave us a beaming smile of welcome. Our first communion service at Cardiff was exactly like the one in England, word for word. A cherished ritual. Over the last 50 years it has been a joy to serve our church, each in our own way, according to the talents God has given us.

We have been blessed by the church where we found Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. We have proved that wherever you go in this wide world—if you find the church—you are at home.

Herb & Gladys Scott

MARJ BATHGATE WRITES....

This is my third attempt to put together something that is meaningful for our 40th Anniversary of the Uniting Church in Australia.

There are a lot of good things happening in the Uniting Church at Warners Bay and a lot of that is because there are a lot of good people, doing what they do best, caring and ministering to one another.

There doesn't seem to be the interaction with other denominations since Uniting. Are we so intent on our own interests? Having been in ministry for nearly 60 years and serving west of the ranges, we had a lot of sharing in other churches. Salvation Army, Presbyterian, Baptist, C of E, quarterly with the Catholics, Church of Christ, AoG, and also shared buildings for worship—this doesn't happen on the coast.

Evangelism and moral standards was a very strong influence of John & Charles Wesley but that has been suppressed to a degree. Also there seems to be a strong influence of political correctness and loosening of moral standards to suit society, these days in the Uniting Church, as I see it.

We also had endless missionary deputations from Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Vanuatu, India, Tonga which were well received. That doesn't happen now.

Marj Bathgate

THE TALE OF TWO BAPTISMS....

Scott is the eldest son of Sue and Grahame Liddell of Macquarie Hills. He was born in February 1977. He would be baptised within six months. Scott's cousin, Kathryn is the youngest daughter of Pam and Garnet Bryant of Charlestown. She was born late in 1976 and would be baptised within six months.

On the 22nd June 1977 the Uniting Church came about with the coming together in Australia of the Congregational Church, the Methodist Church and parts of the Presbyterian Church. It came to pass that at just under six months, 19th June, Scott was baptised, a Methodist. He was the very last to be baptised in Cardiff Methodist Church.

Two weeks later, 3rd July, Kathryn was baptised into the Uniting Church. She was the very first to be baptised at the Charlestown Uniting Church.

Moral of the story: *We all make history in our own way.*

Graham Liddell





