



"CLOUD OF WITNESSES BANNERS" CONVENOR

When the South Australian committee took office in June 2003 as the National Committee of the Adult Fellowship, it had the germ of an idea that it would be possible to have a display of banners from all presbyteries in Australia.

This inspiring project was the brain child of our President, Joan Kelley, who had heard about the Millennium banners the Church of Scotland Guild had organised to travel around Scotland during the year 2000. She thought that if something similar was adopted in this country it could creatively link all UCAF Synod Committees and, in speaking about it, Joan was encouraged by the enthusiasm shown at the idea of having a UCAF 'travelling banner' exhibit in Australia.

The concept was endorsed in July 2003 and as "Cloud of Witnesses" was the theme for the triennium, the banners, which would portray either a man or a woman from the Bible, would be called the "Cloud of Witnesses" banners.

A committee, comprising Judy Burge as Convenor, Grant Dunning as Consultant and Ken Hayes, began to "'nut out" how it could all work. After thinking about various designs to carry the banners around in, we came up with three canvas bags, each measuring three and a quarter metres long, with two handles and a zip down the middle of the bag, something like a large cricket bag. We had 34 banners and we divided the banners into approximately 12 in each bag, each banner contained in a material bag to keep them clean and stop them unravelling in the canvas bags. Each canvas bag with the required number of banners inside, weighed approximately 15 kilos. We provided a number of white gloves that travelled in the bags, for people to use when handling the banners to help maintain them in pristine condition. We have heard from various sources that the bags and banners are travelling very well, and this is good to hear because they have been unwrapped and rolled up again so many times in each of the centres and towns, mentioned later in this report, that the banners visited.

Letters were sent to all Synod Committees inviting them to ask the 50 Presbyteries in Australia to design a banner, depicting either a man or a woman from the Bible, as one of the Cloud of Witnesses. The project began to take shape and at the National Celebration in March 2004 the National Committee had already received 18 banners, which were displayed at Lincoln College.

This venture has been very successful as 34 creative banners from every State and Territory in Australia were designed and made. They were officially launched in a Service of Worship in Adelaide in August 2004 by the then Moderator of the S.A. Synod, Rev. Dr. Graham Humphris. During the launch cut-out clouds were handed to those present and, several times during the Service, opportunity was given to reflect and write on these clouds the names of witnesses who had influenced people in their life journey. Small

clouds, with many thousands of names written on them, were later collected and attached to two cloud representations. People reported that this time of reflection was an important and rich part of the service. We were delighted that Kay and Bob Lockley, from Western Australia and Irene Roberts from N.S.W. were able to be present at the banner launch.

The creativity and the inspiration that went into the making of the banners has been and is a thing of joy and amazement to those who have seen them at the various venues in South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania, New South Wales, Western Australia, Northern Territory and finally in Queensland and at the 11th Assembly in Brisbane.

A catalogue of the banners was printed, each with a description about those who made them as well as something about the person/s depicted in the banner.

Their itinerary has been:

SOUTH AUSTRALIA August - December 2004

After the launch in August 2004 the banners began their travels around country South Australia. Places they were seen at were Loxton, Cleve, Whyalla, Pt Pirie, Jamestown, Strathalbyn, Hope Valley, Ceduna, Mt Gambier, Balaklava, Scots Church Adelaide, Peterborough, and Kangaroo Island. They travelled by bus from Adelaide to the various towns and then by generous people who were prepared to take them by car.

TASMANIA May - June 2005

The banners were displayed in Pilgrim U.C. Launceston for the Mother's Day Services and remained there for several days afterwards. They next went to Scots' Memorial Church in Hobart, then to Burnie for the North Western UCAF Rally and were again used as a focus in the Sunday Service, before returning across the sea to Victoria.

VICTORIA June - August 2005

The venues around country Victoria and Melbourne were: Wangaratta in the Goulburn Murray area, Bairnsdale, Warragul and Sale in the Gippsland area and Bendigo in the Loddon Campaspa Presbytery. In the Grampians Presbytery they were shown at Ararat, Ballarat, Donald, Horsham, Rupanyup, Stawell and Kaniva, at Cavendish in the Mitchell Presbytery, Swan Hill in the Mallee, and at Nunawading Uniting Church during Holy Week.

NEW SOUTH WALES September - December 2005

The venues around country New South Wales. In New South Wales the display began at Wagga Wagga then to Griffith and Jerilderie. They were then displayed at the Canterbury Racecourse during the NSW Synod, when many inner Sydney congregations came to view them. After Synod they travelled to Broken Hill, Lithgow, then to Bathurst and Orange, Dubbo and Mudgee. They then travelled to the Hunter Presbytery where they were displayed in the Newcastle area, then to Gosford, Chatham, Forster, Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Alstonville, Yarralumla in Canberra, Wentworthville in Sydney, Frenches Forest, Batemans Bay and Merimbula, Holt in Canberra and then back to Sydney completed their travelling in New South Wales.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA February - April 2006

The Banners arrived in Western Australia and were launched during a Service of Worship at the Noranda U.C. on February 4th. After the launch the venues that the banners visited in Western Australia were Kojonup, Toodyay, Northam, Kalamunda, Mundaring, South Mandurah, Innaloo (World Day of Prayer), Pinjarra, Katanning, where they were displayed in the Art Gallery, Albany, Esperance, Quairading, Busselton, St Augustine

Bunbury, Maylands, Rockingham, and at Kardinya where the Banners were blessed before travelling to Alice Springs on the 2nd April.

NORTHERN TERRITORY April 2006

After arriving in Alice Springs they were displayed in the Flynn Memorial Church during Holy Week, and then travelled to Darwin, where they were displayed over Easter before being sent to Queensland.

QUEENSLAND April - July 2006

After arriving in Queensland they were displayed at Chermerside/Kedron Community Church, Bremer/Brisbane Presbytery, Graceville, Nambour, Wellers Hill/Tarragindi, Frontier Services, Broadwater Road, Sunnybank, Tweed Heads, Elanora, Burleigh Heads, South Moreton Presbytery Dinner, Warwick, Chinchilla, Rockhampton Berserker St UC, Mackay St Pauls, Callide Valley Biloela, and will then be displayed in Brisbane during the 11th Assembly after which they will be returned to those who designed and made them.

An Order of Service, written by the Rev. Norah Norris, was used for the launch in Adelaide and was offered to and has been used and adapted by several UCAF Synod Committees, during their own launch and in various venues around the country. They have been displayed in hundred of churches and been seen by thousands of people, many of whom have been inspired and challenged by them. Some places asked people to vote for their favourite banner and at others there was a "comment book" made available. "Breathtakingly beautiful", "very creative", "God has indeed gifted these very special people serving in this way", "privileged to have had this opportunity to host this creative and exciting display", "we were loathe to send them back", "we felt really blessed", "it was much, much better than I was expecting", "it should become a two or three yearly event", "glad I came" are a sample of the comments.

The banners were featured in dozens of local and rural newspapers, in UCAF Magazines and Synod papers.

All the banners are on our web site and have been downloaded by Sunday School teachers, used by a number of small groups when reflecting on Biblical characters, and turned into bookmarks by others. We have recently published a book depicting all of them, which is available for purchase. In this book the banners are in colour, with various descriptions attached to each, as well as the history of this project. The cost is \$20 a book.

I believe this project has been worth the time and effort and is a truly remarkably result.

Judy Burge