The Ecumenical Liturgical Centre, Melbourne 1962-1989

Robert Gribben

Robert Gribben retired as Professor of Worship and Mission of the Uniting Church Faculty of Theology (part of the United Faculty of Theology) at Parkville, Victoria, in 2009. He is an Honorary Research Fellow of the MCD University of Divinity, and a Professorial Fellow of Charles Sturt University. From 1976 to 1980 he was Hon. Director of the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre in Melbourne, succeeding Dr Harold Leatherland, its founder; in later years he served in a number of capacities. This Centre was a ground-breaking ecumenical society for liturgical studies and teaching for twenty years before the founding of the Australian Academy of Liturgy.

In March 1962, the first issue of the journal *Studia Liturgica* appeared, for "liturgical research and renewal", and a study group formed around it, involving a number of scholarly clergy in Melbourne. The Rev. Dr Harold Leatherland, then a Congregationalist minister and Principal of that church's theological college in Kew, consulted the 'Heads of Churches' in Melbourne about forming a group which formally pursued the journal's aims, and in a meeting at the Independent Hall in Collins Street on 5th September, the 'Studia Liturgica Group' was established with him as its first Chairman and the Rev. Austin James, a Methodist, as secretary. All sixteen who were present, clergy and laity, became original members, and their number could be expanded by invitation or nomination - with the approval of the authorities of their Communions. This was no casual enterprise. The first meeting began and ended with silent prayer; at the second they dared to try the Lord's Prayer and a Benediction. They agreed to meet three times a year.

In the first few years, the core group included the Rev. Dr Barry Marshall, the newly arrived Chaplain of Trinity College, University of Melbourne, and two Roman Catholics, Frs Greg Manly CP and Austin Cooper OMI. Their conversations focussed on the new issues arising from the journal and from the Second Vatican Council, then in session, in particular the 'Eucharist, Baptism, Holy Uction, the implementation

---

68 Dr Leatherland gives an account of the development of the Centre in 'The Studia Liturgica Group, Record and Reminiscence' in the Newsletter of the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre, No. 10, November 1974, on which I draw here. He was on the Advisory Board and a correspondent of the new journal. There were two Australian members of Societas Liturgica at the time: Dr Leatherland and Archbishop Guilford Young in Hobart. In 1980 the present writer became the third.
of Vatican II's Constitution on the Liturgy, the Service of the Word, Prayer – its forms and language, intercession, the relation of liturgy to private prayer, consideration of revised rites in the several Communions, and the Burial rite, as these became available. They began to compile a register in which should be noted outstanding examples of modern ecclesiastical art and architecture in and around Melbourne, properly indexed and cross-indexed under categories, designers, craftsmen etc. This interest was a hallmark of later work in the Centre.

In 1967, the Group offered a Council of Adult Education (CAE) course of 12 lectures on Liturgy, which attracted a large enrolment; this involvement lasted a number of years and produced many of the early membership. By the end of 1968, the idea of a Liturgical Centre began to emerge, which would promote on a wider scale courses and seminars akin to ecumenical liturgical institutes in other parts of the world.

On 21st August, 1969, the group became foundation members of the 'Liturgical Centre of Victoria' established, according to its constitution, 'for the historical and pastoral study of Christian worship', with Harold Leatherland as its first Hon. Director. In the first decade, those who held the Chair were Fr Bernard O'Connor, Bishop Felix Arnot, the Rev. Godfrey Kircher, the Rev. Dr John Rodenburg, and Fr Gregory Manly. In this early period, the individual subscribers numbered thirty, and there were also corporate members – religious and parish congregations, liturgical committees and so on. In 1974, it changed its name to the 'Ecumenical Liturgical Centre' (ELC), and flourished until the foundation of the Australian Academy of Liturgy (AAL). In 1988, members of the ELC became members of AAL. This article attempts to put on record an account of the life of this pioneer body.

Harold Leatherland, the founder

Harold Fulton Leatherland was clearly the moving force behind the ELC. Born in England in 1909, he was ordained into the Congregational ministry there in 1933. In 1940 he married Phoebe, a tour de force in herself, and they had two children. Leatherland spent twelve years in Leeds (during which he gained his doctorate) and in 1956 the family emigrated first to Sydney where he became Principal and Professor of Church History at Camden (Congregational theological) College. In 1960, he moved to Melbourne, first as pastor of College Church, Parkville, the university congregation of the Presbyterian Church opposite Ormond College, and then in 1962 as Principal of the Melbourne Congregational theological college, from which he retired in 1976. The Studia Liturgica group began to meet soon after he took up his new duties as Principal, first at Trinity College with Harold in the chair and Austin James as secretary. Later, the group met at the Leatherlands' home above Seward House in Kew, which had a simple chapel, the nearby facilities of the Congregational (later Uniting) College, and gave access to Phoebe's hospitality.

Apart from the continuing informal meetings of the liturgical group, Harold began to teach courses for credit in church history, liturgy and later in spirituality. He regularly offered two units in alternate years: the History of Christian Worship, and the Nature and Expression of Worship, which he designed. A member of the Melbourne College of Divinity, he was the architect of the Diploma in Liturgical Studies, which provided the first steps in serious study of worship for many later leaders in the field. He held many 'schools of worship' in parishes around Victoria and beyond; he taught segments of similar courses in Catholic Theological College and at the (Catholic) National Pastoral Institute. The Ecumenical Commissions of the Catholic and Anglican Churches recognized his work, and one of his memorials is a eucharistic prayer for which he prepared the primary draft, and which appears in both Anglican and Uniting books of worship today, thus opening a unique ecumenical possibility of two churches, not yet in full communion with each other, sharing the text of such a central prayer.

He also made an early and important contribution to Christian understanding of Judaism, not merely in relation to early Christianity, but to the whole conception of worship now: the Service of the Word, the place of Scripture and psalmody, the public prayer and the blessings, the calendar of feasts and fasts, the use of sign and symbol, the great words of our liturgical language – Amen, Hallelujah, Hosanna, Maranatha – and the family nature of the Jewish religion. When I began to teach with him, I listed my lectures as 'The Jewish Background'; he more peremptorily had called his 'The Gifts

---

156 Australian Journal of Liturgy • Volume 13 Number 3 2013
Australian Journal of Liturgy • Volume 13 Number 3 2013 157
of the Parent Faith. His familiarity with Judaism, in fine detail, and with synagogue worship, went back to personal friendships with rabbis in Leeds.141

The work of the ELC will be described further below, but first Dr Leatherland needs to be located within his own tradition. At the point of union of the Uniting Church in 1977, he was somewhat pessimistic (and he died a mere two months after its achievement). He thought that Congregationalism – the great English tradition of Independency – had had its day; and that union was inevitable. He much admired the first Basis of Union (1963) with its proposal of a church with ‘bishops-in-presbytery’, and a concordat with the Church of South India; he could never have conceived of the union as a pan-Protestant affair. But he knew the rock from which he was hewn: the Free Churches gave him the freedom to be the ecumenical person he was. Those who know the Puritan tradition, of which he was a distinguished exponent, knew that he was every inch (every considerable inch: he was a big man) a Congregationalist in the tradition of Isaac Watts, Owen, Perkins and Richard Baxter. He loved them for their pastoral theology, their stand for conscience against an oppressive Church and State (he himself had to leave his London parish during the Second World War because he was a pacifist), their profound Biblicism and their splendid prose. There were times when his lectures were a little too challenging for the student who, unlike Harold, did not enjoy rolling around his tongue a choice piece of 17th century grandiloquence, like a good vintage wine.

Harold was the towering figure who lay behind almost every significant moment of the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre. But there were others, who must mentioned more briefly.

Austin James

Second in the pantheon of the ELC was the Rev. Austin James. He was born in Bendigo in 1900 and died in Melbourne in 1968. He took an MA at Melbourne University as a resident at Queen’s College, and after a break during which he did farm work away from city and university influences, he offered as a candidate for the ministry. The Conference sent this learned young man to Lake Boga as a probationer, but soon after marriage and ordination, he set off to India. He served the Methodist Missions from 1925 to 1958 at Lucknow and in the Varanasi District. He became a fluent Urdu speaker and gained a profound knowledge of both Muslim and Hindu life and thought. He became a presbyter of the newly united Church of North India and a deeply committed ecumenist. Most importantly, he had imbibed the prayerful spirit of India, and it was palpable. I can still see him kneeling at the Lord’s Table (the ‘altar-table’ as he preferred to call it) at South Essendon Methodist Church (originally a Primitive Methodist chapel), with the 1936 Book of Offices lying open before him unread, reciting the Communion Prayer by heart, eyes fixed on heaven, communing with God in the Spirit.142

After his death, the Centre created a public lecture in his honour. In 1972 Harold Leatherland gave the inaugural one: ‘Liturgy – How does the Word become Meat?’, and a lecture was sponsored annually, with few breaks until the Centre closed in 1989. Apart from the full spectrum of Australian scholars, international luminaries included David Frost, Gerard Austin OP, David Power OMI, Louis Weil and Geoffrey Wainwright. Under the auspices of the Academy, the Methodists Geoffrey Wainwright and Karen Westerfield Tucker and the Anglican David Holton have given this lecture. Almost all were published either singly or within the ELC’s newsletter. The lectures continue occasionally under the AAL (Victorian Chapter).

Barry Marshall and Greg Manly

The well-beloved chaplain at Trinity College, Dr Barry Marshall OGS (1923-1970), also has a eponymous memorial lecture, sponsored annually by that College. Raised in rural New South Wales, he graduated in Arts in Melbourne and read theology at Morpeth, taking Firsts in both, and was ordained in 1950 as Brother Timothy of the Brotherhood of the Good Shepherd, otherwise known as the Bush Brothers. After serving in the outback, in 1952, he went to Oxford, completed a D. Phil. in 1955, and returned to work in Bourke. The role of bush pastor never left him, though he was a sophisticated scholar and a delightful companion. Later, he spent some time at the Institut Catholique in Paris, absorbing the vision of liturgical renewal in the Roman Church, which he brought to his ministry at Trinity College from 1961. He had a particular interest in Christian initiation, and it is apt that, following death by accident in 1970, his ashes are buried by the font in Trinity Chapel.

141 The Centre of Jewish-Christian Dialogue, represented by Sr Leonore Sharry NDS, was a corporate member of the Centre from 1970, ELC Newsletter, June 1970.

142 I owe some of the biographical details to an earlier account by James’s friend and colleague in India, the Rev. Stan Weeks, published in ELC Newsletter 6/2, and to the Rev. Cohn Honory. Austin James was also a notable leader of silent retreats.
Father Gregory Manly CP (1920-2012) was born in Dublin, professed in the Passionist Congregation in 1943 and ordained in 1950. He arrived in Melbourne (Holy Cross seminary) in 1964, just as the impact of Vatican II began to be felt. He was immediately part of the Studia Liturgica group and what grew from it. He appears as a regular lecturer from the first Newsletter (June 1970) where he is also named as a member of the Council, representing the Passionist Community which was a 'corporate member'. A year later he reports on his tour of Europe and the USA, including his conversations with Père Gelineau and other liturgical stars of the era. I remember attending his lectures on church architecture, and on the liturgy of the 'new' eucharist, with the emphasis on creating community and prayer, themes which he developed in later talks. His book At the Table of the Lord (Spectrum, 1973) is reviewed in the Newsletter for that year. He was later President of the Centre's Council. Most notably, he worked closely with Sr Anneliese Reinhard, a Missionary Sister of the Sacred Heart, who had come from her native Germany in 1958, bringing her experience in novice formation, pastoral counselling and spiritual direction. Fr Tom McDonough has said that Sr Anneliese 'brought him [Greg] out of his head and introduced him to his heart', and the heart was what then brought to his liturgical formation. I had the privilege in 1984 of launching their book The Art of Praying Liturgy (Melbourne: Spectrum). It is a deeply personal book, and opens the hearts of readers to the centre of the eucharistic liturgy and the eucharistic experience. The book needs urgent re-reading in the light of the present mood in Rome.

Greg delivered the Austin James Lecture on two occasions. The first, in 1977, was entitled 'Liturgical Formation – a praying need'. He proposed moving beyond the study of the liturgy (historically, comparatively, theologically) to the formation of the people of God in the liturgy, and he describes the method on which he and Sr Anneliese and others had been working in the previous four or five years. He acknowledges that talking about the method is very much a second-best. Looking at the liturgical changes in the period following Vatican 2, he asks whether there has been concomitant deepening of people's prayer – for surely liturgy is people praying? Liturgy is not 'the choir singing, nor the preacher preaching, not the minister leading'. The Constitution on the Liturgy of the Vatican Council was stressing participation, which was not just keeping the people busy! The praying community needs to be receptive (not active, not passive) in the liturgy in order that their prayer arises from the centre of their being. 'They need to respond to what is going on. Then they 'externalize' this in symbolic activity, fundamentally in eating bread and drinking wine. He goes on to spell out some of the ways in which all this might happen, including the acquisition of the necessary skills in the congregation.

The work of the Centre

Communication among members was through the Newsletter published twice a year from June 1970. Its readers that year were calculated at 54 personal members, 16 associate members and 13 corporate members. Dr Leatherland was designated Hon. Director. A 10-week CAC course on 'The History of Christian Liturgies' had been presented in March, and was attended by 25 people. The opening lecture was given by Rabbi John S. Levi, followed by Fr John Prendiville, Rev. Alfred Bird, Fr Paul Ryan, Fr Greg Manly, Fr Oliver O'Brien and architect David Pincus. The participants were invited to the end of the convent of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament in Armidale to see the production of altar-breads and to join in the community's prayers. A second course in July was on 'The Building for Christian Worship today'.

By September 1971, two Patrons had been appointed, the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr J. R. Knox, and the Anglican Archbishop, Dr Frank Woods. During this early period of the Centre, there was discussion about forming or joining groups on the liturgical arts and liturgical dance. Liturgical travellers like Harold Leatherland and Greg Manly gave reports on their experiences. The Diploma in Liturgical Studies was announced. A seminar was offered to 'people involved in Christian Education', a course for lay people on 'How to Worship' (predictably led by Greg Manly), a course on 'contemporary Celebration: Principles and Guidelines' and finally a seminar on 'Using the Imagination', which would be quite enough for a year, except that CAC classes were maintained alongside the Centre's own. This busyness is typical of the early years of the Centre's work in the astonishing variety and contemporary relevance.

In March 1972, 97 personal members are claimed, 25 associate and 16 corporate, but the note is added 'the Centre is represented in every State within Australia, and in London, South India and Manila'. The implications of this are noted: 'Is it feasible to think of an Australian Liturgical Society, with an office in this ecumenical liturgical centre in Melbourne? We have Associate Members in each of the Australian States; there are interesting and important liturgical activities in many places; helpful and informative periodicals are published in several cities. But many of us are still working in isolation and probably none are aware of what is happening throughout Australia' – and Dr Leatherland (as editor) goes on to raise a number of possible contributions which might be made. This vision lasted as long as the Centre did.

---

160 My name is listed from September 1970. I began to give lectures in 1975 on return to Melbourne from my first circuit in Portland, Vic.
161 Associate members were corporate bodies such as libraries and religious congregations, or were persons who lived beyond Melbourne.
162 The Liturgical Dance Group was formed in 1971 with support from the Centre. Its great moment came with the 1980 World Council of Churches conference on Mission and Evangelism when they prepared and performed the dances for an ecumenical service at St Patrick's Cathedral on Ascension Day. See ELC Newsletter 89/3. Among its leaders were Felicity Fallon and Neil Chalilworth.
163 ELC Newsletter No. 5, March 1972, first page.
Harold Leatherland retired as Hon. Director at the end of 1976, and was appointed a Patron soon thereafter alongside Archbishop Woods, Cardinal James Knox (then Prefect of the Sacred Congregation for the Sacraments and Divine Worship) and the Catholic Archbishop of Melbourne, Frank Little. The present writer succeeded Dr Leatherland as Hon. Director. I was then Chaplain of Ormond College at the University of Melbourne, and W.A. Sanderson Fellow in Liturgical Studies, a new position from 1979, teaching at the United Faculty of Theology. In my five years, the programme continued along its usual lines with a variety of seminars and lecture courses. The advent of the Uniting Church added zest to the ecumenical discussion of new liturgical forms. The ecumenical breadth increased to include lectures by Pastor Vernon Kleining (Lutheran) and the Rev. Bill Tabbernee (Church of Christ).

The Leatherland Exhibition

The death of the founder on 29th August 1977 inspired the H. F. Leatherland Fund to honour his name, with the purposes of offering an Exhibition for an essay in the liturgical field by a student in the MCD Dip. Lit. Studs or for the B. Theol. (it was later opened to any Australian student of liturgy enrolled in a recognized institution), grants to assist research, including travel, and library grants first to the library of the Centre itself, and then to what is now the Dalton McCaughey Library at the Centre for Theology and Ministry in Parkville, where Dr Leatherland's own library had been placed and separately catalogued.

The first recipient of the Exhibition, in 1981, was Fr Shane O'Connor O. Carm., for an essay entitled 'The origin and development of the Carmelite rite up to its suppression after Vatican II', and it was awarded at the MCD graduation in April. Not all who submitted an essay were judged to have reached the required standard, so it was somewhat rarely awarded. Under the Academy, two memorable winners were the Rev. Ian Ferguson (Uniting Church) on 'Remembering the Body: Human embodiment and liturgical practice' (1997), and Mr Stuart Hibbert (Anglican) for a meticulous preparation of the liturgy of the Syrian Orthodox liturgy in English for the guidance of its congregations in Melbourne (2007).

Australian Ecumenical Liturgical projects

In significant ways the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre provided the ground – and the personnel – for the Australian Consultation on English Texts from October 1976 and its successor, the Australian Consultation on Liturgy (ACOL). The first ELC Newsletter in 1970 had reported on an early connection with the Melbourne ad hoc committee for the study of liturgical texts under the Rev. Dr Percy Jones. Dr Jones was a member of the ecumenical International Consultation on English Texts (ICET) which had published Prayers We Have in Common which included two sets of texts with commentary. These were revised in the light of criticism and published under the same title in 1975 before ICET went out of existence. The decade of the 1970s was busy liturgically for several Australian churches. In 1976, the Anglican Liturgical Commission invited some ecumenical members to join them 'in a personal capacity' as they prepared An Australian Prayer Book (1978). Soon afterwards, a new, national, body was formed by formal appointment by the participating churches, which became the Australian Consultation on Liturgy (ACOL). It became affiliated with the international ecumenical body which had then formed, the English Language Liturgical Consultation (ELLC), and sent regular delegates to ELLC's meetings. ACOL's first secretaries were Hon. Directors of the ELC, and its current work is now regularly reported in this Australian Journal of Liturgy.

Another offshoot – briefly – named itself the Collins' Joint Lectionary Project, a project of Collins Publishers (London) under the direction of Suzanne and Geoffrey Chapman. It arose from the involvement of Collins in the publication of the Australian Hymn Book and Geoffrey Chapman's knowledge of the ecumenical work on An Australian Prayer Book. He proposed the publication of a lectionary – in the sense of a book with the lections set out in a common translation for reading in the liturgy – which would indicate the variations in the use of the Revised Common Lectionary which several Australian churches were already using. One task was to

---

140 The ELC Newsletter of May 1979 published the sermon Dr Leatherland delivered at College Church, Parkville, on the Sunday before he died, and formally launched the Fund. The amount raised and invested was $4418.00. The Exhibition was initially of $100: most recently, of $500. The Fund has been administered by a Trust with members representing the Melbourne College of Divinity (later the MCD University of Divinity) and the Victorian Chapter of the Academy. The terms of the Fund have been modified by the Trust over the years; e.g. the low income meant that travel grants soon ceased. The book and journal grants to the library have been a constant.
141 ELC Newsletter 83/1
convinced all to use a version of the three-year Revised Standard Version of the Bible, for which Geoffrey Chapman Ltd held a right to publish, and the psalter as translated by Professor David Frost. By 1978, ACET had become ACOL and my role as ACOL secretary (and Hon. Director of the ELC) was formalised as Executive Secretary of the project and Evan Burg's as its chairman. Fr Gilbert Sinden SSM was engaged as Editor. Expenses were paid for by Collins. There was interest also from New Zealand in the lectionary project. As time went on and negotiations continued, a smaller executive was appointed to meet in Melbourne. Huge amounts of detailed text were sent back and forth – but during 1980 the project was abandoned. In the meantime, a group of liturgical scholars had learned a great deal, and forged some very close friendships.

Leadership and programme

Late in 1980, I accepted the role of Ecumenical Lecturer at the Church of England's theological college in Lincoln, U.K. and Father Patrick Bishop SJ became Hon. Director of the ELC. He and I had jointly taught liturgical courses at the United Faculty of Theology. Bishop James Grant became Chairman of the ELC Council, and Fr Peter Cross gave the Austin James Lecture on 'The Revised Rites of Christian Initiation of Adults', to which Fr Ron Dowling (Anglican), Rev. Bruce Barber (Uniting) and Fr Peter Conroy (RC) responded. The catechumenate was becoming a common term in liturgical parlance well beyond the Roman Catholic Church. The ELC Newsletter continued to publish articles on liturgical subjects, to review books and to announce courses. In 1981, the Rev. Ron Dowling (Anglican, then Vicar of St Margaret's, Eltham) became Hon. Director. Each change of director necessitated the moving of a large number of books in the Centre's Library across Melbourne. Frances Gillard took on the editorship of the Newsletter. Being now placed in the UK, I was able to attend a congress of the Societas Liturgica in Paris – where I encountered the important exploration of liturgical time by Dr Thomas Talley – and wrote a report for the Newsletter (82/2). Ron Dowling was appointed for a second three-year term, and when I returned in 1984, I replaced Bishop Grant as Chairman of the ELC Council. The Rev. David Brown became its secretary, soon to be followed by the Rev. Graham Gall (both Uniting). In 1986, Fr Harry Aveling (Liberal Catholic Church) became Editor of the Newsletter. This year marked the death of Fr Anthony Cleary, an early member and strong supporter of the Centre, who had pioneered post-Vatican II architecture in his new parish church, Holy Name, East Preston.

Joining with the Academy

The ELC leadership watched the formation of the Australian Academy of Liturgy (AAL) with interest. Ron Dowling and some other ELC members had attended the first meeting in Adelaide at the end of November 1982, but it would appear that the existence of the ELC was not known among the founding members. The examples of international liturgical associations and graduate liturgical study possibilities, especially in the post-Vatican II Catholic universities and seminaries were a vivid reality for many there. During 1988, the ELC Council began to consider the future of the Centre, and on 30 August, it met with the executive of the AAL's Victorian Chapter. In 1987 there were 94 members of the Centre, across Australia (and a call to pay up subscriptions). It was agreed that ELC members would be welcome as members and associates of the AAL, and arrangements were put in place for the administration of the Leatherland Fund and the Austin James Lecture. The AGM of 30th September 1988 made the decision to dissolve the Ecumenical Liturgical Centre. The Epiphany 1989 Newsletter is full of historic record with a touch of nostalgia, but also with a recognition that it was right that we should go out of existence in favour of the new body.

I acknowledge that this is a somewhat personal essay, and a certain sadness remains with me. The transition did not work well for the Centre. The intention to be an academy, with relevant standards of presentation and of membership, dissuaded many active lay members (in particular) from continuing to attend activities. The activities on the CAE model had ceased. The strong non-Roman Catholic leadership of the Centre was always somewhat tenuous since opportunities for Anglican and Protestant scholars to pursue liturgical studies were much rarer and less well funded than those for Catholics. However, there is a tale told here of transforming teaching and example, of the opening of a world of worship I had only dreamed of as a young Methodist, of the discovery of the rich variety by which Christians glorify their Trinitarian God, and above all, the experience of what might be called ecumenical agape, ecumenical friendships, which have sustained me for a lifetime. For all this, many across Australia join me in giving thanks to God.