Part 1: Historical Research as a Change Agent

In 2001 I was appointed as Principal of Parkin-Wesley College, the South Australian theological college of the Uniting Church in Australia (UCA). It was not a position that I aspired to, and it was one that I only agreed to apply for with real misgivings. I loved teaching. I was good at teaching. Becoming a Principal would take me in a different direction.

In the following year I enrolled in the Doctor of Education course at Flinders University designed for educational administrators and managers—the kind of person I had reluctantly become. It was one of the best decisions I have taken. The course enabled me to acquire the insights, skills and confidence that I needed to fully engage with the challenging new role that the church had given me. I still love teaching, but now I also love leading this learning community. I completed the Flinders University program early in 2007, having taken five coursework options and three major research projects. The program was designed to be tailored to the particular professional needs of the participants so my research projects (as well as most of my coursework assignments) focused on particular aspects of theological education in the UCA. This was just as well, because at the same time as I finished the course I found myself being called upon to lead
the college through a process of significant ‘organizational and cultural change’. I have seen that process described as ‘the Adelaide experiment’ by one of the UCA academics who have done me the honour of critiquing my work. In the neutral territory of this conference, I will take the opportunity to tell the story of ‘the Adelaide experiment’, focusing especially on how two major historical research projects released forces for change and innovation that have given theological education a place at the centre of the emergent 21st century church, and describing what I have learned about being a change leader in theological education.

But first, I need to make a couple of contextual observations. The first is that Parkin-Wesley College was a denominational college. Although it delivered courses provided by the Adelaide College of Divinity and Flinders University, the college itself was entirely funded, staffed and governed by the Uniting Church in Australia—and expected to deliver theological education which would meet the needs of that denomination. The second contextual observation is that I was ‘the Basis of Union guy’. The relevance of that lies in the way I came to be that guy, and what it taught me about historical research.

Becoming ‘the Basis of Union guy’

On completing the Uniting Church’s prescribed course of training for the ordained ministry I was directed into ‘secular employment’. That was the church’s way of saying, ‘You’re dropped’. It was November 1980, little more than three years since the inauguration of the Uniting Church in Australia. I was twenty-two and devastated. How could I have been so wrong about my sense of call to the ministry? How could the church be so wrongheaded in its management of my vocation? What is ‘ministry’ anyway beyond this stupid, pointless, soul­destroying system? I was very hurt and very angry.

In the course of that final year at theological college I had ended up in deep conflict with the Synod Settlements Committee. It was not that I had performed poorly as a candidate for ministry. On the contrary. It had been decided that since I was still very young, and a promising student, I would benefit from the experience of a year of postgraduate study overseas. I had managed to get a place at St Andrews University in Scotland doing a postgraduate Diploma in Ecumenical Studies. However, because the academic years in the northern and southern hemispheres do not coincide, I could not begin at St Andrews until September 1981. The Settlements Committee did not know what to do with me during that awkward nine month hiatus.

I did not see why they had to ‘do’ anything with me. I was quite happy to find a job to save some money, or to serve in a ministry if there was one that took account of the plans I had worked out with the church. I could not see the problem. But there was a problem—a big one—that no one could explain to me. The deeply held but contrasting assumptions about the relationship between candidates for ministry and the church that had been brought into the Uniting Church from the three previous denominations were present in the Settlements Committee, turning my situation into a test case. As the months went by with no resolution, my uncertainty and anxiety turned to frustration and anger at the process. I became a difficult person to deal with and I felt progressively more alienated from the church’s systems and practices.

By the time the letter arrived, officially advising me to ‘get a job’, I was already working as a clerk in a legal firm. I was happy—regular hours, regular income, regular people my own age—and with the prospect of a career in the sensible field of Law, once I returned from Scotland having completed the Diploma. That adventure had already been planned and saved for and my wife and I were going ahead with it. Three terms of study were to be followed by a few months’ backpacking around Europe. We were young after all, with plenty of time to get started on the new career when we came back.

But that is not how things unfolded. It turned out that, away from the distractions and commitments of our life in Brisbane and with no other duty to fulfill than to attend my classes, write my essays and sit my exams, I was quite good at academic theology. My examiners recommended that I be encouraged to go on to doctoral research and I was invited to continue at St Andrews working on a PhD. That appealed to us. We were very happy in Scotland and were beginning to wonder if there might be a way that we could make our life there—far away from the painful associations that Australia held for us.

1 Decision of the Standing Committee of the Presbytery and Synod of South Australia, quote in Dutney, A Genuinely Educated Ministry, 7.
4 The following story is from the Introduction to Dutney, Manifesto for Renewal, 4-6.
5 The Uniting Church in Australia was inaugurated on June 22, 1977. It was a union between the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Australia. The process and character of that union is described in Dutney, Manifesto for Renewal.
Having worked out how to finance an extended stay in Scotland with support from our families and part-time and casual work for each of us, the only question remaining was what I would research. That was easy. I was still angry and hurt about what had happened to me as a candidate for the ministry in the UCA. I wanted to expose the stupidity and duplicity of this new church and the way it approached ministry. And I wanted to do a root and branch job of it, starting with the negotiations for church union and uncovering the compromises and mistakes behind the system that had derailed my life and undermined my faith. Staying motivated is half the race in completing a PhD, and my supervisor thought that the thirst for revenge would be a reliable ally in getting me to the finish line. So it was agreed. I would research ‘The development of the understanding of ministry in the Australian church union negotiations 1957-1971’—and then watch them squirm.

But once again, that is not how things unfolded. Within a few months, my attitude had been completely transformed. As I investigated the long history of the church union movement in Australia, and especially what was so distinctive about the work of the Joint Commission on Church Union, the body which negotiated the union, I became increasingly convinced that I was dealing with an authentically Spirit-led process—one that challenged the tired denominationalism and unimaginative institutionalism that I despised. And when I eventually arrived at a close study of the final version of the Basis of Union I was simply captivated. The vision within its eighteen short paragraphs crystallised what I had been looking for—a vision that could guide me as a disciple and servant of Jesus and renew the community that gathered around him. All I wanted to do was to share what I had discovered with my peers—my own generation which was the first generation of the Uniting Church in Australia. I did not know it then, but I had found my life’s work.

I completed that PhD thesis towards the end of 1984. In the years since then I have written many articles and several books on different aspects of the Basis of Union. I teach courses on the history, theology and polity of the Uniting Church and regularly make presentations on the ethos of the Uniting Church to the boards and staff of UCA agencies.

And over and over again, I have seen how people are empowered by hearing and knowing their own story. In particular I see people encouraged to embrace change and inspired towards innovation by the vision of the Basis of Union. I do not have time to explain it now, but those who framed the Basis of Union in the 1960s ‘were convinced that God was calling the church away from that nailed-down, sewn-up, nothing-to-learn illusion of “church”’ that was so unresponsive to the challenges and opportunities of mission. For the last thirty years, I have seen repeatedly how a simple history lesson—about a community’s own history—can release the energy and resources for significant, positive change. But someone has to do the historical research first.

**Becoming the Principal**

So twenty years after being told to ‘get a job’, there I was, ‘the Basis of Union guy’ installed (improbably) as the Principal of one of the UCA’s seven theological colleges. And something was clearly not right with Parkin-Wesley College, but not as far as the other six colleges or the national Ministerial Education Commission (MEC) were concerned. Parkin-Wesley was doing what UCA theological colleges did, in the way that they all agreed it should be done. But something was not right.

While overall student enrolments were strong, the numbers of ordination candidates had plummeted. Since union in 1977, the numbers of candidates at Parkin-Wesley had been maintained, roughly, at between 35 and 45. But as the new century began, these numbers settled into the teens. With a striking fall in the number of applications for candidature, together with the increasing average age of applicants, it was clear the church was not replenishing its ministerial leadership and had no prospect of doing so.

As I began moving around the church as the new Principal, I soon became acutely aware of the number of ministers who had specific and deep-felt complaints about their experience as candidates studying at Parkin-Wesley College. I also found that few of the thriving congregations looked to the college for their theological education and training needs. Consequently Parkin-Wesley College, and the prospect of ordained ministry itself, was not really on the radar of the emerging young leaders in those congregations, and the college was at best marginal to the centres of energy in the church.

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6 Dutney, The Development of the Understanding of Ministry.
7 The most widely used are the short works such as, Where Did the Joy Come From? Revisiting the Basis of Union, Introducing the Uniting Church in Australia, and The Basis of Union: A Commentary by J. Davis McCaughey.
Something was not right with Parkin-Wesley College. I was offered dozens of diagnoses as people became aware that I was actually interested in what they thought about their college—and just as many cures. But it felt premature. I needed to understand in a deeper way what a theological college is in the life of the UCA. So, with the support of the Flinders Doctor of Education program, I once again chose historical research as a way to find that out.

I designed and conducted two historical research projects. The first investigated the place of theological education in the inherited traditions of the Uniting Church. The Congregational and Presbyterian churches represented the Reformed tradition of theological education and the Methodist church owed more to the Evangelical educational tradition. I examined each of these traditions from their roots in the Reformation and in the Evangelical Awakening to identify their key emphases and characteristic expressions. I then studied the history of theological education in each of the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches in Australia, to see how stable those emphases and expressions were in this context. I then wrote a short history of Parkin-Wesley College as an historical case study of a united Congregational-Methodist college that was supposed to fulfil the expectations of both traditions.

The second historical project investigated the place of theological education within the Uniting Church from its inauguration in 1977 to 2005. There was plenty of material to work with. In less than three decades there had been five national reviews of theological education by different Assembly task groups. In addition, every Synod which had a college had undertaken one or more reviews of its own. Surrounding all of those reviews were reports, discussion papers, minutes and correspondence. As I analysed that material I was able to identify patterns in the way change happened in the UCA, in stakeholder responses, and in the interaction between UCA culture and changes in the surrounding context—religious, educational and social.

Through these two historical studies I learned some of the key things I needed to know in order to begin to address what was not right at Parkin-Wesley College. I learned what were the core, non-negotiable values of theological education in the UCA. I understood why theological education was such a lightning rod for disaffection in the UCA. I identified opportunities for genuine reform in our approach to theological education. And, incidentally, I came to understand for the first time what had happened to me in 1980—why the conflict with the Settlements Committee was so visceral and wounding on every side.

With these studies completed and with a range of findings before me, I conducted a final study—a mixed-methods study of UCA ministers in South Australia including a survey of all the candidates for ordination accepted in the South Australia Synod between 1995 and 2005. Again, this turned out to be a rich, surprising and very fruitful investigation. On the back of the historical research which I had already completed, this engagement with ministers, many of whom were my former students, became personally transformative of me as a minister, a teacher, and a Principal. I had not expected that. But it also gave me numbers and patterns to add to the narrative I had developed through the historical studies which then became transformative for Parkin-Wesley College.

I had hoped for that.

What I found

First, I found that a system of theological education is integral to the UCA as a religion—it is part of our culture and one of the things that makes us who we are. It is why we do it ourselves rather than outsource to other denominations or para-church agencies or universities. It is why we are willing to dedicate so much of our budget to theological education. It is why we have a college in every Synod—and why the Synods are unable to contemplate forgoing their college for the sake of establishing a national college. It is why, when there is a perceived problem, Synod and Assembly decisions will routinely include the request for action from the colleges. It is why ten of the fifteen Presidents of the Assembly have come from college faculties. Any suggestion that we could walk away from the ideal of what Davis McCaughey called ‘a genuinely educated ministry’—and sustaining a system of theological colleges to reassure ourselves that we are pursuing that ideal—is absurd.

Second, I found that although the UCA has this common commitment to theological education, we actually inherited two traditions of theological education, with two ways of valuing and delivering this core activity. They are like each other in some ways, but in very important respects contrast with, or even contradict, each other. I have tried to represent the two traditions of theological education in the table below.

Third, I found that while both traditions have a valid place in the life of the UCA, and both are consistent with the Basis of Union, only the Reformed tradition is explicitly legitimated (and implicitly mandated) in the Basis—with which the UCA Constitution and Regulations must be consistent.

Fourth, I found that Parkin-Wesley College was the site of a fault line in the UCA when it came to theological education—that was at the core of what was not right. It was a combined Congregational (Parkin) and Methodist (Wesley) college, united at a time when the Parkin College Principal was pioneering a more practical, pastoral emphasis in ministerial training while the Wesley College Principal was actively pursuing a project of ‘raising academic standards’.

The union seemed obvious and natural at the time, but it did not take into account the contrasting traditions and the contrasting expectations of the two constituencies. For as long as the Wesley College Principal maintained his project, Congregational candidates were fulfilling the expectations of their church. And for as long as Methodist candidates were under the jurisdiction of the Conference and its President, the Methodist church’s expectations were being fulfilled. But at the time of union, the authority of the Conference and its President was transferred to the faculty of Parkin-Wesley College—reflecting the way the Reformed tradition had been unintentionally privileged over the Evangelical tradition in relation to theological education in the plan for church union. In South Australia, an overwhelmingly Methodist Synod in the new UCA, the new arrangements were fine for a while. No one noticed really. But over time it broke down, as expectations were disappointed again and again. This was not the only thing that was not right with Parkin-Wesley College, but it was at the core of it. And here the final, mixed-methods study brought things into focus for me.

Fifth, I found that the Reformed tradition, which had been privileged in the Basis of Union and which was oriented towards the formation of professional, teaching pastors, had been overtaken by social change. As Gary Bouma put it, ‘Many institutions that train clergy still produce graduates suited to a society and culture that has now passed for more than a quarter-century’.

But, sixth, I found something I had not gone looking for. I was interested in candidates’ pathways into theological education—and I found out about that. But what I heard from them primarily—all of them—was their story of being called by God to ordained ministry. And without any correlation to their place on the theological spectrum—fundamentalist, liberal, charismatic, progressive, evangelical—more than two thirds of them described their experience of call in supernatural terms, frequently a disruptive, frightening, unwelcome intervention into what they thought was a reasonably organised life. That is, I found that God is calling women and men to ministry and Parkin-Wesley College was supposed to be the place where they were encouraged and equipped to respond to that call. As this became clearer and clearer in the data I was gathering, I found I was not just the dispassionate researcher here any more, but I was being led by my research into the hands of the living God. If God is calling women and men to ministry today, why are they not turning up in the college established and maintained specifically for them?

Having outlined what I learned through historical research, in the next section I want to relate what we did with that—how historical research released

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10 Bouma, Australian Soul, 105.
me and others from the inertia of denominational systems and processes, and what I learned about change leadership through this experience.

**Part 2: What We Did and What I learned**

**What Needed to be Done?**

Even as I was conducting the research projects that I described earlier, from 2002 onwards, pieces of the puzzle started falling into place. It was beginning to become clear, in broad terms, what needed to be done. Unfortunately, dauntingly, the thing that obviously needed to be done was a major change-management exercise—including culture change in the church and in the college.

What needed to happen was to find a way to put theological education and Parkin-Wesley College back where it belonged—at the heart of the church's life and mission. Deep down, that is where the church wanted it too—but not in the college's current condition.

Of course, we had students who were studying with us simply because they wanted to—members of other denominations, and lay people and ministers of our own who had chosen our courses over other alternatives for reasons of their own. In fact, by the early 2000s most of our student body was made up of this kind of student. We loved teaching these highly motivated learners, and their satisfaction with what we did and the way we did it kept reinforcing our culture and practices. But our real bread-and-butter—the students for the sake of whom the UCA was willing to maintain a college—was ordination candidates. And, in terms of motivation, they were a very mixed group—I had been wrestling with the challenge they posed for quite a while.

Back in the early nineties, I had published an article entitled 'Disillusionment: Reflections on the Experience of Theological Education', which was a kind of theological pedagogy emerging from my early experience as a teacher—at a time when almost all our students were ordination candidates. A few years later I had conducted a small research project that was published under the title 'Don't Let Them Change You: Psychological Reactance and Theological Education'. It was an explanation of the challenges facing teachers of mandated students—who were there because they had to be there, but who actually did not really want to be there—using the theory of psychological reactance, and developing a set of strategies that were intended to make everyone's life a bit more tolerable, even if transformative learning proved elusive. Most of our students were still ordination candidates at that stage too.

Later I took this interest further in another project in educational psychology called 'How Made Up Minds Learn: A Pilot Study in Understanding Conceptual Change in Theological Students'. (This was a project within my EdD program, and I never developed the report for publication.) In that study I was trying to understand better that 'significant minority of the people who study at Parkin-Wesley College [but] do not want to study theology and/or do not want to study theology at this college'—in particular, whether and how their 'made up minds' could still learn. By then only a small minority of our students were ordination candidates.

What needed to happen was to find a way to put theological education and Parkin-Wesley College back where they belonged—at the heart of the church's life and mission. The college needed to become a learning community that women and men sensing a call to ministry in the church would long to connect with, would make sacrifices to join, and would engage with unreservedly when they became part of it. And deep down, that is what the church wanted its college to be too—but Parkin-Wesley College was just not that kind of college.

So the change process was going to have to start on the edges, with the thriving but disaffected congregations: building relationships and trust with the ministers and key leaders of those congregations; listening to their perceptions of the college, their experiences with it, and their aspirations and needs in theological education and training.

Equipped with what I then knew about theological education and the UCA from the research projects I have described in part 1, I could begin to find ways to reform our processes and structures, and redesign our curriculum that would honour the core values of our tradition while accommodating the aspirations and needs of those parts of the church from which the college had become alienated.

In diagrammatic form, organizational change looks quite simple. A standard way of representing it is in Kurt Lewin's three stage process of change development: 'Unfreezing' (making sure everyone understands and is ready for change); 'Changing' (implementing planned changes); 'Refreezing' (making sure that the

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11 Pacifica 4 (1991), 137–147
12 Uniting Church Studies 5.2 (August 1999), 1–14.
new practices, systems or procedures become normative). The trouble with this is that you are supposed to have a strategy to take each of these steps.

The unfreezing stage alone is daunting. Management manuals will tell you that, ‘People are more likely to accept change if they feel there is a need for it [...] Those who plan the change will need to make the case that there is an external or internal threat to the organization’s competitiveness, reputation, or sometimes even its survival’. I could probably manage that. But the manuals also tell you that, ‘When [people] know what is going to happen, when, and why, they may feel more comfortable’. And working out precisely what the changes to Parkin-Wesley College needed to be was going to take a long time and involve negotiation with a lot of stakeholders. At the beginning to 2007, when I completed my last research project, the only thing I was sure of was that change had to happen and that leveraging South Australia’s strikingly resilient memory of Methodism was probably the way to make it happen.

Something Unforeseen Happened

At the end of 2006, while I was taking some study leave and long service leave to finalise the EdD research projects, the South Australia Synod adopted a new Strategic Plan. It involved six Key Directions, the second of which was, ‘Raising Leaders: Develop ministers and lay leaders to lead the church to be the best it can be’. Five goals were identified to give substance to that intention:

1. Establish a Leadership Institute;
2. Identify future leadership needs and develop strategies to meet those needs;
3. Develop a strategy for recruitment based on giftedness and passion;
4. Improve the way we value and affirm current leaders;
5. Raise the bar with respect to the continuing education, supervision, performance; expectations and accountability of Ministers.

When the Strategic Plan was adopted by the Synod there was no assumption that the five goals associated with leadership would involve Parkin-Wesley College at all. What did it know about leadership? It was an academic institution. Those goals were all related to the ‘Leadership Institute’ that the Synod had resolved to establish—undefined and not costed (such was the depth of longing for something different in the area of leadership development). In fact, I learned when I returned from leave, many members of the Synod believed that the intention of this initiative was to create an alternative to the college. The strength of that view is evident in that even though as early as February 2007 the Synod Standing Committee had determined that the college would undergo ‘organisational and cultural change’ consistent with the new Strategic Plan, through most of that year it was not clear whether the Leadership Institute would be completely separate from the college, or sit alongside a smaller, more narrowly focused theological college—taking responsibility from the college for any parts of the curriculum that could conceivably be related to ‘leadership’. There was no suggestion that the Leadership Institute and the college could be one institution, a ‘centre for leadership development’, until the following year.

During 2008, the Assembly wound up its national distance education provider, Coolamon College, and requested Parkin-Wesley College to take responsibility for Coolamon’s students. This required Parkin-Wesley College to make a stronger commitment to distance education and brought it into relationship with students throughout Australia (and a small number in the Pacific). Then, early in 2009, Parkin-Wesley College was finally replaced by the new Leadership Institute, which would be called Uniting College for Leadership & Theology. Uniting College was purpose-built to ‘develop effective leaders for a healthy missional church’ while, at the same time, fulfilling the UCA’s requirements for a college suitable for the education of candidates for ordained ministry.

What We Did

To get to this point an enormous amount of organisational change had to be managed.

- As a member of the small core team guiding the implementation of the ‘Leadership’ element of the strategic plan, I was able to have a hands-on role in working out ‘what is going to happen, when, and why’ in theological education in South Australia.
- Through 2007 different models for the new shape of theological education were presented to three Synod meetings for discussion and feedback.

13 Lewin, Field Theory; Carpenter et al, Management Principles v1.0, 334; Lussier and Achua, Leadership, 486–489.
14 Carpenter et al, Management Principles v1.0, 335.
15 Carpenter et al, Management Principles v1.0, 335.
• The faculty of Parkin-Wesley College was consulted as the models evolved. Not surprisingly, this was a difficult, frequently conflictual process.
• The board that oversaw ministerial education was reviewed, thanked and discharged and a very different kind of board was put in place, the Leadership Development Council (which was replaced in January 2017 by the Mission and Leadership Development Board).
• The traditional shape of the curriculum—Biblical Studies, Historical and Systematic Theology, and Pastoral Care—was set aside and a new curriculum was formed around Biblical Studies, Missiology, Leadership and Discipleship.
• Correspondingly, in 2008, new Position Descriptions for the faculty of the new entity were developed. Instead of simply terminating all positions and recruiting the new team from scratch, as some of the core team proposed, my arguments were accepted and all current faculty could work to the end of their contracted appointments. Faculty members whose current position corresponded closely to one of the new positions would be entitled to a preferential interview for the new position.
• Responsibility for the oversight of the formation of ordination candidates was shifted from the faculty to teams of effective practising ministers (Formation Panels).
• The new network of relationships that we had been building with the ministers and leaders of the thriving churches started to bear fruit as it became evident the college was serious about responding to their aspirations and needs, and the numbers of candidates were soon back into the mid-twenties.
• Candidates’ individual experiences of a call to ministry were listened to and study programs and ministry practice placements were shaped around them.
• Candidates’ course plans were redesigned to reduce the amount of pre-ordination study and to incorporate three years of planned continuing education after ordination.

In the UCA at that time, theological colleges were overseen by the Ministerial Education Commission (MEC)—essentially a self-regulating ‘industry’ group, in which the Principals of the then six theological colleges had a powerful influence. When I explained the changes that had happened in South Australia in 2009 to the MEC, as I was required to do, I used this table to simplify the discussion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>New Model</th>
<th>Familiar Model</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Forming focussed missional practitioners</td>
<td>Forming general practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning context—placement in congregation, faith community, agency or school</td>
<td>Learning context—college community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning mode—reflection on ministry practice</td>
<td>Learning mode—academic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning focus—the person’s passion, gifts and potential capacity</td>
<td>Learning focus—the college course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SFE—the centre of the course, 15 hours per week for 2-4 years</td>
<td>FE—the climax of the course (7 months full-time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formation—overseen and delivered by practitioners with support from college faculty</td>
<td>Formation—overseen and delivered by college faculty with support from practitioners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theological Studies—36-72 units in Core Phase—initial part of an integrated continuing education plan</td>
<td>Theological Studies—108 units in Core Phase—not reliant on continuing education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the tasks of the MEC was to maintain a regular schedule of college ‘visitations’ of UCA theological colleges, with a view to confirming their suitability as institutions for the training of UCA ministers. The South Australian college was due for an MEC Visitation later that year. So I said in my 2009 report to the MEC:

Clearly, we are still at a very early stage in the life of this model of education and are still establishing the administrative and resourcing measures that will enable it to function well. The MEC Visitation brings fresh eyes to the project to give us objective feedback and will also give stakeholders an opportunity to give feedback to an independent body. We are very pleased about the timing of the Visitation, therefore, and eager to receive its report. 16

But the Visitation produced a report that questioned the validity of the new direction taken by the South Australian Synod and its college and its accreditation remained unresolved until 2011, leading to three years of uncertainty over whether ministers being educated in the South Australian college could really be

16 The report is held in the records of Uniting College for Leadership & Theology, MEC, 2009, Principal’s Report. It may be made available on application.
recognised as UCA ministers. I had always expected that what we had done in South Australia would have an impact nationally in the UCA, but I thought that it would not happen until after we had had a few years of experience with the new model. Instead, almost immediately, our new college was caught up in a national controversy about the future of theological education in the UCA—celebrated by most as an example of the way ahead and condemned by others as an example of what can go wrong if you let people who are not directly involved in theological education interfere.

What have I learned about change leadership?

I have learned that books on management and leadership really do help—not one in particular, but lots of them in different ways (although I did find myself going back to Mark Gerzon’s Leading Through Conflict quite regularly).\(^{17}\) Sometimes dropping in and out of that literature was useful just as a reminder that leadership needs to be conscious and reflective. And that is the second thing I learned: Leadership can be learned and it needs to be cultivated—my own leadership and the leadership of my team members.

I learned that the cliché is true, culture is everything after all. And culture needs to be attended to consciously and strategically if it is not going to sabotage innovation. Teams are also everything—not least because in theological education it is the faculty, the discipline subgroups, and the administration officers who will embody the culture, either the new culture or the old, in their individual behaviours and corporate practices. So another of my go-to resources was Graham Winter’s Think One Team.\(^{18}\) I learned especially that God is up to something in every situation and in every person’s life. Working out what that is and then cooperating with it uncovers resources and opportunities for change at the same time as it grows quality relationships.

And I have learned that research releases energy for change, even historical research.

In the two Parts of this essay, I have tried to show how historical research can resource and empower innovation in theological education. The main example I have been using has been ‘the Adelaide experiment’ of Uniting College for Leadership & Theology. But the same body of research into the heritage, theology and polity and the UCA has also had an impact in a variety of other ways. I described earlier how, when I began the research journey that turned me into ‘the Basis of Union guy’, the historical research released me personally from the inertia of the UCA’s systems and processes. Along the way, that research has also enabled me to resource the church to effect change in other ways too. In South Australia I was not only involved in the formation of Uniting College, but also in a process that led to a major restructuring of the Synod from a system of seven Presbyteries to a single Presbytery with multiple ‘mission networks’ within it. Nationally, the energy for change expressed in ‘the Adelaide experiment’ also saw the replacement of the Ministerial Education Commission with a very different Education For Ministry Working Group and, from January 2017, a new set of national Standards for ministerial education and formation that not only permit, but actually encourage and require, much greater flexibility and student-centred education than had ever been possible before. This story of ‘the Adelaide experiment’ shows how two major historical research projects released forces for change and innovation that have given theological education a place back where it belongs: at the heart of the church’s life and mission.

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