

Within fifty years the original little congregation had grown into a large church – one of the largest Churches of Christ in Australia. Griffin had agonized over how the Holy Spirit was to be experienced in the life of the new convert. But perhaps the work of the Holy Spirit is best manifested through the faith perseverance of the whole community. The church is greater than the individuals who comprise it, and stronger than any one member of it. However, the issue of one's personal experience of the Holy Spirit has never quite gone away and continues in subtle forms in the wider church.

For a time, things were not easy for the original church. There must have been times after the departure of Griffin and Mitchell in 1856, or that of Lewis in 1866 (to undertake evangelistic work New Zealand), when it would have been tempting to allow the little church to fold. But the Newtown believers hung on – just as Ingram was 'hanging on' in Beechworth, Victoria. The pioneers were a hardy, resilient lot. They were tough times, they had an unpopular message, few facilities, no attractive music (worship was probably a capella), no trained ministers and rudimentary means of transport. But they did have some pretty firm ideas about the Word of God and they were good apologists.

While much is owed in an institutional sense to Albert Griffin, recognition must also be made of the role of Isabella Griffin. The Griffins had twelve children – one child died. Life could not have been easy for Isabella at Beechworth or Barnawatha, particularly as Albert succumbed to the black dog of depression. Hers would have been the primary role of raising the family. But it is clear that as late as 1900 Grandma Isabella was still at the centre of family life. It is perhaps more of a tribute to her that some her descendants continued to serve in pioneering roles in our churches. The epithet on her gravestone is appropriate: "Strength after strength, crown after cross, rest after weariness, sweet rest at last".

Families like those of Griffin, Stimson, Kingsbury, and Lewis played a significant, cohesive role in the early Churches of Christ connection.

Harold Hayward



<http://www.rootsweb.com/~ausvsac/Index.htm>

Bethany, New South Wales?

Before official place names were allocated, the western Sydney Disciples, in consultation with other settlers, called their district Bethany. This followed the example of Alexander Campbell whose influence was extended to Australia originally by British immigrants. But the Australian settlers developed the message in their own way according to their different circumstances.

Australia has its own frontier experience every bit exciting as that of the Stone-Campbell pioneers in the USA.

About the Author

Harold and his wife Jill were foundation (now 'isolated') members of North Turramurra Church of Christ in NSW. They occasionally attend Key to Life Church of Christ in Sorrel, Tasmania. With others, Harold is engaged in writing the recent history of the NSW Conference.

Acknowledgements

The author acknowledges the assistance of Julie Deall (Young) in supplying some information on the Griffin family originally prepared by her mother Thelma Young. The assistance of Richard Brown in supplying some details about his parents is also gratefully acknowledged. A debt of gratitude is owed to Graeme Chapman whose books of readings are an invaluable source of church and social history.

Feedback

Harold Hayward welcomes your feedback. Comments and observations can be posted on the National Churches of Christ Council Facebook site [[Churchesof ChristNational](#)].

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Articles for publication are sought. Send submissions, including biographies and church histories, to the editor. Obituaries and anniversary news are also welcome.

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