



Congregation outgrows the Chapel – expansion of the Church



The last service in the Wesleyan Methodist Church c1958. NT Library

Following the union of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregational Churches, and the expansion of the congregation, a larger church soon became essential.

In 1958 the foundation stone for a new Church was laid in Smith Street. The new Uniting Church in North Australia opened on 23 July 1960 and the Melville Church was converted to a store for the Methodist Overseas Mission to Arnhemland. It was from the Uniting Church in Darwin that the gospel was spread across East Arnhemland.

'Mission workers often endured extremes of hardship with courage and optimism. They, and others like them, were the people who over the years built schools and churches, brought medical and pastoral care to thousands of Aborigines, trained them in jobs, and established communications between Arnhemland and the outside world'.

McKenzie M, Mission to Arnhemland, 1976.



Methodist Church of Australasia, 1967. NT Library

Missionary work among Aboriginal people expanded from 1910 when the World Missionary Conference in Edinburgh encouraged Protestant churches to extend their missionary activities. Four years later the Methodist Church held discussions with the Australian Government resulting in the allocation of areas of the East Arnhemland coast to the Methodists. Missions were built at Goulburn Island, Elcho Island, Milingimbi, Croker Island and Yirrkala.

The Melville Church was significantly altered from 1960 as its use changed from a church to a store. To facilitate the loading of stores the front entry porch was removed, a loading dock constructed and the floor was raised. Wall cladding was also removed around the top of the walls to improve ventilation.



The Church in use as a motorcycle repair shop. NT Library

By 1973 the Methodist Church left the site and the Church building was used for a number of commercial purposes. Including a gospel fellowship and a motorcycle repair shop.

