



Historical Society

of the Uniting Church
in South Australia

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NEWSLETTER
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Restored Ernabella Uniting Church
at the Opening & Re-dedication Service,
March 2010,
Pukatja Community, South Australia
[photo, courtesy W.H. Edwards]

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EDITORIAL

It is hard to believe that half the year has gone! ... and with it half of our programme for this year.

We record, with great sadness, the sudden death of our Secretary, the Rev George Potter, on 9th May. He and Marian were visiting family in Victoria at the time. The funeral service was held in the Lobethal Lutheran Church. George was passionate about church history and always urged church groups to whom he spoke to record their "faith story" - not just cold facts about when buildings were built or how long ministers or organists were at a particular church. We record below the tribute, presented by Rev Dr Dean Eland on behalf of the Council and offered at our Annual Meeting held just a few days after George's death.

The next gathering for members and friends will be on Sunday, 29th August at Clayton-Wesley Church, cnr. The Parade and Portrush Road, Norwood. It will be a special occasion as we will hear organ music composed by W.R. Knox, the subject of the lecture to be presented by Geoffrey Bishop.

Rev Dr Bill Edwards has written about an important event in the life of the Aboriginal community in the far north of South Australia.

Rev Keith Smith presents a synopsis of a larger work which he and others are in process of writing on 'Pirie Street's Pilgrimage'.

The recent Gordon Rowe Memorial lecture, presented by Mr Trevor Schaefer at our Annual Meeting on 14th May, is represented here by an 'interview' with Rev James Jefferis, the first minister of Brougham Place Congregational Church which was formed in 1859. Trevor's lecture was based on his history of the Brougham Place Church which celebrated its 150th anniversary in 2009.

GEORGE WILLIAM POTTER 1939-2010

Tonight it is appropriate for us to acknowledge and give thanks for the ministry of George Potter and to remember the contribution he made to the work of this Society.

During his ministry, George developed an enthusiasm for church history and I suspect he was inspired by Arnold Hunt, long time secretary of this society and church leader in South Australia.

After 18 years of active ministry in Broken Hill, Kimba and Kadina, George enrolled at Flinders University for courses in history and sociology and produced an honours thesis on the Response of the Methodist Church in SA to the Religious Crisis of the Sixties.

He became secretary of the society in 1996 and over the past 14 years he and others have been instrumental in addressing major challenges in reorganizing the work of the society and in establishing the History Centre.

The Council will prepare and record a memorial tribute. Tonight is an opportunity for those who have worked closely with him to share something of your own appreciation of his leadership.

Dean Eland

THE NEXT EVENT OF THE SOCIETY

will be on

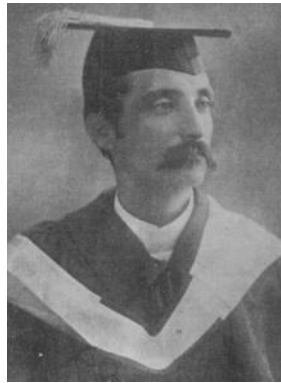
Sunday 29th August 2010 at 2.30 pm in
Clayton Wesley Uniting Church,
cnr The Parade and Portrush Road, Beulah Park

An exploration of W.R. Knox – Organist, Composer and Teacher

**The life and music of W.R. Knox (1861-1933),
Adelaide City Organist and Australia's 'most published composer'**

Dirk Zadra will perform works by W.R. Knox and his contemporaries and
Geoffrey Bishop will discuss Knox's life and career in music.
This is the first time since Knox's lifetime that much of this music has been performed.

Come and hear the superb J.E. Dodd pipe organ (1897).



William Robert Knox (1861-1933) was one of Adelaide's best-known musical figures in the period 1875 to 1920. A child prodigy, Knox's musical training was wholly in Adelaide and by 1900 he was recognised as the most published of Australian composers.

Most of his compositions are for organ or piano but he also composed works for voice and choir. During his career he was variously church organist, composer, music teacher, music retailer and Adelaide City organist. In this latter role he presented numerous well-attended weekend performances at the Adelaide Town Hall in aid of charity organisations and the war effort during World War I.

This Historical Society event will present an overview of Knox's life and musical career, interspersed with examples of Knox's compositions. This is Australian music from the early C20th and most of it has not been performed for over 80 years.

The presenters:

Dirk Zadra is a former organist at Clayton Wesley Uniting Church and teaches at Prince Alfred College.

Dr Geoffrey Bishop is a horticulturist with an interest in history. His history of Clayton Wesley Uniting Church was published in 2006.

He is the current President of the Historical Society of South Australia.

Re-opening of the Ernabella Church

The re-opening of the church at Pukatja Community in the far north-west of South Australia on 27 March 2010, provided an opportunity to reflect on the history of Ernabella Mission which began as a Presbyterian mission in 1937. Celebrations to mark the restoration of the church building and its re-opening continued on the following day, Palm Sunday.

The establishment of the mission was due largely to the advocacy of an Adelaide surgeon, Dr. Charles Duguid, who had visited the region and was disturbed by the negative effects of encroaching white settlement, including the abuse of Aboriginal labour and women on cattle stations and the spread of introduced diseases. He was able to use his influence as Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of South Australia to further this advocacy. Duguid was also influential in formulating the policies which were to guide the missionaries in their work. These policies included respect for traditional culture and use of the Pitjantjatjara language in evangelism and education. In the early years church services were held outdoors until a brush church with spinifex roofing was erected in 1944.



The large church building, constructed of cement blocks made and laid by local Pitjantjatjara men, was opened in 1952 with approximately 400 people present. On the same day, 20 young people were baptised as the first-fruits of the Ernabella church. In following decades the building was used regularly for Sunday services and daily morning prayers.

From 1 January 1974 the church handed over administration of Ernabella to a local incorporated community which was given a local name Pukatja. Sunday services continued to be held in the church and for a period morning prayers were maintained. From its beginnings at Ernabella, the Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara church expanded as new settlements, including Fregon, Amata, Mimili and Indulkana, were established in the region. This expansion continued in the late 1970s with the opening of homeland communities to the west of these settlements. The Pitjantjatjara parish became part of the newly established Uniting Church in Australia in 1977. By 1980, approximately 500 adults had been baptised in the area and 25 Elders had been ordained.

By the 1990s the church building was used less frequently as many services were conducted from an outdoor platform. However it was used on special occasions and for funeral services. Having been listed on the State Heritage Sites register in 2001, the building was closed in 2006 because of asbestos in the roof and one wall. While closed, it sustained damage to windows and doors. Church and community leaders requested government assistance to restore the building and in 2009 the asbestos was removed and replaced and a work party repaired other damage.

A large crowd of locals and visitors gathered for the re-opening celebrations. The visitors included former mission staff, representatives from the Northern Synod and the Northern Regional Council of the Uniting Aboriginal and Islander Christian Congress and members of the Alice Springs Uniting Church. The official opening ceremony was held on the Saturday afternoon. That night a service was held in the open-air with the Ernabella School Choir and the Senior Choir singing on a specially constructed stage near the church. The church was full for the Sunday morning service. The President of the UCA, Rev. Alistair Macrae preached, with Bible translator, Paul Eckert interpreting. Ernabella Community Minister, Graham Kulyuru, presided at the sacrament of communion. A large Pitjantjatjara Bible donated by the Bible Society, a lectern, communion table and baptismal font were dedicated. Since



the original opening of the church, a concave shaped rock had been used as the font. This had gone missing when the building was closed but one of the women found a similar rock to replace it. Pews donated by churches in Monbulk and Portland in Victoria had been placed in the church. The congregation included men who had mixed cement and laid bricks for the construction of the church in 1952 and women who had observed this work of their brothers.

During the restoration work, two large panels with photographs and facsimiles of documents which portray the history of Ernabella and the church were placed on the rear wall. These were prepared by Ara Irititja Project, a Pitjantjatjara Council archive based in Adelaide. An eight-page program prepared for the celebrations includes some of these images, a timeline in English and Pitjantjatjara listing significant events and dates in the history of the church, a list of ministers and a section on the Ernabella Choir. Work is now proceeding on preparing a book which will contain a fuller outline of the events, oral history records of the original church building and more images to illustrate this history.

All who attended the celebrations found them inspiring with the warmth of fellowship and renewing of friendships. The Pitjantjatjara/Yankunytjatjara churches need the prayers and support of the wider church as they face the challenges of change.

Rev. Bill Edwards
(former Superintendent of Ernabella Mission)

TWILIGHT HISTORY WALK

On 19th March (a balmy evening at the end of daylight saving) a small group enjoyed a Twilight History Walk (and car tour) in lower Norwood led by the enthusiastic Rev Mac Macdonald. We began at 15-17 Sydenham Road, the manse and church building of a Primitive Methodist Church (the existing building was erected in 1872, the first having been built in 1858). As part of our journey, St Bartholomew's Anglican Church in Beulah Road was well worth the visit, as we learned a great deal about the history of the building and the community which worships there. On our way we also passed the Orthodox Church of the Prophet Elias, the historic Norwood Primary School and Police Station, and St Giles Presbyterian Church on The Parade. Our walk ended at the Mary Martin Bookshop in The Parade, the former Norwood Baptist Church. Grateful thanks were expressed to Mac for his detailed commentary.

Val Canty

"COPPER COAST" SESQUICENTENARY

Noted in "New Times", for those who have a particular interest in the Cornish history of SA, there will be a guided car tour of the Moonta area (a repeat of one held in March) on **Sunday, 3rd October at 2 pm**, meeting first at the Moonta Uniting Church. The tour will identify where the 14 Methodist Churches were situated in the area prior to 1900.

PIIRIE STREET'S PILGRIMAGE

SYNOPSIS

The study briefly traces the story of the first Methodist settlers, from the inception the colony of South Australia through to the 1960's. It argues the thesis that the people of Pirie Street Methodist Church who became part of Union Church in the City were the spiritual heirs and successors of those first pilgrims.

The unique function of a City Church is investigated and its role contrasted with that of suburban churches (which in the early days included several congregations located within the city's square mile).

The paper examines the disproportionate influence of the transfer to Pirie Street of a relatively small group (of members) following the closure of the Madge Memorial Church, Halifax Street in 1960. These newcomers brought a youthful vitality and an openness to innovation to the older, more staid congregation. They also played a major role in the establishment of the contemporary worship "in the round" and contributed to the re-ordering of the old Stow Memorial Church building.

Research has thrown light on Pirie Street's "disappearing" Sunday school. The city church remained viable from 1920 until the transfer of the Madge School in 1960 at a time when many suburban congregations boasted huge enrolments. Just why this happened as well as its significance for today's congregations are examined.

By the conclusion of World War 1, Pirie Street had reached its zenith. However it maintained its standing as the "Mother Church of Methodism" for another 40 years. Then, the social upheaval of an era which included the Beatles, the Pill (and its consequences for the role of women), the "Continental Sunday" and the emergence of television (to mention a few), all impacted the wider church and this city church in particular.

The saga of Pirie Street had been inseparably linked to Epworth Building since its erection next door by a Conference appointed committee in the 1920's, where it occupied the site of the old parsonage. The perceived inequity of the terms of the ground lease of the site with no provision for changing values and emerging needs, strained the relations between the church and Epworth. This festering wound soured the relationship between Pirie Street and Epworth, notably during the period of the Great Depression and finally came to a head when Epworth was enlarged in 1964-5. The ensuing dispute between the church trustees and the Epworth Board consumed much time and energy during a period when land values had risen sharply post-War and costs associated with the mission of a city church were escalating. A compromise was reached under which the rental on the area of the original building remained unchanged while provision for escalation applied to the area of the extension.

Changes in ministerial staffing accelerated the momentum of fresh thinking regarding mission, with four options being examined for the future role of Methodism in the city. Eventually, leaders and members determined to explore possible amalgamation with Stow Congregational Church which adjoined Pirie Street on the south. The negotiations which followed investigated the redevelopment of part of the joint site to provide modern church facilities. The role of the Adelaide City Council in impeding a variety of development proposals proved frustrating and ultimately resulted in the church reluctantly requesting the Council to compulsorily acquire the site of the Pirie Street church. The changes which have transformed both sites and the Town Hall itself, did not begin until after the establishment of the united parish.

The consultations which took place between 1966 and 1969 also focussed on the renewal of worship. Obviously, the continued duplication of morning and evening services demanded a re-think. The resulting consensus had three features: a contemporary service in Pirie Street at 10 a.m.; an 11 a.m. service in Stow Church; and evening worship in Pirie Street at 7 p.m. The new initiative in contemporary worship owed much to the leadership of Rev. Dr. Ian Parsons and took place in the "round" in the upstairs gallery. Until the closure of the Pirie Street building, the

two choirs operated independently – Stow in the morning and Pirie Street in the evening. Eventually the two choirs would combine and occupy new choir stalls in the south end of Stow Church.

The skeletal essentials of “Methodism’s cathedral” consisted of a tripod base which supported its mission to the city. Progressively those three supporting members were weakened. First, the difficulty in recruiting and then retaining an outstanding organist and choirmaster damaged the crucial and long standing role of pace setter in worship and preaching. Then the un-written charter of nurturing and preserving the traditions of Methodism was diminished by the transfer of the meeting place of the Conference to the new complex at Maughan Church and was further accelerated by the growing excitement relating to the impending inauguration of the Uniting Church. While changing community attitudes to the institution of marriage and family reduced the church’s ministry of providing a common meeting place for events such as weddings and baptisms.

By the sixties both the Pirie Street and Stow congregations faced daunting backlogs of maintenance work resulting from the financial stringencies of the Depression years as well as the building restrictions during World War 11 and the immediate post-war years. For three decades little had been done to both sets of buildings.

Once the proposal for three worship services had been agreed and the steps for the acquisition of the Pirie Street church site together with the restoration of the “Lecture Hall” were in hand, the drafting of a constitution for the new United Parish presented few difficulties. Nor did John Bennett’s suggestion for the name of the united congregation - Union Church in the City- raise any significant dissent.

Thus on Trinity Sunday, 1st June, 1969 two streams of what was to become the Uniting Church in Australia, became one.

For those of us who can look back after a half century, it is easy to identify how the aspirations of the two congregations were largely fulfilled, as old buildings were re-modelled or demolished and new structures built in their place. Instead of a “shop-front” on Pirie Street, Pilgrim Church created an accessible lounge and office fronting the landscaped pedestrian walkway between Flinders and Pirie Streets to complement the facilities of the Pilgrim Centre. And the re-ordering of the remaining church structure has resulted in a more functional and attractive sanctuary which incorporates the Pirie Street organ significantly upgraded.

True, the churches were unable to erect the office tower they dreamed of. But, in the fullness of time the City served us well, not only by creating the elegant Colonel Light Building to enhance the streetscape of Pirie Street, while at the same time preserving and enhancing the historic Methodist “Lecture Hall”. In addition to this, the Council has greatly improved the immediate environs of the Town Hall and the church surrounds.

True, all this could have been accomplished with much less frustration and more expeditiously. But it was the Pilgrim Way. And we can now say it has been Pilgrims’ Progress!

Keith Smith

22nd June, 2010

Interview with the Rev. James Jefferis

Brougham Place



Rev. James Jefferis in 1877. Portrait by Mr. McCorman, hanging above the stairs near the entry at Brougham Place Uniting Church.

Interviewer:

This evening, I will be interviewing the Reverend James Jefferis, the founding minister of the North Adelaide Congregational Church. Welcome back to Brougham Place after so many years' absence!

Jefferis:

It's a pleasure to be back. The old building still looks much the same, but all these new faces...it's so satisfying to see all these people here and all different generations, what do you call them these days, Generation X, Y & Z? Sounds like the end times to me.

Interviewer:

...Can you tell us a little about yourself?

Jefferis:

Well, I was born in Bristol in the old country, England, in 1833. I came to Australia 26 years later, when my doctors said that I was prone to consumption (TB) and that I need-

ed to find a warmer, drier climate. My new wife of just six months, Mary Louisa, accompanied me.

Interviewer:

What was the happiest moment of your life?

Jefferis:

Having been married twice, I cannot say either of my wedding days, for fear of offending one of my wives. So, I will say it was at a Public Meeting in the Temperance Hall on Tynte Street, on 20 October, 1859. We had gathered for the purpose of establishing a Congregational Church in North Adelaide, and when the people were asked to indicate who would join a new congregation, 52 people stood up, including myself and my dear wife.

Interviewer:

What was the saddest moment of your life?

Jefferis:

This happened just five years later. Mary Louisa was pregnant with our fourth child. We had just moved into the new manse which still stands next door [St. Anne's College] and she gave birth to a little girl in March 1864, whom we named after her. A few days later, on Saturday afternoon, she was struck with scarlet fever. I did not appear in church the next day, but while the service was in progress next door, Mary Louisa died by my side. I was devastated and could not continue to function as the minister. I took time off from my duties from that day for the next two months. The baby girl was looked after by Mrs. Whittell, the physician's wife, and I took the other children, two boys, to stay with me at a friend's place in Glenelg. While there, young William died the day after his second birthday. That left me with a son of three, a baby girl and a great burden of sorrow.

Interviewer:

I am so sorry to hear of your sad loss. Can you tell us then of something happier in your life. What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Jefferis:

What do I say to that? I suppose that you have all heard how the Congregational Union was

offered £20,000 to establish an institution to train ministers, and instead, I insisted that the money be used to establish a University in Adelaide. And I'm sure you all know that for over twenty years, I was such a strong supporter of the idea of the federation of the Australian colonies into a single nation, that I have been called the "Prophet of Federation". And this congregation, still worshipping here after 150 years, must surely be a great achievement. However, to take my cue from the great Scottish poet, Robert Burns, "No other contribution we may make to the world is as important as that which we make when we establish and maintain a good home". And I humbly submit that my second wife, Marian, and I did that in the 42 years that we were married.

Interviewer:

Do you have any message for the Brougham Place Congregation today?

Jefferis:

This church building was completed in twelve years, and it is a magnificent monument all these years later. But the congregation of people is a living organism. That you people still meet here faithfully for worship and for teaching and to nurture the young, and that you have maintained this service to God and the community unbroken for 150 years, that is the real thing! And it is particularly pleasing to me that you are still meeting in the spirit of the original congregation.

Then, we taught a progressive theology: the exposition of the scripture proceeded on the assumption that more light and truth were to break forth from God's word. We believed that the study of the universe and the world of humanity would deepen our knowledge of the Most High. Science and philosophy were looked upon as handmaids to religion, and as contributing in their own spheres to a true theology. And I think that an open-minded way of thinking and a progressive theology are still the characteristics of this congregation. Well done!

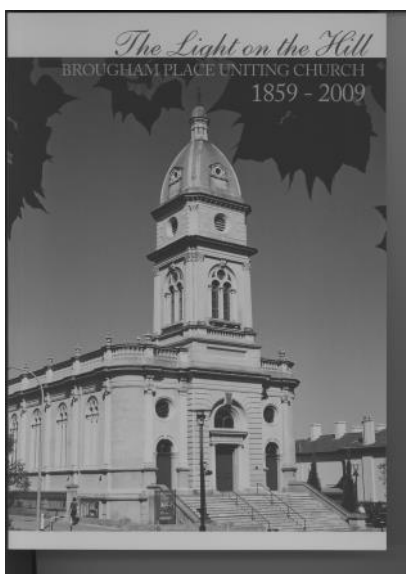
Interviewer:

Any final thoughts?

Jefferis:

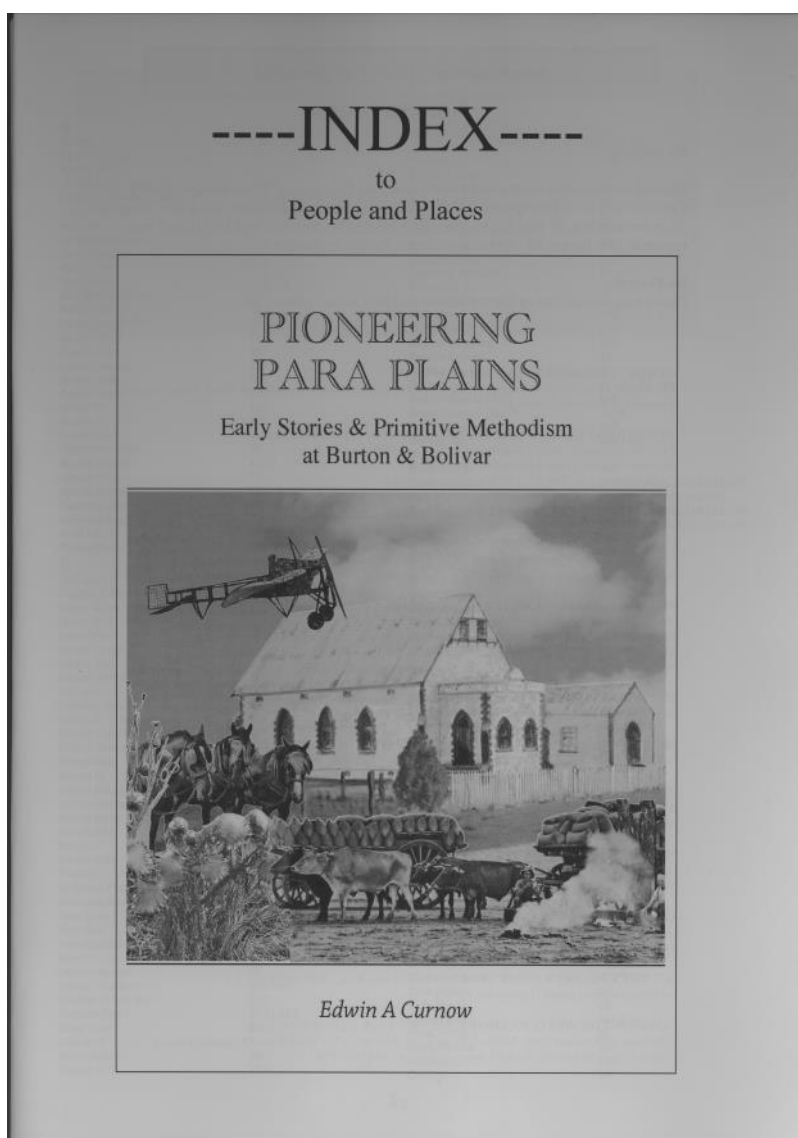
If you would like to know more about all this, I hear that there are still copies for sale of the book written by your historian, what's his name again?

Copies of the History of Brougham Place



Uniting Church, by Trevor Schaefer, are available from the church office, 193 Brougham Place, North Adelaide, for \$35.
email : office@bpuc.org

Copies of the Index (\$5)
to Rev Ted Curnow's book
are available from
Uniting Church History Centre
44A East Avenue
Black Forest SA 5035
Email: ucsahist@chariot.net.au
Phone: (08) 8297 8472



The book is
able (as

for \$40 (plus postage/packaging)

also still avail-
above)