

2018 Events

Members are urged to enter the following dates in their 2018 diaries now:

- **Sunday 4 March**
- **Sunday 29 April**
- **Sunday 17 June**
- **Sunday 21 October**



On these days, beginning at 2.30pm, we will be holding our public events, and look forward to a big turnout of members and others interested in South Australian church history.

Please note that the 29 April meeting will be part of the official SA History Month program, and the 17 June meeting will be our AGM. Details of the program are being finalised as this newsletter goes to print, but we are happy to announce the following, and will publicise further information, including venues, in due course.

4 March:

Primitive Methodists:

Who were they? Why did they come to SA? What has been their legacy? What were your family's links with the Primitives? This will be a work-in-progress discussion of this neglected aspect of church history, led by Rosemary Mitchell and a team of discussants.

29 April:

The local church as part of the historic built environment

(in conjunction with SA History Month). To be held at a local prominent historic church.

17 June:

AGM, followed by special lecture.

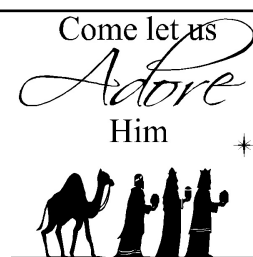
Rev. Dr Brian Chalmers, 'Evangelistic Trends within South Australian Methodism 1838-1939: a comparative analysis'.

21 October:

The history of the involvement of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Communities with the Uniting Church in SA.

Led by a team from the UCSAHS Council.

If you have ideas about topics for our meetings, or are engaged in history projects that warrant a wider audience, please let us know. We are always looking for ways to involve more of our membership in Historical Society activities, and to plan events that resonate with your interests.



The Committee and History Centre Volunteers and Staff would like to wish you a very blessed Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year



Uniting History SA December 2017

Guest Editor: Brian Chalmers

Methodist 'Lady Evangelists' of the 1890s

The significance of women as leaders in the emergence and development of the Women's Suffrage Movement in South Australia in the late nineteenth-century was acknowledged in the September edition of the Newsletter. The topic was the subject of a public meeting held at Brougham Place Uniting Church, North Adelaide on Sunday 8 October. A report on the Panel Discussion led by Dr Jenny Stock, which took place at the meeting, appears in this edition.

Some of the women as leaders in the women's suffrage movement were church members and a few were active lay preachers. These included the Bible Christian evangelist Serena Lake Thorne, who helped to pioneer women's preaching from the early 1870s and the Unitarian Catherine Helen Spence who later became Australia's first female political candidate. Their work as suffragettes benefitted from their active church association as occasional lay preachers. South Australia was the first colony in Australia to enfranchise women. This was achieved in 1894.

In an era when avenues for women outside the home were limited, opportunities to develop administrative, leadership and oratorical skills existed in churches. In Methodist churches women were often appointed as class leaders, could lead in prayer and exhortation, offer counsel to other women and engage in philanthropic activities. Methodism, and more generally, evangelical religion, in addition to an emphasis on female domesticity, aided the enlargement of the role of women in society.

The winning of the vote for women in South Australia in 1894 occurred a few years after a significant change took place in the attitude toward, and the role of women as revivalist preachers within some Methodist churches. A more extensive use of women as preachers in the formal setting of public worship in the 1890s signified a genuine departure in religious attitudes toward women preachers.¹

In 1891, the Bible Christians utilised what they termed 'Lady Evangelists' to conduct short-term revival-type missions.² Women often worked in pairs, moved from circuit to circuit at the invitation of the circuit minister, and quickly established their worth in securing conversions. How did this come about?

Background

The Bible Christians in South Australia, along with the Wesleyans and Primitive Methodists, never had female ministers in their connexions. The Bible Christians were the only branch of Methodism to use female evangelists, and then only sparingly, although the Wesleyans utilised the services of Misses Nesbit and Green in 1894-1895, as well as Misses A. and H. McLennan, in 1894. Prior to the 1890s, Serena Thorne, who had arrived in the colony as an evangelist in 1870, was the only female evangelist.³

Within British Methodism, the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians had women preachers since their foundation (1812 and 1815 respectively). Their ability to attract listeners, particularly other women, and thereby multiply the scope for conversions, influenced their use.⁴ The first Bible Christian Conference in 1819 unanimously approved the use of women preachers, but despite being acceptable in the pulpit their exclusion from governance was formalised in the Connexion's *Rules and Regulations* of 1838:

We believe that God, in certain instances, calls women, as well as men, to publish salvation to their fellow-sinners...They do not, however, take part in Church government: they are entitled to attend meetings for business, but not to vote.⁵

Fifty-one years later, these exact words, which indicated

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News from the History Centre

Volunteers continue to serve the church and the wider community by providing advice and assistance for those involved in researching church, local and family history.

The centre welcomes volunteers to help manage the large and growing collection of documents, memorabilia, books and records of churches and agencies.

The Centre at 44a East Avenue, Black Forest, is open on Wednesday afternoons from 1:00pm to 4:00pm

PLEASE NOTE: The History Centre will be closed for Christmas and Summer from December 13, and will be reopening on February 7, 2018

(Other contact details can be found on page 2)

The Women's Auxiliary to Overseas Missions—Holder
Memorial Church—circa 1908

(From Page 2)

243 conversions. Bible Christian membership increased by 128 in the following year. One correspondent, soon after Miss Catchlove’s visit to Port Elliot in the third quarter of 1892, declared the use of women evangelists as a matter of divine accord: ‘We are moving in harmony with God’s will in returning to a fuller recognition of woman’s work in the Gospel. We ought to have at least two of these devoted women in each district, if not one in every circuit. The expansion of our denominational area must come by these means’.¹¹ In 1892, the Bible Christian Northern District and the annual Conference of February 1893, expressed similar sentiments regarding the zeal and ‘persuasiveness’ of the ‘evangels of Christ’, who were credited with much of the 406 member increase for 1892.¹²

The ‘Lady Evangelists’ led a total of thirty-four revival/evangelistic missions from 1891-1897, and of these, twenty-eight were conducted in Bible Christian Circuits over the seven-year period and six in Wesleyan Circuits in the years 1894 (5) and 1895 (1). These missions accounted for a total of 786 Bible Christian converts and 602 Wesleyan converts. All of the reported Wesleyan conversions (602) occurred in the one year, 1894, the year Conference sanctioned the employment of ‘Lady Evangelists’ by the Home Mission Committee on the condition that no ‘liability be incurred by the Committee’.¹³ There is no evidence to suggest that, apart from this one year, the practice of female itinerant evangelists occurred within Wesleyan Methodism in the late nineteenth-century; the self-supporting criterion was sufficient reason for its limited appeal. Like their sisters in other churches, Wesleyan women were often valued more for their connexional fundraising ability, organising public teas, bazaars, fetes, and collecting contributions.¹⁴ Their roles, however, extended beyond the more traditional bounds of circuit life. Women class leaders were required to embrace the spiritual and pastoral in their leadership and oversight responsibilities of their society class meetings. These included ‘watching over souls’, restoration of backsliders, and encouraging the ‘reluctant to speak in front of others’.¹⁵ The primacy of the spiritual dimension entrusted to women as instruments of spiritual power among their own, collaborated with the restorative work of the revivalist. By 1896, the popularity of the ‘Lady Evangelists’ had waned; in that year only five missions were conducted, yielding 29 conversions. There were two missions and a further 29 conversions in Bible Christian circuits the following year. In addition to the five mentioned ‘Lady Evangelists’, an additional two (Misses Vierk and Harriet Ashenden) undertook evangelistic work. Female evangelistic agency of this nature concluded in 1897, although there were other women preaching at the time, and it was not until 1910 that the Methodist Church in South Australia employed the itinerant English evangelist, Sister Lily (Miss Cowmeadow) for three years (1910-1912).

The Bible Christian ‘Lady Evangelists’ of the 1890s nurtured the evangelistic and conversionist ethos of Methodism. They exemplified the Methodist spirit of pragmatic aggressive evangelism. Many nineteenth-century South Australian Methodists dared believe that the whole state could be converted to a ‘religion of the

heart’ through revivalist means.¹⁶ The contribution of women preachers was an important part of the vision, however unrealised the vision may have been.

Rev. Dr Brian Chalmers
Guest Editor

1. For a fuller account of the ‘Lady Evangelists’ in the 1890s see Brian Chalmers, “Methodists and Revivalism in South Australia, 1838-1939: The Quest for ‘Vital Religion’” (PhD thesis, Flinders University of South Australia, 2016), 123-136.
2. On the employment and history of women preachers in the English Bible Christian Connexion, see Jennifer M. Lloyd, ‘Women Preachers in the Bible Christian Connexion’, *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 36, no. 3 (Autumn 2004): 451-481. On the Bible Christian women preachers in South Australia, see Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven: A History of Methodism in South Australia* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985), 129-130; *The Bible Christians in South Australia* (Uniting Church Historical Society, 2005), 17-18.
3. Among the Bible Christians, a few women preached, but were not deemed ‘evangelists’. For Mrs. James Way, see *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine (SABCMag)*, August 1876, 277; for Mrs James Roberts, see *Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal*, 14 August 1885, 4.
4. Lloyd, *Women Preachers in the Bible Christian Connexion*, 455-456. Hugh Bourne, founder of the Primitive Methodists defended women preachers in a pamphlet of 1808.
5. Lloyd, *Women Preachers in the Bible Christian Connexion*, 463.
6. Bible Christian Handbook: A Manual of the Laws, Regulations, and Usages of the Bible Christian Church in South Australia (Adelaide: Bible Christian Conference, 1889), 6-7.
7. Wesleyan Methodist Church, Minutes of Conference, England, 1803, vol. II, 187; Handbook of the Laws and Regulations of the Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church (Melbourne: Wesleyan Book Depot, 1877), 135.
8. *SABCMag*, W. F. James, sermon to the Conference of 1890, August 1890, 227-236.
9. *SABCMag*, An elder (unidentified country resident), leading article, February 1891, 275-281.
10. Alan Hunt, *Governing Morals: A Social History of Moral Regulation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 97.
11. South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (SABCMonthly), 1 November 1892, 165.
12. *SABCMonthly*, April 1893, 247; May 1893, 239, 265. The Bible Christian Conference reported an increase of 317 for the year.
13. Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of South Australia Conference*, 1894, vol. 1, State Library of South Australia (SLSA) SRG 4/1/1.
14. Linda Wilson, ‘Constrained by Zeal: Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century Nonconformist Churches’, *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 2 (June 1999): 193-196.
15. Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of South Australia Conference*, 1874, vol. 1, South Australian Archives, SRG 4/1/1, 18. Conference, in 1892 did advocate the use of ‘female agents’ to help with ‘young people and outsiders’, but nothing eventuated beyond the proposal. See Australasian Wesleyan Methodist Church, *Minutes of South Australia Conference*, 1892, vol.1, SLSA SRG 4/1/1.
16. Such optimism was not entirely unfounded for by 1900, self-described (census) Methodists comprised 25.1 per cent of the state’s population, second only to Anglicans at 29.8 per cent.

Leaders of the Women’s Suffrage Movement in SA
Panel Discussion—Sunday 8 October, 2017



40 people were present on Sunday 8 October at Brougham Place Uniting Church for Society’s final meeting for 2017. We were welcomed by local historian, Trevor Schaefer who provided a summary of the influence the Rev James Jefferis, “prophet of federation” minister of the North Adelaide Congregational church from 1859-1877 and again from 1894 to 1901.



The main focus of the meeting involved a panel conversation was an explanation of the background and motivation of South Australians who were involved in the campaign for women’s suffrage in final two decades of the 19th century. Dr Jenny Stock “retired” historian from Adelaide University, opened the discussion with an overview of the social trends and opinions in the western world. These trends influenced South Australians who led the women’s suffrage movement. Don Hopgood, former deputy premier of SA and former Moderator of the UCA and Judy and Dean Eland provided further insights as the discussion continued.



L to R: Dean Eland, Judy Eland, Jenny Stock, Don Hopgood

A two page resource sheet was distributed for reference and this included notes on six women and two men who were directly involved. (A copy of this chart has been included in this newsletter). The conversation included reference to the lively and articulate Mary Lee, secretary of the Social Purity Society and the Womn’s Suffrage League from 1888 until legislation was passed in December 1894. Mary Lee was influenced by the ideals of Primitive Methodist preacher Hugh Gilmore and worked tirelessly for political and social reform.

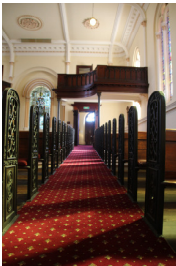
Other activists including Mary Colton member of Pirie St Methodist church, Serena Lake, Bible Christian

evangelist, Elizabeth Webb Nicholls, Methodist, Rosetta Jane Birks, Flinders St Baptist and author and journalist Catherine Helen Spence who became an itinerant preacher of the Unitarian Church. The two men included MP Dr Edward Stirling, who introduced the bill to enfranchise women. The Rev J C Kirby, minister of the Port Adelaide Congregational Church from 1880 to 1908, campaigned for the rights of women and children and preached and lectured widely in Australia on the topic.

Reference was made to many other groups and associations that embodied similar ideals and convictions including the Woman’s Christian Temperance Movement, Working Women’s Trade Union, Adelaide hospital, and female refuge, Traveller Aid, YWCA and YMCA. Lady Mary Colton was active in over 20 similar church and community organisations. Many of these groups were founded by non-conformists who were concerned for the poor, women and children at risk from family violence, working conditions and were expressed as underlying ideals of Christian service.

Recommended biographical references for further research include, *In Her Own Name: a History of Women in South Australia from 1836* by Helen Jones, revised edition Wakefield Press 1994. Summary biographies of these leaders are included in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography* and are available on line. Other more recent publications include *Woman Suffrage in Australia: a gift or a struggle?* (1992) by Audrey Oldfield and *Votes for Women: the Australian story* (1995) by Kirsten Lees.

Members present were interested about the about the origins of the Brougham Place UC building and James Jefferis. An extensive 340 page biography by Walter Phillips, *James Jefferis: Prophet of Federation*1993, Australian Scholarly Publishing is a valuable source of information.



Following afternoon tea those present were invited to join in a tour of one of Adelaide’s most significant heritage listed church buildings opened on 22 February 1861. For those interested in the architectural features check out the recent photographic study of the building by Paul Scott. <http://paulscottinfo.ipage.com/adelaide/churches/broughamplace/index.html>

Dean Eland

Women’s Suffrage Movement in SA

	Church Link	Organisations	Achievements	Key beliefs
Mary Lee 1821-1909 Married 1844 7 Children Migrated 1879. Middle aged Irish widow.	Influenced by ideals of Primitive Methodist Hugh Gilmore of Wellington Square	Secretary Social Purity Society. (SPS.) Secretary SA Women’s Suffrage League July 1888-94. (WSL.) Working Women’s Trade Union. Female Refuge.	The Constitution Amendment Act passed 18 Dec 1894. House of Assembly. 31 to 14. First vote took place on 25 April 1896	Worked for political and social reform. “To love is to serve.” Female suffrage as pivot on which turns the whole question of the moral, social and indus- trial standards of women. “The active concern of such women for children arose from their firm commitment to Christian principles and humanitarian ideals.” Page 44 Jones.
Mary Colton 1822-1898 Born London. Migrated 1839 and married 1844.	Wesleyan Meth- odist Pirie St	President WSL 1892-94. More than 20 organisations, par- ticularly for women.	Adelaide Children’s hospital, YWCA, founding of about twenty charitable organisations including Dorcas Society at Pirie St. WSL and WCTU	Lifelong philanthropy based on ideals of Chris- tian service.
Serena Lake 1842-1902. Migrated 1865. Arrived SA to preach at the Town Hall 22 May 1870 Married Octavius Lake 2 March 1871. 7 children one survived.	Bible Christian Evangelist	WCTU. WSL. Bible Christian Women’s Mis- sionary Board.	Following disbandment of the SPS 1885 they continued to meet and decided in June 1888 that women’s political enfran- chisement was necessary.	Believed that sexual equality “to be the original design of the Creator.” Confident that if women possessed the ballot it would curb the abominable liquor traffic.
Elizabeth Webb Nicholls 1850-1943 Born Adelaide. Mother died when 3. Married 1870.	Methodist	President of WCTU. 1889-1897. 1906-27. Hospital Board.	Founding member of WCTU. Platform of principles for wom- en’s work.	Proportional representation suffrage as access to employment & professions.
Rosetta Jane Birks 1856-1911 Born Adelaide. Stepmother to 6 children	Baptist Flinders St	Treasurer WSL 1888-94. Hospital Board 1896.	Social Purity Society. 1882	Family that strongly supported public affairs, philanthropic and religious causes.
Catherine Helen Spence 1825-1910 Born in Scotland	Unitarian from 1856 and preacher 1878.	Boarding Our Society 1872-1886. Australia’s first female political candidate.	Campaigned against domestic violence. Writer, preacher, re- form feminist and proportional representation.	Remedies for social ills lay in long term solu- tions backed by public opinion and based in the law. Jones xvii” Grand old woman of Australian education for girls.”

	Church Link	Organisations	Achievements	Key beliefs
Dr Edward Charles (Ted) Stirling MP Lecturer and Prof. in medi- cine. 1848-1919	Influenced by John Stuart Mill	First President of WSL 1882-92	Raised issues in parliament. Strong advocate for girl’s edu- cation.	In 1884-87 Stirling was member for North Ad- elaide in the House of Assembly and in 1886 he introduced a bill to enfranchise women. The South Australian Museum became his major life’s work.
Joseph Coles Kirby 1837-1924 Born England Migrated to Sydney 1854 Joined Pitt St congregation.	Congregational Went to Quaker boarding school in UK.	Minister Port Adelaide 1880-1908 Active in retirement! Evangelical, educator, pastoral worker and social reformer SPS Co secretary WSL 20 July 1887	Formation of the Social Purity Society 1884 Secretary. Act to protect women and chil- dren. RI in State Schools. Later known as Mr Six O’clock. Prison reform etc.	Connection between liquor, prostitution and family violence. July 1882 Three lectures at Pirie St on Social Purity. 14 Dec 1890. Sermon “Woman: A Queen Reg- nant.” Gen 1:26-28. 1895 Amendments in the Laws needed to se- cure the Rights of Women and Children. Age of consent to 16 1899.



Lady Mary Colton

“And now the colony is the first in Australia to rest the government of the people upon an adult suffrage. Memorable in the history of the southern continent must be the general election in South Australia of 1896 as the first in which women took part. Amongst the ladies who had the honour of being the first to vote for members of Parliament in Australia are; West Adelaide, Mrs Kingston, wife of the Premier; Glenelg, Mrs Charles Birks; Rose Park, Mrs Winifred Woods; North Adelaide, Miss Elsie Claxton; Port Adelaide, Mrs J.C. Kirby; Norwood, Mrs Thomas Gully; St Peters, Mrs Violet Gandlish Simon; Hindmarsh, Mrs T. Saunders; Goodwood, Mrs J.F. Cook; Unley, Misses A. and S. Winwood; Parkside, Mrs J.G. Jenkins. And the women have polled remarkably well as to both numbers and the intelligence displayed in fulfilling the requirements of the Act.”

http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/women_and_politics/suffr3.htm



Serena Thorne Lake