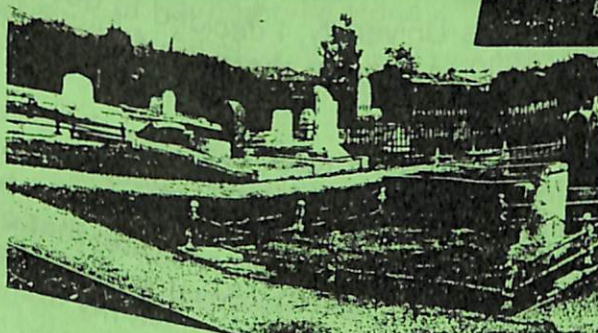
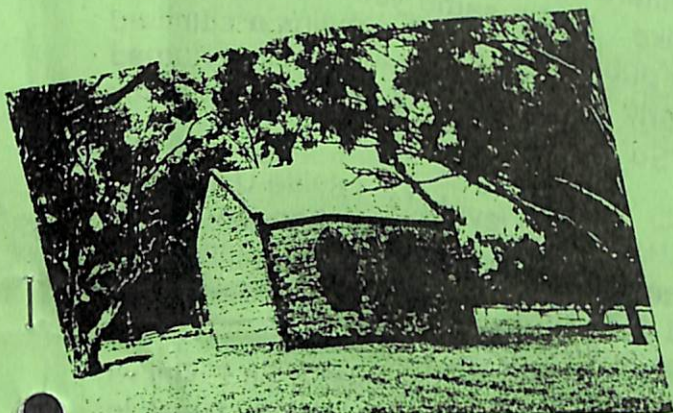


The Historical Society  
of the  
Uniting Church in Australia  
South Australian Synod



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NEWSLETTER  
NO. 78  
OCTOBER 2001

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## *Editorial*

The President of the UCA Historical Society (SA) has insisted that for this first editorial I should write something about myself.

I suppose I have always been fascinated by matters historical. At Adelaide University in 1957 I studied History under Dr. Douglas Pike. In the same year his book about early South Australia, *Paradise of Dissent* was published. It still remains a standard book on the subject. I still remember very clearly having one of my essays returned with his oft-repeated comment in the margin: 'So I was wrong when I wrote....in my book *P of D.*'

Years later I sought to resume doing History at BA (Hons) level at Adelaide University. However the pressure of other work commitments meant I had to abandon it half-finished. When I finally entered the retirement era of life, I still felt it was unfinished business. I thought I could pick up the subject where I had left off 28 years earlier. However other students had well and truly covered the field in the meantime.

After my acceptance in Flinders University, I decided to develop a thesis on Primitive Methodism in S.A. 1840 - 1900. I hope to share the findings of a part of my thesis in lecture to the Society next year.

A friend of mine was recently rather bemused when he discovered my involvement in the Historical Society. He had always understood people only became interested in history when they were afraid of the future. I assured him, as he well knew, I was not afraid to face the future. I then told him of my conviction that our future depended on us having a good grasp of the past in order to develop a greater understanding of just where things are at, and for what reasons. I then gave my friend Professor Theodore Zeldin's dictum to ponder :

***'To have a new vision of the future  
it has always first been necessary  
to have a new vision of the past.'***

That sums up what I believe as I take up my duties as Editor of this Newsletter.

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***A Warm Invitation to all  
to the Annual Meeting and Lecture***

*To be held in the*

***Clayton-Wesley Hall,***

***Cnr. Portrush Rd and The Parade, Beulah Park  
on Friday, 9th November, 2001***

***7.30 p.m.***

***The lecture, to begin at 8 p.m., will be given by  
Ms Julia Pitman***

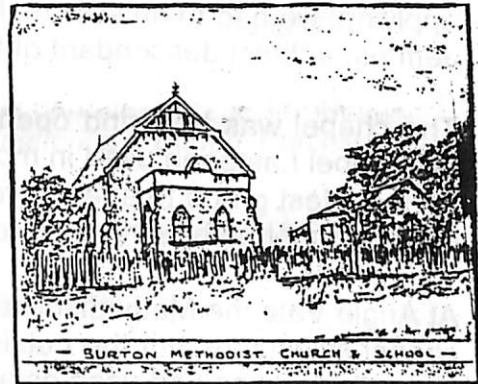
***"High Principles and Real Possibilities:  
the ordination of women in  
the Congregational Union in Australia, 1927-1977"***

*Light Supper to follow*

***Almost a Pilgrimage -  
A Visit to some of the early sites of  
Methodism on the Gawler Plains***

On September 1, I joined 40 other people who had braved inclement weather to visit some of S.a. Methodism's historic sites on the Gawler Plains (the tract of land between the Little Para and Gawler rivers).

After assembling at the Uniting Church's Freedom and Community Centre, Paralowie, the cavalcade of hired bus and private cars proceeded to where the Primitive Methodist church stood by the side of the Burton Road. The church cemetery is all that remains of the original centre. There had once been a substantial church building, erected in 1915 adjacent to the original chapel. A memorial stone now marks the spot and the cemetery is at present being restored as a site of historical significance.



Rev Ted Curnow has reconstructed the history connected with the grave-sites and has published an index and biographical material concerning the 143 people who were interred at the Burton cemetery.

William Diment was a pioneer farmer at Burton. Of church interest is the fact that at 61 years of age, he was the first and only layman to become President of the Primitive Methodist Assembly in South Australia, first in 1883 and again in 1885. Probably his 1883 term of office provided a unique situation in S.A. Methodism. His 29-year-old minister son, William Diment jnr, was the Secretary for the Assembly for that year. It must have been confusing for delegates when matters were referred to 'William Diment' to know whether it was father or son who was being named.

As this was my first visit to the old cemetery, it called to mind that two sons of the Secomb family from Two Wells had courted and married two daughters of the Diment family. The younger of the brothers was my great-grandfather. I wondered whether the love-story had begun at one of the Anniversary tea-meetings which were such significant district social events in Primitive Methodism, indeed Methodism generally, in that era.

This old cemetery and church-site is cheek by jowl with a new suburban housing development. That would be something the old pioneers would never have envisaged. On the other hand, the significance of the site probably scarcely impinges, if at all, on the consciousness of these latter-day residents.

The next port of call was the site of the Zoar Bible Christian chapel. Again, all that remains of this once thriving congregation is a cemetery. Here we are reminded of the particularly zealous ministry of Samuel Keen, after his arrival on the Gawler Plains in 1853. He diligently sought out the settlers, organised them into groups for worship and urged them to build a chapel as soon as possible.

In his 1857 report to the Bible Christian Missionary Society in England, Samuel Keen wrote of those converted at Zoar during the past year as "twenty who escaped thither for their life".

Much of the original farmland in this area, once known as Peachy Belt, has been taken over by the Weapons Research Establishment and Edinburgh Airbase. The Jeffries family, originally from Canada, erected a small chapel on their property known as 'Sturton'. This chapel was used by the Jeffries family and neighbours, but it always remained a small congregation.

This very small, very plain chapel still stands in reasonably good repair, thanks to the restoration work sanctioned by WRE. With restricted access to the area now applying, we had to have formal permission to visit. This was arranged by Mr Laurie Jeffries, a direct descendant of the pioneer family.

The chapel was built and opened in 1856. Regular services ceased in 1892, but the chapel has been used in more recent times for special Jeffries family occasions. As the latest group to attend, we said a prayer and sang the Doxology to add to the worship that had been offered to God on a regular basis more than 100 years ago.

At Angle Vale the Methodist church was closed in the 1970's. The original red-brick chapel still stands but the outside walls are now cement-rendered. The building is in good condition and used as a private home.

This was where Samuel Keen began his South Australian ministry in 1853. After a period of services being held in the homes of the people, this chapel was opened in September 1854, and was named Ebenezer. This is another biblical name, mentioned in 1 Samuel 7:12 – 'Then Samuel took a stone and set up between Mizpah and Jeshanah and called its name Ebenezer, for he said, "Hitherto the Lord has helped us".'

The setting up of a stone to mark a sacred place was something done in pre-historic times, long before the days of Samuel. It signified that which could not have been easily toppled. Keen was determined the Bible Christian cause would be on the Gawler Plains for a long time.

***"Here I raise my Ebenezer:***

***Hither by Thy help I'm come."***

(Words from a hymn by one of John Wesley's preachers, Robert Robertson)  
Methodist Hymnbook, 417.

With heavy rain about to descend on us, we made our final stop for the afternoon at the ruined Carclew Primitive Methodist church. The first brick building with a three-roomed cottage attached had been built in 1850 on a block given by Jonathon Roberts from the corner of his property, 'Carclew', named after the locality where he had lived in Cornwall.

The building we were looking at had been built in 1870 to replace the original chapel. Although much-abused by vandals, the signs of it having been a fine building were still evident. It still proudly displayed the inscription over the remains of its stately entrance porch : PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH 1870.

Although regular services at Carclew ceased in 1919, the trustees kept the building in good repair, hoping it would be needed again. But it was not to be. [contd. ....]

After the centenary celebrations in 1950, the fittings and furnishings were disposed of, and the building left to the ravages of neglect. Unfortunately this has also been the fate of the little church cemetery adjoining.

Again the personal links came to mind, as I remembered my great-great-grandfather had come with his wife and two small children to farm on leased land in the area in 1851. Eighteen years later, he purchased land near Two Wells. During the Carclew years, my ancestors had come regularly to the very spot where I was standing, to worship in the Primitive Methodist chapel.

With the rain setting in for the rest of the day, our group had no alternative but to remember briefly and leave quickly.

There would have been others present who, like me, found the occasion was almost a pilgrimage in the original Christian sense of the word.

**Kevin Secomb**

*[Photos on front cover, taken by Val Canty, from left to right: Zoar, Burton, Carclew]*

### ***A Modern Pilgrimage – tramping the Salisbury circuit***

Under the grim gathering of gun metal clouds  
Glowing o'er the dead,  
Pilgrims seeing Primitive churches  
Surrounded by straggling shrubs  
Ash green acacias  
Spurting golden wattle  
The road rutted  
Clotted with mud  
Tyre tracks deep entrenched  
Like the faith of the pioneers trod  
Striving and straining  
In dirt, dust, flies  
Souls to save  
And here on this bleak day  
On this windswept plain  
Of wet and tired feet  
We modern pilgrims complain  
Not so hardy we  
That follow our forebears' lead  
To comfort wedded  
As listening in silence  
Stunned by their passion  
Their persistence  
Over pestilence and plague  
To bring their preaching  
To these plains  
And left us to wonder at our own  
Standards left  
That pale in retrospect.

**Jane Pederson**

## ***Biography of John Wesley Barrett, 1879-1938***

*By Mary Barrett and Maisie Tuft (nee Barrett)*

(Published privately and circulated among members of the extended family)

A 96-year-old lady, with a crystal-clear memory, now living at Helping Hand Ingle Farm, was a teenager when John Wesley Barrett was the minister in the Eudunda Circuit, 1920-22. She recalls how he used to drive in his buggy to her parents' home in Neale's Flat, conduct the Sunday service in the living room and then stay for lunch. When Bertha, his wife, was in hospital giving birth to Maisie (co-writer of the biography), she helped to look after the eldest child Kevin (now husband of Mary who co-authored the book). In those days the local chemist, Mr C. B. Secombe (father of Rev Viv Secombe), was a circuit steward. Records of this period in the local history of Eudunda indicate that membership increased and plans were laid for the building of a church at Anlaby.

When John and his younger brother Sam were in their early twenties, they were widely known in South Australian Methodist churches as the "Barrett Brothers". They were very gifted young men. John could recite, sing, play the organ, cello and violin. Both brothers "could make people sit up" with their homely messages and deep commitment to their Lord. They became known as the "smiling evangelists, the singing evangelists, organising evangelists, preaching evangelists, bell ringing evangelists". A mission to a town or suburb usually began with a concert on the first night and then mission meetings. A letter in the book from Minlaton indicates the profound influence of their ministry. Between 1900 and 1902 they conducted 55 missions.

In 1903 they were invited to go to NSW to help establish "The Helping Hand Mission" in Balmain, which had the reputation for being the "devil's allotment". The story of their three years there reads like present-day church-planting and church growth. "Hundreds of non-church goers were attracted to this mission, including many prize fighters, drunkards, gamblers and Sabbath-breakers".

On returning to SA, they conducted another 51 missions. Then in 1909 John married Bertha Peter in the Helping Hand Mission Hall in Balmain in a service conducted by the famous Sydney CMM preacher, Rev W.G. Taylor. Brother Sam now joined his brother Fred in the well-known real estate firm, Barrett & Barrett, and continued to serve the church in property matters and as a local preacher.

John became a Home Missioner. Beginning in April 1910 he served at Meningie, then at Kingston, Mount Gambier, Berri, Modbury and Eudunda. During this period he applied twice to be ordained, "received an absolute unanimous vote of the conference" but was rejected on medical grounds. Extraordinary! In his diary there are occasional references to being "completely knocked up" after an exhausting mission but nothing to suggest that his health was dubious. He was finally ordained in 1924. Beginning in the Cleve Circuit in 1922, he subsequently served in Mount Torrens (where he bought his first car – a 1924 Chevrolet) and Yongala.

In 1930 he transferred to NSW so that Bertha could be nearer her family. Appointments to Clunes and Murwillumbah in the north coastal area of NSW followed and finally the Waverly Circuit, near Bondi, where some well-known ministers, like Alan Walker, were to serve in later decades. John died of pneumonia while on holidays in 1934.

Bertha looked after the diaries which he had written in the early years; also his letters and newspaper clippings. She lived on until the late 1960's and ..[contd....]

it was then that family members discovered the historic records which inspired the writing of this biography.

A copy has been placed in the Church archives and another is available from the Modbury Church library. We are grateful to Mary and Maisie for their contribution to our knowledge of the significant ministries of the "Barrett Brothers" and then the circuit ministry of John.

(John's childhood home was in Millswood. He attended the Goodwood Primary School and very likely left school when he was 12. The family belonged to the Clarence Park Church. His father was a carpenter. In the diary record of the very first mission service at Kangarilla, 12th August 1899 "Father preached in the morning powerfully. Sam addressed Sunday School in the afternoon and ... afterwards...drove to visit a poor paralysed boy and rang and played to him the bells... evening service place very full...one or two decided...")

*Reviewed by Gowan Armstrong*

***"High Principles and Real Possibilities:  
The ordination of women in the Congregational Churches  
in Australia, 1927-1977"***

As advertised on page 2 of this newsletter, Ms Julia Pitman will deliver the annual lecture for the Historical Society at the Annual Meeting on Friday, 9th November, 2001 in the Clayton-Wesley church hall, 7.30 p.m., with the lecture beginning at 8.

Ms Julia Pitman is a postgraduate student of the Adelaide University History Department. She is currently completing a PhD on women in the Congregational churches in Australia. Thoroughly involved in the Uniting Church in Australia, she is an active member of Pilgrim Uniting Church, is serving her second term on the Assembly Standing Committee and forms part of the reference committee for the About FACE 5 program. A committed ecumenist, she is acting national secretary of the Australian Student Christian Movement and serves on the Executive of the National Council of Churches.

Between 1927 and 1977, fifteen women were ordained in the Congregational Churches in Australia, the first church to ordain a woman. How did this come about and what were the implications for the churches and Australian society? This paper explores the significance of the ordination of women in the Congregational Churches for the wider feminist and ecumenical movement. Julia suggests that a combination of high principles and real possibilities propelled women into the ordained ministry in the Congregational Churches in Australia.

Julia believes historical perspectives are vital for the maintenance of functional identity not only for churches but for society as a whole. Church history is the implications for whole societies of the often controversial engagement of believers with tradition and revelation. This legacy shapes the present and the possibilities for the future. History is done daily at prayer, stirred over cups of tea and enshrined in committee resolutions. It has implications for the mood, motivation and mission of the church. The occasional critical appraisal forms a vital springboard for its life and mission.



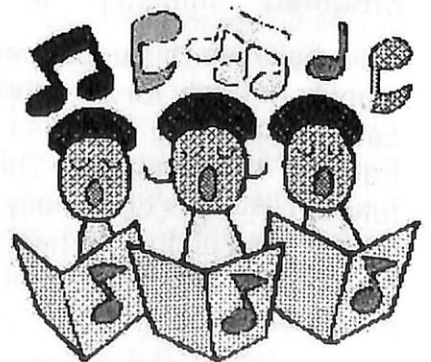
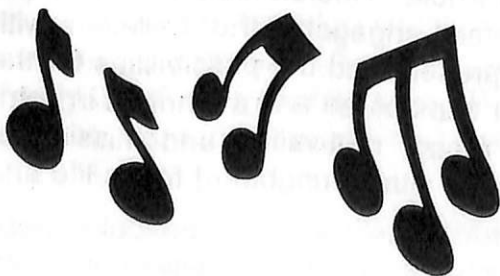
***Great Hymns of our Faith***  
***Featuring the Adelaide Harmony Choir***  
***With conductor John Hall***  
***- launch of new CD***

***Sunday, 11th November, 2001***  
***2.30 p.m.***  
***Wesley Church, Kent Town***  
***Fullarton Road***

***Come along and enjoy***

- ◇ ***Musical Items by Adelaide Harmony choir***
- ◇ ***With conductor John Hall***
- ◇ ***Congregational Hymn Singing***
- ◇ ***Rev Kyle Waters to launch CD***
- ◇ ***Copies available – \$20***
- ◇ ***An ideal Christmas or birthday gift***

The CD has been sponsored by the Historical Society





**Book Review**  
**"A Sacred Trust : The Uniting Churches in  
the Mitcham Hills"**  
By Rosemary Mitchell

(Henley Beach S.A., Seaview Press, 2000) 265 pp, RRP \$30.

This attractively presented narrative is comprehensive in its coverage of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists in this particular region of the Adelaide Hills. It begins in 1836, the year when South Australia was proclaimed a colony of England, and ends during the year 2000, just before going to print. It is not so much a completion; rather a recognition of the story thus far. Many more chapters will be added in the future.

For those of us intrigued by 'the early days', the first chapter: 'Foundation to Federation 1836 - 1899' is particularly full of interest. As pioneering settlers moved out of Adelaide and into the hills, they were sustained by their Christian faith. To ensure this faith remained strong they built chapels of very simple design to house them while they worshipped. These became the gathering points for both the worship and social life of these hardworking men and women and their children.

The Adelaide Wesleyan Methodist circuit of chapels and preaching places was extending constantly. Finally it became too unwieldy to manage effectively. The circuit was then broken into two, and the Clarendon circuit was formed in 1855 - Clarendon, Cherry Gardens, Kangarilla, Meadows, Finniss Flat and Happy Valley.

The minister of the new circuit and eight local preachers made sure that the eighteen Sunday and mid-week services were regularly held. Even so, this situation soon changed as the circuit extended further afield, and more preachers were needed to fill the preaching plan.

The Clarendon circuit relished its independent status. Its leading laymen were never in a mood to be dictated to by the leaders of the Church in Adelaide. Rosemary Mitchell comments, towards the end of the book, 'Methodism had been structured around lay involvement but with lay people subservient to the minister.' (p 251) According to her description of some actions taken in the early years of the Clarendon circuit, subservience was not always the order of the day.

It is interesting to note that Clarendon Uniting Church celebrates its 150 years of history this year. While services were first held in homes, and in Mr. Bottrill's barn, the first chapel was built in 1851 in Clarendon village on a steep hillside, named 'Mount Zion' by the Methodists. A bigger building was erected in 1875, this time on a more accessible piece of flat land. This is the building used by the present Clarendon Uniting Church congregation.

In 2001, we travel through Blackwood, then Coromandel Valley, to Clarendon and beyond. It is easy to assume the Blackwood church was established earlier than the one at Coromandel Valley. Not so. In fact we are reminded that Congregational services were held between 1854 and 1858, before the Coromandel Valley Wesleyan chapel was opened in 1859. The impetus for the founding of the first Blackwood Wesleyan chapel in 1881 was the construction phase of the Adelaide to Nairne railway. Both the building of the Coromandel Valley and Blackwood chapels was instigated by the Clarendon circuit.

All this, of course, is but part of the subject matter in the first chapter. There are seven more chapters detailing what has taken place since 1899. *[contd. over page]*

Each chapter represents an era, so we are able to follow developments in an ordered way right to the year 2000.

We are indebted to Rosemary Mitchell for her painstaking work. She has been ably assisted by Lynne Sowerby who contributed very clear line drawings. Photographs complete the presentation of a very interesting book.

In the Foreword, David Houston quoted Loren Mead, author of *The Once and Future Church*: 'God is always calling us to be more than we have been.' As it has been estimated by social psychologist Herbert Otto that most human beings function at 10 percent or less of their potential, it would suggest there is much more history in the making to emanate from the Uniting Churches in the Mitcham Hills.

K.S.

**Of Interest:**

The Clarendon Church Sesquicentenary Celebration is to be held on Sunday 21<sup>st</sup> October. Service at 10.30 am to be followed by shared luncheon. Further details from Ms Jo Horsnell, phone (08) 8383 6017.

***BROUGHAM PLACE TO CELEBRATE  
ROLE IN CENTENARY OF FEDERATION  
Sunday, 21st October, 2001***

In 1898 the people of the six separate Australian colonies voted to establish a federated 'Commonwealth of Australia' whose centenary we celebrate this year. In the campaign preceding that vote, the South Australian Council of Churches petitioned its member churches actively promoting a 'yes' vote. The letter bearing that recommendation was drafted by a Congregational minister, Dr James Jefferis, of the Brougham Place church.

Jefferis received the criticism of the *Advertiser* for this stance which was, it claimed, "beyond the province of the pulpit". "If the pulpit had nothing to say at such a moment of national significance," Jefferis retorted, its ministers would be rightly denounced as "dumb dogs that cannot bark". It is perhaps no co-incidence that the referendum question received its strongest metropolitan support in the electorate of North Adelaide.

For this and his many public statements towards Federation, Dr James Jefferis has received the biographical title of "Prophet of Federation". Historian, Dr Walter Phillips, now of the La Trobe University in Melbourne, wrote that history which was published in 1993.

To mark the contribution and impact of the church and its then Minister in the movement to Federation, Brougham Place Uniting church is to hold a special worship celebration on the morning of Sunday, 21st October, commencing at 10 a.m. The Moderator of the Uniting Church in SA, Ms Jan Trengove, will participate in the occasion. A forum of federation speakers will follow. This date falls conveniently close to the anniversary of the founding of the congregation at North Adelaide on 20th October, 1859.

Interested persons wishing to join the celebration would be most welcome. Details from the Church Office on 8267 2657.