



Uniting History SA December 2018

Guest Editor: David Houston

Where would we be without Lay Preachers?

As our South Australian settlement began in 1836 it was lay preachers who formed and nurtured our earliest congregations. Ministers came later. Now, as then, it is lay preachers who enable congregations to gather for worship, and the Church greatly values their leadership.

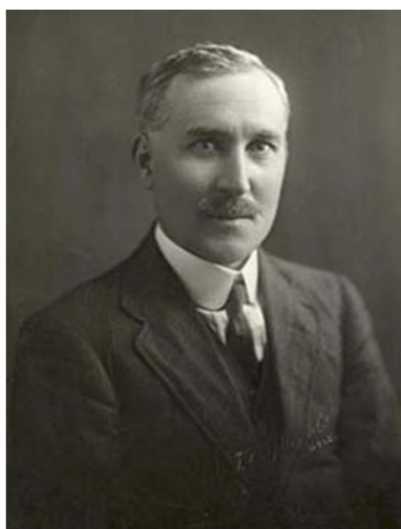
At the recent November Presbytery and Synod meeting, Max Howland, coordinator of the Lay Preachers' Committee of the Presbyter and Synod, presented certificates of recognition to five lay preachers for their ministry to congregations in our Church. Those receiving recognition were Libby Kelly (Kangaroo Island) 60 years, Phillip Whittaker (Ardrossan), Ken Edwards (Gawler), and Ian Fuss (Coromandel Valley) 40, and Robin Bodycomb (North Eastern Hills) 30.

At the same meeting last year, eleven were recognised for their ministry. They were Craig Bailey. Aberfoyle (Seeds) 40, Don Sarre (Glenunga) 50, Iain Kilpatrick (Tea Tree Gully) 60, Janet Munro (Campbelltown) 40, John de Rooy (Tusmore Park) 40, Laurence Joyce (Port Pirie) 40, Malcolm Potter, 60, Milton Rowe (Port Elliott) 60, Pat Crouch (Renmark) 30. Peter Bird (Belair) 60, and Shirley James (Coromandel Valley) 40.

We have 182 accredited lay preachers, and another 120 lay leaders who regularly conduct worship in our churches. They are gifted people and they bring a wealth of life experience to their ministry. Their Christian faith and witness has been evident in their vocation and the work place and communities where they lived their daily lives. Across the years I have listened with real appreciation to their insightful messages. As with the above listed preachers, they are farmers, social workers, pastoral workers, fitters and turners, teachers, business managers, doctors, nurses, judges, lawyers and politicians. In this last grouping, some readers will remember listening to Norman Makin, Lin Riches, Gordon Davidson and Don Hopgood.

Let's go back 100 years and recall the story of a lay

preacher who became a Home Missioner then a Federal Politician. Moses Gabb as a young man grew up in a local congregation where his leadership and ministry



Moses Gabb, then the Federal Member for Angus in his second term 1925-1934

gifts were recognised and encouraged becoming firstly a Local (or Lay) preacher then a Home Missioner within the Methodist Church.

The late Stan Parr, once the chief Hansard Writer at our State Parliament House, wrote an article about Moses Gabb for the UCA Historical Society's Newsletter of March 1996, entitled, 'The Churchmanship of a Politician'. Stan, an active lay leader in our Church, was a member of the Historical Society at the time.

(continued page 2)

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 12, and will be reopening on February 6, 2018

(Other contact details can be found on page 2.)

The UCA History Centre

Open Wednesdays 1 - 4pm

44A East Ave

Black Forest

Website:

historicalsociety.unitingchurch.org.au

Facebook:

www.facebook.com/UCAHistoricalSocietySA

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You can receive this newsletter via email. Send your email address to office@ucsahistory.org.au and we will send you our up-to-date news and other items of interest.

Membership of the Society

Individual—1 year	\$20
Individual—5 years	\$80
Individual—Life	\$250
Congregational—Life	\$250

Contact the Centre for more information.

(from page 1)

Moses Gabb was born in 1882, the eldest son of eight children, became the surrogate father of the children at the age of 18 when his father died in 1900; he was interested in the ideals of the embryonic Labour Party from the age of 12; was nurtured in the faith by Rev F.R. French (a widely known and much loved Methodist minister) and moved from his Anglican roots to the Methodists during his teenage years. He became an accredited Local Preacher, and at the age of 19 he offered to serve as a Home Missioner in remote new areas of settlement. He served on Kangaroo Island, at Cockburn, then Kalangadoo.

His commitment is illustrative of a young person ready to serve Christ and his Church with all the means and wisdom he had. He rode his bicycle in all weathers – on Kangaroo Island he describes how after rain he would walk through the swampy ground with his bicycle on his shoulder until he came again to firm ground. Then on being appointed to Kalangadoo he rode his bike the 300 miles to get there, and used it every day he was there to make his family visits.

In 1908, he was accepted as a Candidate for the Ordained Ministry and spent time in training at Prince Alfred College for Theological Training. After six months he withdrew and returned to the role of Home Missioner for the Mid-Murray Motor Mission where he served for almost two years. To get to some of the small communities developing along the banks of the river he travelled by motorboat to hold regular services between Swan Reach and Loxton.

He resigned in 1911, citing his doubts on the Trinity, the fall of man and special inspiration of the whole of the Scriptures. This reflects a searching integrity and honesty that was to be a mark of his character all his life. He married in 1912 and became an important lay leader in the Alberton Methodist Church for the next 40 years. He was elected to the House of Representatives in Federal Parliament as the member for the electorate of Angas (centring on the Barossa Valley) for two terms, 1919-1925 and later from 1929-1934. He was known for representing the needs of his constituencies with both purpose and persistence. Gabb championed the cause of Australians of German origin against the unjust treatment they received from the Hughes Government during and after the end of WWI. He worked hard to make the Parliament a place where people's real needs were addressed. Revealing the seriousness with which he took his role, at the end of his first six months in the Parliament Mr. Gabb recorded in his diary...

'My first impression was disgust at the pomp and show. A few days' experience in the House revealed to me one's impotence for good in many directions. Some of the standing orders of the House seemed to me to be for the purposes of obstruction, not construction, especially those dealing with private members' business. Hypocrisy seemed to be prevalent in many directions, especially was this so in regard to speeches...truth matters for little if there is

(continued page 3)

(from page 2)

a purpose to serve.' (Parr, S., March, 1996 UCA Newsletter, pp.2-5)

Our early Lay preachers were ready and capable at helping fledgling congregations begin and grow. They were equally committed to serving their wider communities. Moses Gabb was one of these.

Stan Parr concluded his article describing Gabb as a sincere and principled man, especially beloved by the young men's class he formed at the Alberton Methodist Church in 1933, who was thoroughly conscientious in all that he did, whether as a lay preacher, home missionary, or a member of parliament.

References:

Max Howland, Convenor of the Presbytery and Synod Lay Preacher's Committee. November, 2018

Althea Young and Diary notes of Moses Gabb, her Grand-father. 2013

Stan Parr, in March, UCHS Newsletter, p.2-5), 1996'

David Houston, (2017) pages 84-85 and 104-106, *'By Word and by Deed,* MediaCom

Rev. David Houston



Can you help?



Here at the History Centre, we have many photos that have been generously donated to the collection. Some of them are not labelled with who they are, where they are, or when they were taken.

This photo is one of these. There is nothing on this photo (printed as a postcard) to indicate where or when the photo was taken.

Do you know who is in this photo? Or do you know when or where it was taken?

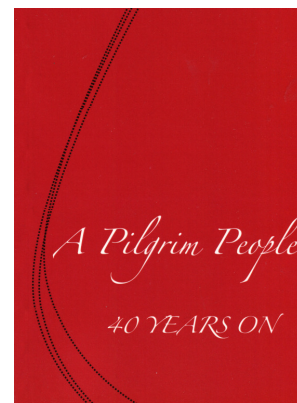
If so, we would love to hear from you so we can give names and a place to this photo.

Free Publication for All Members

Have you collected your copy of *A Pilgrim People 40 years On* yet?

All members of the UCSAHS are entitled to a free copy of the proceedings of the inaugural Uniting Church National History conference held in Adelaide in June 2017.

If you don't have your copy yet, please collect it from the History Centre soon, or get in touch with us so we can make arrangements for you to get your copy



Uniting Church National Historical Society

DATE SAVER AND CALL FOR PAPERS

2nd Biennial History Conference

FINDING A HOME IN THE UNITING CHURCH

At the Centre for Theology and Ministry, Melbourne
29 College Crescent, Parkville, Victoria 3052.
7-10 June 2019

What does it mean to belong to the Uniting Church? Many grew up Congregationalist, Methodist or Presbyterian. Others have grown up in the Uniting Church. Some have only ever known the Uniting Church as their spiritual home and others have transferred in from other denominations. What does it mean to find a home in a church that describes itself as Evangelical and Reformed and is at the same time committed to theological diversity? Papers are invited on this theme and on any other topic related to the history of the Uniting Church or its precedent churches.

Invited Speakers will include:

Dr Meredith Lake, Honorary Associate of the Department of History, Sydney University, and author of the 2018 Australian Christian Book of the Year, *The Bible in Australia: A Cultural History*.

Dr Joanna Cruickshank, Senior Lecturer in History at Deakin University, author of *Pain, Passion and Faith: Revisiting the Place of Charles Wesley in Early Methodism* and editor of *The Journal of Religious History*

For further information, please contact
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0427 812 606

Celebrating 150 Years. Port Adelaide Uniting (formerly Congregational) Church.

Reading a Building. Embodied history telling the story of people and place.

On the 9 December 2018 the Port Adelaide Uniting Church celebrated the 150th anniversary of the opening of their heritage-listed two-storey Commercial Road building. Located at the entrance to Port Adelaide near the railway station, this highly visible site became home away from home for many residents twenty years after the formation of the Congregational church in October 1849.

Early settlers from many denominational traditions first met in the Sailmakers loft in Lipson St. and the first chapel was built in 1849 for the sum of £212.16.0. Two years later on 8 December 1851, the foundation stone of a new chapel in St. Vincent Street, west of the previous site was laid and this second chapel was destroyed by fire in April 1866. "A shingle roof stood no chance with the strong North East hot wind" and a campaign was launched to purchase land and erect a new building. On their own authority local ship owner Captain John Bickers and denominational founding father, Rev T Q Stow attended a Port Road auction sale. One prospective buyer "was told it was wanted for a church and ceased bidding and instead bought the site on which the burnt ruin of Mill stands"!

The story of the struggles and achievements of Port residents in these early years is the story we share and learn from today. Over 150 years this heritage-listed building has been a sign of continuity and resilience through decades of population and economic growth, decline and redevelopment as a tourist destination. Information about the events and challenges associated with this building embody the story of people who responded to a changing urban environment and preserved and adapted the use of their interior spaces and external grounds.

The story of the building and its occupants is recounted in several valuable resources and these documents provide insights about the growth of the Port as a major regional centre in SA. A local history, "Narrative Sketch of the Foundation and Early History of the Port Adelaide Congregational Church" was produced around 1890 by G. P. Hodge Esq, son of the first minister, the Rev Matthew Henry Hodge. This document was reproduced in 2008 and included photos of early community leaders. Copies are available by contacting the church's

web site <http://portadelaide.unitingchurch.org.au/>



Hodge and his family arrived at Port Adelaide on 16 September 1849 on his way to Melbourne. He preached at Adelaide and on the following Sunday in the Sail loft and was persuaded to stay and be the first minister. He loved his new home and continued a fruitful ministry for the next 28 years.

While there are no existing minutes, reports, architectural plans or building contracts of the third building, several newspaper reports recount the foundation stone event in July 1867. Given the size of the building it's hard to believe that sixteen months later *The*

Register of 16 December 1868 includes a report of the opening day, the 13 November when approximately 2,600 people were present. I cannot imagine any group today would set out to meet the cost and undertake such a project, a public two storey Neo-Gothic edifice of stone and brick with seating for 800 people. The commitment and enthusiasm of its trustees tell us something about the way the first European settlers understood the opportunities and convictions that led them over the seas to a new-old land.

Newspaper articles stress the social importance of the building and those present were not to know that 12 years later, with the arrival of their third minister the Rev J C Kirby in 1880, the church over three decades would become the centre for those committed to social reform, educational innovation and civic leadership.

Anniversaries invite us to reflect on the significance of the commitment of community activists to create social capital and strong community ties and how this can be encouraged today. We also recall those involved in the early years and since who have taken risks, raised the funds, been subjected to criticism and experienced



moments of doubt and struggle.

The significance of any public building as a historic artefact cannot be understood without reference to the people who conceived it, worked to ensure its completion and who held strong convictions about its purpose. Heritage buildings symbolise those who were adventurous, committed and created a legacy we enjoy today.

Continuing as the home and meeting place of a Christian congregation, churches remain symbolic of places for people with a social purpose. Many of those responsible for maintaining the Uniting Church over the years have shared moments of uncertainty and doubt about the value of property, restoration and adaptation. Surviving church buildings, however, continue as meeting places where people celebrate a vision for a better world, restored relationships, reconciliation, justice and human transformation. In many ways these places are instruments for achieving this vision and in times of uncertainty and change symbolise that we are here to stay.

In their willingness to adapt and make best use of resources, over the past year or so the Port Adelaide Uniting Church has developed the Bent Pine community garden, designed and produced a wall mural at the rear of the site. They have welcomed a new congregation, the City International Christian Church to share their sanctuary and this church, in the charismatic tradition, is largely made up of immigrants from African nations. They continue to adapt their support programmes at the Cottage Kitchen, 160 St Vincent St (Bower Buildings 1870-1) and maintain their long term support for the Junction Community Centre at Ottoway.

Religious traditions based in building are an important feature of the urban landscape as immigrants to SA settled and “provided places for shaping, displaying and celebrating their inherited and emergent ways of life and their understandings of the world.” (Orsi 1999).

In Port Adelaide these traditions make up the urban topography where the spatial distribution of shops, pubs, the town hall, waterside workers hall and churches represent the pathways, mapping the, “social relationships which exist across classes, occupations and civic life”. They contribute to the stories of the past and are assets in celebrating the unique identity and character we have in each community today.

Port Adelaide’s historic and prominent heritage buildings on St Vincent St, Commercial Road and Dale St and the State Heritage Area are the continuing evidence of the commitment of residents who welcomed those who came to the land down under by ship, those making a new start in life by making their house a home. They also represent an optimistic social outlook and positive engagement by creating a sense of place and

belonging.

Graeme Davison quotes from Eileen Power in her 1937 book, *Medieval People* suggesting that it is an error to suppose that history needs to be written down; *for it may just as well be something built up, and churches, houses, bridges or amphitheatre tell their story as plainly as print for those who have eyes to read.*

By surviving changes, upheavals and social trends monumental buildings are anchors of memory. The language of buildings, their visibility and street presence accompanied by generous hospitality and openness, contribute to place making that reflects the ethos and sense of community.

Many Uniting Church congregations today are committed to making their buildings available as a resource, a place to meet, a community asset not a liability. While remaining creative places for liturgy and traditional ministry practices, they continue to provide affordable and open spaces by collaborating and forming partnerships with others to make our city and suburbs great places to live and work.

Orsi, Robert A. ed. 1999. *Gods of the City: Religion and the American Urban Landscape*. Indiana University Press.

Rev Dr Dean Eland
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Dean Eland was minister of the Alberton Port Adelaide Uniting Church Parish from 1984 to 1991. He grew up in the Port Adelaide region and was a student at Pennington Primary and Lefevre Boys Technical School.



Do you remember?... **Religious Instruction in State schools**

When our family moved from Kangaroo Island to ‘the mainland’ at the beginning of 1953 one of the many things that was different about my new school was that once a week, for half an hour, it offered ‘Religious Instruction’ (RI). I was aware that a few people didn’t participate in this, but almost everyone did. RI involved breaking up our normal class groups and re-dividing us by our denominational affiliation instead. All of us, except for those who opted out — and I guess they had a note from their parents that allowed them to make this choice — seemed to have such an affiliation, and that determined whether we ended up in a class called Catholic, Church of England, Lutheran or... ‘Other Protestant Denominations’, otherwise known as OPD. That was me: OPD. I knew of course that I was really C of C (Churches of Christ) but RI didn’t accommodate such fine distinctions. In any case, being OPD for half an hour each week seemed OK to me, and did not lead to an identity crisis.

My memory suggests that most of the people who fronted up to teach my RI class were Methodist ministers, and that was OK because I knew about Methodists. On Kangaroo Island, in the absence of any Churches of Christ congregation, Methodists had been the next best thing. But I can remember very clearly the sense of pride and ownership I experienced when a dynamic young Churches of Christ minister turned up to take the classes. What I can’t remember with any clarity at all is what I learnt from RI, even though it continued, for me, from grade four until the end of grade seven. I guess that anything it could have achieved paled before the rich experiences offered by my local church, where I lapped up two church services, Sunday School and Christian Endeavour meetings each Sunday.

* * * * *

What I did not understand at the time was that the RI I experienced at primary school (but not at secondary school, where as far as I recall there was no RI on offer), was part of an historic experiment in South Australia, for which many church leaders had fought long and hard, but soon came to despair of. The system was established in 1940, after a campaign that had been waged, with periods of differing intensity, for more than 60 years.¹ The 1940 legislation, which allowed for clergy or their appointees to enter schools for half an hour each week to offer denominationally based education, was heralded by its proponents as a victory, but it also represented the relinquishing of the earlier hope that some form of religious education that avoided dogma and sectarianism and was based on a “simple foundation of common belief” could be established.

Over the years, various programs based on Bible reading, to be offered without interpretation or comment, were canvassed, reflecting a widespread view among South Australians, that, despite their commitment to liberty of conscience and the separation of church and state, “the values of the Christian faith were the best foundation for education and for the development of responsible citizens”.² While there was support for these schemes from many Christians, and uncritical optimism from some about what they might

achieve, there was also considerable opposition. They were variously seen as unworkable, as a usurpation of the responsibilities of the church and the home, as an infringement of liberty of conscience, as “nothing more nor less than the introduction of the teaching of Protestantism” and as involving “a disembowelling of the Bible which leaves but a bloodless remnant covering nothing worth having”. While some Christians feared that a Bible thus “mutilated” and “emaciated” would be rendered powerless “to bring salvation into the hearts of the young”, Rationalists continued to deride those who wanted to expose children to material which was “insulting to the intelligence, painful to the heart, and a contradiction of the known facts of existence”.³ The debates generated heat and hyperbole, but little light, and from 1921 to 1934 five bills based on non-denominational Bible-reading schemes failed to create consensus among Christians or to win parliamentary approval.⁴ In fact, it was only when it was recognised that these schemes were based on a naïve hope, and were abandoned, that a workable alternative could be devised.

That alternative was the RI that I knew as a schoolgirl, that is, denominational teaching, by clergy or their appointees. By 1940 this was “not the bogey it had previously seemed” and had increasingly come to be seen as having more integrity and fewer problems than the supposedly neutral Bible-reading. Crucially, the resort to denominational teaching ensured the scheme had the support of the Catholic church. There were several reasons for this turn-around, and they included the admission that there were Catholic children in state schools who were growing up without a religious education. Thus, the Catholics could accept denominationally-based religious instruction in state schools “as a missionary opportunity in much the same way as many Protestants did”.⁵ Generally, the churches hailed the new system as a long-awaited victory. Some saw it as a “golden opportunity for contacting the young and winning them to Christ and the Church”. Others believed it would “give our children the privilege and right to prepare themselves for citizenship in a Christian land”. And according to a 1941 report, it all got off to a good start: “the clergy rose splendidly to the occasion, the assistance of suitable lay helpers was secured, and the work is proceeding satisfactorily”.⁶

* * * * *

My personal involvement with RI took a new and final turn in 1968. I was by then teaching in a large secondary school in suburban Adelaide. That school was persisting with RI, but it was clear to me that it was by then a system in crisis. Instructors were frequently absent, in many cases inadequate to the task when they were there, and the classes were a shambles whose main effect was to attract the derision and contempt of the students. This mattered to me. It mattered because of my own commitment to the claims of Christianity and also to the students whom I thought deserved a better opportunity to assess those claims for themselves. So I decided to teach an RI class myself. This was not an easy decision to take, because it would mean missing out on staff meetings that were held at the same time, and that presented me with a significant professional dilemma. But I opted in favour of RI.

I asked for a year twelve class, since I already knew and taught many of the students and believed that this was where I could have the greatest impact — and the most fun. I was given a year twelve class (I don't think there were other applicants), and it was indeed fun. I followed no formal syllabus (there wasn't one available), but trusted in my students and in my teaching skills, allowing the classes to be shaped by the students' expressed interests, and some interests of my own to which I risked introducing them. Thus we discussed 'boy-girl relationships', notions of right and wrong, situational ethics, war and peace, conscription and conscientious objection, science (mostly evolutionary theory) and religion, . . . and because at least some of them were interested in some aspects of theology and Christian doctrine, and wanted to know how to deal with doubts and confusion, we did some of that too. I remember devising sessions around the chapters of John Robinson's little book *But That I Can't Believe*, which he said was for "those who didn't get *Honest to God*". It seemed just right for my students, and I relished the chance to explore with them their questions, which were my questions too, about biblical inspiration, miracles, life after death, atheism and agnosticism . . . What lasting impact all this had on the students I can't be sure, but I can say that they kept on turning up and being involved and they certainly weren't derisive.

* * * * *

That was 1968. I knew RI was in serious trouble but I wasn't then aware that it was actually in its death throes. I know now that in that year the Methodists withdrew their support, and this proved to be the fatal blow to a system that, as its erstwhile advocates were becoming increasingly aware, had been remarkably unsuccessful in developing students either as Christians or as better citizens. It had also become an enormous burden for those who were still battling to prop it up. I suspect they were relieved when it came to an end in 1972.

Dr Judith Raftery

- ¹ For a detailed account of this campaign, see chapter six of Judith Raftery, 'Till Every Foe is Vanquished: churches and social issues in South Australia, 1919-1939', unpublished PhD thesis, Flinders University, 1988. A copy is available for perusal at the UCSAHS History Centre.
- ² Raftery, *Till Every Foe is vanquished*, p. 211
- ³ Raftery, *Till Every Foe is vanquished*, pp. 216, 224-229
- ⁴ Bills to amend the Education Act by introducing some form of non-denominational religious education were introduced in 1921, 1924, 1927, 1932 and 1934
- ⁵ For discussion of the thinking and circumstances that led to the 1940 decision to adopt denominationally based religious instruction, see Raftery, 'Till Every Foe is Vanquished', pp. 236-241
- ⁶ Raftery, 'Till Every Foe is Vanquished', p. 241

You are invited to the

***Annual Ecumenical Archivists
Dedication Service***

The service will be held at

Pilgrim Uniting Church
12 Flinders St

Wednesday 20 February 2019—9:30am

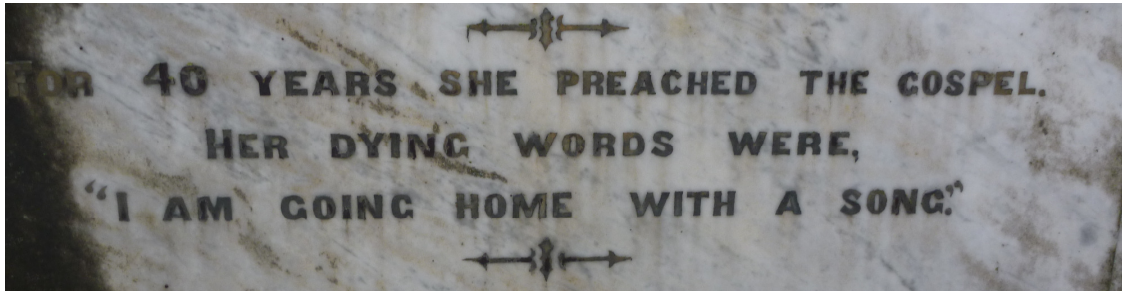
After the service (beginning at 9.30am) there will be a short talk and morning tea.

The service involves members of the State Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists (<https://www.archivists.org.au/>)

All interested in South Australian church history are invited.

This is a great opportunity to meet up with others who are committed to documenting and recording the story of faith in this state, the Paradise of Dissent!

For further information contact
Rev Dr Dean Eland
Phone: 0419 112 603
Email: djeland@bigpond.com



“I am not defeated. I am going home with a song”
Serena Thorne Lake (1842–1902)

Her headstone reads:

For 40 years she preached the Gospel. Her dying words were, “I am going home with a song.”

These are the words that we have to remember Serena Lake (nee Thorne) – a preacher, evangelist, activist, advocate, suffragist, wife and mother.



Serena was born on 28 October 1842 at Shebbear in Devon, England. She was the daughter of Samuel and Mary Thorne (nee O’Bryan).¹ Mary was the daughter of William and Catherine O’Bryan (nee Cowlin). William was the founder of the Bible Christian Connexion denomination within

the Methodist Church Movement. Serena’s paternal grandfather – John Thorne – was instrumental in helping O’Bryan with the establishment of the movement, and donated land for the first chapel and school. Both Serena’s mother and grandmother were preachers within the Bible Christian Connexion² so it is not surprising that Serena too became a preacher in the church. After hearing God’s call on her life, Serena first began preaching at age 17, and from 1861 was preaching throughout Devon and Cornwall in Bible Christian congregations and gatherings. She has been described as the “sweet girl gospeller who drew crowds and converts, attracted by her persuasive, vivid oratory; unclouded faith and compassion for souls.”³

In 1865, Serena, along with her brother, travelled to Queensland to work, in the first instance with the Primitive Methodists. In her obituary, Serena’s husband, the Rev. Octavius Lake writes this,

“A member of the Queensland Government, and a Congregationalist, who often used to hear her preach, and studied her faculty for organisation said to me – ‘If your conference had made Miss Thorne general superintendent of your work here, she would have had Bible Christian circuits in every part of Queensland.’⁴”

In 1867, Serena left Queensland and travelled to Victoria to undertake evangelistic and mission work in that colony. She spent three years in Victoria, preaching, teaching and evangelising. Rev. Lake describes her work in Victoria in this way, “The round of sermons, speeches, lectures goes on for weeks, months, years, and one wonders how a woman could do it all.”⁵ She is reported to have said, “My brethren are not illiberal in the work they give me. Three Sunday sermons, preaching nearly every week day afternoon, and a public meeting nearly every night. I feel I must slow off. Yet there are such pressing entreaties for work that I can hardly say ‘No’ without absolute unkindness. I pray for Divine light on my limitations.”⁶ During her time in Victoria, Serena preached and taught. She evangelised, spoke on temperance and was invited to places as a special event speaker. Places she spoke were crowded to the point of people being turned away. A local Eaglehawk reporter is quoted as having said this of Serena, “... she displayed none of that masculine manner which might have been anticipated from one of the fair sex placing herself in so prominent a position.”⁷

In 1870, Serena came to South Australia at the invitation of the Rev. James Way and others of the Bible Christian movement in South Australia. She arrived from Melbourne on 19 May, and on that evening she wrote in her diary,

“Pray my coming here may result in the salvation of many souls ... I need more of the quickening breath of Pentecost.

May the God of Horeb answer me by fire.”⁸ On the following Sunday, Serena preached the first of many sermons in the Adelaide Town Hall. The



newspapers of the time report the Town Hall was “crowded to the doors.”⁹ Serena wrote this in her diary about the event, “Sunday Eve May 22nd I preached for the first time in this land, this afternoon at the Adelaide Town Hall, King William St. – Place crowded, over 2,000 present. Had a pretty good time speaking from Hosea 6:3.”¹⁰

Serena was paid a salary/allowance of £1 per week, and the various country circuits she visited were to meet the travelling and accommodation expenses. She would spend her weeks in various country circuits including Clarendon, Bowden, Gawler, and Kapunda, and often returned to the city on weekends to speak at the crowded Town Hall.

Besides her preaching and teaching in both the city and various country circuits, Serena made a point of visiting and sharing the Gospel with the prostitutes of Adelaide. She and others involved in the City Mission would speak to gatherings of women late into the evening. She was concerned about how, what she described as “the social evil in this city”, things could be dealt with. On 2 July 1870, she writes “the low publicans are making bitter and violent opposition to our midnight meetings. Great talk and writings in the papers about this problem. The social evil in this city, may God teach us how to deal with it.”¹¹

By mid-June of 1870, Serena, feeling homesick and exhausted from her extensive preaching schedule (she reported to have taken 8 services in the preceding week as well as a prayer meeting or two¹²) resolved to raise enough money for her passage back to England within the next year. However, her life was going to change before long on one of her trips to a country circuit, when travelling in the company of the Rev. Octavius Lake. A whirlwind romance followed, and after a fortnight, they became engaged. The engagement was not smooth sailing as Serena’s diary records on November 24, 1870:

1870
 I have written to Octave cancelling our engagement. I hope I have done right. When I read that he was ‘among the members who in the English Conference cheered the announcement that we had not a single woman preacher left and that he rejoices that the practice is receiving such discountenance that only in special cases it can find support I thought my head would burst – for I read in that

“I have written to Octave cancelling our engagement. I hope I have done right. When I read that he was ‘among the members who in the English Conference cheered the announcement that we had not a single woman preacher left and that he rejoices that the practice is receiving such discountenance that only in special cases it can find support...

... I dare not sacrifice principles and duty even to love.”¹³

To cut a long story short, this turned out to be a misunderstanding, Octavius was forgiven, and Serena and Octavius were married on 2 March 1871 at the home of Mr. Samuel Way. In their married life, Serena and



Octavius had 8 children. Only 2 survived to adulthood, with one of them, Florence, becoming an accomplished artist.

Married life did not stop Serena’s work. She continued preaching and teaching, often working in partnership with Octavius in the parishes and circuits he was the appointed minister for. She continued her active involvement in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union. She travelled

the country to help communities set up branches of the WCTU, and in 1889 the WCTU appointed her as Colonial Organiser and Suffrage superintendent; in 1891 she was made a life-vice president of the WCTU.¹⁴

Serena’s involvement in women’s suffrage came about because of her faith. She believed that sexual equality was the original design of the Creator, so as a result, women should be naturally entitled to vote. In July 1888 she was elected to the council of the South Australian Women’s Suffrage League, and was often called upon to speak on the organisation’s behalf, speaking with “logical argument, wit and evangelical passion.”¹⁵ She was working with Octavius in missionary and pastoral work in Moonta when suffrage was won.

Serena was instrumental in the establishment of the Bible Christian Women’s Missionary Board, and was its founding president in 1891. This was established to support and train people for missionary work in China.¹⁶

Serena Thorne Lake died on 09 July 1902. The Advertiser Obituary the following day reported this: “Mrs Lake preached only three weeks ago in connection with the Ovingham Church anniversary with all her old power, and apparently in her usual health. A few days later it was discovered that the insidious disease cancer had already made alarming progress. An immediate operation became necessary; though this was successfully performed, death resulted five days later from exhaustion.”¹⁷

And from her funeral service, the Rev. E. T. Cox prayed to God that “her mantle of gifts and consecration might fall on some women who should take up her work and carry it on to larger achievements. May we soon realize that we are in the very heart of that great “Afterward,” when God will pour out His Spirit upon all flesh, and our sons and our daughters shall prophesy.”¹⁸



¹ Jones, Helen. n.d. 'Lake, Serena (1842-1902). In *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University

² Lloyd, Jennifer M. 2013. *Women and the Shaping of British Methodism: Persistent Preachers, 1807-1907*. Oxford, United States: Manchester University Press, p.14.

³ Jones, Helen. n.d. 'Lake, Serena (1842-1902). In *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Canberra: National Centre of Biography, Australian National University

⁴ Lake, Octavius. 'In Memoriam—Serena Thorne Lake'. *Australian Christian Commonwealth* (clipping in diary of Serena Thorne held at the Uniting Church SA History Centre)

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ *ibid.*

⁷ McHarg, Travis, 2011. *The Bible Christian Church in Victoria: 1850s-1902*. Boronia, Vic: Mercia Press.

⁸ Thorne, Serena. 1870. *Diary*. Unpublished. Held by the Uniting Church SA Historical Society.

⁹ ARRIVAL OF MISS THORNE. (1870, May 28). *Adelaide Observer (SA: 1843-1904)*, p.13—<http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article158940160>

¹⁰ Thorne, Serena. 1870. *Diary*. Unpublished. Held by the Uniting Church SA Historical Society

¹¹ *ibid.*

¹² *ibid.*

¹³ *ibid.*

¹⁴ <https://atributetoaustralianchristians.wordpress.com/2010/10/28/serena-lake>

¹⁵ *ibid.*

¹⁶ *ibid.*

¹⁷ <http://saobits.gravesecrets.net/l.html>

¹⁸ Lake, Octavius. 'In Memoriam—Serena Thorne Lake'. *Australian Christian Commonwealth* (clipping in diary

of Serena Thorne held at the Uniting Church SA History Centre)

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- Lloyd, Jennifer M. 2004. 'Women Preachers in the Bible Christian Connexion'. *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 36 (3): 451–81. <https://doi.org/10.2307/4054368>.
- Pritchard, John. 2016. *Methodists and Their Missionary Societies 1760-1900*. Routledge.

This presentation was prepared and given as part of my Bachelor of Theology Studies in October 2018. We were each asked to prepare a presentation on a significant Christian figure in the time from the Reformation to the current day, and talk about their life, their ministry and their legacy.

Leanne Davis



A response to Can you help?



We shared this photo in the last newsletter in an attempt to identify this little Methodist Church.

One of our readers has identified this as the Bath Street Methodist Church in Alice Springs.

The church existed there from 1934 to 1956 when it merged with the John Flynn Presbyterian Church to form the Alice Springs Congregation of the United Church in North Australia.

Other information we have found suggests that this building no longer exists, and the site is now part of a shopping centre.

In our collection

Our collection at the History Centre contains many documents, files and photographs. We also have many artefacts—things that have been significant in the lives of congregations and the wider church over time.

We have small church organs, baptismal fonts, banners, plaques, memorial boards, etc.

Included in these artefacts is a number of ornately engraved trowels, used in foundation stone laying occasions.



You can get a close up look at these trowels and the other artefacts in our collection at the Centre's Open Day on Sunday March 31, or if you call in when the Centre is open on Wednesday afternoons (re-opening after the Christmas/New Year holiday period).

We would love to see you at the Centre to show you through the trowels and the rest of our collection.

August 8 2019—7:00pm

In association with *The Seminary of the Third Age*

Effective Living Centre
26 King William Road, Wayville

Aboriginal Missions: Neglect, Failure, Atonement and Legacy

Delivered by noted Uniting Church Historian: Rev. Dr William Emilsen, Associate Professor, Charles Sturt University.

Cost \$15
Bookings: 8271 0329

70 years ago...

In 1948, as the world was still recovering from World War II, there was much anticipation for the first gathering of the World Council of Churches that was to be held in Amsterdam.

The 'South Australian Methodist' on 20 August 1948 had some information about the upcoming meeting.

You can read this article, and many other old church news papers at the History Centre.



2019 Events



- **Wednesday 20 February**
Annual Ecumenical Archivists Dedication Service

The Annual Ecumenical Archivists Dedication Service will be held this year at Pilgrim Uniting Church 12 Flinders St on Wednesday 20 February 2019. The service will begin at 9.30am and the event will conclude with a short talk and morning tea. The service involves members of the State Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists (<https://www.archivists.org.au/>) All interested in SA church history are invited and is an opportunity to meet up with others who are committed to documenting and recording the story of faith in this state, the Paradise of Dissent! For further information contact Rev Dr Dean Eland 0419 112 603 or email djeland@bigpond.com

- **Sunday 31 March**
Open afternoon at the History Centre

Come along to meet the volunteers who look after the Centre, to see what we have in our collection and to meet other people interested in the history of the Uniting Church (and predecessor denominations)

Where: Uniting Church SA History Centre
44A East Avenue, Black Forest

- **Wednesday 15 May**
Port Adelaide Uniting SA (formerly Port Adelaide Central Methodist Mission) Centenary Celebrations

Join us as we join with Port Adelaide Uniting SA (formerly Port Adelaide Central Mission) for their Centenary Celebrations

Where: Port Adelaide Uniting Church
169 Commercial Road, Port Adelaide

- **Friday 7 June—Monday 10 June**

Join us in Melbourne at the Centre for Theology and Ministry for our 2nd National Biennial History Conference.

The theme this year will be *Finding a home in the Uniting Church*.

- **Sunday 23 June**

AGM and 'Maughan Church: Past and Present'

- **Thursday 8 August**

Aboriginal Missions: Neglect, Failure, Atonement and Legacy

This lecture, presented in association with the Seminary of the Third Age, will be delivered by noted Uniting Church Historian: Rev. Dr William Emilsen, Associate Professor, Charles Sturt University

When: 7:00pm

Where: The Effective Living Centre, 26 King William Road, Wayville

Cost: \$15

Bookings: 8271 0329

- **Sunday 25 August**

Presbyterians and the Uniting Church

- **Sunday 27 October**

Intellectual and Theological leadership within the UC and its antecedent denominations

Come let us

Adore

Him

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

