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# Methodist Women in South Australia (1836 – 1900)

What can we know or learn about them and  
their involvement in early South Australian  
Methodism?

A Thesis presented by Leanne Davis

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## Synopsis

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The aim of this thesis is to gain an understanding of what it is we can learn about the women who were involved in the Methodist Churches in Colonial South Australia (1836 – 1900). Published histories of the Methodist Churches for this time have largely focussed on the work of men in the church. The names and stories of the women who were involved are in danger of disappearing, if they haven't already.

This thesis documents the first steps of the journey to identify the women involved in the early South Australian Methodism, to give them their names back, and to tell their stories. In order to do this, we need to know what we can learn about them from the information that we have available to us. To demonstrate what we can learn in order to tell stories, specific stories of two women, and one organisation have been told. More general information about women's involvement in the three Methodist church denominations has also been included to highlight what can be learned from existing resources, and to suggest directions for future research to tell the stories of these women and their place in the history of the church.

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## Acknowledgements

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There are many people I would like to thank in the research for and writing of this thesis. I recognise that in naming some people, I will have forgotten others, and for this I apologise.

Thank you to my husband Scott, who made sure I was fed, housework was done, helped with genealogical research and acted as a sounding board to help me find some of the nameless women that I have been able to give their names back.

Thank you to Gaye Brown, Val Canty, Rosemary Hocking, Dr David Hilliard and others at the Uniting Church in South Australia Historical Society who have helped find women and information about them, who have suggested places to look, articles and books to read and have encouraged this research as something that will be an ongoing resource for the church in South Australia.

Thank you to Ana Grieve, Anna Witty and Ian Trenwith of the Adelaide Theological Library who have always greeted me with a smile, have patiently provided the books I have requested (including at a proper social distance during the initial COVID-19 lockdown when I had requested a stack of books), and helped with other suggestions when I have become stuck.

And finally, thank you to the Rev. Dr Andrew Dutney who has encouraged me along this journey, suggested sources and places to look, provided advice and wise counsel on writing, and listened patiently as I have talked about my passion in telling the stories of the women in the church.

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## Introduction

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Church history has largely been told from a male perspective. This includes the history of the Methodist church in the early years of South Australia colonial life. What was the involvement of women in the establishment of the Methodist Churches in South Australia prior to Methodist Union (circa 1901) and what are some of their stories?

This broader question of the involvement of women in the Methodist Churches in South Australia came from some study in this era of church history and noticing that the stories were all the men's stories. Knowing there was at least one prominent woman involved (Serena Thorne Lake) at this time, made me wonder about the involvement and stories of other women who may have been involved. Some of these women also had significant roles to play in the establishment of community within South Australia.

David Hilliard, in his paper "Looking again at the History Of South Australian Methodism", writes this of women's involvement in the Methodist Church in South Australia:

Arnold Hunt and I were products of churches that were led and ruled entirely by men...  
... Women who had played significant roles in church organisations and in local congregations often received only brief obituaries so it takes a lot more digging to find out more about them. The sources are indeed there...  
...Could we write a women's history of Methodism in South Australia and what would it look like?<sup>1</sup>

This gap, that is the stories of the women's involvement and influence, in the story of the Methodist church has been touched on by others in different contexts (in England, and in Victoria, particularly in the context of women preachers), but it would seem very little work has been done in the South Australian context.<sup>2</sup>

Paul reminds us, in his letter to the Galatian church that, for those in Christ, "there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28, NIV). In the early Christian church, people gathered in homes where "women played a decisive role in the founding, sustaining, and shaping of such house-

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<sup>1</sup> David Hilliard, "Looking again at the history of South Australian Methodism: Twenty-five years after Arnold Hunt's *This Side of Heaven*," *Aldersgate Papers* 10 (2012).

<sup>2</sup> For example:

Jennifer M. Lloyd, *Women and the shaping of British Methodism: persistent preachers, 1807–1907* (Oxford: Manchester University Press, 2013).

Barry Brown, "Women Preachers in the Methodist Tradition," *Proceedings of the UCHS VicTas* 19, no. 1 (2012).

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assemblies.”<sup>3</sup> Yet over time, things changed, and the church became more and more patriarchal like the society around it. Roles changed and the way we remembered things changed.

Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza in her work, *In Memory of Her*, discussing early Christianity, asks “...is early Christian history ‘our own’ history or heritage? Were women as well as men the initiators of the Christian movement?”<sup>4</sup> I ask the same (or at least similar) questions of the early Methodist Church in South Australia: is this our own history or heritage?<sup>5</sup> Were women as well as men the initiators of the Methodist Churches in South Australia and what did they do?

Fiorenza also says this, primarily of women in biblical texts but it can also apply to written history that discusses the nineteenth century:

... commonplace premise of scholars tend to assume that women were only peripheral or not at all present in the past, if historical sources either do not mention them or refer to them only occasionally.

I argue to the contrary, that women were not marginal in the earliest beginnings of Christianity; rather, biblical texts and historical sources produce the marginality of women. Hence texts must be interrogated not only as to what they say about women but also how they construct what they say or do not say...<sup>6</sup>

What is it that we are missing in the stories and histories of the Methodist Church in colonial South Australia if we assume that women were only peripheral in the establishment and growth of the church? To assume that women were only peripheral to the beginnings of the church would mean we miss at least half of the story of the church. We need to include the women in the stories and histories of the church to complete the story.

In his lecture, *Why Uniting Church History Matters*, Emilsen speaks of the importance of church history (not just for the Uniting Church in Australia) and reminds us that

“the study of Church History generally broadens our experience of Christian Community as we come to know our brothers and sisters from different nations and across the centuries. Church History makes the Communion of Saints real.”<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, *In memory of her : a feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983). xxxii.

<sup>4</sup> Schussler Fiorenza, *In memory of her : a feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*. xlviii.

<sup>5</sup> As someone who was baptised into the Methodist church.

<sup>6</sup> Schussler Fiorenza, *In memory of her : a feminist theological reconstruction of Christian origins*. xx.

<sup>7</sup> William Emilsen, "Why Uniting Church History Matters" (Presbytery/Synod of South Australia Meeting, Brooklyn Park, South Australia, Historical Society of the Uniting Church in South Australia, 2014). 8.

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Understanding our past as a church/denomination helps us to recognise the faithfulness of God in the past to be able to trust it into the future (as the ancient Israelites did, and were commanded to do). Our current stories of the church in the past (the mostly men's stories) potentially only tell half the stories.<sup>8</sup> God has been faithful in the lives of all – men and women. We need to remember the stories of men and women. If we are to “come to know our brothers **and** sisters ... across the centuries”<sup>9</sup>, we need to discover and tell the unknown stories of the women as these are the stories that “place us in the presence of God”<sup>10</sup> and “introduce us to a larger and richer treasury of wisdom than we could possibly imagine.”<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Or less than half the story. As I have researched this topic, I have become aware that the stories of our First Peoples -men and women - are generally not told or made known. These stories need to be told as well to continue the story.

<sup>9</sup> Emilsen, "Why Uniting Church History Matters." 9. (emphasis in quote is mine.)

<sup>10</sup> Amelia Koh-Butler, *Sisters in Scripture - Evocations on Biblical Women* (Adelaide, South Australia: MediaCom Education Inc, 2017). 7.

<sup>11</sup> Emilsen, "Why Uniting Church History Matters." 9.



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## Research Question

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The involvement of women in the establishment of the Methodist Church in South Australia prior to Methodist Union (1 January 1900<sup>12</sup>) is an extensive topic, even without attempting to tell any of the stories of these women as the size of the gap identified earlier is unknown. For the purpose of this thesis, the topic needs to be narrowed.

With this in mind, using existing published sources relating to the history of the Methodist Church in South Australia, newspapers (both secular and church sources) and the unpublished/primary sources (archived minutes, unpublished church histories, diaries), information that has been collected by the Uniting Church SA Historical Society (UCSAHS), other Synod archived information and existing histories of the church in South Australia and by looking at the lives of a limited number of women (two) and one women's organisation, the question to be considered is:

What can be known or learned about the involvement of women in the establishment of the Methodist Church in South Australia prior to Methodist Union?

This limited view, in the first instance, will provide some information on the involvement of women in the early Methodist Church in South Australia and help to define the size of the gap for future research opportunities.

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<sup>12</sup> Arnold D. Hunt, *This Side of Heaven* (Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985). 238

The date here is the date for Methodist Union in South Australia. This happened earlier than in the rest of Australia. Hunt states (on page 236) that "some of the legal measures necessary had to wait until the realization of union throughout the whole of Australia in 1902."

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## Methodology

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The broad research methodology to be used to answer this research problem will be qualitative as this is a research problem that will be answered by discovering and telling the stories of the women involved in the church. Whilst qualitative research is often based on interviews and interactions with living people, this qualitative research will be text based, as the timeframe under consideration is long enough past that there are no living people.

Whilst there is some existing literature related to this topic, it is either more general (relating to women in Methodism in Australia, or general Methodism in South Australia) or about specific topics (women preachers in Methodism in Australia). There has also been some research done into some of the most prominent women in Methodism in South Australia at the time (Mary Lee and Serena Thorne in particular), there are still many stories of many women that have yet to be discovered and told.

The existing literature will still be read and considered as part of the data to be collected. The remaining data collection will take place by reading original records (church minutes, other church records, personal papers, diaries) and historic newspapers. A large collection of these original records are held at the Uniting Church Historical Society's History Centre, and others at the State Library of South Australia.

In his book, *Qualitative inquiry & research design: choosing among five approaches*, Creswell suggests two different (but related) ways of analysing data when telling the stories of people:

1. Narrative Research: *begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories of individuals.*<sup>13</sup>
2. Phenomenological Research: *describes the meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon.*<sup>14</sup>

It is in the discovering and telling the stories of some of the women groups/organisations, we will be able to gain a greater understanding of their experiences in the life of the early

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<sup>13</sup> John W. Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches*, ed. Cheryl N. Poth, Fourth edition. ed., Qualitative inquiry and research design : choosing among 5 approaches, (Los Angeles : SAGE, 2018). 54.

<sup>14</sup> Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry & research design : choosing among five approaches*. 57.

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Methodist Church in South Australia. Time and space limitations prevent all (or many) of the stories of these women being told at this point. As a result, we will explore the lives of two women and one (from within the wider Methodist Church) will help show what can be learned from the existing church and history literature as well from primary source documents, and other archived information. Beyond this, there will also be some brief discussion on the involvement of women more generally across the life of the Methodist Church in South Australia which will also help to show what can be learned.

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## Literature Review

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### South Australian Methodist History

A review of existing published works on South Australian Methodist History has helped to provide the context of the Methodist Church in South Australia in the period under consideration. These works have also provided some information about some of the women involved in the Methodist Church (in all denominations that were present in South Australia<sup>15</sup>) at that time (even if only names to provide starting points for further investigation), as well as giving some indication about what the women did within the church (again, giving starting points for further investigation).

- Chalmers, Brian. "Methodists and Revivalism in South Australia, 1838-1939: The Quest for 'Vital Religion'." Doctor of Philosophy, Thesis (Doctorate), 2016. <https://flex.flinders.edu.au/file/23ae4d06-8460-4f2f-ba83-7765311cd21f/1/ThesisChalmers2016.pdf>
- Curnow, E. A. *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : A Biography of Chapels and Their People*. Black Forest, S. Aust. Uniting Church SA Historical Society, 2015.

There is one chapter of this book that pays special attention to the ministry and work of Serena Thorne Lake (part of my inspiration for the research question and one of the sources for my paper on her).<sup>16</sup>

Rev. Curnow also has a blog where he shares some of the research done for this book, as well as other research into the Methodist Church in South Australia (<https://tedcurnowhistory.wordpress.com/>)

- Ellis, Julie-Ann, "Methodism and Working-Class Organisation In South Australia in the Nineteenth Century." Honours Thesis, Flinders University, 1990.

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<sup>15</sup> Of the five different Methodist denominations – Wesleyan, Bible Christians, Primitive, New Connexion and United Methodist Free – three were significant in South Australia: Wesleyan Methodists, Bible Christians and Primitive Methodists.

<sup>16</sup> Leanne Davis, "Serena Thorne Lake" (*Finding a home in the Uniting Church*, Uniting Church National History Society, Hoppers Crossing, Australia, 2019). 115-122.

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- Haslam, Rev. James. *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from Its Commencement to Its Jubilee*. Adelaide, South Australia: The South Australian Methodist Historical Society, 1958.

This book was originally published in 1888 (as articles in the Wesleyan newspaper) and described the first fifty years of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Australia.

- Hilliard, David. "Looking again at the History of South Australian Methodism: Twenty-five years after Arnold Hunt's *This Side of Heaven*." *Aldersgate Papers* Volume 10 (2012)

This paper is part of the inspiration for my research question. Whilst it is not specifically about the women's history of the South Australian Methodism it is about the history in general and acknowledges that very little has been written about the history of the women involved in the church.

Associate Professor Hilliard has written other works on church history (including the Methodist Church in South Australia). , and has assisted with some research for this thesis.

- Hopgood, Donald. "Methodists in South Australian Public Life." *Aldersgate Papers*. Volume 10 (2012).

This paper provided some insight into the beginnings of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in South Australia, and its connection to the Methodist Church in South Australia.

- Hunt, Arnold D. *The Bible Christians in South Australia*. Adelaide: Uniting Church Historical Society South Australia, 1983.
- Hunt, Arnold D. *This Side of Heaven*. Adelaide: Lutheran Publishing House, 1985.
- Walker, R. B. "Methodism in the 'Paradise of Dissent.; 1837-1900" in *The Journal of Religious History*. December 1969, pages 331-347

## Methodism in Australia

As with South Australian Methodism, reviewing literature on Methodism in Australia has also helped provide context, particularly, the South Australian context in the broader context of Australia before Federation (and Methodist Union), and indication and information about some of the women involved in the church at that time.

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- O'Brien, Glen (editor), and Hilary M Carey (editor). *Methodism in Australia: A History*. Ashgate Methodist Studies Series. Burlington: Ashgate, 2015.

This collection of papers/essays contains a paper on Methodism in South Australia (David Hilliard) as well as a paper on Australian Methodist Women (Anne O'Brien).

- *The Aldersgate Papers* and *The Journal of Wesleyan Thought* from the Australian Centre for Wesleyan Research includes some papers on Methodist history in both Australian and in South Australia

### Religious History in Australia

Information about broader religious history in Australia has (and will) provide a context for South Australia's history. Some of the notable women have been included (at least a mention of a name)

- Evans, Robert, *Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia: A Study of Surviving Published Materials about Evangelical Revivals in Australia up to 1880* (Hazelbrook, NSW: Robert Evans, 2000)
- Evans, Robert, *Early Evangelical Revivals in Australia: A Study of Surviving Published Materials about Evangelical Revivals in Australia 1880-1914* (Hazelbrook, NSW: Robert Evans, 2005)

### Wider Methodist History

Looking into the wider Methodist History and the involvement of women provides a wider context than just the borders of South Australia, and helps to answer whether or not South Australia was unique in the involvement of women in the Methodist Church, or whether the levels of women's involvement is common across the denomination more generally. The review of wider Methodist history has also helped to see the differences in the involvement of women across the five Methodist denominations.

- Bizzell, Patricia, "Frances Willard, Phoebe Palmer, and the Ethos of the Methodist Women Preacher." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (2006): 377-98.
- Bourne, F. W. *The Bible Christians: Their Origin and History (1815-1900)*. Bible Christian Book Depot. 1905

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Bourne includes considerable information about the women preachers in the early years of the Bible Christian Connexion. Whilst many of these women weren't involved in the early church in South Australia (although quite a number emigrated as missionaries, with or without husbands), they would have influenced the women who came.

- Chilcote, Paul Wesley, *Her Own Story: Autobiographical portraits of early Methodist Women*. Abingdon Press, 2001
- Hempton, David and Myrtle Hill, 'Born to Serve: Women and Evangelical Religion', in Alan Hayes and Dianne Urquhard, eds., *The Irish Women's History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001)
- Lloyd, Jennifer M – *Women preachers in the Bible Christian Connection*", *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 36, no 3 (August 2004)
- Shorney, David; "'Women may preach but men must govern": Gender roles in the growth and development of the Bible Christian Denomination', *Studies in Church History* 34 (1998): 309–22.
- Wilson, Linda, 'Constrained by Zeal: Women in Mid-Nineteenth Century Nonconformist Churches', *Journal of Religious History* 23, no. 2 (June 1999)

### Organisational Histories

As with the more general histories of South Australia and Methodism, published histories of organisations, churches, congregations and parishes provide an insight into the lives of those involved with these organisations and groups. They contain records of significant events and people in the life of the organisation or group. It is expected that women will be included (particularly in the women's led organisations).

- Harry, Millicent; *A century of service: the history of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union of South Australia Inc.* WCTU of South Australia, 1986
- Published histories of individual churches, congregations and parishes.

There are a number of these that have been published over time. These will contain records of significant events, and people in the life of the church, congregation or parish. In some cases, the women have been included.

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## Biographies and Family Histories

This thesis is about the stories of women. Some published stories already exist. Reading at least some of these will provide background on these people<sup>17</sup>, as well as providing information on society at the time.

- *The Australian Dictionary of Biography* – available at <http://adb.anu.edu.au/>

A useful site for summary information on either notable women, or women with notable husbands.

- George, Denise. *Mary Lee : The Life and Times of a 'Turbulent Anarchist' and Her Battle for Women's Rights*. Mile End, South Australia : Wakefield Press, 2018.

Mary Lee was involved in the Methodist church and worked in the community through the Women's Christian Temperance Union. Her biography has yielded some useful information.

- Jones, Helen, *In her own name: a history of women in South Australia*, rev. edn. (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 1994)
- Trethewey, Lynne, 'Christian Feminism in Action: Kate Cock's Social Welfare Work in South Australia, 1900-1950,' *History of Education* 36, no. 6 (November 2007)

This reference is a little outside of my timeframe, but still provides an interesting insight.

## Feminist Historiography

The patriarchal view of history is not limited to the church in South Australia. This is an issue and gap in history across time and place. A review of feminist historiography will place the issue in South Australian church history in greater context.

- Davis, Kathy. "On the Shoulders of Giants: Some Reflections on Feminist Historiography." *European Journal of Women's Studies* 17, no. 1 (2010): 3-6. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506809350856>

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<sup>17</sup> Men, women, and whole families - these stories will include mothers, wives, daughters, sisters and other women.



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- Muller, Nadine. "Feminism's Family Drama: Female Genealogies, Feminist Historiography, and Kate Walbert's a Short History of Women." *Feminist Theory* 18, no. 1 (2017): 17-34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1464700116683655>.
  - Radford Ruether, Rosemary. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. London: SCM Press, 1983
  - Schussler Fiorenza, Elisabeth. *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins*. London: London : SCM Press, 1983.

### Newspapers and periodicals

Newspapers (both Christian and secular) will provide a source for names of women (for further investigation into their life stories) as well as a source for obituaries (also a source for life stories of women). I also expect to find more general references to women (as opposed to specifically named women) that points to women's involvement in fundraising events, teaching Sunday School and Junior Christian Endeavor (generally the discipleship of children), organists, pianists, and other church musicians (even though choir directors were often men).

- The *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA: 1901 – 1940)*

Available from <https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/title/1166> and hard copy at the UCSA Historical Society (Black Forest).

This was the weekly paper for the Methodist Church in South Australia. The Australian Christian Commonwealth (ACC) did not begin publication until after (or at) Methodist Union in 1900.

- The South Australian Bible Christian Magazine

There are limited editions of this quarterly magazine available as it is believed a the complete set was destroyed in the Ash Wednesday (1983) bushfires in the Adelaide Hills). There are some copies available on microfile at the State Library of South Australia.

- The South Australian Bible Christian Monthly

The Bible Christian Monthly is a continuation of the South Australian Bible Christian Magazine (see above) but monthly instead of quarterly. As with the quarterly magazine, there are limited editions of this monthly magazine. There are some

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physical copies at the UCSA Historical Society (Black Forest), and some available on microfilm at the State Library of South Australia.

- The Bible Christian Magazine

This is the English version (and predecessor) of the South Australian Bible Christian Magazine. It contained regular “mission field reports” that included much church activity from South Australia. As with the South Australian version, there are only limited physical editions of this magazine available. Some editions are available online from Oxford University.

- The Christian Weekly and Methodist Journal

This was the weekly newspaper for the Wesleyan Methodist Church in South Australia. It was published from 1874 to 1900 (Methodist Union). It is a source of information about the church and the people involved at the time.

- The Primitive Methodist Magazine
- South Australian secular newspapers including *The Chronicle*, *The Advertiser*, *The Register*, and regional newspapers

Most of these newspapers are searchable on Trove ([trove.nla.gov.au](http://trove.nla.gov.au)) so can be searched for names to get additional information. Women with significant church involvement often had significant community involvement as well, so obituaries, stories and other information might be found in these papers

Personal papers, diaries, minutes, church records, society lectures and newsletters, ...

Many of the useful resources that describe women’s involvement in the church aren’t published. This information comes from archived minutes, personal papers and diaries, unpublished church and organisational histories (published histories have been included above), society lectures and newsletters, and other information that has been collected by the Uniting Church SA Historical Society (UCSAHS) and the archives from other Synods via the Uniting Church National History Society (UCNHS).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> As a member of both of the societies, and employed by the UCSAHS, I have access to these resources.

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- Lectures presented by the then Methodist Historical Society (the forerunner to the UCSAHS) on the establishment of Methodism across South Australia.

These lectures were presented and published by the society in the 1950s and 1960s. Many of these reference families and communities who have been instrumental in establishing the local church communities.

- Church and related organisations minutes, documents, and other papers – including the published Conference minutes during the relevant timeframe

These papers are the primary sources for finding people who were involved in congregations, parishes and other church organisations (including conferences and other significant gatherings).

- Thorne, Serena. "Diary of Serena Thorne 1870 - 1871." Unpublished (held by UCSAHS), 1870.

This is a limited resource in that it only provides the voice of one woman in the time period under consideration (and only a brief snapshot in that time as well). This diary is part of the inspiration for my research question. The parts of this diary that I have read and/or transcribed mention other people who might be useful to consider researching further to include their stories as well.

Her obituary (as published in *The Australian Christian Commonwealth*) was also included in the notebook (pasted in there by her husband – editor of the newspaper at the time). This also provides some information about the organisations connected to the church that she was involved in. Research into these organisations will also provide some useful sources and stories to consider.

### Vital Records, Indexes and other Primary Sources

In many cases, women that have been mentioned in stories and histories are not mentioned by name; mentioned only by their husband's name; or only in reference to their father's name. Using indexes and records (primarily online) provides a way of finding the details for those women to give them their names and opening the possibility of telling more of their stories.

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- The South Australian Genealogy & Heraldry Society (Genealogy SA) provides online access to a number of indexes including births, deaths, marriages, shipping passenger list indexes and the Biographical Index of South Australia to name a few.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> <https://www.genealogysa.org.au/>

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## The Journey

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### Process of Investigation

Of the five 'denominations' of Methodism that were present in the nineteenth century (Wesleyan, Bible Christian, Primitive, New Connexion, and United Methodist Free), only three of them (Wesleyan, Bible Christian and Primitive) had a significant presence in South Australia prior to Methodist Union in 1901.

The Methodist New Connexion began services in South Australia in 1840, and even though they eventually had their own minister in 1852 (James Maughan) and built a new church (later known as Maughan Church) in 1864, the church never really flourished and merged with the Bible Christians in 1888.<sup>20</sup>

The United Methodist Free churches began in South Australia in 1857. They became more significant in Victoria and New South Wales. In 1885, the Adelaide circuit of the United Methodist Free church was removed from the list of circuits. As Hunt describes in *This Side of Heaven*, "It was a miniscule movement, whose contribution to South Australian Methodism was negligible."<sup>21</sup>

As a result, the research conducted for this thesis has involved the Wesleyan Methodists, the Bible Christian Methodists, and the Primitive Methodists, the women in these churches, and their stories. Even among these three more dominant denominations, there seems to be less documented history for the Primitive Methodists.<sup>22</sup> This has led to more focus being made on Wesleyan and Bible Christian women.

Published denominational histories, local church histories, family histories and biographies have been read; newspapers (both secular and church papers) and similar periodicals have been examined; and unpublished church minutes and other papers have been reviewed. The resources consulted in this research have been in no way exhaustive of all possible sources of

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<sup>20</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*. 53-57

<sup>21</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*. 20

<sup>22</sup> An event held by the Uniting Church in South Australia Historical Society (UCSAHS) in March, 2018 sought to encourage conversations and research to address this imbalance, and work has begun on researching the Primitive Methodists in South Australia.

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published and unpublished church history but have provided a representative collection of what information is or could be available.

## Challenges

A number of challenges arose in conducting this research, and these are described below.

Name changes with marriage

Women did (and often still do) change their name upon marriage, and this sometimes happened more than once in a women's life.

Using my own great-great-grandmother as an example:<sup>23</sup>

Miss Jane Ellis married Mr James Rundle and became

Mrs James Rundle. When James Rundle died, she remarried and became

Mrs Charles Lee. When Charles died, she became

Mrs Jane Lee.

Without knowing who they married and when, it becomes hard to keep track of individual women. Keeping track of these things is an important step in following women in the church.

Mrs "Husband's Name"

When married, it seems women lost their own name (and perhaps with it, their identity to some degree) and would be referred to by their husband's name as Mrs <husband's first name> <husband's last name> (refer to the example of my great-great-grandmother above).

Able to trace marriage information for any married women is an important step in identifying individual women and telling their stories.

There are many examples of men remarrying after the death of their first wife (or after divorced<sup>24</sup>), without extra biographic research and information, we may not know which woman is being referenced. For example, in Arnold Hunt's *This Side of Heaven*, there are references to two different Mrs John Dunn of Mount Barker – Mrs John Dunn and Mrs Jane

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<sup>23</sup> Particularly since she is referenced in passing in church history (having married a Bible Christian minister/missionary later in life)

<sup>24</sup> Divorce was very rare in the time period under consideration, but I have come across one example in my research.

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Dunn.<sup>25</sup> In order to tell the story of these women and to place each of these women in their own places and times in the story of the church, more biographical research is needed.

Unnamed and unmentioned women

Church histories and stories, church documents (minutes, and other records), event reports and obituaries tell stories that place people in time and place. Stories and reports have been found where women are mentioned and not named, including obituaries for men but their wives and/or daughters have not been named, and in some cases not mentioned at all.

In the obituary of Mr Benjamin Norton, a prominent lay person in the Methodist Church, there was only a brief mention that he was even married. After an account of his early life in the Auburn area, we read “This was followed by marriage to her who now mourns the loss of a deeply-devoted husband.”<sup>26</sup> After some research, it was discovered that her name was Lavinia (nee Foreward/Forward).<sup>27</sup>

Mrs Lavinia Norton was not the only woman referenced in this way. Many obituaries for men involved in the church were written to have only, at best, a passing reference to their wives. The obituary of John William Parsons, a local preacher, does not mention a wife at all.<sup>28</sup> It is only the mention of two sons (who were named) and a daughter (not named but mentioned was a missionary in India) that suggests he had a wife at all. Further research into the life of John Parsons reveals that his wife’s name was Martha (nee Haines). They arrived in South Australia around 1850-51 as a young married couple (ages 22 and 19),<sup>29</sup> and birth registration indexes suggest they had eight children – four sons and four daughters.<sup>30</sup> Other indexes available online indicate that Martha predeceased John and this is the likely reason for her not being mentioned in his obituary.

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<sup>25</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*.

On page 84, reference is made to Mrs Jane Dunn as the second wife of John Dunn as a “generous supporter of Methodism” and on page 258 a reference is made to Mrs John Dunn who “provided scholarship for training ministers”. It is not clear whether this was Jane (the second wife) or John Dunn’s first wife.

<sup>26</sup> "BENJAMIN DAWSON NORTON," *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940)* (SA), 11 January 1901 1901, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article213567587>.

<sup>27</sup> "South Australia Marriage Registrations Database," (Adelaide, South Australia: Genealogy SA, 07 July 2020), Index of Records. Book/Page: 22/96

<sup>28</sup> "CHURCH TRIUMPHANT," *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940)* (SA), 11 January 1901 1901, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article213567588>.

<sup>29</sup> <https://bound-for-south-australia.collections.slsa.sa.gov.au/ShipLists%20Alpha%20by%20Year/1851N-Q.htm>

<sup>30</sup> Genealogy SA Online indexes - <https://genealogysa.org.au/resources/online-database-search>

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In the history of churches, even women with what might be considered a significant role were not named. The following is from a report on the building and establishment of the Snowtown Bible Christian Chapel:

“In the evening a tea meeting and public meeting were held in Mr Young’s wheat store. The musical arrangements were provided by the Hancock and Stevens families. On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> January three services were held in the wheat store. A young lady preached in the morning and evening and Rev. Bullock, the Circuit minister in the afternoon.”<sup>31</sup>

It is a shame that the recorders of this history did not think it necessary to name the ‘young lady’!

Spelling changes/transcription errors

Issues with slight changes in the spelling of names between different life events can make it difficult to track a person. There were often a number of reasons for spelling changes in names. When literacy levels were low, names were spelled however the person writing them thought they should be spelled. For unusual names, this often resulted in different phonetic spellings of the same name, particularly in the case of non-‘English’ names. As literacy levels increased, spelling of names became slightly more consistent, but there can still be problems with transcription errors. These happened historically, when information was being copied from one record source to another and handwriting was difficult to read; and also happens in more current times when people are trying to read old records to create digital indexes. Any type of transcription error can cause problems in trying to trace people (not just women) as seen in the variant spellings of Mrs Lavinia Norton’s maiden name, discussed above).

Deliberate spelling changes in names also occurred (and still does). These changes were most often seen in families who were attempting to anglicise their names and often happened with both given and last names.

Common names

Surnames that are common make it difficult to trace individuals and to determine who is who. In the list of women gathered in this research (see below for further description), it is possible that the same person has been listed more than once (not only as a result of surname changes

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<sup>31</sup> E. A. Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people* (Black Forest, South Australia: Uniting Church SA Historical Society, 2015). P341 – and quoting from Alan Jones – *Snowtown: the first century 1878 – 1978*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide 1978 and *Adelaide Observer*, March 1879.



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mentioned above). When women are only mentioned by last name as Mrs <last name> or Miss <last name> without much context it becomes difficult to tell people with the same name apart. More research into each woman will help determine how is who and sort out women with the same name to ensure that each woman is in her right time and place in the history of the church.

2020 and COVID-19

The circumstances of this year, whilst not specifically related to the topic at hand, have made access to some resources difficult. Some published material was able to be obtained from libraries that were willing to send books out to lenders while everything was shut down during March - June. This did not include sources such as microfilms, special collections, or historical books. Access to most physical records, particularly unpublished documents, has been, at best, very limited.<sup>32</sup>

This research can be expanded greatly once adequate access to physical resources such as original minute books, personal papers and other historical special collections (for example, the collection for the Methodist Church of Australasia, or the personal papers of Sir Samuel Way at the State Library of South Australia) can be made.

## Research Discoveries and Outcomes

### Meeting the Challenges

A careful review of the published denominational histories, local church histories, family histories and biographies has been made; newspapers (both secular and church papers) and similar periodicals have been examined; and unpublished church minutes and other papers have been reviewed. The resources consulted in this research have been in no way exhaustive of all possible sources of published and unpublished church history but have provided a representative collection of what information is or could be available.

As these materials have been read and reviewed, notes have been<sup>33</sup> made for each woman – named and unnamed – that were listed among the records. In some cases, the women were not much more than names – if that much (refer to Lavinia Norton, or the young lady who

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<sup>32</sup> Access to microfilm, special collection documents etc held in libraries was not possible at all. Access to the information at the Uniting Church Historical Society was available, albeit in a very limited capacity.

<sup>33</sup> And continue to be – the search for the stories and the histories of the women in the Methodist church is continuing after the conclusion of this thesis.

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preached at the opening of the Snowtown Bible Christian Chapel examples described above) in a passing reference. For other women, more detail has been found. The more detail that can be found, the more of their stories can be told. Even this passing reference to a person can place a person in a place at a certain time, and this starts to help to find more of their story. For example, we can surmise from the "List of Agents"<sup>34</sup> for the distribution of the *Australian Christian Commonwealth* in 1901, that Mrs A. P. Burgess was part of the Laura Methodist congregation as she is listed as the Laura agent.

As the list grew it became apparent that a simple list of women's names and where their names had been mentioned was becoming unwieldy and did not help to keep track of the women and their information. To deal with this, a database has been created (and continues to be added to and developed) to list the women, some of their identifying information (including name changes and places) and links to individual larger documents that contain their stories, part of their stories and references to their information in existing histories, church records, newspaper reports and other sources. At the time of writing, the database contains names and information for over four hundred women. As noted above, it is possible that there are some duplicates in this list, particularly for women with common names, or having listed someone as both unmarried and married.

Online sources became a useful and required source of material, particularly when physical access to records and sources has not been possible (either due to library closures in 'COVID times' or to being able access libraries and archives in other cities and countries). Digitised *Bible Christian Magazines* from England<sup>35</sup> enabled information to be found on Bible Christian missionaries and their wives who came to South Australia. Similarly, digitised published missionary reports from the Wesleyan Methodists were found in the 'Google Books' project.

Resources and techniques which would generally be used for family history research have been utilised in finding out some of the information to be able to tell the stories of the women who have been discovered. Birth, marriage, death and burial information provide anchor points in time and place for people, and whilst they do not tell the full story of a person, they

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<sup>34</sup> "List of Agents," *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940)* (SA), 11 January 1901 1901, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-page23940696>.

<sup>35</sup> Available from University of Oxford -

<http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/primo-explore/fulldisplay?vid=SOLO&docid=oxfaleph014284257&context=L>

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represent some of the significant life events to build the stories upon. These vital records<sup>36</sup> are increasingly available in online repositories as indexed databases. This means they can be more easily searched by name, or date, or place when only one of these details might be known. For example, in finding Martha Parsons (described above), using her husband's name and the name of two of their children (the two sons named in the obituary), I could search the consolidated birth index<sup>37</sup> to find these (and the other) children of John. The subsequent search result gave me the name of their mother (Martha). Having to rely on the original paper registers, much more information would have been needed about John and the sons to know where and in what date range to search. The online availability of these records has been indispensable in this research, particularly for long distance information and when local access has not been possible.

#### Discoveries and Outcomes

To be able to tell the stories, the women need to be found. Finding the women in church (and society) history required careful reading, interpretation and interpolation of the recorded information.

For married women, and in particular, minister's wives<sup>38</sup>, some of their stories can be pieced together based on their husbands' information, in particular, the places where the women were, and the times they were there, can be discovered based on various conference reports and minutes that provide the placement details for their husbands. For example, we can assume that Serena Lake (nee Thorne), wife of the Rev. Octavius Lake<sup>39</sup>, was living in the Eastwood and Kensington area of Adelaide in 1891-92. This is based on the report of the fifteenth conference of the Bible Christian Church in South Australia, held in 1891, that tells us Octavius Lake was stationed in Eastwood and Kensington<sup>40</sup>. Placing Serena in a place and at a time helps add to her story.

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<sup>36</sup> Vital records are those that are kept by civil authorities, church registries, etc and can include birth, marriage, death and burial information.

<sup>37</sup> The consolidated online index provided by Genealogy SA means I can search all of South Australia, and not need to know which particular registration district a person was born, married or died in

<sup>38</sup> Ordained ministers in the time period under consideration were always men. Whilst there were some women preachers, they were never ordained.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, "Serena Thorne Lake."

<sup>40</sup> "15th Conference Report," *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine* (Adelaide, South Australia) 1891. 301

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Published obituaries of both men and women are useful in piecing stories together. Women's obituaries give a significant outline of their lives and can provide the beginnings of a more full story. Men's obituaries, assuming the men were married, can help locate the women in time and place, even if they are not mentioned by name (refer to the 'Unnamed and unmentioned women' challenge described above). In these cases, piecing together the story of the wife is a little more challenging, but the availability of online indexed and searchable databases has made this work somewhat easier than it once would have been.

Names, dates and places provide only part of the story. These are the bones, the skeleton not the full story with all of its flesh, and yet, the skeleton is essential. Without this information, finding the story to tell becomes difficult. It is the names, dates and places that are recorded in official records. This information becomes the starting point for story telling. The work of telling the stories of the women in the church (or of telling any biographical story) is finding this flesh to add to the bones. It is finding the ligaments and tendons (continuing the body metaphor) that connect the bones together, and the flesh to the bones. The ligaments, tendons and flesh come from the obituaries. They come from the newspaper reports of events and activities. They come from personal papers and diaries. For example, we can know some information about Serena Thorne and her evangelistic work in the colony from all the reports of where she preached and when. Yet it is in reading her diary that we know of some of what she was thinking and feeling. We know she was hopeful and relying on God to sustain her because on the evening of the day she arrived in South Australia she wrote "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."<sup>41</sup> We know that she was not put off by criticism of her as a female preacher because she wrote this in December 1870:

"I received an anonymous letter last eve, quoting those passages in Timothy and Corinthians – I suppose the clever individual thought to frighten me ... They have done no harm. I prayed that God would vindicate my cause himself today from those bitter tongues."<sup>42</sup>

Similarly, we know she was homesick for a while, and was concerned for her aging parents. We know that she cancelled her engagement (only briefly) to the Rev. Octavius Lake because she wrote this on November 24, 1870:

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<sup>41</sup> Serena Thorne, "Diary of Serena Thorne 1870 - 1871," (Unpublished (held by UCSAHS), 1870-1870).

<sup>42</sup> Thorne, "Diary of Serena Thorne 1870 - 1871."

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"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."<sup>43</sup>

Knowing what led up to their marriage provides a much more interesting story than simply knowing that her and Octavius were married on 2 May 1871 at the home of Mr. Samuel Way.<sup>44</sup> Having Serena's own thoughts and words, in her own handwriting, gives a glimpse into the woman she was when she arrived in South Australia.

As the research into women in the South Australian Methodist church continues, it is hoped that more diaries, personal papers and letters might be found to give similar insight into the lives of other women.

The stories of individual women, as well as the more general stories that include women from the three denominations tell us that there were many similarities in the roles, responsibilities, and activities of women across the churches, at least in part because, as Hilliard describes, "the boundaries between the three main branches of Methodism in South Australia were porous"<sup>45</sup> and also their related shared heritage. There were also some differences, particularly related to women preaching in churches.

David Hilliard, in his chapter *Methodism in South Australia, 1855-1902* in *Methodism in Australia* describes the role of women in the Methodist Church in South Australia in this way:

"Women comprised some two-thirds of church members, were the majority of church attenders and provided much of the labour that kept the church going. They gave religious instruction to the young, led Christian Endeavour societies, participated in prayer meetings, conducted family worship, provided hospitality to itinerant ministers and local preachers, made articles for bazaars and sales of work to raise money for church funds, collected subscriptions and donations, distribute tracts, baked cakes and biscuits for church teas and meetings, cleaned the church and visited the sick and bereaved."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Thorne, "Diary of Serena Thorne 1870 - 1871."

<sup>44</sup> "South Australia Marriage Registrations Database." Book 86 / Page 489

<sup>45</sup> David Hilliard, "Methodism in South Australia, 1855-1902," in *Methodism in Australia*, ed. Glen O'Brien and Hilary M. Carey (Abingdon: Ashgate Publishing, 2015). 99

<sup>46</sup> Glen (editor) O'Brien and Hilary M Carey (editor), *Methodism in Australia: a history*, Ashgate Methodist studies series, (Burlington: Ashgate, 2015, 2015). 77

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## Stories

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The following stories, of Elizabeth Longbottom, Ann Roberts and the Bible Christian Woman's Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board, have been written to demonstrate what can be learned about women's involvement in the early South Australian Methodist church from the existing church and history literature, primary source documents and other archived information.

In researching stories of individual women and organisations, it became apparent that there is more information about women's involvement in the early Methodist Church that was more general in nature. This information helps us to know how much women were involved in the church at the time, without telling the story of any specific woman. It is important to recognise and include this history as well as that of the more prominent women as this helps give a fuller picture of women's involvement. As Nock described, in his biography of Pastor Abbott:

"There were other sisters in the city and country who were zealous of good works and acted the part of deaconesses without the name."<sup>47</sup>

The specific work of women (often unnamed) often went unrecorded, or, at best noted in a passing mention in a newspaper report, or a note of thanks recorded in minutes. This has the tendency to diminish or minimise the work and role of women in the church, and yet it was the women involved in these activities that helped to build the church in the early days of colonial South Australia. These stories need to be told as well as these are the stories of the local church and are important in the history of faith, discipleship and church in this place. Some of these stories have also been included in this section. It is in the telling of these stories that we notice the "robust mutual ministry and support always emerges when it comes to pioneer women."<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> David Nock, *The life of Pastor Abbott* (Adelaide: Adelaide : D. Nock, 1909). 26

<sup>48</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 59

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## Elizabeth Longbottom (nee Eagland)

Elizabeth Eagland was born in 1796 (based on her age at death in 1872)<sup>49</sup> although the first certain documentary evidence<sup>50</sup> of the life of Elizabeth Eagland is found in the marriage records of the Bingley Parish in the county of York, England.<sup>51</sup> On the 13<sup>th</sup> of August, 1829, Elizabeth Eagland (listed as a Spinster) married William Longbottom (listed as a 'Wesleyan minister of the Gospel'). The record tells us they were married by license<sup>52</sup>, and both signed their own names.<sup>53</sup>

In November of the same year (1829), William was accepted (appointed) as a missionary and was sent to India. As the wife of a minister and missionary, Elizabeth accompanied William to all his posts and in all his travels. They first went to Chennai (then known as Madras) and then to Nagapattinam (then known as Nejjapatam). It was while they were in India (in 1832) that Elizabeth gave birth to their only child (also named William).<sup>54</sup> Health issues for William (Snr) forced the young Longbottom family to South Africa (near Cape Town) in 1835 where the climate was hopefully more conducive to William's recovery and ongoing health.<sup>55</sup> After some time, the family returned to India so William could continue his missionary work. Sadly William's health took another turn for the worse, and the Longbottom family were on the move again. The Mission Committee assigned William to the new Swan River Colony in Western Australia<sup>56</sup>, and so in late 1837, they set sail for Hobart Town (unable to find a direct

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<sup>49</sup> "South Australian Death Index," (Adelaide, South Australia: Genealogy SA, 08 August 2020), Index of Records. Book/Page: 49/323

<sup>50</sup> A baptismal record has been found for Betty Eagland, daughter of Mary Eagland on June 9, 1798 (West Yorkshire Archive Service, "West Yorkshire, England, Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, 1512-1812," (2011, Wakefield, Yorkshire, England). The baptismal record notes that Betty was 'base begotten' – suggesting a child conceived and born out of wedlock (according to various genealogical reference sites). There is no father listed on the baptismal record. However, I have not found anything definitive to say this is the same person. Elizabeth's date at death suggests she was born in 1796 (so baptism at age 2 is not out of the question).

<sup>51</sup> Ancestry.com, "West Yorkshire, England, Church of England Marriages and Banns, 1813-1935.," (2011, Lehi, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc.,). <https://www.ancestry.com.au/search/collections/2253/>.

<sup>52</sup> The alternative to marriage by licence was marriage by banns – the banns being issued in the parish church over a particular time period. A number of genealogy websites and discussion boards suggest that non-conformists often chose marriage by licence in preference to having to be married in the parish church (Church of England). A special license would have been issued (for a fee) to allow them to marry somewhere else.

<sup>53</sup> Being able to sign one's own name in the marriage register suggests literacy and education. This is something that was less common in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century than it is today, particularly for women, although not unexpected for someone who was a minister.

<sup>54</sup> "Biographical Index of South Australians Database," (Adelaide, South Australia: Genealogy SA, 08 July 2020), Index of Records.

<sup>55</sup> Rev. William Moister, *Missionary Pioneers: Memorial Sketches of Eminent Ministers* (Hamilton, Adams, 1871). 449

<sup>56</sup> Moister, *Missionary Pioneers: Memorial Sketches of Eminent Ministers*. 466

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passage), arriving there in early 1838.<sup>57</sup> Four months after their arrival, on 30<sup>th</sup> May, and with William's health having improved, the Longbottoms (William, Elizabeth, and William (Junior)) set sail on the *Fanny* headed for the Swan River Colony in Western Australia.<sup>58</sup> The journey to Swan River was interrupted (permanently as turns out) when the *Fanny* ran aground during a storm just east of Encounter Bay in South Australia on June 21, 1838.<sup>59</sup>

In a letter to a friend in Hobart Town, Elizabeth described the shipwreck and subsequent weeks spent trying to get to Adelaide, including this description of how they got to the shore immediately after the ship ran aground:

"... We were very close in, and laid broadside to the shore. We put dear William over the side first, and the man handed him to the captain who carried him safely through the surf. It is impossible for me, my dear Mrs. Barrett, to describe our feelings when we saw our dear boy, safe ashore. The men now waited to assist me in getting off, but I had not courage to jump overboard at the time when the surf receded, and Mr. L. was obliged to push me off the side. I was under water several minutes, having lost my hold of the rope. My dear husband, seeing my situation, instantly plunged in after me and laid hold of my clothes. It appeared the sailor never left hold of my gown, otherwise I might have been carried away with the surf. They dragged me out of the water, but I was dreadfully exhausted, and not strength to keep my feet even after I was on the beach. They assisted me behind a sandhill which sheltered us a little from the violence of the gale. By this time our company was all on shore and we all lay down among the bushes and awaited morning light."<sup>60</sup>

After eight weeks from the initial shipwreck (including forty-five days camping on the Coorong)<sup>61</sup>, the Longbottoms eventually arrived in Adelaide on 01 September 1838<sup>62</sup>, after suffering another mishap on their rescue vessel, The Lady Wellington, when this ship ran aground and got stuck in the mud at or near Port Adelaide on their arrival.<sup>63</sup> In her letter to Mrs Barrett in Hobart Town, Elizabeth spoke of the generosity of the Wesleyan Methodist Society in Adelaide (which, at that time was without a minister or missionary). She wrote:

"... With regard to our lost, it is great... but friends here have been very kind. They have made Mr Longbottom a present of a suit of clothes; one friend has kindly sent me a new

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<sup>57</sup> James Bickford, *Christian Work in Australasia: With Notes on the Settlement and Progress of the Colonies* (Wesleyan Conference Office, 1878). 135

<sup>58</sup> Moister, *Missionary Pioneers: Memorial Sketches of Eminent Ministers*. 467

<sup>59</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, "Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database," (14 August 2020). <http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/underwater-heritage/auchd>. ID5345

<sup>60</sup> Geoffrey C. and Diana P. Vaudry, *Memoabilia of the Revd. William Longbottom and Descendants in Australia* (1981). P24 (transcript of original letter)

<sup>61</sup> Rev. James Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee* (Adelaide, South Australia: The South Australian Methodist Historical Society, 1958). 38

<sup>62</sup> J. W. Bull, *Early Experiences of Colonial Life in South Australia* (Adelaide, South Australia, 1878). 77

<sup>63</sup> Australia, "Australasian Underwater Cultural Heritage Database." ID: 5509



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bonnet, gown and hat; for William another couple of caps, another a shawl, with many little useful articles of clothing..."<sup>64</sup>

The young Wesleyan Methodist Society, which had formed in May 1837 were "rejoicing exceedingly that a Minister of the Gospel had been so unexpectedly cast upon their shores."<sup>65</sup> After some negotiation, Rev. Longbottom's appointment was changed from Swan River to Adelaide<sup>66</sup>, and the Longbottom family settled in Adelaide. During this time in Adelaide, much has been written on the success of William (Snr)'s ministry and mission work in Adelaide, and the building of a new chapel. Little is known about Elizabeth during this time. We can assume that she would have taken some responsibility for William (Jnr)'s faith development in the home (as this was the custom and expectation of Methodist women). Elizabeth conducted class meetings in the places that she served alongside William including in India and South Africa.<sup>67</sup> She led a female class meeting near the beginning of her time in Adelaide<sup>68</sup>, as well as later in life at the Magill Methodist Church.<sup>69</sup> It would be safe to assume that she led class meetings in the other churches that she and William served in or were part of in the years between. She is also recorded as visiting the sick and the poor as part of her ministry and service.<sup>70</sup> Haslam, in his *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia*, says this of Elizabeth's work alongside William's: "Mrs Longbottom's labours in the earlier days of the Church in South Australia were scarcely less valuable than those her husband."<sup>71</sup>

In 1839 the Longbottoms left South Australia for Hobart Town<sup>72</sup> (again to improve William's health) and in 1844, at the request of the Methodist church in South Australia<sup>73</sup>, returned to Adelaide. William Longbottom retired in 1846 (also brought on by continued ill-health), and

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<sup>64</sup> Vaudry, *Memoabilia of the Revd. William Longbottom and Descendants in Australia*. P27 (transcript of original letter)

<sup>65</sup> Moister, *Missionary Pioneers: Memorial Sketches of Eminent Ministers*. 451

<sup>66</sup> "HOW METHODISTS GOT THEIR FIRST MINISTER," *Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1931 - 1954)* (Adelaide, SA), 17 August 1933 1933, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article46994582>.

<sup>67</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

<sup>68</sup> Nock, *The life of Pastor Abbott*. 26

<sup>69</sup> Olive Walton, *Magill Methodist - Uniting Church, 1855-1990* (Magill, South Australia: Morialta Uniting Church, 1998). <http://www.morialtauca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/MAGILL-HISTORY-1855-1990.pdf>. 20

<sup>70</sup> Nock, *The life of Pastor Abbott*. 26

<sup>71</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

<sup>72</sup> James Colwell and W. H. Fitchett, *A Century in the Pacific* (Sydney: Sydney : William Beale, 1914). 307

<sup>73</sup> Reports of the day suggested that William Longbottom's successor was not as successful, nor as well liked as William.

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he and Elizabeth chose to remain in Adelaide.<sup>74</sup> In 1849, William died<sup>75</sup> leaving Elizabeth and their seventeen year old son.

The next occurrence of Elizabeth in any records, relates to the acquisition of a property (Section 343, 20 acres with a small stone cottage<sup>76</sup>) in the Burnside/Magill area. Elizabeth acquired this property, known as Home Park, in 1858, and extensive renovations were made in 1870.<sup>77</sup> She lived here with her son for some time. Elizabeth became part of the Magill Methodist Church congregation, and continued, as she had done in the past, to lead class meetings, up until a month before her death.<sup>78</sup> Her passing was noted in the church records when Mrs Pellow was appointed to take over her (Elizabeth's) Thursday afternoon class meeting.<sup>79</sup> In one of the earliest official records of the Magill church, Elizabeth's name is among those listed at the Leaders' Meeting held on 4 January, 1870. She is the only woman listed as being present in this group.<sup>80</sup>

Very little is known about Elizabeth's education, other than we knew she could probably read and write (as she had signed her marriage record). However, it would seem that she was a student of languages (be it formally or informally). In the reports of William's missionary work, mention is made of Elizabeth conducting class meetings in India in English, Danish and Portuguese<sup>81</sup>. During their time in South Africa, it is reported that Elizabeth "was found leading in Christian fellowship in the Dutch language in which they were born."<sup>82</sup>

Elizabeth died on 8 October 1872 at Home Park (her residence)<sup>83</sup>, and is buried at Adelaide's West Terrace Cemetery.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Moister, *Missionary Pioneers: Memorial Sketches of Eminent Ministers*. 453

<sup>75</sup> "South Australian Death Index." Book 1/Page 179

<sup>76</sup> Donovan & Associates, *Magill Village: An historical Overview* (Campbelltown, South Australia, 2012), [https://www.campbelltown.sa.gov.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/234910/Magill-Village-An-historical-overview.pdf](https://www.campbelltown.sa.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/234910/Magill-Village-An-historical-overview.pdf). 5

<sup>77</sup> This property is now known as Romalo House, and while there is less land associated with the house, the house is still standing, and was recently (late 2019) on the market again - <https://www.realestate.com.au/sold/property-house-sa-magill-132481866>

<sup>78</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. P193

<sup>79</sup> Walton, *Magill Methodist - Uniting Church, 1855-1990*. 20

<sup>80</sup> S. Lillywhite, *Magill Methodist Church Centenary: 1855-1955* (Magill, South Australia: Magill Methodist Church, 1955). 4

<sup>81</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

<sup>82</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

<sup>83</sup> "Family Notices," *South Australian Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1858 - 1889)* (Adelaide, SA), 09 October 1872 1872, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article28689362>.

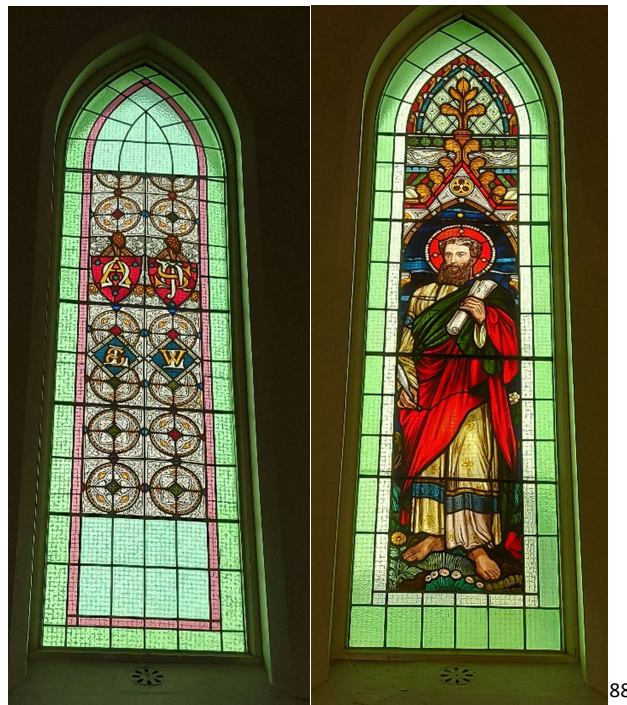
<sup>84</sup> Adelaide Cemeteries Authority, "Cemetery Records," (2020). <https://www.aca.sa.gov.au/records>.

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In describing Elizabeth, Haslam (in *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia*) says that she was “a woman of sound judgment, energy, and grace”, “true helpmeet to her husband”,<sup>85</sup> and

“a woman of well-balanced judgment; strong, physically and intellectually; as unswerving her attachment to the doctrines and discipline of Methodism as she was thoroughly acquainted with both; and earnest student of the Scripture, and hence deeply spiritual in her life.”<sup>86</sup>

The legacy of Elizabeth and William Longbottom to the Methodist Church in South Australia is remembered in the Longbottom Memorial Stained Glass windows in the (now) Morialta Uniting Church (formerly the Magill Methodist/Uniting Church). These windows were donated by William Longbottom Jnr in 1874 when the new church was being built.<sup>87</sup>



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<sup>85</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

<sup>86</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 193

<sup>87</sup> "Longbottom Memorial stained glass windows," accessed 12 September, 2020,

<http://www.morialtauca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/11/Longbottom-Memorial-stained-glass-window.pdf>.

<sup>88</sup> Photographs of the Longbottom Memorial Windows at Morialta Uniting Church. Taken by me (Leanne Davis) at a recent visit to the church.

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## Ann Roberts (nee White)



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Ann, a Bible Christian preacher, was the wife of the Rev. James Roberts, a Bible Christian minister. Ann White was born in Bembridge on the Isle of Wight, on August 8 1805<sup>90</sup>. It is believed that Ann was converted under the ministry of Mary Toms on the Isle of White in the early 1820s, became a local preacher only a few years later and entered the ministry becoming an itinerant preacher in 1833.<sup>91</sup> This was the first time that she appeared in the Conference minutes (two years before her husband apparently) in the lists of

appointments. It is reported that her name did not disappear from these lists until her marriage when she was “appointed by resolution of the conference the permanent and preaching colleague of James Roberts.”<sup>92</sup> She worked and served in a number of different circuits in England including Portsea, Week St. Mary, Launceston and Exeter, and shared in ministry (or as described in her obituary, “shared the burden of circuit work”<sup>93</sup>) with a number

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<sup>89</sup> "THE LATE MRS. JAMES ROBERTS," *Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931)* (Adelaide, SA), 10 May 1895 1895, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article34509686>.

<sup>90</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS," *South Australian Chronicle (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1895)* (Adelaide, SA), 11 May 1895 1895, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article93977178>.

<sup>91</sup> "Bible Christian Lady Preachers," 2020, accessed 15 September, 2020, <https://www.myunitedmethodists.org.uk/content/people/bible-christian-lady-preachers>. 30. Her obituary in the *South Australian Chronicle* suggests she entered the ministry in 1833. Access to the Conference minutes of the time would confirm which year this happened.

<sup>92</sup> "JUBILEE CELEBRATION AND VALEDICTORY MEETING," *South Australian Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1858 - 1889)* (Adelaide, SA), 30 March 1882 1882, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article34279778>.

<sup>93</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS.."

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of significant people within the Bible Christian Connexion including Rev. James Way and Rev. Jacob Prior (and many others).<sup>94</sup>

The marriage of Ann and James took place in Exeter on 18 September 1851. She became wife and mother to James' two children (James Charles, born 18 June 1845<sup>95</sup>, and Richard Reed, born 18 October 1846<sup>96</sup>) from his first marriage.<sup>97</sup> She continued to serve God and the church working with James in Penzance, Cornwall.<sup>98</sup>

In late 1854, James and Ann (and the two children) were assigned to South Australia along with the Rev. Thomas E Keen and his wife Sarah (nee Guard). Both James and Ann, who were both thought to be suitable for mission work, felt it was their duty to travel to South Australia, despite the pain of leaving family and friends.<sup>99</sup> After a farewell meeting in Plymouth at which Ann (along with James and Thomas Keen) addressed the meeting,<sup>100</sup> they set sail on the *Fortitude* in November 1854<sup>101</sup>, with this blessing for Ann and Sarah:

"The wives of our Brethren are both preachers. May their labours be as eminently owned of God in Australia, as those of their sisters have been in England, in the conversion of many precious souls."<sup>102</sup>

The Roberts' journey to South Australia, documented by James in his journal, has been recorded in the Bible Christian Magazine in August and September of 1855.<sup>103</sup> In this, we read of a cramped and uncomfortable journey where, in the first few weeks, many of the

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<sup>94</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS.."

<sup>95</sup> *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*, ed. James Way (Adelaide, South Australia: Bible Christian Bookroom, 1868). 65

<sup>96</sup> *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*. 63

<sup>97</sup> "Bible Christians - Penzance to South Australia," 2017, accessed 20 July, 2020, <https://tedcurnowhistory.wordpress.com/2017/03/30/bible-christians-penzance-to-south-australia/>.

E. A Curnow, in his research notes says that James Roberts married Alice Reed of Hicks Mill Cornwall. Alice and a child died before James moved to Penzance and married Ann in 1851. At the time of writing, no primary sources have been discovered for Alice, the marriage and her death (and that of a child).

<sup>98</sup> Booker, "Bible Christian Lady Preachers." 30

<sup>99</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 104

<sup>100</sup> Christians Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine," *The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine*. (1852). August 1855, p321 – excerpts of James Roberts' journal of the journey. I note that in the report of the farewell meeting in the December 1854 issue, there is no mention of Ann addressing the meeting!

<sup>101</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." December 1854, 478l

The original sailing date was for October 21, 1854 but bad weather delayed the sailing until November 1.

<sup>102</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." November 1854, 444

<sup>103</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." August 1855, pp320-324; September 1855, 351

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passengers were seasick (including James' two sons<sup>104</sup>). James reports that Ann was able to help attend to those passengers who were ill (as he and Ann did not get sick). James and Thomas (Keen) had ensured that there were at least two services (with prayers and a sermon) on each of the Sabbaths they were at sea, as well as other meetings or services during the week. In his journal entries on the same journal, Thomas Keen, reported on the opposition they regularly received, and described Ann's action in attempting to dissuade this behaviour when he wrote "Mrs Roberts went among them and courageously bade them desist..."<sup>105</sup> On Sunday 21 January 1855, Ann preached in the evening from Jeremiah 38:20. James reports that:

"It being the first time she has preached since we have been on board, we had a very large attendance ... several expressed a desire that she might preach again..."<sup>106</sup>

No time was wasted in having the newly arrived missionaries preach in the colony. After having arrived onshore on 5 February 1855, James writes this in his journal for Sunday, February 11:

"Thank God for a Sabbath on shore. We found it had been published for missionary sermons to be preached at Bowden chapel. Mrs. Roberts was appointed to preach in the morning; Br. T. E. Keen in the afternoon, and myself in the evening."<sup>107</sup>

On Tuesday Feb 13, 1855, the Roberts family set off for their first appointment in the colony, Willunga. Three years in Willunga was followed by appointments in Kapunda, Gawler, Mount Torrens, Clarendon, and others in the colony.<sup>108</sup> In all circuits, Ann preached regularly in the chapels in these circuits, as well as visiting many other chapels in the colony to preach on special occasions (anniversaries, openings, etc). Ann was one of the first women to preach in the colony.<sup>109</sup> She preached in many places, in varying circumstances, including on the back of a bullock dray in Yankalilla as the first act of public worship in the township. It has been

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<sup>104</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." September 1855, 322, 353

<sup>105</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." September 1855, 360

<sup>106</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." September 1855, 354

<sup>107</sup> Bible Christians Bible, "The Bible Christian magazine, a continuation of the Arminian magazine." September 1855, 356

<sup>108</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 119

<sup>109</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 59

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suggested that the crowd was larger than it might have ordinarily been because it was a woman preaching.<sup>110</sup>

In 1870, James retired from paid ministry (“became superannuated”<sup>111</sup>) and they made their home in Bowden, South Australia. Ann continued to preach in the Bowden circuit, was a class leader, and visited the sick.<sup>112</sup>

Ann’s ministry alongside her husband was a significant ministry for the colony of South Australia. In 1882, the Ministerial Jubilee of James was celebrated and F. W. Bourne had this to say in his report (published in the *Bible Christian Magazine*) on his trip to South Australia:

“I had also the privilege before I left the colony, to attend Mr. Roberts’ Ministerial Jubilee. Let me haste to correct myself – Mr. and Mrs. Roberts’ Ministerial Jubilee. I was delighted to see how the people thronged to this meeting!...

... Mr. Roberts narrated the chief events of his life, with much modesty and pathos ... Mrs Roberts also spoke with much feeling and force.”<sup>113</sup>

At this same event, Samuel Way<sup>114</sup> described Ann as “standing proof of the success of female preaching, although female preachers had been condemned (by the formal church)”<sup>115</sup> and in support of women preachers, Way also said that “the Connexion had been most useful and successful when it had the greatest number of female preachers”<sup>116</sup>

Much of Ann’s life and work in South Australia was recounted in the address that was given to her as she celebrated her 80<sup>th</sup> birthday (in 1885)<sup>117</sup> as well as the obituaries that were

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<sup>110</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*.

<sup>111</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS," *Express and Telegraph (Adelaide, SA : 1867 - 1922)* (Adelaide, SA), 08 May 1895 1895, THIRD EDITION, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article208988293>.

<sup>112</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS.."

<sup>113</sup> *Bible Christian Magazine*, (Devon, England, 1882, 1882). 329

<sup>114</sup> The son of the late Rev James Way (first Bible Christian missionary to South Australia, and considered as the founder of the Connexion in the colony), and the then Lieutenant-Governor of South Australia.

<sup>115</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. P118 – quoting Samuel Way from *SA Bible Christian Magazine*, 1882, p324-330; *SA Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1882. FW Bourne, *Their Bible Christian: their origin and history, 1815-1900*, Tentmaker Publications, Staffs., UK, 2004 [1905], chapter 32

<sup>116</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. P118 – quoting Samuel Way from *SA Bible Christian Magazine*, 1882, p324-330; *SA Advertiser*, 1<sup>st</sup> April 1882. FW Bourne, *Their Bible Christian: their origin and history, 1815-1900*, Tentmaker Publications, Staffs., UK, 2004 [1905], chapter 32

<sup>117</sup> "MRS. JAMES ROBERTS: HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY," *Christian Colonist (SA : 1878 - 1894)* (SA), 14 August 1885 1885, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article214692433>.

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published in South Australian newspapers at the time (in 1895). The birthday address was included in a number of newspaper reports on her passing.<sup>118</sup>

At her birthday celebrations, Ann was described as “truly a Dorcas”<sup>119</sup> whose “name would be handed down to posterity in connection with the Christian work she had been so long engaged in.”<sup>120</sup> The newspaper report of this celebration tells us that Ann spoke for an hour and half in response, giving details of her life and ministry. It is reported that she spoke of her conversion and call to ministry; her missionary work; her circuit appointments; dangers, hardships and successes. She told the gathered group that “in addition to preaching three times on Sunday and walking fourteen miles to her ‘appointments,’ she conducted class and prayer meetings.”<sup>121</sup>

Ann was one of a number of women Bible Christian preachers<sup>122</sup> mentioned by the Rev. O. Lake when he spoke of their significance to the work of the church, saying that “it had been a good thing for the denomination that a number of holy women had banded together to assist to forward the work of Christ, and women had been the means of bringing the Bible Christian Connexion in a great measure to what it was now.”<sup>123</sup>

Ann died on 7 May 1895<sup>124</sup> and was laid to rest with her husband, the Rev. James Roberts in the West Terrace Cemetery, Adelaide. They left no family,<sup>125</sup> as James’ sons had predeceased them, Richard Reed on 11 May 1866,<sup>126</sup> and James Charles on 5 June 1867,<sup>127</sup> both at Kapunda of typhus fever.

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<sup>118</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS," *Advertiser (Adelaide, SA : 1889 - 1931)* (Adelaide, SA), 08 May 1895 1895, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article34509470>.

<sup>119</sup> "MRS. JAMES ROBERTS: HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY.." in reference to Dorcas/Tabitha whose story is told in Acts 9:32-42

<sup>120</sup> "MRS. JAMES ROBERTS: HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY.."

I note that this is perhaps not the case (her name handed down in posterity) in that the stories of women in the church aren't told very often. Ann has been remembered in some places in passing but stories of women like Ann have largely been lost as women have been written out of history (not necessarily deliberately)

<sup>121</sup> "MRS. JAMES ROBERTS: HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY.."

<sup>122</sup> Most of whom did not come to South Australia, but would have, no doubt influenced those that did. It is of note that in the list of women that Rev. Lake gave, he did not include his own wife, Serena Thorne Lake who had been (and still was at that time) a significant Bible Christian missionary/evangelist in both England and South Australia!

<sup>123</sup> "MRS. JAMES ROBERTS: HER EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY.."

<sup>124</sup> "South Australian Death Index."

<sup>125</sup> "DEATH OF MRS. JAMES ROBERTS.."

<sup>126</sup> *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*. 65

<sup>127</sup> *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*. 66



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## Bible Christian Woman's Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board

This organisation, part of the Bible Christian Church in South Australia, was established with a proposal and subsequent vote at the 1891 conference of the Bible Christian Church in South Australia (held in February 1891).<sup>128</sup> It was also known as the Woman's Missionary Board and the Women's Missionary Board in *The South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*. Its formation and establishment is described in the August 1891 edition of the South Australian Bible Christian magazine:

"Last Conference resolved :- 'That as an additional instalment of the Forward Movement, we deem it advisable to form a Woman's Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board, and that the President and Missionary Secretary be directed to call a meeting of ladies in a central place at an early date to inaugurate the movement.'"<sup>129</sup>

In June of that same year, a group of people met to formally establish the board. Nine people<sup>130</sup> met to form the initial board, and adopt a constitution for the board. This constitution included the "Objects" of the Board:

"To excite deeper sympathy and wider co-operation in Bible Christian Missionary work in the colony, and heathen lands.

The Board shall watch for Godly and zealous young women in our churches, who have gifts to help in the work of the Gospel, and encourage them in speaking of Christ; and seek spheres of usefulness for them in accordance with our rules."<sup>131</sup>

The first board was also elected, and officers appointed at this meeting. In the report of the meeting, the married women were all listed with their husbands' names.<sup>132</sup> In this story of them, their first names (where it has been possible to find them) have been used<sup>133</sup>. The women were: Mrs Elizabeth Rowe (Vice-president), Mrs Serena Lake (President), Mrs Selina Dingle (Vice-president), Mrs Mary Raymont (Vice-President), Mrs Sarah Ashton (Treasurer),

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<sup>128</sup> *Minutes of the Fifteenth South Australian Bible Christian Conference* (Adelaide, South Australia, 1891).

<sup>129</sup> "Woman's Missionary Board," *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*, 1891. 351

<sup>130</sup> "Woman's Missionary Board." 351

5 men (including the President of the Conference – Rev J. Dingle) and the Missionary Secretary (Rev. W. F. James), and 4 women (with three being the wives of three of the men – Serena Lake, Elizabeth Rowe, and Mary Raymont)).

<sup>131</sup> "Woman's Missionary Board." 352

<sup>132</sup> "Woman's Missionary Board." 352

<sup>133</sup> Discovered by using a number of resources including the genealogical resources and indexes available at Genealogy SA (<https://genealogysa.org.au>)

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Mrs Catherine Maughan, Mrs M. Maughan<sup>134</sup> (Secretary), Mrs Sally Keen, Mrs Elizabeth Ashton, Mrs W Dodd, Mrs Withrow, and Miss Mitchell<sup>135</sup>.

The originator of the proposal the conference, and the original reasoning for the establishment of this board has not been found, although it is likely Serena Lake (nee Thorne), the inaugural president of the board, could have been one of the drivers behind this as she had long “believed others could follow in her train.”<sup>136</sup>

Many of the activities of Board have been recorded in their regular reports to the *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*. At the time of writing, any minutes or other documentation of the Board had not been discovered. All we have to tell the stories of the work of these women (and some men who were involved) is the reports that were published in the magazine.

It would seem that early in the life of the Board, there was some difficulty in getting people involved. The report writer<sup>137</sup> reports that

“The Corresponding Secretary had also sent reminders to each pastor *re* Article 8 of our Constitution, but among such a large number of really good women in each circuit, the brethren seem to find it difficult to determine which is the best, so, following the example of the girl who ‘went to bed out of the way of it’ because she had so much work to do she did not know where to begin, they have as yet done nothing. Will that gentle hint of the Cor. Sec. stir them to take action?”<sup>138</sup>

It should be noted that subsequent reports indicate that the appointment of circuit representatives did eventually happen.

Over time the circuit representatives became *ex-officio* members of the Board (it was thought this might be seen as an encouragement to women to become circuit

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<sup>134</sup> Without further information or research, Mrs M. Maughan could be either Mrs Eliza Maughan (wife of Milton Moss Maughan), Mrs Emma Maughan (wife of Marinus Maughan), or Mrs Esther Maughan (wife of Melville Maughan) – all daughters-in-law (and sons) of Mrs Catherine Maughan (wife of the Rev. James Maughan)

<sup>135</sup> Unfortunately, I have, at the point of writing, been unable to find enough information about Mrs W Dodd, Mrs Withrow, and Miss Mitchell to be able to record them with their first names (or any other information about them. None the less, they have been included in the database of women in the Methodist Church.

<sup>136</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*. 130

<sup>137</sup> Unknown at this stage

<sup>138</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*, (Adelaide, South Australia: South Australian Bible Christian Church, 1894). 101

Article 8 of the Constitution ("Woman's Missionary Board." 352) reads:

“*Circuit Representatives*. One or more women to represent the Board in each circuit; such persons to be nominated by the Pastors, and appointed by the Board. Representatives shall be entitled to attend and take part in Quarterly and Annual Meetings.”

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representatives/correspondants). The names of these women were announced in subsequent reports as having joined the Board, giving us the names of more women to record and place in the the story of the church.

The officers of the board were increased to include Superintendents for the Sabbath-School, Young Men's and Young Women's departments and a Superintendent for the Evangelists.<sup>139</sup> Each report included the names and addresses of the officers. As with those listed as joining the board, this information helps us to locate these women in the story of the church, in time, and in place.

In order to support the missionary activities at both home and abroad, the Board organised collections and fundraising. At least some of this was done through the Sabbath-school department as we read:

“Very shortly now the collectors’ books will be re-issued in the Sabbath-school department. We are pleased to find school after school taking up our plans and writing for books ...

... Our young collectors did nobly last year in the very short time at their disposal... We hope they will all read the report published last month, and be stimulated and encouraged by it.”<sup>140</sup>

Children were encouraged to save three pennies each to send in for the work in China, and in the January 1983 report in the *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*, there is a report of the girls of the Moonta Bible Christian Sunday-school running a bazaar to raise money to send the gospel to China. The girls<sup>141</sup> were reported to have raised £3 3s 7d.<sup>142</sup> This story was reported to encourage other groups (older and younger) to get involved with the fundraising efforts of the Board.

Other calls were made for donations in specific reference and need for the mission and missionaries in China. Early in the work of the Board, the mission in China was without a missionary (after the passing of the Rev. S. T. Thorne) and the report includes a call for funding to send others:

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<sup>139</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 161 (November, 1892)

<sup>140</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 77

<sup>141</sup> Named in the report: Serena Thomas, Addie Jewell, Annie Jewell, Lily Lucas, Eva Lucas, Gerty Vivan and Hilda Crutchett

<sup>142</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 198

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“There are yong women here in S.A. who would gladly go to join the little band who are holding the ground with so much heroism there, but we have no money to send them ...

... One shilling a year from every one of our three thousand members in this colony would sustain three missionaries there...

... If we do this thing the God of our Fathers will bless, and this home field will prosper as it has never yet prospered...”<sup>143</sup>

Each report had a call for donations and gifts to sent for the evangelistic and missionary work.

The regular quarterly meetings of the Board were held in various churches around Adelaide, and comprised of business meetings, tea (often provided by one of the Board members). The July 1892 meeting report says that Mrs Raymont provided the tea free of charge.<sup>144</sup> Tea was followed by an evening meeting where lectures and presentations were given by Board members and other speakers.

As well as the quarterly meetings, the Board held monthly Executive meetings and also established monthly prayer meetings, inviting anyone who was in the city at the time of the prayer meeting to attend, and pray for the work of the Board, the evangelists and the missionaries in the mission field.<sup>145</sup>

Less than twelve months after the Board began working towards its objectives (see above), reports started to be made of the work of Miss McLennan as the first evangelist of the board. It is reported in the August 1982 *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine* that at the July Board meeting:

“The Board by resolution endorsed the action of the President in taking out Miss McLennan as the first evangelist of the Board. She is now at Port Pirie, working with great acceptance; from thence she proceeds to Snowtown.”<sup>146</sup>

And the October 1892 report says this of the work of Miss McLennan:

“The meetings conducted by Miss McLennan in the Snowtown, Kulpara, and Port Broughton circuits have been greatly blessed; they have been of great power, and a goodly number of converts remain as the proof of our dear young sister’s ministry.”<sup>147</sup>

Miss Agnes McLennan was soon joined in her evangelistic work by others appointed by the board – Miss Angell joined Agnes in her work in the Kulpara circuit and was described as

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<sup>143</sup> Volume VI - *South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 77

<sup>144</sup> Volume VI - *South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 101

<sup>145</sup> Volume VI - *South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 161

<sup>146</sup> Volume VI - *South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 101

<sup>147</sup> Volume VI - *South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 145

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having “made her own place in the hearts of the people, and was made a great blessing,”<sup>148</sup> and in a letter sent to the Board (and other interested people), she described her work in Kulpara:

“The last night I was there ten decided for God. On Friday night we had a cottage meeting at the friend’s house where I was staying. We sent and asked some road men, who were camping just opposite, to come in, and a nice number did so. We had a most blessed little meeting; may the seed sown bring forth fruit.”<sup>149</sup>

Agnes’ sister, Miss Helen McLennan, Miss Catchlove, and Miss Turner also joined in their evangelistic work in South Australia. Agnes and the Misses Angell and Catchlove undertook mission work in the rural circuits, while Helen and Miss Catchlove undertook their work in the suburbs.<sup>150</sup>

At some point in time, missionary work was re-established in China<sup>151</sup> and the reports from the Board often included correspondence from the missionary or his wife. These letters outlined the work that was being undertaken, as well as prayers and prayer requests, and information about life in China. Some of the letters expressed their “comfort and joy”<sup>152</sup> in knowing of the interest and support that was coming from the church in South Australia.

Based on the reports in the magazine, the focus seemed to move towards the mission work in China sometime in 1883. The reports began to focus less on the fundraising and evangelistic work in South Australia, and included more correspondence from China, and calls to support the work in China, financially, in the establishment of orphanages, in sending young missionaries, and in prayer. Throughout 1895 and 1896, there was also an appeal for socks (including the requirements “that they be small and red.”<sup>153</sup>)

It is presumed that the Bible Christian Woman’s Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board came to an end as a church organisation at the time of Methodist Union in South Australia.<sup>154</sup> The available editions of the *South Australian Bible Christian Magazines* stop before this date. Without any other records for the Board, we can’t know for certain what

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<sup>148</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 145

<sup>149</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 162

<sup>150</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 320

<sup>151</sup> The exact time or date is not clear from the reports in the magazine.

<sup>152</sup> *Volume VI - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (April 1892 to April 1894)*. 199

<sup>153</sup> *Volume VIII - South Australian Bible Christian Monthly (May 1896 to April 1897)*, (Adelaide, South Australia: South Australian Bible Christian Church, 1897). 154

<sup>154</sup> Methodist union occurred in South Australian in 1902

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happened, although given the ongoing Methodist Church in South Australia had similar organisations to support the work of the mission of the church, it is likely that this Board became part of, or the beginning of a similar Methodist wide organisation.

### Women's Church Involvement

The broad categories described below are in no way meant to suggest the limits of the role of women in the Methodist church in colonial South Australia.

Women who were significant in some way in the community or the congregation were often called upon to ceremonially lay the foundation stone for a new chapel, or to ceremonially end the building of a chapel, as Curnow reports in relation to the McLaren Vale Bible Christian chapel in 1866:

“... It was reported in the Chronicle that Mrs Harriet Balchin (nee Harris) on this occasion was carried up the gable of the chapel by a mason to lay the last brick of the building.”<sup>155</sup>

#### Home Faith Formation

What is not well documented is the precise role of a woman in the home with regards to spirituality and faith. In her essay, *Homes are Divine Workshops*, Sabine Willis reminds us that in the nineteenth century, describing the the Christian family, that

“man remained its head but woman became its spiritual guide and moral teacher ... On her fell the task of providing a haven and refuge for her family away from the cares of the world. On her fell also the role of shaper and guardian of morals.”<sup>156</sup>

The influence of women in the home should not be underestimated. Mrs Mary Rundle, wife of John Rundle, butcher in Bowden, was able to convince her husband to stop trading on Sundays in order to hold the Sunday worship services in their shop and home.<sup>157</sup>

Sometimes the work of women in the home in faith formation and discipleship can be determined by the outcomes of the families. Curnow tells the story of Mrs Mary Dennison, a Presbyterian woman who arrived in South Australia with her family in 1852. She is reported as “experiencing the love of God in this fresh, releasing way.”<sup>158</sup> She is described as a “faithful

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<sup>155</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 292

<sup>156</sup> Sabine Willis, "Homes are Divine Workshops," in *Women, Class and History: Fiminist Perspectives on Australia 1788-1978*, ed. Elizabeth Windschuttle (Melbourne, Australia: Fontana Books, 1980). 175

<sup>157</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 42, 59

<sup>158</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 331

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woman of Scottish descent able to offer wise Christian counsel.”<sup>159</sup> Curnow goes on to report that her son became a pioneering local preacher in the mid-north of South Australia<sup>160</sup>, no doubt influenced by his mother and the faith formation he received in the home.

Discovering the role and influence of women in faith formation and discipleship development within the home during the period under consideration may be a story (or stories) that can never fully be told. These stories are not stories that are reported in newspapers and journals. They are not activities that are reported in church or group minutes. They are stories that are held within families as they remember their ancestors. They are stories that might be recorded in family journals or diaries. To tell these stories would rely on finding diaries or journals of these women (or their children), other recollections recorded from people of the time and family stories that have been passed down through the generations.

#### Hospitality and Visitation

Hospitality was important in the life of people in the Methodist church, and besides catering for tea meetings, women have often been reported as opening their homes for visiting itinerant preachers or as places for worship and Sunday school before a chapel might be built, offering refreshment for travelling preachings, providing travelling companionship and providing food and support for families in need.

Some of the more specific examples of hospitality that have been recorded include the advertisement in an edition of *The Australian Christian Commonwealth* where Mrs Charles Drew generously offered the use of her holiday home in Port Elliot, rent free, for “ministers who are in need of temporary rest.”<sup>161</sup> Curnow recounts many instances of meals and other refreshments being provided including Mrs Carey of Auburn’s provision and preparation of dinner for members and attendees of the Auburn District Quarterly meeting held in in 1863.<sup>162</sup>

It was also the women of the church who would spend time visiting the sick as a ministry of the church.

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<sup>159</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 331

<sup>160</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 331

<sup>161</sup> "A generous and beautiful act," *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940) (SA)*, 11 January 1901 1901, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article213567551>.

<sup>162</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 205

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## Class Meetings

The Methodist Class Meeting has been part of the Methodism since the very beginning. The Rev. Theophilus Taylor, in his *Chapters on the Class Meeting*, describes the class meeting as standing “pre-eminent in importance”<sup>163</sup> in Methodist discipline, and “an efficient means of exercising pastoral oversight and preserving the purity of the flock.”<sup>164</sup> Class meetings were at the core to the life of the local church in all three Methodist denominations.

This was one sphere in the life of the church where women could exercise some leadership. Women were often class leaders, particularly for the women’s classes, but they also led mixed classes. Class meetings were generally conducted in the home, often in people’s kitchens. Hospitality in the home was an important part of this, particularly in colonial life.

Brian Chalmers, in his thesis *Methodism and Revivalism in South Australia, 1838-1939: The Quest for ‘Vital Religion’*, says this of the women who led class meetings, particularly in the Wesleyan church:

“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. 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 the society class meetings. These included ‘watching over souls’, restoration of backsliders, and encouraging the ‘reluctant to speak in front of others’ ...”<sup>165</sup>

The story of Elizabeth Longbottom (above) talks, albeit briefly, of her leading classes in a number of countries, and in a number of languages. The references to her leading classes at the Magill Methodist Church suggest that she was a long-term class leader.

Jane Way (wife of the Rev. James Way, the first Bible Christian minister/missionary to South Australia), who was described by her husband as a colleague in ministry, is reported to have led some of the first Bible Christian class meetings at Bowden in 1864.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>163</sup> Rev. Theophilus Taylor, *Chapters on the Class Meeting* (Ballarat, Victoria: T. Taylor, 1858). 8

<sup>164</sup> Taylor, *Chapters on the Class Meeting*. 8

<sup>165</sup> Brian Chalmers, "Methodists and Revivalism in South Australia, 1838-1939: The Quest for 'Vital Religion'" (Doctor of Philosophy, Thesis (Doctorate), 2016), <https://flex.flinders.edu.au/file/23ae4d06-8460-4f2f-ba83-7765311cd21f/1/ThesisChalmers2016.pdf>. 127

<sup>166</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 58



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Within six months of the proclamation of the colony of South Australia, Methodist services and class meetings had been established. Haslam records that a “Mrs Breeze received the distinction of being appointed its first female class leader.”<sup>167</sup>

### Sunday School

Sunday schools (or Sabbath schools as they were known early on for the Bible Christian church) were significant in the faith formation and discipleship of children in the church. The stories of the work of the Bible Christian Woman’s Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board told above would suggest that the Sabbath/Sunday school movement in the church also played a significant part in the mission work of the church.

Women were often given the responsibility for the care and instruction of the children, although a church’s Sunday school department would more regularly have a man as is superintendent. The following report, albeit slightly out of the time frame of this research, would suggest that it was rare to have a woman as the Sunday School superintendent. This is an extract from the report on the Munderoo Sunday school anniversary in 1914:

“Miss Stephenson, who in the absence of any capable men, had undertaken to superintend the Sunday-school during the year, spoke a few words of thanks to the parents for co-operation in sending the children so regularly, and to her loyal band of lady teachers for the unswerving devotion to the school’s interests.”<sup>168</sup>

### Music

In the life of the church, women often figured prominently in the music of the church, most often as organist or pianist for a congregation or Sunday school. For those congregations that had choirs, women would have been part of the choir.<sup>169</sup> Some of the women that served as organists in congregations faithfully served for extended periods of time. Records tell us that Miss M. J. Durdin was the first organist at the Kulpara Bible Christian Chapel, and she served for twenty-five years.<sup>170</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 12

<sup>168</sup> "CHURCH NEWS," *Australian Christian Commonwealth (SA : 1901 - 1940)* (SA), 18 September 1914 1914, <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article214055875>.

<sup>169</sup> Newspaper reports that describe church choirs often made a point of naming the choir director/conductor – invariably a man.

<sup>170</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*.

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Reports of bazaars, teas and other fund raising events often speak of the musical program that was provided as entertainment. It was often the women playing and singing to provide this entertainment.

#### Bazaars and Other Fundraising

Women tended to be the main drivers in fundraising efforts for the church, in particular, raising money to reduce the debts that came about when chapels were being built or expanded. Reports in various newspapers and periodicals (including the secular South Australian newspapers and the denominational periodicals) would suggest that much of the fundraising was accomplished by holding bazaars to varying degrees of success. Some of them were quite successful.

Curnow, in retelling a story from the August 1869 *South Australian Bible Christian Magazine*, reports on the success of a bazaar held in Wilunga to reduce the debt on the Bible Christian chapel there. It was reported that £90 was raised at the bazaar, patronised by Lady Ferguson (wife of the then Governor of South Australia, Sir James Ferguson) and this significantly reduced the debt on the chapel.<sup>171</sup>

The reports would often give the names of the women involved, the organisers and the stall holders. Again, these names help us to locate the women in the church in both time and place.

Tea Meetings (see below), largely organised by, provided for, and served by the women of the church and community were also used as ways of raising funds for the congregation. Reports would suggest that even if the food and drinks were donated, there would be a small charge for tea. For example, the report on the laying of the foundation stone at Castle Range (near Port Elliot) includes the additional information that the proceeds from the tea would be applied to the building fund.<sup>172</sup>

There are also reports of women seeking donations for the wider community in order to build a chapel. In 1859, it was reported that “Mrs Way and Mrs Bastian have commenced to canvas

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<sup>171</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 290

<sup>172</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 128

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the township for the new chapel, we having obtained from the Burra Mining Company a good site."<sup>173</sup>

### Tea Meetings

Newspaper reports (both denominational and secular publications) suggest that the Tea Meeting was an important part of a congregation's anniversary (and other) celebrations. Invariably, the organisation, catering and serving for these tea meetings was done by the women of the congregation. Some reports acknowledge their work, sometimes by name; others mention that a tea meeting was held with no reference to the women who would have worked to provide and serve the refreshments. The first anniversary service of the Mount Charles Primitive Methodist Chapel is described like this in the *Primitive Methodist Magazine* of 1853:

"... Here we celebrated our first anniversary, on Sunday, February the 20<sup>th</sup>, 1853; when two appropriate sermons were preached; that in the afternoon by the Rev. J. Dare, Wesleyan, and that in the evening by the writer. On the following Monday about seventy persons sat down to a comfortable tea, which was gratuitously provided by Mrs. Wm. Dunn and Mrs Newman..."<sup>174</sup>

These tea meetings were not always small gatherings. In his mission report to the *Bible Christian Magazine*, Samuel Keen wrote this about the tea meeting held as part of the celebrations for laying the foundation stone of the Watervale Chapel (in August 1866):

"In the little chapel, four of the ladies had provided tea, six times the tables were thronged, and many took tea elsewhere. As it was, more than 300 sat down to the tea. Never before were the provisions so nearly eaten up, and certainly the ladies were never more severely taxed; upwards of 75 to each table is no child's play; tired though they were, they were never more happy, or better pleased."<sup>175</sup>

The women worked very hard in providing for, and serving these tea meetings. Food and drinks would have had to have been prepared in advance, and everything needed would have had to have been brought from home and set up. Once the tea was over, everything would have to be cleaned up and taken home.

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<sup>173</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 180

<sup>174</sup> Edward Tear, "Foreign Religious Intelligence," *Primitive Methodist Magazine* 1853. 562

<sup>175</sup> S Keen, "Auburn Mission report," *Bible Christian Magazine* (London), September 1866 1866. 569

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## Preachers and 'Lady Evangelists'

Women's involvement in the Methodist church denominations varied the most in regards to preaching. Women in the Wesleyan Church were not permitted to preach in a congregational setting (some other settings were permitted), where-as Bible Christian and Primitive Methodist women were permitted to preach.

These decisions were not made in the South Australian churches, but in the English conferences of the denominations, many years before the church was established in South Australia. As the churches in South Australia were originally part of the English conferences, these decisions were part of the South Australian Methodists churches.

The Wesleyan Methodists made the decision to generally not permit women to preach in their 1801 conference. Abel Stevens, in *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century called Methodism – Volume III*, records the decision in this way:

“At this session it was asked, ‘Should women be allowed to preach among us.’ The answer was, that, in general, they ought not. Two reasons were given. One was that a vast majority of the people were opposed to female preaching; the other, that it was not necessary, there being a sufficiency of preachers, whom God had accredited, to supply all the places in the Connection. ‘But,’ added the Minutes, ‘if any woman among us thinks she has an extraordinary call from God to speak in public, (and we are sure it must be an *extraordinary* call that can authorize it,) we are of opinion she should in general address her *own sex, and those only.*’...”<sup>176</sup> [Note: emphasis in the original text.]

The Bible Christians addressed the subject of women preaching at their very first conference, held in Launceston (England) in 1815, and the following was recorded as an outcome of the conference:

“The subject of female ministry was largely discussed, and the employment of women as preachers unanimously approved. Those engaged had so many seals to their ministry wherever they went that the last lingering doubt as to their Divine call had been removed.”<sup>177</sup>

The Primitive Methodist Church has been described as a “denomination which made no distinction, especially in its early days, between men and women.”<sup>178</sup> H. B. Kendall, in the

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<sup>176</sup> Abel Stevens, *The History of the Religious Movement of the Eighteenth Century called Methodism*, 4 vols., vol. 3 (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1861). 135-136

<sup>177</sup> F. W. Bourne, *The Bible Christians: Their Origin and History (1815-1900)* (England: Bible Christian Book Room, 1905). 79

<sup>178</sup> E. Dorothy Graham, "Chosen by God : the female itinerants of early primitive Methodism," (ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1986). 79

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*Handbook of Primitive Methodist Church Principles, History and Polity* writes this regarding women preachers:

“No sex distinctions were recognised when there was a duty to be done or a privilege to be enjoyed. It has been the mission of Primitive Methodism ... to give the Churches and object lesson in regard to the value of woman’s work. Some of the most valuable of our early travelling preachers were females ...”<sup>179</sup>

Based on the records that have been found thus far, women preachers in South Australia were mostly Bible Christian women. In all likelihood, there would have been some Primitive Methodist women preachers. These have yet to be identified. Some of the Bible Christian women, for example Ann Roberts (whose story has been told above), were preachers and preaching assistants in England before arriving in South Australia and continued to preach in the colony. Whilst they weren’t regularly on any preaching plans, they did preach regularly and in particular, for special occasion services.

Some of the work of the ‘Lady Evangelists’ has been reported above (in the story of the Bible Christian Woman’s Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board). These local<sup>180</sup> women named above were not the only women who worked and preached in this way. Aside from the Bible Christian women named, there would have been many others who have not been named, and there were at least two Wesleyan women who were similarly appointed – a Miss Annie Green and Miss Nesbit.<sup>181</sup>

One of the first reported ‘Lady Evangelists’ in South Australia was Serena Thorne. She arrived in South Australia in 1870 and came at the invitation of the Bible Christian church. She preached at the Adelaide Town Hall, and around the colony on many occasions. Serena eventually married (the Rev. Octavius Lake) and stayed in South Australia. After her marriage Serena continued to preach around the colony.<sup>182</sup> It was through the work of Serena that the Bible Christian Woman’s Auxiliary Colonial and Foreign Missionary Board was established, in part at least, to train young women for the work of evangelism.

As Evans describes in *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia*:

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<sup>179</sup> H. B. Kendall, *Handbook of Primitive Methodist Church Principles, History and Polity* (1898). 42

<sup>180</sup> By referring to the as ‘local’ women, I am talking about those who were born and/or raised in the Colony of South Australia as compared with those who travelled to South Australia to undertake this work.

<sup>181</sup> O'Brien and (editor), *Methodism in Australia*. 77

<sup>182</sup> Davis, "Serena Thorne Lake."

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“These ladies enjoyed an excellent degree of success in winning souls for Christ, in promoting Christian holiness, and in raising the level of prayer in the life of the churches. The fact that they were females, working in an area which was normally dominated by men, did not seem to lessen their effectiveness in any way, and may even had a positive effect...”<sup>183</sup>

In 1893 things began to change for women preachers in that they began to be accepted by the church as local preachers, and thus would start appearing regularly on preaching plans in regular times, and not just for special occasions. Miss Harriet Ashenden was “received by the Bible Christians as a local preacher in the Mount Lofty circuit ... she was the first woman to be so accepted.”<sup>184</sup> In the following year (1894), Mary George became the first female Wesleyan local preacher.<sup>185</sup>

Despite their success, and general acceptance, there was still some opposition to women preachers. Interestingly enough, the opposition and support sometimes came from the same place. This story, about Serena Thorne, preaching in Inman Valley in 1871, has been recorded in *The Inman Valley Story*:

“The opening took place in 1871 when a Miss Thorn (sic) preached to an overflowing congregation. A most violent storm which occurred on the opening day was attributed by some to be the judgement of God for having engaged a lady preacher.

The following years saw a great revival during which hundreds were added to the Church rolls in the district. The great revivalist preacher seems to have been Miss Thorn (sic).”<sup>186</sup>

Certainly for Serena, and most likely for other women preachers, they did not let any opposition stop them from preaching and responding to the call of God on their lives.

#### Ministers’ Wives

Ministers’ wives often worked with their husbands, both in ministry and supporting the family when needed. As described by Hilliard (above) women had many roles within the church. Ministers’ wives were expected to carry these out, as well as take care of , and in some circumstances, provide for their families. Across the church in general, and not only in the Methodist church, ministers’ wives were “long-attested in all denominations to be overworked and unrecognised”<sup>187</sup>

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<sup>183</sup> Robert Evans, *Evangelism and Revivals in Australia* (Hazelbrook, Australia: Evans, Robert, 2005). 22

<sup>184</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*. 140

<sup>185</sup> O'Brien and (editor), *Methodism in Australia*.

<sup>186</sup> Adrian Lush, *The Inman Valley Story* (Victor Harbor, South Australia: Ambrose Press, 1971).

<sup>187</sup> O'Brien and (editor), *Methodism in Australia*. 260

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The second Bible Christian Conference, held in 1820, is reported to have said this about ministers who intended to marry, giving a glimpse of the expectations of a minister's wife:

“Preachers intending to marry were recommended to choose their wives from among those women who had devoted themselves wholly to the work, and those who acted on this recommendation were promised ‘the first support of the Connexion.’”<sup>188</sup>

WT Shapely says that the “wives of these pioneer missionaries were noble heroines of faith, and they worked hard and suffered silently.”<sup>189</sup>

Rev. James Rowe is reported to have recalled this about his wife, Elizabeth:

“For some time our salary was but thirty pounds a year, and with flour ten pounds a bag, small cabbages one shilling each, and clothing at a similar rate, it was hard to live. I suggested adding secular work to the ministry to keep going, but my wife would not hear of it, and nobly employed her needle to help in providing for us...”<sup>190</sup>

Further to this about Elizabeth Rowe, WT Shapely says that “Mrs Rowe was known to work 12 hours a day to earn money enough to keep the family.”<sup>191</sup> All the while in this work, Elizabeth would have been supporting her husband in his ministry. She would not have been the only minister's wife to work in this way.

Particularly in the very early days of the Colony of South Australia, ministers' wives accompanied their husbands to the other side of the world without knowing what they would face once they arrived. Where would they live? What would their home life be like? The story of Elizabeth Longbottom (above) spoke of having to camp in the Coorong for several weeks after their first shipwreck. When they eventually arrived in Adelaide and William was appointed as the minister for the small Adelaide Wesleyan congregation, they were still faced with the prospect of living in a tent (“a home, whose walls and roof were of canvas”<sup>192</sup>) for three months until a small cottage was built in Grenfell Street. Charity Blatchford, wife of James Blatchford (an early Bible Christian local preacher and class leader, and the family settled in Burra. They, like many early

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<sup>188</sup> Bourne, *The Bible Christians: Their Origin and History (1815-1900)*. 86-87

<sup>189</sup> Rev. W. T. Shapley, *Our Bible Christian Heritage*, 1952, Lecture, South Australia Methodist Historical Society, Adelaide, South Australia.

<sup>190</sup> Curnow, citing *SA Bible Christian Magazine 1891; Bible Christian Magazine, May 1855; Shapley, Our Bible Christian Heritage*. 58

<sup>191</sup> Curnow, citing Shapley, *Our Bible Christian Heritage*.

<sup>192</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 42

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settlers in that district, lived in a dug out in the banks of the creek.<sup>193</sup> It is unlikely she expected to be living in a creek bed dugout when she left England.

Some ministers' wives were preachers. Ann Roberts (whose story is told above) and Serena Lake (nee Thorne) were before they married and they continued to preach after they married. There would have been others, and even those wives who didn't normally preach, on occasion would take to the pulpit. It is been reported that when Rev. James Way firstly returned to England for the Conference, and later in life when he became seriously ill, it was Mrs Way – Jane – who ensured that the class meetings, and weekly services continued to happen, even on occasion, preaching herself.<sup>194</sup>

The mission houses (manses) were more than just the home of a minister and his wife and family. They became places for Class meetings, Sunday services and Sunday School rooms. It has been reported that during some of the early Bible Christian revival meetings in the Burra district that “when the chapels were crammed, Mrs Rowe and her helpers were left with the care of children in the Mission House.”<sup>195</sup>

Ministers' wives often took on the responsibility of visiting and providing counsel for those who might have recently come to faith as a result of a revival meeting. They would also visit the sick and those others in need, providing practical support where needed.

Life was difficult for the wives (and families) of the early ministers. Much time was also spent alone when their husbands were travelling throughout their circuits which very large at the beginning with vast distances between congregations. For those not stationed in Adelaide, there would have been a sense of isolation, again because of the distances between towns and settlements. As Curnow writes, “while their lot was painful, they were endued with patience and God's grace.”<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>193</sup> Hunt, *This Side of Heaven*. 12

<sup>194</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 59

<sup>195</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 59

<sup>196</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 54



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## Social Justice and Community Influence

Church women, including Methodist women were involved in the social justice issues of the time. Perhaps one of the most well known of these women as Mary Lee, a widow who immigrated from England and was part of the Primitive Methodist church in North Adelaide. Denise George, in her biography on Mary Lee writes this of the involvement of women in social justice:

“Mary Lee was not alone in the struggle to improve the lives of women in the nineteenth century Adelaide. She worked alongside other social and political reformers including Lady Mary Colton, Catherine Helen Spence, Rosetta Birks, Elizabeth Webb Nicholls and Augusta Zadow to name a few. Unfortunately the passage of time, an absence of personal journals, and a shortage of women’s recorded colonial history have all but erased the stories of these women and their remarkable legacy to South Australian social and political history.”<sup>197</sup>

Not all of these women were church women, nor were all of them Methodist church women. It has been suggested however, that involvement particularly in the Methodist Church with its organisation and structure, provided opportunities to develop skills in many areas (including public speaking) that were useful when working in the social justice sphere.<sup>198</sup>

Women like Mary Lee, Lady Mary Colton, Elizabeth Web Nicolls, Serena Thorne Lake, and many others worked hard to change the communities in which they lived. For a many women in the church, Christian service and social justice were went hand-in-hand, and they worked hard to campaign for the rights of women and children in particular, but also for rights of all workers, and they worked hard to improve the lives of the poor and oppressed.

Denise George writes this of the work of Mary Lee and it would apply to many church women who felt the call to care for the less fortunate in society, and not just within the church:

“Mary was drawn to the plight of the poor, destitute, underprivileged, sick, dying and oppressed in this tumultuous environment. A desire for social justice, an understanding of the benefits of education for women and faith in her God underpinned her trajectory as a relentless social justice campaigner.”<sup>199</sup>

This desire for social justice as part of Christian service was something that compelled Serena Thorne to make a point of visiting and sharing the Gospel with the prostitutes of Adelaide

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<sup>197</sup> Denise George, *Mary Lee : the life and times of a 'turbulent anarchist' and her battle for women's rights* (Mile End, South Australia : Wakefield press, 2018). ix

<sup>198</sup> Julie-Ann Ellis, "Methodism and Working-Class Organisation in South Australia in the Nineteenth Century" (Honors Degree of Bachelor of Arts Flinders University, 1990). 8

<sup>199</sup> George, *Mary Lee : the life and times of a 'turbulent anarchist' and her battle for women's rights*. 64

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with the City Mission. She was concerned with how the “the social evil in this city” could be dealt with. She wrote in her diary that “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.”<sup>200</sup>

The Women’s Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) was a non-denominational organisation. In South Australia, however, many of the leaders of the WCTU in its early years were Methodist women. Elizabeth Webb Nicolls (a member of the Prospect Wesleyan Church) became the first president of the WCTU in South Australia in 1886, and in later years, became the Australasian president of the Union.<sup>201</sup> Serena Lake (nee Thorne) was also very active in the WCTU. She travelled widely in South Australia to help establish new branches. In 1889 she was appointed as the Colonial Organiser and Suffrage superintendent, and in 1891, in recognition of the work she had done for the Union was made a life-vice president.<sup>202</sup>

These same women were also part of the Women’s Suffrage League of South Australia, campaigning for women’s suffrage. As someone who was accustomed to addressing large crowds of people, Serena Lake was often called to speak on behalf of the League. It is said she spoke with “logical argument, with and evangelical passion.”<sup>203</sup> Suffrage wasn’t specifically a church issue, and yet it was often the faith of the women that gave rise to their involvement. It is reported that Serena Lake became involved because she believed that sexual equality was the original design of the Creator. This led to the logical conclusion that women should naturally be entitled to vote.<sup>204</sup> It is recorded in history that the work of these women, and many more who will probably remain unnamed, enabled the *Adult Suffrage Bill*, which gave women the right to vote, and to stand for Parliament, to pass on 18 December, 1894.<sup>205</sup>

#### Establishment of Congregations

Right from the beginning of colonial South Australia there were Methodist women involved in the establishment of the church in South Australia. Haslam reports that there were “ten

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<sup>200</sup> Thorne, "Diary of Serena Thorne 1870 - 1871."

<sup>201</sup> O'Brien and (editor), *Methodism in Australia*. 77

<sup>202</sup> Davis, "Serena Thorne Lake."

<sup>203</sup> <https://atributetoaustralianchristians.wordpress.com/2010/10/28/serena-lake/>

<sup>204</sup> Davis, "Serena Thorne Lake."

<sup>205</sup> "The South Australian women's suffrage campaign," 2019, accessed 27 December, 2020, <https://officeforwomen.sa.gov.au/womens-policy/125th-anniversary-of-suffrage/the-south-australian-womens-suffrage-campaign>.

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persons on board who were sailing under the Methodist flag” that arrived on Kangaroo Island and then Holdfast Bay in January of 1837, only two weeks after the proclamation of the colony. The ten people were five men (named) and their wives. Services and Class meetings were established on Kangaroo Island almost immediately.<sup>206</sup> These women (and their husbands) and some others who were among the first colonial arrivals to South Australia were part of the group that met in on 11 May 1837 to discuss the formation of a Wesleyan Methodist Society.<sup>207</sup>

In the establishment of congregations, occasionally this was assisted by faithful women who were in a position to donate land so that chapels and churches could be built. In 1857, Mrs Ellen Cameron donated an acre of land to the Bible Christian movement so that a chapel could be built at Peachey Belt West.<sup>208</sup> When donors to new chapel and church projects were listed in church newspapers and periodicals, women were very often among the list of donors and contributors to appeals to reduce debt on the churches and chapels.

#### Congregational Members

For the majority of the women involved in the early South Australian Methodist Church, their role would be best described as member of a congregation. These women did not make the newspaper reports. These women would not have had extensive biographies written about them. For the most part, these women would not have been remembered beyond their own generation or family.

Like the ministers’ wives, they accompanied their families to places unknown, making the paths for their lives as they went (quite literally for some, including Elizabeth Hall, who with her husband William set out for Dalkey to make their life together, “axing a track through the mallee in the days when kangaroos and wild dogs were still around.”<sup>209</sup>). Those not living in Adelaide would have experienced the same sense of isolation. This would have made the connections they made in the local congregations even more significant and essential in their

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<sup>206</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 11

<sup>207</sup> Haslam, *The History of Wesleyan Methodism in South Australia from its commencement to its Jubilee*. 11

<sup>208</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 146

Peachey Belt West is now known as Waterloo Corner. The land donated was at the corner of Huxtable and Short Roads.

<sup>209</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people*. 333

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lives. Regardless of how well they were known, they were the backbone of the local church. Women like Mary Adair who “was said to have been the first parishioner at Zoar,”<sup>210</sup> would have been faithful Godly women who faithfully attended weekly services, class meetings and other activities of the local congregation.

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<sup>210</sup> Curnow, *Bible Christian Methodists in South Australia, 1850-1900 : a biography of Chapels and their people.* 140

Zoar Chapel was a Bible Christian Chapel in the Peachey Belt (north of Adelaide – the exact location of the Peachey Belt is unknown, but is thought to cover the areas now known as Davoren Park, Penfield, and Eyre). The chapel no longer exists, but the cemetery still remains and can be seen from the Northern Expressway.

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## Conclusion

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The question this thesis set out to answer was:

What can be known or learned about the involvement of women in the establishment of the Methodist Church in South Australia prior to Methodist Union (circa 1900)?

Whilst existing published histories of the Methodist church in South Australia largely tell the stories of the men in the church at the time, women are sometimes included (if only mentioned in passing). Newspaper reports of events (in both local and church papers), obituaries, minutes and records, personal papers and diaries provide a considerable source of information to find women in particular places at particular times. Careful reading of all of these sources has revealed many women, sometimes by name, sometimes not, and there are still many more sources and records, and women to be discovered and stories to tell. As with family history research, the sometimes small and varied pieces and sources of information needed to be pieced together to even begin to tell the stories of womens' involvement.

The database that has been created (and continues to be developed and women continue to be included) in the process of this research has proved invaluable in being about to put these pieces and sources of information together, to keep track (mostly) of the different women who have been discovered to this point and will provide a useful resource for future research into the women who were involved with the early Methodist Church in South Australia.

While there is still much to learn about the involvement of women in the early Methodist Church in South Australia, much has been learned. We have learned that even the smallest snippet of information that places a women in a place at a time can be the start of a much bigger story. We have learned that we can know what they might have been thinking or feeling if we read diaries, personal papers and letters. We have learned that women were involved in the life of the church right from the beginning of colonial South Australia. We have learned that they faced trial and hardship, including financial hardship, as they ministered in their communities. For those women who immigrated to the colony, we learned they often faced difficulties, simply in arriving. We have learned that those women who were wives and mothers had considerable influence and responsibility for faith formation and discipleship in

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the home. We have learned that women were involved in all aspects of the life of the church as they preached, prayed, provided music for worship services, taught Sunday school, led class meetings, visited the sick, provided hospitality, and raised funds for major projects. We have learned that they were also passionate about social justice issues including temperance and women's suffrage in nineteenth century South Australia. We have learned that they were wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters working together and with others to build their church and community.

We have only just begun to fully tell the story of women and their involvement in the church. We have begun to answer the questions asked in the introduction: Is this our own history or heritage?<sup>211</sup> Were women as well as men the initiators of the Methodist Church in South Australia and what did they do?

We have only just begun to discover and tell the unknown stories of the women, the stories that "place us in the presence of God"<sup>212</sup> and "introduces us to a larger and richer treasury of wisdom than we could possibly imagine."<sup>213</sup>

There is much more to tell to ensure that the history of the church is more fully told and recognise all those who were involved in the establishment and growth of the Methodist Church in colonial South Australia.

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<sup>211</sup> As someone who was baptised into the Methodist church

<sup>212</sup> Koh-Butler, *Sisters in Scripture - Evocations on Biblical Women*. 7

<sup>213</sup> Emilsen, "Why Uniting Church History Matters." 9

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