

Starting the first Anglican church in Adelaide.

What was it like to start up a church in the early years of South Australia? Here are some stories from the beginnings of the life of the congregation of Holy Trinity Church on North Terrace, Adelaide, the state's oldest surviving church.

The incumbent, Charles Beaumont Howard, appointed Colonial Chaplain as well, had been sent out with a prefabricated building for his church. When he eventually got it transported from the Port it was found to be a collection of useless timbers. So he and the Colonial Treasurer manhandled a trolley with a sail to Town Acre Nine, allotted by the Surveyor General, Col William Light on the basis of the land order the trustees had provided.

One Sunday, when using the temporary court house in Gilles Arcade the front bench, carrying the weight of Government House, notably the substantial and tetchy Governor Hindmarsh, collapsed and they fell flat on their backs amidst much suppressed tittering, including the Governor himself.

Eventually funds were collected and a stone building began to rise on acre nine. Even while the building grew it was used for a service of baptism, on 21 July 1838. Miss Eliza Malpas described the scene in her diary. She and Mrs Stephen walked down the hill from their residence at the SA Bank on Stephen Place to greet the others. To her it was a small building, and on the roof workmen looked on. Mrs Fisher's daughter Emily Anne was the first baptised by Mr Howard. Perhaps it helped, for Emily lived till 1926. Then Master Cotter and his little sister, and another Fisher child. Mr Fisher, the Resident Commissioner for the Province, was dressed in uniform, Mrs Fisher wore a maroon corded silk with a very handsome worked collar. Mrs Cotter had a fawn silk with lace pelerine, Mrs Smart a lemon colored silk and pearl necklace, while Mrs Howard was in a stiff corded black silk, her hair tied with a cherry ribbon. They addressed a cold collation of pork, chicken, plum pudding, gooseberry pie, custard and pear tart and drank port, sherry, and ale.

A few months later the public was informed that Mrs Howard's newborn son had died. The tiny child's father however had to attend a Government House levee to observe the birthday of the new Queen, Victoria. He had no time for grieving.

In church on Sundays, Mr Howard had a clerk to read the service, but Mr Monk was reputedly fond of his beer. Staff were hard to keep. There was also the pew opener ,the cleaner and the bell ringer. Howard walked to visit his flock until he could afford a horse. When Governor Gawler took over, he and his wife encouraged the Howards by their regular attendance, and Mrs Gawler began a Sunday school, just like the one she remembered in her home town of Derby.

Howard was very musical, and put together a hymnal for his flock. He endured criticism, especially from envious Nonconformists who disapproved of his Government salary. In 1841 the church was bankrupt, and efforts were made to sell it. Eventually they won through and rebuilt the church. But it was at the cost of the life of CB Howard who died from pneumonia caught in the process of his pastoral visits. Getting a church started in the new colony was not easy.

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