

MEMORIAL

OF

TWENTY-ONE YEARS' MINISTRY

OF THE

REV. ALEXANDER MORISON

IN THE

FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH,

VICTORIA.

By Request of the Members.

MELBOURNE :

MASON & FIRTH, PRINTERS, FLINDERS LANE WEST.

1864.



M E M O R I A L.

DEAR BRETHREN—Having been requested at the last church meeting, held August 3, 1864, to furnish a brief statement of the transactions of this first Independent Church in Victoria, worshipping in Collins-street east, Melbourne, during the twenty-one years of my pastorate, as a memorial to be possessed by the members, I begin with the following statement :—

The church had its origin in the resolve of H. Hopkins, Esq., of Hobart Town, who, being in Port Phillip in 1837, almost the commencing period of its settlement, and seeing the promise of rapid advancement the infant colony presented, wrote forthwith to the Colonial Missionary Society of London, to send out a suitable minister, and remitted the necessary funds for his outfit and passage. The Rev. Mr. Waterfield was the gentleman selected. He arrived during the latter months of the year 1838, and was cordially welcomed by Mr. J. P. Fawcner and other friends. The gentlemen associated with Mr. Waterfield obtained the Government grant of the land on which our buildings stand, and on the 3rd September, 1839, the foundation-stone of the chapel was laid, being the first event of this kind in Port Phillip. On 1st January, 1841, the chapel was opened for worship. I have never been

able to ascertain the cost of the erection of either the church or the cottage residence of the minister, the papers being retained by Mr. Fawkner. The Rev. W. Waterfield continued pastor of the church till March, 1843, when, in consequence of dissatisfaction, he resigned his charge, and retired to Van Diemen's Land. The late Rev. F. Miller, of Hobart Town, being at the time in Melbourne, acted as minister for about five months. The Committee of the Home Missionary Society, of Van Diemen's Land, resolved to send the Rev. A. Morison as a supply for two months, who accordingly arrived on the 12th July, 1843, and that evening preached his first sermon in Melbourne. The church and congregation were, by a variety of circumstances, scattered; and as the services and position of the young minister were suitable to the wants of the church, a unanimous invitation was given to Mr. Morison to become the pastor. The debts on the place were stated to be about £500, and the depressed condition of the colony at that period was very great. The chapel also required a considerable outlay for repairs. The first efforts of the church were directed to liquidate the debts, and in the course of the few succeeding years, the creditors were paid, viz. : H. Hopkins, £300, and Rev. W. Waterfield, £150, with other less amounts, while the church continued to meet the current expenses of the place of worship, and to effect the repairs and alterations for rendering the chapel more commodious, amounting to about £100.

The building of the school-house was the next effort, and the boys' school was first erected; to which, in after years, the girls' and infants' schools were added, at a cost which may be estimated at £500 or £600. Subsequently the present ornamental edifice was erected in advance of the older buildings at a cost of upwards of £500. Next we endeavored to establish a school-house and preaching station at the west end of the city, and having obtained a site, transferred the building materials of a

school-house at Richmond, and raised the structure, in which the second church subsequently commenced its existence, under the pastoral care of the Rev. T. Odell. This caused an outlay of £50—a large sum in those times.

The church meantime contributed to the various public institutions and charities among us in the city according to their means. In 1847 the tidings of famine and distress in the parent lands having reached us, the congregation enabled the pastor to remit £68 for the relief of our fellow-countrymen, which was sent to Rev. A. Wells, the Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, and was applied accordingly. We were not indifferent to the spiritual wants of the colony, but every effort had been made to obtain ministerial supplies. The pastor wrote to the secretaries of the Congregational Unions of England, Scotland, and Ireland, and to the various missionary societies, and to Dr. Ross, at Sydney, entreating them to send a minister or ministers to this colony, but without success. He was himself accustomed to ride a distance of from eight to ten miles in the neighborhood of Melbourne to supply country congregations, on the Sabbath afternoons, in the interval between the regular morning and evening services. Efforts were made for the formation of a church at Geelong; and when Mr. Higgins came out, about 1849, the church endeavored to help him in commencing labors in that district; but nothing effective could be accomplished till the arrival of the Rev. B. Cuzens, who made a commencement, and this church afforded such pecuniary aid as might help on the cause there. An attempt was made to form a second church in West Melbourne, under the guidance of the Rev. J. Allen, but it had almost at the commencement to be abandoned. On the arrival of the Rev. T. Odell, in 1850, however, this attempt was renewed, and the second church took its existence, and built the second chapel; the members of this church con-

tributing a fair portion of the funds for that erection. Our next movement was to establish a chapel at Prahran. A small brick building was raised to serve the double purpose of chapel and school, where a church was formed, and Mr. Moss became, and continues to be, the pastor.

There had been a purpose since 1847 of making the minister's residence more commodious, and just before the discovery of the gold-fields, we had hoped that a new building would have been commenced on the site of the old, then almost ruinous. The cost of such a building was estimated to be between three and four hundred pounds, but the project was stopped, as all others in Melbourne, for the time, by the great event so interesting to our colony. When the building was actually finished, the cost was about £3000, in consequence of the immense rise in the price of labor and material. This work was no sooner accomplished than the erection of teachers' residences had to be undertaken, which occasioned an outlay of £1900.

CHURCH PROPERTY AND BUILDINGS.

Parsonage	...	...	...	...	£2830	3	5
Study	...	...	...	...	114	8	0
Roof of the Church, &c.	414	10	9
Iron railing	392	5	3
Fences, &c. (about)	80	0	0
Other buildings	600	0	0
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					£4431	7	5

During 1853, and subsequently, a number of chapels were in progress at Kyneton, Geelong, Brighton, Richmond, St. Kilda, Kew; and besides, friends from Sydney and South Australia came seeking help. To those various foreign objects our subscriptions amounted to £2469 6s. 6d., in addition to our own expenses. The

following list will in some part show the extent of our help :—

CHAPEL BUILDING SUBSCRIPTIONS.

Adelaide, Rev. Mr. Hodge	£42	13	0
" " Watts	10	0	0
Kyneton " Anderson	43	9	0
Geelong " Cuzens	125	4	0
" " Apperly	106	2	0
Prahran " Moss	344	11	6
Richmond " Simper	535	0	0
St. Kilda " Dewhurst	410	10	0
Kew — —	150	0	0
Sydney " J. Beazley	54	0	0
Oxford-st. " J. B. Landells	225	0	0
Portland " Sleigh	17	17	0
Melbourne " Odell (full amount not known)	305	0	0
Wesleyan, Presbyterian, Baptist, and other places of worship, I have items of subscriptions about or over	100	0	0
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	£2469	6	6

There are imperfect memoranda relating to contributions made by members of the church, and by church collections, for various benevolent and religious objects, such as the Moravian Mission, that to the Chinese in Victoria, that to the Aborigines, our City Mission, Widows and Orphans of Soldiers, the support of Ministers in different places (Kidgell, Simper, Butler, &c.), the Congregational Union, Melbourne Hospital, Immigrants' Home, the Female Refuge, the Bible Society, Jews' Mission, Orphan Asylum, &c. Such imperfect items as I have been able to collect from my papers amount to £941 15s. 2d.

The London Missionary Society has been a special object of interest to our Church. We have contributed in cash and in articles sent to the various Missionaries, £2000 (more or less) within the last eighteen years.

We had at a very early period of the present pastorate abandoned the system of pew rents for that of weekly contributions. This system ought to have been sufficient for our wants, and were it well understood by the worshippers, would be effective; and its scriptural character renders it preferable to any other mode of supporting the Divine ordinances. By this, and other auxiliary means, the Church fund for supporting the minister, and other internal expenses, has amounted in the twenty-one years to £6556.

The roll of membership, when I took charge, contained the names of 25 members in town, and some—the number not known—in the country. But the real membership was 21 persons, I being the 22nd; since then, 586 members have been added to the Church, of whom 168 were received on profession of faith, the others by certificate from British and Colonial Churches. The number at present on the roll is 67, with some members in the country.

The Sabbath School, in those items I could collect of former days, and the more correct financial reports of the later times, does not show itself as an expensive institution, since in the whole twenty-one years all I have been able to find is an expenditure of £330 13s. 6d.

The daily schools have been, to a great extent, self-supporting; and beyond the expense connected with the buildings, have not been a charge to us. The school at Flemington may be named as involving an outlay of £220.

In 1857 a Ladies' Benevolent Association for relief of cases of general distress was organised, which has continued till the present. About £200 has been raised and expended in this good work.

TOTAL OF AMOUNTS STATED ABOVE.

Debts, &c., 1843	£600	0	0
School-house, West Melbourne ...	50	0	0
Schools, Collins-st., by Church (about)	1100	0	0
Famine relief, England	68	0	0
Teachers' residences (£1900), by church	800	0	0
Subscriptions to places of worship ...	2469	6	6
Contributions to benevolent purposes...	941	15	2
London Missionary Society	2000	0	0
Church property and buildings ...	4431	7	5
Church fund for internal support (21 years)	6550	0	0
Sabbath School	330	13	6
Flemington School-houses	220	0	0
Ladies Benevolent Society	200	0	0
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	£19,767	2	7

In conclusion, to advert to the causes which have resulted in terminating the happy relationship which has subsisted between me and the church, over which I have presided for fully twenty-one years, I cannot, perhaps, better or more judiciously state them than in the terms of my letter of resignation.

TO THE FIRST INDEPENDENT CHURCH, VICTORIA,
WITH ITS DEACONS.

DEAR BRETHREN—In submission to what I consider a clear indication of the Divine Will, I have resolved and herewith do tender you my resignation of the pastoral care of this Church, and of the trusteeship of the property.

About ten years back an unhappy collision of some of the leaders of the denomination with myself and the Church occurred, so that almost to the present we have been compelled to stand on the defensive; hence the

opposition of our brethren has acted unfavorably on our progress. Feeling that my continuance with this Church as pastor would only perpetuate the evil, I avail myself of the overture of those gentlemen who wish to terminate our connection, since I consider it will conduce to the advancement of the Church, and of the denomination at large.

In doing this I call to remembrance the happy relation which has been maintained between us now for fully twenty-one years, and would humbly record my sense of your attachment to me as your minister, invariably shown during those years, the honor and co-operation given me by you, and the liberal support afforded myself and family.

And now, much loved friends, I pray, and will while life is permitted to me, that the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen.

ALEXANDER MORISON, Minister.

TESTIMONIAL OF THE CHURCH.

TO THE REVEREND ALEXANDER MORISON.

DEAR PASTOR—It is with no ordinary feelings of regret that we accept your resignation of the position you have so long and honorably filled, as Pastor of the First Independent Church in Victoria; and in doing so, we desire to testify our unabated attachment and affection to you, and our appreciation of your faithful and devoted services, which for ability and long continuance have not been surpassed in this colony.

To most of us who have been so long associated with you, the parting is peculiarly painful; you have been a participator in our sorrows and our joys, a comforter in

trouble, a counsellor in difficulty, and at all times a tried friend.

The circumstances to which you have alluded, and which have tended to bring about the present result, is a matter of regret to us, because we are conscious that in no instance have we, as pastor or people, departed from the principles of our denomination, but have ever striven honorably to maintain them in their fullest integrity. We may also state, that as a church your resignation is a matter unsolicited and undesired by us, and to which we reluctantly accede under the circumstances. And now the time of separation has come, and we say farewell with hearts full of grateful and happy remembrances of the past, and the earnest prayer that you, your dear wife, and family may ever enjoy, in the fullest measure, the blessings of that gospel you have so faithfully proclaimed, and on the last great day we may be all found associated with the Church above, where parting is unknown.

Given at the Church meeting, held August 17th, 1864,
on behalf of the church.

GEORGE HORNE	} Deacons.
WILLIAM COCHRANE	
CHARLES BAKER	

Collins-street, Melbourne,
Victoria.

To the REV. ALEX. MORISON, *Melbourne.*

MY DEAR SIR,

I gladly embrace the earliest opportunity to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 25th April, enclosing a draft on the Bank of Australasia for £70, being the contributions for the year from the church under your pastoral charge in aid of the Society's funds. It affords me much pleasure to be the medium for conveying to the generous contributors the very cordial thanks of the directors for this renewed expression of their interest and sympathy in the missionary work. To the first Independent Church in Victoria, and to its attached pastor, we are largely indebted for their seasonable and zealous efforts and generous contributions, during a succession of years, in furtherance of the good work; and we earnestly hope that, while seeking by every means in their power to open up wells of salvation in the parched and desert places of the earth, their own souls may be watered with the dews of heavenly blessing.

With best wishes for your health and happiness, and the yet more abundant prosperity of your labours in the Gospel,

I remain, my dear Sir,
Yours very truly,

ARTHUR TIDMAN,
Foreign Secretary of the London Missionary
Society.

London, June 18th, 1864.