



BRIEF HISTORY
OF ST. MICHAEL'S
LUTHERAN CHURCH
GNADENFREI, MARANANGA

**St. Michael's
Lutheran
Church,
Gnadenfrei
Marananga**

**Barossa Valley,
South Australia**

Church built 1873
Bell Tower erected 1913

Gnadenfrei is a German word that carries a message of Grace and Hope and means, 'free by the grace of God.'

The following is a brief resume of the history of the St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Gnadenfrei, Marananga scanned from previous publications of the Church's history.

HISTORY

Many of the early German migrants who came to this country were mainly as a result of religious persecution.

In the early 1800's there was no United Germany. It consisted of a number of States, some more powerful than others. At this time Prussia was the largest and most powerful State and was ruled by King Friedrich William III.

In 1808, by an Official Decree, he placed the Government of the Churches under a State Ministry of Worship headed by himself. In 1817 he issued an Order of Cabinet, which placed the Lutheran and Calvinist Churches under the one State Department. A few years later he issued another Decree which united them into a New Union Church and bound them to accepting its New Confession. The result was that they were no longer allowed to adhere to their own Lutheran Confessions.

He asked all Ministers to conduct services only in the manner laid down in the Agenda (Book) setting out the Orders of Service (Liturgy) which was compiled by himself with the help of his Political Advisers. One matter to which Lutherans objected was that they were no longer permitted to administer the Sacrament of Holy Communion according to Lutheran Rites - a very grave matter of conscience to them.

As a final means of compelling Lutherans to submit to his demands, he passed New Laws in 1834 under which Pastors, who did not fully follow the King's Agenda, were dismissed as well as being deprived of all Rights and Privileges. If they baptised, married and confirmed in the former Lutheran Manner, they were heavily fined. Midwives were compelled to report births of Lutheran children. If parents allowed their children to be baptised in the Lutheran Manner they were fined. Those who refused to name the Pastors who officiated were gaoled and rewards were given to those who reported the offending Pastors. Congregations were often fined heavily.

Lutherans were "denounced publicly as rebels, separatists, dissenters and seducers".

Those whose consciences compelled them to adhere to the old order of things worshipped in secret in homes, cellars, barns, forests and quarries and often did so at night. In place of Pastors who were arrested, Lay Readers often officiated. It is no wonder that they saw migration to another country as the only way out, as their pleas to Prussian Authorities for consideration and tolerance had been in vain.

On June 8th 1838 (after a failed attempt two years earlier), 250 persons boarded two barges to take them to Hamburg to embark on the sailing ship "Prince George". On July 8th 1838, together with the ship "Bengalee", they set sail for Plymouth, England, where they were joined by Pastor August Ludwig Christian Kavel.

The cost to transport these migrants to Australia was financed by a wealthy English Baptist Philanthropist, George Fife Angas, who at the time was Chairman of the South Australian Company. He was sympathetic to the situation of the Lutherans and was also seeking settlers for land in South Australia. Money for fares, etc., would be repaid over a period of time with added interest.

The migrants arrived at Port Misery (now Port Adelaide) on November 8th 1838. Pastor Kavel ministered to the German Congregations until his death in 1860.

There were numerous other boat loads of migrants arriving in the months and years following. The first Lutherans settled at Klemzig (Adelaide), but as more people arrived some moved to Glen Osmond, then to Hahndorf and Lobethal in the Adelaide Hills and to Bethany and Langmeil (Tanunda) in the Barossa Valley.

During the period from 1845-1850 more German settlers moved into the Barossa Valley area. Most of them had connections with the Langmeil Congregation and would have worshipped at Langmeil, Tanunda. Pastor Kavel was their spiritual leader. At this time, members of the Langmeil Congregation settled in and around the area which soon became known as Gnadenfrey. The Gnadenfrey Lutherans did not immediately form a new Congregation, but were regarded as part and parcel of the Langmeil group.

At some stage between 1850-1853 a local place of worship was built. This was done under the guidance of Pastor A. Kavel and remained part of the Langmeil Parish.

The first church building was erected on the present church grounds, the land being given to the Congregation by a Mr Carl Kriebel. The exact location and type of building is not known. These records were believed to have been lost with some of Pastor Kavel's records.

The present spelling of Gnadenfrei was adopted in 1860. Also in 1860 the Gnadenfrei Congregation severed its ties with the Langmeil Congregation and joined the Light Pass Immanuel Lutheran Parish, and remained with that Parish until realignment saw Gnadenfrei join a re-vamped Greenock Lutheran Parish in 1966. To this day the Parish comprises St. Peter's Greenock, Nain Lutheran Church and St. Michael's Gnadenfrei, Marananga.



THE PRESENT CHURCH BUILDING

The present building was erected in 1873. Forty years later in 1913 the building was extended to include the existing gallery and bell tower. The bell in the tower was donated by a Mr Leopold Schmidt in memory of his late wife, Sophie, as the inscription on the bell tells us. The cost of these extensions was £579-11-4 (\$1,159.15).

It is believed that Mr Schmidt also donated the original small bell to the church; this was then given to the church school, which was located in the house just east of the existing Marananga Band Hall. When this school was closed in 1916 during World War I, the bell was then loaned to the Marananga public school. When this school was closed in 1994, the bell was returned to the Gnadenfrei Congregation and is located near the front fence.

In 1938, to celebrate the 65th Anniversary of the church and the 25th of the erection of the tower, the existing altar, pulpit, a reader's chair and matching lectern, altar railings, hymn boards, pedestals, silver candlesticks, and two leadlight windows were donated.

For the 75th Anniversary in 1948, the impressive ornamental archway and gates were erected. At this time also, photographs of former Pastors were procured and hung in the porch. This practice has been continued. A family of the congregation also donated the marble baptismal font.

For the 100th Jubilee of the church in 1973 extensive upgrading was again done to beautify the church surroundings, buildings and garden.

In 2000 a member donated the amplification system, projector system and screen. In 2001 the carpet in the sanctuary, aisle and gallery steps was replaced at a cost of \$3,960.00. The previous carpet was laid in 1962 at a cost of \$472.06.

The rose hedge and front garden redevelopment began in 1999 and was completed in 2002. This has added to the attractiveness of the church, which makes for an impressive sight as motorists heading north east from Seppeltsfield, following the palm avenue, round the corner after the Seppelt Mausoleum to see St. Michael's Gnadenfrei at the entrance to Marananga.

A small but dedicated group of ladies still form the Ladies' Fellowship, which was founded in 1956. They now combine their activities with the Greenock and Nain ladies.

Our members take great pride in their church and grounds, giving many hours of voluntary labour in cleaning the church and hall, keeping the yard, garden and cemetery tidy, with the ladies providing flowers for church services and functions in the hall. Sincere thanks must go to the members of Gnadenfrei who over the years have given generously of their time and talents and given many thousands of dollars' worth of goods and materials for the betterment of our beloved church property.

The following Pastors have served the Gnadenfrei congregation:

Pastor A. L. C. Kavel Until 1860
Pastor G. W. Staudemeyer 1860-1864
Pastor W. Keppler 1864-1865
Pastor J. P. Niquet 1865-1888
Pastor J. Spanagel 1888-1900
Pastor C. W.J. Meier 1901-1922
Pastor F. W. Matschoss 1923-1931
Pastor F. A. Hartman 1932-1943
Pastor A. G. Simpfendorfer 1944-1954
Pastor G. P. Venz 1954-1964
Pastor P. E. Mickan 1965-1966
Pastor B. E. Bartholomaeus 1966-1974
Pastor E. O. Riedel 1974-1977
Pastor J. H. Mattiske 1977-1986
Pastor E. L. Spike 1987-1997
Pastor J. Weier 1998-2011
Pastor W. L. George 2012-2015
Pastor D. Vosgerau 2016-2020
Pastor P. Bentley 2021-2021

For many years the Gnadenfrei Congregation has given financial and personal support to a married Seminary student and family studying at Luther Seminary, Adelaide (now Australian Lutheran College).

THE ORGAN

The pipe organ was built by a Mr W.G. Rendall for a Mr G.S. Hale of Norwood at a cost of £70.00 (\$140.00).

In 1880 the organ was later purchased by one of the Point Pass Congregations and then sold in 1915 to a Mr Geyer, an organ dealer and teacher of Tanunda. Mr Geyer had it set up in his home until 1918 when the Gnadenfrei Congregation bought it.

It was converted from foot pedal operated bellows to an electric blower in 1962. The organ was fully restored and repainted to its original colours in 1988 by Mr Roger Jones, organ builder of Nuriootpa. It was re-dedicated on May 28th 1989.

In May 2003 a Yamaha clavinova was purchased. This now enables younger musicians to accompany the hymn singing and allows easier brass instrument accompaniment. The clavinova was dedicated at the 130th Anniversary Service on October 5th 2003.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL

In 1964 the congregation purchased a transportable Housing Trust unit for the purpose of Sunday School rooms and meeting room. Sunday School classes were being conducted in the church and vestry.

This building was used until August 1996 when it was demolished to make way for the current Sunday School Hall and rooms. The foundations were poured in October 1996 and the completed building was opened and dedicated at the end of June 1997.

Over the years many teachers and pupils have passed through our Sunday School and received instruction in God's Word. The seeds have been sown but the harvest is not always visible in our sight.

MIXED BLESSINGS WINE

Blessings add and multiply when shared with others. In this spirit of thanksgiving, members and friends of St. Michael's Lutheran Church Gnadenfrei have produced a wine called "Mixed Blessings". This wine Mixed Blessings was first produced in 2004, followed by vintages in 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011 and 2016.

The grapes were sourced from congregational members and friends' vineyards in the Marananga district. The unique blend of many red grapes including Shiraz, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Viognier, Malbec, Grenache, Mourvèdre, Touriga, and Zinfandel has created a wine with as much character as the growers themselves! The result is a delightful and balanced wine, which has matured in oak for 18 months under the watchful eye of well-known local winemaker Troy Kalleske. Proceeds from the sale of "Mixed Blessings" go towards the work of the Church.

GNADENFREI

This name reminds us of God's grace (Gnade), which in His goodness and without any worthiness on our part He has freely (frei) given to us.



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Addition of bell tower and gallery in 1913.

