

**LEADERS OF CONGREGATIONALISM 1904-1977:
PRESIDENTS OF THE CONGREGATIONAL UNION
OF AUSTRALIA (AND OF NEW ZEALAND TO 1960), 1888-1977**

Geoffrey Barnes

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The late Rev. Dr Geoffrey Barnes was the doyen of Australian historians of Congregationalism and was the founding and long-serving President of the Society. This article was his last completed piece of research and it was a fitting memorial in the journal of the Society to which he gave so much.*

In earlier issues of this journal, there have been biographical articles on the Assembly Presidents¹ and Synod Moderators² of the Uniting Church, on the Moderators-General of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia³ and on Presidents-General of the Methodist Conference.⁴ It is only fitting that the leaders of Congregationalism in this country are similarly featured.

**TABLE: ALL PRESIDENTS OF THE AUSTRALIAN (AND A & NZ)
CONGREGATIONAL UNIONS**

1888	Rev. W. Roby Fletcher MA
CUANZ	
1904	Rev. J. Fordyce MA BD
1904-07	Rev. A. Gosman DD
1907-10	Rev. J.C. Kirby
1910-13	Rev. Ll. D. Bevan LLB DD
1913-16	Rev. T. Roseby MA LLD FRAS
1916-19	Rev. W.J.L. Gloss BA
1919-22	Rev. Ernest Davies
1922-25	Rev. G. Rayner
1925-27	Rev. F.V. Dowling MA
1927-29	Rev. P. Watson BA
1929-31	Rev. G.H. Wright MA LittD
1931-33	Rev. J.S. Griffith MA BD
1933-35	Rev. W.L. Patison
1935-37	Rev. L.C. Parkin MA BD
1937-39	Rev. A.P. Campbell BA
1939-41	Rev. A. Penry Evans
1941-46	Rev. C. Bernard Cockett MA DD Dip Ed
1946-48	Rev. E.S. Kiek MA BD DD
1948-50	Rev. J.D. Northey BA BD
1950-52	Rev. J. Harold King
1952-54	Rev. Walter Albiston
1954-56	Rev. C. Denis Ryan BA
1956-58	Rev. Lyall D. Dixon MA BD
1958-60	Rev. J.F. Dickinson
CUA	

1960-62	Maynard Davies
1962-64	Rev H.T. Wells AM BA
1964-66	Rev S.J. Henshall
1966-69	Rev. G. Lindsay Lockley MA BD PhD
1969-71	Rev. John Bryant
1971-73	Rev. T. Rees Thomas MBE MA BD
1973-75	Rev. G.L. Barnes BA BD STM PhD
1975-77	Rev. K.B. Leaver BA BD STM

The information for this biographical register is taken from G.L. Lockley's biographical index of Congregational ministers.⁵ It has been updated by reference to Uniting Church archives in several states and to the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Where information in the UK might be relevant it has not been checked. Only university degrees have been included; diplomas have been omitted. The publishing of this list might prompt some missing information may come to light. The place of ordination is usually only noted when it was overseas.

Originally the CUANZ met triennially from 1904. Prior to 1904 there had been inter-colonial conferences. In 1888 an assembly was held but little was done to maintain continuity. In 1903 in Queensland it was decided officially to form the Australasian union (CUANZ) with an assembly in 1904. From 1927 the assembly met biennially. From 1941 to 1946 the assembly of the CUANZ did not meet because of the Second World War. From 1960, when the connection with New Zealand was amicably discontinued, the CUA met biennially, except in 1966 when it was hoped the assemblies of the three churches negotiating union would meet at the same time.

The only layman among the 33 to hold the office of President since the union's beginning was Mr Maynard Davies (1960-62). Though twelve of the 32 clerical Presidents were at least partly educated in the United Kingdom, the majority were Australian-educated, with Camden College leading the score with nine, the Victorian College with seven, Parkin with five and the Queensland College with one.

Most men – and they were of course all men - were elected from New South Wales (ten), South Australia (nine) and Victoria (eight). There were five from Queensland, only one from Western Australia and none from Tasmania. However, 25 of the 32 ministers had served in more than one state, including five who had spent some time in the island state. Not only the British men, but four of the Australians had had ministries in the UK as well. The liking of Congregationalists for strongly academic leadership is demonstrated by the fact that no fewer than twelve Presidents were College Principals at some stage. Twenty of them had BA or MA degrees, with ten BD degrees and eight doctorates.

INDIVIDUAL BIOGRAPHIES

Fletcher, William Roby, MA

(1833-1894)

Educated University of London and Lancashire Independent College; ordained 1857; Brighton, St Kilda Vie 1857; Bendigo Vic.

1857-1866; Richmond 1866-76; Adelaide (Stow Memorial) 1876-90; Associate, (Stow Memorial) 1890-93; Principal, SA Theological College 1890-94.

Chairman CUV 1866-67, CUSA 1878-79.

Vice Chancellor University of Adelaide 1883 -1887;

Member Australasian Society for the Advancement of Science, President Adelaide University Shakespeare Society, President YMCA

Publications: include *Egyptian Sketches* (1892), 'Dry-as-Dust Club Papers' in the *South Australian Register*, 1884.



William Roby Fletcher

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Fordyce, John MA BD (1844-1915)

Educated Edinburgh; ordained Scotland; Woollahra 1889-1908; then returned to UK.

Publications: *Aspects of Skepticism* (1883 & 1889).

Gosman, Alexander DD (1829 -1913)

Born Crail, Fife, Scotland; educated University of Glasgow and the Congregational Theological Hall; ordained Haddington, East Lothian, Scotland 1855; arr Melbourne per *Great Britain* 21.9.1860; Ballarat Vic. 1860-63; St Kilda Vic. 1863; Hawthorn Vic. 1878-1905; Lecturer Congregational College of Victoria 1864-76; Principal Congregational College of Victoria 1876-1913.

Delegate to the Bathurst Federal Convention 1896; President Anti-Sweating League 1895-1902.

Chairman CUV 1869, 1883, 1895, 1904; Delegate International Congregational Council, London, 1891, 1899.

Alexander Gosman

La Trobe Picture Collection,
State Library of Victoria



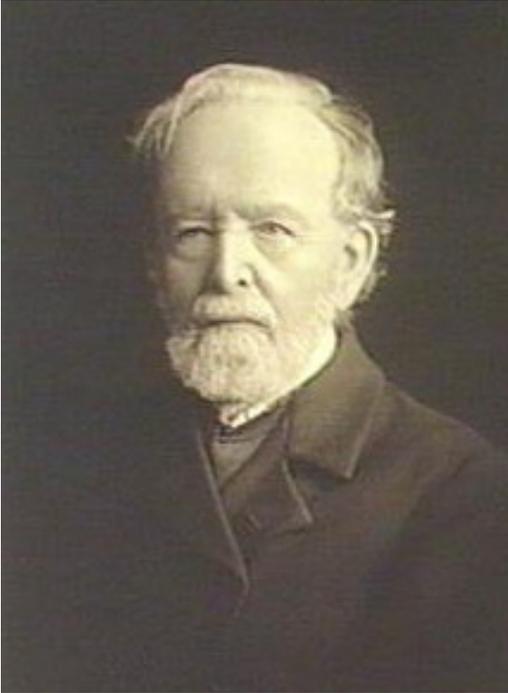
Publications: *Mr Justice Higinbotham on The Orthodox Faith. A review and a Vindication* (Melbourne 1887), *Socialism in the Light of Right Conduct and Religion* (Melbourne 1891).

Kirby, Joseph Coles**(1837-1924)**

Born Buckingham, England; educated Camden College (in process of formation) under the Rev. Barzillai Quaipe (NSW) and W.C. Drane (Qld); ordained 1864; Ipswich (Asst) 1863-64; Dalby Qld 1864-71; Woollahra NSW 1871-77; General Agent CUNSW 1877-80; Pt Adelaide SA 1880-1908.

Chairman CUSA 1886-87, 1906-07, CUNSW 1879-80; Delegate International Congregational Council, London, 1891

Publications: *Pamphlets on Social Reform*, 1877-98.



Joseph Kirby

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Llewellyn Bevan

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Bevan, Llewellyn David BA LLB DD

(1842-1918)

Born Llanelly, Carmarthenshire, Wales; educated New College, London; ordained King's Weigh House London c1865; King's Weigh House London (Asst to Binney) 1865-69; Tottenham Court Rd (Whitfields) 1869-76; Brick Presbyterian Church New York 1877-82; Highbury Quadrant London 1882-86; arr. Melbourne per *Valetta* 6.11.1886; Collins St Vic. 1886-1909; Principal Parkin College SA 1910-1918.

Chairman CUV 1888-89, 1898-99, 1909-10.

Publications: *The Life and Reminiscences of Ll Bevan* by Louisa Bevan (Melbourne 1920).

Roseby, Thomas Bede BA MA LLB LLD FRAS

(1844-1918)

Born Sydney; educated Camden College NSW; ordained Petersham 1867; Petersham 1867-72; Moray Place Dunedin NZ 1872-85; Dawson St Ballarat Vic. 1885-88; Marrickville NSW 1888-1911. Chairman CUNSW 1891-92 1903-04.

Publications: *The Genetic Unity of Nature Viewed in a Theistic and Christian Light* (Livingstone Lectures 1888), 'The Transit of Venus, Dunedin', *The New Zealand Journal of Science*, Vol. 1 (1882-83), 'Elliptical Orbit of Comet b 1894(Gale)', *Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society*, 1896.

Gloss, William John Leech BA

(1859-1920)

Educated Camden College NSW; ordained 1885; Mt Eden NZ 1885-87; Summer Hill NSW 1887-99; Ipswich Old 1899-1908; Christchurch NZ 1908; Mt Eden NZ 1913; Brighton Vie 1913-18; Canterbury Vic. 1918; Principal Congregational College of Victoria 1919. Chairman QCU 1904-05.

Publications: *Ipswich Congregational Church Jubilee 1853-1903* (Brisbane 1903)

Davies, Ernest (1869-1957)
 Educated Extra Mural Course Congregational College of Victoria; ordained 1904; Midland Junction WA 1898-99; Leederville WA 1899-1904; Fremantle WA 1904-07; Hawthorn Vic. 1907-22; Strathfield/Homebush NSW 1922-35; Cheltenham NSW 1936-37; Campsie NSW 1951-56 (Act). Chairman WACU, of Vic. 1911-12.
 Publications: *In the Golden Days* (ed Maynard Davies 1911), *Autobiography*, 1958, 1968.

Rayner, George (1856-1935)
 Educated Richmond, ordained Ireland 1880; Cork Ireland 1881-84. Arrived Sydney 1884 per *Ravenna*. Homebush NSW 1884-94; Glenelg SA 1894-21; Wharf St Brisbane 1923-25. Chairman CUNSW 1893-94, CUSA 1900-01, 1921-22

Dowling, Frank Vincent MA (1870-1930)⁶
 Born Adelaide SA; educated Camden College NSW; ordained 1898; Claremont WA 1898-1909; Nth Sydney NSW 1909-22; Davey St Hobart Tas 1922-25; Ipswich Qld 1925-30.
 Chairman CUWA 1908, CUNSW 1914-15, 1915-16 (act) CUTas 1924-25, QCU 1928-29. AIF Chaplain, 1917-19; Australasian Secretary, LMS 1920; Lecturer, Queensland College.
 Publications: *Evolutionary Science and the Christian Religion*_(Livingstone Lectures 1905).

Watson, Percival MA (1881-1959)
 Educated England; ordained 1904; Henley Beach SA 1905-08; Hindmarsh SA 1908-12; Gawler SA 1912-14; Summer Hill NSW 1914-20; Clayton, Kensington SA 1920-25; Brisbane Qld 1925-47; Pitt Street NSW 1947-50; Principal Queensland Congregational Theological College.
 Chairman CUNSW 1917-18, CUSA 1924-25, QCU 1926-27, 1937-38, 1943-44.

Wright, George Herbert MA LittD (1881-1960)⁷
 Born Melbourne; educated Hackney College London; ordained ?; Swindon England 1910-13; Fremantle WA 1913-17; North Perth WA 1917-19; Stow Memorial SA 1919-33; Principal Camden College NSW 1933-37; Trinity Perth WA 1938-50.
 Founder and Chairman King's College; WEA lecturer.
 Publications: *Immortality in the Poets of Today* (London 1930), *The Conflict of Good with Good* (Adelaide 1943).

Griffith, James Shaw MA BD (d. 1939)
 Educated Balliol and Mansfield Colleges Oxford England; ordained 1901; Abingdon Berks England 1901-07; Union Church Tientsin China 1907-13; Halstead England 1914-19; Elsternwick Vic. 1919-22; Principal Congregational College of Victoria 1919-39. Chairman CUV 1923-24

Patison, William Lyle (1886-1947)

Educated Camden College NSW; ordained 1896; Leichhardt 1896-1903; Home Mission Supt CUNSW 1904-28; Commissioner Centenary Movement CUNSW 1929-33; Ministerial Secretary CUNSW 1930-37. Chairman CUNSW 1916-17

Parkin, Leslie Clarence MA BD (1890-1982)

Educated Congregational College of Victoria and New College (London); ordained 1911; Kew Vic. (Asst); Epping England 1913; Chatswood NSW 1914-22; North Adelaide SA 1922-38; Memorial Hobart Tas 1938-43; Hawthorn Vic. 1943-50; Angaston SA 1951-56. Chairman CUSA 1925-26, CUTas 1941-42, CUV 1947-48. Publications *He's Riding My Donkey* (London 1945).

Campbell Alexander Petrie OBE BA (1881-1963)

Born Redfern; educated Camden College NSW; ordained 1905; Hunters Hill NSW 1905-11; Killara NSW 1911-38; Burwood NSW 1938-44. Moderator CUNSW 1944-51; Chairman CUNSW 1919-20. President Sydney City Mission; Crippled Childrens Association; Padre Sydney Rotary. Publications: *The Great Hill Climb* (Sydney 1930) *A Word for the Road* (Sydney 1933)

Evans, Alfred Penry (1877-1954)

Educated Bala-Bangor Wales; ordained 1900; Llandudno Wales 1900-04; Porth Rhondda Valley Wales 1904-08; Scarborough Wales 1908-13; Great George St Liverpool England 1913-23; Walter Rd Swansea Wales 1923-28; Collins St Melbourne Vic. 1929-46. Chairman CUV 1933-34, 1945. Publications: *Melbourne Sermons* (1946)

Cockett, Charles Bernard MA DD (1888-1965)

Born Marrickville NSW; educated USyd BA 1913, MA 1915; Camden College NSW; ordained 1915; Rockhampton Qld 1915-17; Wycliff Church, Surrey Hills Vic. 1917-20; Memorial Hobart Tas 1920-25; Bunyan Meeting Bedford England 1925-31; Vine Memorial Ilford England 1931-39; Pitt St Sydney NSW 1939-46; Chapel-in-the-Fields Norwich England 1948-51; Minister & Secretary CUWA 1952-54; Haslemere Surrey England 1955-59. Publications: *Sex and Marriage* (Sydney 1920), *John Bunyan's England* (Luton, 1928), *Broken Things*.

**Kiek, Edward Sydney MA BD DD
(1883-1959)**

Educated Wadham & Mansfield Colleges Oxford; ordained 1909 Eng; Newcastle-under-Lyme England 1909-13; Square Church Halifax England 1913-20; Principal Parkin College Adelaide SA 1920-56; Luhrs Road, Payneham SA (acting) 1943-50.

Chairman CUSA 1929 1950.

Publications: *An Apostle in Australia, The Battle of Faith, Group Psychology and the Current Situation, The New Psychology and the old Faith, The Larger Hope, The Modern Religious Situation.*

E.S. Kiek

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Northey, James Douglas BA BD

(1890-1975)

Born Adelaide SA; educated Parkin College Adelaide SA; ordained 1916; Kensington Gardens SA 1916-21; Luhrs Rd Evandale SA 1917-21; Victor Harbour SA 1921-29; Canterbury Vic. 1929-39; Principal Congregational College of Vie 1940-60. Senior Freemason; President Melbourne College of Divinity 1944-46, 1957-59. Chairman CUV 1934-35; Vice-Moderator ICC.

King, James Harold

(d 1959)

Education Camden College NSW; ordained 1922; Kurri Kurri NSW 1921-25; Woollahra NSW 1925-36; Strathfield/Homebush NSW 1936-38; Brown St Newcastle NSW 1938-44; Ipswich Central, Qld 1944-58. Chairman CUNSW 1931-32, QCU 1948

Albiston, Walter

(1889-1965)

Educated Congregational College of Victoria; ordained 1914; Home Missionary Bream Creek Tas 1909-14; Warmambool Vic. 1914-18.

Secretary Protestant Federation Vic. 1918-25; Sec CUV 1926-57; Chairman CUV 1937-38; Senior OPD Chaplain 1941-61.

Ryan, Cyril Denis BA

(1899-1958)

Educated Congregational College of Victoria; ordained 1933; Hampton 1933-35; Victor Harbour SA 1935-40; North Adelaide SA 1940-44; Killara NSW 1945-57.

Secretary CUANZ 1957-58.

Dixon, Lyall Douglas MA BD

(1904-1985)

Educated Parkin College, Adelaide SA; ordained 1932; Highgate SA 1930-32; St Helier England 1932-37; Islington Chapel England 1937-44; North Perth WA 1945-50; Collins St Melbourne Vic. 1950-70. Chairman CUWA 1948, CUV 1955-56

Dickinson, James Forsyth

(d. 1975)

Educated Congregational College of Victoria; ordained 1927; Burnley St Richmond Vic. 1927-31; Geeveston Tas. 1931-34; Dulwich Hill NSW 1934-37; Milton Old 1937-43; AIF Chaplain 1941-44; South Brisbane Old 1944-48; Clayton, Kensington SA 1948-55; Victor Harbour SA 1955-58; Brown St Newcastle NSW 1958-62.
Minister & Secretary CUNSW 1962-72

Davies, Maynard

(1907-1994)

Lay Member Epping Congregational Church; Chairman CUNSW 1952-53; Editor *Australian Congregationalist* 1968-73; Member Joint Commission on Church Union; Secretary CUA 1963-67.

Publications: *Beyond My Grasp* (Alpha Books 1978).

See G.L. Barnes, 'A Father in God: Maynard Davies (1907-94),' *Church Heritage*, 9, 2 (September 1995), pp. 77-81.

Wells, Henry Thomas AM BA

(1912-1986)

Educated Congregational College of Victoria; ordained 1937; Brunswick Vic. 1937-42; Glenhuntly Vic. 1942-46; Epping NSW 1946-51; Epping/Cheltenham NSW 1951-58; Secretary CUSA 1958-67; Secretary CUA 1967-77. Chairman CUNSW 1953-54.

Henshall, Sydney Joseph

(1907-95)

Educated Western College UK; ordained 1932; Dartmouth England 1932-36; Horfield Bristol England 1936-39; Gloucester St Weymouth England 1939-46; Clarendon Rd Watford England 1946-53; Collins St Melbourne Vic. (asst); 1953-64; Trinity Perth WA 1964-77.

Chairman CUV 1959-60, CUWA 1968, 1974.



Lockley, Geoffrey Lindsay BA BD MA PhD (1909-1991)

Educated Camden College NSW; ordained Hobart 1932; Gordon NSW 1932-36; Rose Park SA 1938-42; Angaston/Milton/Rocky Valley SA 1942-46; Secretary/Moderator & Parkin Mission SA 1946-50; Principal Old Congregational College 1950-63, 1966-70; Principal, Cromwell College, University of Qld, 1950-70; Secretary CCWM in Australia & NZ 1970-74.

Chairman CUSA 1945-46, President QCU 1957-58. Publications: *Congregationalism in Australia* (ed. Bruce Upham, Melbourne 2001), also see *A Comprehensive Bibliography to Congregationalism in Australia* (ed. Bruce Upham, Melbourne 2003), many articles & smaller publications e.g., *From Darkness to Light* (Port Moresby 1972)

Bryant, James John

(1906-??)

Educated Parkin College SA; ordained 1934; Kadina SA 1933-35; The Hyde London England 1936-39; Croydon NSW 1940-45; North Adelaide SA 1945-50; Trinity Perth WA 1950-63; Burwood NSW 1963-69; Pitt St Sydney NSW 1969-77.

Chairman CUWA 1954-55.

Publications *There was a Man Whose Name was John* (an autobiography, Sydney 1982)

Thomas, Thomas Rees AM MBE MA LTh BD LLB MAPS MACE (1910-93)

Born Pontardulzus, Wales; arr. Qld 1913; educated Queensland & Parkin College; ordained 1934; Subiaco Mt Hawthorn WA 1934-42; Clayton Kensington SA 1942-48; City Church Brisbane Qld 1948-1981.

Chairman CUSA 1947-48, QCU 1951, 1959, 1964-5, 1977. Moderator Qld Synod UCA 1978.

Barnes, Geoffrey Leon BA BD STM PhD (1926-2005)

Born Melbourne; educated Congregational College of Victoria & Hartford Seminary USA; ordained 1951;

Hampton Vic. 1951-59; Canterbury Vic. 1962-67
Principal Camden College NSW 1967-74; Lecturer
United Theological College NSW 1975-92.

Chairman CUV 1964-65; Moderator NSW Synod
UCA 1987-88; President of UCR&HS of NSW,
1977-2001.

Publications: *The Story of Lay People in the Church*
(Melbourne 1991), *Doing Theology in Sydney*
(Sydney 1999).

**Leaver, Kenneth Batten AM BA BD STM****(1914-)⁸**

Educated Parkin College SA; ordained 1939; Medindie SA 1939-40; Medindie/Gilberton SA 1940-42; Gilberton SA 1942-43; North Balwyn Vic. 1943-45; Geeveston Tas. 1945-50; Christ Church Launceston Tas. 1950-55; North Adelaide SA 1955-58; Principal Parkin College SA 1958-69; Parkin-Wesley College SA: Co-Principal 1969-72; Principal 1973-76; Chaplain, Flinders Medical Centre SA 1977.

Chairman CUTas 1950-51; CUSA 1965-66.

Publication: *The Abundant Life* (1949).

ENDNOTES

¹ P.K. Bentley, 'The Magnificent Seven: a statistical note on the Presidents of the Uniting Church in Australia,' *Church Heritage*, 9, 3 (March 1996), pp. 163-169.

² P.K. Bentley, 'Ninety Two and still going: a statistical note about Moderators in the Uniting Church, 1977-94,' *Church Heritage*, 9, 1 (March 1995), pp. 19-32.

³ M.D. Prentis 'Fathers and Brethren: the Moderators of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1901-1977,' *Church Heritage*, 12, 2 (September 2001), pp. 124-139.

⁴ E.G. Clancy, 'Methodist Leaders: Presidents General of the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Australasia, 1902-77,' *Church Heritage*, 12, 4 (September 2002), pp. 224-242.

⁵ A copy of the Lockley Index is held at Uniting Church Archives, Eskdale, North Parramatta.

⁶ Additional detail from H.J. Gibbney & A.G. Smith (eds), *A Biographical Register 1788-1939*, Vol 1 (Canberra 1987), p. 189.

⁷ Additional detail from H.J. Gibbney & A.G. Smith, *op. cit.*, Vol. 2, p. 355.

⁸ Additional detail from *Who's Who in Australia 1993*.