

# Synod '24



## Record of Service – Rev Owen Roberts

I grew up on the farm at Angle Vale in the fifth generation of Cornish Methodist farmers. One of five children and surrounded by cousins and others of similar background. The Methodist Church was an influential and major part of people's lives. Worship on Sunday in the crowded very strong congregations, many lay preachers, lively Sunday school and many social events for all ages. The family home was part of being part of the Church. Amongst my earliest memories was going with my very active Lay Preacher father who willingly accepted the frequent opportunities to preach. I was a Sunday School teacher and then Superintendent while still a teenager.

After Gawler High School and Adelaide Boys High for Leaving Honors, I entered Teacher's College and University. In my third Year of teaching, I felt the call to enter the Methodist Ministry. During my five years in Parkin Wesley the joining of Parkin College and Wesley College took place, and one long holiday was taken by using a trailer behind my car to cart the books and assisting one of the lecturers combine the two libraries. During my time in College and because of the shortage of ordained ministers I was pastor at Black Forest for two years, Cowandilla Presbyterian for a year and an Assistant to Rev Arthur Jackson at Westbourne Park for a year.

During this time, I married Caryl Saxby whom I had met and became engaged to while at Brighton Methodist Church. We married in 1967. In 1971, before going to the UK for further experience in multiracial schools, I was asked by the Methodist Conference to engage in a "tent maker" ministry in Streaky Bay, teaching in the High School for half time and ministering the other half. It was a busy and enjoyable year even allowing for the school time being increased to four days after the science teacher left.

The next two years were spent as head of Religious Studies at a multi-racial School in the Borough of Ealing while Caryl taught nearby in Southall. We came back to South Australia at the end of 1973 with the first of our two children. Expecting to take a position in Overseas Missions we were asked to consider Christian Education in the Department of Education and Citizenship in the Methodist Church.

**Note: Below written as a record of service - Perth WA 1984 to 2010**

Owen was appointed as Co-Minister of Wesley Central Mission in Perth. This appointment allowed Owen to develop his abilities in preaching, often having four sermons a week to prepare. During his ten years the Congregation grew to 400 and included people who were born in nineteen different countries. He enjoyed the music program, the youth group which grew under the leadership of paid youth leaders. The Mission programs also allowed to develop his interest in both the Gospel proclaimed and the Gospel in action. Marriage and family education became a department under separate leadership. A Medical Centre was begun to help needy and often lonely people have access to medical services they otherwise could not afford to go or were inclined to go for help. While at the Mission and beginning in 1984 was to become part of the Life Education Program which began at the

Wayside Chappel in Sydney and was started in Perth. It was a program which travelled to schools and employed trained educators. Owen was Chair of the Board in WA and a member and Vice Chairman of the National Board for many years.

Schools were never far from Owen's involvement. He became involved with the then newly established St Stephen's School. After some years on the Board he became Chairman and had an association with the School for more than 20 years. Caryl spent her last years as a teacher and Principal of St Stephens which had grown to 2,500 students on two campuses.

After the ten years at Perth Mission, Owen was appointed as Mission Minister at Fremantle. During that time besides enjoying the challenging work of the staff in a variety of programs, there was time to be Executive Officer of the Schools Commission for 6 years, be Executive Officer developing a Uniting Church School south of the river, Tranby College. The thirteen and a half years spent at Fremantle also included working with outreach agencies of the Church restructuring into Uniting Care. Owen was aware of the change in emphasis this would bring to the Mission Churches but was also aware of the need to refocus our resources and relieve the burden that many lay people were experiencing in maintaining social welfare programs.

In 2010, Owen and Caryl moved to NSW and enjoyed the stimulation of ministry in a vastly different area. There was good opportunity to work in a team ministry in the Southern Highlands and be a little closer to their son in Canberra having left their daughter and her family in Perth. In 2014 it was decided to live in Asia for a period having missed out on the opportunity many years before. Penang Wesley Church provided a different and stimulating place to live and play some part in the Church. In 2017 it was time to come back to Australia. The question was where could they go to experience new and challenging, in what would be the last chapter in active ministry. Having missed out on rural and regional ministry in earlier years, they asked the Church for such a place. The Goyder Ministry Area became their new home for the next seven years.

Owen enjoyed preaching, and for the first time Caryl was a partner with him in the pastoral ministry in the area. There were new challenges with the members growing on average, older and fewer. The world was changing so rapidly that Owen felt the challenge of preaching a Gospel for the current age that was following the living Christ looking to the future rather than looking backwards.

After 60 years since being called to ministry and more than 50 years as an ordained minister having turned 82 years of age, he retired from active service. He always felt in the right place and grateful to the Church for the opportunity to serve.

**Rev Owen Roberts**

9 October 2024



The Uniting Church in Australia  
Synod of South Australia