



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

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

**498 Seppeltsfield Road  
Marananga, 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 Gnadenfrei St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Marananga scanned from previous publications of the Church's history.

Updated September 2023

# HISTORY

Many early German migrants came to this country between 1838 - 41 as a result of religious persecution. Later on it was for economic reasons.

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, the King decreed that the government of the Churches would be under the State's Ministry of Public Worship headed by himself. In 1817 he issued an Order of Cabinet, which placed the Lutheran and Reformed 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 the Lutherans were no longer allowed to adhere to their own Lutheran Confessions. The name "Lutheran" was not to be used.

All ministers were asked by the King 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 Lutheran pastors 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, the King 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". Pastors and people 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 Elders 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

In 1840 the persecution ended when Friedrich III died and his son Friedrich IV repealed the Orders. However, by then a large majority of Lutherans had gone to America and over 800 to Australia.

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 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 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 a realignment in 1966 saw Gnadenfrei join a re-vamped Greenock Lutheran Parish. To this day the Parish comprises St. Peter's Greenock, Nain Lutheran Church and Gnadenfrei St. Michael's, 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 Mr Leopold Schmidt in memory of his late wife, Sophie, as is inscribed on the bell. 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. In 1914 this bell was given to the Gnadenfrei Provisional School (1880-1922) located in the house just east of the existing Marananga Band Hall. A church school had operated 1850-1880. When the Marananga Public School was built, the Gnadenfrei School closed and the bell was loaned to the new school. When the Public School closed in 1994, the bell returned to the Congregation and is located near the front fence.

Earlier than 1938, a family of the Congregation donated the marble baptismal font. In 1938, to celebrate the 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the church and the 25<sup>th</sup> 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 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 1948, the impressive ornamental archway and gates were erected. At this time, photographs of former Pastors were procured and hung in the entrance porch. This practice has been continued.

For the 100<sup>th</sup> 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 Gnadenfrei St. Michael's at the entrance to Marananga.

A small but dedicated group of ladies formed the Ladies' Guild from 1956-2023. 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:

(underlined name is the regular Christian name used)

Pastor <u>August</u> Ludwig Christian Kavel	Until 1860
Pastor Gottlieb <u>Wilhelm</u> Staudemeyer	1860-1864
Pastor Karl Gottlob <u>Wilhelm</u> Keppler	1864-1865
Pastor Johann <u>Peter</u> Niquet	1865-1888
Pastor <u>Jakob</u> Spanagel	1888-1900
Pastor Carl Wilhelm <u>Julius</u> Meier	1901-1922
Pastor <u>Friedrich</u> Wilhelm Matschoss	1923-1931
Pastor <u>Franz</u> Adam Hartman	1932-1943
Pastor August <u>Gottfried</u> Simpfendorfer	1944-1954
Pastor <u>George</u> Paul Venz	1954-1964
Pastor <u>Peter</u> Eric Mickan	1965-1966
Pastor <u>Benno</u> Edwin Bartholomaeus	1966-1974
Pastor <u>Erich</u> Otmar Riedel	1974-1977
Pastor <u>John</u> Henry Mattiske	1977-1986
Pastor Edward <u>Lloyd</u> Spike	1987-1997
Pastor <u>John</u> B. Weier	1998-2011
Pastor <u>Wayne</u> George	2012-2015
Pastor Frank <u>Detlev</u> Vosgerau	2016-2020
Pastor <u>Philip</u> Bentley	2021-2021
Pastor <u>Eugene</u> Minge	2023-

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 Mr W.G. Rendall for 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 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 28<sup>th</sup> May 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 130<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Service on 5<sup>th</sup> October 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 the Gnadenfrei St. Michael's Lutheran Congregation are pleased to release the 2023 "Mixed Blessings" Wine. This is our 8th release having produced wine in 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2009, 2011, 2016 and now 2023.

The "Mixed Blessings 2023" release was produced through the generous donations of local viticulturists and the expert blending skills of local winemaker Damien Tucharke. This unique blend makes for a round yet still fresh wine characterized by abundant fruit and depth. This release also has a special place as it commemorates the 150th Anniversary of the Gnadenfrei St. Michael's Lutheran Church in Marananga and the 20th Anniversary of the Marananga Wine Show. Knowing you are supporting a fundraiser adds extra depth to this wine.

## **MARANANGA WINE SHOW**

The Marananga wine show an initiative of Gnadenfrei Lutheran Church was founded in 2004 to help small producers in the local community benchmark their wines. Now in its 21st year, wines from large and small producers in the western Barossa sub-region are judged to Australian wine show standards. The show judging is held each year in August.

The 2024 Marananga Wine Show Public Tasting provides guests with the rare opportunity to stand shoulder to shoulder with growers and winemakers, taste from a range of 120 wine entries and cast their vote for the People's Choice award. Tickets will be available online from July for this event held on the last Friday of August at the Old Redemption Cellar, 65 Para Road Tanunda.

## **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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