

The Australian Women's Register

Entry type: Person
Entry ID: AWE3972

Ward, Elizabeth Jane

(1842 - 1908)

Born 27 March, 1842, Sydney New South Wales Australia

Died 29 May, 1908, Sydney New South Wales

Occupation Evangelist, Milliner, Philanthropist

Summary

Elizabeth Ward was an evangelist who preached Christian values to 'fallen women' in the back streets of Sydney in the late nineteenth century.

Details

The 'good Mrs. Ward' published her autobiography, *Out of Weakness Made Strong*, in 1903 'at the earnest request of many friends'. From somewhat inauspicious beginnings, Elizabeth Ward came to spend much of her time doing 'good works' and campaigning for womanhood suffrage. Ward's father, William Garland, was a farrier on George Street, Sydney. Her mother took Elizabeth and her three siblings to the Church of England three times on Sundays. By the age of fifteen, however, Ward was an orphan. In successive years, her father died, then her mother, then her younger brother, who drowned in a waterhole aged nine. Ward married in 1863 and bore seven sons, but in 1882 one son, Arthur, was run down by the steamer Fairlight and killed with the paddlewheel, and ten years later a second son, Frank, fell to the bottom of a lift-well and died. Remembering these events in 1903, Ward assured her readers that 'God who comforteth those that are cast down, comforted and upheld his servant, and after a while I resumed my usual Christian work'. That Christian work included district visits on Castlereagh Street – from Bathurst Street to Goulburn Street – while her husband taught at the local Sunday School.

Ward was a member of multiple committees. She was involved in the Sydney Woman's Prayer Union from 1883, petitioning Parliament with a request that theatres and concert halls be closed on Sundays (agreed), and that parliamentary sittings be opened with prayer (declined). She joined the Y.W.C.A. in Sydney from its early days, and inaugurated the Surry Hills branch in 1890, where she ran bible reading, prayers, and lectures. Ward served on the committees of the Queen's Jubilee Fund and the third Australasian Conference on Charity, as well as the Sydney Ladies' United Evangelistic Association, the Women's Federal League, and the City Mission. She worked with the City Mission's Rescue Committee 'to reach the fallen women of the city' by holding midnight meetings.

Ward was not a wealthy woman. She established her own millinery business in King Street, later moving it to Oxford Street, Sydney, and advocated giving away a tenth of one's income – moreover, giving it away cheerfully. By 1903, she was living in the Blue Mountains and had retained her posts as vice-president and State press superintendent and correspondent for the Sydney Woman's Christian Temperance Union. She was media savvy, and well known for her letters to the newspaper in support of Federation.

Published resources

Resource Section

Ward, Elizabeth Jane (1842-1918), Godden, Judith, 2006,
<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120427b.htm>

Thesis

In Her Gift: Activism and Altruism in Australian Women's Philanthropy, 1880-2005, Lemon, Barbara, 2008

Book

Out of Weakness Made Strong: Being a Record of the Life and Labours of Mrs E.J. Ward, with Photos., Ward, Elizabeth Jane, 1903

Site Exhibition

In Her Gift: Women Philanthropists in Australian History, Australian Women's Archives Project, 2009,
<http://www.womenaustralia.info/exhib/wiph/home.html>

Edited Book

Australian Dictionary of Evangelical Biography, Dickey, Brian, 1994

Resource

Trove, National Library of Australia, 2009

Author Details

Barbara Lemon

Created 9 December 2008

Last modified 20 November 2018