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Right Wor. Bro. JAMES DOUGLAS NORTHEY (1890 - 1975)

James Douglas Northey was born on 26th March 1890 at Hindmarsh, Adelaide, eldest of four sons of James Northey, stoker, and his second wife, Mary Elizabeth nee Davis.

When his father died, 12 year-old Douglas left Kyre College and worked as a printer's devil to help support his mother, brothers and half sister. In 1906 he was apprenticed to a bookbinder.

Raised in domestic piety by his mother who "lived her faith", Northey began preaching at the age of 16 and was challenged by an old minister to "take up the Lord's work."

At that time his ambition was to be a professional athlete. Stockily built and possessing extraordinary physical energy, he excelled at every sport he tried; he was regarded as a prospective international cricketer, though he was blind in one eye from a football injury.

When he completed his trade course, Northey entered Parkin Theological College, Kent Town, and studied at the University of Adelaide where he obtained his B.A. degree in 1919. He was ordained a minister in the Congregational Church on 1st December 1916.

At Riverton Methodist Church on 20th December that year he married Eva Janet Hannaford.

Parish appointments followed, at Kennington Gardens from 1916 to 1921 and at Victor Harbour from 1921 to 1929.

In 1929, Rev'd. Northey transferred to Canterbury, Melbourne, where he quickly distinguished himself. An indefatigable proponent of the ecumenical movement, by the early 1930's he was advocating organic union between the Congregational, Methodist and Presbyterian churches which was eventually achieved with his active assistance in 1977. He was chairman in 1934-35 of the Congregational Union of Victoria and president in 1936-37 of the Council of Churches of Victoria. In 1938 he helped to found the Christian Commonwealth Movement which sought to interpret "the Kingdom of God" in socio-political terms. A member for twenty-one years of the Melbourne College of Divinity, he served as its president from 1944 to 1946 and again from 1957 to 1959.

Rev'd. Northey left Canterbury in 1940 to become Principal of the Congregational College of Victoria. A major formative influence on generations of candidates preparing for ordination, he rebuked pietism and the introverted church, narrow-mindedness and inflexibility. As President of the Congregational Union of Australia and New Zealand, he travelled extensively, visiting theological schools and preaching from famous pulpits in Britain and the United States of America.

With a resonant voice which he used to effect, Northey was a popular speaker - not only from pulpits, but at retreats, conferences and secular public events. He rarely spoke without a full handwritten script before him. He co-founded the Congregational Mayflower Lodge. His rapport with men was a singular asset. A prolific writer of pamphlets and articles for religious and secular media, he was renowned for his love of the deft phrase, and for his quirky alliteration, which some considered excessive.

For one whose logic and rhetoric could border on the overpowering, he was flexible, tolerant and forgiving. One of his maxims was "guiding principles are better than prescriptive rules." In public, he was the epitome of dignity, and was often seen in a homburg, black coat and striped trousers. In private he was warm, and at times riotously comic. Students goaded him at the dining table to tell favourite jokes so as to see the tears of uncontrolled mirth before he could deliver the punchline.

"J.D." as he was widely known, retired from the college in 1960 and served as a locum pastor for eight years with the South Kilda congregation.

Right Wor. Bro. Rev'd James Douglas Northey died on 28th February 1975 at Kew and was survived by his son and two daughters.

MASONIC CAREER

James Douglas Northey was made a Mason in the Lodge of Peace No. 89, South Australian Constitution on 20 December 1921. He was passed Fellowcraft on 17 January 1922 and raised a Master Mason on 14 March 1922.

He called off from this lodge on 30 August 1922.

He affiliated with Riverside Lodge No. 437, Victorian Constitution on 5 June 1930 and was installed as Worshipful Master on 6 March 1941.

He served as Grand Chaplain of the Grand Lodge of Victoria in 1943-44.

He was appointed Grand Representative of the Grand Lodge of South Carolina in 1950.

The rank of Past Senior Grand Warden was conferred in 1956.

Rt. Wor. Bro. Rev'd. Northey received his 50 Year Membership Certificate and Jewel in 1971.

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Grand Lodges of South Australia and Victoria - Membership records.
