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NEWSLETTER

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The Society meets at the home of Mrs. J. Marshall, 2 Jellicoe St., Cheltenham on the 3rd Thursday in each month. Next meeting - Thursday 13th July.

New members welcome.

EARLY DAYS OF A CHELTENHAM CHURCH

The driver of a car along Chesterville Road through Moorabbin to Cheltenham passes many modern factories and shops and comfortable homes. Near its end at Charman Road he sees a building which is different. It looks neither old nor new yet it is both. It is the Cheltenham Church of Christ. Standing on a little hill, it is one of the most attractive buildings in Moorabbin and is the home of a church which has a long story.

It began about 1850, the year when James Keir and his wife of Crossfields, Scotland came to live in Point Nepean Road (now the Nepean Highway), South Brighton, the early name for the Moorabbin district. The area was then mostly bush; land was very cheap and the Keirs' property ran from near the present site of the Hightt Gas Works to almost as far as Bluff Road. The Keirs were Protestants and as there was no church near them they celebrated the Lord's Supper in their home. In 1856 with a Mr. J. Ingram they joined the Melbourne Church of Christ. Not far from the Keirs another settler, Thomas Walker, and his wife who had brought a pre-fabricated cottage - small and square - from Mollington, Chester, England also began, to hold religious meetings, sometimes in "Farmer Allen's barn," sometimes in Walkers home. The two groups combined and built a wooden chapel near the corner of Wickham and Chesterville Roads (the latter was named by Thomas Walker after his birthplace). The congregation became known as the Chesterville group and included, as well as the Keirs and Walkers, the families of Ruse, Sears, Fairlam, Brough, Cameron, Allen, Le Page, Meeres and Penny.

Meanwhile at the Southern end of the district two men, H. Hillier and Samuel Judd were concerned about religion and had come to believe in baptism by total immersion. Hillier as preacher and Judd as singer conducted services in the area we now call Beaumaris, using a farm cart as a pulpit. They attracted interest and made some converts among the settlers. In 1859 they began to hold ceremonies of baptism by immersion at Munday's Bay at the end of Charman Road. The candidates used a covered vehicle something like the English bathing machine to change into long white gowns (on windy days there was some embarrassment!) As they entered the water the congregation gathered on the beach chanted "Hallelujah, praise the Lord!" and then sang hymns.

Later the Beaumaris group met at the home of Stephen and Mary Charman at the corner of Balcombe and Charman Roads. It included, as well as those already mentioned, the families of Moysey, Fisher, Hayes and Bodley. By 1861 they