

REFLECTIONS

BENTLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH DIARY

Issue 4, September, 1989

In 1834 Edward Henty landed at Portland and the next year John Batman arrived at Port Phillip. In 1837 the settlement was named Melbourne. That same year the first Baptist of whom there is any record came from Tasmania. Scottish Baptists, Mr. Thomas Napier, and his wife settled in Collins Street in a wattle and daub dwelling, thatched with rushes. There they gathered a few folk for home worship. About 100 years later their grandson, Rev. Lorraine Barber, was an A.B.M.S. missionary at Faridpur, East Bengal.

In 1838, two arrivals from Sydney formed a Baptist congregation. They borrowed a tent in which they held the first public Baptist service. It was conducted by Peter Virtue, a Scottish Baptist and farmer, and James Wilson, an English Baptist and school teacher. So, true to early Baptist tradition, the early Baptist witness was by devout layman. The services continued in the tent, then in a furniture shop and later in a room in Bourke Street.

In 1841, John Lush, from England, led the Bourke Street work, and he took a prominent part in establishing the Collins Street Church in 1845. His three daughters were also influential in the early development of the Baptist denomination. It is of interest that one of those daughters was the mother of Mrs. Aeneas Gunn, authoress of "We of the Never Never".

However, it is a nephew, G.P.Lush, in whom we are interested. In 1868 he was one of the first students of Rev. Thomas Ness, who had been a tutor at the Rev. C.H.Spurgeon's Pastors' College in the United Kingdom. Rev. Ness commenced the first Baptist College work in Victoria. Mr. Lush went on to pastor the St. Kilda Church from 1871, and as Rev. G.P.Lush he came to minister to the Brighton Baptist Church.

Earlier in 1850 eighteen members withdrew from the Collins Street Church and formed the Albert Street Church. Before their first building was opened in 1853, the Brighton Church was constituted in 1851. Local Baptists had been meeting in the home of Mr. Brewer, in what was then known as East Brighton but is now Bentleigh. It may be that this was in Brewer Road. In July 1853, they opened a new Church building in Bay Street, apparently on their present site.

In 1884, during the ministry of Rev. G.P.Lush, the Brighton Church, through its missionary outreach opened a new work in Tucker Road (now), Bentleigh. Thus the Bentleigh Baptist Church was born, with very direct links with the pioneer Baptists in this State.

Issue no.5, December, 1989

An 'Australian Baptist' editorial commented "Church history may not be the most fascinating subject but even a passing knowledge would convince Baptists that nothing of real importance has been achieved until God's people draw near to Him in earnest, sincere prayer" to which the founders of our fellowship would surely say Amen and Amen. We have not been told of the prayer life but we do know that to them the Lord's Day was His day in every respect. It was devoted to His praise, glory and worship.

They walked or rode long distances, not once but twice each Sunday, and for some, a third time for afternoon Sunday School. This, without roads or street lights as we know them, and under conditions that would tempt us to stay home. They gave their time, talents, worldly goods and total commitment to the development of His Kingdom, through the Church, and were blessed accordingly.

Henry Box

He was one of a family of English gentry of Sussex, U.K., who used to cart market garden produce to London. The introduction of the Stephenson railway caused the collapse of this business and they came to Australia. Henry and his family and brothers settled near the corner of East Boundary and North Roads from where they regularly walked two or three times each Sunday to the Brighton Baptist Church. They were active workers there and in the Tucker Road Church. One brother, Francis Box, had two sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom, Edith, married Jack Clay. The Clay family had a long and active association with this Church, but for the moment it is sufficient to say that one of their daughters, Joy, married Vern Lipman who served us as a Deacon, Secretary, Treasury and Sunday School Superintendent. After Vern went to be with the Lord in 1973, Joy moved to Cheltenham from where she worships at Mentone. There her daughter Bronwyn is the wife of the minister, Rev. Ross Prout.

Other pioneers prominent in our earlier history were the Watt family. Richard and Martha Watt had a market garden surrounded roughly by Centre Road, Jasper Road, Brewer Road and where the railway is now. With their family they attended the Brighton Church, either walking or by horse-drawn jinker. One of their sons, Herbert, then about 17, with his father's horse and dray carted most of the timber and building material for the Tucker Road Church from Brighton. That building measuring 40' by 25' was erected by a Mr. Stamp of Brighton, at a cost of £150 (about \$300).

Herbert Watt later married Annie Hall at the Tucker Road Church, and they settled on a market garden at Clarinda in the Old Dandenong Road, Warrigal Road and Centre Road area. With their family, they were active in the Tucker Road Church, continuing after it moved to Vickery Street. One of the daughters, May, was for many years in Jack Clay's Sunday School class. Later she became a teacher by which time she was riding her bike between Clarinda and Vickery Street. At Youth Club meetings with Tucker Road Methodists she had met a young fellow named Hector, who made opportunities to call in on her father for a cup of tea and a talk. (Those of us who new Hector 30 or more years later always found him ready for "a cup of tea and a talk").

On one such visit he asked if May would be at Church on Sunday night and was told "Yes, at Vickery Street" and that's where Hector turned up. A lady sitting with May wondered who the strange fellow "was trying to catch". After the service May accepted Hector's offer of a ride home in the sulky - and she was caught. We are not told what happened to the push bike, but she wouldn't have to ride it to Church anymore. May Watt and Hec Marriott were married at the Vickery Street Church in 1927 and were almost to their 60th. Wedding Anniversary when Hec was called home in November 1987. Twenty years earlier there as open invitation to our fellowship to visit their home on Sunday afternoon to join their ruby wedding celebrations. We gathered there in a state of shocked disbelief as we heard that Harold Holt, the then Prime Minister of Australia, was missing, washed out to sea off Portsea.

May had become a Church member in 1926 and, now a Life Deaconess, is our longest serving member. Hec became a member and gave many years of devoted and valuable service as a Deacon and Life Deacon.

May's uncle, Don Watt, took over his father's market garden between Centre and Brewer Roads and later lived in Vickery Street, where there is now a car park behind the Gas Company. He married Chris Box, who was an aunt of Joy Lipman, and they continued as members of our Church.

From time to time we will reflect on the continuing influence of the various descendants of the Box and Watt families and the Grewar family. Others mentioned as outstanding workers at Tucker Road were Mr. Chas. Alexander and Mr. F. Shepherd, of whom we know nothing more.

Issue no.6, March 1990.

The preacher always appreciated at Bentleigh has been the one whose message was a "sane, reasoned evangelism to which the Cross was ever central as the utmost revelation of God, and all sufficient to satisfy the heart and conscience of men."

This was the standard established from the start, with those words being used to describe Rev. Samuel

Chapman, who preached the first sermon in the new Tucker Road building. After an outstanding ministry in Scotland he came to the Collins Street Church in 1877, with his wife and eight children. (A good way to build a Sunday School!) There, he had a 22 year ministry described as "in many respects the greatest that Collins Street has known." During church renovations his services were held in the Theatre Royal with congregations of over 2,000. He was said to be "Archbishop of the Baptist denomination in all but name" and when a newspaper ran a poll to find the foremost preacher in Melbourne, he was a clear first. For about 20 years he was Chairman of the Baptist Home Mission Fund, used for commencing a Baptist college, helping new churches, and caring for aged ministers. Also a member of that fund committee was Mr.H.Chambers, who was the first Sunday School Superintendent at Tucker Road.

By 1890, that new work was constituted as a separate church and in 1896 it came under the Home Mission which over the years gave leadership and financial assistance. It was not until 1959 that we became an independent church, and we could well remember those 63 years of support when we are now asked by Mission at Home to assist new and developing churches.

The first of our pastors of whom we have any record is Rev.T.A.Eunson who served from 1905 to 1909. We know nothing of that ministry but he left Bentleigh to start a Mission of Social Service in a neglected part of Melbourne. For almost 30 years he exercised a unique ministry among the poor and in 1917 he founded the Collingwood Baptist Church. It was then said, "Rev. Eunson's experience should be an incentive to our churches to undertake self-denying work in a similar district" and no doubt he was the fore-runner of Baptist Social Services.

Rev. Eunson was followed by Rev. E. Boreham and Rev. W. Fletcher, of whom we have no further information. It does appear that it was during the ministry of either of these when, in 1916, the wooden church building was moved from Tucker Road to our present site in Vickery Street. This removal was made on one of the Marriott's horse-drawn jinkers. Some of us remember seeing a photograph of this but we are unable to locate it. The building was placed north and south across the property, roughly in the position of the present Grewar hall. The area between the building and the street was vacant except for a few trees. During the second world war a slit air-raid trench was dug in this space.

Here we look back with appreciation and admiration on those who showed such devotion to their Lord, and made such sacrifices to establish this Church as a witness for Jesus Christ, and who played such a part in the establishment and growth of the Baptist Denomination in this State. What greater inspiration and incentive can we have to be more active, caring and outgoing in our Church membership, and service for Jesus Christ, than the examples of these pioneers of our fellowship.

Issue no.7, June 1990.

After the church building was moved to Vickery Street, the ministry of Rev. Fletcher continued until 1924, with a church membership of 36 and Sunday School of 60. We have been unable to trace any further mention of Rev. Fletcher after he left Bentleigh.

It was during that ministry, in 1922, that Jack and Lil Kennedy came to live at No.4 Vickery Street. As was the case with our church building, their furniture and effects came on a Marriott horse-drawn jinker. That was normal then and rates a mention here only because as the jinker approached Vickery Street, Lil Kennedy's sewing machine slid off onto the road. Sewing machines in those days were a piece of furniture much more bulky than the present day portables. Probably, it's the only time a sewing machine has been on display in the middle of Centre Road, instead of in a shop - quite a sight.

The Kennedy's brought with them their only child, Isa Mary, who spent virtually all her her life here and watched Bentleigh and it's Baptist Church grow with her. Her early relationship with our church suffered a set back when some objected to her coming to our Sunday School because of a family Roman Catholic relationship. That was not an unusual attitude in those times but, from this distance, it is hard to understand how obviously sincere and otherwise caring followers of Jesus could overlook that He said, "Suffer the little children..." How many of our present fellowship, in addition to our Pastor, would be

disqualified if that criteria was not applied. However, as we moralise we need to take care that our own personal prejudices are not a stumbling block for those to whom we should witness and reach out. Isa told us that story without any bitterness, her simple faith allowing her to understand and forgive. She turned the tables on her objectors when, in 1940, she married John Herron, a staunch Orangeman from the North of Ireland. One has to have some understanding of the sectarian conflict of those days to appreciate the irony.

According to John, he was going to have to waste money on a new suit for the wedding. Instead, he joined the 2nd. A.I.F. so that the taxpayers could provide him with a brand new uniform in which he was married. The army also paid for his new teeth on which Isa insisted before their marriage. John served with the 2nd/4th Australian General Hospital Unit in Tobruk, then had 3 years in New Guinea before his discharge.

That proved to be an old-fashioned marriage, in which two people became as one and over almost 50 years, established a loving, caring relationship. Together, they maintained the old weatherboard house in perfect condition, as a happy home. They surrounded it with a garden that was productive and attractive to all who passed by. One minister admits to having been influenced by the Herron garden when accepting a call to Bentleigh.

We remember seeing John, not many years ago, painting the galvanised roof on a hot summer day. Of course, when Isa and Celia Seawright enjoyed good health, John preferred to spend such a day with brother Seawright in the outer at the M.C.G. Those days were particularly enjoyable for them on the rare occasions that their beloved 'Poms' demonstrated that they did know something about playing cricket. In the winter, John was a one-eyed 'Demon', but he almost wavered when that club chose a former 'Tiger' as their coach. As we write, John is confident of a grand-final victory in September.

Their long association with our fellowship has been a very practical one of unending service. They were our care-takers and willingly accepted extra responsibility for security during our various building projects. No matter how inconvenient the time at which one called on them for a key, there always was a pleasant welcome, and a helping hand if needed. If anyone was doing repairs, maintenance or cleaning, they would always be there to help. They gave our property the same care and attention they gave their own. The green lawn fronting our building is a living testimony to their management, and they felt any damage to that as damage to themselves.

Isa also assisted Edith Streckfuss, and others, in the running of the pre-school kindergarten in our hall. There she demonstrated her faithfulness and reliability. She was much loved by the children and her care and compassion in those years is remembered by many who are now adults.

Isa and John were never guilty of complaining or being concerned about the talents they didn't have. They just used those they had in the way they found comfortable in their daily life, but used them with such care and devotion that God used them in His service to His glory, and to the blessing of others.

As active as they were, many who regularly worshipped with them on Sunday mornings never came to know them. They were unobtrusive and self-effacing, arriving quietly and keeping the background. To others, it became a privilege to form with them the sort of friendship that stands the test of time.

Eventually, under the pressure of the extending commercial area and the endless traffic, coupled with advancing age making it more difficult to care for No.4, they sold and moved away. Isa's health steadily deteriorated, and after little more than 24 hours in hospital, she was spared further pain and suffering when she was called to be with Jesus. Now John continues without his long-time partner and, although he no longer lives in the area, worships with us when he is able. He remains part of our fellowship, surrounded with our Christian love and prayers.

John and Isa Herron are part of the history of the Bentleigh Baptist Church and we praise the Lord for their long faithful service, and their quiet and unassuming fellowship.

Issue no.8, September 1990.

Have you ever told anyone that you were 'cumbered'? It's not a word we use everyday, yet we don't have any doubt about what we mean when we sing "cumbered with a load of care". Most of us have at some time felt cumbered - obstructed, impeded, bowed down, over-burdened. Sometimes we find so much to be done, so few helpers, and so many who don't seem to care. Perhaps our Pastor feels cumbered when, after spending so much time and effort in seeking God's will and preparation he brings his message to empty seats, or his Bible study to the same few regulars. Or, on the Sunday evening we have that much sought after visiting preacher, and he has to apologise for the small congregation. Perhaps our Sunday School Superintendent feels that way when after all his preparation there are so few at Sunday School. Perhaps a teacher also when, after giving up that extra hour on a Sunday morning, those in class seem so disinterested.

Imagine how Jack Clay, an early stalwart at Bentleigh, felt one Sunday afternoon when, as Sunday School Superintendent, he had just one person in his Bible class. Was he wasting his time? Was Sunday School teaching worthwhile? Would he be better serving the Lord doing something different elsewhere? And what about Alice Cole's feelings that afternoon, when she was on her own in that class? The 15 year old daughter of a Moorabbin Council foreman, they had moved to a house in Vickery Street, since pulled down to make way for the supermarket. Her non-Christian, but caring, parents insisted on their children attending Sunday School, and here she was on her own because other kids' parents didn't seem to care.

Neither Jack Clay nor Alice Cole could have anticipated how his talk on the lesson would that day be used by the Holy Spirit to bring her to the Lord. Neither of them could have the least idea that for the next 60 years and more the Lord would continue to use what flowed from what happened that afternoon.

Those who remember saintly Annie Grewar can't imagine her being cumbered about anything. Yet, perhaps she was when she took a small group to a Christian Endeavour rally. There she talked to a young fellow about her efforts, with a few of her C.E. group, to hold open-air meetings on late shopping Friday nights. (Incidentally, they used the small portable organ still in the Grewar Hall). When she invited him to join with them, she could have had no idea how the Lord was using her toward the marriage He had ordained. Young Ern Faulkner joined the open-air group, and later was baptized at Bentleigh. Some years later, before he left for missionary work in the Kimberley in Western Australia, he and Alice Cole were engaged.

Meantime, a Mr. Tom Graham from Spring Street Mission was a regular preacher at Bentleigh. Alice Cole was then a Sunday School teacher and, after viewing some of his slides on work amongst aborigines, she felt a call to that task. She went to M.B.I. and the Lord later confirmed that call through Isaiah 52:11-12. Alice followed Ern to the mission field, arriving on her 25th. birthday. They were married on 31st. October 1936. Ern became a member of this church when they were home on furlough in 1939, and they both remained on our membership roll until recently. Some of us remember warmly welcoming them during their periodic furlough visits to Bentleigh. Often, as well as their family, they had with them aboriginal children. They continued on various mission fields until age brought their retirement. They now live in Toowoomba, Queensland, their 1988 photo is on our missionary board.

Ern and Alice can have no idea how many folk whom they have influenced are continuing to spread the good news of Jesus Christ. However, they can have no doubt that there are many and that, wherever they are, the Lord continues to use and bless them. An example is one of their sons, Rev. Peter Faulkner who, with his wife Val, for the past decade has been Church-planting and building in the Pilbara mining area of Western Australia. He is the part-time pastor of Tom Price and Paraburdoo Baptist Churches, and works as a Safety Officer for the Mining Company. Val has an empathy with children, and with other ladies, has the primary schools in both towns covered with R.I. classes. It can be no easy task ministering in widely separated isolated areas, with inadequate finance, and a floating population with many staying for only six months to two years. Who knows how where someone they now influence will be used in years to come.

These mentioned here did not claim any special ability but they were set apart because of their total commitment to the Lord, and their simple faith in His power and His grace. They should be an example

and encouragement to us, no matter how ordinary and ineffective we see ourselves. Like them, we have no way of knowing how and where the Lord will use the least of our efforts, even our word of support, our presence and our prayers.

In a recent 'New Life' editorial, Bob Thomas says,

"Francis Schaeffer reminded us in a famous sermon that there are 'No Little People, No Little Places' - that every person who does the Lord's work in every place is as important as everyone who does the Lord's work everywhere else, and whether we are small or great, up-stage or down-stage, it is only required of us that we be found faithful.

And one more thing. Have we ever been guilty of thinking that we are just too ordinary, too insufficiently gifted to be useful in the service of the Lord? Our God is a specialist in making His strength perfect in our weakness, and if we all surrendered ourselves wholly to Him, we would see wonders of grace on every side."

May it be so at Bentleigh.

Issue no.9, December 1990.

A notice has appeared on the interior walls - "Please meditate silently inside the sanctuary". We expect that is a call to all who enter the sanctuary. That is an interesting choice of word. My dictionary describes 'sanctuary' as "a consecrated place, a refuge". My Bible dictionary says, in part - "In the New Testament the word is used only in the epistle to the Hebrews (8:2, 9:1,2, 13:11), where the author makes clear that the earthly sanctuary was only a type of the true sanctuary which is in heaven, of which Christ is the High Priest, and in which He offers Himself as a sacrifice (Heb.10:1-18)

That notice has prompted 'Reflections' to turn from mundane and material things to our 'consecrated place' - that which we fondly but incorrectly refer to as our church. We continue to use the word 'church' loosely herein. Research shows that our present church, and related buildings, did not come easily to those who went before, and who, under God, provided them for us. Dedication, determination, vision and self-denial were required of them. Perhaps, as we reflect on that history we will become more appreciative, careful and reverent, and more ready to "meditate silently inside the sanctuary".

We already have recorded that our first church was a 40' by 25' wooden building erected at a cost of £150 in Tucker Road back in 1884. In 1916 it was moved to Vickery Street on a horse-drawn jinker, but we don't know how or why the site was available. It was extended in 1924 but no details are given. A new vestry was added in 1934 at a cost of about £30. On the door was a brass plate:

*To the glory of God
and in loving memory of
Mabel Cross
wife of Rev. W. Cross
called to higher service Dec.23, 1933
This room is erected by her friends
as a memorial to the courage and
devotion of a faithful servant of God.
1 Corinthians 13:13*

Rev. Cross was pastor from 1932 to 1935. That brass plate is now on the inside of the door to the Pastor's Vestry.

The building was placed north and south across the block, roughly in the same position as our present Grewar Hall, but occupying a much small area. In those years the vacant land from the church to the street was used to 'park' the horses and horse-drawn vehicles. During the war, air-raid trenches were dug there and part of the building was used by A.R.P. wardens. That was the church until the present one was opened in 1958. We must recognise and praise the foresight of those making the decisions in 1916 that 40 years later allowed the new church to be built on vacant land.

The first indication of a move toward that new church appears in the minutes of a members' meeting in 1931. There, Miss Annie Grewar spoke of the 'desirability of establishing a building fund'. That was carried by the 9 members present. It was appropriate that the initiative should come from Annie Grewar, because the money bequeathed to us from the Grewar estate, when Jean and then Annie went to be with the Lord in 1969, enabled the debt free development of our church property, to the present standard. When Annie first raised it, such development must have appeared remote, and so it proved. There was an economic depression and times were hard. The few members had little spare cash to fund such a long range project. Indeed they were having problems meeting the ordinary church financial requirements.

They already were considering and later had to accept a joint pastorate with Ormond, because they could no longer meet a full stipend. Receipts for that quarter had been £30 against an expenditure of £39, with over £4 still owing to Rev. Cross. The joint annual stipend was provided by Ormond £149/10/-, Bentleigh £104 and the Baptist Home Mission £32/10/-.

At the same time they sought to improve their funding by introducing an envelope system. The 'Duplex' system was chosen because the envelopes came free from the Union, whereas other envelopes cost 7/6d. per thousand. It was said that if 40 members each gave 1/6d. a week it would local requirements. (Our treasurer want a lot more than that from a lot more members). Later there was consternation when it was found that the money from one part of the Duplex envelope went direct to the Union. Some months later the treasurer complained that members were tardy in applying for envelopes, and it was decided that they would be issued to each member.

There are other signs of the financial battles of the time. When the Union appealed for funds toward the employment a State Evangelist, Bentleigh resolved to give £2 for each of the next 3 years - not much by our standards, but a lot when you don't have 2. A new became necessary and this was financed by a donated £5 deposit, with repayments of 5/- per week, to which some members promised to contribute.

Even in the mist of this fight for financial survival they continued their support for missions and remembered those less fortunate than themselves. At a members' meeting in April 1932 they established the first Communion Fund. That proposal came from Mrs. Cross "to relieve distress in and around our own district, by the Pastor". After it was explained how such a fund would operate the treasurer asked if it was to be used for "member's relief, or general relief". The Pastor explained that it would "Jerusalem first", but at his discretion. Thus the Communion Fund was born, and an offering for that purpose was taken at each Communion service. Down the years successive Pastors have had the fund available to relieve distress and to meet emergencies, both within the fellowship and beyond.

A few years ago the practice of taking up the offering was discontinued and a much-ignored retiring offering was substituted. Later, some folk insisted on the name being changed to 'Fund for the Needy'. This resulted in the box so marked being placed on the literature table for contributions to the fund. This too is often overlooked. I doubt if the changes have been for the better. With all the present indications of a recession, and rising unemployment, there may soon be increased demands on this fund.

In our next edition, we will return to the trauma of establishing a building fund during a depression, and trace the steps toward building a new church. Perhaps we will also explain how we came to be the first church in Melbourne appearing live on t.v. Until then, wherever you may be seated in church, reflect on the debt we owe those who provided our 'earthly sanctuary' where we can medicate silently on 'our true sanctuary which is in heaven, of which Christ is the High Priest.

Issue no.10, March 199.

It was in 1931, on the motion of Annie Grewar, that it was agreed to establish a New Church Fund. There was a long, uphill fight with many problems and difficulties to overcome before a new Church was opened over 25 years later. To raise the finance during depression years was a real task for 30 odd members, but in spite of the obstacles they laboured on in faith. The leaders accepted the authority of the members, regularly reporting and discussing every detail. Together they accepted the authority of the Lord,

consistently gathering in prayer, seeking His guidance, and trusting in His strength.

There was little progress before 1936, when they resolved to raise £500 by donations, and a further £500 by interest free loan from the Home Mission. However, it took a further 5 years before they raised £200. Even this was a great effort because the average weekly offering was only on £1/8/9.

They then faced a major problem as it became essential to provide extra room for the Sunday School. Classes were then being held, not only in the Church proper, but also in the one vestry and the kitchen. A kinder hall fund was started and by contrast it soon reached £100, "with a substantial donation from Mr. Wadley, the Church Secretary." By October, 1941, they had a quote of £219 for a 30' x 20' wooden building. This was refused as too costly, and Mr. Wellum, a Deacon, offered to do the construction. Mr. Hinton, the Pastor, volunteered to act as builder's labourer, during time he would normally spend in visitation. With respect, we think we get better value out of our Pastor on visitation than he would give as a builder's labourer. Both offers were accepted and working bees gave some assistance.

Additional finance was provided by a loan from the New Church Fund "at bank interest". Such good progress was made that the work was completed within 2 months. An opening service was conducted by Rev. G.P.Rees, Baptist Union Secretary, on Saturday, 6th. December. Their praise for this achievement, and their attitude of thankfulness, shine through in the following verses of a hymn they sang that day.

*Light up this house with glory, Lord;
Enter, and claim thine own;
Receive the homage of our souls,
Erect Thy temple-throne.*

*Light up this house with glory, Lord,
The glory of that love
Which forms and saves a Church below,
And makes a Heaven above.
Amen*

The kinder hall was of great benefit and soon brought an expansion of church activities. The Day Kinder grew, and within weeks Church Boy Scout and Girl Guide groups were formed. These are separate stories to be developed later. The hall also provided a new source of income, being let to a variety of organisations. At varying times these included: Day Kinder 25/- a week, Chess club 10/-, Oddfellows 10/-, Masonic Club 10/-, Ancient Order of Foresters 10/-.

The New Church Fund then stood at £216. For some time it increased only by shillings, and now and then by pounds. In September 1942 the Deacons were asked to introduce a scheme to augment the Fund, but nothing came of it, and it took until November 1943 to reach £300. It rose to £500 as the war ended mid.1945, and they then hoped to commence building when the acute housing shortage eased. From then it grew more rapidly and within another 3 years reached £1,000.

In October 1949, two new schemes were introduced. Again at the instigation of Annie Grewar, a cardboard money box was issued to each family to save for the fund. Also, the Ladies' meeting gave out envelopes to members and adherents into which each was asked to place one half-penny for each year of their lives - surely, discrimination against we oldies and we wonder if a lady had to reveal how many half-pennies she contributed. The fund having passed the £1,000, that amount was loaned to the Home Mission, at 3% interest, instead of the 2% paid by the bank.

Again, a call was made for ideas to increase the fund but "none were forthcoming, except from Mr. Simpson who urged a drive for converts". In February 1951, the fund reached £1,300 and it was then decided to raise sufficient money by direct giving to commence building by 1956. That 5 year period was not easy but building did commence in 1957.

A major hurdle for them was that their two student pastors were about to move on, and the Home Mission

stressed that they had to provide a manse before they could expect to attract a full-time pastor. They accepted this, but after preliminary enquiries their response was that prices being charged for land and houses were exorbitant. The manse idea was put on the back burner while members were asked to be alert for any suitable property.

However, they pressed on in faith and called the Rev. Ken Wade as pastor, who commenced his ministry in August 1952. Being single, he could be provided with local lodgings, but the necessity for a manse surfaced a couple of years later with his approaching marriage as they desired him to continue as pastor. The Home Mission then offered to purchase a suitable manse, and consolidate repayments with the Pastor's salary, toward which it would make an allowance until the church was self-supporting. The church accepted this and undertook to find the extra £5 per week needed. Then, as He always has done when we have put our trust in Him to meet a need, the Lord provided the complete answer - the Church Secretary announced that he and Mrs. Wadley were leaving Bentleigh to take a unit at Strathalan. Probably they were the first of our fellowship to reside at a Baptist Social Services home. They offered their Bent Street, brick house, for sale. This was purchased in December 1954, by the Home Mission for £3,500 and Mr. and Mrs. Ken Wade moved in after their honeymoon.

The task of planning and financing the new Church remained, but they were encouraged by the continuing evidence that God was with them, and had purpose for them in Bentleigh. With the Psalmist they could say "No wonder we are happy in the Lord! For we are trusting Him. We trust His holy Name." (Ps.33:21)

Issue no.11, June 1991

The new manse having been purchased and occupied by the Pastor and his wife in December 1954, it was not back to promoting the New Church Fund which had reached £3,000. Substantial contributions had come from annual "Sale of Gifts" organised by the ladies who held a frequent work night to prepare items for the stalls. Mr. Hec Marriott, a market gardener, for many years had brought a load of vegetables for the annual Harvest Festival. He repeated this for the Sale of Gifts with vegetables the like of which are only seen on seed packets. These attracted outsiders who also patronised the many other stalls.

About this time, Mr. Powell Bell had taken over from Mr. Vern Lipman as treasurer. The church had been well served in this position by men of great dedication, but as a senior bank officer Powell brought a new expertise. This in turn generated increased confidence and, in August 1953, three possible church designs had been obtained for display.

Soon there was a basic ground plan to be put before the Home Mission and it was requested that their Honorary Architect, Mr. Lawrence Warner, prepare detailed plans. Mr. Warner was a Baptist legend in his own time. He was only 16 years of age when he became a church organist. When he was 21 he designed the Ivanhoe Baptist Church, where he also built the organ and became organist. For 25 years he was organist at Collins Street Baptist, followed by 22 years at Scotts Church. For many years he was musical director and organist for Carols by Candlelight and conducted many Melbourne choirs. He planned the Karana, Strathalan and Judge Book Homes and Bentleigh is only one of 50 churches he had a part in designing. On 10 February 1960 he gave an organ recital in our church, when our present Lipp Electric Organ was presented and dedicated. At the age of 86 he went to be the Lord on 28 April 1990.

Early in 1955 the plans were received from Mr. Warner and were considered in great detail until June when they were approved, subject to some suggested variations. At a special meeting in November, members were given a statement of the financial requirements if building was to proceed. They then decided by ballot that work should commence immediately provided the Home Mission could arrange a loan. That meeting then "continued as a prayer meeting to ask God's guidance on all matters pertaining to the new church".

There was a prompt response from the Home Mission, that funds were not then available, that the building should be modified in size, and that more money should be raised. Mr. Warner was then asked to produce

new plans decreasing the size and to obtain quotes to ascertain if the saving would be worthwhile. That modification resulted in the present recess in the south wall that provides the outside space between the church entrance and the vestry door, and a similar reduction on the north side. Those, and other changes, resulted in a saving of £1,600.

Through 1956 there were numerous special meetings, and much prayer and detailed discussions, while the fund continued to grow. Although average weekly offerings were only £16, the fund reached £4,000 late that year. In April a new method of building with "Econo-Steel" was being investigated in the hope of a considerable saving. Nothing came of this economy for which we can be thankful. During this time Rev. Wade accepted another call, and was replaced by Rev. L. Winckel, previously a police officer. Early in 1957 plans were finally agreed and the necessary approvals obtained from the various authorities. Tenders were called and a building contract was let to Mr. J.L.Richards.

At that time "Mr. Wellum queried the cost of the wash basin in the Pastor's vestry". Whatever the cost, it was saved because the wash basin never appeared - we must ask the pastor if he misses it. Work proceeded immediately and by 23 April a meeting decided on the wording of the foundation stone to be laid on 1st. June 1957. The wording includes Eph.2:20 which reads, "You are built upon the foundation laid by the apostles and prophets, and Christ Jesus himself is the foundation-stone". That stone was donated by William Train & Coy (Mr. Kerr, manager). This firm still appears in the phone book as Marble & Stone Merchants, Footscray West.

The stone was laid by Rev.J.G.Manning, then Superintendent, Victorian Baptist Home Mission, who was a good friend to Bentleigh. It was this Jack Manning who, when chairman at one of members' meetings, read from the Minutes of the previous meeting "Youth Club - Spencer Smith and Mary Neil are still carrying on...."(which provoked some unseemly mirth) until he turned the page and continued "...carrying on the leadership of the Youth Club."

Presiding that afternoon was Mr.F.H.Rollason, then Vice-President of the Baptist Union. Our late brother Bert Streckfuss welcomed the visitors and greetings were brought from various local churches. Lawrence Warner and Mr. J.L.Richards were introduced.

No doubt there was sincere thanks to the Lord, and great satisfaction, at seeing these tangible results of about 25 years of praying, planning and fund raising, but there was still much to achieve. The window designs to be chosen, the furniture to be selected and purchased, more - much more - money to be raised, and unforeseen difficulties to be met.

However, they pressed on with their God given task of providing a sanctuary where he would be worshipped, where Jesus Christ could be found by all who entered, and from where there would be an outreach and witness for Him - a task they handed to us. May we be equal to it.

Issue no.12, September 1991.

We are indebted to "New Life" for a photocopy of this item they published on 30th. May 1957:

The laying of the foundation stone of the new church building of the BENTLEIGH BAPTIST CHURCH will take place on Saturday, June 1, at 3 p.m. The ceremony will be performed by Rev. J. G.Manning, superintendent of the Victorian Baptist Home Mission. The minister of the church is the Rev. L.R.Winckel.

We now go to the excitement of having our service televised. The new and existing buildings were to have a common wall, so the west wall of the then church was demolished. Next Sunday morning we sat wide open to the elements so we came at night in overcoats and scarves, with rugs and hot-water bottles. We then found a Channel 9 cameraman busy with wires, lights etc.. He kept us outside so that he could film our 'arrival' with protection against the elements, and organised an entrance like a Myer's sale. Young folk rushed through the church and back, to filmed arriving again and again, giving the impression of a never-ending congregation. During the service the camera and floodlight roamed everywhere, distracting us from worship, while the message was directed at the cameraman who perhaps for the first time, surely heard the gospel.

The service over, we were told we would be on the T.V. news that night. Hec & May Marriott were among the few with T.V. and most accepted the invitation to invade their lounge. Unexpected as it was, May served supper to all, reminding us of Elijah and the widow with a handful of meal (1 Kings 17). There was fellowship until the news came - and went - without a glimpse of us! Consternation - until we knew we were on at 10.30 next night.

We resolved that the Lord had provided this opportunity to reach out to the community, and everyone we met on Monday knew our church service was to be on T.V. that night. Of course, we all returned, but this time with a plate. We watched "In Melbourne Tonight" with Graham Kennedy and Co. Some became instant Kennedy fans, while others rejected him for life. Finally, the news and rapt attention. Suddenly we were on - with shouts of 'there I am', 'look at me', 'that's your third time arriving', etc. Then we saw some of the service, and prayed the message would reach some viewers. All too soon it was over but the excitement lingered. It is history that although many of were star material not one received an offer from Channel 9. By next Sunday the new wall was up and we returned to reverent worship, much more in character for Bentleigh Baptists.

Construction progressed and attention now focused on the furnishings. To ensure uniformity of design this was placed in the hands of the architect. The pulpit, bearing the inscription "We would see Jesus" was given by the Streckfuss family as a memorial to Bert's father, a past Secretary and Treasurer. There was some contention about where it was to be but this was settled in favour of its present position, according to the original plan. Some still would prefer it elsewhere.

Annie & Jean Grewar, who had laboured so long for the new building, gave the Communion table. The Pastor's Communion chair was given by Florrie Sach and family. As a 90+ resident of "Karana" she retains a lively interest in Bentleigh. The other chairs were given by Mr. & Mrs. Wadley who had sold their Bent Street house to be the manse. Some objected that the designs on the pulpit and communion furniture were contrary to Baptist tradition, but the architect's view prevailed.

The pulpit Bible was given by Mrs. Reid, mother of Lesley, now Mrs. John Bell. The Communion cloth, still in use, was given by Mrs. McMillan, a member with a drapery store in McKinnon Road. There was to be a single vase of flowers and the vase was given by Edith Streckfuss. The clock, strategically placed where it can be seen by the Pastor and not the congregation, was given by the Intermediate Christian Endeavourers. They were then led by an M.B.I. student, Fred Nile. Now he is Rev. Fred Nile, M.L.C., leader of 'Call to Australia'. He and his wife Elaine hold the balance of power in the N.S.W. Upper House. According to 'New Life' (27 June 1991) they say "We prefer to call it the balance of prayer and responsibility as we prayerfully consider all legislation by two guiding principles: 1) How does it measure up to the Word of God? and 2) How does it affect the traditional family?" How good it would be to see all legislation put to this test.

We wonder how many others there are who gained experience serving the Lord at Bentleigh who are continuing to reach out to the community in His Name. We know of many, but believe there are many more in a variety of areas. More importantly, how many who are now spending their formative years here will continue in Christian service. This many well depend on the training, example and encouragement, they receive from us. Let us ensure that our young people develop a Christian life based firmly on the true Word of God, and that the preaching, teaching, prayer and fellowship that surrounds them here, prepares them for service and witness wherever the Holy Spirit leads them.

Issue no.13, December 1991.

In the last issue we listed some of the furnishing gifts. The late Mr. E.J.Streckfuss Snr. bequeathed £100 to the Building fund. At the family request this went to the purchase of the pulpit which, with the Communion setting, cost £297. The pulpit Bible cost £9. As well as giving the Pastor's Communion chair, the Sach family gave the silver Communion plates. In addition to giving the Communion table, the Grewar sisters also contributed to the purchase of 28 pews, which cost £764. Mrs. Simpson also contributed. Some old pews were re-furbished to match. To replace them, 80 steel-framed chairs were purchased for

£220, i.e. 55/- each. They have given good service, but as we now move them from room to room they seem heavier than in 1957. (Are there still 80?) For some years Mr. & Mrs. Wellum put aside £1 a week from their pension to provide most of the £195 to purchase the carpet, the balance being given by the B.W.F. The carpet also gave good service for 33 years until replaced last April.

Some of the stained glass windows were gifts, and are so marked with brass plates. On the pulpit side, one is in memory of Mrs. Mary Main, and one in memory of William John Evans - killed in action, 1945. Another was given by Mr. & Mrs. J. Cooke. On the organ side, there are windows in memory of Samuel George Cahill - passed away 10.5.57, and Mrs. Kate Smith - died 1945 aged 28, sister of Mrs. Nancy Freeman. Another is in memory of Mrs. L.B. Streckfuss, President Women's Association and Bible Class leader - died 5 February 1963, aged 88. Back in 1948, a cheque for £300 was received from the estate of Mrs. Wanless (previously Mrs. Redmore). Of this, £200 was for the building fund, and £100 for a stained glass window. The centre window facing Vickery Street is in memory of Mr. & Mrs. A.B. Redmore. Hec and May Marriott gave the three windows over the baptistry. The total cost of the windows was £609 and it was decided that they could not be insured, or covered with screens because of the excessive cost. An earlier pastor, Rev. Phil Audemard, gave an interesting series of children's talks on the messages in the various designs.

Electric heating was rejected as too expensive and the present two gas heaters were installed for £82. The four electric wall heaters came much later, as did the seat cushions and fans.

A working bee, with some professional advice, laid the concrete drive-in at a cost of £187, and removed the tree that appears in the artist's sketch.

The total cost of the building was about £10,500 and the furnishings about £2,000, with an existing Manse debt of about £3,000. These were financed by a building fund of £5,700, loans from members of £3,800 and a mortgage of £6,000. They achieved this with a membership of 50, an average weekly offering of £36, and a total weekly income of £51. This reveals their devotion, determination and firm faith in Him to whom the building was to be dedicated. Surely as that day approached they anticipated enjoying the results of their years of planning and working.

However, as so often occurs when God's people are on the crest of a wave, and perhaps glorying in their own efforts, they are most vulnerable to the wiles of Satan. Without warning, a rift developed between the Minister and the Deacons which proved irreconcilable. A small group moved to replace the Deacons but were soundly rebuffed by the majority. It was in this atmosphere that the official opening was celebrated. Shortly afterwards, the Home Mission Department wisely arranged the movement of Rev. Winckel to another church. He was replaced by Rev. Phil Audemard, who was called to the pastorate while still on his migrant voyage from London. He commenced his ministry on 20th. July, 1958, and proved to have such a humble Christian personality that the fellowship soon warmed to him. In the goodness of God, the threatened split was healed, few left the church, and the work was strengthened rather than weakened.

Another problem was that, true to form, a fortnight before the opening day the Health Department produced a list of things to be done before occupancy would be permitted. All were to do with the old building and eventually approval was given on a promise that the work would be done.

An interesting piece of trivia is that two sisters were the last and first married in the respective buildings. Margaret Hawkins and Elton Ord were married in the old church on 13th. July 1957, and the next wedding was when her sister Sheila married Ron Pith in the new church in August, 1958.

The final service in the old building was conducted by a past minister, Rev. Ken Wade, at 11.00 a.m. on Sunday 13th. April, 1958. The official opening was at 3.00 p.m. that day, followed by a dedication service. Both buildings were crowded with many standing outside. The service was relayed over a P.A. system loaned by the Salvation Army. The scripture was read by Rev. Winckel, Mr. Streckfuss welcomed visitors, and Mr. Bell gave a financial statement, followed by a Thank Offering. The hymns sung were "O Thou whose hand has brought us, unto this joyful day" (No. 278) and "Be with us gracious Lord today, this house we dedicate to Thee" (No. 266). The address was given by Mr. F.H. Rollason, Baptist Union President.

As we have come to the opening of the building we have concentrated on the material and financial. However, they built this sanctuary that God may dwell among them (Ex.25:8). As the "Diary" regularly explains, "Our Church is not the building made of wood and stone, our Church is God building a people for His own."

"That they may walk in my statutes and keep mine ordinances, and do them, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Ez.11:20) This has been so from the beginning, with Jesus the foundations and total purpose. He is the Light at the centre of our worship, and His gospel has been faithfully preached from our pulpit. Many have found Christ here, and witness for Him, both at Bentleigh and beyond. We who continue to benefit from God's provision of this lovely place of worship have a responsibility to Him to maintain this tradition, to pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to lead sinners to salvation, and to work under His guidance to that end.

(N.B. the hymn numbers 278 and 266 are from the Baptist Hymn Book, published 1962)

Issue No. 14, March 1992.

"It's for Annie" said the little girl as she proudly showed off her pretty new dress. "Who is Annie?" was the query. "Don'tcha know Annie, wots at Sunday School?" came the retort. The Sunday School Anniversary was 'Annie', and there were the new dress, with many other new ones, was to be worn for the first time. In the 1930s clothes were treated differently than today. Sunday best was kept for church, and other special occasions, and on returning home they were put away until next Sunday. This led to girls and their mums showing off a new outfit on a special day. The anniversary was such a day because children of non Roman Catholic or Jewish families invariably attended Sunday School, well into their teens. During the anniversary they were on show, and in class items which brought their families, other relatives and friends to the services. Many of the visitors otherwise came only for Christmas, Easter and Mother's Day.

For weeks they learned special songs with a final practice on the Friday night. For many years the late Bert Streckfuss was our conductor, sometimes also being organist. Over a long period he was replaced a couple of times by a visiting conductor but each time for only one year. Among those who followed him in that role were Mrs. Pat Wallace, and later Margaret Bell (now Phillips) - equal opportunity in action. Each teacher was responsible for a class item, as were the kindergarten and primary leaders. Not all items were of the highest standard but all were well received, particularly the tiny tots who were even applauded - otherwise then unheard of in our church.

Each October there were three services on each of two Sundays, with an intervening concert on Tuesday night. This continued until late in the 1960s when the second Sunday was dropped. At the morning and afternoon services there were special speakers, usually with a gift of talking to children. Often they produced a variety of objects, or elaborate equipment to illustrate a Bible story. In the afternoon, certificates were presented to those successful at earlier Scripture exams, and small gifts were given to the very young. The evening service was taken by young people with an address by the Pastor or Youth leader. Except for one hymn at each service all the singing and items were by the Sunday School. Most of the concert entertainment was home grown with occasional guest artists. Reports of the year's activities in each department were given, with an inspirational talk by the Pastor.

Much preparation was required by the Superintendent and a small band of dedicated teachers. Over one period they held a pre-school prayer meeting at 9.00 a.m. each Sunday, and during another era there was a half hour of prayer prior to a monthly business meeting. They publicised the anniversary with house to house visitation; letterboxing of leaflets, with some in shop windows; and notices in the Baptist Witness, New Life, and the Bentleigh Standard. In the old church building, the pulpit had to be moved to the side, forms moved on to the platform and temporary staging erected over the baptistry high up the rear wall. There was much rivalry among the older scholars for the highest seats.

At times they departed from the traditional format. In 1963, the evening service was replaced by the children presenting the play "The King's Treasure House". It was reported as very successful, but appears to have been a one off event. In 1966 a Fancy Dress parade was held in conjunction with the concert, to attract more visitors. Small

prizes were given for the best fancy dresses, chosen by acclamation, and for the most original, judged by Mr. & Mrs. Audemard. It had the desired result because subsequently it was decided that the concert and fancy dress would be held separately in future to avoid overcrowding.

Usually the Sunday School prizes were presented during the Anniversary. In 1963, instead of the Superintendent selecting the prizes, each teacher was responsible for their class. Books were to a value of 7/6 each for second, and 12/6 for first prize.

In 1968 a points system for prizes was introduced with - 25 for sitting for the scripture exam, 75 for full attendance, 50 for 2/3, and 25 for 1/3, and - not surprisingly - nil points for no attendance. All in the lower school received a prize. Afterwards it was agreed that the singing, items and presentation had been excellent and the same procedure would continue. Next year 13 sat for the scripture exam and passed, eight with honours, and Sandra Docker (now Taylor) came 2nd. in the State.

A further change came in 1970 when the concert was replaced by a Saturday games and supper evening. The Sunday School took the morning services, demonstrating their procedures with the emphasis on parents seeing their children in class. In 1971 the anniversary was limited to one morning service at which the children took part in singing, verse speaking and Bible reading. The same format was followed the next year but this was the beginning of the end. No later references to these anniversaries have been found although it is believed that they continued in some form until about 1975.

The church then lost that point of contact with outside folk. Children and their parents are still there, and in need of the unchanging gospel. Let us be much in prayer and totally supportive of our leaders as, under God's leading, they foster a vision for this church.

Issue No.15, June 1992.

As we have seen the Sunday School Anniversary was a time for relatives and friends. By contrast, the Church Anniversary was a time for the church family, past and present, to join in praise and thanksgiving. An anniversary is to commemorate the particular date of a past event but here the date of celebration has been fixed for convenience. Until 1937 it was in July and then, to avoid the winter, it went to October. It varied frequently until 1955 when the financial year was fixed as ending on 31st. July, to coincide with the Baptist Union. Since then it has been held each August.

Until 1949 they argued about the number of years being celebrated. They then accepted what appears in the Baptist Union publication "Our First Century - 1838-1938". This has us born on 19th. February 1884, the date the Brighton Church commenced a new work in Tucker Road, which meant we were 66 years on that date in 1950. That count still prevails and resulted in our 1984 Centenary Celebrations. Now (thanks to Mark Hubbard) we have found an earlier background in a Brighton Church publication "Links with the Past". This records an influential Baptist activity here in the 1860s.

The Brighton Church was then holding its weekly service on Sunday afternoons, and its business meetings on the Monday evening nearest the full moon. This was to help the widely scattered congregation, including a large Benteigh group, to cope with travelling over unlit unmade roads. By 1869 that group met locally in various homes particularly during the heat of summer and the depth of winter. By 1876 they regularly worshipped separately, but remained under the pastoral care of the Brighton minister, who then had the travel problems.

Rev.G.P.Lush came to Brighton in 1882 and as well of conducting services allotted one day each week for visitation in Benteigh. For this he was provided with a 'special conveyance'. The new Tucker Road church continued with Brighton until the final separation came in 1890. In 1916 they moved the wooden church building by horse-drawn dray to Vickery Street. Because of this historical background, in addition to our Anniversary, we observe 19th. February as Commemoration Day.

From time to time the anniversary has been joined with a "Back to Benteigh". One was held in 1937 when

Jean and Annie Grewar were 'appointed to decorate the church, with power to add'. It doesn't say if it was power to add to the decorations, the church, or to Jean and Annie (?). There was another successful one in 1943, despite wartime restrictions. The special preacher that day was Rev. Collard who was one of those instrumental in the foundation of Kilvington. They continued periodically, the most recent being during our Centenary year.

Always a part of the anniversary has been the Thank Offering. At first it was "Vestry Day", when the Pastor was in his vestry to receive gifts and give thanks and praise with the givers. Until the church became debt free, this offering went to the building fund. Now, members determine annually that it goes to a church requirement or outreach, or some special project.

Traditionally, the Sunday morning preacher was the then President of the Baptist Union. That office changes yearly between an ordained and a lay man, so down the years we were served by a wide cross-section of prominent Baptists. At night there was a gospel service, mainly involving young people.

There always was an anniversary choir, one being formed specially for the day when necessary. This was supplemented by musical items, often by visitors. Now, here is a surprise - we would have thought that in 1952 the only 'musical item' given by Mr. & Mrs. Bernie Thomas would have been in a creche. But here it is clearly reported that in 1952 "Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Thomas gave vocal solos and a duet which were much appreciated." Not only so, but they were still contributing in 1957. There's an idea for our next Anniversary.

In the 1930s there also was a mid-week "Tea Meeting" when those returning from work when direct to the church for a meal prepared by the ladies. Then followed an 'Inspirational Rally', with reports of the activities and objectives of the fellowship with a pastoral address. Later it became a Saturday tea, with the Rally continuing, but at times replaced by a concert. More recently it has developed into a social evening, but always concluding with family worship around God's Word.

Indeed this was their true strength. Through our Reflections we have tried to show that they did not rely on themselves or human nature but on what they firmly accepted as the inerrant Word of God. They studied the Scriptures as the supreme authority and sought to apply them to their individual and collective lives.

This came through in the planning, preparation and enthusiastic involvement that were central to their celebrations. Whilst remembering the past they concentrated on the kind providence of God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ, and their future outreach for Him.

A demonstration of this is found in the following extract from the 1968 report of the late Vern Lipman, the then Secretary: -

"Acknowledgement has made in this report of the work of many. There are many others who in many various ways contributed to the work and worship of this church - our organists Mrs. Bell, Miss Bell and Mrs. Lamprell - our caretakers Mr. & Mrs. Herron, - the ladies who regularly provide the lovely floral decorations in the church - the stewards - the deacons and our beloved treasurer Mr. Bell. The members and adherents by their attendance at the worship services, prayer meetings and various social activities have made it possible to continue the witness of the Baptist faith and order in this district and, by their faithful stewardship, to make it possible to enable others further afield to hear the wonderful message of the saving grace of God through Jesus Christ. So, with humble thanks to our Lord for His grace and guidance and strength over the past year and our prayers for His blessing in the year ahead, we present this report."

To which we say AMEN and AMEN.

Issue No.16, September, 1992.

In the previous issue "Focus" gave the up-to-date story of the work, witness and fellowship of the Bentleigh Baptist Women's Fellowship (B.W.F.). "Reflections" now explores the origins and growth of the B.W.F. and the influence of women in and through our denomination and church.

Sir Winston Churchill said 'the further back you look the further forward you are likely to see', so we go back to 1867 when the seeds were sown which eventually resulted in the birth of the B.W.F. In that year a "Ladies Association for the support of Zenna and Bible Women in India" was formed in London, as an auxiliary of the Baptist Missionary Society. This opened a new field of service for women missionaries in Delhi and Calcutta, where the 'Zenna' is the women's quarters of a Hindu home. By 1872 Mrs. James Martin, wife of the Collins Street Baptist minister, formed the Victoria Baptist Zenna Mission. Within two years it was financially supporting three native workers in India.

In 1895 a group from city and suburban churches formed the Victorian Baptist Women's Missionary Union (V.B.W.M.U.) as an auxiliary of the Baptist Foreign Mission Society, which had been formed in 1865. Their objective was to promote missionary zeal amongst Baptists and to support Baptist missions and missionaries. The V.B.W.M.U. spread rapidly through Victorian churches and eventually absorbed the Zenna Mission. For many years their secretary was Mrs. J.M. Templeton, a daughter of Rev. G.P. Lush, who was instrumental in founding our church.

In 1923 the V.B.W.M.U. held a women's rally which resolved to expand their work through local churches. The result was the formation of a sister organisation, the Victorian Baptist Women's Association (V.B.W.A.) in 1924. The stated purpose was "to interest itself in the spiritual life of the churches - to develop a women's viewpoint in all matters relating to the welfare of the denomination; and to express the opinion of Baptist women upon moral and social questions affecting the welfare of the community". They soon had 40 branches, and their first annual report said their aim was "to bind together the 3,000 women of our churches in an effort to purify and uplift the social order."

Gradually the V.B.W.A. spread interstate and in 1935 the Australian Baptist Women's Association was formed, with headquarters in Melbourne. The V.B.W.M.U. and the V.B.W.A. continued to work in harmony until 1967 when the two organisations amalgamated to form the present Victorian Baptist Women's Fellowship (V.B.W.F.). Thus 1992 is their silver jubilee year.

In his 1939 report on "Our First Century", Rev. F.S. Wilkin wrote that the formation of a Baptist Women's Association had been fully justified and said "we must pay grateful tribute to the gracious self-denying work of the women of our churches. Every one knows that in all our Lord's Day meetings for worship, and at all our prayer meetings, and in all our Sunday School work, women are in the majority. Also, everyone knows, though the fact is not sufficiently acknowledged, that the success of a Missionary or Minister is often largely due to his wife." He also said, "It is impossible to do justice to the worth of the women of our churches. Besides the wives of missionaries and ministers, there have been very many who have in many ways laboured unselfishly for the Kingdom of God." Over 50 years later we can endorse those comments and add that the ladies continue to stand out in every avenue of Christian service both at Bentleigh and beyond.

In addition to their strong support of existing institutions the various women's groups regularly have reached out in faith with new ventures, some of which we summarise. From 1916 until after the second world war, they managed a convalescent home at Frankston which was said to be "the first experiment in the sphere of social services undertaken by Victorian churches in concert." Because of the post-war housing shortage the house was then let as an emergency home to needy families. When no longer so required the property was sold.

Prior to the first world war the ladies of the Collins Street church established a Baptist Sunday School in Bouverie Street, Carlton. Later to meet the needs of the children they extended this to a day kindergarten. This introduced the Free Kindergarten movement to Victoria. In 1922 new premises were opened and Mary Lush, of Collins Street, became Directress. Up to 150 children at a time attended and a number of young

women were trained as pre-school teachers. The stated objectives included:

1. creating a community home where the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of each child received attention.
2. extending to a social centre for elder children and parents from which influences for good citizenship and Christian living penetrated their homes; and
3. expressing practical Christian ideals.

By 1954 the area was no longer residential so the building was sold. Some of the funds were used to appoint Miss Beryl Aston as Baptist Pre-school Counsellor, the Victorian Baptist Association of Pre-school centres having been formed for the more effective organisation of the then 25 centres conducted by Baptist churches.

In 1944, as part of a project designed to mark its Silver Jubilee in 1949, the V.B.W.A. purchased a property at Macleod for £4,500. In November that year they opened Strathalan with 3 residents, increasing to 12 within a year. The V.B.W.A. made a substantial contribution to commence this project, and by its Silver Jubilee in 1949 was able to complete payment of the purchase price. This was the first of the existing Baptist homes, which include Southleigh where our ladies are active, including in the B.W.F. auxiliary.

The Benthleigh B.W.F. celebrates its 71st. birthday this year, which means it was established in 1921, three years before the V.B.W.A. However, there is no doubt that much earlier the ladies were active and involved in the foundation of our church. Among those reported as being outstanding workers back in 1884 were Mrs. Watt - the mother of May Marriott, and Mrs. Grewar - the mother of Jean and Annie to whom we owe so much.

Issue No.17, December, 1992.

As we reflect on the activities of the ladies' organisations in our early years we are restricted by the absence of their records. Little help is found in the Minutes of the Deacons' and Members' Meetings, because they mainly mention only their material and social activities. In addition to the perpetual requirement to 'bring a plate', and be busy in the kitchen, the type of activities recorded are that "Mrs. Freeman donated material for Mrs. Beach to make a new organ cover", "the ladies painted and renovated the vestry", "they are making bandages for the China relief fund", and "the Pastor agreed to ask the ladies to supply an extra offering bag". From earlier reflections we know that they laboured to support the fundraising for the new church building.

However, there is no doubt that their first priority was spiritually based, with much time given to prayer, praise and Bible study with a complete commitment to the Lord. This is apparent from the earliest available Minutes of their meetings, commencing late in 1956. We then find that Mrs. John Paton was President of their Baptist Women's Association (B.W.A.) as it then was. She was a member of the Ormond Methodist Church, and it is not known how the Lord led her to this service at Benthleigh Baptist. It is clear that, as well as having the gift of leadership, she was a gracious Christian lady. Her term commenced and continued through a time when young Baptist College students pastored here for relatively short periods, while continuing their studies. Mostly they were single, and did not live locally, although some, Lloyd George, Eric Aspinall and Ken Wade, did find a bride here. In these circumstances Mrs. Paton provided the necessary continuity to the B.W.A. and contributed greatly to the strength and service of our fellowship.

Supporting her for many years as Vice Presidents were Gwen Bell who had transferred from Hobart in 1951, and Mrs. Sutton, a long time member. In 1958, during the ministry of Rev. Winckel, Mrs. Paton stood down to be Senior Vice President when Mrs. Winckel became President. However, this proved to be short term because in June that year Mrs. Winckel resigned and left the church. The breach was filled by Mrs. Paton who resumed as President for the remainder of that year.

Rev. Phil Audemard commenced his ministry in 1958 and when his wife Joan became President for 1959,

Mrs. Paton was finally able to retire from that office after 15 years. The ladies then unanimously expressed their appreciation of the wonderful leadership and faithful service she had given, and their delight that, in spite of failing health, she was willing to continue as Senior Vice President. On their behalf, Annie Grewar presented her "with a lovely clock with their love and prayerful best wishes." Mrs. Paton finally retired from office in 1960, surely a period of totally committed service worthy of recording.

Rev. Ken Wade married during his 1952-56 ministry, and toward the end of that period his wife was B.W.A. Secretary. She was then replaced by Mary Neil who the previous year had transferred from Lloyd Street, East Malvern, where she had been active in their B.W.A. She continued as Secretary until 1963, when she was elected Vice President, a position she currently holds.

So dedicated in the Lord's service were the ladies at that time that the B.W.A. met each week. Invariably the meeting opened with prayer and praise and frequently the Pastor led a Bible study. They had a great variety of guest speakers, occasionally substituted by a testimony or talk by one of their number. It is recorded that messages by Mrs. Paton were particularly appreciated and "were always a Christian tonic". during 1957, the first year for which we have records, some of the guest speakers were - Rev. Lloyd George, the 1947-48 pastor; Mrs. Aspinall, who as Bromwyn James was a member of a church family and married Eric Aspinall, our 1949-51 pastor, and was now on furlough from A.B.M.S. missionary service in Pakistan; Rev. Geo. Haughan, Mary Neil's father visiting from Sydney; Margaret Simons from the Jewish Evangelical Witness with which Rev. Winckel was associated; and Dawn Martin of the Christian Service Centre which she founded 44 years ago this month. In spite of her age and serious operations she still actively leads this centre in caring for disabled young people and supporting missionary work.

A very special day was the 36th. Birthday Meeting when the guest speaker was Mrs. Wilson of the V.B.W.A. Probably Millie Wilson was not as well known to the ladies back in 1957 as she has become since they have worked together on the Southleigh Auxiliary. She always has been active in Baptist work and must have been just as accomplished as a speaker then because they all agreed what a fine address she gave. It was said that the Birthday cake was a treat, both to look at and to eat. It was made by Mrs. Costain, a real 'Martha' - she ruled the kitchen for all manner of functions, including the annual sale of gifts. For many years the candles were lit by Mrs. Watt, an original from Tucker Road, and Mrs. Main of Vickery Street, the mother of Mrs. Costain.

There was another very special occasion on 20th. march 1957, when probably the most internationally famous person to be guest speaker at the church addressed the B.W.A. Even so, there does not appear to have been any special arrangements or wide-spread invitations. On the contrary, they held their ordinary meeting, opening with a hymn and prayer and proceeding to the Minutes and other business. Members then took time to decide that because of altered bus arrangements for a visit to the Judge Book Home, the cost would be increased by 6d. to 6/- each. Then it was the turn of the visitor, Miss Corrie ten Boom who spoke on 'Having Faith in our Lord Jesus', which she was so well qualified to do. She was born in 1892 and spent her first 50 years living peacefully above her father's watch shop in Haarlem. It was a place where anyone in need found a warm welcome and it was said that Jesus was as much a member of the ten Boom family as anyone. When World War II broke out they provided a "Hiding Place" for persecuted Jews, until discovered and confined to concentration camps. So grateful was she to the Lord for His overriding care and her release that she became a self-styled 'Tramp for the Lord'. She told her story in those two books and travelled tirelessly sharing with people all over the globe the reality of Jesus Christ. No wonder that when those travels brought her to this small fellowship the ladies felt it a great privilege and were inspired by her message.

It seems appropriate to conclude these reflections with these words from Corrie ten Boom:

*"When my parents were married, they claimed Psalm 32:8 as their verse -
 'I will instruct you (says the Lord) and guide you along the best pathway for your life;
 I will advise you and watch your progress.'
 They felt this promise was God's assurance for them, and it became the special
 directive for my life as well."*

May it also become so for each of us.

Issue No.18, March 1993.

The intriguing title of one of the ladies' meetings in the early 1950s was "Down Memory Lane". An unnamed member then recalled that their Fellowship was started in 1922 by a Mrs. Baker and their first speaker was Mrs. Hatton. There is nothing more about these two pioneers, although in 1950 a Mrs. Baker has spoken on Job 10, but she was not identified as the founder. Also "Down Memory Lane" there was much praise for the great work done among the ladies by Mrs. Cross, who was the wife of the 1932-35 pastor.

There are brief but thought-provoking references to other meetings of the times. Beth Priest, from M.B.I. spoke on "Clouds mentioned in the Bible, and how applicable they are to our lives." (So far, I have found 20 mentions) Mrs. Hill of the China Inland Mission told of "Reds in China, and how Christians were being driven out." We were to hear much more of this in subsequent years, and recently "New Life" told of this persecution continuing. Mr. & Mrs. Ezard testified concerning God calling them out of the Methodist Church into the Salvation Army, which led to them serving the Lord in Kenya. There is no mention of the reaction of the President, Mrs. Paton, then a member of the Ormond Methodist Church, but from our memory of her we expect she would graciously say "Praise the Lord". Mrs. Kershaw, referred to as the "Flower Lady", gave a delightful message of the spiritual meaning of the flowers in our gardens. later she gave an inspirational talk on "Prayer - Power through prayer; Repentance through prayer; Assurance in prayer; Yearning in prayer; Earnest prayer; and Reality in prayer - surely material for a whole series!

With a weekly meeting it was not always possible to have a visiting speaker, and a variety of other interests were arranged. Often one of the ladies would share her travel or holiday experiences and there were frequent testimonies. Meetings were shared with other ladies' groups but in those years this was confined to the Baptist and other mainstream Protestant churches.

There were regular visits to Strathalan which they supported until the advent of Southleigh. Prior to 1954, they travelled by public transport, which must have been time consuming. There was excitement and relief in March that year when, for the first time, they went by hired bus, on a perfect day and so many more could make it - 37 ladies and 3 gents. They found it a great improvement on the train, "enabling us to see God's creation." Also they were able to take afternoon tea as a treat for the residents. However, the twice yearly trips to the Cheltenham Old Folks' Home continued by train. There was also much support for Kilvington, with one member being 'Kilvington Convenor' and making the needs and events at the school well known.

Another all too brief report is of a Question and Answer Day when there was a profitable time around God's Word. A Recipe Meeting had an unusual touch when recipes were sold for 3d each, raising 10/- for their missions fund. A "Stray Leaf" afternoon brought cuttings from magazines, some humorous but all with a helpful moral message. Something very special would have been the Sin, Say or Pay Day. Most ladies took part with a solo, testimony or thoughts, so few had to pay.

However, as we appreciate these ladies, we know that they also were making their financial contribution. It was in this period they were beginning to see the results from their long years of fund raising for a new church building, which included their annual Thank Offering. On one such occasion several told how God was blessing them, and they then filed up to the central table and placed their envelopes in the container. This brought £110, no small sum in those days from about 20 ladies. Even so, before the next such day, Mrs. Paton stressed the need for sacrificial giving and suggested it should be known as "Women's Sacrificial Thanksgiving Day" which was agreed. She also reminded them that tithes should not be of money only, but also of time and effort. Two months later there was a sacrificial offering of £138. No wonder they sang the Consecration hymn.

Their feelings can be understood from the report of one meeting when Rev. Wade reported on the plans and financial position for the new building "which made us feel that it will not be long before the desire of our hearts will be fulfilled and we will see a new church to the glory of God erected in front." They really put their optimism into practice. In an endeavour to make the next church 'Sale of Gifts' the best fundraiser

ever, they decided to start their sewing days earlier than in previous years. They then gave a warm invitation to all ladies 'to join us in our sewing days - even if you can't sew you can always boil the kettle for lunch - every little helps.'

One who made a generous and practical contribution was Millie Smith. She joined in about 1926 and was an active member for over 50 years. For a very long time she and Mrs. Costain were joint Afternoon Tea Convenors, which extended to providing not only morning and afternoon tea, but also lunch at each years' "Sale of Gifts". She was one who regularly made her home available for Ladies' Meetings, and always brought cakes for their Sale Table. She always was a generous contributor to the collections for Baptist Opportunity Shops and Southleigh fetes. Age forced Millie and Jack to become Southleigh residents until her ill health took them to Hedley Sutton. In November last year, at the age of 92, she went to her reward with the Lord.

Millie Smith is a representative of the many ladies who have given and are giving loving faithful service in and through this Fellowship without wavering from Biblical tradition and standing firm on Gospel truths. Some of the others so involved will appear in our next Reflections.

	December 3	December 10	December 17	December 24/ 31.
<u>Deacons a.m.</u>	R.Bell L.Longmuir B.Thomas I.Howard K.Buettner	R.McHale K.Buettner	L.Longmuir R.Bell	
<u>p.m.</u>	R.Bell R.McHale	I.Howard L.Longmuir	L.Longmuir B.Thomas K.Buettner I.Howard	
<u>Stewards a.m.</u>	P.Bell	S.LaCombre	B.Christey	
<u>p.m.</u>	B.Ortell	P.Bell	R.Fooks	
<u>Creche</u>	R.Fooks J.Head	J.Fooks M.Bell	C.Hendrikse M.Thomas	
<u>C.E.</u>	J.Clifton	S.Thomas	M.Buettner	
<u>Flowers</u>	D.Bambridge	M.Wallace	B.Ortell	J.Holmes/ J.Longmuir

	January 7	January 14	January 21	January 28
<u>Deacons a.m.</u>	B.Thomas L.Longmuir R.McHale H.Neil	B.Thomas R.McHale	R.Bell I.Howard	L.Longmuir K.Buettner
<u>p.m.</u>	L.Longmuir B.Thomas	R.McHale L.Longmuir	I.Howard R.McHale R.Bell	K.Buettner I.Howard
<u>Stewards a.m.</u>	B.Christey	M.Ercegovic	R.Fooks	M.Ercegovic
<u>p.m.</u>	R.Fooks	P.Bell	B.Ortell	R.McHale

Please note: there is no rostered C.E. or Creche during January. The creche facilities are available.

	February 4	February 11	February 18	February 25
<u>Deacons a.m.</u>	R.Bell K.Buettner B.Thomas I.Howard	I.Howard R.Bell	L.Longmuir K.Buettner	R.McHale B.Thomas
<u>p.m.</u>	B.Thomas K.Buettner	R.Bell I.Howard	L.Longmuir R.Bell K.Buettner	I.Howard R.McHale B.Thomas
<u>Stewards a.m.</u>	G.Smith	B.Ortell	B.Christey	G.Smith
<u>p.m.</u>	S.LaCombre	K.Buettner	R.Fooks	S.LaCombre

Reflections

An "Australian Baptist" editorial commented "Church History may not be the most fascinating subject but even a passing knowledge would convince Baptists that nothing of real importance has been achieved until God's people draw near to Him in earnest, sincere prayer" to which the founders of our fellowship would surely say Amen and Amen. We have not been told of the prayer life but we do know that to them the Lord's Day was His day in every respect. It was devoted to His praise, glory and worship. They walked or rode long distances, not once but twice each Sunday, and for some a third time for afternoon Sunday School. This, without roads or street lights as we know them, and under conditions that would tempt us to stay home. They gave their time, talents, worldly goods and total commitment to the development of His Kingdom, through the Church, and were blessed accordingly.

For example, although faced with the adversity of a lapse in the work at Brighton during the 1860's, the revival was such that within 20 years they were able to establish the new work at Tucker Road. Within another year a church building was erected on land given by Henry Box. He was one of a family of English gentry of Sussex U.K., who used to cart market garden produce to London. The introduction of the Stephenson railway caused the collapse of this business and they came to Australia. Henry and his family and brothers settled near the corner of East Boundary and North Roads from where they regularly walked two or three times each Sunday to the Brighton Baptist Church. They were active workers there and in the Tucker Road Church. One brother, Francis Box, had two sons and three daughters, the youngest of whom, Edith, married Jack Clay. The Clay family had a long and active association with this Church, but for the moment it is sufficient to say that one of

their daughters, Joy, married Vern Lipman who served us as a Deacon, Secretary, Treasurer and Sunday School Superintendent. After Vern went to be with the Lord in 1973, Joy moved to Cheltenham from where she worships at Mentone. There her daughter Bronwen is the wife of the Minister, Rev. Ross Prout.

Other pioneers prominent in our earlier history were the Watt family. Richard and Martha Watt had a market garden surrounded roughly by Centre Road, Jasper Road, Brewer Road and where the railway line is now. With their family they attended the Brighton Church, either walking or by horse-drawn jinker. One of their sons, Herbert, then about 17, with his father's horse and dray carted most of the timber and building material for the Tucker Road Church from Brighton. That building measuring 40' by 25' was erected by a Mr. Stamp of Brighton at a cost of £150 (about \$300.).

Herbert Watt later married Annie Hall at the Tucker Road Church, and they settled on a market garden at Clarinda in the Old Dandenong Road, Warrigel Road and Centre Road area. With their family they were active in the Tucker Road Church, continuing after it moved to Vickery Street. One of the daughters, Mae, was for many years in Jack Clay's Sunday School class. Later she became a teacher by which time she was riding her bike between Clarinda and Vickery Street. At Youth Club meetings with Tucker Road Methodists she had met a young fellow named Hector, who made opportunities to call on her father for a cup of tea and a talk. (Those of us who knew Hector 30 or more years later always found him ready for "a cup of tea and a talk"). On one such visit he asked if Mae would be at Church on Sunday night and was told "Yes, at Vickery Street" and that's where Hector turned up. A lady sitting with Mae wondered who the strange fellow "was trying to catch". After the service Mae accepted Hector's offer of a ride home in the sulky - and she was caught. We are not told what happened to the push bike, but she wouldn't have to ride it to Church anymore. Mae Watt and Hec Marriott were married at the Vickery Street Church in 1927 and were almost to their 60th. Wedding Anniversary when Hec was called home in November 1987. Twenty years earlier there was an open invitation to our fellowship to visit their home on Sunday afternoon to join their ruby wedding celebrations. We gathered there in a state of shocked disbelief as we heard

that Harold Holt, the then Prime Minister, was missing, washed out to sea off Portsea.

Mae had become a Church member in 1926 and, now a Life Deaconess, is our longest serving member. Hec became a member and gave many years of devoted and valuable service as a Deacon and Life Deacon.

Mae's uncle, Don Watt, took over his father's market garden between Centre and Brewer Roads and later lived in Vickery Street, where there is now a car park behind the Gas Company. He married Chris Box, who was an aunt of Joy Lipman, and they continued as members of our Church.

From time to time we will reflect on the continuing influence of the various descendants of the Box and Watt families and the Grewar family. Others mentioned as outstanding workers at Tucker Road were Mr. Chas. Alexander and Mr. F. Shephard, of whom, to date, we know nothing more.

(to be continued)

Finally, we again ask that you let us know if you have any further information on anything we have mentioned here, or if you can correct any of our Reflections.

H.N.

DATES TO REMEMBER

- December 10th. - Special morning service with Jennie Flack.
Church dinner
- 17th. - Baptismal Service
- 24th. - 7.00 p.m. Carol Service
- 25th. - 9.00 a.m. Christmas Service

Pastor Jeff Kendal will be preaching on the next four Sundays, both morning and evening services, while the Rutledge family have a holiday.