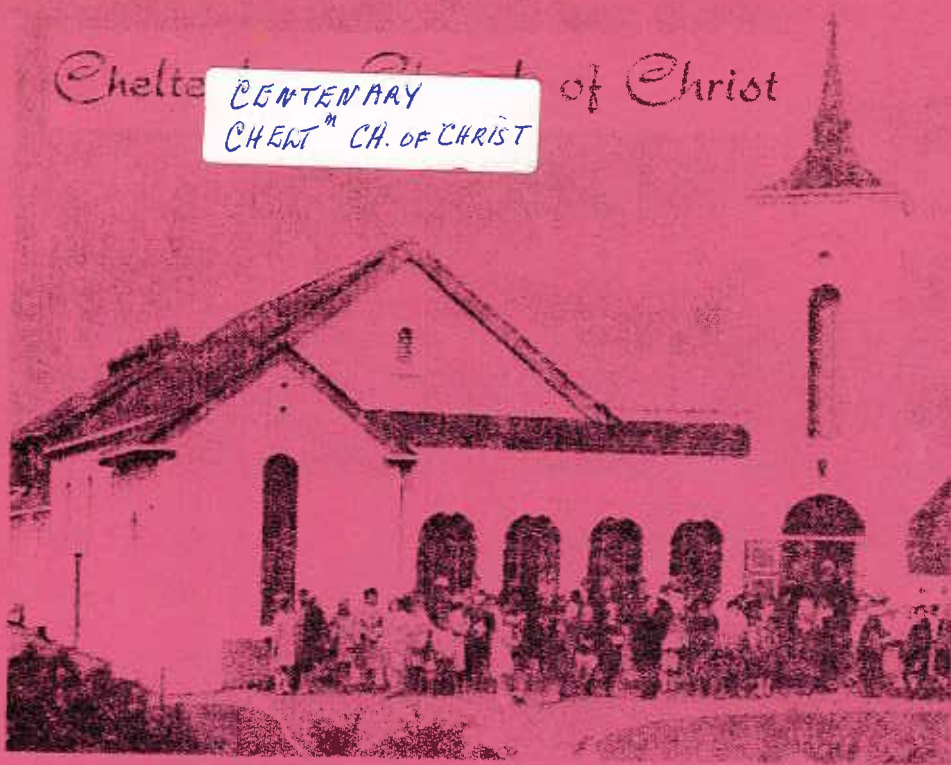


Cheltenham Church of Christ

CENTENARY
CHELT^M CH. OF CHRIST



OUR HERITAGE

" HOW CHURCHES OF CHRIST BEGAN "

- K. G. HILBIG.

" THE HISTORY THE CHELTENHAM
CHURCH OF CHRIST "

- G. L. DAFF.

The Cheltenham Historical
Society
with the compliments of the
Cheltenham Church of Christ

HOW CHURCHES OF CHRIST BEGAN

THE RESTORATION MOVEMENT (OR BEGINNINGS IN AMERICA).

After the American War of Independence (1776), Daniel Boone began exploring land in Kentucky. Twenty years later many settlers had moved into the area. One week in 1801, about 30,000 people met at a place called Cane Ridge to listen to some ministers preaching about Jesus Christ.

THE BIBLE ALONE

People from different denominations agreeing with each other was quite unusual in those days, and a Presbyterian Minister, Barton Stone was very impressed. He concluded that because the people were using terms from the Bible instead of their various creeds, there was a real basis for unity.

Stone stood firm in his beliefs when the majority of others returned to their old ways of division. He insisted that the Bible only should be the rule of faith and practice. He also believed that anyone who believed in Jesus Christ as Lord must be accepted as a fellow Christian. Stone had many supporters from various churches.

In 1804 they called themselves only "Christian" and within 20 years there were over 500 churches calling themselves "Churches of Christ".

DECLARATION AND ADDRESS

Thomas Campbell was a Minister of the "Old Light, Anti-Burgher, Seeder" Presbyterian church. The name shows how divided were the churches, each part representing a separate split.

In his district near Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, there were so few ministers that he invited Christians from other branches of the Presbyterian churches to attend communion in his own church. Many of his own members opposed him.

In 1809 he prepared a Declaration and Address intended to lead to Christian unity and restore the spirit and life of the "New Testament Church". Summarized, it says:

1. The church is intended by God to be united. Division is a "horrid evil".
2. The way to find out what God wants his church to believe and do, is to examine the New Testament.
3. Division is caused when human opinions about what the Bible says are used to test whether a person is a Christian.

DISCOVERIES NEW AND OLD

Later, on arriving from Ireland, 21 year old Alexander Campbell discovered that, independently, he had reached the same conclusions as his father, Thomas.

The Campbells did not want to form a new church organization, but their own church rejected them because of their ideas. They searched the New Testament to find out what they should do.

- * They held Communion every Sunday as that was the custom of the early church.
- * Gradually they came to see that they should not baptize infants, as in the New Testament church only people who personally believed were baptized.

The Restorationists, as they were called, not wanting to start a separate church, for 20 years met with the Baptists, but tension developed since many Baptists did not agree with them.

Alexander Campbell and Barton Stone, now firm friends, found how much their ideas agreed. On New Years Day, 1832 the two groups commenced a program of unity. From this time on there was a group of churches calling themselves "Christians" or "Disciples of Christ".

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC (OR BEGINNINGS IN BRITAIN)

Whilst the movement was beginning in America, several small groups in Britain felt that Christ was being lost in ceremonies and disputes about doctrine. These people - university scholars, labourers, coalminers - decided that the only way to regain a dynamic Christianity was to return to the simple faith and practices of the New Testament. Early in the 19th century congregations called Churches of Christ were begun.

It was not until 1833 that they heard of the people with similar ideas in America. Soon Alexander Campbell's writings were being published in Britain. This helped to link the movements of both countries. In 1842, the first conference of the British Churches of Christ was held in Edinburgh.

DOWN UNDER

It was people of British Churches of Christ who brought their ideas to New Zealand and Australia.

Thomas Jackson left Britain in 1843 to settle in Nelson, New Zealand. After discussions with others, a small Church of Christ congregation was commenced. One of the first persons baptized in the Nelson church was 20 year old Thomas Magarby. A few months later he went to live in the new village of Adelaide, South Australia. Soon some of the settlers were persuaded to accept the understanding of Churches of Christ and the first of our church buildings in Australia was erected in Franklin Street in 1845.

Albert Griffin, of Enmore, New South Wales received in 1853 from his brother in London, literature setting out the view of Alexander Campbell. He was convinced and then convinced others.

When gold was discovered at Ballarat and Bendigo in 1851, some of the people flocking to Victoria were members of Churches of Christ in Britain. In a tent at Prahran in 1853 some of them began a church. From here they went to various parts of the state commencing Churches of Christ in the various districts where they settled. American influence was introduced, when in answer to an appeal from Victoria, several talented American ministers came to Australia.

From Melbourne, a church was begun in Hobart, Tasmania in 1871. From Tasmania a schoolteacher, Stephen Cheek went to Queensland in 1882 because people there had asked for help in starting churches. Before he died at 31 years of age, he had established four churches at widely separated centres.

A church was commenced in Perth, West Australia in 1891 after an Australian Conference of Churches of Christ agreed that a church should be established in that state.

From these beginnings Churches of Christ have grown in every state and the Australian Capital Territory.

AROUND THE WORLD IN 38 COUNTRIES

Altogether there are about 2½ million members - 2 million living in the U.S.A. Australia has 43,000 members, Canada 5,000, Britain 4,000 and New Zealand 3,800.

From these countries, missionaries have begun Churches of Christ in other countries:

- * Africa - Congo, Malawi, Rhodesia, South Africa, Tanzania, Zambia 155,000
- * Americas - Puerto Rico, Jamaica, Mexico 15,000
- * Asia - India, Okinawa, Korea 17,000
- * Pacific - New Hebrides, New Guinea 2,700

In Japan, Thailand and the Philippines, Churches of Christ have joined with other churches to form United Churches.

WHAT THEY SAID

"The church of Christ upon earth is essentially, intentionally, and constitutionally one."

"Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent we are silent."

- Thomas Campbell 1763-1854.

"Let the unity of Christians be our Polar Star."

"Let every Christian begin the work of union in himself."

- Barton Warren Stone
1772 - 1844.

Acknowledgement for the material used in this article is made to the Joint Board of Christian Education.

FOR FURTHER READING: (All books are in our V.C. Stafford Library.

"Understanding Churches of Christ" - Dr. Keith R. Bowes, M.A., S.T.B., Ph.D.
(a fairly simple and up-to-date 40 page booklet, printed 1970, on our Australian Churches.)

"A Biblical Approach to Unity" - Principal E. Lyall Williams, M.A. 280 pages
Contains a copy of "The Declaration And Address". A study on doctrine and teachings of Churches of Christ in our Australian setting.

"Christian Unity is Our Business" - Dr. Howard Elmo Short 60 pages.

"The Shattered Cross" - Dr. William Robinson 92 pages
A study of how all Churches began.

"History of the British Churches of Christ" - Dr. A. C. Walters M.A. Ph.D.
132 pages. A detailed study of our British Churches.

"The Disciples of Christ" - Dr. W. E. Garrison and Dr. A. T. DeGroot
600 pages. An extensive world history of Churches of Christ.
(Cheltenham rates a mention!)

"They Carried a Torch" - B. J. Combridge 90 pages.
A history and interpretation of our Victorian Churches.
(Mr. Moyes rates a mention!)

This chapter prepared by

K. GRAHAM HILBIG.

THE HISTORY OF THE CHELTENHAM CHURCH OF CHRIST

Within seventeen years of Batman's landing on the site of Melbourne, members of the Church of Christ were settled in the bush county of South Brighton and were laying foundations of our cause in the district.

Much of the early history of the Cheltenham Church has been recorded for us in booklet form. The minister of the church at the time of the 80th anniversary, Mr. J. E. Allan, being interested in the history of the church and realising the necessity of gathering and recording this information before it was too late, did an immense amount of research through old records and minute books and private letters and interviewed older residents and church members to find out as much as possible about the early days, and produced this booklet.

At this time, 1937, there were still people living who had known personally some of the pioneers, or who had been told first-hand of many of the happenings of the early days.

Our story begins with a young couple, Mr. and Mrs. James Keir, who left Crossfields, Scotland in the year 1848 for the new country Australia. Landing in New South Wales, they spent some time there, then migrated to the new colony of settlers in Melbourne. Eventually in 1850-1851 they selected a site on Point Nepean Road, South Brighton, for their future home. The general area of Moorabbin and Highett was known as South Brighton in those days, the present names being given to the railway stations when they were built later on. The young couple settled in the vicinity of the Highett gas works, as this rise in the road, now much levelled, was known to the past generations as Keir's hill. (Their original property extended back almost to Bluff Road.)

Denied the opportunity and privilege of worship with those of like convictions, they observed the Lord's Supper by themselves, but in 1856 they united with a Mr. J. Ingram in the Melbourne Church of Christ - their names being Nos. 42-43 on the old church roll.

About the end of 1857 the seed sown earlier began to bear fruit and from then on we hear of the humble beginnings of the Church of Christ in the community.

It must be remembered that the religious climate of those days was such that many people had doubts about the scriptural-ness of some of the practices of the established churches, and were diligently searching the scriptures for direction in doctrine and practice.

The first Church of Christ paper, the "Melbourne Medley", edited by Mr. R. Service, played a part in the foundation of the South Brighton church. (Later known as Chesterville). One day a Mr. J. Organ picked up a fragment of the paper on the main Melbourne Road. He became interested and purchased all the copies on sale at one shop. Mr. Service used to visit the market, where Mr. Organ introduced himself. This acquaintance led to the visit of Mr. Service to South Brighton to deliver temperance addresses, but he also preached the gospel. One listener, Mr. T. Penny, confessed Christ and was baptised in St. Kilda bay. Soon afterwards Mr. and Mrs. Keir and Mr. Penny assembled regularly to observe the Lord's supper and hold gospel meetings.

In May 1858 Messrs Organ, Potts and King were added to the group by faith and baptism, and a Mr. Thomas Walker also met with the group. A certain Dr. Kidner often visited the church at Mr. Keir's home, and in an old letter of August 1858 describes what was probably the first baptismal service at Munday's Beach (now Mentone) when Mr. Keir baptised (by immersion) three women. Since that day many hundreds have obeyed the Lord in baptism.

Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Walker from Mollington, Chester, England, settled in the Chesterville Road area in 1852. Mr. Walker held services in his own home as had been his custom in England, and the Lord's Supper was observed prior to September 1857 when Mrs. Walker died. Like Mr. Keir, he

associated himself with Mr. Ingram of Melbourne Church and later became a charter member of the Prahran church.

Thus these members were faithful "sowers of the seed" of our faith, in their own district first, and then assisted elsewhere.

Some of our present members who were brought up in the district can remember a dilapidated building on the corner of Chesterville and Wickham Roads, the remains of our first chapel, the opening date of which was May 1st, 1859. This became known as Walker's church, as he conducted many services there, and many names which became great names in the church in later times joined this church. (The families of Brough, LePage, Fairlam, Monk, to mention just some.)

In due time those meeting at Mr. Keir's home united with those meeting at Chesterville Road, and for many years the united forces witnessed for Christ.

While the seed of truth was taking such firm hold on the north end of the district, the hand of God was shaping the spiritual destinies of two men in the south end of the district at Beaumaris. These two men, Mr. Hillier and S. Judd 'searched the scriptures daily'. This was toward the end of 1857 and continued for six months, after which time they came to the conclusion they should be immersed and that they should meet together every Lord's day to break bread.

Not knowing anyone holding similar views, they applied to Rev. Mr. Collins, Baptist minister at Brighton, to instruct them, being convinced of the scriptural-ness of immersion. They were baptised by Mr. Collins in 1858, and soon afterwards with Mr. Hillier as preacher and Mr. Judd as singer, commenced open air services in Beaumaris. A farm dray was used as pulpit and people were greatly interested and converts were made.

The groups from Chesterville and Beaumaris held combined baptismal services at Mundays Bay in 1859 and these combined services paved the way for a union of the two causes later on.

The first meeting of the Beaumaris church was held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Charman in Charman Road, but soon a chapel was needed and it was erected on the corner of Charman Road and Patty Street.

The training of children was not forgotten by the pioneers, and at Chesterville in 1859 and Beaumaris in 1863 Bible schools were commenced.

The two churches later combined and met together in the Beaumaris chapel.

The next stage was the purchase of land in a more central part of Cheltenham, and the erection in 1878 of a fine brick chapel which is still in use today. The opening on December 8th, 1878 was a memorable day in the life of the church, and also the district. One report described the opening as 'The largest religious services ever held in Cheltenham.' (This record may still hold.) Over 400 attended the evening service, and the next night 500 sat down for tea in the Mechanics' Institute.

The chapel was in use without alteration until our centenary year 1957, when a ceiling and modern lighting was installed, the small original porch removed and the present foyer, cry room and tower added and the brick work rendered. The rooms connecting the Chapel and brick hall were also added at this time.

As already mentioned, the church always valued Bible School work, and in 1902 a splendid brick hall and class rooms were erected. This is the building at the rear of the Chapel which is now used by the Junior and Intermediate grades of the school. This building may not be considered a good design today, but when built was years ahead of its time, and has done tremendous service as venue for Sunday School, boys' clubs, girls' clubs, gymnasium classes, concerts, social gatherings, fairs and fetes, men's and women's meetings, anniversaries, and so on.

As the work continued to grow, kindergarten accommodation became necessary and a hall for this purpose was erected at the rear of the brick building in 1920. Still the work grew, and to accommodate more scholars and to allow for divisions of age groups, this hall was doubled in size in 1936, the extension being used for the primary department of the Sunday School. These two halls now form the Primary room.

In the late 50's a great deal of subdivision of land took place in Cheltenham, many houses were built and the population of the district rose considerably. In the mid-fifties the Sunday School attendance reached an all-time high of 300 plus.

This put great pressure on our teaching space and facilities, and once again the church moved forward adding another wing to the primary room to accommodate the kindergarten and nursery grades. This wing was opened in 1958.

All the extra activity by various week night clubs was putting a great strain on the furnishings and finish of the brick hall. About this time the block of land on the westside of the tennis courts, which incidentally the church had owned and the tennis club had used since the 1920's, was up for sale. The opportunity was too good to miss and the church bought the property with the idea at first that the old house on the property could be used as class rooms, and then when money was available perhaps a brick hall suitable for gymnasium and indoor sports could be erected.

However, through a very generous loan by one of our members, and loans and donations by many others, the suite of buildings we know as the Ray Barnett Christian Education Centre was able to be erected. It was officially opened on 28th April, 1962.

A Manse was purchased in 1922 almost opposite the Church in Chester-ville Road, which eliminated the problem of ministers having to find a house when serving Cheltenham church. In 1956 the house adjoining the church became available for purchase, so the manse was sold and the adjoining house purchased. The minister at the time, Mr. R. C. Bolduan, moved in in December 1956.

The most recent building alteration was in this current year 1970, when an alcove of the brick hall was partitioned off to take a further subdivision of grades in the school.

The progress of the church did not only consist of securing more buildings, though these were tangible expressions of the needs of the present and of faith in the future.

Effective leadership was a concern of the church, as no class or club is better than its leadership. Consequently our teachers and leaders have been encouraged to take training courses to better fit them for their work, especially during the last two or three decades, when general educational standards and facilities have been improving. Some of the courses have been conducted in the city by our Conference departments, or the Joint Board of Christian Education. Others have been conducted in our own or neighbouring churches.

Over the last two decades a great deal of equipment and teaching aids have been purchased for use by the school and week night clubs.

The school used the Austral Graded Lessons for many years, then the lesson material of the Federal Board (Churches of Christ in Australia), and in 1970 commenced to use the Christian Life Curriculum. This latter is a joint venture by the Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregational Churches and Churches of Christ in both Australia and New Zealand. Also in N.Z. the Anglican Church joined in the venture.

This is not only a great effort in co-operation and understanding but with this combined strength better material can be produced.

Many of our children today are in the 4th and 5th generations of the pioneer families while some are into the 6th generation, though strangely enough, in most cases their surnames have now changed from the original, because of descent through the female line.

Some of these surnames dating from the combined Beaumaris church and prominent for many years later were: Judd, Charman, Hillier, Rees, Moysey, Fisher, Ruse, Bodley, Hayes, Penny, Meers, Chambers, Organ, Keir, Parker, Bosworth, Martin, Bruton, Brough.

Other names appearing on old rolls include: Barnett, Woff, Daff, Gouldthorpe, Foreman, Roberts, Green, Chandler, Clayton, Butler, McDonald, Moloney, W. Smith, Bumpstead, Lowe, Huxtable.

The first half of the Church's life saw many men giving themselves in full time ministry for the Lord and at least one woman going as an overseas missionary.

The latter half has not been as fruitful in this respect, but the last two Annual Reports have shown 14 members acting on conference and Brotherhood committees.

Various types of missions or special series of services have been held from time to time. Probably the biggest effort was the Tent Mission held in 1927. A large marquee was pitched on vacant land behind the shops between Charman Road and Stanley Avenue. The missionaries were E. C. Hinrichsen (preacher) and L. Brooker (song leader). Running for seven weeks each night except Saturday, it drew large attendances. Mr. E. G. Brough, who later served as Secretary, was one member who did not miss a meeting. More recent efforts were the Mini-missions of 1968-1969 running for three Sunday nights in June and held in the Cheltenham hall. These also attracted interest in the community and some new members were added to the church.

In July 1927 during the ministry of D. Wakely a weekly church paper was started - a four-page printed paper called "Cheltenham Church Chimes".

This was discontinued some years later, but another paper was commenced in 1943. Commencing as a four-page duplicated sheet, it is now in its 27th vol. and has now grown to eight pages, and in 1969 won the award for best Church paper in our Victorian Brotherhood. Its title "The Christian Sentinel", was inspired by the towering cypress tree that stood in front of the church through storm and calm for many years, until extensions to the chapel made its removal necessary.

Another important addition to the church's facilities for educational and spiritual development was the building and opening of the V. C. Stafford Library on 11th August 1968. This library, named after a former minister, elder, and youth leader, contains a large number of text books, reference books, films and maps and pictures for use by teachers and leaders, projectors and portable amplifier, and also a large number of books for use by all members, covering subjects such as Church History, Bible commentaries, devotional, missionary, leadership, psychology, etc.

An electric organ was installed in the chapel in 1967, which is a great help to the choir and congregational singing.

From records old and recent we cull some names of past preachers: A. H. Bryant, T. H. Bates, W. T. Clapham, H. Goodacre, J. P. Wright, C. Moore, W. H. Martin, W. Stevenson, G. B. Moysey (2 terms), J. Pittman, M. W. Green, W. Judd, J. Strang, H. Mahon, T. B. Fischer, A. P. Wilson, S. H. Mudge, P. R. Baker, G. P. Pittman, D. Wakely, A. Brooke, J. E. Allan, V. C. Stafford, C. Cunningham, R. C. Bolduan, G. K. Moyes.

It is interesting to note that G. B. Moysey and W. Judd were converts in the early days at Beaumaris.

Eight secretaries have served the church, viz:
W. Ruse, W. Meers, R. W. Tuck (over 40 years), L. Hutchinson, F. E. J. Smith,
E. G. Brough, C. Ward, G. Hilbig.

Bible School Superintendents: Bro. T. Walker was Superintendent
at Chesterville and W. Ruse at Beaumaris, other leaders were: R. Judd, C. Brough *J. ROSE*
E. T. Penny, R. W. Tuck, F. Chipperfield, H. Brough, Theo Daff, Roy Barnett,
Bruce Ward, G. L. Daff.

Of course in this church as in any other, the parable of
Matthew 13 applies: "Not all seed has fallen on good ground and multiplied".

In this present age of the permissive society, tremendous pres-
sure is on Christian people and Christian youth to lower their standards and
conform to the world about them. But if this Church is to be true to its
Founder and Lord, it must continue to uphold high Christian standards, and
give strength and encouragement to its members young and old who are trying to
witness to Christ and be true to Him in their daily life.

Perhaps an appropriate text for today would be Philippians 1:27-28:
"Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that.....you
may stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith
of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents."

G. L. DAFF
Cheltenham Church Historian. 1970