

*Church History presented by
Raleyn Stukles*

Since being asked to do this talk, I have felt as if I have embarked upon a quest. I have re-visited a forgotten era, and in reading through old minutes' books, have observed a procession of faithful servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my desire to make ~~this~~ a tribute to these wonderful yet very ordinary people, rather than a personal walk down memory lane. In doing this, however, I am bound to highlight the names and incidents which have triggered my own memory.

The very first meeting was held on Thurs 7 July 1949 at the Bauer Street home of Mr and Mrs Geoff Green. There were about 7 people at that meeting - Mr and Mrs Green of course; Percy Johnson - a student pastor from Tugun/ Palm Beach who rode a push bike for visitation. He even made monthly visits to Nerang this way, Mr and Mrs Fred Harding, and their daughter Joan - farmers from Nerang; Noel Cannon, a fellow teacher at T.S.S. with Geoff Green. This group agreed that it would be on the basis of prayer alone that the fellowship would grow and their reliance was on the work of the Holy Spirit.

Six months after this first meeting it was decided that the time had come to hold Sunday services, and on 26 Feb, the first service was held at the Scouts' Hall, the speaker being Rev A.H. Brooks. The group called themselves the Southport Baptist Fellowship until constituted as a church. Geoff Green was the first secretary, but soon decided to resign his teaching position and enter the ministry. He became the first minister of the Southport Baptist Church. The outstanding features of this period were the visitation to homes, the outreach to children (the first S.S. anniversary had 50 children and their parents present) and the open air meetings that were held. Above all, these people's lives were a witness to their neighbours and friends. The very first convert was a lady many of you would have known well - Mrs Reichert who just happened to be the next door neighbour of Geoff and Esther Green.

Two important acquisitions were made - one was an amplifier to enable open air services to be held weekly on the Esplanade, and the other was a block of land with a fence and a hut in Little Norman Street. Apart from that they had very few material possessions.

The fellowship was formally constituted as a church on 14 Jan 1951 at a service with a congregation of 70 where 15 members were received in, and that evening Geoff Green was inducted as Pastor. The new secretary was Mr Cannon and the continuing treasurer was Mr Fred Harding. A month later, the first service was held in the hut at Little Norman Street. Plans for a Church were drawn up, and a Building Fund was started.

1952 A wide-eyed shy little four year-old came to Sunday School with her next door neighbours. Although she had no understanding of the 'Big Picture', this was to become a very special place for a very long time - 35 years to be precise. It was a place of comfort, and of challenge, a place of decision and commitments where the lives and witness of the very committed adults had a lasting effect. Most importantly it was the place where she accepted Jesus Christ as Saviour. My first memories include an unfinished hall which was used for Sunday School, and a Church building which I was afraid to enter.

During this year, some of the following occurred:

Girls' Club started with Mrs Green, Boys' Club Mr Hattingh.

Church organ purchased for 87. Pulpit completed with misgivings.

First death - a deacon - Mr Lovelock.

Mrs Reichert became a member

The Constitution was written and unanimously accepted

£175.00

1953

New families recorded in the minutes were the Balkes, the Surches and the Proctors who are here with us today.

There were 90 on the Sunday School roll, 8 conversions, 2 baptisms, and 15 on the membership roll. The Sunday School was capably run by Mr and Mrs Hattingh, who also took Boys' and Girls' Clubs.

The S. S. Picnic was held at Hollywell. I can remember my Dad's Banham's trucks being used for transporting children to these picnics. Imagine! These were such eagerly anticipated events - we would all collect flowers, shells etc for the sand modelling competition. The races were taken very seriously as well.

The hall was becoming quite headache with unfinished and shoddy workmanship. Unfortunately it seems there were no tradesmen in the church at that time. There were other hardships at this time in that there was no secretary or deacons' meetings, and finances were a problem. This was the last year for the Greens.

1954

Louie Miller the new minister and friend of Geoff Green arrived to continue the work. Eric Proctor became the acting secretary and continued on as secretary until 1957. That was the year Fraser Harding became a member along with the Potts, Surches, Leschkes and Baldocks. The six-year-old daughter of Baldocks Ruth was killed when she ran in front of a truck - that made quite an impact on me as I was the same age.

Not only did the minister preach morning and evening, he ran the Sunday School, taught R.E. in the schools and had a go at his own renovations in the Manse. Then he had to ask for reimbursement from the struggling Church. The hard-working HATTINGHS left at the end of 1954.

1955

Phone in manse.

Mr Taylor took over Boys Club.

Pastor lost a new born babe.

Decision to start a work at Broadbeach.

Joan Harding married and had her reception in the hall.

1956

Mr Fred Harding passed away suddenly and the Church members stood for a minute's silence. He was a faithful servant of Christ, a man of prayer whose treasurer's books were up to date and flawless. His son Fraser whom a lot of you would remember clearly became treasurer at the tender age of 18.

Eric Proctor took over the job as Sunday School Superintendent. Mrs Burke who is here today became a member along with Mr and Mrs Bellette.

1957

Another completely selfless couple entered the scene. Col and May Ham who are here this morning transferred their membership and immediately set to work. Mr Ham became Secretary and Sunday School Superintendent in the place of Eric Proctor who moved to Labrador. He also taught Sunday School at Broadbeach and looked after the grounds there. Mrs Ham began Junior

Christian Endeavour. Both of these people impacted me greatly while they were serving in this Church. Another person who I feel I have known forever, and

who served faithfully in the Southport Baptist Church was Betty Dick who became a member in 1957. Betty married Fraser 3 years later and together they served the Lord in a number of different ministries including Intermediate Christian Endeavour and Sunday School, Where I was personally ministered to as a young teenager. Membership - 40

1958

The Millers were transferred to Annerley. Mr Davidson arrived.

- 1959 The budget appeared to be more healthy. The first suggestion of a new church and manse at at Southport.
- 1960 Frank and Margaret Andrews arrived. Mrs Andrews and daughter Joy are also visiting here this morning. Their daughter Ruth was one of my friends. Max and Marion Buntrock arrived.
- 1961 New manse purchased at Dowling Drive. ~~£~~2650.00
Eric and Gloria Parker became members and Eric became treasurer. Other new members included Mr and Mrs Inger, Joy Benton, Mrs Hodge, Mrs Kivikink, Mr and Mrs Ross Davis and Mr and Mrs Hohanke.
- 1962 The Hams left on transfer to Maleny, and Ross Davis became Sunday School Superintendent and Treasurer, as well as acting Secretary.
Jack Inger led the evening Praise Service and became a deacon.
Mrs Alice Kobolett transferred in as a member.
Mr and Mrs Legge applied for membership.
Church of Christ borrowed tables and a teapot.
Gwen Covill came to the Church as deaconess.
- 1963 Rev. A.B. Hine arrived.
New members - Keith Legge, Mr and Mrs Zeilke and Narelle, Max and Marion Buntrock, Janis McKinley, Hollands, etc.
Keith Legge became B.Y.F. leader, and Praise Service leader.
The decision was made to purchase the land at Corner of Nerang St And Eugaree St., and to sell Little Norman St. for £1000.00.
- 1964 New members Gay Parker, Ian Levinge, Bruce Condon, Ralph Legge, Mr and Mrs Horsborough.
The Australia Missouri Crusade was held, the Sat evening meeting was held in the Pier Theatre.
Mr Legge became acting secretary.
Permission was granted to remove the Church to the new property.
- 1965 Buntrocks became leaders of I.C.E. as Betty and Fraser headed south for college.
Members' Meetings were held at Labrador as Southport was being rebuilt, and Church services were held at the Scout Hall for the donation of \$1.1.0 per week. Moved into the new site at Eugaree Street mid year.
Teaching mission with Gene Jeffries.
New members Bob & Shirley Condon, John Mollhoek, Ian Taylor.
Members meetings reached 30.
- 1966 Labrador - Southport separation was proposed.
Mrs Harding resigned as communion steward - served almost constantly since the first meeting. Kay, Sandra, Terry Collins joined Youth group.
A new Church organ was purchased - locked!
Michael Kent was baptised. Keith Legge went into the Baptist ministry.
Mrs Radcliffe, Bill and Libby first mentioned. Libby and Ann Bartle were assistant organists.
Bob Condon became Sunday School Superintendent. Mr Surch took kinder.
Shirley took J.C.E. John Mollhoek led Boys' Club, and Ralph was songleader.
David Wentworth applied for baptism and membership.
A series of meetings were held for Labrador to be separated from Southport.
Labrador Baptist Church was formally constituted 30 Nov 1966.

1967 Christine Marlon, Mrs Beitz, Don McNeil - applied for baptism.
Members: Mrs Radcliffe, Mrs Jean Andrews (from Annerley), Mr and Mrs Rowe (from Port Kembla), Mr and Mrs Jo McClune (from Gympie)
Mrs Harding was recognised as the only surviving foundation member.
Mrs Tait was recognised for being organist for 15 years.
I.C.E. camp with Allan Gardner and Jim Muir. I remember that as the time 3 of my friends David Burke, and Ian and Colin Taylor died tragically in a road accident. That had a deep and lasting effect on our young people.
Max and Marion Buntrock left us to go to Mt Hagen and I believe they are still there. Mr and Mrs Bruce Melville became members and leaders of I.C.E.
Peter Marlon was baptised. Ann Bartle became a member. Lyn Leschke was in charge of Buds.
Rev A.B. Hine left after 6 years' ministry.
Rev Noel McLaren arrived.
1969 New members Pat Bateman, Bob and Ann Graves, Mr and Mrs McIntosh.
Bruce condon married Narelle Zielke, and John Molhoek married Lyn Leschke.
Mr Legge resigned as Secretary after 4 years, and Jo McClune was the new secretary.
Reg Owen was new Y.P. leader.
Manse fund opened with as donation of \$39.00.

1970 Jen and Geoff Litzow and family arrived.
Tom and Rosalie Froggatt became members. Mr Hohnke passed away.
Church's 21st birthday. All past ministers were invited to attend and Geoff Green was invited as guest speaker. I was teaching in Augathella that year so missed out on the excitement. My request to use the Church for our wedding was tabled, and agreed to.

Since Geoff Litzow, the Church was pastored by Gerhard Bagen, Trevor Harris, and Jim Allen before we left in 1987. It continues to be a place very close to my heart, with so many precious memories - far too many to cover in this session. Congratulations on turning 50 - with God's guidance the best is yet to come.