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The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland
(formerly: *Baptist Historical Society of Qld Newsletter*)

No. 46 August 2000

Annual Festival of Baptist Heritage August 26, 2000

In conjunction with

Kalbar Baptist Church 125th Anniversary

The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland is pleased to support and share with the Kalbar Baptist Church for their 125th Anniversary

BHSQ will launch two books during the Saturday afternoon program

Tarampa Baptist Church
Marburg Baptist Church

Both written by R.A. Scanlan, OAM, and edited by David Parker

These books will be on sale at a special price of \$6.00 each
(Regular price is \$7.50 plus postage)

Saturday Program

12 noon to 5pm: Displays, Tours, Interviews, Afternoon Tea

5.30pm: Dinner (\$10.00 per head)

RSVP 15 Aug and enquiries Ph 07 5463 7251 or 0411 129 419 or 07 5463 7262

Evening: Concert with German items, Historic Narrative and Address

The Baptist Historical Society of Queensland (est. 1984)

Membership (2000)

Individual \$8 p.a. Family \$12 p.a. Corporate \$20 p.a.

Qld Baptist Forum 3 issues p.a.

Free to Members Others \$2 each posted

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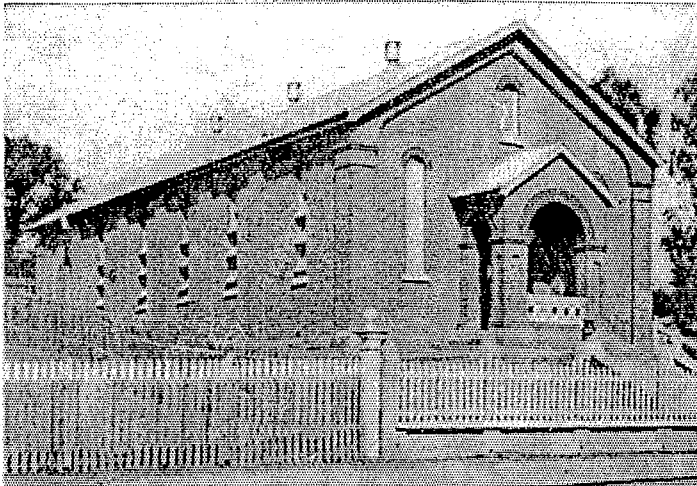
by David Parker p 8

THE SECOND BAPTIST CHURCH IN QUEENSLAND.

Reproduced from *The Queensland Baptist* June 1900 p 77

We continue the reproduction of a series of articles on early Baptist churches in Queensland which appeared in *The Queensland Baptist*. These articles present some interesting details of the churches and their buildings. One of the features of the original series was a photograph of the church with each article. Recent pictures of these churches will also be shown where available.

Some months ago we gave four illustrations of the first Baptist Church in Queensland. We are glad to say that these were much appreciated by many readers, and we now follow with an illustration of the home of the second Baptist Church in the colony—an honour which falls to Ipswich, that church being formed in 1859.



Our illustration is not of the first building, however. After a short occupancy of a rented building, a little wooden church was erected on a site in West Street, given by the pastor, Rev. Thos. Deacon. The opening sermons were preached by Rev. B. G. Wilson, and it was a somewhat remarkable coincidence that Mr. Deacon died on the day the building was opened. It is not our present purpose to chronicle the history of the church, but in describing the present building the above reference to the first structure will be of interest.

In July of the year 1875 Rev. J. Straughen became pastor of the church. At the close of his first year's ministry the congregation had increased to such an extent that it was deemed advisable to erect a more

commodious structure and emerge from the obscurity of a bye-street to a frontal position. A site was secured in Brisbane Street—the main thoroughfare of Ipswich—and the present building erected under the supervision of Mr. R. Gailey, architect. The foundation stone was laid on Monday, December 11th, 1876, by E. Gregory, Esq. of Petrie Terrace, Brisbane. By Sunday, June 17th, 1877, the new church was ready for occupation, and on that date opening sermons were preached morning and evening by the late Rev. B. G. Wilson, and in the afternoon by the Rev. F. H. Brown, at that time Congregational minister in Ipswich. "Eloquent and appropriate" are the adjectives supplied by the reporter to qualify the sermons—"listened to by crowded and attentive congregations!"

On the Thursday following, the event was celebrated by a tea in the School of Arts, and a public meeting in the church. The meeting was presided over by the late James Swan, Esq., of Brisbane, and addresses delivered by the Revs. J. Voller, T. Leitch (Baptists), late R. W. Spence (Congregationalist), R. Allen (Wesleyan), and the pastor, Rev. J. Straughen.

As will be seen, it is a brick building. The cost was £1300, and it can accommodate 350 people. The building has



recently undergone a thorough renovation at a cost of about £150, most of which has been paid, and a second contract has been signed for re-seating the whole of the building. This, with other expenses needed to complete the "working plant" of the church, will cost about £200. Of the church in its present home three pastors have been in charge—Rev. J. Straughen, under whose ministry the building was erected; Rev. W. V. Young, under whom the debt was extinguished; and the present pastor, Rev. F. G. Buckingham, under whom the renovation has been carried out.

Ipswich Baptist Church today incorporating the building above

'In this Corner of the Vineyard'

Gordon Park Baptist Church - The Early Years

By Peter Whitehead

BHSQ member Peter Whitehead has prepared a comprehensive, profusely illustrated history of the Gordon Park Baptist Church in conjunction with the forthcoming 75th anniversary. We are grateful to him for permission to print the opening chapter of his book. We look forward to its publication later in the year.

The Gordon Park Baptist Church owes its origin to the early pioneering instincts of the Jireh Baptist Church, which, having established itself in Gipps Street, Fortitude Valley in 1862, opened several branch churches including Albion. In the year 1925, it was a strong witnessing and missionary church, enjoying the faithful ministry of the Rev Robert Kerr and his wife.

In that year conscious of suburban development, the Albion Church engaged a very capable evangelist in the person of Rev Stewart McColl to hold a tent mission on the recently acquired property in Khartoum Street, Gordon Park Estate.

The successful mission became a rallying point for Christian worship with arrangements in hand for a church to be built at a cost of £475 (the land having cost £200).

The church named the Gordon Park Mission Church was opened on the 27th March 1926 by Rev B Hewison; the Rev F Aldridge became the first Pastor. (Rev Aldridge was obviously much loved for in January 1928 J Bartlett and D Johnston, as a surprise, supplied a pulpit in the church whilst Rev Aldridge was on holidays).

A move to form a church membership was first made in late 1927; then again the possibility was raised in 1931 and early 1932, however it was not until the 8th of December 1932 that the church was constituted.

In these early years the Gordon Park Church was under the authority of the Home Mission Committee, and in the absence of a constituted membership, decisions were made by a Church Committee. Names frequently mentioned in the minutes include: Mr Richer, Mr Smith, Mr J Gratton, Mr D Chalk, Mr Morton, Mr J Perkins and Mr D Johnston.

Much of the early communication – some quite heated – between the Gordon Park Church Committee and the Baptist Union Home Mission Committee, involved discussion of church finances and the outstanding debt which at 28th February 1927 stood at £583-7-9 carrying 6% interest. Despite financial difficulties, the ministry was so successful that within 12 months, it was necessary to extend the church building.

On the 28th February, 1927 the newly appointed Committee of the Gordon Park Baptist Church (comprising Rev B Hewison, Mr AH Richer, Mr Johnston and Mr Morton) met to discuss necessary extensions to the church owing to the rapid increase in the Sunday School. It was proposed that the Home Mission Committee be asked to extend the front of the church by 10 feet and provide £120 for same.

On the 13th April, 1927 a conference was held in the Gordon Park Church with representatives from the Baptist Union Executive and the Gordon Park Church Committee to consider the proposed extension. The following were present: Rev J Latimer and Messrs Bickmore and AH Richer (Union representatives) and Messrs F Aldridge, J Smith, J Webb, D Johnston, D Chalk, Mr Morton and J Gratton. After heated discussion the Union agreed to extend the church by 15 feet at a cost of £200; Gordon Park undertaking to re-seat the church to suit the Sunday School requirements.

Work on the extension clearly proceeded with some urgency; five weeks later the Committee Meeting of 20th May, 1927 set the date for the opening of the extension for Saturday June 4th, 1927 at 3pm. Rev JH Latimer performed the opening; the address being given by Rev WE Hurst (Minister of the City Tabernacle). Two hundred handbills were printed to advertise the opening. This was a "big weekend" for the Gordon Park Church; the next day, Sunday June 5th 1927, services were held (belatedly) to celebrate the first church anniversary. The speaker at the morning service was WP Hunter and in the evening the Rev JH Latimer.

Although few in number, the Gordon Park Baptist Church continued an active ministry in these early years. The Committee Meeting of 22nd June, 1927 agreed to erect a sign board in front of the church calling it the "Gordon Park Mission Church" and advertising its presence in the area.

The first baptism, Miss Daisy Cook, took place on 23rd October, 1927; the first wedding, Helen McArthur to Andrew Cousar was on the 1st July, 1927. It is interesting to note that this couple were the grandparents of present member Jeanette Whitehead (nee Cousar) and that the organist, Miss E Adermann was the mother of present Church Secretary Ewart Brecknell.

By 1927 a Boys' Club had been formed, originally under the leadership of Mr Morton, but meeting at the home of Mr Webb until 1929. A Girls' Club was also operating. The minutes of the Church Committee Meeting of 2nd March, 1927 record the gift of games to same by Miss Phipps. An active Sunday School was also operating. In August 1928, the scholars rendered a Service of Songs entitled 'Then and Now' in order to raise funds towards the church debt. This was not unusual; early minutes record the contribution of the various groups towards the church's finances. In May 1928, for instance, the Boys' Club contributed 14/- which amount paid the church's fire insurance that year.

Also well established by 1928 was the Junior Choir

and Sunday School Orchestra. These practised Friday nights at 7.30pm. Music clearly played an important part in church life from its inception. To facilitate this "Worship through Song" in June 1927, three dozen Sankey hymn books were purchased and a children's choir was formed to lead the singing at the Sunday morning services. (A further 4 dozen hymn books were added in 1931). The church seems to have been blessed with an abundance of musical talent. In addition to the choir and orchestra, the following are some who served as church organists in these early years: Mr J Perkins, Mrs Pollard, Mr George Webb, Miss Cook, Mrs Kelly, Mrs Jones and Miss Hovard (later Mrs Llewellyn).

A Christian Endeavour Society was also in place; indeed on 4th December 1927 the church celebrated Christian Endeavour Sunday. Not to be left out, the senior girls of the church had formed a club called the "Blue Bell Club".

While concentrating on establishing the newly formed church, Gordon Park still had an active interest in the spread of the gospel further afield. In 1927, for instance, signatures were collected for a petition against the restriction of religious liberty in Rumania. As the church developed these ministries, the need for coordination of course increased. Aware of this, it was agreed at the Church Meeting of 22nd June 1927 "that a set of rules for the guidance of the church and its organisations be drawn up". These initial rules were quite simple, especially when compared to later constitutions.

No doubt buoyed by this early growth, at the Committee Meeting held in the church on 25th January 1928, Mr J Gratton (Hon Secretary) moved that "we form a Church and enrol those willing to become members, seconded by Mr Smith and carried". However the move was somewhat premature and was not accomplished until 8th December 1932.

Nevertheless, by its second anniversary in 1928 the church had much to celebrate. It was on the 10th June 1928 that these Anniversary Services took place. The morning service was conducted by Mr AJ Barnard, the evening service by the Rev EV Keith, both services being well attended. On Wednesday 13th June 1928, a social was held in connection with the anniversary when the first report of the work of the church was given and a "short, bright programme rendered". Clearly there was much for which to give praise to God in that report.

The active life of the Gordon Park Church continued; in September 1928 the church conducted a fete and the Committee Meeting minutes of 21st January 1929 reported a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour had been formed.

On Sunday 7th April 1929 the Sunday School celebrated its anniversary reporting continued strong growth.

However the early church did face some frustrations. In February 1929 the Secretary wrote to the City

Council regarding the watertable in Hamilton Street along the side of the church, which was causing seepage problems in the rooms under the church. Apparently a favourable response was not forthcoming, for the minutes of the 3rd August 1930 record a subsequent letter to the City Council concerning the same matter. Another "hiccup" faced by the early church is recorded in the minutes of 30th February 1932, when, owing to an infantile paralysis epidemic, it was decided to close the Kindergarten until the ban be lifted. The Members' Meeting of 4th May, 1932 records "Mr Kelly to be advised by Pastor that horse be kept out of church grounds". Also at the Members' Meeting of 5th August 1936, the Secretary was instructed to write to the Health Department regarding the state of the church grounds through neighbours placing their refuse on the grounds.

However, the major ongoing problem facing the fledgling church was finances.

At a meeting at Gordon Park on the 4th July 1929, Mr AE Bickmore, Baptist Union Treasurer, explained that the debt on the church property stood at £827. The interest bill for

1929 was £50 making a total of £877. Deducting the amount paid during the year, the total debt was £850.

Mr Bickmore explained that if £60 per annum could be paid to the Baptist Union, that would meet the interest and also slightly reduce the Principal.

In addition, the Pastor's stipend would be £180 per annum, plus rental allowance, bringing it to £206-£219. Gordon Park was invited to raise £60 per annum towards the stipend and Geebung £30. This suggestion was endorsed by the meeting and the church threw itself into raising the necessary funds.

Collections for the month of August 1929 amounted to £4/15/1; for October 1929 £3/13/11 and for December 1929 £3/14/5 of which the Boys' Club donated 5/-.

By June 1930 collections had increased to £5/0/10, average attendances at services being 55; in July 1930 attendance averaged 67 and collections were £4/19/10. (In 1931 attendances fluctuated: February averaged 41, March 48, April 43, May 50, June 48. This was despite the hard work of the then Pastor Mr Dagleish, who reported he had made 136 calls in July 1931 and 6 hospital and 7 special visits).

There were, of course, expenses. In October 1929, Mrs Johnstone was appointed to clean the church at 3/- and 10/- when scrubbed; in August 1930 the words 'Baptist Church' were painted across the front of the church at a cost of 32/6d (as the weatherboards were oiled, it required two coats of white paint). See Fig3.

Many interesting ideas were attempted to raise funds for the church and they show the spirit with which the church pulled together to meet its debt.

On the 4th December 1931, a fundraising concert was held, admission for adults being 6d and for children 3d. In January 1932 another concert was held to raise

While concentrating on establishing the newly formed church, Gordon Park still had an active interest in the spread of the gospel further afield.

funds for the church, the charge this time being 1/- for adults and 6d for children. A prize of 2/6 was to be given to the girl and boy selling the greater number of tickets. An interesting fundraiser was held on Friday 26th February 1932; this being a Harvest Festival. The gifts of produce were auctioned, the auctioneer being the Secretary. The proceeds from the sale of these goods amounted to £3/12/5. Children's items were presented for the entertainment of bidders, these items being organised by Mrs Jones. A sale of craft work was held in the church grounds on Saturday 2nd December, 1933. In order to save the church the expense, it was agreed that each member was to pay their own fee of 1/- to meet the Union Capitation Fee in 1934. These were a few of the ways employed to increase church funds.

The need to increase church funds was clearly ongoing and pressing. Despite the best efforts at fundraising, the church debt was reported in July of 1933 at £921 – up in fact from the £675 borrowed in 1926 for the church building and land. The situation was so grim that the Members' Meeting of the 1st February 1933 proposed the Secretary request the Executive Committee of the Baptist Union to pay the Pastor's stipend from the Swann Estate (a bequeath left to the Baptist Union) for a period of three years with a further extension to five years if desired, the reasons for such action being so as to allow the church collections to go off the church debt. In response to this request, Rev WE Hurst, Mr AE Bickmore and Mr Bush, representing the Union, attended the General Meeting of the Gordon Park Church on the 7th July 1933. At this meeting the Chairman (Rev W Hurst) stated that "regarding the reduction of interest and capital this could not be done as 49 other churches and one other in equally as bad a position as this church, would demand the same relief". So the need for fundraising continued with the same degree of urgency.

At the Members' Meeting of 5th April 1933, it was decided to call a special meeting of church members for the purpose of receiving suggestions in relation to socials, concerts, or tea meetings for the purpose of increasing church funds. At this meeting on 3rd May 1933, it was agreed to hold such fundraising activities quarterly; all programmes to be submitted to the Church Diaconate for approval. On the 2nd August 1933, it was agreed to open a bank account under the name of 'Gordon Park Baptist Church Debt Fund' into which monies raised would be deposited. The Pastor and Secretary were authorised to withdraw from this account.

Despite these financial difficulties, the Gordon Park Church continued to develop. A milestone was celebrated on the 8th December, 1932 when the church was constituted with a membership of 18 during the ministry of Rev CE Martin. (See Fig 8). These foundation members were:

Pastor: Rev CE Martin

Mesdames: E Kerr, A Stevenson, G Lee, T Jones, E

Dickfos, E Burnett, HR Kirkwood

Misses: N Baker, M Grant, P Johnstone, J Johnstone

Messrs: HR Kirkwood (Secretary), G Pike (Treasurer), E Dickfos (Deacon), W Kerr (Deacon), K Kerr, A Stevenson, JL Dart (Deacon)

In 1933 an Intermediate Society of Christian Endeavour was formed. Mr Kentish was appointed Superintendent and held the meetings at his private residence owing to lack of accommodation at the church.

At the Members' Meeting of 4th October 1933, Dr Dart moved, seconded Mrs Kerr that a Senior Girls' Missionary Union be formed, Mrs Kentish to be appointed Superintendent. The Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour organised a "motor trip to Sandgate" on 2nd November 1938 which was well attended.

So whilst numbers in the early 1930's were small, the church was alive and active. In a bid to reach out to the community, it was agreed in October of 1933 that notices be inserted in the Courier Mail at a cost of 1/- per week. (This was discontinued April 10, 1935).

It does however show the missionary spirit of the Gordon Park Church. Early minutes record many missionary lectures, for example in June 1933 by Rev A Weller. Moreover, even in times of financial difficulties, the church actively supported missionary work. The minutes of 1st February 1933 which record discussion between representatives of the Union and Gordon Park regarding the church's finances also record that the Foreign Mission Appeal amounted to £1/16/0. In 1934 the church adopted the missionary slogan "All At It. Always At It. Each One to Win One". This is a timely reminder from the fledgling church about the responsibility each member has to make Christ known.

The members of the early Gordon Park Church made great sacrifices and worked faithfully despite financial and other problems to establish a healthy church. In this they were led by Pastors, and in the early days, lay preachers, who served walking, cycling and driving many miles to bring messages of God's redeeming love.

The financial problem (due largely to the size of the church and depression years) saw Gordon Park and Geebung churches united under one ministry until 1951 so early Pastors travelled by bicycle between Geebung and Gordon Park. (Minutes record that on the 8th August 1934, the Women's Union purchased a bicycle "to be used by the resident Minister of the Gordon Park Church"; this bicycle was re-fitted by the church on 6th March 1940 – new tubes and tyres, pump, clips, battery, tool bag and oil can). Some early lay preachers walked from Enoggera and Nundah; some did not make it for reasons unknown, however the Secretary arranged for a magazine sermon to be in the communion table drawer to have in case of emergency. Such was the resourcefulness and commitment, which under God's abundant blessing, saw Gordon Park firmly established.

Carl Kemnitz and the Templin Assembly

By Laurie Wolter

Laurie Wolter has compiled a new history of the Kalbar (Engelsburg) Baptist Church to be published at their 125th Anniversary (see front page). He has been able to draw upon a great deal of information not previously available, especially from the Templin Church in Germany, from which many of the early settlers in the Fassifern district came. We are grateful for permission to reprint this excerpt from an early draft of his book detailing the remarkable story of one of Queensland's great 'mother churches'.

When reading the recently translated Engelsburg Baptist Cemetery records, there is one name that reoccurs time and again. It is that of C.A. Kemnitz.

Many of the early members of the 'Fassifern Scrub Assembly' were baptised by Kemnitz or his assistants Liebig or Meyer, while they were still residents of the Templin district in Prussia. It is interesting to note that a good number of those present at the first meeting of the Fassifern Assembly, but by no means all, were once members of the Templin Baptist Church.

Almost all of what we know about Carl August Kemnitz was discovered in the Jubilee Book kindly sent to us by the members of the present day Templin Baptist Church, who celebrated their 150th anniversary in May 1998.

Carl August Kemnitz was born in Templin but worked in Berlin. Even though he had lived a good God-fearing life, he was still restless about his salvation. He was led in his search for inner peace by a work mate to the Baptist congregation in Berlin, where he came to faith in Jesus and was baptised by G.W. Lehmann on 21 June, 1844.

Two brothers from the same assembly planned a visit to the north, and as their journey would take them through Templin, Kemnitz suggested that they should visit his parents.

While there they met a God-fearing man by the name of Carl Friedrich Zahl with whom they stayed in Templin for several days. Being greatly inspired they wrote back to Kemnitz saying that he should now come to Templin himself to 'water the seeds that they had sown'. Unable to go himself, Kemnitz asked his friend Steinberg to do this service. Steinberg was also originally from Templin and likewise belonged to the Berlin Assembly.

It was not long before Steinberg was back in Berlin with Zahl and two other Templiners, who were in turn baptised by Lehmann.

The baptism of Zahl quickly became common knowledge around Templin, and caused quite a deal of unrest. The Pastor of the State (Lutheran) Church took the trouble to try to change the minds of those who had been baptised in an attempt to steer them away from what he perceived as a dangerous new sect. Much derision was to be heard from the local

townspeople.

In order to support those who were being attacked, Kemnitz came to Templin himself. Many sought him out to hear more; however even on the first day he was forbidden by the authorities from holding any meetings, and furthermore was threatened with fines and imprisonment. Kemnitz was not deterred.

In August 1845 Lehmann and an associate visited a small group in Templin, which by this time was a station of Berlin. They snuck around the town wall and in to Templin late at night to avoid being detected and still held a meeting at that late hour. Such was the wonderful response, it became clear to Lehmann that Templin needed someone permanent to carry on the missionary and pastoral work. Of course no person from out of town could be allowed to be seen there, as the local magistrate would soon use his influence to be rid of such a person. So Lehmann asked Kemnitz if he would take it on.

After much reluctance Kemnitz finally came to the realisation that God had called him to the work field of Templin. Kemnitz began his ministry in September 1845, and by the beginning of 1848 the number of believers had grown to 32.

In due course, on Pentecost day 1848, the Templin Church was granted autonomy by the Berlin Assembly with Kemnitz as pastor.

However the winds of opposition were blowing strongly against the young church. The State and Church officials were doing their best to hinder its spread. All those who desired to attend the meetings were first required by the authorities to make their intentions known to the State Pastor or the Police. A meeting at one member's home was broken up by the village magistrate because 'the duration of the meeting had not been declared'.

It was because of a baptism at Gerswalde, a small village outside of Templin, that Kemnitz was convicted and fined a substantial amount or 14 days gaol in default. The baptism had been properly declared, but Kemnitz performed it four hours later than he had given notice. A plea for clemency was made to the King of Prussia to seek remission of the fine, but it was turned down. This was remarkable as religious freedom had been guaranteed in the Prussian Constitution since 1848.

Nevertheless restrictions were imposed and 'contempt of officials' would be punished. Very soon all church activities not carried out by a State ordained Pastor i.e. funerals, baptisms, preaching, etc., were considered by the authorities to be 'contempt of officialdom'.

Despite the persecution described above, and many other incidents meant to bring about the demise of the new church, the work flourished.

During 1861 another difficulty arose. Up until this time Kemnitz's stipend had been paid via Oncken by the American Missions Union in Boston.

Because of the difficulties arising from the American Civil War which was then raging, the stipend could no longer be paid from America. As the Assembly still had a large debt remaining from the newly built chapel, it was impossible for them to finance Kemnitz themselves. Eventually Oncken reached out to the Spurgeon Assembly in London to obtain the funds for Kemnitz's support.

In the years of 1862/63 there was a revival in the parish. During Christmas, nine people were converted at Prenzlau. On New Year's Night in Gerswalde, sixty people became believers. In the beginning of January in Thymen, fifteen people became followers, and in Warthe there were twenty eight people in eight days.

This movement of God was to continue. Kemnitz wrote: *"though I am scarcely able to draw breath because of the great exertion day and night, my soul is indeed cheerful...if only we had more workers! Everyone calls 'come to us', but it is impossible to be in 60 places at the same time..."*

In January 1864 he reported in a member's meeting that in the previous year 214 people had been baptised, and that the Assembly now had 644 members.

With the members living in places which were spread out right across the Templin district, the Assembly's main centres of activity developed at four stations; Templin, Gerswalde, Warthe, and Prenzlau.

By the time of the Assembly's 25th anniversary in 1870, the membership statistics were truly remarkable. Kemnitz reported at the celebrations:

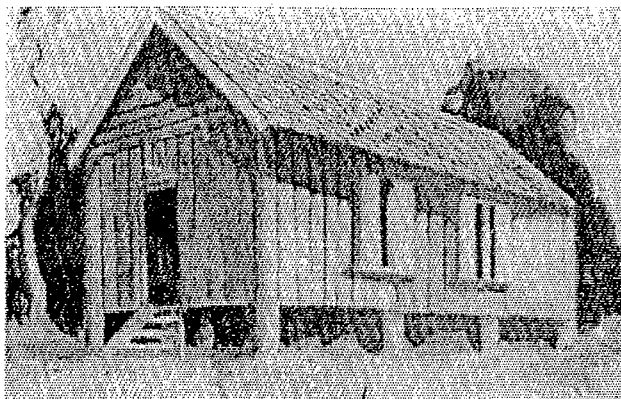
"The acceptances into membership since the founding of the Assembly through baptism - 1158 persons of which 129 have 'gone home', expelled - 184, moved away - 91, emigrated - 179, of which 141 have gone to America, 27 to Australia, Africa 7 and Russia 4. The others are to be found in 82 places throughout the districts of Mecklenburg and Pomerania."

As evidenced by these statistics the 1860's and 1870's were a time of much social upheaval. Many Germans were sick of Europe because of the agricultural decline, religious persecution, and social structures that

condemned them to lives of poverty. Many farmers' sons had no hope of ever owning their own piece of land, so it is hardly surprising that they grasped what they saw as great opportunities which were opening up on the other side of the world, particularly in America and Australia.

Large numbers of people from the Uckermark region which surrounds Templin, and Pomerania which extends north to the Baltic Sea, were on the move, so much so that it was impacting heavily on the membership of some of the stations.

Carl Kemnitz writes in his annual report of 1865: *"The Gerswalde station has again been seriously hit by 'the Emigration', where 34 members have sought new homes in Australia and America. May they not be lost to the Kingdom of God..."* History has shown that Kemnitz's prayer was answered as many of these emigrants along with their compatriots would prove to be faithful to their Lord in playing their part in the foundation of new assemblies around the world.



The Original Kalbar (Engelsburg) Baptist Church, 1877

The ministry of Kemnitz continued in Templin until 1886 when he accepted a call to the Oncken Assembly in Hamburg. During his eight years of ministry in that place he was to baptise another 300 people. At the age of 73 while still in the pulpit, Kemnitz suffered a stroke

and was called home by God nine days later on the 23rd January, 1894.

Obviously the extensive work in the Templin Assembly's parish could not be undertaken by just one person. There were always several missionary workers at the side of Kemnitz as he continued to faithfully carry out his Commission.

(Continued from page 8)

bloc which once provided aid and trade. Poverty is a problem on every hand - 1950s cars are common - Chevys, Fords and others right out of the movies! Many of the Cuban Baptist pastors do not even have a bicycle for transportation.

The BWA Council meetings were highly successful. The Heritage Commission, under the leadership of Dr Charles Weber of Wheaton College (chair) and Dr Geoff Pound, incoming Principal, Whitley College, Melbourne, (secretary) met to share ideas, hear papers on the history of Cuban Baptists, to preview a new video of William Carey and to plan future activities. The Commission Web site will be further developed, a book will be produced on leaders of the BWA and members will assist in the writing and editing of the new official Centenary history of the BWA.

(Lots more reports about Cuba on www.bwanet.org)

'Cuba para Cristo'

Baptist World Alliance General Council, Havana, Cuba, July 2000

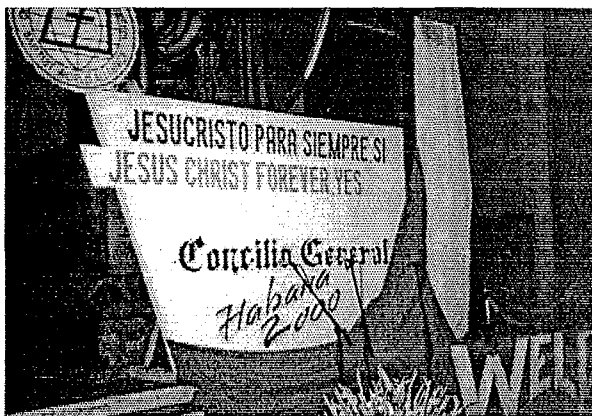
A report by David Parker

Cuban Baptists were thrilled to host the BWA General Council this year. There are about 38,000 church members in over 400 churches and many scores of outstations and home churches. The number has doubled in recent years. Missionary work has taken place in the country for more than 100 years. There are now three main groups, the Eastern and Western Conventions (aligned with the American Baptists and the Southern Baptists) and the Freewill Baptists (aligned with a US group of the same name). These are affiliated with the BWA. There is a fourth group, the Fraternity, not yet a BWA member, which seems to take a more radical line on identifying with the local culture and involving themselves in the socio-political scene.

Some Baptists have been involved in this way from an early stage. The first Cuban Baptists were patriots who were exiled to the US following revolts against Spanish rule over a century ago. They became Baptists in the US and when they were able to return to their homeland, they continued their political activity while planting churches. Later in the 1950s, Baptist people, including sons of a prominent pastor, were part of the revolutionary movement. One son organised the reception of the ship which brought Castro back to Cuba from Mexico. He continued to organize urban support for Castro but both sons were soon casualties of the war. In the 1970s various Baptist people and churches were involved in efforts for greater social responsibility, but in the early 1990s several churches were expelled from the Western Convention for this kind of activity; as a result they formed the Fraternity. It supports the Martin Luther King Jr. Study Centre at one of the suburban Baptist churches where the pastor is Raul Saurez Ramos; he is an outstanding theologian and has also been a member of the national parliament for five years.

Churches now have freedom to conduct services and meetings in their own church buildings and in homes, but not in public places or the open air. There would be a ready audience for open air work because many people are to be seen in the parks, streets and other public places. However, there was a breakthrough for the BWA meetings because permission was given to hold two rallies in an indoor sports arena in central Havana. According to news reports it was the first time such an event had occurred in 41 years. The arena is similar to Festival Hall in Brisbane and was packed on both occasions with BWA delegates and local people, about 3,000 people in all. Evangelistic services were also held in almost 40 churches using BWA delegates as preachers. These events were part of an outreach program of the Cuban Baptists under the slogan, 'Cuba para Cristo' - Cuba for Christ. Large banners with this theme were flying at the central Baptist Church in Havana, the sports arena and the Capitol Building during the General Council meetings.

"This is a historic event for the Cuban people," said Victor Gonzales, general secretary of the Baptist Convention of Western Cuba. "This is the first time that all the Cuban pastors, seminaries, and missionaries are together in one meeting. It is the first time we have celebrated open meetings since revolution times."



The Minister for Religious Affairs was present and spoke at the opening dinner of the Council held in the Capitol Building (a replica of the US Capital in Washington, DC). President Fidel Castro invited the leaders of the BWA to his office on the final afternoon where they spent about two hours in conversation with him.

Cuba is historically connected with Christopher Columbus who, when sighting and landing on the island, is reported to have described it as the most beautiful land in the world (*Esta es la tierra mas hermosa que ojos humanos han visto.*) Located just inside the tropics, about half the size of Victoria (about 1200 km E-W) and supporting a population of 11 million, it is indeed an attractive place with a

fascinating history of Spanish and American colonization extending over 400 years. Havana the capital (pop. 2 million) is attractively laid out (especially the old city) sprawling westward along the coast from a deep harbour. Myriads of streets contain historic buildings, monuments, and large numbers of richly decorated colonial style apartment blocks, public buildings and mansions, most of which are now in poor condition. The country is struggling under the US economic blockade and the failure of the Communist

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