

# The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of the Baptist Historical Society of Queensland

(formerly: Baptist Historical Society of Qld Newsletter)

No. 52 May-Aug 2002

Special Jireh  
Church Planting  
Issue

## Celebrating Jireh - our most fruitful church ever?

Jireh Baptist Church, the focus of the 2002 Festival of Baptist Heritage, existed from 1862 to 1978. It was important because it was the first in Queensland to represent the Particular (or Calvinistic) Baptist stream, one of the great traditions from our heritage. A number of people in the original Wharf St. Church (now City Tabernacle) felt it "soon departed from the Truth, holding the doctrines of universal redemption, requiring only a natural faith and pressing as many as they could to make proselytes, into their communion, in addition to which the utmost laxity of discipline prevailed." These people were in "continual and deep sorrow" about this situation. But then "with feelings of inexpressible thankfulness" they heard John Kingsford, an experienced Baptist preacher, who arrived in 1861 and helped with services at the Presbyterian chapel, South Brisbane. They found to their "great joy, he spoke the word with boldness contending earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints." Within months they moved out of Wharf Street and established their own church with him as pastor.

This was not the only group of people dissatisfied with Wharf Street and especially its leader, Rev. B. G. Wilson. Others soon separated to form Edward Street and Fortesque Street. But Jireh was especially notable because of its success in establishing many other flourishing, long lasting churches, not all clones of itself! The main impetus was its pastor, John Kingsford, who had a firm belief that as soon as the mother church reached about 100 members, it should start a new one. Thus it formed Windsor Road (1874), Albion (1882), and Nundah (1888). One its members was responsible for starting Toowong (1881) and it assisted strongly with the Bulimba mission. Years later it planted Norman Park (now merged with Bulimba to form Carey). These daughter churches went on to form others, so the total is around 15. In the end, when Jireh closed, the proceeds from the sale of the property provided the opportunity for the erection of a building in the new Centenary estate, which was accordingly named Centenary-Jireh. Appropriately this is the venue for our celebration of Jireh as Queensland's greatest Church planting congregation on May 18, 2002.

This great achievement of Jireh occurred during the height of John Kingsford's ministry. During this time the denomination formed a Home Mission Society which would take over the bulk of this work for the next 100 years. Jireh contributed greatly to its efforts as well - the first two superintendents came from Jireh and then later, Jireh provided the HM with office space for about ten years. (Read all about the successor to the HM, Mission to Queensland, in Rev M.C. Williams' book - only \$8.00!)

Read on in the following pages for the stories of Jireh and its daughter churches!

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## **Jireh Particular Baptist Church**

Jireh was the second Baptist Church established in Brisbane, and the third (after Ipswich) in Queensland. The name "Jireh" is a biblical word meaning, "The Lord our Provider." The church survived until 1978 when declining numbers forced its closure. The building was sold and proceeds were eventually devoted to the erection of the building at Centenary. The building itself was used for other purposes until its destruction by fire in Feb 1987. Since then the land has been left vacant but redevelopment now appears to be underway.

The church began on 24 Oct 1861 when several families decided for doctrinal reasons to withdraw from the Wharf Street (now City Tabernacle) Baptist Church to unite together in "Christian Fellowship according to the order of the New Testament." On December 2nd 1861 the "Jireh Particular Baptist Church" was formed. Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice were carefully considered, and unanimously consented and agreed to by all present as being in harmony with the Will of God. The record reporting this meeting includes thirteen foolscap pages of Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice.

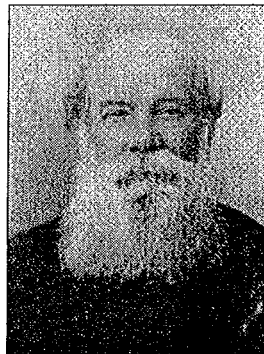
The minutes of 5 Jan 1862 state that "a meeting was held at Mr. Thomas Price's. Present: Mr. John Kingsford, Thomas Price, John Bale, Thomas Sands, Thomas Childs, Thomas Boniface and Sisters Sands and Ellen Birt. After uniting in prayer, praise and reading of the Holy Scriptures, Mr. Kingsford spoke of the important step about to be taken, the mighty responsibilities and duties it involved. Conscious of insufficiency, the members resolved, in the strength of Jesus, to go forward, seeking only to glorify Him by a consistent walk and conversation, and that by a public profession of His Name and adherence to the Sacred Truth, the Gospel might become more extensively known, gladly received and blessed to the edification of saints.

The first meetings were held in the School of Arts, Queen Street. Soon land was purchased and the first and only building, located in Gipps Street, Fortitude Valley near Ann Street, was erected at a total cost of £2,000. It was opened in 1862 by Rev. J. B. McClure. The first minister, Rev. John Kingsford (1818-1905), pastored the Church on a lay-ministerial basis for almost nine years. (He was a brother of R.A. Kingsford, prominent Brisbane draper and politician.) In

October 1871 he relinquished his business interests, giving a further 28 years of vigorous and successful ministry.

Jireh Church was always a strong missionary church, the home work and overseas sharing their deep concern. In the Metropolitan area they were directly responsible for the commencement of such churches as Windsor Road 1874, Albion 1882, Nundah 1888. Toowong and Bulimba (now called Carey) also had strong links (see below for more on this).

The first Queensland Baptist Missionary - Miss Martha Plested, a member of Jireh, went to India on 28 Sept 1885 - only two months after her application was considered by the first meeting of the Queensland Baptist Missionary Society.



Rev John Kingsford

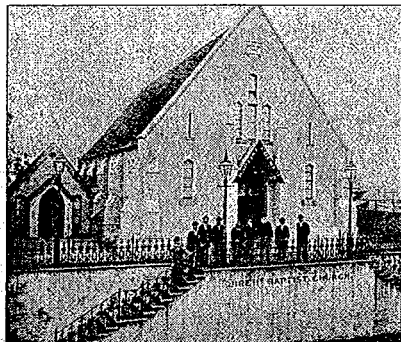
The 'Home' field has always held priority of interest at Jireh; they provided the first Home Mission Superintendent - Rev. T. U. Symons, who was succeeded by Rev. B. Hewison then minister of Jireh; this interest was also expressed in strong giving and prayer - a characteristic evident in the later years of the life of the church. For a 10 year period in the 1950s, Jireh church provided office space for the Home Mission free of charge.

Jireh Church has given to the denomination some very notable men. They include Dr. Wilfred L. Jarvis who was a well known pastor-evangelist, was a young man in the church of which his father was the pastor; he became a Christian, was baptised and received into membership, later to become a Home Missionary in Queensland. Later he became one of Australia's outstanding Baptist ministers, and Vice-President of the Baptist World Alliance. Others were Mr. A. E. Bickmore, many years treasurer of the Baptist Union; Mr. Carey-Carter, Secretary, Queensland Temperance League; Mr. George Grimes, first President of the Baptist Missionary Society of Queensland; Rev. Gray A. Parker, and Pastor Ralph Cameron. One of the ministers, Rev A.J.W. Chisholm, was an early superintendent of Baptist aged care work, then centred on Clifford House.

Several descendants of the founding members and early pastored were associated with the church in later times including Rev. John Kingsford's great granddaughter, Miss Isobel

Grimes; and the son, Mr. K. A. S. Kirwood, and grand-daughter, Miss Annette Kirwood of the second minister, Rev. E. A. Kirwood (the second minister of the Church).

The following ministries (plus some interims) spanned the 117 year life of the church - John Kingsford, E. A. Kirwood, J. E. Walton,



Jireh Baptist Church

AC. Jarvis, B. Hewison, T. McColl, J.C. W. Moon, S. M. Potter, Pastor Waters, Geo. McKecknie, A. J. W. Chisholm, P. J. Evans, A.H. Abbott, and J. C. Llewellyn.

Many people showed a great deal of loyalty and love through their energetic and faithful service to sustain the work of the church and to keep it in good heart over many years; ministries included the Choir, Sunday School, Christian Endeavour, Band of Hope, Women's Guild, Missionary Union, Old Folks at Home; the Brisbane Benevolent Society which held its meetings in the church for many years, was also another interest. One of the longest serving people connected with the church was Miss W. Low, a member of one of the leading families, who for a period of over sixty years presided at the organ - every service, and every choir practice, with only sickness occasionally preventing her being present.

The Centenary Souvenir proudly recorded the church planting ministry of Jireh, by reference to the familiar words of Isaiah 54:2: "lengthening their cords and strengthening their stakes":

*The following gives an idea of how this lengthening and strengthening was effected:— It has already been noted that Jireh began what was to prove to be a long and effective ministry in the year 1861. In 1874 Windsor Road was commenced as a Mission Station. From this Church we find Ashgrove branching out in 1937 and from it The Gap in 1959. Albion, another daughter, commenced work in 1882 and extended her witness in 1926 with the opening of*

*Gordon Park. The cause at Nundah, established in 1888, demonstrated the idea of extension when it began to operate Banyo as part of its plan in 1930.*

*Quoting the words of a previous Minister, that "Jireh had a child in her old age" we direct our thoughts to Norman Park, when seventy years after the establishment of the Mother Church, the year 1931, a group of members resident in that locality instituted services. Bulimba in 1861 and Toowong in 1881 can trace their beginnings back to Jireh. At the time of this writing [1961] the total membership (not including adherents) of the Churches mentioned reaches the figure of 632.*

*All the above Churches are still operating and presenting a witness worthy of the faith of those who "blazed the trail" in the Name of the Lord. We cannot find another church in Queensland, and would be interested to learn of any throughout Australia, with the remarkable record of four Daughter Churches, three Grand-daughter Churches and one Great Grand-Daughter Church, as well as two others, the responsibility of whose beginnings we accept.*

That record can be extended to about 15 in total by taking into account church planting efforts of the daughter churches in the last 40 years and the fact that proceeds from the sale of the Jireh property provided a substantial portion of the funding for the erection of the church at Horizon Drive, Middle Park.

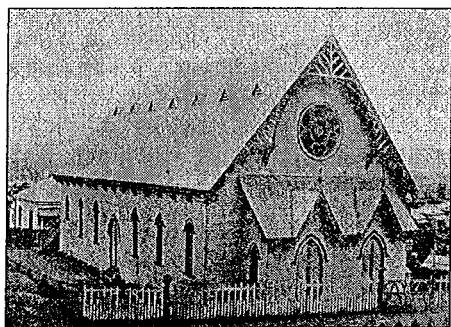
## **Windsor Road Baptist Church**

Rev. John Kingsford, the pastor of Jireh, and Rev. John Straughen, an evangelist, conducted open-air meetings in the expanding suburb of Red Hill in the early 1870s. A Sunday School was commenced and cottage prayer meetings were initiated. On 24 May 1874, a small building known as the Ebenezer Chapel was opened on what is now called Waterworks Road, where the small Baptist congregation gathered for worship.

On 5 June 1877, the church was officially constituted with 19 members and with Rev. Thomas Leitch as the first pastor. The young church continued to meet in the Ebenezer Chapel until growth caused a pressing need for a larger meeting place. A new site was purchased on Windsor Road (the present site), and a new building was constructed there in 1888 for the cost of £2000. This 400 seat building was opened debt-free, largely because of the donation of the

timber used in construction by Mr Stone, a member who owned a nearby timber mill. This building was one of the largest church buildings in Queensland at that time. [Ed. – other information from this period suggests the church was in debt for a considerable period due to harsh financial circumstances in the community in the 1890s]

It was the strong dynamic preaching ministry of the Scottish-born Thomas Leitch that was primarily responsible for the growth at Windsor Road. A number of small revivals occurred during this time, and by 1905, the jubilee year of Baptist work in Queensland, the Windsor Road Church reported a membership of 162 and a Sunday School of 275, greater than those of Jireh. Rev. Leitch soon developed great respect among



Windsor Road Baptist Church

Baptists in Queensland, and so was elected President of the Baptist Association (Union) in 1891-2.

Windsor Road was a strong missionary church, sending a number of missionaries to overseas service, mainly in China or India. The second Baptist missionary from Queensland, Miss Kate Allanby, went from Windsor Road to East Bengal (now Bangladesh) in 1885 to minister mainly among women. She later moved out from the Baptist work to form the Evangelical Missionary Society of Mayurbhanj, while her colleague, Miss Martha Plested from Jireh Church, who preceded her to India, remained with the Baptist mission. Other missionaries connected with the church have been Mr R. McIntyre with the CIM in China and Thos Beasley a colporteur in Australia. Windsor Road was also involved in the formation of the Brisbane City Mission to care for the poor of the city. Rev. Leitch served on the committee that ran the Mission.

Thomas Leitch retired in May 1929, after a record fifty-two years in the pastoral ministry at Windsor Road, his first and only pastorate. In Sept 1929, he died unexpectedly at Port Said whilst returning from a trip home to Scotland. His relatives financed the erection of a hall in his

memory in 1933 on the northern side of the church building, although it was moved in the 1940s to the southern side where it now stands.

Other ministries followed, including those of Rev. A.H. Brooks and Dr H.W. Dart, who was instrumental in having plans drawn up for a new building (although this was never erected) and in maintaining the strong financial and spiritual position of the cause at Red Hill. Although the earlier growth did not continue, it was still a very strong and influential church. However, it did begin to move away from its original Calvinistic emphasis, and to drop the use of the name "Ebenezer Particular Baptist Church." Open communion began to replace closed communion to which Rev. Leitch had adhered so staunchly, and individual glasses replaced the single cup. (Many of the records of the church from this and later periods are no longer available and the church's sometimes over independent stance meant that its activities were not well reported to the rest of the Baptist denomination.)

In 1937, Rev. Robert Horn assumed the responsibilities of the pastorate, commencing his ministry with a church of 136 members and 180 Sunday School pupils. He was responsible for the formation and development of the Ashgrove Baptist Church, building on a foundation established a few years earlier by Mr Brooks. However, around 1942, the membership at Windsor Road dropped from 120 to 66 and the Sunday School from 205 to 120. Mr Horn (who moved to Ashgrove) was followed by the Welsh evangelist Gwynne Durward. His Pentecostal background caused some difficulties and by the end of his long pastorate in 1973, membership had dropped to the 30s. These people resisted efforts to close the church; nevertheless, the church became a trustee of the Baptist Union and was placed under the care of the Ashgrove church.

The faith of the few was rewarded and from the time of the church's centenary in 1977, under new leadership and different strategies of ministry, the membership increased rapidly to about 130, much of which was the result of ministry among university students. Outreach to the Helensvale area of the Gold Coast was a product of this new life. The home church continued to thrive with increased local ministries, missionaries being sent overseas and an enlarged pastoral team. The membership peaked around 1990, and in recent years the church, still meeting in the same buildings, has been re-establishing its mission and vision to suit the needs of the community in which it is placed.

## Albion Baptist Church

The work at Albion was started as a preaching station of Jireh Baptist Church, when on 20 Jan 1882 Rev. John Kingsford announced that land had been offered for a church building in the district. By mid-year, it was decided that the land was not suitable, but by then two allotments in McLennan St had been purchased for £60. On 14 Dec 1882 Mr. Kingsford "reported progress re Albion Chapel Building fund stating that the friends were working very energetically in the matter." He also laid before the meeting a plan and estimate prepared by Mr (later Rev.) W. Richer of Toowong who kindly offered to oversee the carpentry work in connection with the building free of charge. A picnic was held on 1 Jan 1883 when about 300 people gathered to witness the laying of the foundation stone of the building at Albion. It was opened for public worship

26 June 1883, with evening church services, Sunday school classes and weekly prayer meetings being conducted by men from Jireh.

Mr. Cavanagh, a Liverpool evangelist, commenced a twelve months engagement on 1 Aug 1884 and upon the completion of his term, Rev. C. Padley took the oversight of the work for a few months. From his departure until 1889 services were again supplied by brethren from Jireh, especially Mr. John Low who resided in the district. Mr. Lawson then rendered useful service, until he left the colony early in 1890.

In July 1890 Rev W. Higlett of Toowoomba was invited by Jireh to become assistant to Rev. J. Kingsford with a special view to endeavouring to form a self supporting church at Albion. He commenced his labours 1 Oct 1890 and at the conclusion of two year's work, 30 members of the "Jireh" Church who were worshipping at Albion became a separate church.

The newly formed church passed through a severe testing the following year - the great floods, and a financial crisis. The flood was caused by excessive rainfall on the northern arm of the Brisbane river. It took a week for the flood waters to reach Brisbane so there was ample warning, though when it arrived the weather was fine and the sun shining brightly. It reached the

area at a week-end, and steps could be taken to save the church furnishings.

On the Sunday morning the water was up to the top of the church fence and one of the members called to see if any other precautions were necessary. Rev W. Higlett was living in the cottage next to the church and donned his bathing suit to swim across into the church. Ropes were secured to the rafters and the organ hoisted into the roof area of the church thus saving it from any damage. The water inside the church building rose to four feet. As the rains fell during the following weeks and another flood came the waters inside the building rose by four more feet.

Over the years, when the country suffered financially, the church also suffered; it can be noted that more than one pastor went without for a time so that the church could survive. Apart from a few times of hardship, most of the working life of Albion has been completely debt free.

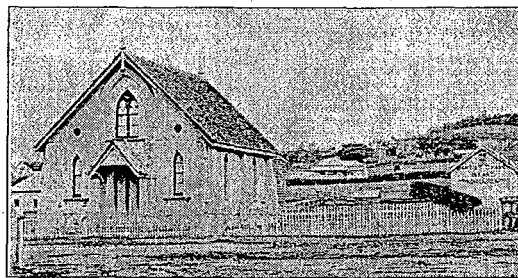
Sunday School or the teaching of the Word of God to school age

children was always a priority in the church, not only for the value placed on spiritual education itself, but also as an outreach to the parents of the children who attended. By the end of 1916 the church was full of young people and the Sunday school was one of the largest Baptist schools in Queensland.

During the period of mid-1920s, the Christian Endeavour group grew and was one of the most popular around Brisbane, due mainly to the gifts bestowed on the minister and especially his wife, Rev Robt and Mrs Kerr. At this time these two people poured their God given gifts into young people bringing them into a deeper knowledge of Christ and inspiring them to good works in His name.

Over the years many other groups were started. Albion had one of the most respected church choirs of the time, with dedicated organists and choir masters who provided pleasure to many down through the years. Singers and musicians have always had a part to play in the life of the church, and they rendered assistance to many other churches as well.

In the early 1920s, a tent mission was set up by Albion in the Gordon Park area. Just as Albion itself had been started as a preaching station of the Jireh Baptist Church, people from Albion



Albion Baptist Church

were sent to conduct services at Gordon Park. Just nine months later, the new church was running on its own, and there was a need to extend the existing building. Even further down the track that building had to be demolished so a new facility could be erected on the site where Gordon Park Baptist Church is now located. [Ed.-Gordon Park itself undertook outreach to the Kedron area in the 1950s and later took an interest in the Stafford work. In the late 1980s it also offered some support at Coolum.]

During the rapid development of the suburbs in Brisbane throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Albion maintained efforts to provide a gospel witness to the residents of the newly populated areas. Through liaison with the Home Missions Department of the Baptist Union of Queensland, Albionites ascertained that the Department had options on two vacant blocks of land in Appleby Road, Stafford. These were unsuitable for conducting open air Sunday schools and as a result a witness through this avenue commenced under the shop awnings of what is now the Rode shopping complex. Unbeknown to Albion at this time was the fact that Nundah Baptist Church also had options on three blocks of vacant land in Appleby Road, now the site of Stafford Heights Baptist Church (directly opposite the Rode shopping complex). As soon as the church was established on the site, Albion discontinued the open air Sunday school activities.

Only a few years later Albion was again burdened for the lack of Christian witness in the Albany Creek district. This burden activated Albionites to set up a Sunday school ministry in the home of one of the local residents. This culminated in Albion purchasing a residence at Albany Creek to house an assistant pastor to encourage and accelerate the witness within the Albany Creek community. Soon after, church meetings commenced there in the local kindergarten hall, and further developed to become the present day South Pine Community Church at Albany Creek.

Besides serving as members of the local church at Albion several of past ministers have held positions in the Baptist Union of Queensland. It started with Rev J. Kingsford from Jireh Baptist Church who was President from 1880-1. Before coming to Albion, Rev. W. Higlett had been President 1885-6, but after he arrived, he was very deeply involved with the Baptist Union - secretary (1890-1902), editor of *The Queensland Baptist*, and serving on numerous committees.

There are also many others who dedicated

their lives not only to serve their local church, but in Baptist Union work as well; in some cases their families carried on the great work started so long ago. Over the years many former Albion members moved out to other Baptist Churches and a number became ministers, missionaries, teachers and leaders elsewhere.

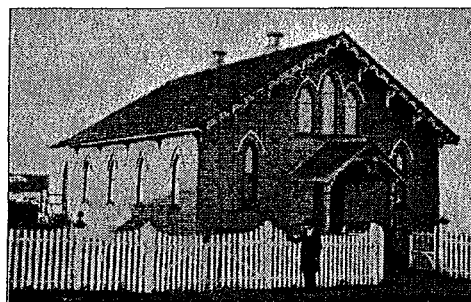
Queensland Bible Institute (now Bible College of Queensland) was established first at Albion by Dr G. J. Morgans in 1943 because of the great need for more in-depth Bible study among the young people of the time. The first meetings were held in the school hall at Albion. As it grew it was given the name Queensland Bible Institute and relocated to the city and then to its present site at Toowong.

In later years, with changing populations and trends in church life, Albion church declined in strength. In the late 1980s the church took a somewhat different direction under the name "Fire of Hope Baptist Church." Today, once again under different leadership, it stands on another new threshold of ministry in the local area with a rich heritage to enjoy.

## Nundah Baptist Church

(Condensed by Rev. M. C. Williams from *Grow in Grace, a centenary history, 1888-1988*, by Patricia Magee)

Baptist connections with Nundah go back to the days of the German Mission at Zion's Hill (Nundah), the site of the first free settlers in Moreton Bay and their work amongst the indigenous people, dating from 1838. From his arrival in 1959, Rev. B. G. Wilson and others preached in the small chapel there which in time became an outstation of the Wharf Street church. Some of the missionaries and their children were baptised by Mr Wilson, but these folk for the most part became associated with the work at



First Nundah Baptist Church (originally Fortesque Street, Spring Hill)

Hendra (now Clayfield) rather than Nundah.

In 1883 Mr & Mrs Francis Irvine and family arrived in Nundah. They renewed their association with Jireh church and soon found there were eleven other members of Jireh church who travelled there each Sunday from Nundah. This was brought to the attention of Jireh's minister, the Rev John Kingsford who began to conduct services in the old Wesleyan Methodist church at the corner of Buckland and Sandgate Roads. He continued to preach once per month with laymen conducting the services on other Sundays. In August 1886 the Rev John Kingsford secured a building site in Chapel Street (off Sandgate Road) at moderate cost. The work continued as an outstation of Jireh for nearly two years without much progress.

At a meeting on 1 May 1888 a petition was passed requesting the parent church to grant separation, but this was denied. The next step was not taken lightly as most of the families concerned had long association with Jireh. Thirteen wrote resigning from Jireh in order to form the new church. They mostly have names well known in Baptist circles - Frances Irvine (who ran the Sunday school), Thomas Went (who did most of the preaching), John Gleadhill, James Carter, John Bernard, John T. Shaw with their wives, and Thomas U. Symonds who later became the church's pastor (and first Baptist Union Home Missions Superintendent).

A theological difference was also involved in the decision. Jireh church had a constitution adopted from the Strict and Particular Baptists of Great Britain with a strong Calvinist theology. As a result communion was restricted to members of Jireh only i.e. strict communion. So instead of adopting or adapting the Jireh church constitution, the Nundah people adopted the Fortescue Street church constitution with small changes. That church had recently disbanded due to members moving out to the suburbs. Nundah also bought the Fortescue Street church building and organ at bargain prices. The chapel still stands in Chapel Street where it is now used by a church of another denomination after being a Masonic Hall for many years. On Sunday 9 June 1889 the Nundah Baptist Church had its official opening ceremonies.

The new fellowship did not find the going easy. Preaching was carried out by Mr T. U. Symonds who later entered the fulltime ministry, and others. In January 1893 with their spirits down they approached Jireh church to take them over again. It would be interesting to have been a fly on the wall when this was discussed by the Jireh deacons! The request was turned down. The arrival of Alfred

Shaw in July 1893 as lay preacher and then fulltime minister proved to be a God-send. Over the next seven years the membership increased to 53 and a manse was added next to the church. The Sunday School grew to 103 children.

Succeeding years were to see a split after the arrival of a new minister (1902), a depression (1904), and the church again in a low state (1909). The sixteen year ministry of the Rev. A. G. Weller stands out as a highlight of Nundah's history. He served as senior chaplain in the Brisbane area during World War I, and afterwards he led the church to erect a new building, the Queensland Baptist Memorial Church, in honour of those from Queensland Baptist churches who served or fell in the 1914-18 War. It was opened after much effort on 4 August 1923.

In the Jireh tradition of sponsoring new causes Nundah took an interest in outreach. Quite early it was busy in the Albany Creek area and later at Chermerside. It was also active in the once



Queensland Baptist War Memorial Church,  
Nundah

thriving church at Pinkenba, based on the meatworks, but there was no lasting result from these efforts.

Banyo became the Nundah church's first permanent daughter church when it took over an existing Sunday School in 1925 and began services in a rented hall. A Nundah member donated a church site which was later built on. After World War II with the Wavell Heights area developing, the church seized the opportunity and bought a block of land. Services began in a home in May 1949. On behalf of Nundah, Mr Ray Smith drew up plans and in August 1955 the new church building was opened.

In 1964, the still strong Nundah church began to look at the developing suburbs further away by initially buying land in West Chermerside/Craigslea. These four blocks were later sold in favour of five blocks in Appleby Road, Stafford. This was a popular area for young families, and it was obvious the work there would thrive. The Stafford



North church was built with considerable help from Nundah as well as the transfer of several church members. It was opened in February 1969. It became the largest of Nundah's daughter churches soon outgrowing the parent church. Later a new church complex was built and it is now known as the Stafford Heights Baptist Church. Money from the repayment of a substantial loan was later used to partly fund the purchase of land for the future Bracken Ridge Baptist Church but there was no other involvement.

From the 1970s onwards, with the Nundah district becoming older and in decline, and with the young people all moving further out to distant new suburbs, the church accepted that change had come and concentrated on its survival and adaptation to change with loss of leaders and members. But that is another story!

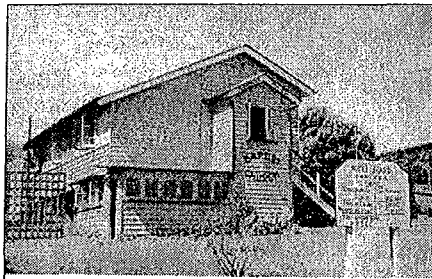
[Ed.- Nundah church was resumed for road-tunnel works in the area and the final service took place in October 1998. Nundah and Wavell Heights merged to form North-East Baptist Church. Plans are now underway to rebuild on the old site.]

## **Norman Park & Bulimba Baptist Churches**

*(Carey Baptist Church Balmoral)*

**Jireh Church** was directly responsible for the establishment of work at Norman Park when in Sept 1931 a number of members who were resident in the area began a Sunday School. In 1936 a block of land was bought in Dickens Street for £95. The Fairfield Sunday School was bought the same price and moved onto the land for use as a church. The fellowship was constituted in 1943. The old building was replaced in 1961.

By this time, thoughts were turning to cooperation with the Bulimba Church. It was one of the oldest fellowships in Queensland, having originated as early as 1856, as a preaching station of Wharf Street which had been founded only the year before. The work was under the care of Wharf



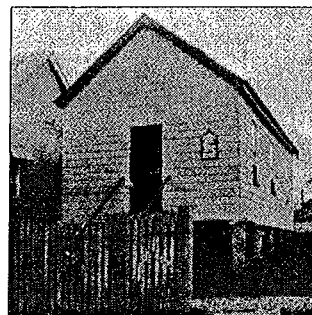
First Norman Park Baptist Church

Street at first but this arrangement ceased when there was a serious division at that church in 1864. Jireh took responsibility at least for a period, as did Petrie Terrace, but the work did not prosper very well.

In the meantime, James Johnston, who had come to Brisbane under John Dunmore Lang's immigration scheme in 1849, established the first river front farm in Bulimba. Under Rev. B.G. Wilson's influence, Johnston, a Presbyterian, became convinced of the necessity of believers' baptism and left his old church. Baptist meetings were held in his house, and his family were mostly responsible for the Sunday School. He gave a block of land in Henderson Street for the erection of a church (about 1862), which was a boost to the work. By the late 1880s, this building was in need of major renovation, so it was enlarged and rebuilt in a better position on the block and served the church well for about 70 years. Even so, the church was only constituted 15 Dec 1940.

By the late 1950s, the site was increasingly unsuitable, especially since the church had been strengthened by the Billy Graham crusade. In 1959, 55 perches of land was bought on Lytton Road for £2500, and an old Housing Commission structure erected on it. The old church was also moved from Henderson Street. The new facilities were opened in June 1960.

Now the Bulimba and Norman Park churches were even closer, so within a few years definite thought was given to co-operation. On 15 Nov 1967, a decision was made to merge, forming a new church, Carey Baptist Church Balmoral, thus bringing the two churches both of which had historic links with Jireh into one membership. The Norman Park building was moved to Lytton Road and officially opened 30 June 1968. Initially the merger was productive - Norman Park averaged in the 20s and Bulimba almost reached 50 just after the Graham crusades but was usually much lower - so that by the 1980s Carey's membership had reached into the 70s. However, it has since declined considerably.



Bulimba Mission Hall



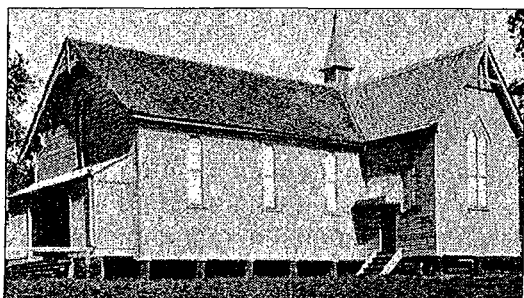
## Toowong Baptist Church

Jireh also had a role in the establishment of Toowong Church, but it was not an official outreach. Petrie Terrace and South Brisbane churches also contributed assistance at various times.

William Richer, a member of Jireh settled in the newly developing Toowong area in 1875, and soon began a cottage prayer meeting at his home on the corner of Sherwood Road and Church Street. Services were also commenced, but were given up when Methodist services began across the road. However, by 1881 more Baptists were living in the area and it was decided to purchase a block of land for a church. Mr Richer, a builder, was asked to design and construct the chapel, seating 100 people. The formation of a church took place in September and a Sunday School was also commenced. The foundation members were Mr and Thos Strong, Mr and Mrs T. White, Mr and Mrs W. Richer, Mr and Mrs W. Hicks, Mr, Mrs and Miss Rosser. Mr Richer was appointed pastor.

In June 1884, the chapel was enlarged and the adjoining corner allotment was purchased. The services for many years were carried on regularly by Mr Richer, who very efficiently discharged the duties of the pastorate, while at the same time carrying on his own private business. He had a brief break from 1893 due to illness. He resumed his ministry in December 1896, which continued until 1911. He served twice as President of the Baptist Union, an honour also conferred on his son, Mr Alfred Richer. A builder also, Alfred was also keenly involved in the work of the Brisbane City Mission.

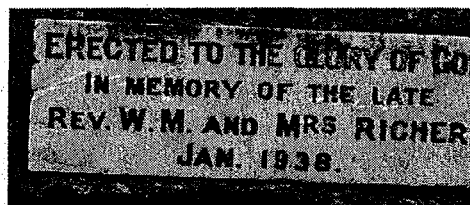
Toowong has never been a very large church - its greatest membership was in the 1920s when it just exceeded 100. However, it has served faithfully and produced many people who have worked well in their own area and far beyond. Some familiar family names include Brooks, Hiron, McIntyre, Williams, Shakespeare, Brown,



Toowong Baptist Church

Ham, Wedd, West, Reid and Benn. The church has been led by some well known pastors, including S. Newell, A.G. Weller, W.W. Solomon, C.H. Nicholls, B. Langridge, T.H. Andrews, J. H. Lane and C. Ip.

In the late 1940s, it co-sponsored outreach work in the St Lucia area with Taringa, but this effort did not continue very long. When the church was struggling in the 1970s, there were serious talks with Taringa about merging, but surprisingly, there was no progress. Reflecting on this, Toowong decided to seek new directions, building on its growing multi-cultural character, and appointed Rev C. Ip (Aug 1976) as pastor. Since then the church has flourished with a strong and growing Chinese ministry.



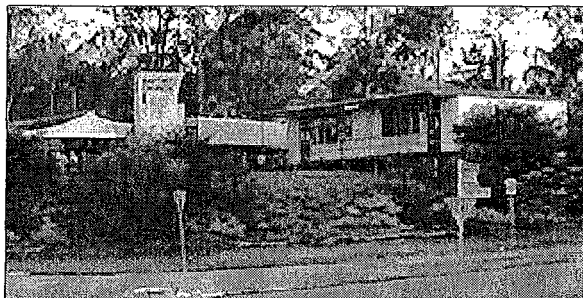
## Centenary-Jireh Baptist Church

(Adapted from a history by Harvey Bernoth)

In September 1974, a meeting of eight people chaired by the then Assistant General Superintendent of the Union, Rev. Vic Bowring, met in a home in the new Centenary suburb of Jindalee to consider the formation of a local fellowship. With help from the Missions board and assistance from Hooker Centenary (developers of the estate), the fellowship was formed and secured a one acre site in the centre of what would be a residential area capable of housing up to seventy thousand people. The Centenary Baptist Fellowship met in the Jamboree Heights State School from 1974 through to the completion of the church building in 1983.

The Sunday School at this time met in rooms under the manse, which had been purchased in 1976, and attracted around seventy regular attendees, with up to 130 on the roll. The church was constituted on the 21 Oct 1976 as the Centenary Baptist Church, with the Rev. Frank Stone presiding at the dedication. In February 1975, Pastor Leigh Diprose, who was then a student, was called to the role of pastor and stayed until called to the Rosewood Church in October

1980. Pastor Ron Holley was then called initially as an interim in February 1981, but later to full time service in June 1982.



Centenary Community Baptist Church

During these early difficult years, the church thrived. From the humble beginning of eight who met initially, the 1977 morning services were now seeing numbers of between fifty to sixty regulars, with a very large Sunday School as previously mentioned. The area was rapidly growing, as were attendances; the people were involved in ministries and excited at the prospect of building a new chapel in a prime position. Children and young people from non-churched families were being attracted to the Sunday School, and the pastor was loved and respected by the people. The church, although small, was well endowed with gifts to carry out its work.

The funds required to complete the building of the church were provided by a grant of \$30,000 from the proceeds of the sale of the Jireh church in the Valley with the balance from savings and a loan from the North Side Inter-Church Interest Saving Fund. As one of the conditions of the grant, the church then became the "Centenary-Jireh Baptist Church" and the building was officially opened on the 21 May 1983. Perhaps in part because of the better facilities, numbers at the services increased rapidly to around eighty.

In December 1984, Pastor Ron Holley tendered his resignation after a long and gradually worsening illness. Pastor Leigh Cripps was then called as an interim pastor from February to December 1985, followed by the Rev. John White also as an interim, Feb-Aug 1986. Rev. John Sheen arrived in August 1986 and served until December 1993, followed by Rev. Chris Burridge from June 1994 to June 1995.

During the second phase of the church from 1981 to 1991, there was a plethora of new initiatives focusing on outreach, young people, ladies and so on. Some were successful and some were not. The church seemed to grow in numbers to about 120 attending the morning service, and then fall back to around eighty or ninety. This

cycle was repeated over and over, and the same principle was mirrored in the youth work, Sunday School, and most other ministries of the church. Some suggest that this was caused by the inadequacy of the facilities, and this may well be true as the building was way past the recommended eighty percent full.

In July 1991, the Church again changed name, constitution and vision and became a regional church, the Southwest Baptist Family. This decision was taken following a long series of meetings with Rev. John Tanner and other Union executives, Rev. Les Scarborough of the St. Marys Church NSW, and Pastor Rick Armor of the Inala Baptist Church. A number of factors influenced the decision, not the least of which was the need for financial assistance to the Inala congregation. Inala, strengthened and renewed to the point of self sufficiency under the leadership of Pastor Brian Hine, was released from the regional church as at the 1 July 1996.

Pastor Peter Boots was called to the Church in December 1995, and served for six years. After his arrival there were a number of baptisms, new members received, and the morning service attendances began averaging around 160. Facilities were extended by the siting of two 10 X 15 metre demountable buildings. The leadership undertook a thorough revision of the vision and strategic plan for the church. The ministry leaders were also invited to participate in the planning process, and many new faces are being actively involved in the life and work of the church.

Now known as Centenary Baptist Community Church, the fellowship has developed in four clearly definable periods. The beginning showed much promise, but for a variety of reasons, the two periods totalling fifteen years up to the end of 1995 did not produce the desired fruit. From then on there was greater promise, and now the church is working to discover its vision and mission for the future under new interim leadership.

The cameos in this edition of Forum were based on published histories and records of the churches and were written by the editor, except where mentioned otherwise. Most photographs were copied from historical sources.