



The Queensland Baptist Forum

The Journal of Baptist Heritage Queensland

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A BHQ Essay Competition

We are pleased to announce that the next BHQ Essay Competition is underway. Students came to Malyon College in mid-March for the one week intensive course on Baptist History and Principles and are now busy researching and preparing their essays. The one which receives the top mark for the class receives the BHQ Essay Competition prize which includes a sum of cash, some BHQ books and a year's membership in BHQ. It is planned that the winning essay will be printed in the next issue of Forum, a suitable feature for the 100th issue of our newsletter!

Digitisation—Expressions of interest invited

Digitisation of archival records is a high priority. Our collection of paper-based photographs is top of the list, with steady progress being made on these. We also have recently been able to obtain e-files of many recent Baptist Union documents, going back to the beginnings of computerization of the office processes. But there is much more to do and we are inviting **expressions of interest** for people to work in this area. The people we need for volunteers would have good computer skills and aptitude, an interest in Baptist history and records, and abilities in handling documents and information. Some of the work could be done from home but regular consultation with the Archives is a necessity. Please contact us for more information.

Heritage Plaque Project

We have been successful in placing plaques on three churches in recognition of the historic significance of their buildings. These are Toowong, City Tabernacle and Windsor Road. We have ideas for more but so far, we have not been successful in advancing them. There are also some sites where churches used to stand which we would like to mark in some way. Some churches have indicated an interest in having their building considered.

This project requires a lot of effort so we are looking for people to help specifically with this aspect of our work, in particular someone who is committed to the concept of the project and is good at contacting and talking with church and community people about it, with a view to securing active progress of plans.

BHQ Meetings 2018: 9 June 27 October (AGM) 2pm @The Baptist Archives

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ANOTHER WOMAN WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE - MRS IRVINE OF NUNDAH (1852-1908)

By Bill Hughes

In 2009 we published "Women Who Made A Difference", which included the stories of twenty-four Baptist women who made significant contributions to the Baptist church, community and mission in Queensland. There are many more such women and one that I particularly admire is Emily Julia Irvine/Collins (nee Downes). Emily remarried Mr T Collins after the death of her first husband, Francis Irvine, but at the time of her death in 1908 she was better known in the church and the Nundah district as Irvine. This is her story.

Emily Julia Downes was born in Braintree, Essex, England in 1852 to Henry Downes, a stone mason, and Elizabeth Mary Ann Martin. She was the youngest of five children and had four brothers Harry, Charles, Frank and Edward. The family migrated to Australia, after Emily was born, some time within the period 1852 to 1864 (when Henry Downes died)¹.

Emily's mother, Mary Ann Downes, joined the Jireh Baptist Church on transfer and remained a member for many years before transferring to Nundah. Emily attended the Jireh Sunday School as a child and



The original Nundah Baptist Church

approached the Pastor, Rev John Kingsford, in September 1867² asking to be baptised. She was baptised at the age of fifteen years by Rev Kingsford on 13 October 1867 and was admitted to membership of Jireh on 3 November 1867. She became a Sunday School teacher a short time later.

Four years later Emily married Francis Irvine, who was also a member of Jireh. The marriage was conducted by Rev John Kingsford on 4 August 1871 at the residence of Francis Irvine. The witnesses to the marriage were Frank Downes, one of Emily's four brothers, and Caroline Downes, who was Emily's sister-in-law. At the time of the marriage Francis was a soap manufacturer³, although he was soon to follow his father's occupation of storekeeper.

A couple of years later the Irvines moved to Warwick. Towards the end of her life Emily wrote a letter to the Secretary of the Nundah church setting out, at the Secretary's request, her background history⁴. She said that she and her husband had been members of the Jireh church before going to Warwick. She added:

Before we came to Nundah we had been over 12 years in Warwick ... as there was no Baptist church in Warwick, Mr Irvine rented a hall and arranged for services when possible and established a Sunday School ... On leaving Warwick the school was given up and the committee handed us the books ... [which] were handed to the Nundah Sunday School.

As soon as we went to Nundah Mr Irvine and myself started the Sunday School we commenced with our own family of five children ... The third Sunday a family who had just come from Warwick joined us and the school increased steadily.⁵

During their time in Warwick the Irvines ran a grocery and drapery store, located in Wood Street.

While in Warwick, Francis and Emily had five children – Martin James (1873), Charles Robert (1874), Mary Julia Verene (1877), Winifred (1878) and Edward (1880). There were also two boys and one girl who did not survive infancy. All five children formed the nucleus of Emily's Sunday School class in Warwick, and later in Nundah when she began Nundah's first Sunday School there.

On their return to Brisbane the Irvines resumed teaching Sunday School at Jireh. A number of churches grew out of the Jireh church in the late 1880s including Windsor Road, Albion and Toowong. The important contribution made by Emily and her husband both to the establishment of the Nundah church and the Sunday School there is told in Patricia Magee's centenary history of the Nundah Baptist Church (1888-1988) titled *Grow in Grace*:

Some of the members of Jireh were also responsible for the planting of Nundah Baptist, particularly Mr and Mrs Francis Irvine. According to Mrs E J Warren, a granddaughter of the Irvines, they moved from Warwick to Nundah in 1883. They had been members of Jireh church before moving to Warwick and so returned to worship there. Soon they found there were eleven other members of Jireh who travelled there each Sunday from Nundah, and these people decided to hold services somewhere in Nundah instead.

[Initially] there was only a Sunday School, which met each week in Mr Hirn's tinsmith shop [plumbing business], consisting of the Irvines and their five children, along with some Aboriginal children. Mrs Warren's mother remembered King Sandy (the elder of the local Aboriginal tribe) attending with several children from his tribe. He often told the Irvine children stories of his people and their corroborees.

In December 1884, morning services commenced in the old Wesleyan Methodist church at the corner of Buckland and Sandgate Roads (the Methodists having vacated the building

two years earlier), which was hired at 10 shillings per week. These services were conducted by the Rev John Kingsland, under the auspices of the Jireh church, once a month, while the other services were conducted by lay preachers ...⁶

Francis and Emily lived in Boyd Road, Nundah which runs down to meet Sandgate Road at the Nundah shopping centre. They conducted a drapery business at the corner of Boyd Road and Sandgate Road for a number of years. Their home was in Boyd Road and it is understood to have been immediately behind their store. When Francis Irvine died in 1895 Emily continued to manage the business but in 1897 she leased the business to Messrs J D Eichstadt and A Murr. For a period while the business was in the hands of the Irvines their eldest son, Martin, ran his bootmaker business from the premises.



The store occupied by the Irvines
(Photo supplied by Nundah Historical Society)

The site of the Irvine's store was subsequently occupied by T Wilson and Company and then by Mr A J Dolby, a former Director of McWhirters, both of whom used the premises for their drapery businesses. The site was purchased by Burns, Philip & Co. Ltd (Penneys) in 1950, but was since occupied by a number of businesses. In recent years the stores in and around the site have been demolished and rebuilt. The present occupants of the corner of Boyd Road and Sandgate Road operate a Mexican Restaurant.

When her husband died on 3 December 1895 Emily ran the drapery business on her own for a short period. She remarried in 1902 to Thomas Collins, who was for a period Pastor of the Petrie Terrace Baptist Church.

In addition to her Sunday School work Emily was a teacher of the Young Women's Bible Class for many years, "the members of which loved her greatly". In her final months her health was failing and she was cared for by her daughter, Winifred (Mrs J Voigt of Elizabeth Street, Paddington). Although she was no longer able to take an active part in church work, she was said to be always bright and kindly.

Emily died on Monday 28 December 1908 and interment with her first husband took place at the Nundah cemetery after a short service at the Nundah

church. A memorial service was later conducted by Rev E Barnett in the Nundah Baptist Church on 3 January 1909. Mr Barnett preached from 1 Thessalonians 4:13-14:

But we would not have you ignorant, brethren, concerning those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep.

The then President of the Baptist Association, Mr W R Smith, took part in the service. There was a large congregation.

In the obituary he wrote in the *Queensland Baptist* in March 1909, Rev E Barnett said: "Fragrant indeed is her memory in the Nundah Church and throughout the district. Her life was lived in the service of her Master".⁷

Notes:

1. Henry Downes died in Brisbane on 16 May 1864 and was buried in the old Paddington cemetery.
2. Jireh Baptist Church Deacons Minutes 15 September 1867
3. Francis had sought permission in 1872 to establish a soap manufactory on a small scale in Annie Street, New Farm Road. *Telegraph*, Brisbane, Monday 2 December 1872, page 2.
4. Letter of 4 August 1904 from Mrs Collins to Mr Shaw, Secretary of Nundah Baptist Church in Display Book *Constitution and Reports 1888-1904*, held in Box 239, Queensland Baptist Archives.
5. A report in *The Brisbane Courier* on Friday 11 October 1878 (page 3) said that a Sunday School was operating in Warwick. It had four teachers and 38 students. A Baptist church was eventually established in 1911.
6. Patricia Magee, *Grow in Grace – Nundah Baptist Church Centenary History 1888-1988*, page 2.
7. Obituary, *The Queensland Baptist*, March 1909, page 464.



Francis Irvine

Moore Park Baptist Sunday School & Church—Origins

By Valerie Dieckmann

In 1957, Mr Les Clark, Superintendent of the Taringa Baptist Sunday School, and wife Gwen had a growing concern for the children living in the new Shepherds Bush Estate near Indooroopilly, and adjacent area. It seemed to the Clarks that the Lord would have them start a new work in the Indooroopilly area. These were the days when most people had to walk and Taringa was too far for children. While driving around the area to get an overall impression of what would be involved, it was confirmed there was no public hall in which meetings could be held.

On speaking with Mr Laurie and Mrs Joyce Aaroe who also attended the Taringa Baptist church, they kindly offered the use of the area under their house in Julie Street, Indooroopilly. This was an ideal location being in the centre of the proposed new work. After talking with the Taringa pastor, Rev J Wilbur. Cook and seeking the permission and blessing of the Taringa Church to proceed, Les and Gwen Clark visited homes in the area to see "the field".

Stepping out in faith, the site under the house was prepared by levelling the sloping ground and laying donated lino on the dirt floor. A portable organ, seats and little chairs were loaned by the Taringa Church. Parents and children were invited to come to the new Sunday School, at 9.30am on Sunday December 15, 1957. Twenty-five scholars were enrolled including some of the children who gathered at week-ends on Blackstone Street to hurl themselves down the hill in their soap box carts.

The teachers were - Superintendent, Mrs Les Clark, Secretary/Treasurer Mr Ken Neilen, Mrs Gwen Clark and twelve-year-old Jennifer Neilen was the organist. When the Moore Park Baptist Church was constituted, Jennifer continued to play for the church services.

House-to-house door knocking was carried out seeking those who did not attend a Sunday School and gradually the numbers increased filling the space under the Aaroe's house. With the increase in scholars, the teaching staff was also increased when Mrs Smith consented to help. From Annual reports in the following years : 1959 - 65 with 23 on the Cradle Roll, 1960 - 96, 1961 - 92 with two teachers in the Senior School, four Intermediate/Junior and six Primary.

In 1962 at the time of moving into the present building (see companion article), there was a church membership of 30 and 100 enrolled in Sunday School. With the growing numbers of children, the following answered the call to teach - Mrs Maida Neilen, Primary, Mr Mollenhauer, Intermediate and Mr Kenworthy Secretary/Treasurer. Commencing in 1960 - Miss Betsy Campbell (Primary), Mrs Stevens (7-8 years) and Mr C McLellan (Boys' Bible Class for over 11 years).

Other activities were discussed and introduced. A picnic was planned. But instead of combining with the Taringa School (which was also combining with the St Lucia branch), it was felt a more personal touch with parents and scholars of the new Sunday School would be achieved by having a separate event. The teaching

staff were few, so parents were invited to help with the arrangements. With a good response, two meetings were held—the parents agreed to help at the picnic ground (probably not knowing what they were letting themselves in for) and with food - sandwiches were prepared and each family was responsible for 1½ dozen small cakes or the equivalent in bar cake.

On Saturday, 26th April 1958, 47 children and 30 adults gathered at Anzac Memorial Park, Toowong and had a wonderful day. It was so successful that it was repeated next year when 85 children, parents and friends "combined well for another happy and successful" picnic.

In order to involve parents more, it was decided to embrace the custom of the Taringa church and have a Harvest Thanksgiving Day. Fruit and groceries were to be brought along and donated to the needy. It was a good idea but space was a problem. It was planned for Sunday, 21st September 1958. As Les Clark recalled, long before our prayers were made, the Lord had the answer to the space problem. It was hidden from view by bushes.

At the time of commencing the Sunday School, it was not known there was a building behind the Aaroe's home. A week prior to the Harvest Thanksgiving day, a lease for the amazing sum of 1/- per week was procured for a disused building, measuring 20' x 24'. An energetic team of workers, Sunday School staff and, you've guessed it, parents, got busy clearing and painting inside the building to achieve reasonable order. The dirt floor was levelled and again old lino was put down. Rev. Norman Mergard, minister of the Mackay church, was visiting Brisbane for the Annual State Assembly meetings and agreed to speak.



A Christmas party was held on Saturday, 20th December starting at 5.30pm, with a tea followed by a film program and closing with Father Christmas giving the presents to the children from the brightly lit Christmas tree. The children brought small gifts for the needy of Brisbane.

The Sunday School participated in the Annual Scripture Examination. In 1961, fifteen scholars sat and "secured excellent passes". "The school tied with Rosalie for the most awards in the State".

Now that extra space was available, the Sunday School divided into two sections. Mrs Gwen Clark led

the Primary section and Mr Les Clark the Intermediate.

The Annual Report of June 30, 1959 starts with these words "Behold I have set before thee an open door" (Revelation 3, 8). Through the acceptance of the challenge of this text, work in this area of Indooroopilly was commenced first with the formation of a Sunday School under the sanction of Taringa Baptist Church on December 15, 1957. It was the prayer of those engaged in this new pioneer work for the Lord that the Lord would open the way to commence a Church service as well, within the coming year."

An Executive meeting of the Baptist Union of Queensland (now Queensland Baptists) was unanimous in its decision in favour of forming a church. At a meeting on 27 October 1958, dates for constituting the church and adopting a written constitution were discussed. A sub-committee of Mr W D Grimes, Chairman, Mr L Clark, Secretary, Mr C Watson and Mr K Smith and Mrs O'Loughlin was formed to consider the task. January was considered the best time.

The labour of love continued in earnest. The shed which became known as the temporary hall, was spruced up with the installation of shutters, the floor sealed at a cost of £4/-, outside painting and 100 yards of wiring for lights. It was also decided to cement under the Aaroe's house. Seventy-five bricks were used for a wall costing £4/15/- for sand, £2/- gravel and £1/- brickie's loam. Mr Aaroe provided the cement.

On Sunday, 18th January 1959 was a milestone in the history of Moore Park Baptist Church. The Sunday School under the auspices of the Taringa Baptist

Church, became part of the now separate and independent Moore Park Baptist Church officially constituted by the President of the Baptist Union, Mr E S Jones. The foundation membership was eleven. Mrs J Aaroe, Mr L and Mrs G Clarke, Mr J English, Mr W and Mrs J Grimes, Mrs Letham, Mr K. Neilen, Mr and Mrs M Watson were granted a transfer from the Taringa church with its blessing on the new work. The eleventh member was Mr K Smith who had made application for membership.

At the time of the 1959-60 Report, ninety-six students were on the roll with the average attendance of seventy. At the second anniversary held on 15th November, Mr F. Harbottle led the scholars in the singing of special songs. Scholars and parents attended a concert was held on Friday 20th November. New teachers added to the staff in that year were Miss Betsy Campbell (Primary Department), Mrs Stevens (7-8 years) and Mr C McLellan (over 12 years, Boys' Bible Class)

The meeting held on 22 September 1967 appointed the following as officers of the Sunday School:

General Superintendent	Mr C. Ballantyne
Kindergarten and Primary Super.	Mrs C. Ballantyne
Junior and Intermediate Super	Mr T. Walker
Young People's Super	Dr Jacobsen
Secretary	Mrs G. Hamm
Treasurer	Mr K. Neilen
Cradle Roll Superintendent	Mrs M. Merrin

Also at this meeting, a farewell was recorded for the former General Secretary of the Sunday School, Mr L. Clarke as he had taken on the office of Secretary of the Church.

Where and how God provided a church building

A week before the Harvest Thanksgiving Service on 21 September 1958, a lease was arranged on a disused building 20 feet by 24 feet, directly behind the home of Mr and Mrs L. Aaroe where the Sunday School had started. Working bees took place to make the building reasonably presentable for the service the following Sunday.

With the success of the Thanksgiving Service and this added space, it seemed that regular Sunday morning services were possible but more work would be needed.

The labour of love continued in earnest. The shed which became known as the temporary hall, was spruced up with the installation of shutters, the floor sealed at a cost of £4/-, the outside painted and 100 yards of wiring installed and batteries purchased for lights. The Sunday School paid for the interior painting of the Church. It was also decided to cement under the house where the Sunday School had been meeting. Mr Aaroe provided the cement and the Church the sand and gravel. The final costs were 75 bricks @ £4/15/-; sand and gravel £2/- and brickies

loam £1/-/. The all important EC and wash basin were given without charge.

By Saturday, 21st February 1959, three working bees had repaired and improved the building. It was considered that the next, on the night of 11th March, would complete the work.

Even with all this feverish activity, there were thoughts of a new building. At the meeting on 27 October 1958, a Building Fund was established with an initial credit of £5.

Numerous approaches were made to the owner of the property on which the leased temporary hall was situated with a view to buying a site. A number of other alternatives were also tried. Portion of No 4 Coverdale Street, the front portion of the site of the temporary hall facing Julie Street where a new permanent church building could be built on the whole seven acre site.

Mr W.D. Grimes travelled to Sydney to see Mr. Shepherd, the owner of the land, and received a sympathetic hearing. However, the verbal agreement that

£450-£500 would be acceptable, could not be finalised by the agent with the owner. We all know now, the Western Freeway runs across that property. However, the trip to Sydney was not wasted as approval for a year's lease was arranged. Eventually, on Saturday 11 July 1959 after a fellowship tea at 5.30pm, the members met for a business meeting and heard that Mr Shepherd thought the offer was too low.

Though membership was 31, the church seating of approximately 70 had been taxed most Sundays.

In Taringa Parade a young couple was in the process of buying an allotment. However, they could not afford the cost of relocating the storm water drain that ran through the property. This work was at the insistence of the BCC. This piece of ground Section 30 in Taringa Parade was purchased by Moore Park Baptist Church, in January 1960 for the sum of £700 from Mr L.C.H. Maddock. A Mr Gilmore had an option of purchase from Mr Semple, Section 29. It was decided that an effort should be made to purchase this Section next to Section 30. Mr Cannon understood that the owners favoured selling to the church if it was not required for a road [there was a farm at the back of the allotment].

Sketch plans were received from the Union Architect. Front and base brick, upper portion timber, to seat 150 people and choir. Five class rooms in the basement at an estimated cost of £8,500. The Architect said the class room extensions would have to be omitted because of the width of the land was 50 feet. The Church had to be set back 20 feet from the foot-path line. The price was considered reasonable. The Baptist Union offered to guarantee full cost up to £9,000 with Brisbane Permanent Bank with yearly commitments, including interest and repayments of the loan.

The problem was, it was also imperative to have a permanent minister for God's work. The Treasurer suggested there were two methods for financing the work: 1. Lop the cost by modifications and 2. future gifts. A member had offered to help substantially in a cash gift from a future land sale. The gift of property could be transferred to the Baptist Union in trust for this church, to give firm security. The Chairman said faith and commonsense were needed to build the church. The meeting adjourned.



**The opening Moore Park Baptist Church
3 March 1962**

The lease on the temporary building expired on 29th September 1960 and the Brisbane City Council had to approve the holding of meetings on the new site and this took approximately three weeks.

After three years of meeting in the home of Mr and Mrs Aaroe and in a shed 20' x 24' on a vacant lot directly behind the Aaroe's home, plans were drawn up for double storey brick church; ideally suited for the sloping land. After a number of meetings, the final plans and specifications were presented to the members and on Wednesday, 8th June 1960, they were adopted. Tenders were called and on 6th October 1960, the Church accepted the tender of Mr K. Knott to build a new church for the price of £9244.

The ground had now been bulldozed and in April 1961, work on the new church commenced. It was anticipated the building would take six months to erect. In May representatives of all organisations of the Church held a meeting to arrange the program for the laying of the Foundation Stone. During June 1961, the building was progressing and plans and arrangements were finished for the setting of the foundation stone. Special invitations were sent out and 1500 circulars were distributed to nearby homes and all Brisbane Baptist Churches.

The foundation stone was set by the President of the Baptist Union of Queensland, Mr R.J. Morris on 1st July 1961 at 2.30pm with over 180 people attending. The meeting was chaired by the Moderator and the dedication prayer was offered by Rev J.C. Stone, Secretary of the Baptist Union. The opportunity was given to those who desired to contribute to the building fund by means of thank offering boxes. An amount of £140 was donated. A very enjoyable afternoon tea was provided under difficult conditions by the ladies with the assistance of the young people.

In March, 1961, 154 seats were obtained from the Lyric Theatre for under £200. The Annual report commenced "Praise to God from whom all blessing flow".

On Saturday, 3rd March 1962 at 2.30pm the church building was officially opened by the President Rev S. Lane. A family gathering was held in the evening when a musical program was presented. On Sunday 4th March 1962 the Moderator performed the Dedictory Service in the morning and the past President of the Union Mr R.J. Morris in the evening. Church services were held in the hall from Sunday 24th December 1961 until the church opened.

On 28th February 1965 a Choral Service was held to dedicate the Hammond Electronic Organ, the goal of fundraising by the Boys Brigade.

Later, at a Special meeting on 21 Jan 1968. The secretary asked Mr Merrin and Mr Cannon to outline progress re the proposed purchase of land. Motion - This church actively endorses the principle of purchasing the land adjacent to the church and empowers the diaconate or members appointed by it to secure the land at the best possible price in negotiations with the owner those negotiating to investigate the Financial commitment etc.

The land cost \$2,800. \$800 was taken from the reserve and a special thanksgiving offering taken on Anniversary Day for the project with the aim of raising the \$2,000 in an all-out effort to purchased the land debt free. The car park concreting was completed on 12 February 1983 at a cost of \$2,000.

Darling Downs Project—The Origins of Chinchilla Baptist Church

By David Parker

This is a further chapter in our 'Baptists on the Darling Downs Project' recording the history of Baptist witness in this important area of Queensland, with a focus on the origins of each of the churches.

Assistance with this project is welcome.

Chinchilla, a town of about 5500 people, is situated 300km by road northwest of Brisbane on the Warrego Highway, and is the centre of wide-spread pastoral, agricultural and mining district. The nearest Baptist church is at Dalby, about 80 km south east back along



the highway. Another church existed at Roma, 200km west for a short time.

The first European contact was in 1844 when Ludwig Leichhardt passed through the area naming Charleys Creek, a tributary of the Condamine on which the town sits, after his Aboriginal guide. 'Chinchilla' is thought to be derived from the indigenous word for the cypress pine forests in the district.

A pastoral run was soon established and the railway reached the area in 1878. Over the next 30 years the town developed from the initial railway camp with a school and Catholic, Methodist and Anglican churches. Local government, the local show and a butter factory were established by the time of the World War I.

Prickly pear badly affected the district until it was brought under control in the 1920s. From about 1850, the rapid spread of this plant, originally brought to Australia to provide red dye for soldier's uniforms, became noticeable in the district. By 1925, the plant was spreading at the rate of 400 hectares a day, and growing to a height of up to 4 metres. It covered well over 24 million hectares of land – more than the area of the United Kingdom!

This scourge made it impossible to grow crops or to run stock. It devastated the economy, destroyed the livelihoods of families and ruined the economy of the region.

After many different attempts at controlling it, the cactoblastis insect was imported from Argentina, and introduced in 1926 resulting in an 'environmental miracle' which destroyed the pest almost overnight, thus giving a new lease of life to the district.

There was some further progress in the development of the town in the period after World War I, but signifi-

cant growth had to wait until after World War II. Dairying was the prime occupation for many years, but in the 1970s grains and agriculture, especially melons began to take over. In recent times a power station was erected, and the controversial coal seam gas industry was established. The town was also affected at various times by serious flooding.

Methodist services were conducted from 1893, and Presbyterian a decade later, although it took many years for these outreaches to become fully independent works.

The earliest Baptist contacts in the town date from the 1885 when Rev William Higlett, pastor of the Toowoomba church, visited the town to see a former member of his church. He conducted services in the Court House and private homes, but tactfully declined to christen babies, offering instead to offer a prayer of blessing instead.

In later years, there was irregular contact with some Baptists who owned pastoral properties in the area. They would occasionally visit churches in Toowoomba, Brisbane and elsewhere, and would subscribe to the denominational newspapers.

Although isolated from other Baptist churches, there was opportunity for fellowship through the Christian Endeavour movement which conducted well supported regional conventions in the Chinchilla during the middle years of the 20th century. Often Baptist speakers at these conventions would report good fellowship with these isolated Baptists.

The establishment of the Chinchilla Christian Convention on a private property in the area provided more regular fellowship.

Another valuable point of contact immediately after World War 2 was the Baptist Union's Gospel Wagon, operated by Rev AJM Howard (and later by Rev JW Fletcher), who visited the town in June 1946, making some good contacts but without any hope then of establishing a church.

After a Baptist church was established at Dalby in 1950, hopes were raised about outreach to other areas including Chinchilla. So in the 1958 Rev Reg Neibling began monthly services at Chinchilla. Later, in 1960 visits were made by the Home Mission Superintendent, Rev Vic Bowring and the new pastor at Dalby, Pastor Jim Watson, to gauge interest and likely response.

However, as these steps were being taken, a development occurred which in time resulted in a fully operational Baptist church, with its own property and building. This unexpected development involved the Churches of Christ.

In the early 1900s, the government offered attractive conditions to new settlers to the districts around Chinchilla in an effort to expand the economy and increase

ORDER OF SERVICE

CONDUCTED BY THE PRINCIPAL OF THE BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE OF Q'LD. -- DR. E.G. GIBSON, M.A.

SUNDAY MORNING 8TH MARCH, 1970 AT 11.00 A.M. AT CHINCHILLA BAPTIST CHURCH.

DOXOLOGY and PRAYER

HYMN -- Sankey 253

Mrs. E. Druce

Mr. K. Hyland

Mrs. M. Smith

Mr. J. Smith

the population. Among those who responded to this opportunity were several families from Victoria who took up land around Sixteen Mile Creek and Hopeland, 20 or 30 kms south of Chinchilla. Being associated with the Churches of Christ, they soon established services in homes and later erected chapels, creating a thriving network. In 1949, the work extended to the town and in 1950, a chapel was erected in Canaga Street which was later enlarged.



Pastor Meyrick D Roberts

Photo: Jean Roberts

However, in time internal difficulties developed and some of the people attending were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the beliefs and emphases of the church, especially, the Churches of Christ approach to baptism and its relation to salvation. Some of these people were active supporters of

the interdenominational missionary organisation, World-wide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) and loyalty to this body and sympathy with its spirituality were important factors in the development of severe tension with the Chinchilla Churches of Christ.

This resulted in a group of people leaving that church and forming their own independent church. They purchased land in Heeney Street and erected a chapel which was opened in September 1958. They called Pastor Meyrick Roberts from Victoria to lead them. At first, the new fellowship was known as the Heeney Street Independent Church of Christ, but under legal challenge, the name was changed to Heeney Street Christian Fellowship Church.

Pastor Meyrick Roberts, originally a Queenslander, trained for four years at the Churches of Christ Theological College in Melbourne, and was ordained in 1951. He then served in South Australia and in Essendon, Victoria before coming the Chinchilla where he was pastor of the independent church from 1958. Through his effective visitation and leadership, the church was well established. In mid-1962 he moved back to Victoria to be Church of Christ pastor at Weddurnburn. During this time, the church was served by a number of short term pastors, including several missionary personnel.

The independent church continued to flourish during the 1960s. Their strong links through the Trebilco family

in particular with the Christian Convention were a valuable means of Christian growth. However, after a few years the need was felt for more substantial organisational links and fellowship with a wider Christian community. As a number of people with Baptist contacts had become part of the church, it was natural for interest to turn to the Baptist Union of Queensland for possible affiliation. With its history of concern over the beliefs of the Churches of Christ on baptism, the Heeney Street church was quite close to the Baptist position on these matters. By this time, Pastor Roberts had returned to Chinchilla after having served a happy pastorate at the newly established Deniliquin Baptist Church, NSW, from 1966 to 1968.

Approaches were made to the Baptist Union of Queensland which warmly welcomed the move, giving approval to its affiliation. A formal service of constitution was held on 8 March 1970. Rev Dr EG Gibson, President of the Baptist Union of Queensland who was well known to the church through his convention ministry, officiated, welcoming the church and its 16 foundation members to the Baptist denomination

So about one decade after the initial outreach by the Dalby Church and the Home Mission, a church complete with property, a pastor of many years standing, and a good history of ministry became the Baptist Church in Chinchilla. The population of the town at the time was around 3,000.

Pastor Roberts served until 1976. (His son Glenn would later make a significant contribution to Baptist historical work with his extensive research and writings about the German Baptists of Queensland.) Other pastors who followed included Michael Cooke (1976-80), Lester Kelly (1981-82), John Roth (1983-86), and Graham Ballin (1986-92), all making significant contributions to the life of the church and the community. Michael Kluske, formerly of South Australia, began his ministry in 1993, and continues to the present.

Over the years, the tensions associated with origins of the church eased and the church took its place in the normal Christian life of the district. It has had to meet the challenges of a town that has enjoyed periods of great prosperity (coal and gas as well as the original agricultural and pastoral industries) and times of difficulty and decline, which are typical of rural areas of the country. The town, now with a population of over 5000 about 300 kms from Brisbane, has also been seriously affected by flooding of Charley's Creek, a tributary of the Condamine River – particularly bad in 2011.

The church's original strong missionary support was well maintained, and for many years some of its people were key figures in the long running Chinchilla Christian Convention. Christian Endeavour was important in the district from early days, and the church has sponsored many evangelistic crusades. It reached its peak membership in the early 1990s.