

**A
HISTORY
OF
CHRISTIES BEACH BAPTIST CHURCH**

By

Lorna Castle

**Some memories of C.B.B.C by
LORNA CASTLE**

I came to Christies Beach in 1952 with four children – three boys and a very sick baby. I had been teaching school lessons by correspondence while living in a camp on the East-West Railway line north of Port Augusta. It was necessary to take the baby nearer to medical attention, and even though I loved teaching the older boys, school was important for them, so we came to Beach Road to live in a shed. The boys were enrolled at Pt. Noarlunga Primary.

School – just wonderful. We had purchased the land two years earlier while on holiday. Mr. Fuller divided his sheep paddock into building blocks. We came to Christies during our holidays to cut the grass and build a large shed. For the next two years we lived in this while my husband worked up north. We then came here to live and build a house. I had been to the Community Church in Fowey Street, when on holidays, and had been told how the land had been donated by a Mrs. Hall who was at time living on Kangaroo Island.

The Building was an army hut brought down from Alice Springs. During erection a storm blew the roof off (I believe Mrs Duke gave the photographs of this to be kept in church records). Mr Wesley Smith, a retired Baptist Pastor held meetings in his home at Christies, then used the Progress Hall (now rebuilt as Ron Gill Hall), and from there the Community Church in Fowey Street became a reality.

One morning, the lady who delivered our mail asked me if I would like to put the baby on the “cradle roll”. She invited me to church and have me times of Sunday School for the other children.

We were duly accepted into S.A.B.U. Our share of the stipend was three guineas (three pounds three shillings). Sometimes that was hard to raise. We held trading tables. It was great having a reliable preacher. We mostly had students from the college. Some were exceptionally good e.g. Neil Adcock, Les Leske. Some left the ministry before completing their studies, a few people had cars, but Les Leske only had a pushbike (no ten gears those days). It was a marathon to preach at Morphett Vale, Hackham and Christies each Sunday.

Mrs Duke cared for a strip of garden on the Fowey Street side of the building and the ladies shared cleaning and flower rosters.

We had a floating population, mainly weekenders and holidaymakers. Often when children reached high school age, families would need to move closer to town. Some weekenders were regular attendees, and some came down by bus and returned the same way in the afternoon. We had a bus service, enough for our small population, but not many trips each day.

The church was really the social life of the district as well as being the Christian centre. There were activities almost every evening – Junior Endeavour, Prayer Meeting, Youth Group, Ladies Guild met once a month. Later we had a younger women's group called Homemakers. Often we met in each others homes.

Each year we had a big fete. It was our major fundraiser of the year. We would cook and sew and make pretty lolly baskets. We decorated out stalls in the church hall with crepe paper. Often we would have sewing bees – taking our sewing machines to another lady's house with materials we had "begged" from shops and factories. One person would look after the children, another would cut out garments, aprons, children's clothes etc. Another would iron and finish off. We would bring along basket lunches. They were wonderful times of fellowship and caring and getting to know people really well. We packed u[at 3pm so as to be home before school children.

When we first came here the nearest butcher shop was in Port Noarlunga – they had two – and each of them would come over to us with meat, scales etc. in a panel van. They cut up, chopped and weighed the meat while we went inside to get a plate and purse.

Membership fluctuated as did the population. The block next door (now Beth Shalom), owned by Mrs Hall was for sale. She offered it to the church for four hundred pounds, but the S.A.B.U. said they were short of money as we were. All that was on the block was a limestone shed. The Charlick family bought it and added more to the building. Later of course we did buy it, now much improved, higher price than the four hundred pounds (\$23,000.00 in 1976).

We had a very enthusiastic youth group who often put balls through the windows, so it was decided to install louvres – easier and cheaper to replace. Later we put up screens as well.

During the conversion, one of the men attempted to saw through the window frame and lost all the teeth off his saw. We then discovered it was a steel framed building. We had a great number of men who helped a lot – often the wives came to church, but the husbands did not.

Someone gave us a set of tumbling mats for the youth group. Les Leske helped me run the group, but if we had a north wind he would have an asthma attack by the time he got here. He always had his syringe and adrenaline with him. He always had his syringe and adrenaline with him. I had nursing experience so would give him his adrenaline injection and leave him at my place for a while. We gave the dusty tumbling mats to another group because they were a health hazard for asthmatics.

Many people had a great input to the church, but sadly most of them moved on after a while. The Kemps were able to take over the Sunday School. Mrs King and Mrs Turner cared for the Kindergarten. Mrs Kemp played the piano. I was please to have students who were learning piano.

We also had children enter scriptures exams. Nearly all would pass 100%. Sunday times changed along with church service times – in later times it was mornings. One year we decided to have a Sunday school anniversary. The men measured up many long planks, got hundreds of bolts and a tiered platform was made. Of course the big kids wanted the top row but some were too tall, so we had the platform in the hall for three weeks, one for practice and two for the anniversary. Twice each Sunday following the anniversary we would have a special early evening party and prize giving, books for attendees and bouquets for the teachers. The platform was then dismantled and stored under the building. It was used as a stage sometimes. Never did the holes line up in spite of everything being numbered, so a few more holes would be drilled.

We had one lass going to high school who was learning dancing during the week and on Saturday afternoons she ran a dancing class for boys and girls who paid three pence each. One of the high school boys played piano for her. They decided to put on a concert. They planned it all themselves. With help from the youth group they did an amazing job. They begged costumes from John Martins (ex pageant pieces). I made net tutus for the “ballerinas”. John Graham and Beth Denny wanted it to be really professional. I was able to buy many yards of bright purple cotton material for one shilling a yard. John went to the library to find out how Stage curtains worked. We got ropes and pulleys and after many hassles it really worked!!! Amazing to pull “A” cord and the curtains would. Pull “B” cord and they would shut!!!

So with the platform flat for a stage – the purple curtains and wonderfully nervous kids trying to remember lines and dance steps the show went on. The lad responsible for lighting had his instructions written on the palm of his hand. It was the most wonderful event and the people asked for a repeat, so they did one.

One day I will write some details of that concert, how so many people were involved. The man who lived across the road was the official photographer. This is really looking back – John is now a retired schoolmaster.

I mentioned to my 60 year old son that I was writing this. He said “Mum, don’t forget the wonderful youth teas, the monthly socials, the church picnic and don’t forget the Church bell and paint.”

Paint: My sons had unruly hair so they used hair oil, and where they sat against the masonite walls they left greasy marks, so a group of us ladies painted the walls, mostly pastel colours. We changed those colours many times. My children usually painted the masonite at the bottom of the wall while we adults did the plaster board. Some of those ladies were expert on a ladder.

The Bell: We lived on Beach Road, quite close to Fowey St, and some afternoons the church bell would ring. There were not many houses and not many people, so I asked the obvious question of my sons: “did you ring the bell?” No – not me. It continued, so we took the rope off and had a wire inside the church to use to ring the bell before the service. The bell continued to ring just before the Castle kids got home from school, and still it was “no not me.”, then a neighbour solved the mystery. The bigger boys would throw stones at it, or better still life up the youngest to ring it. Once they had been found

out, they were no longer interested in doing it. (Note: the bell is still around, Peter Knapman has custody of it!)

We did not have a baptistery. I went to Morphett Vale for my baptism, but one lady, Cora Martin, said no!, could we borrow the portable baptistery from the Union. All was set up, but the water seemed to disappear. Eventually enough water was hosed in and she climbed up the ladder and went into the water. The next day I got several phone calls telling me that there was water coming out of the building at floor level;. Of course, we knew what it was – the thing leaked. It was closed to the wall and the water found its own way out without wetting the rest of the floor.

We often had weddings in the church, with receptions in the hall, the ladies did the catering.

Carol and Michael Perry are one couple I remember. They came over from Canberra to visit her mum, Lil Carter.

The plaster in the ceiling in the hall was in a state of disrepair. I had difficulty getting someone to repair it, so I took out a special insurance in case it fell on someone (Especially youth club members).

Another great milestone was putting in a septic tank. John King and my husband were the plumbers. Les Leske and Johnny Brooks were the labourers. Only a shallow layer of soil – then limestone, it was hard work.

A very dear Christian, Elizabeth Harwood, moved into the area. She did not enjoy very good health, but when she was able she made a wonderful contribution to our worship services. She had a heart attack and refused to go to hospital. Olive King and I cared for her for several months. Her husband, Cliff, was so grateful for all the church folk had done for them. He made the wooden cross, which is now in the yellow brick building.

We had buses to take us to the Billy Graham Crusade, I think we sent ten or eleven counsellors. In our community many decisions for Christ were made. Sadly, most of those people have moved away from the district.

Our membership was growing all the time together with the number of houses and shops being built in the district. The bus service also improved. One family which came into membership, was Ray and Shirley Burman. Ray was a carpenter, and when we were having a mission in the church he changed the solid partition between church and hall into a folding one. It was successful for that time, but later we had to restore it to its original state permanently.

Our church picnic – just talking about our membership and the old building we thought it would be a good idea. Within days the whole district was abuzz, so we called a members meeting and resolved to first to raise one thousand pounds and then discuss plans. Wages were not very high, and government allowances nothing like today's family allowances,

pensions and dole etc, however, we worked to raise money. Mr Henstridge, a Salvationist, became a member so he could be treasurer for the project. The night he announced that the target of one thousand pounds had been reached a young man, Rod Tillet and his wife, who were on holiday from Whyalla, were worshipping with us. He asked if he could talk with us.

He was an architect specialising in church buildings. While he was here we had meetings with Joe Westlake, our first ordained pastor, at the manse at Morphett Vale. We looked at pictures, plans etc. A committee was formed consisting of Joe Westlake, Ray Burman and myself. Later Rick Mc Kay joined us. We decided on a plan and builder – Cunningham the builder from Morphett Vale. Many of our meetings, held after Joe Westlake had been to other meetings. Bert Mc Cubbin lived in Adelaide but had a house here as well. Money kept coming. We decided on a straw ceiling, but as building progressed money kept coming in. After the straw ceiling was in place we had enough money to put an acoustic tile ceiling. This had to be hung lower. That is why we have the funny angle of ceiling going up to the top of the windows.

Rod Tillet was killed in a car accident before the building was completed. We decided, after discussion with members, not to put plaques on donated pieces of furniture etc.. In hindsight I wonder if this was a good idea. The person who paid for the frontals came to church one morning to find that they had been cut up and made into backs for the old church pews. Also the Ladies Guild had donated the three sided pulpit, and one day discovered that it had been cut down, the replaced altogether. Likewise the organ just vanished.

We asked Bert Mc Cubbin to choose the lights because he had such good taste, but now the lighting has been changed. Just as the building was being extended Joe Westlake was encouraging us to call our own pastor.

I was Asked to run craft classes, so I began pottery in Beth Shalom. Eventually the class was so large that I moved into ceramics in the hall. Creative Corner had begun classes in the church.

Sunday school teachers were always hard to find and for a while we had students from the Bible College at Victor Harbour come up for the weekend to help us. They were billeted with church members. Andy and Marge Palm, who were single at the time were among those who helped us.

All this has been progress and now I leave it to others to continue. The minutes of meetings e.g. Elders and F.E.C. will have information top draw upon. I will leave it to others to continue with the demolition of the of the old building and planning of the new building also the extensions to the “new building”

Now I leave it to someone else to continue. So much more could be written about the last fifty years. I do hope the old minute books are still about..

A few snippets

The treasurer who hid five pounds of church money before he went to football and never found it – it was just put in his records as five pounds mislaid!

SS weekend camps in tents on Mr. Dale Caux's property between Mc Laren Vale and Willunga.

SS picnic – egg and spoon (today would be regarded as dangerous,. sack races, three legged races and of course Treasure hunts for lollies.

In the old minutes I remember reading how Mrs Fisher applied for extra sugar to make sweets for trading tables and S/S., picnics. Sugar rationing was in force for a long time after the war ended.

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Note from David Dawes

The extension to the first brick building took place in 1976. This resulted from a church business meeting and was one of the quickest decision I have ever known. We were having trouble fitting everyone into church on a Sunday morning, many had to stay outside, until the children went out to Sunday school.

George Turley put forward a proposal that the church buy the land on the corner of Beach Road and Fowey Street, build three shops, use the rental money to furnish a mortgage, so that we could extend the church. At the time the church had no money, and still owed \$6,000.00 on the existing building. In addition we were receiving a subsidy from S.A.B.U. to cover part of the Pastor's wages.

The Church meeting approved the proposal and a sub-committee was formed, of, Dean Harding (Church Secretary); David Dawes (Church Treasurer) and Sandy Little (a builder). To explore the possibility and to come up with costings etc.

The recommended plan was:

1. Buy the land - \$60,000.00 from the King family (I think eventually we got it for \$50,000.00.
2. Build three shops \$40,000.00
3. Extend the Building \$40,000.00
4. Pay off existing mortgage \$6,000.00
5. Purchase Beth Shalom \$23,000.00 – (note when we advertise that we were going to build and extend the church, the lady who owned the building approached us to ask if we would like to buy it)

With the help of S.A.B.U., who guaranteed a mortgage of \$160,000.00 with the Savings Bank of South Australia, we commenced building and completed the project on target within the estimated costs.

Five years later the shops were sold to Dr. Robert White for \$150,000.00, the remaining mortgage was paid off and \$30,000.00 was put into the bank.