

CHURCHES OF CHRIST IN N.S.W.

Home Missionary Dept.

69 CAMPBELL STREET,
SURRY HILLS, SYDNEY

4881
1884
25
1945

If not claimed within 7 days, please return

Handwritten notes in cursive script, including "18 years in ...", "first in ...", and "M. ...".

If not claimed

If not claimed

RECEIVED

44 Woonona Avenue

Wahroonga

20/8/1942

Dear Bro. Saunders, /

Your letter of the 6th duly came to hand & I have been busy since compiling matter from my records to assist you in knowing something about the past records. I cannot help you as regards your old members because my work at Enmore as secy prevented me moving around other churches though I have been to Rockdale for special occasions. Somebody else can fill in about the local work and its highlights, As a matter of fact I was nearly throwing in my lot with the Rockdale brethren but that their methods did not appeal to me. I went to live in Rockdale in 1898 - my wife was a member at Enmore but I had not then been baptised though I attended Enmore services at night. We thought that we would see what the services were like and so we went to one at Bro McGregor's home but it was so different to what we had been accustomed that we preferred to go to Enmore even though it was so much more difficult to go to in those days. In course of time I was baptised by the late Bro. Walden and ultimately became the church secretary.

I forget Bro McGregor's Christian name and the street that he lived in but you can perhaps get that information. I think that some of the McGregor family moved to Loftus Park & may still be found.

I would be glad to see a summary of such information as you may gather from others as that might help to make my sketch more comprehensive and useful, will you bear that in mind?

I have also compiled figures from the Conference returns for the period that the church became properly organised and they may be of interest. You will note that the number of members written off by revision of roll just tops the additions by letters, Baptised Believers & Restorations. that is one of the problems of our work.

If you cannot get the date of the organisation of the church I may be able to help you in that way at some later period.

I trust that this will be of help to you and, if it is, I will be amply repaid for the work involved.

With kind regards

Yours fraternally

E.J. Hilder

E. J. Hilder

73 McLennan St
Lutwyche N.3
Brisbane.
Queensland.

4th August 1942

Mr A. Saunders,
34 Romani Avenue.
Hurstville. N.S.W.

Dear Bro Saunders,

The following may be of interest to you in view,
of your enquiry in the "Christian" recently, as to the starting of
the work at Rockdale.

As to the actual beginning, that goes back a long way - how far
I cannot say. The work was almost extinct, there being but a few
members of a conservative type meeting only for breaking of bread,
when I went to Hurstville in 1916 as the first fulltime preacher
of the latter church; being there from September 1916 to Sept. 1919.

Finding there there was no church between Hurstville and Cooks
River (excepting the little meeting at Rockdale) and that members were
scattered over this area, I obtained the addresses of as many as
I could. Also approached the little band of brethren at Rockdale
with a view to the expansion of the work, to which they agreed.
Then approached all whose names and addresses had been obtained,
and called a meeting at Rockdale, from which the present work dates.
Services were held in a hall opposite the railway station.

Then the Home Mission Committee seeing the possibilities, appoint-
ed Bro Stuart Stevens as preacher, and a tent mission was held (by
Chandler-Clay, if my memory serves me correctly). From then the work
developed rapidly.

As to the year. I have no records of the movement, but know
that the work was in progress and Bro Stevens there in the year of
the pneumonic-flu epidemic, and as Bro Stevens was there soon after
the reorganisation, the work started probably in the year before the
flu year. In any case Bro Stevens would know when he went there.

My association with Rockdale, which had been of a voluntary
nature, ended when the work was established. The Hurstville church
about that time was interested in the starting of the work at Rockdale
Dumbleton, and in the starting of a Bible School at Blakehurst. The
Hurstville brethren were keenly interested in the reorganisation at
Rockdale.

Of the members meeting at Rockdale before the reorganisation
I recall the Black family and the Duff family. The late Bro Sainty
was one who came into ^{at the beginning of} and was actively engaged in the reorganised
church.

I trust that this information will be of use to you. Also that
your present mission may be a great blessing.

Yours in Christ
H. G. Payne

A History of the Rockdale Church compiled by E.J.Hilder.

The first record of meetings by the Rockdale brethren is to be found in the statistical register presented to the Conference held in 1889 which showed a membership of 15. The location of the meeting place is not stated but was, probably, the home of the late Brother McGregor in street. The writer remembers attending a Sunday evening service there some time in 1898 and has always understood that Brother McGregor was the originator of these meetings. A report was made to each Conference till 1899 when there were 28 members, 20 scholars & 2 teachers. In that period very little progress was made numerically till 1894/5 when 34 members were reported, a year later this is grown to 38 but in the following twelve months, 20 names were removed from the roll, reducing the total to 18. (18)

For some unexplained reason the church then withdrew from the Conference & no further mention is made of it till the 1911 report which stated that £1:1:0 had been received from the Rockdale church, 14/- being for Foreign Missions & 7/- for Home Missions. A move was then made to a hall and returns were sent in to Conference for the next four years, the average membership being 13. The church then ceased making returns to Conference till 1918 when the membership stood at 14. The next twelve months showed the first important advance which was brought about by 36 members from other churches moving into the district & linking up with the local congregation & these with additions of three baptised believers & six by faith & order increased the total to 59.

The position then was completely changed & a brighter outlook presented. The Home Missionary committee took steps to organise the church and by monetary assistance made it possible for Brother Stuart Stevens to devote his full time to the work. Soon after the committee sent Brethren Gilbert Chandler & L.E. Clay to hold a mission in a tent erected in the Rocky Point Road not far from Bay Street. A very severe epidemic of Pneumonic Influenza then swept over the State & the Government was compelled to close churches, theatres & prohibit all public meetings and the mission had to be abandoned before it had proceeded very far. The 1919 Conference had to be postponed till June because of the Epidemic & the Home Missionary committee reported on the work as follows. :- "Rockdale church. S. Stevens, preacher fine block of land secured, 45 additions, 100 added to the Bible School, a church building & a self supporting church are quite possible this year." It is probable that the Gilbert Chandler-Clay mission was resumed late in 1919 or early in 1920 and that the 59 additions by faith & order shown by the Rockdale church on the register presented to the 1920 Conference were largely brought about by that effort.

A larger hall had to be secured and Brother Stevens continued his work till some time after March 1921 (1921). In October following, Brother John Clydesdale accepted the oversight of the work. The matter of the erection of a church home was kept prominently before the brethren & steps taken to bring this about came to fruition in May 1923 when the new chapel was opened for use. A few weeks after Brother H.G. Harward held a five days mission in the building & in the following August a tent mission was conducted by Brethren A. Baker & L.E. Clay resulting in 20 additions. The church possessing a strong evangelistic spirit arranged with Brother H.G. Harward to hold a four weeks tent mission in January-February 1924 & 11 more believers were added.

In March 1927 Brother Clydesdale finished his labours & for the next five months services were conducted by such speakers as were available until Brother F.E. Alcorn of Queensland accepted the invitation extended to him & began his work in August 1927. In June 1928 Brother Thomas Hagger held a series of meetings for six days which added four to the church. Arrangements were made with the late Joseph Whelan to hold special Gospel meetings for 3½ weeks in March & April 1930 and through his labours 35 were added to the church. In September 1935 Brother Alcorn resigned & there was an interval of over twelve months before Brother H.D. Priestley began a ministry that was terminated by his untimely death in June 1939. *in the chapel*

Arrangements were ultimately made for Brother A.G. Hinrichsen to come from New Zealand to carry on the work and he began his labours on 21st. January 1940 on which date Brethren E.C. Hinrichsen & V.C. Morris began a tent mission that lasted till March 10 and proved to be a great success. The confessions totalled 123 and the thank-offering in cash & promises amounted to £320.

E. Hinrichsen

19 Aug 1942

The Statistics of the Rockdale church

Membership of church as at 1st March 1918

14

ADDITIONS as from 2nd March 1918 to
31st January 1942

By Faith & Obedience
By Letters
By Baptised Believers
By members restored

397
173
50
33

667
681

LOSSES as from 2nd March 1918 to
31st January 1942

By Letters
By Death
By Revision of Roll

99
48
258

405

Membership of church as at 31st January 1942

262

FACTS ABOUT THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE
ROCKDALE CHURCH.

The Church of Christ Rockdale, held its first meetings in the home of Mr. & Mrs. McGregor, Gladstone Street, Bexley about 55 years ago. Some of the early members were: Mr. & Mrs. McGregor, Mr. & Mrs. Murchison, Mr. & Mrs. Black, Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Henry, Mr. & Mrs. Argent, Mr. & Mrs. Fraser, Mr. & Mrs. Males, Mr. & Mrs. Beattie, Mrs. W. Gately, Mr. & Mrs. A. E. Gately.

Later Meetings were held in a Building in Rocky Point Road, near Kogarah and the Temperance Hall, George Street, Rockdale.

For many years the Church was not very strong only having a few faithful members.

In 1918 the Church was reorganised and meetings were first held in the School of Arts and then in the Supper Room of the Rockdale Town Hall, when Mr. Stuart Stevens was appointed the first minister of the Church.

Some of the members who came while meetings were held in the Temperance Hall were: Mr. Parr, Mr. & Mrs. Duff, Mr. & Mrs. Golby, Mr. & Mrs. Coles, Mr. & Mrs. Partridge and Mrs. Burt.

1912
58
1904
1955
1887

Bro and Sister McGregor received the
right hand of fellowship in the Christian
Chapel, Elizabeth St, Sydney.
on Lords Day Sep 27th. 1885. A.D.

Were members there for about 2 years.
then moved to Rockdale in 1887. A.D.
met in their own home with Bro Murchison.
Sis McGregors father.

After a few weeks rented the
Masonic hall, with a membership of 5.
Bro and Sister Beattie, also of Sydney
Church having also moved to Rockdale.
later moved to Temperance Hall,
and later still to the Excelsior in
Rocky Point Road.

The Sunday School and evening meetings
were held in Bro McGregors home
for about 17 years.

The first Sunday School Scholar was
Sister Henry (atill at Rockdale church)
and her brother.

Many brethren visited regularly.
amongst them being Bro Shepherd
(now of Gospel Advocate) Bro Hall, Sashy,
Logan, and many others.

38 years ago moved to Maryland
had the meetings in the house for
23 years, and in 1927, a chapel
was built, and the work continued
there.

On June 3rd 1942. Bro McGregor
was called to get his reward.

Bro Colin Smith continues the good
work.

In this brief history of the Church of Christ at Rockdale we go back to the year 1887 when Brother and Sister McGregor set up the Lord's Table in their home in Gladstone Street Bexley. This couple had been welcomed into the Church two years earlier in Sydney.

Two or three other members met with them and later they decided to move to the Temperance Hall, George Street, Rockdale. The Gospel Service and Bible School, which also were held in the McGregor home, continued there for 17 years.

In 1889 returns were sent to Conference showing a membership of 15. The ensuing years saw the work go ahead, and then drop back the membership rising to 38 and dropping to 28 in 1899. The School had 20 scholars and 2 teachers in the same year.

Meeting with the McGregors over this period were-- -----
MR and Mrs. Murchison, Mr. and Mrs. Black, Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Henry
Mrs. Argent, Mr. and Mrs. Fraser, Mr. and Mrs. Males, Mr. and Mrs.
Beattie. Mrs. W. Gately and Mr. and Mrs. A. Gately.

Brother and Sister McGregor moved to Eastwood in 1904 where they continued to live until Brother McGregor received the Home Call on June 3rd. 1942. Of the early members Brother and Sister Fraser, Sister Mrs. Henry, and Brother Black still meet with the Church at Rockdale. Mrs. Henry and her brother were the first Bible School scholars.

Little is known of the Church from 1899 till 1911. From 1911 to 1916 the membership averaged 13.

Brother H.G. Payne (now in Queensland) went to the Church at Hurstville in 1916, being Hurstville's first full time preacher. As there was no Church between Hurstville and Cook's River, except for the little band meeting at Rockdale, Brother Payne obtained the names and addresses of as many members in the district as he could. He visited these folk and arranged meetings from which the present work dates.

In November 1918 there were only 52 members and as a result of 36 members moving into the district the Church grew to 88 in 1919. Brother Payne called a meeting of the Church on 25th. January 1918 with Brother C. Rush as chairman, but owing to a number of members being unable to be present, the meeting was adjourned until 4th. February when a good number was present, Brother H.G. Harward being chairman.

The first entry in the Church Minute Book reads :-

"During the last few weeks of 1917 endeavour had been made, with the active assistance of Brother Payne of Hurstville to interest members of the Church of Christ resident in the District, in the local work!"

As a result of the meeting on the 4th. February it was resolved that the Secretary, Brother C. Duff, should compile a list of members that a Bible School be inaugurated on 10th, February 1918, that a Gospel Service be held on the evening of the same day and succeeding Lord's Days, speakers to be provided for Sunday Mornings and that a preacher be obtained for three months.

On Sunday 10th. February Brother C.C.S. Rush (now at Lane Cove) offered to preach till Easter, which offer was gratefully accepted.

The position of the Church was now much improved, and the Home Missionary Committee helped to organise the work, and by financial aid made it possible for Brother S. Stevens (preacher at Enmore now) to take the position of the first full time preacher at Rockdale. On April 8 1918 Brother and Sister Stevens were welcomed to Rockdale. The first Quarterly Business Meeting was held in the Temperance Hall on 29th April. Those present at this meeting were:- Sisters Mrs. McIntosh, Mrs. Gately Mrs. Black, Miss Burt, Misses G. V. E. Waring, Brethren Black, D. M. Duff, G. Partridge, W. T. Coles, S. Stevens, F. T. Willis and C. F. Duff.

At this meeting it was decided to change the place of meeting from the Temperance Hall to the School of Arts by the 5th May 1918. A Church Paper was to be published, and that a committee be formed to select land for a Church Home. On the First of June the Church Paper was published known as Good Tidings. An extraordinary business meeting was called to discuss the recommendation that the Church purchase a block of land in Frederick Street Rockdale for £1000. The meeting, held on 17th. June 1918 agreed to the proposal.

The first Annual Business meeting revealed that the Church had grown by 38 members. The Bible School had been started and Gospel Services commenced. A full time preacher had taken up the work, the Church paper was issued at the rate of 1000 copies per month, and land had been purchased for the prospective Church Home.

In 1919 the Chandler- Clay mission party held a mission and although forced to close the effort early on account of the pneumonic influenza epidemic, the Conference report for Rockdale, 1919 read,

S. Stevens Preacher, fine block of land secured, 45 additions, 100 added to Bible School, Church building and self supporting Church quite possible this year.

At a meeting on April 6 1919 the Church decided to move to the Town Hall the rental being 25/- per week, three meetings on Sunday. This meeting coincided with the closing of the Chandler - Clay Mission as a result of the epidemic.

Later in the same year, the Church decided to sell the cottage on 50ft. frontage to Frederick Street, at not less than £750. The amount received to be used as a deposit on the Chapel. As a result of the sale £750 was received, and then it was agreed to sell the remainder of the land and to purchase two blocks of land, each 40 x 125 in Bryant Street, Rockdale opposite the Town Hall.

The 1920 report showed an increase of 59 members. Brother C. Duff had resigned his position as secretary, and was succeeded by Brother E. V. Sainty who held the office for nearly two years and was followed by Brother W. B. Lang. The year 1920 saw the commencement of the Junior Christian Endeavour Society with Miss H. Grist as Superintendent on 17th. October. Miss Grist led the Society until she married Brother W. Small in 1934. In the next year the Church adopted the Church of Christ Property Management Act.

Brother Stevens relinquished the work in 1921 after serving the Church faithfully for three years. Brother J. Clydesdale followed Brother Stevens, commencing his ministry on February 1 1922. In July 1922 plans and specifications for the new Chapel were obtained, and in the following September the tender of Mr. Burgin was accepted, his price being £1095. Brethren W. T. Coles, W. D. Lang and E. V. Sainty were appointed trustees, Brother Sainty having again taken up the position of secretary.

Saturday 24th, February was a red letter day for the Church, for on that day the Chapel was officially opened by Brother J. Crawford Conference Vice-president. In the afternoon an appeal was launched by Brother C.C.S. Rush and as a result £460 was obtained in cash and promises. At night a splendid meeting under the chairmanship of Brother H.G. Harward was held when Sister Churches gave greetings. The following brethren were Officers and deacons at the time :-

Preacher J. Clydesdale
 Secretary E.V. Sainty
 ASSIST.
 Secretary C. Waring
 Treasurer W.T. Coles
 Asst.
 Treas. A. Coomber
 Deacons R. Golby
 N. Goyen
 W.D. Lang
 G. Partridge

Of these Brethren the following have been called to Higher Service Brethren E.V. Sainty, R. Golby, N. Goyen and G. Partridge. Brother Lang is now in Melbourne.

In December it was arranged for a tent mission led by H.G. Harward to start in January 1924. The Church had another mission with Baker and Clay in August 1925.

Brother Clydesdale resigned from the ministry at Rockdale in January 1927 after serving the Church for 5½ years. In April Brother F.E. Alcorn of Queensland was called to the work. He accepted the offer and commenced at Rockdale in August 1927. While Brother Alcorn was at Rockdale another mission was held by J. Whelan of Chatswood. Brother Sainty resigned from secretaryship in 1928 and Brother C. Sorrell was elected to fill the vacancy. Brother C.C. King became secretary in 1929 and held the position till 1940 when due to ill-health he resigned.

In May 1932, Rockdale offered to help the Church at Bexley North by allowing Brother Alcorn to go to Bexley North one week per month one Sunday included. Brother Alcorn was at Rockdale for 8 years, leaving Rockdale in 1935. It was in this year also that Sister Miss Winter of Chatswood gave the Church an organ.

A year passed before the Church was able to secure another preacher Brother H.D. Priestley coming in 1936. During this time the Church had been served by Brother G. Everett of Mosman and Brother A.L. Carter. Bro. Priestley served the Church faithfully, sparing not himself in his efforts to present the Gospel, until his sudden death cut short his stay at Rockdale.

On the death of H.D. Priestley, Brother A.L. Carter was approached to see if he would help Rockdale with speaking appointments. This he gladly did, and as a result of his efforts following the good work of the late preacher many souls were added to the Church. From June 1939 until January 1940 when Brother A. Hinrichsen arrived from New Zealand to take up the work, Brother Carter did a good work. The Church at Rockdale in common with other Churches had suffered both financially and in membership during the years of depression and it was good to see the interest growing and the general tone of the work improve.

The work had prospered steadily during these years and when the Church had a mission with E.C. Hinrichsen and V. Morris in 1940, there were added to the Church more than 100 members. ~~to the Church~~, the Offering exceeding £320. In this year also, it was decided to raise all Brotherhood finance by means of the Duplex Envelopes and it is pleasing to note that the r

Bro. A. M. M. served from 1940-1944

response has been most gratifying. The year 1940 showed total receipts in excess of £900 including The mission thank offering, in 1941 total receipts were £880.

Bro. G. E. Burns

There has been a consistent growth over the past 3 years, and our present Evangelist is doing a great work in the district for our Lord and Master. The average attendance at the Lord's Table over the last three years has been 150.

Brother H. Colbourne became secretary in 1941 but owing to war conditions was unable to continue as such, and the assistant secretary Brother A. Saunders took over. He was elected secretary in 1942. From July to the end of September a special effort was made to liquidate the debt on the Chapel. The amount was £227 and of this ~~£210~~ £210 was raised. The deacons agreed that the debt be wiped and now the Church is free of debt.

The Church property is now valued at more than £ 2000.

Bro. Burns served the Church faithfully for four years having commenced in 1944 and resigning in 1948 to return to his work at Borman. During this period a Bible class room was built, and a manse purchased in Orwell St. Parish. Bro. R. Everett became Church secretary, and was followed by Bro. S. C. C. In February 1948 Bro. J. J. J. and present preacher came from Ballarat, Vic. Due to the generosity of the members making interest free loans available the debt on the manse has been almost wiped out. The last conference return shows the membership to stand at 140.

In 1952 Receipts were over £1600. and surplus £1249.5