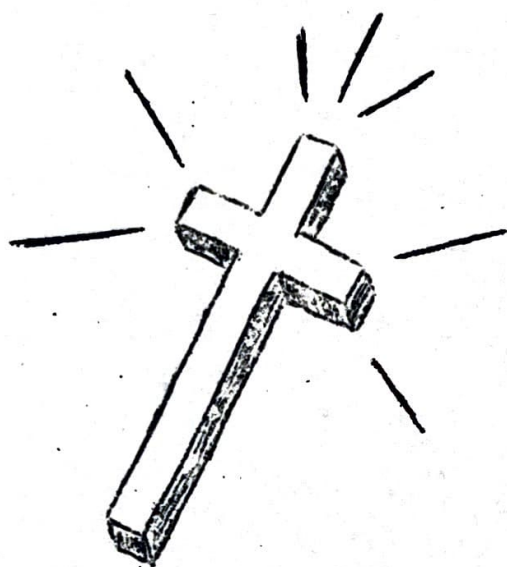


THE CHURCH
OF CHRIST



70

years
at Rockdale

EARLY HISTORY OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST, ROCKDALE.

The first meetings of the Church of Christ at Rockdale were held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. McGregor, Gladstone Street, Bexley. Apparently associated with them was Mrs. McGregor's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Murchison. After a few weeks Breaking of Bread services began in the Masonic Hall with five members.

ASSOCIATION WITH CONFERENCE. The first report to Conference was made in 1889, and reports continued each year until 1899, when for some reason unknown, the church withdrew from conference. No further reference is made to the church in Rockdale in Conference records until 1911 after which date the church sent in reports for four years and then discontinued again until 1918. The present register shows that this church was affiliated with conference in 1919.

THE MEMBERSHIP: The numbers reported to conference do not always agree with the number of names on the roll. The following numbers are those reported to conference, and where there is a difference to the church roll the roll figures are shown in brackets: 1887, 5; 1889, 15; 1895, 40 (34); 1896, 40 (38); 1897, 30 (18); 1901, 25; 1902, 24; 1903, 24; 1904, 20; 1906, 14; and reports to conference from 1911 to 1915 showed an average membership of 13. A report made to conference in 1918 showed a membership of 14.

THE MEETING PLACES: The home of Mr. and Mrs. McGregor, Gladston Street, Bexley was the first meeting place for Breaking of Bread, and continued as the place for evening services and quarterly business meetings until July, 1901. Breaking of Bread services were held in a Masonic Hall soon after the work began, but in 1895 we find the church using the Excelsior Hall, Rocky Point Road, Rockdale. Meetings continued in this hall until 1906 when the change was made to the Temperance Hall, George Street, Rockdale. Soon after the church was re-organised in April, 1918, it was decided to change the place of meetings to the School of Arts, and in April, 1919, to the Supper Room of the Rockdale Town Hall, where the church continued to meet until the opening of the present building in 1923.

THE PROPERTY: A building fund was being built up from the very first meeting held. In June, 1918, the church bought a block of land in Frederick Street, Rockdale for £1,000. In 1919 part of this property was sold for £750, and later in the same year the remainder of the property was sold, and the present land purchased.

OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH: The first secretary of the church was Mr. McGregor who served from 1887 to 1904. He was succeeded by Mr. A. E. Gately who served until at least 1907. The first treasurer mentioned was Mr. Beattie who resigned in 1896, and he was succeeded by Mr. Gately. Mr. W. T. Black succeeded Brother Gately in 1900.

THE BIBLE SCHOOL: The Bible School continued to meet in the home of Mr. and Mrs. McGregor in Gladstone Street, Bexley, for 17 years. In 1899 there were 20 scholars and 2 teachers. In 1904 there was a break of three months for want of staff. This was the year the McGregors left Bexley, and suggests that their going caused a shortage of staff. Mr. J. Males resigned as a teacher, and Mrs. McIntosh offered to carry on with some help, but as none was forthcoming the school closed for three months with a hearty vote of thanks to Mr. Males and Mrs. McIntosh. At the end of the three months Mrs. McIntosh offered to carry on the work "if the Brethren thought it right." Nothing further was said in the matter and Mrs. McIntosh carried on. A year later two of the brethren offered to help on alternate Sundays. At a later date the brethren again placed on record their appreciation of the services of Mrs. McIntosh as a devoted teacher of the Sunday School.

This early era of the church was brought into the stream of Brotherhood history again when, during the last weeks of 1917 an endeavour was made with the active assistance of Mr. H. G. Payne, the first full time minister of Hurstville church, to interest members of the Church of Christ resident in the district, in the local work. To the 14 who were meeting already, there were 36 others added, and these, with the addition of three baptised believers, and 6 by faith and baptism, brought together a congregation of 59 people. Then the church was ready for a new era of numerical and spiritual growth.