

PROFILE - ROCKDALE CHURCH, N.S.W.

Rockdale Church was born in 1887, during a time of change. Only 3 years earlier a 7 mile rail link with Sydney was opened, whilst the first public school in the area commenced a year later. Early church records show the gradual advance of literacy and with frank humour interspersed. A rubber stamp and pad was needed, but the scribe of the day recorded "much talk but no action".

There followed ups and downs, association with Conference and withdrawals. The Chandler-Clay tent mission in 1919 revived and consolidated the small church and in four years it outgrew hired halls and opened its own chapel on an ideal site opposite the future Town Hall and Civic Centre. Bro. J. Clydesdale was the Minister.

During the lean years of the 1930's the church received several applications from would-be ministers, even though the general fund was in the red.

Better times followed, and ministers who had assiduously visited the flock on foot moved up through bicycle and motor cycle to car. A manse was bought and gradually paid for. Then,

The A.C. Vol. 63 No 26, July 5, 1960 front page carries a suitable photo of Rockdale Church Building.

realising that the old multipurpose chapel was inadequate, the mind of our architect, Keith Sawdy, was enlisted. Meanwhile, the Copley family with many helpers conducted wayside stalls and raised \$12,000 - half the cost of the new chapel.

In 1959 this attractive building was opened for service and many modern ideas were incorporated - from a parquet floor on a concrete slab, to the aluminium roof supported on straight steel joists rising from exterior concrete pads. Featured too are a garden beside the open baptistry. Of special interest is the symbol of the Christian Church: the empty cross designed by Robin Norling as an aid to worship. He also made on the outer wall the mosaic of Jesus and His fishermen disciples.

More recently, the old hall was replaced by a modern kitchen and hall. The whole area is made beautiful by well-kept gardens.

Deliberately planned to belong to the community, these premises are intended to attract folk. The chapel is open through the day - an oasis where it is easy to meet God. Adjacent is the Minister's office with its busy phone. Usually just more than

100 meet the Master around His Communion Table. The fellowship is enriched by visitors and there have been non Christians present. A most successful innovation is the after-church Christian Cafe. at every gospel service. It is interesting to note that most of the Bible School scholars come from homes of non-members.

Co-operation with other communions is evident in combined Holy Week services - this year in our own chapel. Also there is mounting united participation in the Billy Graham Crusade.

During her 80 years, many have gone into full-time ministries and allied service. The present minister, Bro. Mackenzie commenced when the new chapel was opened. During this period he was successful in gaining a Doctorate in Theology. He has twice been "lent" to serve as chaplain on migrant ships. Mrs. Mackenzie was recently honoured as State President of the Women's Fellowship.

The church was born in a time of change and lives in a time of change. The outreach of the future may well need to centre on senior citizens and youth, social service and counselling.

G. MAXWELL, Secretary.