

Merrylands was commenced in 1901, the exact date of the first service is not known but that the work had been established is verified by a brief reference to it in the Parramatta church minutes for September 1901.

In 1905, Mr George Hollier donated a block of land measuring 66 ft by 132 ft (20 x 40m) for the erection of a church. The first Merrylands Baptist Church building was opened on Jan.7, 1907 - a weatherboard structure which stood on the exact spot occupied by the present church.

Around 1921, a group of Merrylands residents, attending the Granville Baptist church, decided to set up a Baptist mission in the Merrylands School of Arts. The Mission attracted a very enterprising group of worshippers, such that the Home Mission Committee suggested to both churches in 1921 that a more aggressive work could be pursued in Merrylands if the two Baptist causes could be merged under the direct control of the Home Mission Board. The Home Mission raised the matter again in 1929 and, this time, Parramatta agreed to their suggestion, making the current property available free of debt. The Home Mission assumed responsibility for the work in April 1930.

The Merrylands Baptist church was duly formed on May 14, 1930, with 21 members being received into fellowship by the President of the Baptist Union, Rev. G.H. Morling. When Bruce Hinds succeeded Frank Starr in 1932, his immediate priority was to effect an amalgamation with the Baptist Mission. In fairly short order, the amalgamation took place, with combined Sunday morning services being held in the more spacious School of Arts, and evening services in the church in Chertsey St. (now Memorial Avenue).

In 1933 the old church building was moved to the rear of the block and, backed by the now much larger congregation, a new church was erected, which was enlarged on three separate occasions. While the reconstituted Merrylands church was healthy, it was relatively small. It was supported by modest-wage earners and it had a substantial residual debt occasioned by the new building. It was still a "Home Mission" church, subsidised by the Baptist Home Mission Department and reliant on theological students from the Baptist College.

The period 1945-50 saw the calling of the Rev. Stanley Dickson - the church's first full-time minister. When Rev. Dickson resigned (and retired) in 1950, Pastor Ron Burns was appointed to take his place. Pastor R.B.(Bob) Graham and his wife Jean succeeded Pastor Ron Burns. The need for a permanent manse prompted the purchase of the property at 18 Newman St., which came our way during the Burns/Graham ministries largely through the intervention of a local resident and communicant, Mrs Spence.

Bob Graham and Jean were followed in 1953-54 by Pastor and Gladys Heard. Remembered as a sincere battler, Ron was determined to reshape his life for the Lord and to win as many souls as he could in the process - young and old alike.

John Curtis and his young wife, Violet, accepted a full-time call to the church in 1954 and began what proved to be a very profitable ministry. They set up home in the Newman St. cottage and

helped translate it into the official manse.

A companion meeting to services, a monthly Saturday evening "Family Night" was organised by Neville and Min Williams, with generous assistance from musically and technically minded members to look after lighting, projectors and amplifier. Continuing until the mid '70s "Family Night" gave birth to a mobile team which conducted interdenominational rallies and services in rural centres as far afield as Newcastle, Cootamundra, Wagga Wagga, Junee and Tumut.

It was also during John's ministry that the All-Age Sunday School was established (1958) - only the third such in Australia and the first to gain the Standard of Excellence Award based on principles laid down by the Southern Baptist Convention of USA.

John Curtis was followed by the Rev. Frank and Win Gallagher (1959-64) whose ministry was marked by further extension of the church building to seat 312, and by the purchase of 33 Memorial Avenue to serve as a manse.

Fresh from country service at Griffith, Rev Darcy and Anne Taplin (1964-68) caught the vision of further expansion involving complete replacement of the old hall with a new two-storey multi-purpose auditorium complex. Rev. Alan and Mrs Logan followed in 1968-71 and saw the vision of a modern auditorium become a highly practical reality.

Rev. Ben and Mrs Ewing happily accepted a call in late 1971, having earlier become known to the church as an itinerant missionary: "The Singing Sailor". Ben Ewing moved to the Dee Why church in 1977, his place having taken by Rev. Keith and Beryl Beech (1978-82) with a sincere, friendly ministry.

1982 saw the calling of Rev. Ken and Clarice Newman, a challenging preacher with a special ministry to young marrieds. He also took a hands-on role in enlarging the church entrance and foyer to limit exposure to the westerly sun and winter southerlies. Also, by largely personal effort, Ken added a free-standing study to the manse in Wayman Place. When Ken Newman resigned in 1988, a number of interim pastorates took place including a number of former pastors who ministered to the church.

In 1994, Rev Max Dundas took up the role a Senior Pastor and along with his wife Jenny have served the church faithfully and well up to the present. During this time major changes to Worship service and ministry styles have occurred.

MBC celebrated in grand style 100 years of ministry in Merrylands in 2001. Major decisions regarding the future of MBC buildings were undertaken starting in 2000. This resulted in the consolidation of properties and a major refurbish of the main church property. The congregation met off-site for 9 months to allow this major refurbishment. The enhancements included moving

the worship centre from old original church building to the top floor of the auditorium installing a lift for disabled persons as well as major upgrades of playtime, kitchen and toilet facilities.

In 2005, MBC employed their first fully accredited part-time Associate Pastor Rev. Maria Vidal. This was made possible by the investment of funds raised from the sale of the 16 & 18 Newman St properties. Maria concluded her ministry in 2007, married to become Maria Matherson and now serves at Cherrybrook.

In 2008, Chris Hall was appointed to this position as a Student Associate. Chris will continue in this role when he graduates from Morling College in 2009.

Much of this history came from the 90 years on booklet, which set out the history of Merrylands Baptist Church from 1901 to 1991. The full booklet can be viewed here: www.merrylandsbaptist.org.au/files/90thBooklet.doc

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