

1876-1976

HISTORY OF



BAPTIST WORK AT BROOKER

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The beginning of Brooker Baptist Church must date as taking place at least ten years before the time of its organization in 1876 and Rev. John Galt was fortunate in having a definite account of the same from the man who under God, commenced the work. The founder and first preacher of the Gospel in the settlement was Elder Richard Herrington, a son of Elder Richard Herrington Sr., founder of the Kingsville Baptist Church and pioneer Baptist preacher of the district.

Richard D. Herrington was baptized in Lake Erie on Sunday, November 3, 1852 by the Rev. H. Fitch after being examined and accepted by the Colcehster Second Baptist Church (Iler Settlement). A little later it was unanimously voted that Bro. Richard Herrington Jr. be privileged to improve his gift in preaching and that a certificate to that effect be given to him.

In the early Eighteen-sixties Bro. Herrington in improving his gift in preaching, conducted services at Woodslee, riding on horseback when the state of the ground permitted, and in the spring and fall going on foot with the aid of a vaulting pole. One day when riding home he was accosted by William Brooker, one of the first settlers, in a rough manner and with a query as to why he went all the way to Woodslee to preach and never offered to stop in the Brooker settlement. Did he think that the people in the settlement were all heathen or what did he think? The result of this interview was that William Brooker offered to open his house and to see that there would be "a crowd at the preaching."

On the occasion of the first meeting, Mr. Herrington found some difficulty in getting into the house which was crammed to excess with men, women and children; even the little stair to the attic was occupied by women with children in their laps and the creaking of the boards overhead indicated there were some upstairs. The day was warm and the place being crowded, the fresh air was very sweet when

they got outside after the meeting. These services continued and many became deeply interested in the "Good News", so much so that it was proposed that a Chapel be built in order that all might hear the Gospel proclaimed.

A lot for the first church was purchased at the corner of what is now the Belle River Road and the Ninth Concession, for \$5. A "bee" was called and in about a week a log church was ready for use as a chapel and a day school when a teacher was available. This building served the community for a number of years until a larger and better appointed building was erected.

While preaching continued in the little log chapel for some years, no church was organized until that historic occasion one hundred years ago. The minute book contains this record "January 12th in the year of our Lord 1876 delegates from Leamington, Kingsville, Colchester and Rochester Churches met with the brethren in Brooker settlement (seven miles north of Kingsville) for the purpose of examining and, if thought proper, recognizing them as a Regular Baptist Church — the little church now number 12; yet it has fair prospects and promises well. Under the earnest ministrations of our devoted Brother Jacob A. Iler we expect the little to become a thousand and the small one a great nation".

In the same year (1876) a new church was erected upon the site of the present edifice. It was much larger and of brick construction. A lot was donated by William Dewhurst, owner of the farm where the desired lot was located. The bricks cost \$200. and as ready money was not available, it was necessary to raise the money by "note". It is significant of the poverty of the period that the money could not be obtained without the signatures of the three most responsible farmers in the church. The Pugsley Revival brought so many more people to the church that it was necessary to build an annex to provide for all.

There followed a period of intense evangelism. At least three protracted series of revival meetings were held. The first was conducted by the minister, the second by Rev. William Pugsley and the third by Evangelist Vansickle. In the year 1897 Mr. Vansickle conducted special services with such remarkable results that almost all of the young people of the district made profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

With the coming of Rev. John Galt, 1909, a new day dawned for the church. The practice of engaging a minister by the year was discontinued and Rev. Galt remained for three years. Under his direction in 1910 a Ladies Aid was organized with seven members and a fund was started to improve the church building. Eventually the ladies had \$1200. in the bank only to find the improvements were opposed by some who considered that there was no future to the work in the church.

When Rev. C. Gosnell took charge of the church in 1919 he seized the opportunity to do some permanent work.

A shed at the back of the lot which sheltered the horses in the cold weather and where the wood was kept for heating, was cleaned and tables set up, lanterns were hung from the rafters for lights. This was where we held our ice cream and strawberry socials with the men and women going in the afternoon to make the ice cream in large freezers turned by hand. Our fall chicken suppers were also held there with only a free will offering given. The ladies aid met each week in different homes where neighbouring ladies would come and help piece quilts and to quilt, receiving three dollars for each finished quilt.

The dream of rebuilding the church became a reality in 1920 when the church was completely rebuilt. A rock well was drilled at the back of the church; an addition was built making room for a kitchen and some class rooms; and a baptistry was installed with only a wood stove to provide heat. Our faithful janitor Mrs. William Orton would stay all night to keep the fire going so the water would be kept warm for the baptismal service the following Sunday. Before this we had the privilege of using the baptistry in the Kingsville Church. A basement was placed beneath and an addition made to the entrance. Some years passed before the debt involved was retired but they were years of intense activity and growth. The new building brought new life to the congregation.

1922 — Rev. and Mrs. John Marshall came to minister during this time. Mr. and Mrs. Nelson Helkie gave another parcel of land to the church to increase the size of the grounds. The congregation was greatly surprised when Mrs. Marshall presented the church with a large oil painting for the wall of the baptistry which she herself

had painted. This gift was greatly appreciated so much so that it still beautifies our church.

In 1927 Rev. A. Burgess came to serve our church as pastor. A lovely pulpit Bible was donated by Miss Audera Hutchins. Up to this time the church used only coal oil lamps and in November 1929 the electric lighting system was installed. At the dedication service, the oldest member of the church, Mrs. James Brooker was asked to switch on the auditorium lights. A beautiful pulpit light was given by Mrs. Rose Osborne who was deeply interested in the church work. The Ladies Aid of the church and community worked and fellowshiped together to give the support they needed in all activities. One afternoon, in 1935, the ladies of the church, visiting churches and community met together in the auditorium, the occasion being Mrs. Oscar Patterson having completed twenty-five years as President. Mrs. Ethel Newman read the minutes of the first organized meeting, while three other members of the seven chartered members were there: Mrs. Jim Newman, Mrs. Harry Bedell and Mrs. Matthew Hutchins.

In 1937 a flag "the Union Jack" was given to the church by Mr. and Mrs. Elwyn Patterson. Rev. Burgess resigned in 1941, he had served the longest pastorate in the church's history — 14 years.

In 1943 during the ministry of Rev. F. M. Ward the auditorium's beauty was greatly enhanced when the beautiful stained glass windows were installed by the members and former members of the church. At the same time the kitchen was renovated and fine new carpeting put down in the church. The same year Rev. Ward had the privilege of marrying the first British War Guest in Canada. In preparation for the ceremony a Minshall Electric organ was secured. The congregation was so impressed with the music they decided to keep the instrument. A canvass of the community was made and in one month the amount required was raised.

Shortly afterward the fine oak communion table and chairs were presented to the church by members of the Trimble family; the table in memory of Dr. Trimble and the chairs as a memorial to Mr. and Mrs. William Trimble. The task of beautifying the House of God had progressed steadily. The building was worthy in every way as a place dedicated to the worship of Almighty God.

1954 — With the faithful leadership of Rev. C A. Hill the auditorium was renovated, a new hard wood floor was laid and new pews

were installed which were donated by different members and friends. This was an added attraction to our church.

In July 1960 a motion was carried that we contact Dr. Burns to see if it were possible to receive help from the Home Missions as we would like to continue the work of our church independently of Kingsville and start on our own. Rev. K. R. Davis, our minister, suggested guide lines so that all working together we could manage to build our parsonage and support our own minister.

Since the beginning of our church the same minister had served both Kingsville and Brooker and due to the growth of both churches we felt that the Lord was leading us to step out in faith.

With the help of the Lord and much prayer, and all working together in unity and love we began to build our parsonage across the road from the church on the one acre of land that was given by Mr. and Mrs. Edgar Goodburn. In September 1961 a contractor was called and work on the parsonage began. When it was completed a few months later, we were all very thankful to the Lord for His rich blessings.

God has honoured the faith of this congregation but it was with much regret that we voluntarily severed connections with our mother church in Kingsville. We greatly appreciated their help and love during our many years of work together, and we still look forward to the times of fellowship which we can share together as sister congregations.

A Pulpit Committee was appointed to call a minister. Rev. P. Augustine accepted our call and agreed to come in April 1962. Meanwhile we called Rev. Silas Lamb to come as interim minister to oversee the work until Rev and Mrs. Augustine came as our full time minister. In 1963 a garage was built beside the parsonage and the work of the Lord prospered as many were baptized and joined our growing fellowship.

It had been predicted that most rural churches do not have much longer to exist, but under the capable leadership and ministry of Rev. and Mrs. Sheldon Draper which began in 1964 our church continued to increase.

In 1965, the J.O.Y. class with their teacher Mrs. Glen Bruner presented the church with the Christian Flag.

On June 26, 1966 at the morning service, we had the privilege of watching the burning of the mortgage of the parsonage. Rev. K. Davis was the guest minister for this occasion. The evening service was held on the lawn of the parsonage when our minister Rev. Draper took the service and led in the act of dedication. To God we give the Glory.

Renovations had been made to the existing church building and although the improvements had added to the church, the Sunday School had simply outgrown the existing facilities. Again the congregation was faced with the question of taking a big step in faith and after considerable study and much prayer, plans were prepared for the erection of a Christian Education Wing. Recognizing the need for faith and sacrifice on the part of every member, the congregation approved the plans and authorized construction of the new building. At this time Mr. and Mrs. Steve Newman donated additional land to the church property.

The new wing provides seven permanent classrooms along with furnace room in the basement and a minister's study at ground level just inside the main entrance. On the upper floor a spacious kitchen and large auditorium has been provided and this can be used for classrooms by placing dividers at the proper location. Washrooms and a cloakroom space are also located in this same area.

The convention was asked to make available a church extension loan to assist the congregation which had already raised a considerable amount of money.

At the service of dedication February 4, 1968, a crowd of approximately two hundred people filled the new auditorium. The guest speaker for the occasion was Rev. A. R. Goldie of the Department of Canadian Missions, Toronto. Our pastor Rev. Sheldon Draper led in the act of dedication and Rev. Martin Brown of Kingsville led in the prayer of dedication.

Furniture for the study was donated and dedicated to the Glory of God in the memory of Mrs. Ethel Newman a former well loved member. A flag for the Christian Education Wing was given by the Cottam Canadian Legion through Mrs. Harry Counsell. A pulpit Bible was given in memory of Mr. and Mrs. John Brooker by their grand-

daughters Mrs. Simon and Mrs. Brown. New Bibles for the pews were given by Mrs. Jean Augustine in memory of her husband Rev. P. Augustine. The former flag (Union Jack) that was given in 1937 was replaced by Mr. and Mrs. Fred Collard.

In 1972 the new suspended ceiling and fluorescent lighting were installed in the sanctuary. The lights in the form of a cross seem to symbolize the faith of this church. Our preaching and witness is based on the cross of Christ where our Saviour shed his precious blood so that our sins might be forgiven. With Paul we say: "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ." We acknowledge that all our blessings come from God and to Him we give all the glory. Also in 1972 the basement of the sanctuary was completely renovated, and divided into three permanent classrooms, furnace room and beautiful nursery.

Rev. and Mrs. Draper having accepted a call to a church in New Brunswick resigned in October 1972, and terminated their ministry here in December.

Rev. A. G. Heatherington came as interim minister for a few months in which we greatly enjoyed his ministry.

In June 1973 Stephen Jones a graduate of Ontario Bible College came to minister to us. At this time a beautiful desk, chairs and filing cabinet for the study were donated by Mr. and Mrs. C. R. Jewell and Family.

In September 1973 Mr. Jones began studies toward a Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of Windsor. He received his B.A. in May 1975 and is presently looking towards ordination in the near future.

To the present time Mr. Jones' pastorate has been an eventful one. In December 1973 a new Conn electric church organ was purchased by the church. Its music adds greatly to the quality of our worship service. It is noteworthy that no funds were taken from the church treasury to pay for the organ. A special organ fund was set up and the organ was completely paid for in a very short period of time.

In March 1974 new shingles were installed on the roof of the sanctuary.

Also in 1974 the congregation voted to begin extensive renovations in the vestibule of the church and to purchase new carpeting and baptistry drapes for the sanctuary. The result is a lovely, spacious vestibule with ample space for coats, new glass doors, beautiful indoor-outdoor carpeting, wrought iron handrails and newly refinished woodwork.

Much time and energy and many monetary gifts went into the completion of the renovations. After the carpenters had left, much work still needed to be done and we are grateful to those who gave of themselves so willingly for the beautifying of God's house. Carpeting in the sanctuary was donated by the Ladies Aid with donations by individuals. The Baptistry drapes were donated as were the wrought iron coat racks in the vestibule.

In 1974 and 1975 the pulpit, pulpit chairs and woodwork in the vestibule were refinished by Mr. and Mrs. Elton Newman — thus adding greatly to the beauty of God's house.

1975 was a year of great significance in the life of our church. In February we began our Centennial Celebrations with Rev. William P. Lewis of Toronto as our "99th" Anniversary speaker.

The plan for the year was to have one special speaker per month. On these special Sundays we would have a fellowship hour following the morning service so that everyone could meet the speaker. As an experiment, on the evening of these special Sundays, evening services have been initiated with the pastor speaking. We have been gratified to see the response of the people during the year. We have enjoyed great inspiration from our guest preachers Rev. Clifford Hill, Rev. Kenneth Davis, Rev. Sheldon Draper, Mrs. P. D. Augustine, Rev. Silas Lamb, Rev. A. G. Heatherington, Dr. S. L. Boehmer, Rev. David Faulkner, Rev. Fred Jewell and our 100th anniversary speaker Dr. Fred Ward.

All of the special services have been noteworthy, but one especially stands out in our minds. On Palm Sunday evening it was our privilege to have as our guest speaker Dr. Robert F. Armstrong of Warrendale Community Church, Dearborn, Michigan and star of the popular Television program "Happy Though Married". Over two hundred people crowded the church. The Sanctuary was filled to capacity and others watched the service over closed circuit television in the Christian

Education Building. God truly blessed us on this evening and has continued blessing us on all of our special Sundays.

In 1975 the ladies of the church were divided into six groups, each group being responsible to supply refreshments at the fellowship hour once every six months. This group is called the "2M" group and seems to have ended the perennial problem of the same ladies being responsible for providing refreshments every time they are necessary.

We have an active B.Y.P.U., two Mission Circles, Young Adults, and Ladies Aid.

There are three choirs, a choir for young people as well as junior and senior choirs. The young people take responsibility in the service once a month.

In the fall of 1975 a Family Night program was initiated. A Boy's Group was formed and now Choir practice, Prayer Meeting and Bible Study, Pioneer Girls, and Boys Group all meet on Wednesday evenings with good attendances.

1975 was also a year in which memorial gifts were presented to the church. A pulpit light was donated by Mrs. Inez Trimble in memory of her husband Wallace. A filmstrip projector, amplification system and picture of Jesus and the Children were donated in memory of Jeffrey Fitch by his parents and friends. Flowers and a picture "The Road to Emmaeus" were donated in memory of Mr. Bruce Hunter by parents and the Young People's group. Money was donated in memory of Mr. Wallace Trimble and Mr. Lawrence Nelson and has been used to purchase library books in their memory. A new Guest Register was purchased in memory of Mr. Lawrence Nelson by his wife Florence.

Our leaders are very dedicated, very dependable workers. "We believe in tithing" and we have suppers for fellowship only. Our members and friends contribute faithfully. We try to involve as many as possible, participation is the secret in rural work.

Brooker Church which has already experienced considerable growth in its membership looks forward to a continued expansion of its work and witness. It is the prayer of the congregation that many others will come to find Jesus Christ as the Way of Salvation, as the Brooker Church spreads the gospel throughout the community.

MINISTERS

1876-1877	REV. R. D. HERRINGTON
1878	ELDER HUFF
1879	W. T. OSBORNE
1880-1883	REV. G. A. CHITTENDON
1884	PASTOR MILLS
1885-1888	T. D. HUGHES
1889-1890	A. SNIDER
1891	T. J. MURDOCK
1892	PASTOR STIENHUFF
1893	PASTOR RYERSON
1894-1895	E. L. STEVENS
1896	E. D. SHERMAN
1897	REV. J. I. MANTHORNE, B.A.
1898-1899	A. J. SAUNDERS
1900	REV. W. H. STEVENS
1901	REV. E. MATHEWS
1902-1903	REV. C. P. McFARLANE
1904	J. G. BROWN
1905-1906	REV. J. W. GREGORY
1907-1909	REV. JOHN GALT
1910-1914	REV. W. H. EBERSOLE
1915-1916	REV. J. W. HISEY
1917-1921	REV. E. C. GOSNELL
1922-1926	REV. J. MARSHALL
1927-1940	REV. A. BURGESS
1941-1954	REV. F. M. WARD, B.A., B.D.
1954-1958	REV. C. A. HILL, B.A., B.Th.
1958-1961	REV. K. R. DAVIS, M.A.
NOVEMBER, 1961-MARCH, 1962	REV. SILAS LAMB (Interim)
1962-1964	REV. P. AUGUSTINE
MAY, 1964-SEPTEMBER, 1964	REV. SILAS LAMB (Interim)
1964-1972	REV. SHELDON DRAPER
FEBRUARY, 1973-JUNE 1973	REV. A. G. HEATHERINGTON, B.A. (Interim)
1973	PASTOR STEPHEN JONES, B.R.E., B.A.