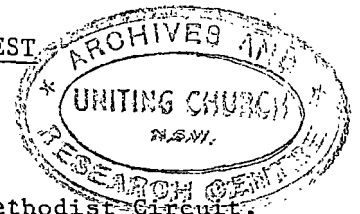


1916 - 1991



Stepping Out in Faith

On 25 January 1916 the Superintendent Minister of the Manly Methodist Circuit, Rev. Henry Clifford Foreman, suggested to his Quarterly Meeting that services should be held at Frenchs Forest and at the following meeting, on 17 April, he reported that services were being conducted in the home of John and Elizabeth Holland, where "the attendances were good and the collections satisfactory." The Hollands operated a large orchard which included the grounds of Forest High west to Rabbett Street and the land occupied by Warringah Road. Remnants of his orchard are to be found behind Holland Crescent and Karingal Crescent.

Manly Methodist Circuit

In April 1917, it was resolved that steps should be taken to build a Methodist Church Hall and that opportunity be given to other denominations to use it. Mr. J. Haigh donated one acre of land at the Soldiers Settlement at Frenchs Forest on condition that a church be erected there within a year.

Certificate of Title to the land is dated 8th June 1918 and the trustees were Richard John Wild, John Porter (both of Manly), Henry Goggins, James Arnold Wareham, William Sampson and Edward Miles. Mr. Porter erected a brick church 36ft. x 24ft. for £350. The official opening was 29th June 1918 among those present being the President-General, the Rev. Dr. James E. Carruthers, Chairman of Conference, Col. Rev. James Green CMO, Capt. Chaplain F. Colwell, the President of Warringah Shire and the Mayor of Manly. This building still stands beside Forest Way in the grounds of the Christian Alliance Church diagonally opposite Forestway Shopping Centre.

The pulpit was a gift of the Bondi Trustees and the reading desk a gift of the old York Street Church (Sydney). The Church was lit by two or three large kerosene lanterns. Collections totalled £35 7s.6d and £35 towards a piano. The Sunday evening services were well attended when "27 partook of the Sacrament." The Sunday School had an enrolment of 21 scholars.

Rev. Frederick J. Ball was at the helm in 1919 and in his report to his successor, Rev. Patrick J. Stephen, in 1921, he said, "There is a handful of people here. The debt on the Church is £300. You will find Mr. Goggins a fine man and really interested." On 14 April 1919 special reference was made at the Quarterly Meeting to the receipt of 19 new members, 8 of whom were from soldiers' families.

Pastor William Arnold was now appointed a Circuit Assistant to work Brookvale, Frenchs Forest, Dee Why and Mona Vale.

Rev. F. Reginald Swynny was minister in 1922 and it is recorded that he advised his successor, Rev. Frederick R. Todd, in 1923, that "There is only a handful of people scattered over this settlement. A free loan has been granted of £300, of which £200 has been received. Trust Secretary is Mr. Goggins. You will find him a splendid fellow and really interested - he is an ex-policemen. Mr. Wareham and Mr. Butler - both good men. You will enjoy coming here. They have a Ladies Church Aid. Preachers usually go to Mr. Goggins' for tea. Mr. Goggins will sometimes take up a collection at the tea-table before leaving for Church if any of the party are not attending. Mr. Butler is great on organizing - there are 21 members." Henry Goggins resided at 26 Maxwell Parade where he had a large orchard and poultry farm. (The house still stands.)

Dee Why Methodist Circuit

Gradual but persistent population growth necessitated formation of Dee Why Circuit on 9 April 1923, its area comprising Dee Why, Brookvale, Frenchs Forest, Mona Vale and Church Point. The first Quarterly Meeting was attended by Rev. F.R. Swynny,

LPH
FOR



Messrs. Osborne, R. Rose, D. Broadbent, Radford, Parker, Starr, Stevins. The first stewards of the Circuit were R.H. Rose, Brookvale (snr) and W.J. Broadbent, Dee Why (jnr). Rev. Reginald B. Bowes, supernumerary, was the initial appointee to the new Circuit in 1924. Eric Osborne, son of Local Preacher, George Osborne, recalls accompanying his father from Collaroy to the evening service at Frenchs Forest on the Circuit's horse drawn sulky. The journey took around 1 1/2 hours and was undertaken in all weathers. Other Local Preachers included Mr. Davis (who came by pushbike) and Mr. Frank Garrard (both from Manly), Mr. Ivor Robbins and Mr. Alwyn Parkin (from Balgowlah), Mr. Keys and Mr. Abraham Miles (from Brookvale). Eric James (from Chatswood) and Sept Porter (from Mona Vale). Many of these Local Preachers would have tea with the Osbornes and then set out for Frenchs Forest via South Creek or Brookvale. The horse and sulky were maintained by the Osbornes at Collaroy.

In October 1926 a resolution was sent to Synod recommending the transfer of Frenchs Forest to the Roseville/Lindfield Circuit but Synod did not agree despite a resubmission of the proposal.

In 1928 Rev. Leslie H. Kelynack succeeded Rev. Reginald Bowes. Due to difficulty in supplying a minister to the evening service, it was decided on the suggestion of Mr. Broadbent, to hold Sunday afternoon services. Around this time Eileen Hillier taught a Sunday School of 10-12 scholars. Sunday School picnics were held at Griffith Park at Long Reef.

Rev. Kelynack was succeeded by Arthur L. Cannon in 1932 and by Rev. Bruce H. Willis in 1937. A second minister was sought but as there was not one available, theological students helped as short-term assistants.

Rev. Arthur T. Newton, father of Mrs Heather Broadbent, was appointed Superintendent Minister in 1942, to be succeeded by Rev. Henry N. Whiteman in 1957, Rev. Victor Mead in 1948 and Rev. Ernest Foster in 1950. During Rev. Foster's term, a church was established in Narraweena in Amaral Street.

Frenchs Forest Home Mission Station

The year 1953 heralded the formation of the Frenchs Forest Home Mission Station comprising Frenchs Forest and Narraweena Churches. Rev. Richard Piper, a supernumerary, was the foundation minister and the first Quarterly Meeting was conducted in May 1954.

Frenchs Forest Methodist Circuit

The NSW Conference of 1955 officially constituted the Frenchs Forest Circuit consisting of Narraweena and Frenchs Forest Churches, Narraweena being the larger of the two at that time.

In 1958 the Frenchs Forest Church building was cut back at a cost of £866.12.6 to allow the widening of Forest Way. Compensation of £2200 was paid by the Main Roads Board for the resumed strip of land. Originally the Church had a western entrance.

On 19 July 1959 the Forestville Church was established at Darley Street having been purchased in May for £4500.

At the end of 1959, Rev. Richard Piper retired and was succeeded by Rev. Frank A. Lewis, probationer. On 13 February 1960 the Frenchs Forest Sunday School Hall was dedicated, the foundation stone having been laid by Rev. Piper on 27 September 1959. Funds for this building came from compensation paid by the Main Roads Board and £1926.14.0 gained from the sale of two blocks of land at the rear of the site.

Rev. Roger Bush succeeded Rev. Frank Lewis in January 1962, and upon his ordination on 12 November of that year, the Circuit was raised to married minister status. Thus the Bush's became the first occupants of the parsonage in Landscape Avenue, Forestville.

It soon became evident that assistance in oversight was necessary and in January 1964, Deaconess Myra Gray was appointed to be succeeded by Deaconess Jo Glasson in 1965.

During 1964, the Narraweena Sunday School relocated to Lee Street, Beacon Hill followed by the congregation upon the opening and dedication of the new church by Rev. Edmund T. Walker on 19th December.

In 1965 the Frenchs Forest Church Trust received an attractive financial offer for the site from Ampol Petroleum. The sale or lease of the site was seriously considered and a search for a new site began. In 1969 discussions were held with the Forest Kirk regarding a possible joint development.

Rev. Edgar Tredinnick and Deaconess Margaret Herbert (now Ainsworth) were replacement appointees in January 1966. Due to her impending marriage, Deaconess Ainsworth reduced her hours in mid 1968, continuing on this basis to the end of 1969.

The Forestville Preschool Kindergarten was officially opened by the Hon. A.D. Bridges, Minister for Child Welfare and Social Welfare and dedicated by Rev. Walter Whitbred, Secretary of the Methodist Conference on 2 March 1968. The kindergarten is the largest in NSW. On 21 September 1969 extensions to the Forestville Church Hall were opened by Mrs. Spowart, dedicated by Rev. Neville D. Arthur and named The Edgar Tredinnick Hall in honour of the work done by Rev. Edgar Tredinnick, 1966-69.

On the retirement of Rev. Tredinnick at the end of 1969, Rev. Wilbur Dundas became the Superintendent Minister. He was later assisted by Pastor Fred Ailwood, a Home Missionary, who was appointed in 1972 to minister to the rapidly expanding areas of Frenchs Forest, Belrose and Davidson.

In December 1970 a two hectare site was purchased in Morgan Road, Belrose for \$100,000 to accommodate the church and kindergarten and the first stage of Wesley Gardens hostel and nursing care complex.

The final service in the Frenchs Forest Methodist Church was held on Sunday, 11 November 1973. The scripture was read by David Broadbent & Gail Young, Pastor Fred Ailwood and Rev. Wilbur Dundas spoke and Dianne Collett sang. The final hymn was MHB 615, Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah. After the service the congregation was photographed.

The Belrose Methodist Church and Kindergarten were built at a cost of \$175,000 and the church complex and parsonage were opened on 17 November 1973 by the President of the Conference, Rev. Colin Ritchie.

The first service of worship was held the next day. The first hymn was O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing and the address entitled "Blessings Never Stop When You're Thankful" was given by Pastor Fred Ailwood. Miss Jan Byrne read the lesson from Philippians 3:17-4:9. That evening the service at 7:15 was led by Rev. John Mallison.

The Trust Secretary was Mr. J. George Mann and the Trust Treasurer, Mr. Les R. Woodcock. The old Frenchs Forest Church was sold to the Forest Alliance Church.

Pastor Fred Ailwood and his wife Kathleen were the first occupants of the Belrose parsonage and following their departure in 1974, Pastor Elvyn Smart and Marjory took up residence and ministry at Belrose.

Rev. Robert Coleman and Jean succeeded Wilbur Dundas and Flo in January 1975 and was inducted on 2 March of that year. His first 7 months of ministry was in the Forestville Church but in August 1975 he relocated to Belrose. In the same month Rev. E. Keith Thompson was appointed to Forestville/Beacon Hill.

From 1 January 1976, Terrey Hills became part of the Circuit having been transferred from the Gordon Circuit due to its members having strong ties with the Forest area. A Sunday School had begun in Terrey Hills in December 1935 under the watchful eye of Rev. Winston O'Reilly, now retired, but active in the Parish and living close to the Belrose Church. In early 1936 an old disused shed became the meeting place and housed a portable organ given to the congregation by William Arnott. In 1949 the garage church moved to the present site.

The foundation stone of the church is dated 6 August 1960 and bears the names of Rev. Alfred Robins (Supt.) and Rev. Wilbur Dundas (minister). On 19 September 1976 at Belrose Church, Methodists and Presbyterians formed a combined choir under the batons of John Lynn and Charles Cox to record a Community Hymn Singing Programme for the ABC.

The Forest Parish of the Uniting Church

On 22 June 1977 the Frenchs Forest Methodist Circuit became The Forest Parish of the Uniting Church consisting of the four former Methodist Churches of Beacon Hill, Belrose, Forestville and Terrey Hills, and the former Presbyterian Church, The Forest Kirk. Rev. Tom Knibb was the incumbent minister at the Kirk at union. The Forest Kirk was originally an extension of St. Andrews, Chatswood. The land in Warringah Road was purchased on 5 October 1948 and the hall was completed on 3 February 1953. The first service at the hall was held on Anzac Day 1955. The present church was opened on 8 July 1962.

On 19 July 1980, the new church was opened at Forestville by Mr. Stan Munns, a foundation member of the church, and the dedication was made by Rev. Roy Glover.

Rev. Milton Brown succeeded Rev. Tom Knibb in 1983 at the Forest Kirk, Rev. Bruce Walker succeeded Rev. E. Keith Thompson at Forestville/Beacon Hill in 1984 and Rev. John J Weston and Lynette succeeded Rev. Robert Coleman at Belrose/Terrey Hills in 1985. At the end of 1990 Rev. Bruce Walker transferred to Queensland and a replacement appointment is still being sought. In 1991 Rev. Winston O'Reilly was appointed to an interim supply ministry.

In 1991 we celebrate 75 years of Methodist/Presbyterian/Uniting Church witness in the Forest. We thank God for the servants who have laboured in the past, those who are witnessing now, and those who will do so in the future.

Sources: Rev. Eric G. Clancy for the 50th anniversary of the Frenchs Forest Church (1968)
Donal Carr for subsequent research and
older members, Christian workers and current members for their good memories.

The story of witness is ongoing.

Additions, reminiscences or corrections would be welcomed, in writing.