

**Church of Christ**  
**430 Ann Street Brisbane**  
**Church Self-Study**

**PART A HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION**

**1. Brief History**

**1.1 Early Years**

In 1882, a newly formed "Restoration Movement" church at Zillmere called Stephen Cheek to Queensland as Pioneer Evangelist. Shortly after his arrival, Stephen delivered some lectures on the plan of salvation in the Temperance Hall which was situated in Edward Street, Brisbane. There were no visible results at that time and Brisbane was written down as "noted for its apathy". However it has been recorded that on 23 September 1883, "a few brethren living in the city" formed a church and met for the first time in the Synod Hall and moved to other venues after that.

In March 1884, the first baptisms were reported when Mr. D A Ewers, an evangelist, immersed two into Christ. Mr Ewers had come to Queensland following appeals for help after Stephen Cheek's death on 17 February 1883.

During the first five years of the church, a number of preachers spent some time with the Brisbane church. After Mr. W S Houchins took up the work in 1892, "The work prospered exceedingly; the church became known; meetings were packed, and many were added, following confession of their faith and baptism into Christ". The church meet in several buildings during that time and held open air meetings on Sunday evenings and week nights.

**1.2 Property Purchase**

The church property situated at 430 Ann Street, Brisbane, was purchased by the Church of Christ from the United Methodist Free Church in 1898. The church has met for worship and other activities in that building ever since.

**1.3 Membership**

Church membership increased relatively quickly in its first 20 years and maintained an active membership of over 200 for the next 63 years. Active membership began to

decline in 1965 and there are now 41 active members. Active members are those who have publicly confessed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God and their personal Saviour, repented and are baptized, being immersed in water into the name of the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit, have been admitted into membership and attends regularly at the Lord's Table. The active membership trend over the life of the church is as follows:

<u>Church Membership</u>	
<u>Year</u>	<u>Active Members<sup>1</sup></u>
1884	21
1903	200 (about)
1947	250
1958	231
1963	239
1968	171
1973	134
1978	133
1983	124
1988	99
1993	75
1998	42
2003	41

<sup>1</sup> For definition of "Active Member" refer to Part F Section 2.

During the second World War, attendance at the morning and evening services was so high, "it was difficult to accommodate the congregations". No statistics can be found for attendance and membership during those war years.

The recorded peaks in active membership were 257 in 1961 and 255 in 1964.

There appear to be two periods when significant numerical growth occurred in the church. One was in the first 20 years of the commencement of the church (1883 to 1903) when the numerical growth increased from 21 to about 200. The other was during the second World War (1939 – 1945) when the number of visiting servicemen swelled the numbers and "were an inspiration".

There appear to be three periods of numerical decline. After the second World War, "With the return of peace, the church's task became harder as the wartime enthusiasm waned."

In the five year period from 1964 to 1969, active membership declined by 98 from 255 to 157 while the number of communicants declined by 34 from 161 to 127. This would indicate that catch up adjustments to the church role might have been carried out during that period e.g. a relatively large number of members might have been transferred from the active membership role to the supplementary or isolated roles. Factors that might have contributed to the decline in numbers at that time include the transfer of some members from the Ann Street church to newly established suburban churches at Kenmore (1965) and Arana Hills (1966). [It is noted however that after some Ann Street church members became foundation members at the church at Camp Hill which began in 1958, the active membership and number of communicants actually increased at Ann Street the following year]. During the 1964 to 1969 period, Brisbane's inner city development was significant and with that development traffic volumes began to grow significantly also and on-street parking opportunities began to decline. This might have contributed to the decline in active membership as the suburban churches became more convenient from a traffic and parking perspective.

The third period of significant numerical decline was during the 12 years between 1986 and 1998 when active membership decreased from 118 to 42. It is not clear if there was an identifiable cause of the decline occurring at that time. The traffic and parking situations might have caused some members to find an easier access option at the suburban churches. It is also understood that between 1982 and 1992, there were instances of some members being dissatisfied with the ministry leadership and this could have resulted in a decline in numbers.

#### **1.4 Change**

Over the last ten years, the church has experienced several significant changes:

- An outreach ministry to a number of cultural groups including Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders has increased,
- The traditional church of past years with families of more than one generation and Sunday morning Sunday School has changed. Most of the younger generation family members of long term church members have moved away from the Ann Street church. Sunday School diminished and for a time there was no Sunday School at all. There is now a Sunday evening Sunday School.

- The concept of an A.M. group and a P.M. group has emerged. The Sunday A.M. services are traditional and relatively conservative and the attendees are mostly of the older generation. The Sunday P.M. services are more contemporary. The P.M. ministry relates to significant numbers of Aboriginal attendees.
- Very few people now attend both the A.M. and P.M. services.
- Two other churches have begun ministries based at 430 Ann Street. The Indonesian Multicultural Church (IMC) commenced in 1994, and South Pacific Evangelical and Restoration Ministries (SPEAR) commenced in 2004. Fellowship with these new churches occurs as they share the facilities with the Church of Christ.

### **1.5 Conference Involvement**

The Church at Ann Street was very much involved in the Queensland Churches of Christ Conference during the Church's first 100 years. Ann Street Church members held many positions on the Conference executive and committees, including 19 Conference Presidents and 17 Women's Conference Presidents. The Ann Street Church building was for many years the venue for the annual State Conferences. In more recent years as the church membership has reduced and other venues were used for the Conferences, very few members have held position with Conference.

### **1.6 New Churches**

The Church "mothered" new churches at Albion in 1911 and Annerley and Hawthorne in 1914. The church also assisted with the establishment of the church at Camp Hill in 1958, Kenmore in 1965 and Arana Hills in 1966.

### **1.7 Other Activities**

The Church has been involved in a diverse range of other activities, including:

- Conducting several evangelistic missions,
- Music and choir including a conference choir,
- Oversight of Glen Eagles residential apartments for elderly folk,
- Competitive sport including, gymnastics, tennis, cricket,
- Sewing classes,
- Youth groups, junior and senior,

- Regular Youth Rallies and Coffee Pots – Central venue for Metropolitan churches combined youth events in the 1960s,
- Christian Endeavour,
- Bible School.

*Information source: 1. A Century of Witness 1883-1983 by Norman Watson*

*2. Minutes of Church Annual General Meetings 1967 to 2000*