

BRIEF HISTORY OF ESSA RD. PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH 1892-2009

The Church was initiated in October 1892 as Allandale Presbyterian Church with Rev. W.R. McIntosh as its first minister. Inducted in 1894. The first building was a former Blacksmiths shop located on Essa Rd. almost across the street from the present building. Membership consisted of 80 members and 44 Adherents and the minister's salary was \$800 per annum. In 1888 a lot at 26 William St. was donated and a brick church was built.

By 1895 the Sunday School had 168 pupils. The second Minister was the Rev. H.D. Cameron and his induction took place in March of 1900.

In 1901 a lot was purchased on West side of Essa Rd. (present location) for \$260.00 and a new church built for the sum of \$4441.31. The Rev. Dr. D.D. McLeod laid the cornerstone August 16th, 1901.

In 1906 the Church inducted its third minister in the person of Rev. W.A. Amos. Rev. Amos served the congregation till 1909 when Rev. Dr. A.V. Brown was inducted as the fourth minister.

1914 and the Great War began. 27 young men from the congregation signed up to serve for their country 3 of whom paid the supreme sacrifice. In 1917 we saw the arrival of our fifth minister Rev. W.J. Watt.

1919 saw the church build its first manse for the minister. Located at 59 William St. The house still stands today. The congregation at this time consisted of 226 members.

In 1922 during a vicious thunder storm the church steeple was struck by lightning.

1925 brought turmoil to the church and to the Presbyterian Church in Canada as a whole. A group of Presbyterians decided to split off from the Presbyterian Church and join a group of Methodists to form the United Church of Canada. In the end Allandale Church lost 23 members who went to the newly formed United Church, which left us with 199 members on the roll. During this period the church welcomed their sixth minister the Rev. D.C. Hill.

At this time also neighbouring Stroud Presbyterian Church found itself without a pastor as Rev. W. Johnston left for another charge. Allandale Presbyterian Church shared their minister with Stroud and this relationship lasted some 50 years.

August 1927 saw the church induct its seventh minister in the person of Rev. J.B. Thomson but his stay was short-lived and he left after only two years. The eighth minister, Rev. N.R.D. Sinclair was inducted in May of 1929.

In 1933 a fire partially destroyed Burton Ave. United Church and Allandale Presbyterian stepped up to the plate offering worship and meeting space till the church was repaired. This joint venture lasted over six months.

1939 saw the outbreak of World War 2. 78 men and women volunteered for King & Country five of whom would pay the supreme sacrifice. The church celebrated its Golden Jubilee in 1942. In 1946 a new organ was purchased and dedicated as a memorial to those who had died on active service.

May 1950 brought the induction of the Church's ninth minister, Rev. A.C.G. Muir. In 1952 church services were broadcast on Barrie radio station CKBB.

1959 saw the induction of the churches tenth minister, Rev. W.S. Bell.

In 1960 an expansion of the church was discussed. This would involve erecting an educational wing attached to the building and enlarging the sanctuary. At the same time the City of Barrie planned to extend Burton Ave. through to Innisfil St. This would have gone straight through our present property. A presentation was made to City Council and the Church won the battle and so the Church remains in its present site. The extension and education wing proceeded and was completed in 1961. Although the church was known as Allandale Presbyterian Church many referred to it as Essa Rd. Church and so in early 1961 a decision was made to rename the church Essa Rd. Presbyterian Church. This defined its location and it's serving the surrounding community in God's name.

During 1967 the minister, Rev. Bell's health declined and he was forced to resign in May 1968. This led to the induction of the Church's eleventh minister Rev. J.A. Crabb. At this time the church also sold its manse due to the expense of its upkeep.

September 1971 was the date of the induction of Essa Rd.'s twelfth minister, Rev. A Pattison, a recent graduate of Knox College, Toronto.

Following Rev. Pattison's departure in 1974, the Rev. W. Kutcher was called but due to tragic accident in which he was killed the induction never took place. July 1975 Rev. G. Bylaard was inducted into the charge. 1975 was also the Centennial of the Presbyterian Church in Canada. This year also saw the replacement of the original 1901 pews with new ones. Sunday morning 1978 brought a devastating fire to the church. Eight pews, the carpeting and books were destroyed The damage was soon repaired and in the meantime services were held in the Fellowship Hall.

1981 saw the separation once more of Stroud Presbyterian Church as they called a minister and became a self-sustaining church.

1985 saw the replacement of the old Sanctuary widows with new stained glass memorial windows. The windows were dedicated in May of 1985. This year also saw the induction of the fourteenth minister the Rev. K.L. Brownlee, our first female minister. This year was a tragic one for the City of Barrie as a devastating tornado hit the City on May 31. Lives were lost and homes and businesses destroyed. In 1986 the 40 year old organ was replaced.

Rev. Brownlee resigned in 1990 and once more the pulpit was vacant.

1991 saw the induction of our fifteenth minister the Rev. Tom Cunningham. Rev. Cunningham would continue to serve Essa Rd. till July 2008. In September 2008 a search Committee was formed by the Session and the search for a new minister began.

In March 2009 Rev. Martyn Van Essen from New Brunswick was invited to preach for the call. The congregation overwhelmingly extended the call and barring unforeseen circumstances should be welcoming our sixteenth minister by summer of 2009.

David Steele
Clerk of Session
Church Archivist.