

# **HISTORY OF ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH EIGHT MILE PLAINS**

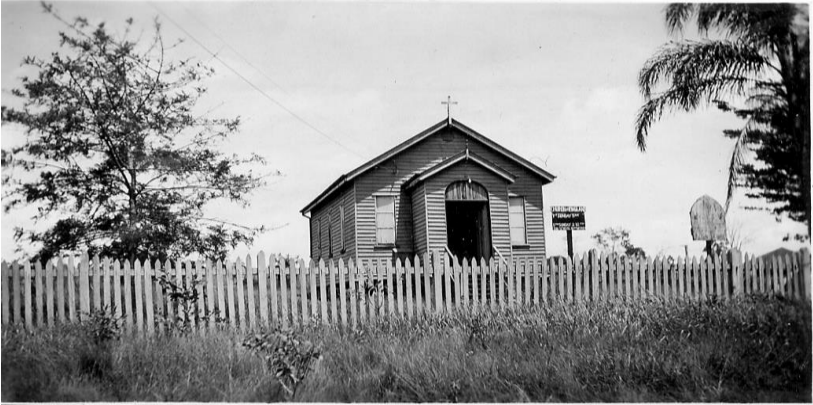
This short history of St John's Lutheran Church Eight Mile Plains gives an insight into the developments which led to the erection of a brick church, built to the Glory of God! The thought that was uppermost in the hearts of those who sponsored the building of this church was that it should not only be a visible monument to their faith in God, but that it be a spiritual reminder to the thousands who daily pass by on the busy Pacific Highway.

## **EARLY BEGINNINGS**

It was along this highway that years ago Cobb & Co coaches travelled. Eight Mile Plains was one of the places where the coaches stopped, and the horses given a rest period. Several Lutheran settlers, who were affiliated with the Lutheran churches of South Brisbane, Bethania or Beenleigh, came into this area; but no organizational work of any consequence was done. However, with the rapid growth of the City of Brisbane, and the growing demands of the population, the area in the vicinity of Brisbane was made available for fruit and vegetable farming.

In **1914**, Mr JC Stiller and family took up land in Kuraby and joined the Bethania congregation, eight miles away. Realizing that many children in his immediate neighbourhood did not attend Sunday School, Mr Stiller organized a Sunday School and taught the children himself. With the coming of several Lutheran families in the neighbouring area of Rochedale, Mr. Stiller approached Pastor R. B. Reuther of Bethania to see if it were possible to conduct a monthly service in the United Protestant Church at Eight Mile Plains. The Pastor gladly consented to this request, and monthly services began.

In **1929** the work of the Lutheran Church in this area started in a small and unpretentious way.



**United Protestant Church – Eight Mile Plains**

## **THE CONGREGATION IS ESTABLISHED**

When Pastor M Lohe took over the pastorate of Nazareth Church, South Brisbane, in May **1932**, he also assumed charge of the preaching place at the United Protestant Church in Millers Road, Eight Mile Plains. Throughout the years, the monthly services gradually increased to two, three then four per month, which reflected the growth of the congregation. In **1933** an attempt was made to organize a congregation, but this was discontinued. However, with the increasing congregational membership, organization could no longer be postponed.



**Church Building Committee – W Stiller, H Wendt, J C Stiller, Pastor M Lohe, W Stern, W G Dipple and R Waldman.**

On **13<sup>th</sup> April, 1935** the following members met at the home of Mr W Stern, Rochedale: Pastor M Lohe, Mr & Mrs JC Stiller, Mr & Mrs W Stern, Messrs EA Bernhardt, H Wendt, E & W Stiller. It was decided to organize a congregation to be known as **St. John's Lutheran** of Eight Mile Plains. A constitution was adopted. The pastor was elected as Chairman, Mr W Stern as Secretary/Treasurer. It was also decided to apply for affiliation into the Qld District of the UELCA at the next District Synod (at Dugandan), Mr JC Stiller was elected as delegate of that Synod. On **12<sup>th</sup> July, 1935** the congregation joined the South Brisbane Parish, JC Stiller & W Stern representing the congregation at the meeting. It is interesting to note the statistics at that time: **37 souls; 29 communicants; 44 communed; 28 preaching services; 11 children in Sunday School.**

Since that period, the growth of St John's has been slow but sure. Although possessing no rights to alterations to the United Protestant Church, the installation of lights and other improvements were made to the building. With the permission of its trustees, the building was lined and sealed. An **altar** presented by J C Stiller family; a **sandstone baptismal font** presented by Mr & Mrs W & T Stiller; a **brass crucifix** presented by Mr & Mrs W Stern were dedicated on **Palm Sunday 18<sup>th</sup> April 1943**. The sermon on this occasion was preached by Dr. O Theile.

It was in this year that the church choir presented Handel's "Messiah". The first Annual Harvest Festival was held in **1936**. In the early years the fruit and vegetables were taken to the Rest Home, Toowoomba and in later years to St Peter's College & Trinder Park Rest Home.

## THE CHURCH IS ERECTED

As four different denominations were conducting Services in the United Church, members of St John's were finding great difficulty with this arrangement, particularly when the need for a "special" service arose. By **1947** when St John's membership numbered **82 souls; 58 communicants**, the building proved too small and inadequate. So it was only natural that members again and again expressed the desire to have their own church. The first important step in this direction was taken at the Annual General Meeting **2<sup>nd</sup> March 1947**, when it was decided that the Church Committee (Pastor Lohe, Messrs J C Stiller, W Stern, H Wendt, WG Dippel, R Waldman & W Stiller) be the Building Committee for a proposed new church. Every effort was made to find a suitable yet central site. Eventually, it was decided to accept the offer of the oldest member, Mr F Fels, who presented an allotment on Levington Road, off Logan Road at Eight Mile Plains situated centrally in the Rochedale-Kuraby-Sunnybank districts.



**Sign indicating the Church Site**

At a congregational meeting on **17<sup>th</sup> August 1947** it was decided to purchase another allotment alongside, thus making provision for a hall, parsonage etc. This meeting also asked the Building Committee to prepare plans for a church and present same to the congregation.

Plans were drawn up by Mr R Waldman, who, at the time was a member of the Church Architectural Committee of Qld District. The Building Committee met on numerous occasions before the completed plans were finally submitted to a Congregational meeting on **15<sup>th</sup> August 1948** when the momentous resolution was unanimously carried:

**That a brick church be built according to the plan submitted by the committee—but without a spire.**

It was also decided that a subscription list be circulated among the members. The meeting fully recognized the cost involved (although at the time no one realised to what unprecedented heights prices of materials would soar) and the difficulty of procuring materials (these were scarce as a result of the war). It must be stated here, that for a comparatively small congregation, this project was one of faith. The congregation decided to support the erection of the church to the utmost! Members felt they could assist not only with their donations but with their time and voluntary labour – thus saving an enormous amount in costs. Mr Harry Vietheer, an experienced builder and member of the congregation offered his time and services gratis – an offer which was thankfully received. Through his efforts no trouble was experienced in procuring the 75,000 bricks needed. We were grateful to the Hon.VC Gair for his interest on our behalf in getting the building permit approved by the authorities. On **13<sup>th</sup> November** the congregation gathered at the church site for a **ground breaking and blessing of the site** ceremony.



**Ground breaking**

It was a momentous occasion when the Pastor and senior elder JC Stiller broke ground. Building operations then began in earnest. Working bees held every Saturday, some to dig the foundations while others carted tons of gravel & sand, finally the concrete foundation were laid. On **Palm Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1950** the **Foundation Stone** was laid by President of Synod Pastor M Lohr (Pastor of the congregation) in the presence of a large congregation. Pastors O Adler, M Stolz and J Monz were present and addressed the gathering. The offering amounted to 50 pounds. Many records etc. were placed behind the Foundation Stone in a sealed container.



**Foundation Stone laid –  
Pastor M Lohr**

*Some members thought it would be a good idea to show the builder how bricks should be laid.*



From this day until the actual day of dedication, members of the congregation spared neither time nor energy to complete the task. To expedite the brick-laying, bricklayers were employed for three months. Under the able direction of designer Mr R Waldman and the builder Mr H Vietheer the building gradually took shape.



**Groundwork begins**



**Brick construction underway**





**Nearing completion**

In the meantime, Mr G Jungfer, a friend of the Stiller family, was busy making furnishings for the chancel. Mr Gus Jungfer was a retired blacksmith and cabinet making was his hobby. He had offered his services gratis and his excellency of workmanship can be seen in the many articles in the chancel. A fully equipped workshop had been fitted out by Mr R Waldman at his home. Mr R Waldman was also busy collecting materials and tirelessly attending to the many duties requiring personal attention. He designed all the furniture in the church, as well as making blue prints for every construction. What time has been devoted to all these tasks during the day and into the night will never be known. The congregation was indeed fortunate in having his services so freely and unselfishly given. Not only did members give of their time and money, but they also sacrificed much. Materials such as cement, sand, gravel, steel and timber for construction were given. All the pews were donated by individual members; the three windows in the chancel were given by the Stiller family as a memorial to their late father, who looked upon the erection of the Church as an answer to his many prayers but was not privileged to see the fulfilment of same. Members who could not find the time to work personally, often gave money for the employ of others. The stained glass symbols in the windows of the nave, candlesticks, ciborium, brass vases etc were presented. The Ladies Guild supplied all the carpeting, Young Peoples Society the jardinieres and flagon. Mr R Waldman a large reed organ, with pedals, and the congregation an electric blower for same.

Members and friends gave a total of **9692 working hours**. But for their generosity, our Church could not have been built. As it was we were indebted to the **Church Building Fund of Qld District** for a donation of **£200**, an interest-free loan for several years, to **Nazareth Lutheran, £500** interest-free for three years and to several members for varying loans. Above all, we are grateful to Almighty God that He held His protecting Hand over all who laboured so incessantly. The men were often exposed to great dangers, particularly as the building reached great heights.

The church is correctly orientated, the altar situated in the east. It will be of interest the dimensions of the Church: **Nave 42' x 20': Chancel 17'x 12': Vestry 12'x 9': Narthex/Vestibule 15'x 8'6": Choir gallery 20'x 10'.** **The large reed organ was first set in the first floor of the tower and later moved to the choir gallery.** The church's architectural style being perpendicular Gothic, means that the roof is pitched very steeply the **top gables reaching 36'** above the ground. A total of **22 tons of cement** were used and **132 cubic yards of gravel and sand; 4200 super feet of rough hardwood timber, 3500 feet of dressed timber and 3 tons of steel.** So today we witness that for which St John's congregation prayed, planned, worked harmoniously and sacrificed. Our prayer is that all who worship in St John's will do so in the beauty of holiness and that those who have laboured and sacrificed in its erection will be amongst those who will worship God for ever and ever; and that all who pass by will have their thoughts lifted to a loving heavenly Father who sent His Son to be our Saviour.



**Church building**

*(owing to lack of funds spire was yet to be added)*

## CONSTRUCTION OF HALL

Despite the debt owing on the church (600 pounds approx) It was decided at a special meeting of the congregation, **11th July 1954**, to buy an army hut from the Greenslopes Housing Camp on the Glinderman property, Holland Park. Messrs W Stern & G Dippel had earlier inspected one of the huts, which was subsequently bought for **200 pounds**. In **August 1954** dismantling of the hut, **140' x 20'** began and most of this material was then stored on Mr W Stiller's farm at Kuraby. He and A Dippel also had the difficult task of transporting the floor (cut into pieces 20'x10') to the church property.

Walter had an oversized load. Ted was on one side and Alf on the other, hanging on to strapping so they could direct traffic safely round the loaded vehicle. Along came a police vehicle. They were pulled over and Walter explained the circumstances of what, where and when – they were then escorted to their destination. Arthur was following with a similar load a few minutes later, he had no trouble. Mr R Waldman replanned the hut into a T shape raising the top part to form the stage and dressing rooms, also suitable for Sunday School classrooms. The entrance porch was constructed in brick to match the church. We are grateful to Ald Harvey (member of Nundah congregation) for his help in obtaining a building permit and approval for the plans when several difficulties arose with City Council regulations. Again working bees were called, and many hours of free labour were given. A great debt of gratitude is due to Mr N Bobbermien for supervising and directing the building of the hall, especially as second-hand

timbers and materials had to be used due to the financial position. The building was completed, opened and dedicated by Pastor FH Schmidt, on **4<sup>th</sup> December 1955** (4<sup>th</sup> anniversary of dedication of Church).



**Church Hall**

**January 1964**, a large room on right hand side was converted into a kitchen, with built-in cupboards, sinks etc by builder Mr G Evans. Later rooms were formed under the stage, lined and ceiled to serve as Sunday School classrooms.

## MANSE

It was at beginning of **1961**, that Mr Rubis designed a manse to be erected beside the church. Mr R Waldman took over the drawing up of plans and detailed drawings for tendering. Five quotes, ranging from 4100 to 5200 pounds were received. The quote of **4321 pounds** from W Ehm of Mt Gravatt congregation was accepted. The cost of the manse was approx 5000 pounds, part a bank loan together with gifts and loans by the congregation. **Dedication** was held on **14th January 1962** by Pastor KJ Schmidt. Later the problem of an adequate water supply arose. This was overcome by Mr H Vietheer who sunk a bore. In **September 1967** it became apparent that some additions were needed to the manse, so an extra bedroom and study were added and completed in **June 1968** costing approximately **\$3000**. (i.e. after decimal currency came in).



**Church Manse**

## SUNDAY SCHOOL

Before Lutheran services were conducted in Eight Mile Plains area, Mr JC Stiller had organized a Sunday School in the Kuraby district and many children received the advantage of Christian training from him. After St John's was organized, regular lessons were held and the Sunday School flourished. The children of Mr Stiller carried on the good work. Miss Vera Stiller became Superintendant until she married in January 1953 and moved from the district. There was an **enrolment of 50 pupils and 8 teachers**. Mr R Waldman then took the position until 1961 when it was decided to start a Sunday School at Woodridge as some 30 children were being transported each Sunday from that area to St John's. Mr L Stiller then became superintendent with an enrolment of **120 pupils and 15 teachers (7 relief teachers)**. Special classes were also held for the older children who were preparing to become teachers. The Sunday School children annually held a Christmas Tree Programme and Anniversary Service, bringing their messages of Gods Love in word and actions. Offerings on these occasions have been passed on to Lutheran World Relief. Three teachers Mr R Waldman, Mr & Mrs E Stiller left Eight Mile Plains to begin the Sunday School at Woodridge. From their small start in the Progress Hall at Woodridge, the Sunday School grew to such an extent that a Church and congregation were formed – St Luke's at Woodridge. These three teachers remained training and giving support until January 1973 when they felt Woodridge was able to continue alone. St John's members have given freely of their time and gifts at Woodridge, also erecting the Sunday School Hall and Church. We can truly be thankful to God when we see so clearly His Hand at work.

## CONSTRUCTION OF KINDERGARTEN

During **July 1971** the congregation at the Annual General Meeting agreed to authorise the drawing up of Plans for a double unit Kindergarten building suitable for use as an extension of the Hall. Mr R Woods undertook this task. A building committee was established Messrs H Vietheer, W Stiller, R Waldman and Mr R Woods together with Pastor D Stolz. Permission was sought from the Brisbane City Council to use the Sunday School Hall as temporary premises. A public meeting was called at which a Constitution was adopted and a committee elected to operate the Kindergarten Mr R Woods (President) Mr Henry Vietheer (Treasurer) and Mrs L Martin (Secretary). Miss Wendy Hill was appointed as Director and preparations were made to begin operations in **January 1972**. Permission to use the Hall as a Kindergarten premises was granted two days before the children were due to start! The Hon R Harvey, then an alderman of the Brisbane City Council (and later the Lord Mayor of Brisbane), was instrumental in obtaining permission. Tenders for the new building were called in **March 1972** and these came in at about **\$45000**. The Building Committee considered that this would be too much of a burden for the congregation to carry. Further discussions were held to prepare alternative plans for a single unit and these were finally approved by the Building Committee. Further tenders were called, the lowest being **\$25393** from B & G Fletcher. With the contract duly signed, work commenced in September 1972. **Wet weather and a shortage of bricks** delayed completion. The building was finished in **January 1973** in time for start of the new Kindy year. **Roadworks** costing **\$3300** were completed in **March 1973**. The **official opening** was held on **20<sup>th</sup> May 1973** by the Hon W Kaus MLA Member for Mansfield and dedicated by Rev F H Schmidt, President of LCA of Qld District. Hon R Harvey, Mr A Fazldeen (Administrator of the Crèche and Kindergarten Assn.) Rev G Prove, Mr R Palmer (President of Eight Mile Plains Kindergarten) were among those present.



**Church Kindergarten**

## **CHURCH TOWER and SPIRE. Completion of the Church.**

St John's was originally designed with a tower and spire but owing to lack of funds this was postponed, to be completed for the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Church. On **6<sup>th</sup> April 1975**, plans were under way for the tower and spire. It was unfortunate indeed that bricks of the same colour were unobtainable at the time of building. While Hornick Constructions carried out the building of the tower, the spire construction was carried out under cover in Mr A Stiller's packing shed by voluntary labour. Many Saturday mornings were spent at the shed and must have brought back memories for some of the older members of working together again for their Lord. After the steel framework was completed, it was moved to the church yard where it was completed with copper coating. The raising and positioning of the cement buttress-cappings and spire by crane onto the now completed church tower was a memorable occasion for those who were present in the Church grounds and all who watched the news telecast on Channel 9. Yet there was still something missing – a bell! God's guidance led one of our



members to a beautiful bell of superb quality – just what was required to complete the church. The bell is 3'x2', weighs about **153 kgs (3cwt)** and fits perfectly into the tower. A neon cross which stood for years on the uncompleted tower has now been set into the brickwork of the front of the tower by Mr C Wendt and stands as a visible sign of God's saving grace. The building of the tower and spire commenced on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1975 and was fully **completed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1976** at a cost of **\$8380** incl \$750 for the bell. A truly uplifting experience for all who sat in the Church for worship and those arriving on Sunday 8th August 1976 was to hear the bell ring out for the first time over the Plains at 6.57am and again at 9.57am commencing the Services. We, the children and grandchildren and great grandchildren, can see how the prayers of those first pioneers to the district have been answered to overflowing.

## IMPROVEMENTS

A Conn electronic organ was purchased in October 1965 for 1750 pounds to replace the original organ, and a duplicator in 1961 for printing of Monthly Messenger and later the Weekly Bulletin, together with many other leaflets to aid in spreading the Christian message. A fold down table was added to the wall near the vestry, where the Wedding Register could be signed.

## NEW LAND

Additional land was purchased in 1956 and 1965. In the Treasurer's Report of 31st December 1956 a small note says "50ft of ground was acquired from E Collett and will be finalised early in 1957. Looking to the future development of the congregation the Committee decided to purchase the acre of land adjoining our property for \$3000 during 1965.

## **1976 UPDATE**

*The following update was written in 1976.*

### ***CHANCEL ALTERATION***

In 1976 plans drawn up to alter the chancel area. Owing to the small number who could commune at one time, it was felt desirable to extend the predella and change the flooring of the chancel. At the same time a communion rail was added. The chancel area was covered with wall to wall carpet, and a runner down the aisle. This was donated by the Ladies Guild. The work was completed in November, 1976.

### ***MAINTENANCE***

Over the past 25 years dedicated members have given of time, talents and efforts to keep the Church and Kindergarten grounds in good order. The gardens are faithfully tended by Mrs A Schilling. Mr Henry Vietheer never tires of working in the grounds and supervising the working bees. Ladies clean the Church and Hall. Flowers grown by members are arranged by Mrs W Stiller and Mrs K Graydon and others on odd occasions.

### ***ORGANIZATION***

#### **CHOIR**

From the very beginning music, in the form of choir and congregational singing and organ voluntaries, has been an integral part of worship at St John'

s. In 1934, even before St John's was officially organized, a choir under the leadership of Mr Voigt sang at every service. Subsequently Mr T Stiller took over the baton and continued to conduct the choir for the 7am service and while Mr R Woods for the 10.00am service. Since the beginning, Mr R Waldman has accompanied the choir and congregational singing at the organ. As the congregation grew it became necessary to conduct two services each Sunday so Mr P Stiller, Miss G Stiller and Mr C Wendt played for the first service and R Waldman and R Woods

for the second. Two of the younger members also play voluntaries.

St John's is fortunate in having organists who, together with the choir, give of their services to the glory of God. The choir has on occasion, presented Handel's "Messiah", Mauder's "Olivet to Calvary" and Stainer's "Crucifixion" sung at special functions in other churches. The choir has led the congregational singing which, on two occasions has been recorded by the ABC for their Hymn Singing. Since the two Sunday morning services commenced, the choir divided into two parts, and despite the smaller numbers in each, they have continued to render beautiful anthems. It is pleasing to note that several of the original choir members still lead and aid the younger members. We hope that this tradition will always go on.

### **JUNIOR CHOIR**

In an effort to encourage the love of singing and music, a Junior Choir was begun by Miss G Stiller and Mr P Stiller in mid 1970. From this small beginning Miss G Stiller then led the group of young choristers to perform several concerts, take part in worship and Sunday School Anniversary Services and delight the old folk at Trinder Park Rest Home with their happy voices. During the six years since, the responsibility for this choir has been taken over by Mrs G Skerman, Mr T Stiller and presently by Miss P Stiller. Mr R Waldman has willingly helped and encouraged these enthusiastic children by accompanying them at piano and organ. The music tradition will go on.

### **YOUTH FELLOWSHIP**

In 1945 a Young Peoples Society was formed at St John's. Many of the young people had previously been actively associated with the Youth Society of the sister congregation, Nazareth of South Brisbane. At the inaugural meeting on 30th August, 14 members were present. The first office bearers were: Pastor M Lohe - President Mr W Stiller -Vice, Mr L Stiller -Secretary & Mrs N Stiller -Treasurer, 5th member Miss D Stiller. The first Youth Society donated 25 pounds to the new church building. Since then the

Lutheran Youth Fellowship LYF of St John's has continued to provide Christian fellowship for the youth of the congregation and to assist with various projects of St John's and participate in community activities.

### **LADIES GUILD**

The ladies of our congregation have always been active in the work of the Church. From the time of the formation of St Johns Ladies Guild in 1951, when they donated 80 pounds for the purpose of carpeting the new church, they have devoted themselves to community help and improving church plant. The most recent project being the renewal of carpet in the church at a cost of \$1000. The first committee consisted of Pastor M Lohe – President, Mrs T Stiller –Vice, Mrs C Stern –Secretary, Mrs L Stiller –Treasurer. Meetings at the start were held in the home of late Mrs W Stern. This staunch band of willing workers has given of their time and efforts in catering, sewing, street stalls and various other fund-raising activities, profit from which have all been given to mission work. Their ready service is a true witness to their Christian faith and an inspiration to us all.

The following are **membership figures for 1976** –

Baptized 287, Communicant 200, Sunday School 100, Youth 25 and Ladies Guild 23.

The **total income** of congregation for 1975 was \$26000.

## MINISTRY

The following pastors served at St John's

RB Reuther	Bethania with monthly services	1929 – 1932
M Lohe	South Brisbane with monthly/fortnightly then weekly services (assisted by E Reidel & R Gerhardy)	1932 – 1953
FH Schmidt	South Brisbane (assisted by E Sabel & D Larsen) Parish Sth Brisbane, Carina, EMP, Mt Gravatt	1954 – 1960
D Larsen	Parish EMP, Mt Gravatt, Woodridge	1961 – 1967
G Prove		1967 – 1970
D Stolz	Parish EMP, Mt Gravatt, Woodridge	1971 – 1973
N Bergen	Parish EMP	1974 – 1978
T Zanker	Parish EMP	1978
V Gerhardy	Parish EMP	1979 – 1988
M Alfson	Parish EMP	1987 – 1994
J Keller	Parish EMP, Coopers Plains	1989 – 1995
R Stelzer	Parish EMP, Coopers Plains	1995 – 2005
	Note - Rochedale formed - R Stelzer accepted.	
G Pietsch	Parish EMP, Coopers Plains	1996 – 2000
R Briese	Parish EMP, Coopers Plains	2000 – 2006
A Muller	Parish EMP, Coopers Plains	2007 –

It is of interest to note that Pastor D Larsen was the first minister to be stationed at Eight Mile Plains. The Parish consisted of Eight Mile Plains, Woodridge and Mt Gravatt – the latter two both started as preaching places from St John's. In 1973, Woodridge withdrew and formed a separate Parish. In January 1974, Mt Gravatt also withdrew and formed a separate Parish. Accordingly, Pastor D Stolz accepted the call to the new Mt Gravatt Parish and Pastor N Bergen to Eight Mile Plains.

## **2007 UPDATE**

*The Following Update was written in 2007.*

In 1985 a celebration was held to mark the 50th Anniversary of the formation of St John's congregation. As a sign of continued growth and outreach St John's in 1985, began a permanent preaching place at Redeemer Lutheran College, Rochedale. Subsequently, on Palm Sunday 1986, Our Saviour Lutheran Congregation, Rochedale was officially formed and became a member of the Extended Eight Mile Plains Lutheran Parish. Both congregations were served by Pastor V Gerhardy and then jointly by Pastor M Alfson and Pastor J Keller. In December 1991, members of the Parish gathered in worship on the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the dedication of St John's Lutheran Church (building). Ten years later the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was celebrated on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2001. On 14<sup>th</sup> August 1994 Bethlehem Congregation at Coopers Plains became part of the Extended Eight Mile Plains Parish and the two Pastors jointly shared Parish responsibilities for three congregations. However, during the time of Pastor R Stelzer and Pastor G Pietsch, it was felt that it would be better for Pastor R Stelzer to concentrate on the growing outreach ministry at Rochedale, while Pastor G Pietsch cared for the other half of the Parish, namely St John's and Bethlehem. This division of Parish responsibilities continued until the peaceful withdrawal from the Parish of Our Saviour congregation. At the time the Parish name reverted to The Extended Eight Mile Plains Lutheran Parish with St John's and Bethlehem being served by one Pastor. Since 1976

when the foregoing was written, the activities and auxiliaries of the congregation have continued along with some additions.

### ***CHRISTIAN SUMMER SCHOOL***

Under the ministry of Pastor V Gerhardy, and in particular, through the efforts of his wife, Miriam, along with Mrs J Bock, Christian Summer School was begun in 1982. CSS has become a major event in the ministry of St John's being held in the January school holidays each year. The week long programme caters for up to 280 community children. In 2006 the 25th anniversary was celebrated. Praise be to God! Over the years St John's has been instrumental in promoting similar events at Rochedale and Sunnybank. Excess funds from CSS have been used to purchase improvements, equipment and contributing to the hall fund.

### ***BOY'S BRIGADE***

In 1985 the 4th Logan Company of the Boy's Brigade was established at St John's. The first Captain was Mr. K Koplick and Pastor V Gerhardy the Chaplain. Since that time Logan has continued to provide activities and Christian centred training for the advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys in our community. Many enthusiastic and dedicated leaders have served this ministry of St John's. At the 21st anniversary in 2006, the records show 33 boys under the captaincy of Mr A Palmer, Pastor R Stelzer (Rochedale) as Chaplain. These records also show some who began boy's brigade as 8 year olds.

### ***GIRL'S BRIGADE***

Mrs M Gerhardy was instrumental in setting up 79<sup>th</sup> Brisbane Company of Girl's Brigade in 1986. She was the first Captain and set a great standard for the girls and the captains and officers who succeeded her. Pastor V Gerhardy was the first Chaplain. St John's has been blessed to have capable and dedicated leaders to continue this valuable ministry, encouraging girls to "seek, serve and follow Christ". The 20th anniversary was celebrated in 2006 with 35 girls and Mrs V Francis as Captain.

## ***SUNDAY SCHOOL – JAM (Jesus and Me)***

Enrolments have fluctuated over the years. The Annual SS Christmas Programmes ie concert night, when classes present songs and lessons, and a closing service in the church, when children receive their books and lollies – a tradition that has prevailed since earliest times, are special events. Efforts have been made to encourage activities which can include other congregational members eg: the annual picnic, camp over and special church services. In the early days SS picnics were held in Mr E Stiller's paddock at Kuraby where everyone enjoyed foot races, trolley races, sack and 3 legged races, mintie and peanut hunts, high swings, watermelon, and wonderful food for lunch – all homemade (bring and share) and ICE CREAM. Later picnics have been held at Trinder Park, and in local park and the church grounds. Even with small numbers (2007) the SS still remains self supporting with dedicated teachers sharing God's Word and His love with children. Miss C Francis is Co-ordinator.

## ***LAZER***

A group for children aged 10-13 meets in the "Youth Room" under the hall each Sunday morning for Bible Studies and games.

## ***YOUTH***

This group meets fortnightly at the hall and in 2007 attracts around 35 youth for bible studies and fun activities promoting the Christian way of life. They are under the enthusiastic leadership of Mr M & Mrs K Vezos and a number of trained youth leaders.

## ***WOMENS FELLOWSHIP (Formerly Ladies Guild).***

This group continues to meet monthly for fellowship and bible study. Mrs B Wendt continues in the role of President, which she has held for over 30 years. Although the group is smaller now and the members older, the Women's Fellowship still provides financial support and acts of service to St John's.



## ***EVENING CARE GROUP***

This small group of ladies convened by Mrs B Bailey, meets fortnightly to provide fellowship, to organize fellowship events such as Advent Dinner and to support those in need of practical help.

## ***HOME GROUPS***

There are three home groups meeting regularly for bible study and fellowship. These are led by Mr C Wendt, Mr W Schmidt and a group with a focus on young adults led by Mr M & Mrs K Vezos.

## ***MUSIC***

A new Rodgers digital organ was purchased in December 2002. Small sets of genuine organ pipes were installed above the pulpit and above the door to the vestry. Although not speaking pipes, they reverberate from the sound of loud speakers mounted behind them. Thus the overall effect is truly a pipe organ sound.

"Together in Song" hymnbooks were introduced in early 2003, replacing the old traditional Lutheran hymnbooks that are no longer available. This unites us with the other mainstream churches in hymn singing. These books and the organ were dedicated at the same service.

It is encouraging to note that since a Music Bursary was offered in 2005, a number of young musicians have taken up training with the aim of providing music for worship services, not only on organ and piano, but also with guitar, flute, clarinet and violin. From time to time a choir has been formed to assist at special worship services. The choir has lapsed when Mr T Stiller, due to health, had to relinquish the baton after 50 years. Mrs M Stiller one of the original choir members continued to sing anthems occasionally. Mr D Koplick also served 26 years faithfully playing the organ until 2006. Mrs B Zabel, Mrs K Vezos and Mrs M Perks have continued both Playing and training the young musicians. Mrs J Wong, Mrs J Feeny and Mrs M Hage have joined the team of musicians. Mr I & Mrs E Koplick also add to our worship services in voice and guitar.

## ***REFURBISHMENT OF HALL***

In April 2004 work began on the refurbishment of the old hall with construction of new kitchen, lounge and toilet facilities all being linked by a paved colonnade. The building and refurbishment were designed by Sydney Architect, George Straesser and built by Gunnar Helberg of Commercial Constructions. The resulting construction has provided an attractive and practical facility which is further enhanced by the paved courtyard and revamp of the gardens. Mr O Scholl contributed much to the management of this project. It was dedicated the Glory of God on 28th November 2004 by Rev Dr R Briese. In conjunction with the hall project, new technology was installed in the church and hall to allow data projection and improved sound system along with video link with the church. This allows services in the church to be relayed to the hall should there be an overflow of worshippers. Mr D Loch contributed much of his time and expertise to this installation. An alarm system now protects this equipment in the hall. The hall project was completed at a total cost of \$441,116.



**Church Hall with extensions**

### ***EXTENSION OF CHOIR LOFT***

In 2005 an extension to the choir loft in the church was constructed to allow for the installation of a control desk for the sound and data projection system. It also provided a stable floor for the location of a camcorder.

### ***FUND RAISING***

Since the refurbishment of the hall St John's members have raised funds of approx \$1500 per month by refurbishing Qantas headsets and at the same time have assisted Keystone to maintain their contract with Qantas. These work days provide fellowship and mutual benefit to all involved. From time to time other events are organized eg: Whiz-Bang Concert, Trading Tables, Country and Western night and Bush Dance all of which enable the loan from LLL to be repaid.

### ***JAPANESE WEDDINGS***

The attractive style of the church building, and the beautiful lawns have made St John's a sought-after place for weddings. In 2004 St John's began an arrangement with a Japanese company to use the church for blessing ceremonies for Japanese couples. A St John's wedding team consisting of celebrant, steward and organist, conduct the ceremonies and through their efforts, substantial funds are raised to service the hall debt.

### ***REACTIVATION OF BORE***

In 2006 with the introduction of water restrictions by Brisbane City Council owing to drought conditions in South East Queensland, church council decided to reactivate a bore which had been put down during the 1960's. Thanks to a generous donation by a member, of pump and sprinkler system, this bore now provides sufficient water to keep the lawns and gardens looking beautiful. The water is also connected to the Kindergarten to allow water play and lawn sprinkling during the dry.

***WORKING BEES***

The tradition of working bees and generous donations of time and money have been part of the history of St John's from the beginning. Although only a few of the original members remain, the tradition continues as members gather to perform tasks of maintenance and improvements to the church and grounds giving of their time and talents to the Glory of God.

**IN CONCLUSION**

We praise God for every blessing He has bestowed upon us during the past 72 years and that He has permitted us to worship Him for the past 57 years in our own building. May we in turn, show our thankfulness for His blessings by being His faithful and willing witnesses in the community in which He has placed us.