



**ONE SOWS, ANOTHER WATERS BUT
GOD GIVES THE INCREASE!**

1 Corinthians 3:6

DENIS & GWEN SMITH

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History of Gateway Church

Denis and Gwen Smith

The Locality

South-east Queensland is believed to have been occupied by Aboriginal people for centuries. The local Indigenous people hunted and camped by the creeks and on the rolling hills of the area, now known as Belmont. These people were there both before and after white settlement of the area.

A corroboree ground existed on banks of Bulimba Creek and the mineral springs near Mount Petrie were a popular camping spot for these people. They interacted with the Dreamtime through dance, music and costume.



Andrew Petrie, circa 1870s

In 1821 Andrew Petrie a builder from Scotland, together with his wife and family, came to N.S.W Australia. They were brought here by Rev. John Dunmore a Presbyterian minister. A nucleus was formed there with other Scottish tradesmen who were “free workers.”

Meeting hostility from convict and emancipist workers, Petrie accepted a post as a clerk in the Ordnance Department and later established his own construction business. The quality of his work impressed his superiors so much that, in 1837, he became a Superintendent of Works, repairing many crumbling structures.

Later, he and his family were the first free-settlers to move to the area. They travelled to Dunwich aboard the *James Watt* and were then transferred by pilot boat, manned by convicts and landed at King’s Jetty, the only landing place that then existed near today’s Story Bridge.

“We acknowledge the Traditional Owners on whose country Gateway Church’s meetings are taking place.

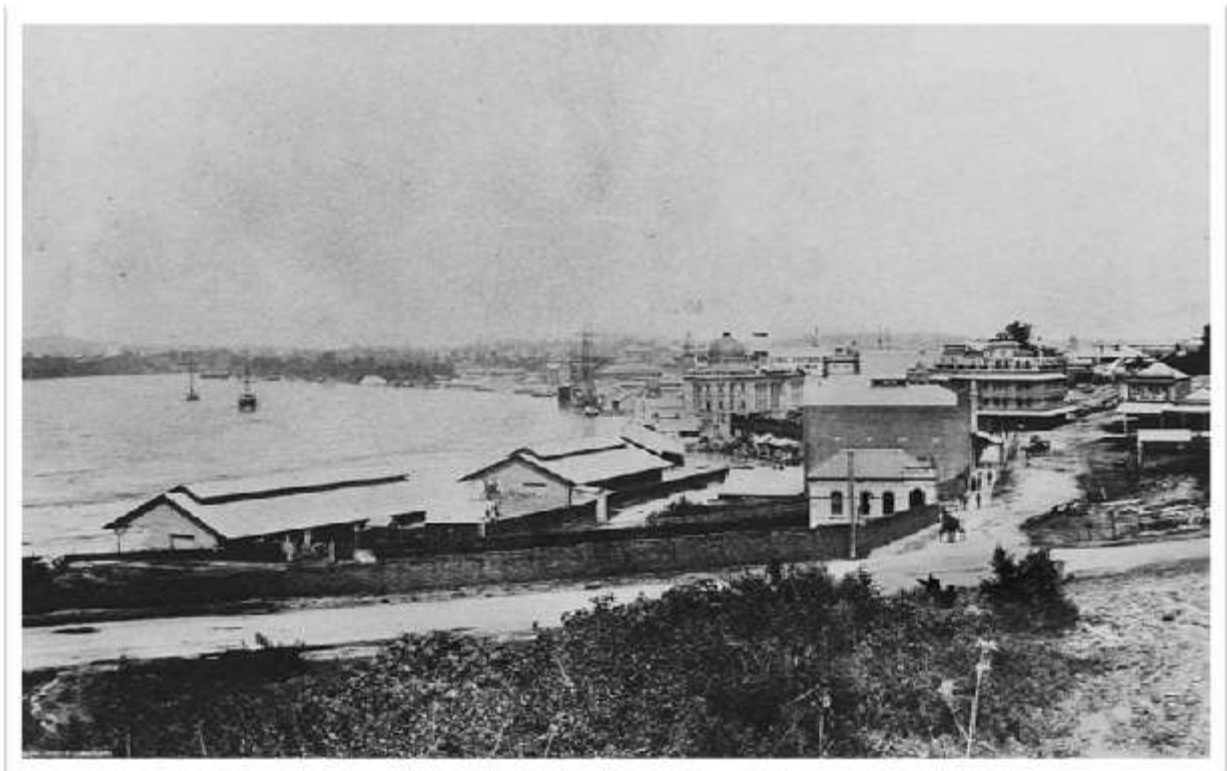
We thank them for allowing us to meet on their country and acknowledge their Elders past and present.”

A year after arriving in the colony Petrie and his family moved into a stone house he built at what is now known as Petrie Bight.



Andrew Petrie's house at the corner of Queen and Wharf Streets, Brisbane, circa 1859

Petrie's general duties entailed the supervision of prisoners engaged in building and making such necessities as soap and nails. He also carried out inspections of government owned sheep and cattle and placed a number of beacons on navigational hazards in the Brisbane River.



View from above the intersection of Adelaide and Boundary Streets, to Petrie Bight, Brisbane. The dome of Customs House is visible in the background

Petrie's charge took him to several convict outposts and gave him a taste for travel and exploration. His private journeys soon added to knowledge of the immediate environs of the settlement.

When the convict station was removed in 1839 Petrie saw the opportunity at last of a free community, and with his family remained to contribute to its formation. He gave his name to the hill at Belmont – Mount Petrie.

In the mid to late 1840s, Torn, Andrew Petrie's son, marked a road from Cleveland to Eight Mile Plains crossing Bulimba Creek at Wishart and Upper Mt Gravatt. This extended the dray road which passed from "Cowper's Plains" through Ipswich to the Darling Downs, enabling the pastoralists to transport their produce to the coast for shipment.

After the Separation of Queensland from New South Wales in 1859 and the establishment of the first Queensland Parliament, there were extensive land sales in 1861 with the proclamation of the Brisbane Agricultural Reserve where the modern suburbs of Eight Mile Plains, Kuraby, Runcorn, and Sunnybank are today.

With those events, there commenced a large influx of English, Scottish, Irish and German-born settlers who began to farm extensively in the more fertile flats of the catchment area of Cannon Hill and Belmont.

The area was settled by the Weedon, McKie, Burstall and Mackenzie families. Robert Mackenzie was the first recognized settler to build a homestead at Belmont. August Bernecker an early settler in the area had named his estate 'Belmont' and that name then spread to the surrounding area.

Belmont State School opened on the 5th June 1876.

The 1893 floods also brought a pause to any previous climb in property values in the Belmont area and elsewhere on the south side of Brisbane. Demand for such land languished until shortly before World War 1 because of uncertainty about the area's transport prospects during periods of flooding. In the 1932 flood Bulimba Creek achieved a breadth of over a kilometre in the lower valley.

The dangerous condition of an unlicensed wagonette and driver, operated by a Mr. Winterbottom, plied that route was highlighted in a report. In early 1899, the Belmont Divisional Board sent a letter to Winterbottom Bros. complaining of the "bad condition of the Belmont bus, the careless and reckless driving of the vehicle and the gross cruelty practised on the horses."

By November 1901 the Board wrote to the new proprietor of the bus service, H. Dean, calling his attention to "the great inconvenience and loss of time occasioned by the bus stopping too long at the Belmont Hotel on Old Cleveland Rd., Camp Hill." The Board also stated "the necessity of having a light inside the bus when travelling after dusk."

Around 1894, permits for the operation of tanneries and other noxious trades near Bulimba Creek were granted with restrictions on effluent to be piped to the tidal, salt water section of the lower Bulimba Creek.

Within two years ratepayers were voicing their objections to the associated health-threatening stench, caused by the company's wool washing plant and piggery. These companies continued to proliferate so that, at the end of World War 2 there were seven in existence.



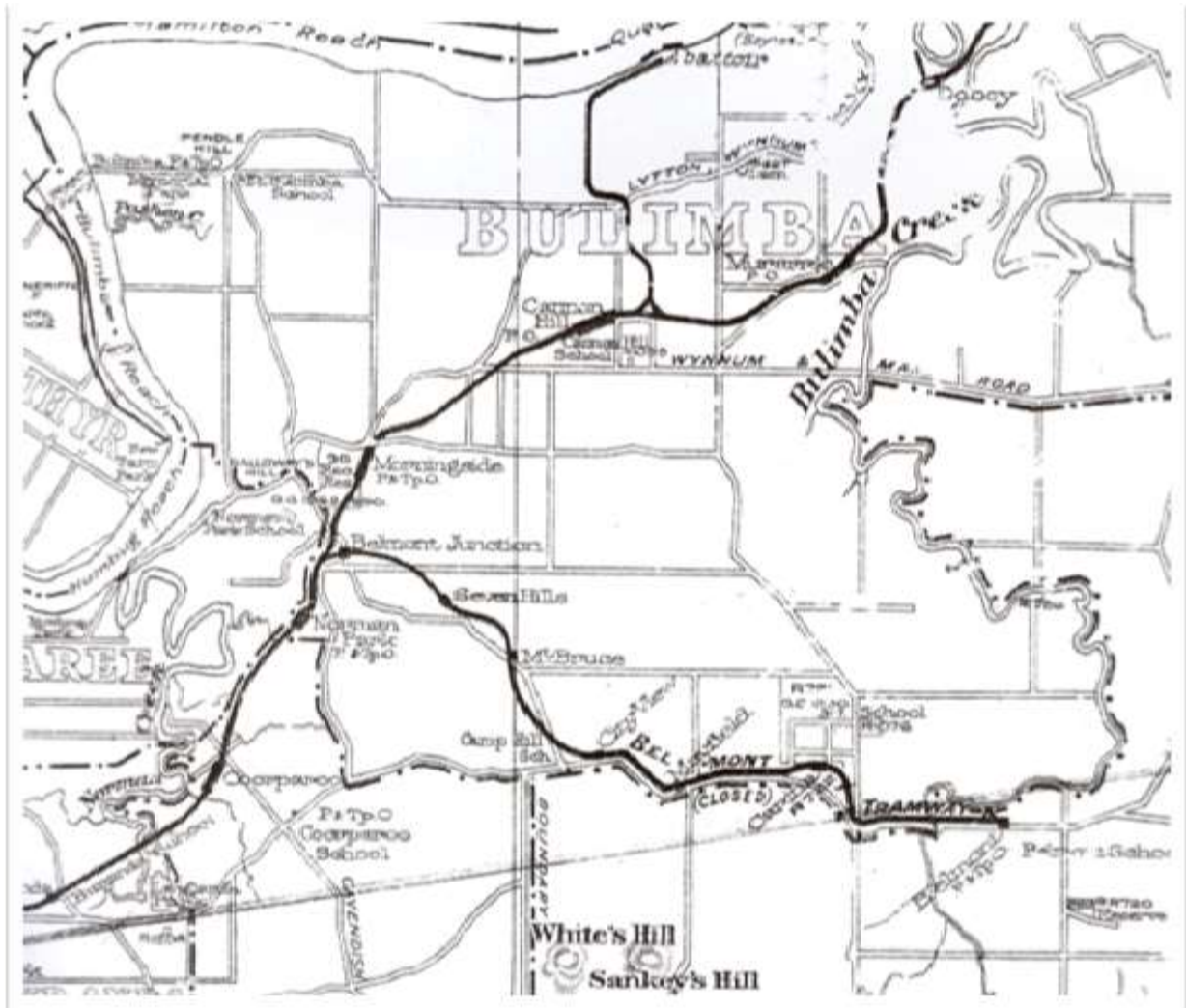
An unidentified small girl stands on the road leading to the Baynes Brothers Woolscour and Fellmongery in Belmont, Brisbane [State Library of Queensland]



[Belmont tram by Belmont Shire Council - State Library of Queensland. Licensed under Public Domain via Commons]

On 25th May 1912 the Belmont Shire Council operated the short-lived Belmont Tramway - the "Belmont Flyer," running from Norman Park railway station to a terminus near the present State School.

The line closed following the amalgamation of Shire into the City of Greater Brisbane in 1926.



Portion of a 1916 map showing the Belmont Tramway
[State Library of Queensland]

The Belmont Rifle Range was constructed in 1916, and was to become the third largest privately owned rifle range in the southern hemisphere, and a venue of shooting events during the 1982 Commonwealth Games.

After World War 2, a huge population growth occurred in the area and since the 1950s was growing significantly.

Building for the Future



Pastor James Wallace

Pastor James Wallace together with his wife Margaret arrived in Australia in 1951.

They assumed the leadership of the Assemblies of God Commonwealth Bible College at New Farm, Brisbane and he was elected Chairman of the Commonwealth Conference.

He and his wife also pastored Glad Tidings Tabernacle during this time. The records of Glad Tidings Tabernacle [now Hope Centre] show that discussions concerning “a site for Belmont church” were recorded in November 1951. [Pastor Jack Easton’s research papers owned by Denis & Gwen Smith]



Once again the burden of prayer and intercession came upon the small Assemblies of God in Australia fellowship and a committee was appointed to implement a Home Bible Study Course. Pastor Ralph R. Read was appointed as the chairman of a Home Missions Council.

The desire for evangelism continued with many churches beginning to reach out into their communities.

Jim Wallace also launched into radio ministry with a program, “For Times like These.”

A policy for church expansion in Brisbane was adopted with Glad Tidings Tabernacle sponsoring and shepherding new works.

Outreaches at Mount Gravatt, Yeronga, Enoggera, Sandgate, Grovely, Zillmere, Cooper's Plains and Belmont were commenced this way. Commonwealth Bible College students gave the main ministry in these new works.

By now Felix Lloyd-Smith and his wife Betty, from England, became the Pastors of Glad Tidings Tabernacle. At this time, Alan Conwell was the Church Treasurer and Bob Conwell a builder as well as Jack Shaw, two other Board Members, stood behind these outreaches.

They were anxious to evangelise the Brisbane suburbs.

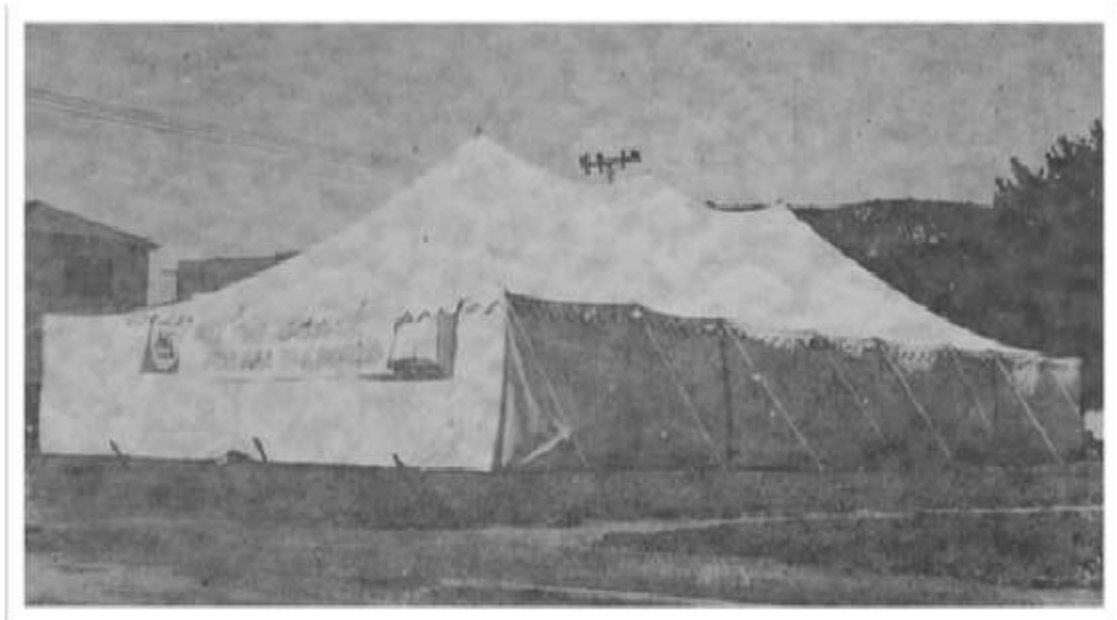
Pastor Ralph and Iris Read came from the Victorian Bible College [set up by C. L. Greenwood] at the invitation of Glad Tidings Tabernacle.

Burdened to reach the community, Ralph held four tent missions in Belmont, Fairfield, Windsor and Stafford.



Ralph R Read

“At Belmont a kindly Christian Brother [a Brethren church member] let us erect our tent on his property. It was in Belmont Road. We were there for two or three weeks with after school children’s meetings and Gospel services in the evening. Jack Shaw led the singing. The Commonwealth Bible College Students with James Wallace as Principal gladly co-operated with literature distribution and door-to-door invitations.” – Ralph R Read



Ralph R Read's Tent



The Glad Tidings Tabernacle Board and Felix Lloyd-Smith were anxious to establish a permanent witness in the area. They purchased land and in 1951, built a hall for youth and church services – “Glad Tidings Tabernacle – Belmont.” Bob Conwell supervised the construction and at the official opening Felix Lloyd-Smith chaired the proceedings. Jim Wallace and Ralph Read spoke at the opening meeting. High praise was given to Bob Conwell and co-workers for their generous help. The tent was taken down and moved to the north side of Brisbane.



Under the direction of Principal Wallace the College students became the Youth and Sunday School workers.

Henry and Ruth Freudenberg provided the initial oversight of Belmont under Pastor Jim Wallace.

The Freudenbergs came from New Zealand to assist at the College and he remained the pastor for a number of years. Henry was the general caretaker and part-time College lecturer and his wife was the cook.

John Griffiths, a student around 1957 wrote, "I was assigned quite often to Belmont. I was driving the College truck for a while and would take the students out there Sunday evenings. We would take food for tea and then go out and conduct open-air meetings. "Preach to the gum trees!" was the mandate as we could not see any houses or lights around the place.

"Henry Freudenberg would select the sites and who would speak. The singing was accompanied by a piano-accordion. He would bring an elderly lady, Mrs Anderson, for the meeting in the church and take her home afterward."

"One thing I recall clearly was that the church needed painting on the outside so Bro Freudenberg purchased Mission Brown paint and mixed in sump oil, "to preserve the wood" he said." John Griffiths reflected. "I was one of the students who 'volunteered' to help with the painting. We were given a discount off our College fees as an incentive."

Robert Dunk a student at CBC humorously recalled, "My limited memories seem to be few, and were all filed under the conception or misconception that for a CBC student to be assigned to Belmont was seen as being a punishment for some misdemeanour."

Henry Freudenberg was teaching Pneumatology in my first year, 1956. His wife was cook at the college. He worked in the office collecting fees and keeping stocks of stationery. He also kept the hot water boiler going and dumped the ashes down on the river bank. He also found the time to do home visitation in the Belmont area.









Bob & Jean Pearson

Later Bob and Jean Pearson provided the oversight for the Church. “We were there for only two years and the numbers were small. Bob’s parents came along to help us and his father helped with the preaching.” Jean reflected.

“There was a lot to do at that stage. With the full time teaching position Bob had at Cavendish Road High School, it all became too much for us. With small children, we felt the pressure and eventually handed the church over to the next pastor who had more time than us to try and build it up.”

Ernie and Dot Berthelsen then provided that pastoral **ministry for a time. He was also a Lecturer at Commonwealth Bible College** and worked at a full-time job. Lionel Berthelsen, their son, who was a student at Commonwealth Bible College recounted, “I was active in the early 1960s in voluntary ministry leadership at what was then Belmont Assemblies of God. I am still filled with embarrassment at my preaching from those days. I remember taking 40 hours to prepare one sermon—and taking 40 mins to deliver it. Even I was bored to death! But the people were so encouraging!”



“Other memories flood in too. Like the lady who used to come to church by horse and buggy. She would unhitch the horse, and let it graze. Or the time I took a carload of kids to

some functions and had an accident on the way. The kids found it exciting! I reckoned that if I could do that every week, I'd double the group in no time."

"But in all this, I thank God for the lessons he taught me as I began in ministry, and for the gracious folk who tolerated my feeble efforts, and encouraged me. I am so grateful that they helped me get started in a ministry that has now extended more than 50 years."

Desley Querro, another College student recalled, "My first year assignment in 1962 was to Belmont with Lionel Berthelsen and John Knauff on Sunday mornings. John played the piano and we led Sunday School. It was not a very big congregation then. It seemed like it was a church just built out in the scrub with not many people living there and an old lady who was still riding to church in her cart and horse that seemed ancient. Our theme song was "Church in the Wildwood". Returning there years later to speak at a ladies meeting I was amazed how much the city had spread out to that area. It was no longer a church in the wildwood but a church planted there for the purposes and plan of God."

From 1964-1971 Glen and Merna Gray provided pastoral leadership to the church. The Sunday School grew under the leadership of Merna to around 100 children being reached for Christ each Sunday. In 1968, they purchased a bus to assist in the children's work. The church experienced good growth with meetings sometimes lasting three hours as God ministered to His people. The building was packed to overflowing onto the aisles and the foyer. Many healings and miracles occurred and the church continued to grow. In 1971 they moved on to pastor the Mount Isa church.

In 1980 Belmont Assemblies of God church under the leadership of Pastor Ken Kruger embarked on a vision to build a new church. The original building had a seating capacity of 90 people and with 70 people on average attending weekly.

It was thought that without a larger building there was little hope for growth. It would take three years of persistence prayer, vision casting and overcoming obstacles before one sod of soil would be turned.

David Brooker, a domestic house builder was the only person in the church with any building experience and by default found himself building his first ever commercial project. One of the first obstacles that had to be overcome was the Brisbane City Council insistence that the church pay a cost of hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring the sewer line a couple of kilometres down Old Cleveland Road.

Through much prayer and the help of the local politician, this obstacle and many others were overcome.

The congregation were high in faith and low in finance and the members found themselves doing most of the work through working bees.

It took a further three years for the building to be completed.

PASTORS



1951-1959	Henry Freudenberg
1959-1960	Bob & Jean Pearson
1961 - 1962	Ernie & Dot Berthelsen
1962	Brian Kay
1964- 1971	Glen and Merna Gray
1971	Maurice Hughes
1972-1986	Ken Krueger & N Cameron
1987 - 1994	David Watson
1994 - 1995	Wayne Richards
1996 - 1997	Sean Stanton
1998 - 2001	Graham Forster
2002 -	Chris and Beverley Aiton

Chris and Beverley Aiton

Pastors Chris and Beverley Aiton accepted the call to pastor the church in 2002 following a succession of several pastors. Since 1971, none of them had stayed for more than a couple of years.

It has often been said that there are watershed moments in the lives of individuals and churches – their arrival was to be one of those moments!

Chris and Beverley with their young family had served as missionaries in the Philippines from 1981 to 1994, where they were involved in national church leadership and church planting. They had also served as pastors in Australia and Chris had worked at the Assemblies of God World Missions office as Assistant Director.



They shared a passion for reaching the lost and developing people's personal walk with the Lord. Their messages were based on a thorough study of Biblical truths. They believed the answer to real life's problems is found in the Word of God.

Their vision was to ignite the existing small congregation to minister to the whole family, from the newborn to senior citizens and reach their community and beyond with the life changing message of Jesus Christ.

This passion transformed Gateway church. One of the present Board members wrote, "Significant changes took place in Gateway church between 1993- 2002. Chris and Beverley brought stability back into the Church."

They established a vibrant Youth Ministry that has impacted young people in Brisbane and beyond. They built the financial stability of Gateway so that the church could move forward.

Constructing the new church building was a dream of past generations so they worked diligently ensuring Gateway church was debt free. The church moved from being in debt, to building a fund of over \$1 million for a building project.

They brought good governance into the church and had clear policies and procedures to function as the Body of Christ in the community.

During this time, despite challenges, which they handled with resilience and fortitude, they maintained their vision with steadfastness and prioritised the choosing and training of younger men and women to ensure the vision was not lost.

In 2015, the "turning of the sod" service was held and Elvene Szendry, in her nineties and the longest serving member of the congregation present, turned the first shovel full of soil to launch the building program. Pastor Denis V Smith, who preached in the old church building in 1961 while a student at Commonwealth Bible College led the congregation in a prayer of thanksgiving and dedication...

“Lord of the Church,

Over sixty years ago, people planted a seed of hope in Belmont and through the years it has been watered through the investment of their lives in what has now become the vision of Gateway Church – to build a relevant, dynamic church that impacts our community and beyond with the life changing message of Jesus Christ.

We acknowledge the generations of faithful ministry that has been provided by the ministers and people of this congregation over many decades. We remember and honour those who have sown their faith here and now gone on to their reward. They have left us an example to follow in their footsteps.

Time has brought many changes to our lives that would astound those who worshipped at the original Belmont Assembly of God as they worked together for the glory of God. Many of the things they valued most have not changed nor disappeared from those present here today.

We are here to ask your blessing on the work that we are about to begin. And yet this is already a sacred place, for it has witnessed the work of the people of God – individuals, couples and families, worshipping and working together in faith.

Thank you for the finance already raised and which will now be invested into a building which will add a new and exciting dimension to our lives and the life of this community.

We acknowledge that the church is not a building but a community of people united by the Holy Spirit to share faith and vision. We know that the foundation for the church is not concrete or steel, because the church is built on the sure foundation of the love of Christ. This building will be our light to the community and in the will of God; this congregation will continue to be a light shining for the glory of God.

And once again, like those who gathered here in an earlier decade, we ask God’s blessing on this place. As this sod is turned, may it also remind us of a hope for the future – that this land will continue to provide a place of worship and caring, welcome and sharing and a home where people experience your presence and most of all, your love.

Jesus we ask your blessing, the blessing of one who was a carpenter on earth. Let your blessing be upon the work of building your house. Guide the decisions and the efforts of all who work here and keep them safe. Let your presence fill this place and the lives of all who will serve you here as we see by faith a building that is consecrated to your honour and glory.

Amen.”

God has enabled the congregation to construct the new church building for the present and future generations and has miraculously provided finance, people and resources through answered prayer.

Their vision has been “to build a relevant, dynamic church that impacts our community and beyond with the life changing message of Jesus Christ.” And their mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ – by leading people to Christ and building them into a worshipping and serving community.

When you visit Gateway Church, you will find a pastoral ministry team that passionately cares about your personal and spiritual relationship with the Lord. A ministry, that believes in developing your individual gifts and talents.

Their encouragement to all who attend is to “connect – grow – serve!”

Over the years Pastors Chris and Beverley ministry at Gateway have made *people* their priority. Whether giving to missions to improve the lives of less fortunate, or encouraging the young people to impact the world for Christ, they have always maintained a positive and encouraging attitude.

Their story is reflected in some comments from congregational members.

“Chris and Beverley Aiton are our senior pastors and are a blessing because they live a life that reflects Jesus Christ and His love.” – Testimony.

“Together they make an effective and powerful team and have impacted the lives of many people, including our own.” – Testimony.

“Over years they have rebuilt trust through living and practising what they preach.” – Testimony.

“Chris and Beverley showed their commitment to God under challenging circumstances – financial, health, family and other. They proved to be dependable, capable, culturally sensitive and practical ministers of the gospel.” – Testimony.

“Chris is a very down-to-earth pastor who is very practical. He is both a practitioner and pragmatist, with a preaching style that is humorous and that connects with people.” – Testimony.

“Beverley's strengths are her ability to be both pastoral and prophetic. She has a well-developed prophetic/intuitive gift that she combines with a pastoral care style.” – Testimony.

Pastors Chris and Beverley have gone "beyond the call of duty" in shepherding their church – whether it has been their late night or early morning hospital visits for someone facing challenges.” – Testimony.

Chris and Beverley, the pastoral team and their congregational members have personified two great quotes from missionary statesmen:



"Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God." William Carey [1761 – 1834]



"The prospects are bright as the Promises of God" Adoniram Judson [1788 – 1850]

Applying these truths will serve to ensure Gateway Church has a great future!

We thank God for those who have faithfully served Him in the past at Gateway Church and for those who still serve in many roles, knowing that "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us." 2 Corinthians 4:7

"The current Pastoral Staff consists of Pastors Chris & Beverley Aiton, Pastor Ben Dolling, Pastor Faith Hatfield. Other Credential Pastors who are part of the church are Pastor Mark Robinson, Pastor Adam Hatfield, Pastor Amy Dolling and Pastors Denis and Gwen Smith. God has blessed us in the church with a great team of pastors and volunteers who work with great passion to see the kingdom of God expand. The current congregation are extremely supportive and generous in their commitment to Gateway Church. Together the church is joined in great unity and there the Lord has commanded his blessing." Chris Aiton

In this way, "One plants, another waters, but God gives the increase!" 1 Corinthians 3:6

Sources

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