

History of Riverdale Baptist Church

Establishing a Convention Baptist Church in Whitehorse was first discussed in 1955 between Everett Ball, an insurance underwriter who made semi-annual trips from his home in Edmonton to visit clients in Whitehorse, and Rev. G.M. Ward, who was the Home Missions Secretary for the Baptist Union of Western Canada (BUWC).

In the fall of 1955, the BUWC sent Rev. T. Elgar Roberts to Whitehorse for an appraisal of the "Baptist Fellowship," formed by several Convention Baptist and Mennonite families. In May 1963, a group of fifteen residents met with Rev. Roberts to discuss the possibility of starting a Baptist church in the Riverdale district of Whitehorse and unite with the BUWC.

The group set to work and canvassed the Riverdale area to see if there was Sunday school potential, passed a proposal to purchase property for a church building, and contacted other churches of the BUWC to help to raise funds for the mission work in Whitehorse. With the funds provided by the Union, White Gifts donated by many Baptist Sunday schools, and funds raised by the Riverdale group itself, there was enough money to begin building.

By the end of 1963 the group was meeting for fellowship on a weekly basis. Among those involved in this early stage of Riverdale Baptist Church were Loverna Armstrong and Ursula Heynen, who are still active in the congregation today. In January of 1964 a retired minister, Pastor Duncan Ritchie, arrived in Whitehorse to lead the congregation. On January 12, 1964 the first worship service was held in the Selkirk Street School gym. On that Sunday there were 32 in Sunday school and 46 in the worship service.

The Church Manse was built first and completed in December 1966. The congregation continued to meet in the school gym until the first Riverdale Baptist Church building, located at the corner of Tutshi and Teslin Roads, was completed in 1968. The Dedication was held on November 3, 1968.

By the 1980s the church building had become too small to accommodate the increasing number of members and adherents. Zoning problems prevented the congregation from expanding their existing building so the decision was made to sell the existing property, buy a larger one and erect a new church. After much work and praying by the congregation, God led the way and provided the necessary finances to build at a new location on Duke Street in Riverdale.

During the transition time between selling the old church and building the new one, the congregation met in several locations around town, such as The Seven Day Adventist Church and Jeckell Junior High School.

The new church at 15 Duke Street was finished on November 15, 1990 and the Dedication was held August 26, 1991. The congregation of Riverdale Baptist Church has worshipped at this location ever since.