

## History of Punchbowl Uniting Church

Punchbowl Uniting Church is an amalgamation of Punchbowl Methodist and Congregational. They currently worship in what was the Methodist Church.

In 1915 Punchbowl boasted one shop, a hurricane lamp was added to the path to evening worship, there being no bitumen roads; the railway station was lit by kerosene lamps; steam trains ran an hourly service for a population within the bounds of the present Punchbowl of probably less than 1,000 people.

### Methodist Church

A church site, with a frontage of 100 feet to the Broadway was secured in 1913, and during the next year services were held in the homes of some of the people. On Saturday, 6th February, January, 1915 a small wooden building to seat 100 persons, which had cost £275 was opened. Punchbowl was then part of the Lakemba Circuit. Owing to shortage of man-power during following World War 1, the Lakemba Circuit was combined with Bankstown. In 1924 Punchbowl-Bankstown was formed and division into Punchbowl Bankstown took place in 1936. The original building soon became too small and a second church made of brick measuring 45 ft. by 30 ft. with seating for a congregation of 200-250 was built at a cost of £789. The building was officially opened on Saturday, 21st December, 1918. Shortly after this the little sectional church building was purchased by the Cronulla Circuit for £230, taken down, and re-erected at Caringbah. Further extensions were made in 1922 and in 1927 the present kindergarten hall was built in a day by voluntary labour.

Strenuous and happy years of toil saw the congregation grow. Then came the depression making heavy demands on faith, hope and courage of officials. Scarcely had the congregation recovered from the hard times when cracks began to appear in the walls of the second church. The building was condemned and the final service was held on Sunday, 26th July, 1936.

The present building was opened on Saturday, 19th June, 1937. The complete suite of premises consisted of church, hall, three vestries and kitchen. The cost of the whole scheme including furnishings was £3,100.

Following the closure of South Punchbowl Church late in 1970 an extension to the building was made in 1973 to commemorate the transfer of the South Punchbowl congregation to Punchbowl.

### Congregational Church

The Congregational church at Punchbowl originated early in 1913 as a Sunday School class in a home. News of this class soon spread to the neighbouring Congregational Churches at Lakemba and Bankstown and as a result it was resolved to construct a building at Punchbowl. The church was officially opened on the 24th October 1914. There were fifteen members in the first fellowship.

A joint pastorate with Hurlstone Park operated between 1920 and 1928. The church grew in numbers and by 1928 the Sunday School had an enrolment of 200 scholars.

From 1928 until 1960 the church worked as a joint pastorate with the Bankstown Church. From 1961 until 1966 under supervision of a lay pastorate. From 1966 the church was without pastoral oversight - however a most useful ministry was rendered by a team of lay preachers from surrounding churches of all denominations.

In November 1971 a Joint Parish arrangement was established with the Methodist Church. The Congregational property was sold during 1972.

### Presbyterian

The Punchbowl Charge was initiated in March 1940. Then first services were held in a shop at 54 Highclere Avenue. In March a removal to the Soldiers' Memorial Hall took place but in 1945 the congregation went back to the old address where they carried on pending the completion of the church. A site was bought in Catherine Street but it was felt that it was not sufficiently central and in September 1943 a site was purchased in Punchbowl Road. The church was opened on Saturday, 12th March 1949 and continued to hold services until the formation of the Uniting Church.

### Uniting Church

The transition by the Joint Parish into the Uniting Church on 22nd June, 1977 was greatly helped by the co-operative spirit of the two denominations. The Punchbowl Presbyterians did not officially join the Uniting Church and closed about this time. They did have representation in Punchbowl Uniting Church.

### Organisations

Many groups operated at various times. These included Sunday School, Mission, Fellowship, Social and Sporting groups.

### Ministry

The call to service on the overseas mission field has not gone unheeded and we honour their work as well as those on the home front.