

REVEREND J. MURDOCH - Brighthouse United Church

INTERVIEWED:

May 1, 1975

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Reverend Murdoch came to Richmond in August, 1964, having spent a year in Prince Rupert as Superintendent of a Rehabilitation House for Indians.

The church was located at the time on Granville Avenue. The congregation had been officially formed in 1926 out of Richmond United Church.

Location

The church was at 816 Granville Avenue (south side of Granville). It was composed of a sanctuary, a small house for a custodian and immediately behind the hall there was a hall there was a hall built by the men of the congregation in 1952.

Sanctuary

Frame building, functional but not in good repair. Inside it was simple, with only a painting donated by the Barker family adorning the altar. There was an office and study on the west side and two rooms on the east, one a lounge and the other for the choir. Seating capacity was around 200.

Groups

There were Explorers, C. G. I. T., Men's Club, United Church Women, Scouts, Guides, Rovers and Ranges. There was an active kindergarten. These groups were using the hall behind the church.

A new Christian Education Building was opened the year Reverend Murdoch arrived. Soon other groups started meeting - Al-Anon, concerned citizens and even nomination meetings during election times.

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The parking lot was entered from Granville Avenue but was in poor repair.

Parsonage

Located at 819 Bennett Rd. Another dwelling was purchased at 813 Bennett Road and furnished by a group of women in the congregation.

Role of Women

Of late, women have been appointed as members to Session (as Elders) who take their place with men in serving Communion. The woman in the congregation of Brighthouse has been invaluable and is on the increase.

Moving of Church - some reasons for:-

The inadequacy of the church buildings became evident. The building too was beginning to deteriorate - at times the floor was under water. The church had been opened in 1927 and later enlarged. The parking lot was in a bad condition and access onto a busy thoroughfare as Granville had become, was at times hazardous. The church hall, where a Coffee House for youth had been going on for about 8 years, was becoming too small.

The land of the church had become valuable in its prime location, and the church felt the municipality should benefit from its re-zoning use. An offer came from the White Spot organization of \$285,000.

The move was started in 1973 and undertaken in May, 1974. It was carried out by moving of the buildings by professional house movers from Surrey. At one point the church appeared to tip (one window was broken).

Setting Up

The building was raised and the rotting supports replaced.

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The entire structure was reinforced and the two wings were rebuilt. The walls were re-plastered, adding an apse to the southern end of the building. This now contains stained glass windows which came from Ocean Park United Church when the Provincial Government took over the Crown Zellerbach operations there, and the church closed down.

The new site consists of 2 lots between 819 and 813 Bennett Road, purchased a number of years before Reverend Murdoch arrived.

Rather than expend money on greatly enlarging or changing the sanctuary, the church decided to spend it on the church hall. And agreement was entered into in December, 1974, with the Municipality of Richmond to turn over the facilities to the community after the church has established its priorities. A grant of \$43,000. was arranged with the help of the Municipality, through the Provincial Government. This grant had to be applied for because of spiralling building costs which pushed the cost to \$340,000. from an expected \$275,000.

A second building fund was launched and with the grant, the building will be completed (it has already been much used to date).

First Service

First service was held December 1, 1974, and on February 16, 1975 a service of re-dedication and Thanksgiving was held. A stained glass window was donated by Alderman Mrs. Irene Howard, in memory of her husband, and this was placed opposite one of the earlier mentioned windows in the narthex (vestibule) of the church.

The area which was formally the lounge was turned into an overflow area by removing part of the east wall and replacing it with a glass partition, then installing a sound system so the overflow congregation could see and hear the service. The seating capacity has thereby been increased to about 300.

The lighting has not been changed (incandescent) - a Memorial Fund has been started and this will provide new lighting and new

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carpetting in the aisle.

The heating was updated and re-vamped into a 3-phase heating system for 3 areas.

The previous kindergarten has been replaced by a pre-school program.

Services during the move of the church, were held in Minoru Chapel, the first service being held April 28, 1974 through the Fall months until the opening service December 1/74.

Opening of New Hall

A special service was held Sunday, April 27, 1975, with representatives of the Provincial Government, Mr. Steves, the Richmond Mayor, Mr. Blair, Alderman Mrs. Irene Howard, Director of Richmond Recreation Department Mr. Don Harwood, Builder Mr. L. Boyd and Architect Mr. Dick Hall.

The Hall was named after Rev. Murdoch in recognition of his work with the church.

Reverend Murdoch has given his resignation and is leaving at the end of June 1975. The Pastoral Relations Committee was formed and has sent out the call to Reverend David Cline of Granville Avenue, Vancouver.

Discussions on Union

Some meetings have been held between Brighthouse church and St. Alban's Anglican church. These meetings were not well-attended. Rev. Murdoch feels there is not much interest being felt toward amalgamation, but there is already much co-operation on an inter-faith level.

Reverend Murdoch has greatly enjoyed his stay in Richmond and places great on the role his wife has played in helping him with his work.

M. NOBLE.