

## **INTERNATIONAL BAPTIST CHURCH OF HONG KONG BRIEF HISTORY ...**

### **1958 – 2006**

In Matthew 16:18b Jesus declared, “I will build My church ...” and build it He has! And although thousands of people have come through the many different doors of this particular church – and many of them have served faithfully and sacrificially – all glory goes to the Father through the Son, Jesus Christ.

In 1956 some English-speaking believers expressed interest in having regular English worship services which were first held on Sunday evenings at Hong Kong Baptist Church (Caine Road). The HK Baptist Chapel (English Language) was formally opened on Sunday, 3rd November, 1957 at 62A Leighton Road. The average weekly attendance quickly grew to over 100 persons each week and within ten months the chapel was ready to organise into a church! So on 7th September, 1958 the first English-language Baptist church in Hong Kong for 113 years was constituted as “Hong Kong Baptist Church, English Language”.

From its very beginning the church has been “international” in composition, with the following nationalities represented in the inaugural congregation ... Chinese, American, British, Dutch, Indian, Australian, Indonesian, Pakistani and Singaporean.

Three weeks after the formal organisation of the church, four persons were baptized. In December of that same year, a Christmas offering was collected for foreign missions. From its beginning, the church has been both evangelistic and missions-oriented.

By 1959 it became a “mother church” by sponsoring a chapel that became Kowloon Baptist Church, English Language, in January 1961.

New premises were purchased (with church building funds plus a grant from the Foreign Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, USA) at 58A Macdonnell Road and services began there

in March 1959. The adjoining property at 56 Macdonnell Road was providentially purchased late 1960 for Kindergarten, Office and Servicemen’s Room (used by hundreds of military men over the years). A Church kindergarten operated from 1960 to 1977; accommodating over 100 children of various nationalities in five classes. It was recognised as an excellent school with well-trained administrative and teaching staff.

A name change took place in May 1967 to “Central Baptist Church”. That same year the church became debt-free.

One notable characteristic of the church has been the number of pastors who have shepherded the flock ... from the first in 1957 to today, there have been more than 20 pastors, several of whom served more than once – often returning as interim pastors. Some took the pulpit for as little as 3 weeks and one pastor for as long as 10 years.

In 1969 a Bible-based English class was started for Japanese women and even Japanese Vacation Bible Schools became established events.

In 1971 a request was made to the Government for a 13,500 sq. ft lot located in an undeveloped area on Upper Blue Pool Road. On the basis of this, the church building was sold, but following heavy rains and landslides, the Government ruled that the designated land would not be suitable for church use. So Central Baptist Church had nowhere to meet!

Adventist Hospital, in Stubbs Road, kindly allowed the church to use their chapel. As property prices began to rise funds were insufficient to purchase a suitably large property to meet the needs of the congregation. So the temporary use became long-term. With this change in location, came another name change to “International Baptist Church of Hong Kong” in August 1972.

Property prices continued to increase and it seemed wise to invest the monies on hand in something tangible rather than allow them to depreciate with inflation. A flat was purchased in Jardine’s Lookout as a parsonage in May 1975.

International Baptist Church Limited was incorporated as a non-profit company under Hong Kong law on 28th November, 1975. The Articles of Association set out the mission and guidelines on church purpose and structure.

The church grew increasingly towards self-supporting status. In 1977 IBC began to pay part of salaries on a monthly basis – previously these had been funded by the Hong Kong-Macau Baptist Mission and by churches in the United States.

Although many weekday Bible studies had been held over the years, on 9th February, 1977 there was a meeting of Baptist women ... the start of IBC’s Ladies Fellowship.

In the same watershed year an interesting avenue of outreach and ministry to youth was pursued when the church invested in the sailing junk “Huan” and the Adventure Ship Company.

On 28th October, 1978, the first gathering of the “Samahang Pilipina” of International Baptist Church met in a member’s home. New Filipinas continued to come to Hong Kong and numbers grew until their own services were provided and Filipino workers were called to serve.

During the late 1970’s when many Vietnamese refugees came to Hong Kong, opportunities were used to witness and minister personally to these refugees.

In 1981 a branch of International Baptist Church at the Hong Kong International School in Repulse Bay started. This congregation grew and in December 1984 was organised into the independent Repulse Bay Baptist Church.

A church office property was purchased in Happy Valley. This provided space for offices, reception area and function room. It was even the site for Sunday evening worship services.

By July 1983, the hospital location was insufficient for growing numbers, so one congregation began meeting in the Duke of Windsor Social Services Centre in Wanchai.

In 1986 IBC began support of another mission chapel – the Chi Fu Baptist Chapel (Western Hong Kong).

Journeymen missionaries continued to serve in ministry with youth and young adults, and by 1988 the church began to partly support its youth worker. This was done in addition to providing housing and partial support for pastor, as well as supporting the Filipino pastor who had been called to minister to the growing Filipino congregations.

In early 1990's IBC International premises again had to move from the Duke of Windsor building to the Boys and Girls Club in Lockhart Road, Wanchai.

Also in the 1990's the expanding outreach to Japanese facilitated the call for a Japanese-speaking pastor and the forming of Megumi Chapel. With the exodus of many Japanese expatriate members this ministry came to an end. But other needs were recognised and responded to.

With a need to reach out to the Muslim community, especially Pakistani and Indian, a ministry was initiated in 1994 called the Indo-Pak Ministry that evolved into Jihad of the Heart (JOTH) with a dedicated pastor and associate pastor partly-supported by IBC. JOTH Ministry centre is now strategically located in Wanchai – for optimal accessibility to the target outreach population.

Inner City Ministries with IBC as a key founding sponsor also commenced in 1990's reaching out to South Asians principally in Chung King Mansions area of Tsim Sha Tsui and recently has expanded to an even more international outreach that includes refugees from Africa as well as Asia.

During 1996 it was deemed prudent to purchase a property for worship in the lead up to the Hong Kong hand-over to Chinese rule. It was a wonderful expression of God's provision that all monies became available as due dates for settlement arrived. Both the pastor's flat and the church office were sold. And in 1997 the

church stopped renting space each Sunday and moved to the Southmark Building, Aberdeen.

At that time there were five Filipino congregations with a total weekly attendance of more than 700. With this great growth, the timing for an autonomous and independent IBC (Filipino) was right.

In parallel to the move to a permanent facility, IBC sought its first direct-hire pastor who came in the summer of 1998. After a long period of "interim" pastoral care, it was a further blessing to finally have a new pastor and enter a more settled period. Sermons enhanced with visual aids and hand-out sheets provided God's word in consistent packages. A weekly newsletter "Think on These Things" with sermon reminders and updates on church happenings replaced the monthly newsletter initiated during the 1990's.

Sunday morning Bible study was developed into LIFE (Living in Faith Everyday) groups to increase adult participation. Also with this aim in mind, the time of the worship service was brought forward and Adult Bible studies held afterwards.

The music ministry, lead by the Pastor's wife, was expanded to a larger choral team and greater musical instrument participation.

Coinciding with the new millennium a Y2K leadership team was formed and an updated Church mission statement was adopted: "To glorify God by multiplying disciples of Jesus Christ." The original Articles of Association were simultaneously updated.

A 40 Days of Purpose campaign was planned in 2004 with large prayer support, many groups involved outreach to colleagues and friends, and a celebratory rally was held at the conclusion of the 40 days.

Children's and youth ministry expanded and challenges in obtaining journeymen in a timely fashion led the church to also directly call a youth pastor in 2002. The youth ministry, as a result, has blossomed and reaches students across Hong Kong who are able to attend Friday night worship sessions in the Northside Ministry Centre on Hollywood Road.

One of the enduring features of IBC has been the itinerant nature of a proportion of the congregation. The majority of expatriate members, with some exceptions, tend to be posted to Hong Kong for 2-3 year assignments. As a result, IBC has the marvellous opportunity to influence communities all around the world when these believers return to their home countries.

Another enjoyable feature of IBC has been regular fellowship activities – potluck lunches and dinners, theme parties, Christmas picnics, tram rides, junk trips, Valentine dinners, and other gatherings. Many enthusiastic members have taken leadership of these activities from the time when the adult fellowship was first called "Pairs and Spares" ("spares" being the spouses of travelling business folk out of town at the time of the fellowship).

Over the years there have been many and varied locations for baptisms ... from borrowed premises at Oi Kwan Road Baptist Church, beach baptisms and swimming pools. There was even a bathtub baptism of one young member.

Mission involvement has been consistent and far-reaching since the church's inception. Over the years, members have travelled and reached out to places such as India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Kazakhstan, Inner Mongolia, Nepal, Tibet, Thailand, Laos, the Philippines, and many regions of China, and other locations as well. It has been the heartfelt desire of members to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are perishing.

As this goes to print (in May, 2006) we are in an intentional interim pastorate with the vision of redefining our church mission and calling a new pastor.

Footnote: This is a brief excerpt of a more detailed history covering IBC's first 30 years plus brief outline to date (that will be posted on IBC website). A more detailed account of the last

15 years is required, so volunteers wishing to undertake this task are warmly invited. In 2008 IBC will, unless the Lord returns in the meantime, celebrate with thanksgiving 50 years of God's bounteous provision.