



*The
First
Thirty
Years*

Sydney
1960-1990

Thirty Years . . .

— that's long enough for any man or woman to make a good-sized addition to the store of life's experiences. To learn many things not known before. To see which ways work, which don't, to understand why. To commit oneself to a new direction, to taste the good fruit of growing understanding and wisdom and accomplishment.

Thirty years. Quite long enough for a young child to grow into adulthood, establish a career, marry, and already have children of his or her own in high school. To notice an ever-widening gap between the sorrows of neighbours round about, and the contrasting blessings of a family which, for generations already, has striven to follow the revealed ways of their Creator.

Thirty years. A mere heartbeat in the long, long history of the Church of God. But long enough for an entire continent to be overspread with congregations of like-minded brethren. Long enough for the message of an entirely new, better civilization to become part of the collective awareness of a nation. Long enough for a solid foundation for that world tomorrow to be laid in the lives of thousands of people.

Long enough for battles to be fought and won — and, true, sometimes not won. Not yet. Long enough to taste both disappointments and the flush of incredible accomplishments. Long enough for a priceless camaraderie to be forged and to be found immovable, even in the crucible of suffering and trial. But not nearly long enough to forget some good friends who began so well with us, and whose presence with us today, were it only possible, would make this day even richer.

But look around — there are a thousand of us here. And thousands more in every part of this country, the abundant fruit of what began here in Sydney on 30th January, 1960: the inaugural Sabbath service of God's Church in Australia, held in the very heart of town, at 30 Martin Place. Thirty people were present. Today we celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of that beginning. We look back with gratitude, yes, and with pride at what God has accomplished through all of us and in all of us over this long-short span of time.

Whether or not we were personally there on the 30th January 1960, that date stands as a kind milestone in our lives. It certainly does in the nearly two thousand year long history of the Church of God. And it will ultimately stand in the annals of the history of this country we love, for those whose brighter future we continue to dedicate ourselves in the Work of God.

Programme

2.00 P.M. Combined service for Sydney area churches

5.30 P.M. Dinner served in the Acacia Room

8.00 P.M. Anniversary Entertainment

Bankstown Civic Centre, February 3, 1990

Buffet Dinner Selection

Beef Stroganoff and Rice

Chicken a la King

Salad Selection

Apple Strudel or Fresh Fruit Salad

Tea, Coffee, Mints

The Sydney Congregation

Soon after its founding on 30th January 1960 under the pastorship of Mr. Gerald Waterhouse, the congregation found its long-term home in the Australian Institute of Builders hall in Alfred Street, Milsons Point. Services were held there for nearly four years, and usually ran from 2.00 P.M. till 5.00 P.M., sometimes longer (and that's not counting fellowship time)!

The hall also served as the site for Sydney's – and Australia's – first Feast of Tabernacles in 1960. Sydney's numbers were augmented by a handful of scattered brethren from throughout the country, and on one day during the Feast the attendance actually hit 103.

In 1961 the Sydney Spokesman Club was founded. It met on Saturday nights in the board room above the hall in the Institute of Builders premises, and a foundation was thereby laid for the growth of coming years.

Because the Institute of Builders hall was unable to comfortably accommodate more than about 150, Holy Day services had to move to new venues. From 1961 onwards, the Feast of Tabernacles moved to Blackheath, and the other annual Holy Days increasingly came to be observed at Anzac House, in College Street, Sydney. In early 1964, weekly Sabbath services were themselves moved to Anzac House, and a little over a year later to Petersham Town Hall. That venue remains fondly remembered to the present as the first church 'home' of a good number of current Sydney members.

After about five years at Petersham, the church moved to the new, quality venue at the Ryde Civic Centre. Apart from temporary forays to Lane Cove, a congregation has remained at Ryde ever since. The agreeable problem of accommodating steadily increasing numbers was solved by founding the separate Sydney South congregation in January, 1974. It met initially at the Belmore Police Boys Club, and has lately moved from its recent home at South Strathfield High School to more suitable facilities.

Meanwhile, steady growth in office functions saw the Sydney office, founded in late 1959, move from the M.L.C. Building to the Combined Insurance Building, both in North Sydney, and from there in 1976 to Burleigh Heads, Queensland. Many Sydney employees, together with their families, moved to Queensland at that time. The dent which their departure caused to Sydney membership numbers was only a temporary set-back in the overall growth of the Church here.

With the construction of the Tabernacle in Blackheath in 1964, a facility became available for the establishment of a local Blue Mountains congregation at the site. Over subsequent years, patterns of demography and church growth have placed the bulk of the Blue Mountains membership progressively closer to the expanding Sydney metropolitan area. The church there moved from Blackheath to Springwood, then Blaxland and finally to Penrith, and now constitutes the third Sydney congregation. Other outgrowths of the Sydney congregation at Newcastle and Wollongong have retained their non-metropolitan identity – Sydney hasn't spread that far yet!

*In a very real sense, **all** of Australia's 41 local congregations, and the more than 5,500 brethren who meet there, together with the churches and work in New Zealand, are the offspring of the Work God founded in Sydney thirty years ago.*

The small, original congregation at the Australian Institute of Builders would have found it impossible to anticipate the kind of growth these thirty years have brought. Are we any better able to comprehend all that will be achieved from our present base by the year 2020?