



Built in 1899, the Acton Baptist Church sits on the corner of Mill and Elgin Streets in Acton. Costing about \$3,500, the church was opened debt free, a most unusual circumstance in any century. A canvass of church members and contributions from the community paid for the building. (Herald photo by Ani Pederian)

New pastor is a lady at 140-year old Baptist church

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer

Being young and female isn't a handicap for the new pastor at the Acton Baptist Church on Mill Street East.

Leading a membership of about 60 Sunday mornings, Jean Stairs, 26, is confident and enthusiastic about her first job as full-time pastor.

"Sometimes it can be to your advantage, and you have openings available to you because you're young or female," she said.

Noting that the church has a long history of hiring young pastors, Miss Stairs said she's pleased to be one of the pastors nurtured to ordination.

In the Baptist church, theology graduates aren't ordained or called Reverend until they serve a year as pastor in a church. The church which the young graduate serves in then ordains him or her.

An attractive, friendly woman with long dark hair, Jean Stairs frequently laughs and smiles and it's easy to see why the Acton Baptist Church wanted her as their pastor after she guest-preached for them in May.

FEW YEARS
Holding a Master's degree in Divinity from McMaster University, where she also did her undergraduate degree in music, Miss Stairs is ambitious. She hopes to do doctoral work as well in a few years.

That's one reason why she

accepted work in Acton. She wanted to be in the Hamilton-Toronto-Niagara region so she could take courses at the theology schools in Toronto or Mill Street East.



Seventeenth in a series

Hamilton. As well, having spent seven years in Hamilton, she has many friends in the area with whom she can get together by car.

Being single in a town made up mostly of young marrieds, because she's found everyone very friendly.

"The church is made up of very understanding, loving people," she said. "They've told me to take a whole week off and go home so I can be with my parents over Christmas."

Touched by their concern, she says she's going home for a

few days after Christmas, but won't take a week. Her family lives in Ottawa, where she was born and raised.

VERY SPECIAL
Currently first vice-president of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec, Miss Stairs' father may become president of the convention next year, she said. That will mean he'll have a hand in her ordination ceremony, making it very special for both of them.

Pastor Stairs has found the religious leaders in Acton to be very co-operative. She appreciates the diversity in faiths, something she acquired while in seminary.

"In my final year, I worked in a Presbyterian setting in Hamilton," Miss Stairs said. "It was right next to a Baptist church and there was lots of co-operation and pooling of resources between the two."

Unfortunately, she says co-operative work between the churches is often the last thing pastors think of because they're so busy with their own church.

The Acton Baptist Church may be new for Pastor Stairs, who took on her post last month, but it's well established in the community.

Originally calling their meeting place the First Esquating Regular Baptist Church, ten men and women gathered back in January, 1842, to form the first congre-

gation. With a fruitful first two years, membership increased by 15 and Rev. John Oakley was acquired as pastor.

OWN CHURCH
Meeting in the home of founding member Samuel Worden, the group finally had a building to call its own in 1858. It was located on Elgin Street nearly opposite the Mill Street location of the present church building. Of sturdy construction, the building lasted until 1947, when it was used as a World War II salvage room before being razed.

That structure was followed by another built on land given to the church by a Sister Steele, which is the currently used church building. On the corner of Mill and Elgin Streets, the Baptist Church was completed and formally dedicated Feb. 18, 1960.

A brick on the side of the church records the date 1899 when the construction of the \$3,500 church began. The church was opened debt-free, a very unusual circumstance even in those days. Money for the building had been raised through the generous response of church members and also through contributions made from outside the membership.

Hardly had the church been completed and admired when a fire in a home next door to the church destroyed the church shed, where the congregation used to leave

Continued on page A7

SANTA'S MAILBAG

Letters and answers pages B6 and B7 and throughout Section C

A special Christmas message

By JOHN M. DRICKAMER
Immanuel Lutheran Church

From BENEDICTUS—Luke 1:68-75
Oh, blessed be our God, the Lord,
For He is come at last
To save His people, keep His word,
And lay our cares to rest.

For God has raised an Horn of grace,
A Savior strong and sure,
The greatest Son of David's race,
Whose kingdom will endure.

For thus He keeps the Word He gave
Through all the holy seers,
The promise that the Lord would save
Us echoed through the years.

For Christ is come to earn the grace
Our fathers, too, believed,
To pay the debt of all our race,
Our guilt has been relieved.

God's holy name confirmed His oath,
His promises of grace,
That are fulfilled in all the growth
Of Christ's new twice-born race.

The Word made flesh is come to earth
To bear our guilt and gall.
The purpose of His joyous birth:
Salvation for us all.

He grants us freedom from the fear
Of every foe and sin.
So we may serve our Father dear
Without a fear within.

We need no longer be afraid
Of God, for all our debt
Was, on the cross, completely paid;
Our needs, completely met.

So we are righteous in His sight
Because of Jesus' death,
And holy living in this light
Begins and flows from faith.



A Christmas Message
from Julian Reed, MPP
December 1981 . . .

"Wishing you a Joyous
Christmas Season and
a New Year filled with
Peace and Hope."

Best Wishes from
Julian, Donna,
Christopher, Robert
and Melanie Reed.



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CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

from the . . .

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Left to Right: Standing - Sharon Greensted, Joan Hewitt, Janet Armstrong, Sandy Hewitt. Seated - Joan Anderson, Paul Armstrong, PCA, Mandy Rogers.

My staff and I would like to wish all our families a
Very Merry Christmas and a Safe Holiday



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