

# TWEEDSMUIR HISTORY



COWAL BRANCH  
WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

2

Chalmers United Church

On July 6th 1853, a public meeting was held at the home of Mr Hugh Fletcher by the settlers of the community and those living across the Thames River to discuss the matter of building a House of God in which to worship. At this meeting the following resolutions were passed.

- (1) That the church was to be built on Mr. Hugh Fletcher's farm.
- (2) That it be 42 feet in length, and 30 feet in width.
- (3) That it be a Presbyterian Church in connection with the Free Presbyterian Church of Canada.

This was the beginning of the first church in this community, which was named Chalmers Church, Dunwich. Prior to that time the settlers had conducted their own service of Praise and Prayer in one another's homes or beneath the shelter of the trees with fallen logs for seats.

The dedication service of the new church took place in 1856. Members of the first Session were, James Graham, Thomas Campbell, Robert Brodie and Angus Fletcher. The first deacons court were Hugh Brodie, Robert Fletcher Hugh McBride and Archibald McNabb. Mr Angus Fletcher was treasurer, and Hugh McBride Secretary.

It was not until ten years after the church was built that a call was given to Rev. John Stuart of Blyth who accepted at a salary of \$400.00. He was inducted on 23 August 1865. In 1866 the congregation built a manse for the Minister. One half acre of land was purchased from Angus Murray (across from the church) on condition that he donate another half acre free. This house, still in good repair, is now occupied by Mr & Mrs Robert Murray, grandson of the late Angus Murray.

Gaelic appears to have been used in Divine Service prior to 1870, as we find a resolution passed that an English sermon be preached in Chalmers Church every Sabbath forenoon, and also at 3 P.M. in Brodie's School.

In 1873 the part of the congregation on the Ekfrid side separated from the Dunwich congregation and became connected with Cooks Church, Caradoc and in 1876 a new connection with Duff's Church, Largie, was formed by the remaining congregation. This connection lasted harmoniously for twenty five years. About this time it was decided that the building should be moved to a more central location, and so it was moved to New Montreal (now Cowal) to a site somewhat North of the present building. It then seemed advisable to have the manse nearer the church, so the old manse was sold, and a new one built just North of the church. This building with many additions and alterations is still in use - being the home of Mr & Mrs Robt Ostrander.

Near the turn of the century the Presbytery of London separated Duff's and Chalmers and after a short period of readjustment Chalmers and McBrides Church, Southwold were made a Pastoral Charge. This arrangement was maintained most satisfactorily for over 60 years. In 1964 rearrangements were made by Presbytery, and Chalmers joined with Dutton and Wallacetown Charge.

Also about the beginning of the century it was felt that the church was no longer adequate. A lot 12 rods square was donated by Mr Daniel Thomson. The land between the old church site and the land donated by Mr. Thomson was purchased, and it was on this site that the present church was erected; the corner stone being laid on 26 June 1901, and the formal opening held in February 1902. The approximate cost of the building was \$4,000.00. Messrs Thomas McCallum, Wm. Carroll and John M. Campbell were elected Trustees.

Chalmers United Church (continued)

In June 1906, Jubilee Services were held to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary. A jubilee Tea was served on the Monday afternoon following the church services and a program held in the evening when Miss Gertrude Huntley (later Green) took part. Again in June 1916, the congregation celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the dedication of the church. Public services were held on two Sundays, June 18th and 25th., and also two days during the week. Rev. D. Radcliffe, Moderator of the Synod of Hamilton, and Rev. A. L. Geggie of Toronto were the special speakers for the occasion.

About this time the automobile began to be used, making it easier for the Minister to get around to visit his congregations, but it was many years before it was used in the Winter months. Up until 1919, the minister's home "the manse", had been at Cowal. However it was felt that a more central location might be of advantage to the minister. Consequently, in April 1920, a house owned by Mr John Telfer of Lawrence Station was purchased by Chalmers and McBrides. The former manse was sold to Mr. Alex McLachlin who lived in it for several years. Rev. C. A. Malcolm was the first minister to occupy the manse at Lawrence Station. The two congregations divided equally the purchase price of Lawrence Manse.

In 1925, when the United Church was formed, the congregation was considerably weakened when a number of members voted to remain with the Presbyterian Church, and withdrew their membership. Rearrangements were found necessary, and the former Methodist Church of Lawrence Station joined with Chalmers and McBrides to form a three point Charge. These three congregations remained together as a charge until 1964.

Hydro was installed in the church about 1938 to replace the gas lighting system. About the same time the sheds, which were no longer in use were sold to W. J. Campbell and Carroll Brothers. In 1940 the church was redecorated, and reopening services held when many former members were present.

Nineteen hundred and fifty six was a memorable year for Chalmers congregation. On June 10th and June 17th., Centennial Services were held in the church. Rev. R. B. Craig of 1st United Church, St Thomas, and Rev. Turnbull, Moderator of London Conference preached to large congregations. The Vanneck Glee Club, the Page Quartette, and Melbourne Choir added greatly to the service of praise. Many former members returned to worship and have fellowship with us. During the week a reception was held when many former ministers and their families, as well as former members were present. James Medlyn of St. Thomas arranged a program for the evening. A Hammond Electric Organ was installed at this time to commemorate the occasion.

An Electric Heating System was installed in 1965 to replace the wood and coal Furnace. In 1966 the Church has been redecorated and the floors refinished.

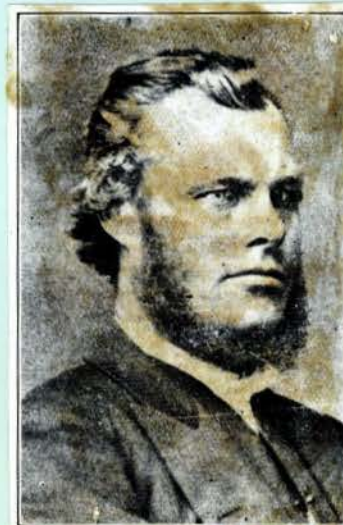
1966



Chalmers Church Ministers

1865 - 1966

Rev. John Stuart	1865 - 1870
Rev. Malcolm McKenzie	1871 - 1873
Rev. Alexander Urquhart	1876 - 1889
Rev. Alexander McKay	1890 - 1891
Rev. John McNeil	1894 - 1900
Rev. S. Lawrence	1901 - 1907
Rev. Donald McKay	1907 - 1917
Rev. G. Munroe	1917 - 1919
Rev. Chas. Malcolm	1920 - 1926
Rev. Neil Campbell	1926 - 1929
Rev. R. Watson Langdon	1929 - 1937
Rev. O. Glen Taylor	1937 - 1943
Rev. T. C. Wilkinson	1943 - 1949
Rev. Bruce Guy	1949 - 1953
Rev. J. Harrower	1953 - 1957
Mr. A. G. Pease	1957 - 1958
Rev. Charles Badger	1958 - 1960
Rev. C. A. Dukelow	1961 - 1962
Mr. Earl Burr	1962 - 1964
Rev. J. W. Shaver	1964



REV. JOHN STEWART  
First minister—1865-1870.



Rev. J. Harrower  
1953 - 1957



Rev. Donald McKay  
1907-1917



Rev. G. Munro  
1917-1919



Rev. Charles Malcolm  
1920-1926



Rev. Neil A. Campbell  
1926-1929



Rev. R. Watson Langdon  
1929-1937



Rev. O. Glen Taylor  
1937-1943



Rev. T. C. Wilkinson  
1943-1949



Rev. Bruce Guy  
1949-1953

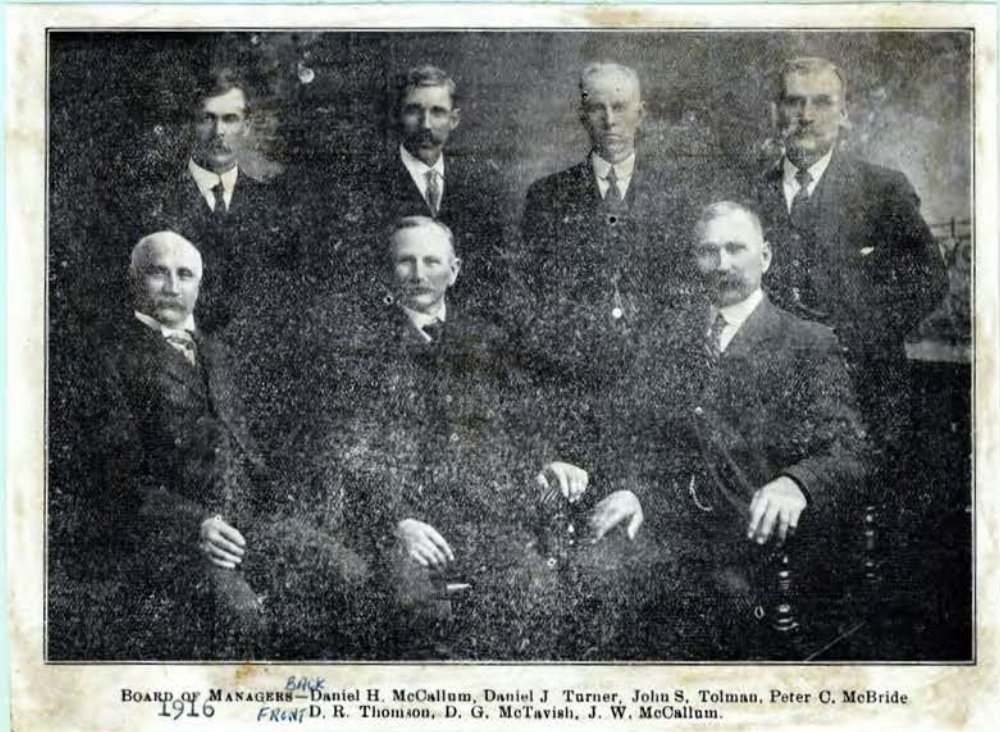
Chalmers United Church

Board of Stewards

It is impossible to name all those who have served on this Board down through the years, but all have given of their time and ability to look after the temporal affairs of the Church.

The present officers are, - Mrs Humphrey Campbell, Mrs I.L. MacAdam and Messrs Archie McTavish, Gordon Little, Clifford Campbell, Ronald Campbell, Jamey Campbell and Gordon Campbell.

Present Trustees are - Archie McTavish, Horace Guest, Angus Campbell.



1952 BOARD OF MANAGEMENT AND TRUSTEES



Standing, left to right: Gordon Little, Horace Guest, Donald Carroll, Ronald Campbell, Archie McTavish.  
 Seated, left to right: Mrs. Humphrey Campbell, Hugh Carroll and Mrs. R. D. Campbell.  
 Absent: George Smith, congregational secretary.

Chalmers United Church

Service of Praise

It was not until the beginning of the Century that a musical instrument was allowed in the Church. Before that time, a precentor with his tuning fork led the service of Praise. The first precentor was Mr. Thomas Gordon; and later, Mr. D. A. McNabb held the office for many years. With the advent of the Organ in 1902 an Organist was required. We wish to pay special tribute to Mrs Margaret McTavish, who was appointed the first Organist, and who served in that capacity with great faithfulness for the greater part of fifty years.

A Hammond Electric Organ was installed in 1956, which added greatly to the service. Mr John Fletcher, Mr John Patterson, Mrs Thomas Gervis, Mrs Bruce Thomson and Mrs C. Chamberlain have been some of the choir leaders.

Some of the Organists who have served through the years have been, - Mrs (Rev) D. McKay, Miss Alice Little, Mrs (Rev) W. Langdon, Mr John Hatton, Mrs Bruce Thomson, Miss Margaret Clark, Miss Jean Evans, Miss Reba Crosson, Mr Melvin Smith, Miss Margaret Little, Miss Helen Patterson, Miss Patricia Campbell, Miss Sharon Carroll, Miss Dorothy Carroll, Mrs C. Chamberlain. Mrs John Smith is our present Organist and Choir Leader.



CHOIR—Back Row—Jennie Carroll, Donald McBride, John Patterson (Leader), Anna Belle Murray, Mrs. T. Gervis, J. Fletcher, Lena Whitelock, Barbara McCallum, Jennie McCallum, Mrs. McKay (Organist), Catherine McCallum, Margaret Patterson, Flossie Murray.

Chalmers Church Elders 1856 - 1966

- 1856 Angus Fletcher  
James Graham  
Thomas Campbell  
Robert Brodie
- 1868 Robert Thomson  
Robert Fletcher  
Thomas Gordon  
Robert B. Campbell
- 1870 David Crosson  
Gilbert Hyndman
- 1888 Colin Campbell  
Peter McNabb
- 1894 D. J. Campbell  
D. A. McNabb
- 1900 Thomas McCallum  
Wm. Carroll  
John M. Campbell
- 1933 Duncan McTavish  
Jacob Beecroft
- 1938 D. E. Carroll  
J. D. Thomson
- 1942 Gordon Little
- 1954 Lloyd Smith  
Wm. J. Campbell



ANGUS FLETCHER  
First Elder

Elders 1966

- D. E. Carroll      Sec.
- Gordon Little
- Lloyd Smith
- Wm. J. Campbell

1956

THE SESSION



Left to right: W. J. Campbell, Lloyd Smith, Rev. J. Harrower, Gordon Little and D. E. Carroll.

In 1943 Rev. T.C. Wilkinson became the minister. During his stay, many young people joined the church and union communion was revived. Although many young men were involved in World War II, all returned unscathed, thankfully.

In 1949 Rev. Wilkinson moved to a church in Belmont and Rev. Bruce Guy from a mission field in Alberta, took over. Rev. Guy started vocational bible schools on the charge. In June of 1953 Rev. Guy accepted an invitation from Ilderton. Rev. J. Harrower of Ben Miller took his place. In 1956 Chalmers celebrated its centennial and Rev. Harrower retired from the ministry in 1957.

Unable to find an ordained minister for the charge, Mr. A.G. Pease, a mature student minister very capably looked after the charge for one year. From 1958 to 1960 Rev. Charles Badger, of Saskatchewan, served the charge, retiring first to St. Thomas, then to the minister's retirement home in Beamsville.

The next minister for one year was Rev. Cecil A. Dukelow. From 1961 to 1964 Mr. J. Earl Burr, B.A., another mature student, looked after the charge until Rev. J.N. Shaver of Dutton took over.

In 1964 the Lawrence Station charge was traumatically broken up by Presbytery. Chalmers was put with Dutton and Wallacetown, much against their will and McBrides and Lawrence were put on a new Southwold charge which included Shedden, Frome and Iona. In 1965 the Dunwich Pastoral charge was formed to include Cowal, Dutton, and Wallacetown. (In 1966 Lawrence church was closed, McBride's and Iona broke away from the United church and became Christian Fellowship Churches and both are active today.)

In 1967 Rev. Shaver left for St. Catherine's and Rev. Murray Barnet moved from the mission field in Saskatchewan. His pastorate was a very successful one as he had the patience and perseverance to get the Dunwich charge to work together. In 1969 a new Manse was built in Dutton. In 1975 Rev. Barnet resigned to become full time director at Pearce-Williams Christian Centre.

In 1975 Rev. David Northey moved from Labrador to the Dunwich charge. The windows in the church were releaded and covered with storm windows. In 1980 a kitchen and washrooms were built at the rear of the church.

In 1980 Rev. Northey accepted a call to Moncton and Rev. Ernest Fellows took over, having spent twelve years in Newfoundland.

In 1981 Chalmers celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding with two special services. One was held on the original site of the first church on the farm now owned by Belldon Farms, as an outdoor service complete with the minister Rev. A.G. Pease (1957) arriving in a horse drawn buggy. The other service was held at the Church.

Update information supplied by Donald Carroll.  
1983





View of Chalmers United Church from the back showing the addition of the new kitchen and washrooms which was made in 1980. The new part is on the right with the vestry on the left side.

Picture taken in 1984.



Chalmers Church, Cowal, as it appeared in 1902 when it was first built. Note the wide front steps, fence, and the lack of trees.



This is the original church which Daniel Patterson bought and used as a barn. It was torn down and the remains burned around 1980.

Chalmers United Church

Sabbath School

The Sunday School has always been a vital part of the church work at Chalmers, when devoted men and women have worked faithfully to interpret the Word of God to the children of the community.

We find that in 1866 four Sabbath Schools were organized and carried on under the supervision of the Session. Two were held on the North side of the river, at Riverside and at Melbourne; and two on the South side, one at the church, and one at the junction of the Townline and the 5th Concession. Owing to the difficulty in travelling, the Sabbath Schools were closed in the Winter months in those days. In the church the Sabbath School was held at 10 a.m. prior to the Church service. Many of our people remember walking two or more miles to Sunday School on Sunday morning. In later years it was found more satisfactory to hold the classes immediately following the Church Service, but at the present time it is held immediately prior to the Church Service. For many years now Sunday School has been held in the Winter months as well as in the Summer. The New Curriculum was introduced in 1965.

The year 1966 finds the Sunday School self sustaining and well attended under the faithful leadership of Mr. W. J. Campbell, as Superintendent, and his Assistant, Donald Campbell. Some of the Superintendents through the years have been; Messrs D. A. McNabb John Fletcher, John M. Campbell, D. E. Carroll, John D. Thomson, Lloyd Smith, and W. J. Campbell.

1956

TEACHERS AND SUNDAY SCHOOL OFFICERS



Standing, left to right: Margaret McTavish, Mrs. R. D. Campbell, Mrs. W. J. Campbell, Alice Campbell, Ann Patterson. Seated, left to right: Donald Carroll, W. J. Campbell, Eric Guest. Absent: Mrs. Len Carroll and Mrs. Robert Murray.