

## History of Our Churches

### Catholic Church

Early settlers in South Surrey included Ed and Jeanne Dupraz in the White Rock area, who were concerned about not having a Catholic Church or religious education for their children. They and other Catholic families turned to the Oblate Missionaries who had been serving the Native people at the little St. Anne's Church on the Semiahmoo Reserve. The first Star of the Sea Church came into being in a log house at the corner of Pacific Avenue and Fir Street in 1923.

In Crescent Beach, Vancouver's Archbishop Duke had been offering Mass in his summer home. By 1942, the congregation had become too large to be accommodated in his home on the beach, and he had the Holy Cross Church built on Beecher Street. During the summer the Archbishop would offer Mass in the church every morning. The church later became a mission church of the Star of the Sea Parish. One Mass each weekend is still offered at the Holy Cross Church, which is now one of three churches which make up the Parish.

— *Source: Parish History, 50th Celebration Star of the Sea Parish, Surrey, B.C., 1996*

### Anglican Church

The Anglican Parish of St. Mark and Ascension had its organized beginnings in Crescent Beach in 1924, although some land had been pre-empted for the church in 1860. With the arrival of early settlers, Bishop Sillitoe became the first Bishop of New Westminster in 1880 and in 1881 ordained Rev. William Bell as Deacon, assigning him to South Surrey. Reverend Bell served until 1901. Services were held in Surrey Centre, Hall's Prairie, and Nicomekl, as well as intermittently at Mud Bay, Port Kells and Kensington.

After completion of the new railway route through Crescent and White Rock in 1909, settlement increased in both places. Captain W. Williams built an hotel on the beach in Crescent in 1912 and summer homes began to appear in greater number. Rev. W. E. Gilbert of Surrey Centre held occasional services for summer visitors in the hotel prior to the first World War.

As more settlers moved to south Surrey after the war, those in Crescent and the surrounding areas felt the need to organize a community church. In 1920, at Captain Williams' home, a Board of Managers was elected. Plans for a simple structure of 44 feet by 22 feet were drawn up and accepted in 1921. Construction began on the site donated by Captain Williams with Mr. Wickham, the designer doing most of the work. That site is where the present Crescent United Church stands. In 1922, the Crescent Union Church was dedicated, free of debt. Although a community effort, the deed was made out in the name of 'Church and Manse Board of the Presbyterian Church of Canada'. A new board was elected comprised of both Presbyterians and Anglicans. The Anglicans used the building for services in the afternoons on the first and third Sundays; the Presbyterians the others. The Sunday school was a union of both congregations with teachers from both denominations.

After the union of Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches in 1925, the United Church of Canada gained control of the building although the Anglican and United congregations worked harmoniously. The Ladies' Circle was composed of members from both denominations. A joint Board of Managers was made up of four Anglican members: Mrs. R. C. Roberts, Mr. L. Laronde, Mr. Elliott, Mrs. G. I. Triggs and four from the United Church.

In 1931, Anglicans met in Mrs. Robert's home until the Anglican Church of the Ascension was built on McKenzie Street and dedicated July 23, 1931. In 1933 it was decided to provide Sunday School for the Ocean Park children in the Ocean Park Community Hall with Mrs. Laronde and Mrs. Broatch as teachers.

From 1947 to 1953, Mr. Tom Charles also taught Sunday School in Ocean Park and noted that United Church children attended with the Anglican children at that time. The Ocean Park Community Association charged the Anglican Sunday School 25 cents for their use of the hall for one hour, but this decision was rescinded a year later to state that

"local religious groups be allowed to use the hall free on Sundays."

Scout meetings were held in Crescent at the home of the scoutmaster Mr. Walter Beare. The name of Crescent was changed to Crescent Beach in 1937 by vote of the residents.

By 1957 the need for a church hall and better Sunday School facilities in Ocean Park was noted. Mrs. Hill donated a lot on Olympic View St. (131st St.) near North Bluff with the proviso that a building be erected to serve the needs of the Ocean Park district. Just about the same time the United Church congregation at Crescent Beach was considering building a large edifice to replace the church built in 1921.

The sale and removal of the church building to a new site was offered. After deliberation and negotiations, the Anglican Synod purchased the building and paid for its move to the Olympic St. site. The first service was held there in November 30th, 1957.

As the population grew a chancel was added and morning services scheduled. In 1966, with the proceeds of the sale of Olympic St. church to become a private home, a gift from the Diocese, and congregational support, the new St. Mark's Church on 20th Avenue was opened. The Parish was incorporated as the Parish of St. Mark and Ascension in 1968.

Miss Pickering, Mrs. Terrell, Mrs. B. Meadows were organists at the little church on Olympic. A youth choir was formed, helped by Granny Anne Hamilton and Mrs. Jonnie Thorn. In 1961 a Wurlitzer organ was donated by Mr. and Mrs. Leonard Stacey as a memorial to the servicemen of the Second World War. It was replaced in 1981 with the Allen Digital Computer Organ.

— *Source: Notes on the History of the Parish of St. Mark and Ascension by H.S. Hamilton, M.D. 1981*

### United Church

After the First World War there were enough people in the Crescent area to consider organizing a church congregation. In 1920, Dr. G. A. Wilson, Presbyterian Superintendent of Missions, held a meeting in Crescent Lodge, the home of Captain and Mrs. Watkin Williams. The Board of Managers were elected: Capt. Williams, Chairman, Mr. W. B. Wickham, Mr. G. P. Tisdale, Mr. R. Gillespie, Mrs. W. Patterson, Mrs. Albert Berry, and Mrs. W. Williams, Sec. Treasurer.

Mr. Wickham was authorized to draw up plans for a church building. During the summer, services were held at Camp Alexandra and in the fall, arrangements were made to use Crescent School for afternoon worship. Although it was a community effort, and included both Anglicans and Presbyterians, the deed was made out to the Church and Manse Board of the Presbyterian Board of Canada (1921). In December, Mr. Louis Laronde, an Anglican, became the Chairman of the Board of Managers. For the building period until 1922, and for the next 10 years, the church was shared by Anglicans and United Churchmen.

When the Anglican Church was built in Crescent in 1931, the final division of monies was made. In 1936, a Lych Gate was built on the path leading to the entrance to the Church as a memorial to Capt. Williams who had played such an important part in the founding of the Crescent Church. In 1946, Mrs. T. W. Johnson was appointed organist, a position she held with distinction for 25 years.

In 1952, Crescent became an independent congregation of the United Church. In 1955, the old church was moved to the back of the lot at a cost of \$700 to make way for building a new church which was dedicated in 1956. The Lych Gate could not be used with the reoriented entrance as it was set in concrete. The old church building was sold to the Anglicans for \$1500 and moved to Olympic Avenue, Ocean Park.

Reverend G. Affleck was inducted as the first full time minister of Crescent United Church in 1960.

— *Source: Our First Fifty Years Crescent United Church 1921-1971 compiled by Miss N. K. O'Neill and Mr. O. M. Sanford.*

— *Researched by Shirley Stonier*

