

Mountain South Gate Church's 65th Anniversary

The South Gate Presbyterian Church will celebrate its 65th Anniversary in October of this year. The Reverend Dr. Mel Bailey founded the church in 1954. Working for the Canadian Pacific Express, he contemplated a career in journalism but his family's religious tradition predisposed him to follow in the footsteps of his four uncles, all church ministers. In 1949, with his vision of a Presbyterian church on Hamilton Mountain, he was appointed student minister for a congregation in Buchanan Hall, (the former Barton Township Hall) on Upper James Street. From these humble beginnings, the South Gate Presbyterian Church was built in 1954, the year that Mel graduated with his Masters of Divinity from Knox College in Toronto. His commitment to the church and the community was so strong that he went door to door inviting people to attend the new mountain church where he ministered for the next 31 years. The church is one block north of Norwood Park School.

Mel's passion for writing and history induced him to write and co-author over twenty books on local history, including his dream of publishing a series entitled, Dictionary of Hamilton Biography which he edited. As founding member of Head-of -the-Lake and Mountain Heritage Societies, Mel was inducted into the Hamilton Gallery of Distinction in 1994.

After 65 years, The South Gate Church remains very active in the community. In addition to looking after the community's faith, the church supports: the Neighbour-to-Neighbour food bank with regular food collections; the Eva Rothwell Centre with regular donation of clothes and appliances. The church also hosts regular meetings of the Hamilton Branch of the Canadian Hard of Hearing Association; the Y Day Care Camps providing affordable child care for low income families; and weekly meetings of the Girl Guide and Brownies. On the first Saturday of each month the church serves a tasty breakfast. Everyone is welcome.



Mel Bailey's daughter, January Will, has carried on her father's love of history and as The South Gate Church historian, she knows that her father would be proud of the effort to continue his legacy. . She would like everyone to know that the month of October will be filled with exciting events to celebrate the 65th anniversary:- a catered dinner on Saturday October 25th at 6 p.m. in the church hall, a reunion of past members who have moved away, a special Sunday service with a tea and anniversary cake to follow. Community members are invited to be part of the celebrations by writing stories about TheSouth Gate Church and its long standing contributions made to the Hamilton Mountain Community.

The Reverend Dr. Mel Bailey

Mountain Memories by historian Robert Williamson for the Hamilton Mountain Heritage Society (hamiltonheritage.ca) appears monthly

(August 2014)