

Historical Sketch of the Congregation

The history of the Presbyterian Church in the vicinity of Motherwell dates back to the early "forties" when the late Dr. Skinner, then in charge of the congregations of English Settlement and Bethel, in the township of London, extended his missionary labors as far north as Downie and Fullarton, preaching in private dwellings and rude school-houses—"enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

The history of the congregation of Motherwell began at a later date. The early settlers in this community worshipped for the greater part, in the Downie church, now known as Avonbank. Faithfully, on Sabbath days, and often in bare feet, these pioneers trudged the long miles, by forest roads, to the Downie services, joyful in the privileges of the House of God of which they had long been deprived. At that time Downie church was associated with St. Marys under the successive pastorates of Rev. John Proudfoot and Rev. William Caven, both, at a later date connected with Knox College. In 1856, St. Marys having grown stronger and desiring the entire services of one minister, the connection between St. Marys and Downie was severed, and Mr. Caven remained with St. Marys. This afforded an opportunity to rearrange the work so as to better serve the requirements of the growing settlements in Downie and Fullarton. Accordingly, in 1857, a petition signed by thirty-five members of Downie congregation resident in Fullarton, was presented to Presbytery at a meeting held in Toronto, asking to be erected into a separate congregation. This petition was granted and the congregation of Mitchell Road was organized, now known as Motherwell.



In the same year the first church building on the Mitchell Road was begun. It was a frame structure and considered a fine one at that time. It was not completed till 1858 and was then formally opened.

The first session consisted of Messrs. John Caven, Robert Bain, James Brown and James Watson, all but the first named ordained in 1858.