

Ambleside Baptist Church Profile

Meeting Place: St. Matthias Anglican Church
6210 - 188 St. N.W. Edmonton

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Board Chair: Mas Kobayashi
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Affiliation: Baptist General
Conference

History:

Ambleside Baptist Church is an off-shoot of Ellerslie Road Baptist Church, which was previously incorporated as Lansdowne Baptist Church in the 1970s. In September 1993 the Lansdowne Baptist Church congregation moved to their new building on Ellerslie Road and became the Ellerslie Road Baptist Church.

A few families decided to stay in the Lansdowne location. An independent congregation was organized by Virgil Olson, then District Executive Minister of the Baptist General Conference in Alberta (BGCA) with the first meeting on August 8, 1993. The clear intent was to subsequently become organized as a member church within the BGCA. Other people from the area, including international students from a nearby university housing complex (former Michener Park), joined the congregation. Virgil Olson served as Pastor for the first few months. Richard Emilson, a recent seminary graduate then served as Interim Pastor.

Paul Nelson became the first permanent Pastor starting May 1, 1994. The church was organized as the Lansdowne Community Church (LCC) with 22 charter members, and an elected Board of four deacons. The LCC shared the building with the Lansdowne Chinese Baptist Church (LCBC), who owned half of the property. In January 1998, LCC entered into a rental agreement with LCBC. In November 1999, Pastor Nelson resigned due to health concerns. Doug Warkentin served as Interim Pastor from March 2000 until June 30, 2001.

From September 9, 2001 to 2019 the church met at the Riverbend Community Centre. In September 2001 the membership voted to change the name from LCC to Riverbend Baptist Church (RBC). At the annual general meeting in February 2012 the congregation voted to change the name to Ambleside Baptist Church (ABC) since we were purchasing property in the Ambleside community and intended to eventually build a worship facility there.

Journey:

Lyle Richards began serving as Pastor on July 15, 2001. Over an 18-month period following the move to Riverbend the attendance was a steady average of well above 80. After Lyle Richards resigned in September 2005 to start a new church plant which had no affiliation with the BGCA, attendance dropped to the 45-65 range.

Ken Bender served as Interim Pastor for the period of May 1, 2006 to mid-August 2006. Robert Sandford served as Pastor for nine years from November 15, 2006 to July 2015. Attendance reached an average high of 82 in 2013, but by 2015 had dropped below 60.

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During that time a Building Fund drive and the sale of a portion of the Ambleside property to developers in 2012 allowed complete payment of the mortgage, as well as some servicing done in preparation for building Phase I of a worship facility. Between 2009 and 2013, at least one special event per summer was hosted by ABC in the Ambleside community. Events included water bottle distribution, community BBQs, and a Summer Fun Carnival. The church property is a fully serviced piece of land in a strategic location, in a community where no evangelical church existed.

With building plans in place, a sod-turning ceremony was held on the Ambleside church property on June 24, 2012. At the Annual General Meeting in February, 2014 the Board reported that we were unable to proceed with Phase I of the building project. They were now looking at alternatives, including building on a smaller scale, amalgamating with another church, or selling the property and buying an older building.

Following the resignation of Pastor Sandford, the church was without a pastor until Ken Bender began serving as Transitional Pastor from February to October 2016. In June 2016, a motion was passed to set up a task force comprised of BGCA leadership, the ABC Transitional Pastor and two Board members, and representatives of interested BGCA churches, to develop a plan to plant a church in the Ambleside area, but nothing concrete came out of that.

Lloyd Alstad became the Transitional Pastor beginning July 15, 2017, at which time the Board began talks with another BGCA church with the possibility of merging and starting a building project on the property at Ambleside. In March 2019, the church moved from the Riverbend Community Center to Chartwell Wescott Retirement Residence which is just across the church property in Ambleside. This move allowed the church to establish a presence in the community. Sunday worship attendance was about 40 to 45, and an average of 15 attended the Wednesday night Bible study and prayer meeting, including some of the residents.

Present situation:

When the COVID pandemic started in March 2020, The Chartwell Wescott closed its doors to any form of gathering. ABC was able to meet in person every other week at the Ellerslie Rugby Park from July 12 to December 2020. Following that, the church was able to make a rental arrangement with St. Matthias Anglican Church located at 6210 - 188 St. N.W. Edmonton to worship at their facility. ABC has been worshipping there in person every Sunday since January 3, 2021 with an average attendance of about 20, with the service videotaped for online viewing.

On January 31, 2021 the congregation approved a recommendation from the Board to secure a mortgage of up to \$800,000 to begin a building project on the church property at Ambleside. The total cost of the proposed building is approximately \$1.7M and will include a sanctuary with seating for 175, a large multipurpose room, two large classrooms that could be subdivided, two offices, kitchen facilities, and washrooms. It is anticipated that building will be completed by December 2021.