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Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church celebrates 75th

A King church is marking a milestone anniversary, and a journey that dates back three-quarters of a century.

It took five years to drain, but after that the Holland Marsh was ready for farmers. In 1934, Canadian representative of the Netherlands Emigration Foundation, John Snor, encouraged 18 Dutch families to call Holland Marsh home. They formed the nucleus of an expanding and prosperous farming community that was soon to be called Ansnorveldt ? a combination of the Dutch words ?aan? and ?veld? and the name Snor, meaning ?On Snor's Field.?

A good number of these early settlers came from a reformed church background. These early settlers arrived in June and on July 15, 1934, four people attended the first worship service in the chicken coop that John Rupke built. The sermon was read by Mr. A. Havinga from the text Genesis 32:9-12, where God tells Jacob to continue in his journey to settle in the land of Canaan because ?I will make you prosper.?

By Christmas of that year, 50 people would gather in one of the homes twice on Sunday for worship. Every few months the minister from the mother-church (First CRC of Hamilton) would come to conduct the service of Baptism and Holy Communion.

As time moved on, more and more people began to arrive from the Christian Reformed Churches in Hamilton and Chatham to build a house, work the land, and begin farming.

The church continued to grow, in numbers as well as financially as the Marsh developed and vegetables began to be a sought-after commodity.

On March 23, 1938, the church was officially organized and named the Holland Marsh Christian Reformed Church, affiliated with Christian Reformed Church in North America, with a total of 88 members.

Through the years the church continued to grow, necessitating a new church to be established on the Springdale side of the Marsh in 1952 and in Newmarket in 1955. A new building was completed in 1960 at the current site on Dufferin Street.

The congregation has been blessed with nine pastors. Their current pastor, Rev. Richard Bodini, just celebrated his third anniversary of service in March.

The church's anniversary weekend will be held April 27 and 28.

?God has been faithful to his people in the Marsh for 75 years and we are thankful for those who grew up, who passed through, who have had a connection, or special memories of being part of the ?muck land' church through vacation Bible school, girls' and boys' club, or members,? Rev. Bodini said.

The weekend begins with a Saturday evening potluck celebration meal (supplied by church members) at the Holland Marsh District Christian School (next door to the church, 18935 Dufferin Street, Newmarket). Visitors will enjoy skits, stories, greetings from some previous pastors, a video, pictures, song, and good food beginning at 5 p.m. The Sunday 10 a.m. worship service will focus on a theme from Psalm 78, which remembers and celebrates God's faithfulness and instruction to teach the next generations about the Lord.

?We are so thankful for the broader community beyond the limits of the Ansnorveldt signs that this little church has touched ? those in King Township, Newmarket, Bradford, and beyond. We look forward to sharing God's gifts for many more years to come,? Bodini added.

For more information contact the church at 905-775-7291 or hollandmarshcrc.ca.