

# MISSIONAL ROOTS OF THE *Chinese church*

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I WAS A PASTOR AT SCARBOROUGH CHINESE BAPTIST CHURCH (SCBC) for almost ten years. I always heard rumours that our mother church, Toronto Chinese Baptist Church was given as a gift by the Hungarian Church. I had no idea what they meant by this.

After a little internet research, I stumbled upon some newspaper articles. What I found startled me.

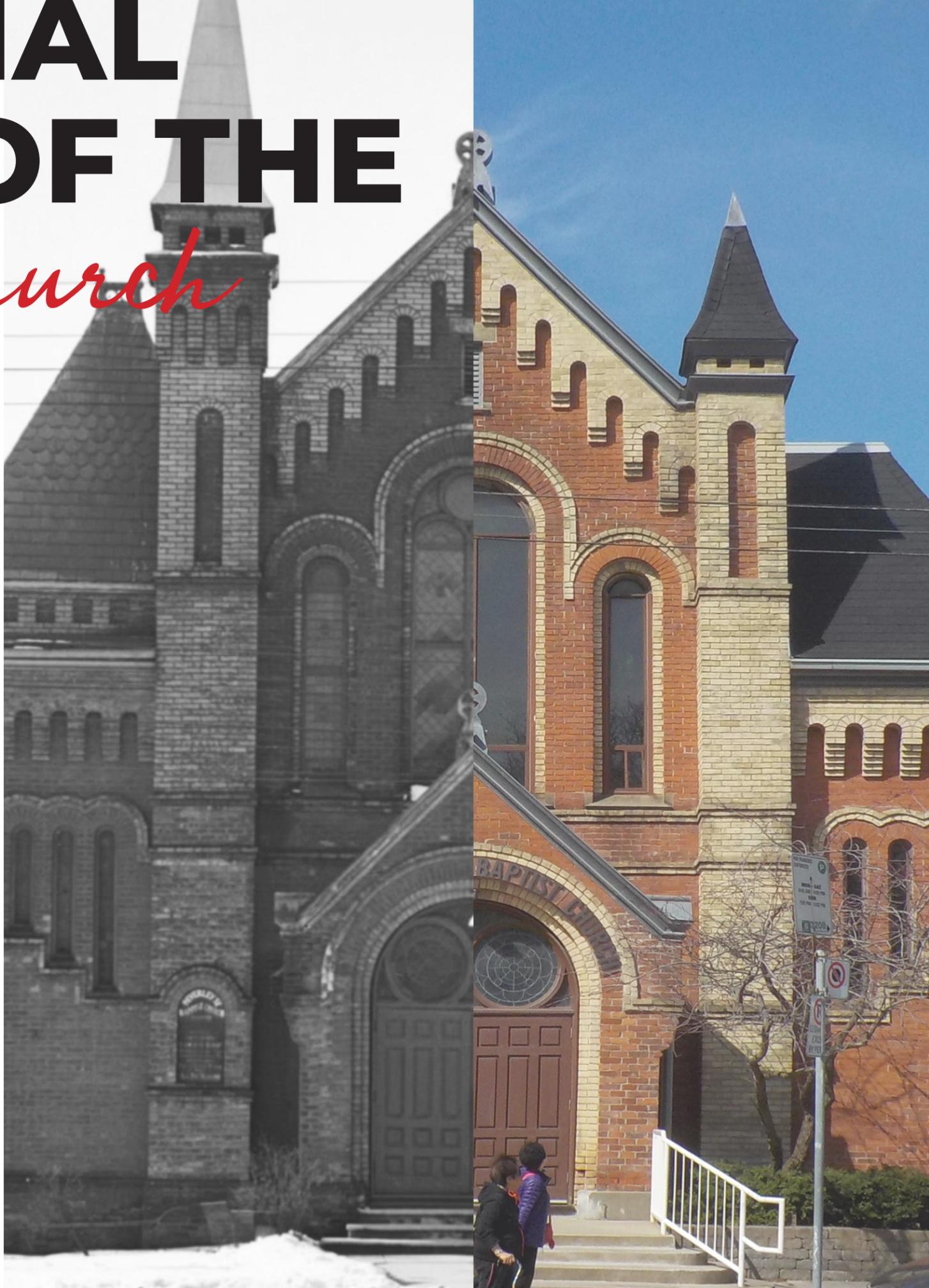
In 1886, Beverley Street Baptist Church (BSBC) was planted as a mission church by Jarvis Street Baptist. At its height, Beverley was around 660 people but went through a crisis. Most of their congregation had moved away and they were down to about 30 people (Wice, 1962).

What were they supposed to do?

They had a choice: close down their doors or continue on.

They decided to continue on.

Now, this ancient red-brick building at Beverley and Sullivan Street is as busy as the most successful suburban church. They have four congregations going full steam with twice Sunday services and a combined membership of nearly 700 (Wice, 1962).



**“They opened their doors and their hearts.”**

How did this happen? Beverley Street Baptist started paying attention to the neighborhood. They started to notice all the new immigrants to Canada. They opened their doors and their hearts.

For a great many years it was just the English speaking congregation meeting there. During WWII the district changed, but it was the great influx of immigrants in 1945 and later that really settled the church's future. Besides the “language” congregations now there, Beverley street has housed four others: Czechoslovakian, Hungarian, Swedish, and German. All eventually went their own way. Three of them bought buildings formerly used by a United Church, a future Pentecostal church and a Jewish synagogue. Now the Estonian congregation is about to leave its old home, graduating to a building in the central east end. The spirit of Beverley street persists, however, as it seems likely that an Italian congregation will move into the building. As well, a burgeoning Chinese community is growing nearby. It will be exciting to see what God does next! (Wice, 1962)

So how did we get here? In 1960, there was a large influx of new immigrants from Hong Kong. The English pastor, Joseph McDermott began to notice the growing Chinese population. BSBC decided to plant a Chinese congregation. In 1967, the Chinese worship began with only 12 people in the basement. In 1968, they called Andrew Wong be their pastor. Through various ministries, such as Bible studies and ESL classes, the church grew quickly. In just four years, by 1972, the Chinese church took over Beverley Street Baptist Church and the church became Toronto Chinese Baptist Church (TCBC).



TCBC planted a number of churches and those churches planted other churches. Thousands and thousands of people have called these Chinese churches their home.

I am touched by a number of things when I think about this story.

Beverly Street Baptist demonstrated a willingness to welcome people who didn't look like them, think like them, or talk like them. This could not have been easy or natural. Yet, BSBC welcomed new immigrants in the name of Jesus Christ. They also gave them the freedom to plant their own churches with little control.

**“They had been practicing a life of sacrificial love and community for a number of years.”**

Something had to die in order for something to be born again. I am not sure what was going through BSBC heart and mind as they sold the building to TCBC. Were they celebrating? Were they lamenting? In my heart, I see them celebrating. BSBC had a tradition—a good one. They had been practicing a life of sacrificial love and community for a number of years. Giving up their church to the Chinese church was a natural outpouring of their communal love and habits.

I realize that the roots of the Chinese church came from a church that started to pay attention to their neighbourhood. Thousands of people were impacted because this church opened their hearts and their doors. We are excited to see what the Chinese church will do next with their passions, gifts, and resources.

Who is God calling you to welcome in your community?

**REFERENCE:**

Wice, Aubrey. *Church in Action: One Church... Four Languages.* The Telegram, September 6, 1962