
Foreword

I warmly invite you to look back at the past of our church life in a series of glimpses which focus on memorable features of former years.

Looking back helps to keep us humble, for our church life did not begin with us. It was fashioned by people of the past. Helped by God, they worshipped and worked where we now serve our Lord Jesus. Before we arrived on the scene, others had humbly and faithfully played their part. Others have laboured and we have entered their labours.

Looking back helps to keep us hopeful, for, from unpromising beginnings, the church grew to be a great influence in the town of Lisburn. Many people, young and old, have been truly saved, and after their conversion, baptised and biblically counselled.

God is still the same today, though the world of the early twenty-first century is so altered from the world of the nineteen-twenties when the church was first founded. We safely entrust the future of the church to Him, for no problem of the future will be too hard for our All Sufficient God.

As a pastor who has had the privilege of returning to be involved in the current chapter of the church's life, I am grateful to the author for the glimpses he has given. This little book is not only a good read, it is a good reference to be carefully kept for future days.

G A C Cardwell
May 2001

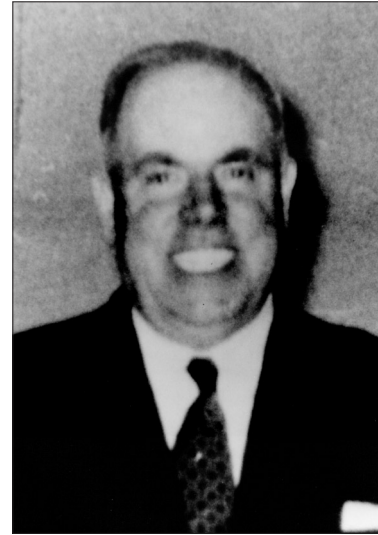
Cover photos show the original Lisburn Baptist Church building in Tonagh Avenue; how we remember it as our church hall; and the current church building in Longstone Street.



Pastor A. E. G. Priestley



Pastor Joshua Thompson



Pastor John A. McCrea



Pastor John J. Baxter



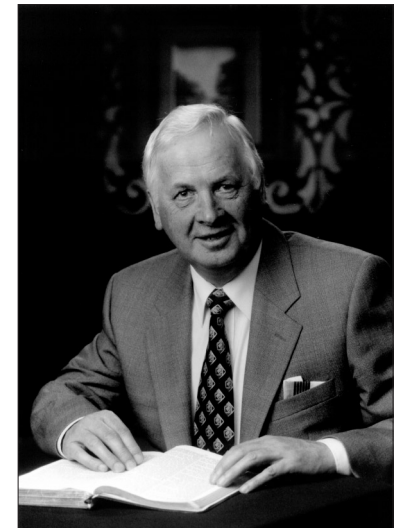
The Good Templar Hall formerly in Linenhall Street



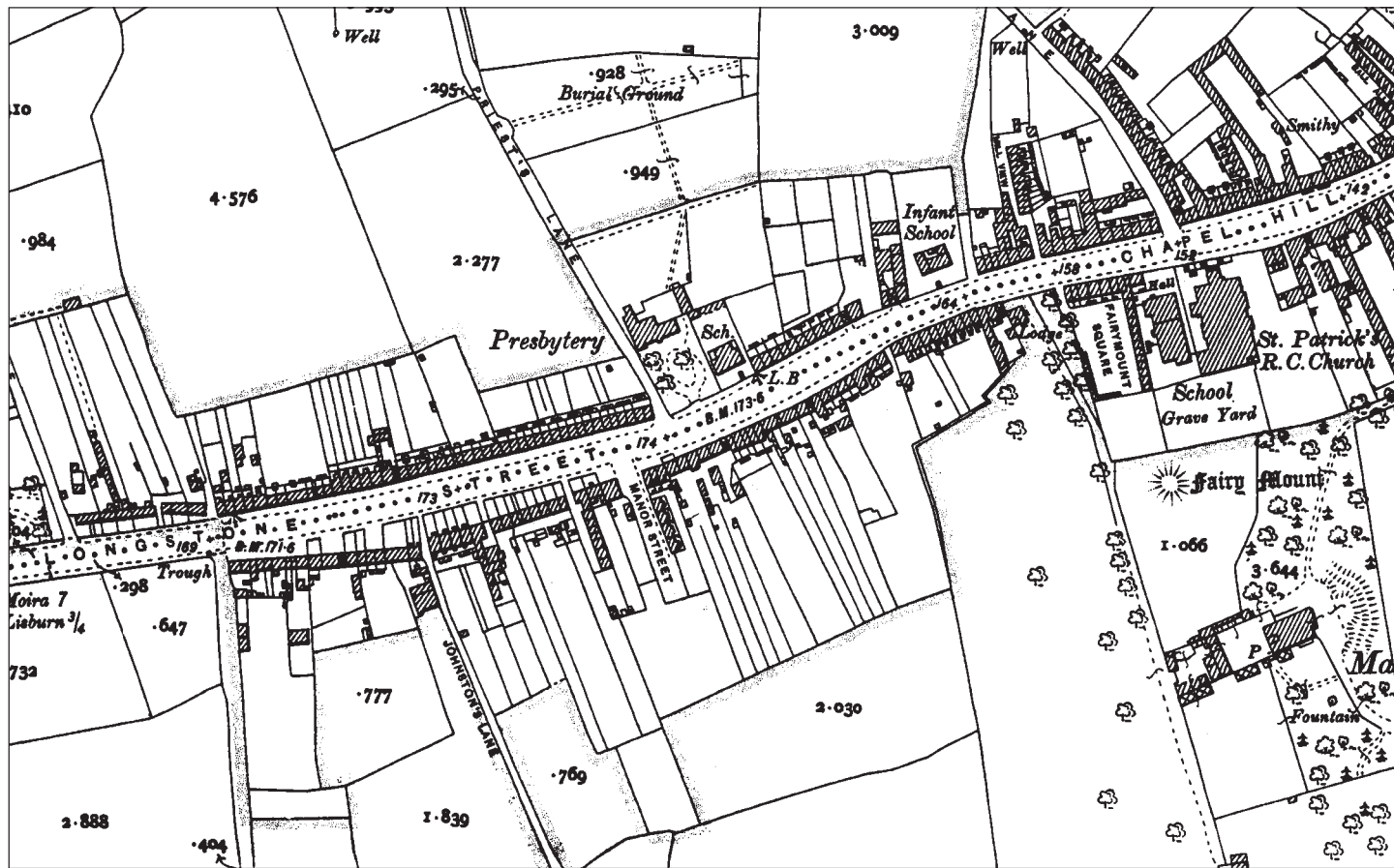
Pastor George F. Blayney



Pastor James K. McBratney



Pastor Gordon A. C. Cardwell



Lisburn in 1902 - notice Priest's Lane now called Tonagh Avenue



The Lisburn congregation in 2001



The interior of the original church building in Tonagh Avenue

1926 - A Notable Year

Newspaper editors love news that will make headlines and the year 1926 gave them plenty of material. It was a year of industrial unrest which reached its climax in a general strike when workers throughout the nation ceased work and all vital services were stopped. A Royal birth lightened the dark news for, in that year a daughter was born to the Duke and Duchess of York. She is our present queen. That year, too, marked the first radio telephone call from London to America and travel by air entered upon a grand new development when spectacular flights to and from South Africa took place. It was a momentous year.

Lisburn, though, provided no startling news for the papers. It was then a much smaller town than at present with many of its population employed in the then thriving linen industry. Wages were small and working hours long. Thankfully, however, there had been a marvellous spiritual awakening a few years earlier through the stirring missions conducted by the Rev. W. P. Nicholson when great numbers of conversions were recorded. The churches in the town and district benefited with overflowing congregations.

It was then that a few Christians began to meet together in Lisburn

anxious to worship with the New Testament as their pattern. They were convinced that they should be baptized by immersion, that they should meet each Lord's Day around the table of the Lord in the breaking of bread to remember Him who had died for them and, that their worship and church government should be that as practised by Baptists.

The late Pastor James Shields who, at that time, was the Pastor of the Milltown church and was instrumental in the formation of the Kilkeel church, became a great friend of this small group. His guidance, advice and wise counsel gained from his long experience first, as an earnest and soul-winning evangelist and then his devoted pastoral care were of invaluable strength to the little flock. So, on 30 May 1926 the Lisburn Baptist Church was formed. It had no building of its own and met first in a small rented hall in Wallace Avenue. Later it used the Good Templar Hall in Linenhall Street. Pastors and local preachers conducted the services.

These were faithful people with a deep love for the Lord and His Word. They sometimes had to endure the misunderstanding, prejudice and even ridicule of those who did not share their convictions. Nevertheless, the Lord stood by them and they saw the Lord's blessing in their service for Him.

Building in Priest's Lane

A permanent building was the acrying need of the little church. The faith of our spiritual forebears was strong and they showed remarkable courage in the face of great difficulties. A site was acquired in Priest's Lane (now called Tonagh Avenue) on 25 September 1928. There lies before me as I write a copy of the deed for the ground. The names of the signatories on behalf of the Baptist Union of Ireland as trustees are worthy of mention for their interest in and love for the Baptist cause in Ireland. Henry C. Gribbon is one. His daughter, Mrs Mary Sloan, was one of our veteran missionaries in Peru. Another daughter, Joan, is the wife of Major W. Ian Thomas founder of Capernwray Missionary Fellowship whilst his son, Dr. H.D. Gribbon was for some years the Honorary Secretary of the Irish Baptist Orphan Society. A. W. Tweedall, another signatory, helped to keep open the Waterford church, through long, difficult years. A third signature is that of Alexander W. McCay who was a generous benefactor to many of our churches and Missions. Mr. John D. Gilmore, a faithful and devoted secretary of the Union, also signed.

Having acquired ground, the next big obstacle to be overcome was the raising of money to erect a building.

Great care was exercised to avoid questionable methods being used and sacrificial, regular giving was the order of the day.

The rejoicing in having the building completed and ready for opening on 19 April 1930 can scarcely be imagined. Pastor F. H. Forbes who was then Vice-President of the Baptist Union of Ireland presided at the opening ceremony. That building with its many alterations, extensions and hallowed memories is now our church hall. Two photographs of the original building taken about 1948 hang in our present vestry. One taken from the outside gives an idea of its size whilst the other shows the interior with a grand piano which at that time was used to lead the singing. That photograph also shows that on the wall behind the pulpit there was inscribed, in the form of a scroll, the text, "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father."

A former resident of Lisburn visiting our church a few years ago remarked on how God had blessed us. She went on to say that she knew the people who put up the first building. "They were", she said, "poor men but good men."

The text they chose to adorn their building confirms her words.

The erection and furnishing of the building in 1930 imposed a burden of

debt which took many years to pay off. Regrettably there is no Minute Book available until the one commencing on 25 May 1932 so that the cost of the property is not known nor has the history of the earliest days of the church been recorded.

References in the available Minutes were made repeatedly to the lack of funds and the inability to pay suppliers' accounts. We read that in June 1932 there was no money to pay an outstanding bill and, in the following month there was great anxiety because legal action against the church had been threatened because the amount due had not been paid. It was agreed, therefore, to apply for a further loan of £100 from the Loan and Building Fund of the Baptist Union of Ireland. The amount already owing to that Fund is not stated, but two years later the debt on the building still had not been cleared. So it is recorded -

'It was unanimously agreed that we get out collecting cards to raise an amount in the clearing of the debt on the building.'

Those were extraordinarily hard times especially for a church with a small membership. Twenty-eight names are listed presumably in May 1932. Three of these have been ruled out but neither the cause nor the date of removal has been given.

Despite their financial weakness there was, however, the desire for spiritual vigour and yearnings for the Lord's blessing on the witness to the Saviour as the following extracts from Minutes of a Church meeting held on 20 May 1932 reveal -

"The chief object of the meeting was to get the Church in Scriptural form. Bro. Bailie then proceeded to read the names of those who had been proposed as Elders of the Church. These were Bros. Coulter and Stewart - being put to the meeting these Bros. were unanimously elected to office."

The small and dwindling number of people who knew these two brethren remember them gratefully as men of God who served the Lord and the church worthily and wholeheartedly.

This further note sparkles like a gem -

"A baptismal service took place on Wednesday (-) May there being 8 candidates for baptism. On the following Sabbath 4 more came forward for baptism making 12 for May 1932."

Again, we can sense the spirit of delight experienced by all present as expressed in the closing words of the Minutes -

"Thus the meeting ended and Bro. Bailie closed with the Benediction, it being agreed by those present that it was one of the most uplifting meetings they had ever attended."

The First Missionary

A notable day in the annals of the church took place one Lord's Day in July, 1932 when farewell services were held for Mr. Stanley Reid before his departure to Peru as a missionary with the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission. His service for The Lord in South Peru lasted for thirty-eight years. He married Miss Kathleen McCord in 1935. She too, was a missionary to Peru with the I.B.F.M. and together they made a major contribution to the work serving in Puno, Juliaca and Tacna, until their retirement in 1970. Mr. Reid commenced radio ministry in Tacna which was effective in bringing the Gospel to those listeners who might not otherwise have heard the way of salvation. He wrote a booklet which is still in print entitled, "Public Enemy No. 1" in which he warned against and attacked the evils of strong drink. A tract exposing the errors of Seventh Day Adventism also

came from his pen and was used by the Peruvian churches.

As a tireless worker he made many sacrifices to serve the Master he loved and was always ready to help others engaged in The Lord's service. Following his death a missionary with another society in Peru wrote - "Reid could never do enough for weary travellers."

Mr. Stanley Reid, the first missionary from our church held strong Christian and Baptist convictions and was "earnest to contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints." He was courageous in the face of hardship, steadfast at times of opposition, and, determined and cheerful in discouragement. Above all, he loved his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ whom he trusted early in life and served enthusiastically. Even in retirement in the land of his birth he was still a missionary as a colporteur and in door-to-door visitation until the Lord called him home to Himself on 6 March 1980.

Like all churches without a Pastor, our church relied upon Pastors of other churches and experienced preachers to maintain the ministry of God's Word at Lord's Day services. We find, too, that when Pastor William Wilson ministered in Portadown Baptist Church, he conducted Bible Studies in Lisburn on Wednesday evenings for some

weeks in 1932. Other men served the Lord in this way.

The church also called upon outside help in business matters. Mr. E. G. Combe, an accountant, one of the original members of the Haypark Avenue Baptist Church, Belfast, who was recognised as an able Bible teacher and preacher, was invited to be chairman of a church meeting on 4 December 1933. No explanation for this decision is given, but, he continued for some considerable time afterwards to chair meetings of office-bearers and the church. Reliance, too, was placed upon the advice of Pastor Fraser who was then Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland. Two former Presidents of the Union, Alderman W. J. Chambers, Belfast and Mr J. H. Corbett, Portadown were helpful in business sessions. So too, was Pastor David Burrows.

The First pastor - A E G Priestley

The need for a settled Pastor was recognised and, although there are no records leading up to the decision, the Minutes show that, at a meeting held on 22 July 1934 when seventeen members were present, a unanimous call was made to Pastor Warke, who, at that time was Pastor of Phibsboro

Baptist Church, Dublin. The Minutes of the meeting say: -

“The church undertakings were read to the meeting which included payment of £50 per annum to the Pastor, all our instalments to the Loan and Building Fund on due dates 25th April and 25th October £12.10.00 each half-year.”

A footnote to the Minutes adds that Pastor Burrows supported by Alderman Chambers had presided. He made it clear that the cost of the Pastor's removal would have to be borne by the church. There is no reference to Pastor Warke's reply to the invitation but, it would seem that a swift answer had been made, for, at a meeting on 20 August 1934 - less than one month after the decision to call him -

“It was unanimously agreed to have a Church meeting on Sunday 9th September. The Secretary was instructed to write to Pastor Fraser and find if it would be in order to have a Church Meeting after the service, and, if not, to have one on Monday 10th September, the object being to take steps for the appointment of a Pastor for the church.”

Again, events moved swiftly because:

“A special meeting of committee was held on 22nd October, 1934 the object being to make arrangements for the installation of Pastor Priestley.”

Albert Eric G. Priestley, the first Pastor of Lisburn Baptist Church, was inducted on Lord's Day, 28 October 1934. He was born in Belfast in 1904 and attended St. Mary Magdalene Parish Church. His conversion took place at a mission in Belfast in April 1927. After leaving his employment as a joiner in the shipyard in 1928, he went to America and worked with the Jewish mission in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Later that year he was baptised in a Baptist Church in New Jersey and, in September of the following year, was enrolled as a student of the Moody Bible Institute, Chicago. After graduating in December 1932, he became field representative for the American Board of Missions to the Jews. It was on a visit to Ireland in 1934 he was called to the Pastorate in Lisburn. In December of that year he was married to Miss Frieda D. Koester in Milltown Baptist Church when Pastor James Shields officiated.

It is interesting to note that during his Pastorate a branch of the Women's

Auxiliary was formed in 1938. The Auxiliary later changed its name to the Baptist Women's Fellowship. So, for more than fifty-four years the ladies of our church have met regularly to pray for and support missionaries at home and throughout the world. Fruitful gospel missions included those of Mr. James McKendrick, who was then a well-known Scottish Evangelist, in 1935 and Gipsy John Hawkins in 1939.

There was great sadness in the church when Pastor Priestley died at the early age of thirty-six on 7 December 1940. He left a widow and two young children - one aged four and the other three. Pastor Priestley was a faithful Pastor, an eloquent preacher and a man who loved the missionary cause especially amongst Jews since he had commenced his service for the Lord evangelising them. He had scholarly gifts and ability and was proficient in Hebrew.

His memory lingers in the hearts of the now small number who were present during his ministry in Lisburn.

Pastor Priestley's early death brought sorrow to the church and his pastoral care was sadly missed. There was loving sympathy and concern for his widow and her two infant children. Although the membership was small and financial resources were very limited, the church endeavoured faith-

fully to sustain them in obedience to the scriptural command, “to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction.”

Those were days of national uncertainty and difficulty, the war being in its second year. Food was scarce and rationed. Clothes rationing soon followed. Most necessities were scarce and difficult to obtain. Streets were unlit and it was forbidden to allow even a chink of light to shine out of a window because of air raid precautions. These conditions and dismal war news made life extremely difficult - especially for those with young children.

It is not surprising, then, that Mrs. Priestley longed to return to America. She showed exceptional courage in making that hazardous journey across the Atlantic with two small children when ships were being sunk almost daily by enemy submarines. This very moving account of her departure from Lisburn is included in the church minute book: -

“On Lord’s Day morning August 19, 1942 the members of this assembly presented to Mrs. Priestley the wife of our late beloved Pastor, a little gift in token of the high esteem and respect the Saints held for her. Our Sister, believing it to be the

Lord’s will was going shortly to her native land America. The gift was handed over by Mr. Coulter. Mrs. Priestley replying (through tears) thanked the church for the gift. She also appreciated the Saints for the way which they had received her, though a stranger; saying also that it was hard to part with all. She could bring nothing with her but memories. This touching scene was brought to a close by our brother Samuel Sloan commending our sister and her children to the Lord’s Grace.”

In later years, while writing her life’s history for the benefit of her grandchildren, Mrs. Priestley gave the following account of her experiences among the people of Lisburn Baptist Church: -

“ The congregation was not large; but there was quality. They were warm friendly people. All of them gladly accepted the foreigner, and I reciprocated. At the end of our first year we moved into a home beside the church. I liked it that close. From our front walk, we looked to the left and saw the beauty of the land. Off about three miles was a height, named ‘Colin Mountain’...

After fifteen months, a baby boy came into our midst. David was born on a Saturday noon, the 29th of February, 1936. He was “a bonny child” and grew normally. Babies were not taken to church in Ireland, so the parishioners wondered when I took mine with me. We did well. Virginia made her entrance without fanfare on the evening of “Pancake Tuesday” (the day before Lent begins) - which in 1937 was February 9 ...

Shortly after Virginia was born, we encountered friends of the Priestley family. The elderly matron stopped attending the Episcopal church and started to come to our services in Lisburn. Then she took the fancy to present my husband with a car. This made pastoral visitation in the community much easier; and it made it possible for him to hold tent meetings in villages elsewhere during the summer months...

The Sunday School did not have a Christmas program, but the custom was to have a “tea” once a year at which time the children got treats and all received a book of some sort as recognition for their attendance. A summer fete for the Sunday School children was to be taken on the bus to the beach for a day. After their play, they were served a meal and then rode the bus home to Lisburn. Otherwise, the Baptist churches in Ireland had no special days.”

Alfred Olley

The need for prayer has always been stressed and so it is interesting to note that, on 15 January 1941 it was decided to hold a prayer meeting on Lord's Day mornings from eleven o'clock. Happily, this Godly exercise still continues.

Discussions and prayer concerning the pastorate led to the choice of Mr. A. Olley who was inducted on 5 June 1943. His term was very brief ending just two months later on 15 August. Pastor Olley tendered his resignation owing to ill health. It is recorded,

"The church could do nothing but receive this with good grace and so closes another chapter in the history of our assembly."

External Relations

Almost noteworthy event took place in September 1943. This was the clearing of the debt on the building when the final instalment of £28.10s0d accompanied by a thank offering of £10.0s.0d was paid to the Baptist Union of Ireland.

Some years earlier the church had severed its membership with the

Baptist Union of Ireland but, in September 1943 this position was reconsidered. Careful thought over the following months led to a special meeting with representatives from the Union on Saturday 22 April 1944. The minutes state: -

"The Union were to understand that no interference would be tolerated in the local government of the assembly. They were also asked to define their attitude to the verbal inspiration of God's Word; do they teach it in their College and what steps have they taken to refute the charges brought against Principal Spurgeon by A. Olley?"

These questions having been put by Mr. Samuel Sloan, the Minutes continue: -

"A full and satisfactory answer was given to all and a lot of misunderstanding was cleared up after which our visitors hoped that the forthcoming May meetings would see Lisburn Baptist taking her place in the Union of Baptist Churches and thus help to present a united front to the world. Our friends also expressed their apprecia-

tion of the way in which they were received and remarked that in Lisburn they had been received more graciously than in any place they had hitherto visited."

Afterwards, the business meeting of the church took place when -

"It was proposed by Mr. Larmour and seconded by Mr. Totten that we again enter the Union. All the members agreed with the exception of one who refrained from voting."

The church has since remained in the Baptist Union of Ireland. A church meeting was held on 9 August 1944 when approval for support of the Irish Baptist Orphan Society was given. This Society has continued to receive generous contributions from the church for its work of caring for widows and orphans in our churches and is deeply grateful for the long and regular assistance given by the church at Lisburn. The next church meeting was held on Saturday 26 December 1944, when it was unanimously agreed to support the Irish Baptist Foreign Mission and the Irish Baptist Home Mission. Now known as Baptist Missions, with missionaries in Peru, France, Spain and Ireland, the church is a wholehearted and enthusiastic supporter in spreading

the Gospel of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ in these countries.

Reaching out With the Gospel

Evangelism has taken a most important place in the witness of this church and many Gospel missions have been held. When the church met on Saturday 26 December 1944 at 4.00pm (note the time and date) the need of a mission was stressed and it was thought advisable that this should be conducted by Mr. H.H. Orr who was an evangelist with the Irish Baptist Home Mission. Arrangements and obligations for the mission were accepted by the church and three hundred invitations were distributed throughout the district which was then less densely populated than now. There was blessing in the mission and it is joyful to record that fruit from the sowing of the good seed of God's Word by Mr. Orr in the Spring of 1945 still remains with us.

The Gospel was spread not only by special efforts, but also by the steady and regular distribution of 250 tracts every month. This was a commendable and worthy example to follow.

The Third Pastor

Although the membership was small the need and desire for a Pastor was keenly felt, but lack of funds stood in the way of proceeding in this direction. However, hope that this difficulty could be overcome was expressed at a church business meeting on 13 January 1946 when it was announced that a scheme was being prepared by the Baptist Union of Ireland to assist small churches by supplying their evangelists to take care of the work on occasions. It was agreed to write to the Union and ask their help in filling the pastoral vacancy.

There was a swift response, for a letter from the Union was read to the church on Saturday 27 April 1946 offering the services of Mr. Joshua Thompson (whom many of the members had previously heard) for a period of six months commencing June 1946. The appointment of Mr. Thompson was approved and passed by the meeting when the need for special prayer and co-operation by the members was impressed upon all present.

A meeting to welcome Mr. Thompson to the Pastorate for six months took place on Saturday 1 June 1946. Pastor John Ravey presided and after a hymn, prayer and reading from the Word, introduced Mr. Thompson to

the church with words of wisdom and advice to both. The Church Secretary, Mr. Alex Totten on behalf of the church, welcomed Mr. Thompson and gave him the charge, reading from I Timothy 4: 12-16. Mr. Thompson replied briefly giving his testimony and call to the Lord's work. The meeting was addressed by Pastor H. H. Orr who, in speaking from 1 Corinthians 3 contrasted spiritual Christians with carnal Christians and urged all present to avoid carnality in all its forms and to seek at all times to be spiritual.

When the six months ended, the Home Mission extended their period of support till the end of May 1947. Also, it was decided that the Pastor's salary should be raised by £6 per annum to £156. The church was asked to raise the full amount of the increase over the next six months (i.e. £3). Even allowing for the vast difference in the value of money today as compared with 1946, Pastor Thompson's commencing salary of less than £3 per week was pitiful. His appointment on a permanent basis, subject to the support of the Home Mission, was confirmed at a meeting on 16 February 1947. Special meetings to welcome Mr. Thompson as Pastor were held on Lord's Day 18 and Monday 19 May 1947.

The Lord blessed Pastor Thompson's ministry of the Word and his pastoral

care of the congregation. Attendance at the services increased to about sixty in the morning and eighty at the evening gospel services. At that time a common cup was used at the Lord's Supper and a second one had to be brought into use. It is interesting to note too that Deacons replaced a committee early in 1947 and that half-yearly business meetings were instituted. The Sunday School increased both in the number of pupils and teachers and our custom of holding anniversary services for the Sunday School began. Mr. James Armstrong conducted a gospel mission in 1947 with much blessing and again we gladly mention that fruits from that mission still remain. Pastor Thompson drew up a Rule Book with hints to members and part of his work is incorporated in our present one.

The heavy duties falling upon Pastor F. H. Forbes as Secretary of The Baptist Union of Ireland as well as of The Home Mission, the Foreign Mission and The Orphan Society imposed a severe strain upon his health and the need of assistance was recognised. Pastor Thompson whose gifts were evident was invited to become Assistant Secretary and at a meeting on 25 June 1949 informed the church that he would be assisting Pastor Forbes in clerical work in the office and also in spiritual ministry in the Churches. In September he announced that his ministry in

Lisburn would terminate in three months. He succeeded Pastor Forbes who died suddenly in 1952 and Pastor Thompson then served for twenty-five years as General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland. A review of the year 1949 showed that thirteen members had been added, thus bringing the membership to forty-one.

Pastor Thompson's Lisburn ministry is recalled with sincere thanksgiving to the Lord.

George F. Blayney

Upon learning of Pastor Thompson's acceptance of the call to serve with the Baptist Union of Ireland, steps were taken immediately to avoid, if possible, a long pastoral vacancy. Not only were names of prospective pastors considered, but approaches were made to some to see if they would consider a call and, astonishingly, the house at 77 Warren Gardens, Lisburn was purchased as a manse. The price was £1,100, but, when it is considered that total weekly offerings at that time were less than five pounds a week, we must conclude that the deacons were men of strong faith in recommending the church to buy the house even though they had no idea as to when a pastor would occupy it or who he would be.

A special church meeting was held on 6 September 1950, when nineteen members were present. They agreed unanimously that a call to the pastorate should be given to Mr. George F. Blayney. The report of the church secretary for the year 1950 referred to these two notable events - the purchase of the manse and the calling of Pastor Blayney whom he described as "one who will prove to be a tree of life in our midst" (Proverbs 13:12). Mr. Blayney, who since 1949 had been on the staff of the European Christian Mission, became the Pastor in Lisburn in January 1951. Just over a year later, on 27 January 1952 Mr. Blayney tendered his resignation having accepted a call from the Ballymena church. After prayerfully considering all the circumstances he believed this to be the will of God.

During his ministry he arranged for the first Easter Tuesday conference which was held in 1952. These conferences became an annual and well-attended event for twenty-five years. The Minutes also record that, at a members' meeting held on 22 November 1951, after stating his convictions concerning who should serve at the Lord's Table, the church resolved that office-bearers only should do so. This has since been the practice in Lisburn. During his short pastorate, five persons were baptised and seven were added

to the membership which stood at forty-seven when he concluded his pastorate on 27 April 1952.

John A. McCrea

Two important decisions were made at a meeting held on 26 February 1953. The first was to sell the manse at 77 Warren Gardens. The other was to call Mr. John A. McCrea to the pastorate. Mr. McCrea's letter of acceptance was read to the church on Lord's Day, 26 April 1953 and his ministry commenced in September of that year.

He came to Lisburn with a long and wide experience in The Lord's Service having first served for eighteen years with the Belfast City Mission, then as Pastor of Kilkeel Baptist Church and as an Evangelist with The Irish Baptist Home Mission. He pioneered Baptist witness in County Fermanagh which led to the formation of Stonepark Baptist Church.

Pastor McCrea was an ardent evangelist with a passion for souls. He preached with uncompromising boldness and unwearied zeal and the blessing of the Lord was evident from the very commencement of his ministry. The following report on his

“ Another milestone in the history of Lisburn Church was passed when the Anniversary and Thanksgiving Services were held on October 3rd and 4th, 1954.

The services on the Lord's Day were conducted by the Pastor, the church being filled to capacity. On the Monday evening, Pastors H. H. Orr and J. Irvine ministered with great acceptance to a large audience.

In thanking the office-bearers, church members and friends for their support and loyal co-operation, the Pastor gave a brief review of the past year. The year, he said, had under the guidance of God, been one of marked progress in every department of the work. He was glad to say that over thirty adults had professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, as well as a number of young people in the Sunday School and children's meeting. Twenty-five believers had been baptised and thirty-seven new members had been received into the church. This surely was the seal of God upon the efforts put forth in His Name and called not only for much thanksgiving, but also for much humiliation and rededication of all their lives to the Lord and His service. In addition to the weekly activities of the church, special missions were held in which Pastor Irvine of Dromore took a large share, and here again the Lord was pleased to bless and souls were saved. One of the most outstanding meetings of the year had been the "Women's Bright Hour" a weekly Gospel Meeting under the auspices of the WA. Under God this meeting had been a great blessing to large numbers of women as well as a great asset to the church. "Thanking God for all that is past we take fresh courage for the future and in His name are venturing into new fields of activities, including a number of cottage meetings, to be in the charge of our young people. Our motive in every effort is the glory of Christ in the salvation of souls, and that in a small way we might fulfil the Lord's commission to us, 'Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that My house may be filled.'"

first year in Lisburn appeared in the “Irish Baptist”: -

God blessed the efforts of his servant in Lisburn and there were sad hearts when he announced that he had accepted a call to a Baptist Church in Toronto. As he reviewed the three and a half years of his Lisburn pastorate, he mentioned that, when he came, the membership was forty-six and had grown to one hundred and eight; a church hall had been erected, the church had become financially self-supporting and the Women’s Bright Hour Gospel Meeting had commenced and was established. He declared, “Surely the Lord has done great things.”

His final services in Lisburn were held on Lord’s Day 17 February 1957. Some ten years later when the church was looking forward expectantly to his first return visit to Ireland the sad news of his sudden home call reached us.

His ministry was honoured of The Lord and only eternity will reveal how many came to the Saviour and how others grew in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

John J. Baxter

Three months after the departure of Pastor McCrea to Canada, the half-yearly church business meeting was held on 26 June, 1957 when the members considered the recommendation from the deacons “that Pastor J. J. Baxter should be invited to take over the pastorate of the Lisburn Church.” The record states, “the proposition was passed”. Pastor Baxter who commenced his ministry in Lisburn on Lord’s Day 22 December, 1957 continued until 30 October, 1968 before leaving to become Pastor of Memorial Baptist Church, Stratford, Ontario, Canada.

A Banbridge man, he prepared for the Lord’s service at the Bible Training Institute, in Glasgow and afterwards worked as an evangelist in England, Scotland and Ireland. Later he became Superintendent of a branch of the Railway Mission in Birmingham. Following these callings he pastored the church at Londonderry for ten years and, after that was pastor of the Magherafelt church before accepting the call to Lisburn.

Pastor Baxter loved the gospel and preached with fervour. As congregations increased, it was necessary to enlarge the original building by an extension at the rear measuring thirty feet long and fifteen feet wide. This was known as the Minor Hall and

was used for prayer meetings, Sunday School and Bible Classes and by the Youth Fellowship. When the present building was erected the Minor Hall was made into the church kitchen.

That Mr. Baxter was a diligent pastor can be seen from a report showing that in one month he had visited 145 homes travelling mainly by foot. Since he never had a car he used his bicycle or public transport for pastoral and hospital visitations.

A Pastor with Foresight

It was largely due to Pastor Baxter’s foresight that we now have our present building and car parking facilities. The need for a bigger meeting place was apparent, but it was he who saw that the site was too small for a more commodious building. So, when three houses on Longstone Street with their long gardens running down to our property came up for sale, he urged the church to purchase them. This was done in September 1964. The following year when another adjoining house came on the market he again realised that the opportunity to purchase should not be missed so that one day a church building with a frontage to Longstone Street could be erected. Earlier still, in September 1958 a substantial part of

the ground which is now our car park was acquired through his influence.

Here we can see how the Lord has guided the church. Business men, banks and shop keepers had not the foresight of Mr. Baxter and later, they would willingly have bought these four houses from the church at prices far in excess of what the church had paid for them.

Again, as we look back further still, the guiding hand of the Lord can be discerned through difficult and discouraging times when some thought that the wrong site had been chosen at the beginning. The Minutes of a meeting held on 26 December 1944 written by Mr. Alex Totten who was then Secretary have this entry: -

“The site on which the church is built was deplored by the committee but in the meantime nothing can be done about it.”

Then, in June 1945 he wrote: -

“We were glad to know that the proposed road was to go ahead, Mr Coulter remarking that he felt quite relieved seeing he was one of those who had the church where it is; the way at last opening up.”

The development of Lisburn and surrounding district after the 1939-45

war leading to its greatly increased population and travelling by cars called for larger church premises together with adequate car parking facilities. Pastor Baxter should ever be remembered and his memory honoured for his wisdom in bringing the church office-bearers and members to grasp the chance to acquire the site even though so many years were to pass before the new building was erected.

Sadly, it has to be recorded, unhappy divisions compelled Mr. Baxter to tender his resignation on 1 September 1968. A recital of the events preceding that day would be contrary to his written expressed wish that - "we endeavour to forget those happenings, but not its lessons, and to seek true unity and humility born of God."

A Long but Interesting Vacancy

There was a lengthy pastoral vacancy from the end of September 1968 until February 1972. Even so, attendances at the services continued to grow and new members were added frequently. At that time, Lisburn had been designated by the Government as a growth area and the church benefited numerically by those who had come to live in the new housing developments.

Mr. Alexander Russell, J.P., a founder member of the Portadown church and an ex-president of the Baptist Union of Ireland, who joined the Lisburn church shortly before the vacancy occurred, was recognised and received as Elder on 21 November 1968. His long administrative experience and wise counsel were of immense benefit to the church especially as an expert chairman of church and office-bearers' meetings. He sometimes conducted the Lord's Day services and the mid-week prayer meetings when his ministry brought spiritual enrichment and uplift to the congregation.

Upon retiring as a colporteur with the Irish Baptist Home Mission after forty-three years of loving and devoted service, Mr. H. A. Ferguson took up residence in Lisburn and joined the church. His deep spirituality and gentle disposition, which were so evident, made him an ideal choice as sick visitor. He undertook this work with the conscientiousness and sincerity which characterised the life of this Godly, Christian gentleman.

It is interesting to note that the very hearty congregational singing was supported by a very old American reed organ until 30 June 1969 when a Praise Service was held to celebrate the installation of a Conn electronic instrument.

Meeting the Needs of Youth

Increasing numbers of children and young people brought repeated requests from parents for a uniformed organisation. The deacons gave serious consideration to this innovation and agreed that, since many of our young people were already enrolled in such organisations in churches of other denominations, and, that as others intended to follow their example, it would be prudent to introduce a suitable organisation.

Long and careful consideration of uniformed organisations in existence was made and discussions took place with known leaders in them. It became clear that the Campaigners had a solid Evangelical foundation requiring leaders who professed to be born again and, that the organisation's objects, which were epitomised in its motto, "UNTO HIM", would be admirably suited to our needs.

A report was brought to the church at the half-yearly meeting on 28 May 1969 when it was agreed that the Campaigners should be the uniformed organisation. Then, at a special church meeting on 27 November 1969 detailed information about the functions of the movement were outlined and also the necessary spiritual qualifications and dedication of those who should be appointed for this new venture. There followed

an intensive programme of leadership training over the next few months. Prospective chiefs who were church members attended courses in our former church hall, at seminars and at group meetings before passing written examinations set by the Campaigners to show that they were qualified to undertake the leadership of young people.

It was, then, with some measure of nervousness, yet with confidence, that our first Campaigner Chiefs commenced their useful work in January 1970. Since then, large numbers of young people have been influenced by dedicated leaders in their weekly meetings and annual camps. We record our gratitude to those early chiefs and to all who have succeeded them and to those who now so enthusiastically lead our Campaigner Clans. Their reward is in knowing that some who have come through the ranks of the Campaigners are now faithful followers of the Saviour, and, that others are in church membership.

The Search for Another Pastor

The need of a Pastor was continually in the mind of the church office-bearers - especially so, because the deacons had undertaken

the regular visitation of members and adherents. They were, therefore, closely in touch with the people and their needs. Much prayer and thought were given to know the will of the Lord before making a call to Pastor W. L. Hibbert on 9 June 1970. After careful consideration, Mr. Hibbert believed that he should continue in the pastorate of the Castlereagh church in Belfast.

Later in the year a Gospel mission was conducted by Pastor William Mullan. Members and friends worked wholeheartedly in preparing for the campaign by door-to-door visitation with personal invitations over a wide area. The two-week mission ended on 6 December 1970.

Two weeks later the church met again to consider a call to the pastorate. The one whom the deacons proposed was Pastor J. Garrett who was then pastor of the Dunseverick church. Mr. Garrett considered this carefully and, in March 1971 informed us that, as he felt the Lord had still work for Him in Dunseverick, he had to decline our invitation.

At the half-yearly church meeting Mr. Russell said that the officebearers were very exercised about the pastorate but, in view of the two previous disappointments, they wished to be wary. They were, he said, pursuing the question.

Just three months later the church met again at a special meeting on 28 September 1971, when a call was made out to Pastor G. A. C. Cardwell who was then serving the Lord in Windsor Baptist Church, Belfast. Several members in supporting the call said that they had been praying that the Lord would lead Mr. Cardwell to Lisburn.

Gordon A. C. Cardwell

Having been without a pastor for over three years, the church looked forward eagerly to February 1972 when the ministry of Pastor G. A. C. Cardwell was set to commence. Not least in the preparations for his coming was the search for a suitable dwelling house which would be within easy reach of the church building and convenient to the homes of the congregation. There was much satisfaction in the decision of the church at a meeting on 7 December 1971 to purchase the house at 22 Magheralave Park East, Lisburn at a cost of £8,150. Looking back, we can see that this was a wise step taken, we believe, in answer to prayer. It was, too, an excellent financial investment.

The first sermon of Pastor Cardwell's ministry was preached on Lord's Day morning, 6 February 1972 from the

text: "The God of heaven, he will prosper us; therefore we his servants will arise and build" (Nehemiah 2:20). Although spiritual building was the theme of his first sermon as pastor, it was not long before it was recognised that a larger meeting place was needed to accommodate the increased numbers attending the services. When the half-yearly meeting was held on 20 June 1972, two ideas were considered. The first was to extend the existing building and the other to erect a new one as soon as possible. It was clear to all and agreed that a new building was needed.

Let Us Build Again

Following upon this decision the next three years were spent in intensive and painstaking work in obtaining additional ground, the purchase of another house in Longstone Street, the preparation of site plans, the application for and obtaining of planning permission and many other necessary legal requirements too numerous, detailed and boring to be enumerated here. However, a separate record of these important matters has been kept and they show the conscientious and earnest endeavours made to

go forward with the erection of a building suitable not only for the pressing needs of that time, but also that future generations would have a worthy heritage.

A Building Fund had been in existence for some years and here it is appropriate that appreciation should be expressed to those who paid into it at times when a new building was like a dream. A legacy of £3,330 out of the Estate of a former member, the late Miss E. McMillen, was received for the building fund in 1964, but when the church at last proceeded with plans to build, the total funds on hand amounted only to £8,880.

Plans were drawn up by our architect, Mr. N. Adamson from Lurgan and he had considered in 1973 that a building for our requirements would cost in the region of fifty to sixty thousand pounds. Later, however, it was evident that the costs could be at least twice the amount of this estimate.

Faced with the burden of heavy expenditure and slender resources, it was considered advisable to ask the church for an offering of at least £10,000 on Saturday 3 and Lord's Day 4 November 1973 as a pledge of support for the project. The amount received was £10,037.14 with promises of more to come!

Increasing congregations made

seating arrangements difficult and uncomfortable. Chairs in the aisle and porch had to be used and then an entrance was made into the Minor Hall (the present kitchen) and this was used for extra seating. Those using this area were facing the wall behind the pulpit. So, mirrors were fixed at the doorway into it to enable them to see the preacher and, most important for him, that he could see them.

Even this arrangement was only a temporary measure for the aisle was still used for seating. This led to the appointment of Mr. Desmond Black and Dr J. Cupples to consider a way out of the dilemma pending the time of erecting another building. Should we purchase a portable hall or again extend the existing building? This was the problem. The recommendation of these brethren was accepted by the church and the wall on the left hand side was demolished, the building widened and another aisle made. There was enthusiastic voluntary labour by the men of the congregation whose hard work late into the evenings of the summer of 1974 was stimulated by the nourishing refreshments provided every night by the ladies who catered so tastefully and with an enthusiasm matching that of the men.

When finished, the extension gave a welcome relief but not a solution to

the accommodation problem. It did, on the other hand, become the present church hall.

At last, the day came in June 1975 when building operations commenced. The main contractors were again Glenabbey Building Works (Kirkland Bros), joined again by our voluntary workers who did so much, so willingly, so devotedly and so wholeheartedly. Their abundant labours are remembered gratefully as so much of the building is a tribute to their diligence in the Lord's service.

Cold print can never express the delight of those who assembled on the forecourt of the completed building to await the opening service on the afternoon of Saturday 28 May 1977. Many friends came quite a distance to be present on this glad occasion, as did local residents and Christian well-wishers from other denominations. The joyful feelings were like those of the returning captives, "we were like them that dream" (Psalm 126:1).

It had been the fervent hope of all, that the building would be opened free of debt, but, no sooner had building operations commenced than the nation faced an unparalleled period of inflation, when costs of materials and labour rose at alarming rates. The church was compelled to borrow from the bank for a short time when the rate of interest was 18%

per annum. Members and adherents contributed generously and also gave interest-free loans which made a very great saving. These loans were cleared in 1981. The total cost of the new building amounted to £175,328.64.

Just over a year before the work was finished the church mourned the loss of the Secretary, Mr. Edward Megaw, who died on 7 April 1976. He was deeply interested and involved in every department of the church and his great interest in life was the work of the Lord. He had been a deacon for many years, a Sunday School teacher, Missionary Secretary, a leader in the children's meeting and Church Secretary from 1968. His methodical leadership, sound judgment and careful attention to the sick were treasured by all, especially when the church was without a pastor. In recognition of these qualities the church received him as an elder in January 1975. A capable and experienced engineer, his advice and wise counsel were invaluable in planning for the building which, in the overruling will of the Lord, he did not see completed.

An Expository Ministry

The text of that opening sermon of Pastor Cardwell's pastorate laid the foundation of his ministry of the Word. His expository ministry on Lord's Days and clear gospel preaching held the congregations in rapt attention. His series of morning sermons included such topics as "The Making of a Man of God," "Joshua, the Man of Conquest," "Great Certainties of the Faith," "Christians in Crisis" (sermons on 1 Peter) and "Into His Likeness." Then the studies at the Wednesday evening Bible readings took the hearers through detailed expositions of the Scriptures when they learned of "Excellent things in Philippians," "The Church at Prayer," "Five Smooth Stones - 1 John," and "The Church of the Living God."

Studies in the epistle of James, Paul's epistles to the Romans, Corinthians and Galatians and in other books of the Bible brought sound and profitable instruction in the great doctrines of the Faith.

The evangelistic services were used by the Lord to lead many to Christ and baptismal services were held frequently. Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ was exalted in every sermon and Bible study.

Pastor Cardwell gave of his best and his God-given gifts were recognised not only in Lisburn, but also in all

our churches, in several of which he conducted evangelistic missions. After serving in Lisburn for nine and a half years he believed that he should accept the call to the pastorate of the Newtownards Church. He left our church at the end of June 1981 revered and respected as preacher, teacher, pastor and friend, but, above all, as a faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ and one led by the Holy Spirit.

James K. McBratney

When the pastorate became vacant at the end of June 1981, it was the earnest hope and prayer of the church that the Lord would lead us clearly and early to the man whom He had chosen for this holy office. In considering their responsibilities in such a solemn and important matter, the office-bearers agreed that, as soon as they felt so guided by God, they should inform the church.

Pastor J. K. McBratney was the preacher on Lord's Day 21 March 1982 when considerable interest was expressed by many of our members and friends regarding the possibility of his becoming our new pastor. He was invited to conduct a series of Bible readings at our Wednesday prayer meetings during the month

of June, when his rich, spiritual ministry and clear scriptural teaching so impressed all who were present, that, when the elders and deacons met in July, they believed that they should commend Mr. McBratney for the pastoral care of the church.

A special meeting was held on 17 August when a clear expression of confidence in Mr. McBratney was expressed. He was inducted to the pastorate on Saturday evening, 4 December 1982. The building was packed to overflowing with members, friends and well-wishers from far and near. Mr. McBratney had been pastor of the Ballyclare church before coming to us and had served previously as pastor of the churches at Limavady and Bethel in Belfast.

Attentive congregations on Lord's Day mornings benefited from sermons taking them through great subjects such as the Life of Abraham, the book of Jonah, a series of ten addresses in which our Basis of Doctrine was expounded and devotional meditations on prayer and our Lord's cries from the cross.

Mr. McBratney was a faithful and earnest preacher of the gospel and his messages were full of entreaties to sinners to repent and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as well as warnings of the eternal loss of those who do not do so.

Then, on Wednesday evenings, Bible readings were given from Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians and the Feasts of Jehovah, as well as addresses on the Church and the great doctrines of the Christian faith. In all of these the Word of God was ministered reverently and sincerely.

Gospel Missions during Mr. McBratney's ministry were conducted by Mr. William Smylie from 19 February until 11 March 1984 and by Mr. Harold Peasley and a team of helpers from Pretoria, South Africa in October 1986. Intensive preparations were made and door-to-door visitations by church members over a wide area were rewarded by exceptionally well-attended meetings. This was especially so in the case of Mr. Smylie's mission, when it was sometimes necessary to use the upper and lower prayer rooms to accommodate those who could not be seated in our main building. Closed circuit television enabled them to participate in the atmosphere of the marvellous services.

A tent mission was conducted by Pastor McBratney at Ballymacash cross-roads in the summer of 1984 when he was assisted by members of the congregation. Following upon this mission an outreach team carried out door-to-door evangelism in this area weekly and distributed gospel literature. This led to the foundation of

Emmanuel Baptist Church on the Glenavy Road. Other members of the church helped with the formation of the churches at Lambeg, Crumlin and Moira.

Mention must also be made of the children's mission in September 1985 when our church building was filled every evening for two weeks. The evangelist was Mr Ronnie Gibson who, at that time, was pastor of the Baptist Church in Haypark Avenue, Belfast.

Those who were present at the meetings conducted by Pastor Francis Dixon, the renowned former pastor of Lansdowne Baptist Church, Bournemouth who was well known as a speaker at Keswick and similar conventions in many parts of the world, look back thankfully to his week of ministry with us in September 1984. Testimonies to the spiritual enrichment which that week of ministry of the Word brought to Christians have often been given. Sometime later we were gladdened when we learned from an applicant for membership, that she had been converted on one of those blessed evenings.

An announcement was made to the church on 7 December 1986 by Pastor McBratney that he would be resigning as Pastor with effect from 31 July 1987 to work in a full time capacity with the New Tribes Mission. He said that this was something which had

been exercising both himself and his wife for eighteen months and that it would be a major step for them in giving up their home and salary to go into a 'faith mission', depending on the Lord's people for their prayers and support. Mr. McBratney preached the closing sermons of his pastorate on 26 July 1987 and a farewell service was held on the following Wednesday evening when he and Mrs. McBratney received the thanks of the church for their labours amongst us and left with the assurance of our continuing interest in their work for the Lord wherever they might be sent to serve Him.

Throughout the period we are reviewing there were happenings worthy of thanksgiving and remembrance. First, there was the Valedictory Service on 6 January 1982 for Miss Christine Thompson who entered the service of the Lord in Nigeria with the Sudan United Mission. Christine had been one of our Sunday School scholars, later a teacher and was one of the first recruits to the Campaigner Clans and rose to be a Chief. She trained for the Lord's service at Lebanon Bible College, Berwick-on-Tweed after graduating as a school teacher from Stranmillis College. She served the Lord in Nigeria until the end of 1990. Another notable valediction was that of Victor and Marie Watson as they left with their

three children to take up missionary service in Austria under the auspices of the European Christian Mission in July 1983. They are still serving the Lord through that mission in an even wider sphere of influence and responsibility.

It is interesting to note that the house at 1 Tonagh Avenue was purchased in July 1985 and, having been fully furnished through the kind generosity of our members, is now a comfortable home for missionaries on furlough.

Some Notable Events

Friday 4 March 1988 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Lisburn Branch of the Baptist Women's Fellowship. A great rally was held to celebrate this Golden Jubilee. Ladies from many of the other branches joined with ours on this joyful occasion of thanksgiving and praise to the Lord. Three former pastors, J. Thompson, G. F. Blayney and G. A. C. Cardwell, with their wives, were also present and many links from previous years were reunited in happy recollections of fellowship and friendship. Mr. Desmond Creelman, one of our missionaries in Peru, brought the closing address.

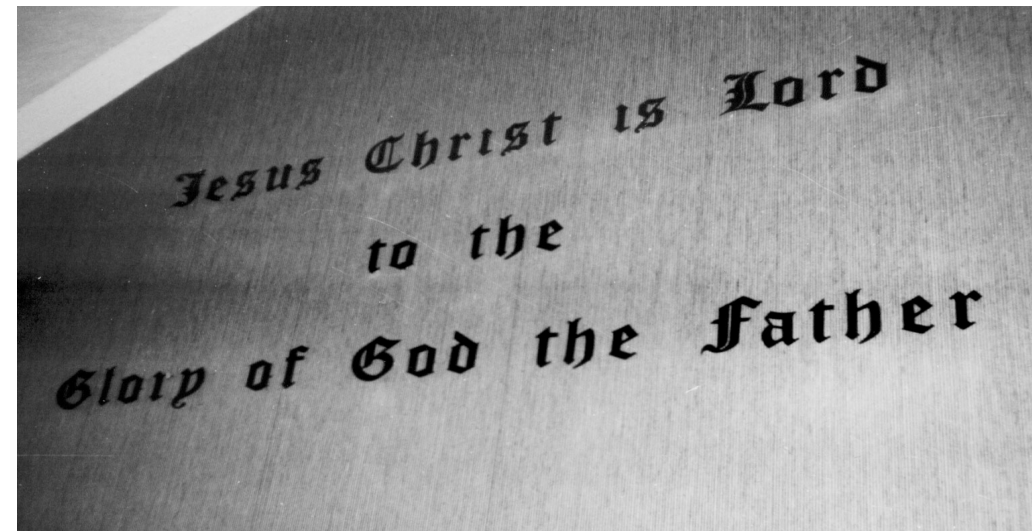
Finally, it was our happy privilege to hold services on the entering into the pastorate of two of our young men. Harry Dowds, who had come through our Sunday School and Campaigners and had served as a Deacon, accepted a call to become pastor of Craigavon Baptist Church. After completing his studies at Lebanon Bible College he served as a children's evangelist with the Bible Club Movement. Our service of farewell took place on 19 May 1988.

The following week, 26 May 1988, brought us together again for the joy of bidding to David Whitmarsh our sincere good wishes upon his becoming pastor of the Baptist Church in Cheddar, Somerset. David had trained at the Irish Baptist College after being in membership

with us for some years. During that time he was an enthusiastic Campaigner Chief and a leader of our Young People's Fellowship.

So, now we close these brief glimpses of our history. Let us praise God for his loving kindness and faithfulness to succeeding generations during the sixty-two years at which we have glanced.

When the first building was erected the text chosen to be written on the wall behind the pulpit and which adorns our present one was "Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father." If each church member crowns Him as Lord and if the entire church honours and glorifies Him, then we may have a worthy heritage for future generations.



Postscript

These glimpses of our history which first appeared in our quarterly magazine, "The Longstone Light", told briefly of some important happenings from the formation of the church in 1926 until the conclusion of Pastor J. K. McBratney's pastorate in July 1987. As we approach the celebration of the seventy-fifth anniversary of our life and witness through God's grace, it is fitting that some notable events of the past fourteen years should be recorded.

Following Pastor McBratney's call to missionary service, the elders and deacons made the continuance of pastoral care and the ministry of the word their first priority. The church members, too, were anxious to have a pastor settled with us as soon as possible. Although eminently capable men came to the pulpit, several members expressed their conviction that our former pastor, G. A. C. Cardwell, was the one whom they believed should be re-invited to the pastorate. When, after much prayerful thought, a special, and very happy church meeting, was convened for Thursday 26 January 1989 when one hundred and sixty-seven were present, a call was made in favour of Mr. Cardwell. His induction took place on Friday 1 September 1989 when the President of the Baptist

Union of Ireland, Mr. Walton C. Balmer, F.C.A., presided. Pastor A. G. Judd B.D., preached a soul-stirring sermon from John 1: 6 & 7 and Miss Margaret Ball sang appropriately and beautifully.

Pastor Cardwell has planned to retire at the end of September in this, our seventy-fifth anniversary year.

Whoever should write the centenary history of this church will have access to an indexed library of tape recordings of his sermons and bible studies which bear the fruit of sustained, diligent, unremitting, careful study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Pastor Cardwell was chosen to preach at the televised service to mark the one hundredth anniversary of the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1995. He undertook also ministry to churches and missionaries in Peru for a month in 1996. Sincere appreciation of the benefit of this ministry was wholeheartedly expressed. Mr. Cardwell's pastoral care was thorough, conscientious and dignified. All confidences placed in him were kept implicitly. He was at all times a wise chairman of office-bearers' and church meetings.

It is the earnest and loving desire of all, that Pastor and Mrs Cardwell's recollections of more than twenty-one years in Lisburn shall always be of happiness to themselves and family, having left their native Scotland for service here.

Great delight was felt when one of our elders, Mr. John Woolsey was chosen as President of the Baptist Union of Ireland for 1993/94. He was again elected to serve in 1998/99. It is an honour to hold this high office and Mr. Woolsey was one of the few to be elected twice. Another of our elders held the Presidency in 1987/88.

During the period under review, commissioning or valedictory services were held for four of our members. Miss Sarah Morrison, now based at the headquarters of Child Evangelism Fellowship in Switzerland attends to administration in the office for the functions of the Fellowship throughout Europe. Mr. Ivor Thompson, B.Sc., B.D., a graduate of the Irish Baptist College, left us to work under the auspices of Baptist Missions in Castlederg. Mr. and Mrs. Keith Henderson, after training in the New Tribes Mission College in England and the United States of America, are now in Australia where Keith lectures in the Mission's College and Ruth, his wife, is the office administrator. Keith too, graduated from the Irish Baptist College. Miss Gwen Frazer, now married to Douglas Jarvie, is in service with the Worldwide Evangelism Crusade along with her husband, in Turkey.

An evangelist, Mr. Roger Carswell, conducted a mission in 1996 from February 25 to March 3. Intensive

preparations were made by the distribution of advertising leaflets and personal visits to homes in the neighbourhood of the church premises. Coffee mornings, special meetings apart from the evening services and some new ventures to attract young people and sportsmen were used with good effect. It was a well supported mission. Mr. Carswell, who was highly esteemed for his sincere and devoted service amongst us, is still remembered gratefully.

The new millennium was hailed by the media as something to be celebrated. Since evangelism is the lifeblood of our church, the year 2000 was made a year of evangelism. A committee drawn from all church departments met regularly and planned special meetings and events to reach others with the gospel. Guest services were held. These well-attended meetings included many people who do not usually frequent church services. Special evangelistic meetings for women were arranged by the committees of the Women's Bright Hour and the Women's Fellowship. The Sunday School as well as the leaders of the Monday and Thursday children's meetings were delighted to welcome parents and children together on evenings when friendships were established and new friends were made. The Youth Fellowship, the Saturday Night Extra and the Bible Class made very special

efforts to reach those in their age groups with the gospel. Much preparation was needed for the children's mission in September. During that week, hundreds of children gathered nightly when the evangelist was Mr. David Cowan of the Child Evangelism Fellowship. He was enthusiastically supported by an experienced band of helpers from our own church.

Mr. Desmond Creelman of the Northern Region of the Association of Baptist Churches was engaged in door-to-door evangelism in the Tonagh, Knockmore and Old Warren estates for a week. He undertook similar work for a further week in other areas using the literature from the trailer. He met and discussed spiritual truth with passers-by. In all of this he was assisted and encouraged by a good number who met with him every day in prayer before accompanying him to sow the good seed of God's Word. It is the belief of all that the year of evangelism was worthwhile and that the experience gained and the lessons learned should be built upon to pursue an even more rigorous evangelism.

It has to be recorded with sadness and deep regret that the Campaigners which had flourished from January 1970 were unable to recommence in September 2000 because of lack of staff. This has happened to uniformed organisations throughout the British

Isles and is a cause for lament. Hundreds of children passed through our Campaigner Clans. Some of them had no other church connections and were most enthusiastic clansmen as they met with young people of our church.

Having now reached adulthood, some former Campaigners gladly recall happy evenings when, after drill, their time was spent on campaigns for such things as basket making, first-aid, gardening, plumbing, handyman, house maintenance and a host of other useful things of interest either to the girl or to the boy clans. Badges gained and prizes won are still proudly displayed and, in some cases, are shown to their children. Two former campaigners who became missionaries wrote to say that what they had learned in the Lisburn Campaigners had been put into practice in far off foreign lands and had been the basis of their work. 'Clan C', which concluded each meeting, was an epilogue with scriptural and spiritual benefit. It is with joy that we recount that, because of these closing moments, some were led to faith in Christ. We know of those who later were baptised and received into church membership.

Great social changes throughout the nation have transformed and improved working and living conditions far beyond what could have

been imagined when the church was formed in 1926. Unfortunately, low morality and disobedience to God's law have accompanied the benefits available. The word 'paedophile', unknown to a past generation, stares us in the daily newspapers and is heard repeatedly in radio and television news transmissions.

Long and tedious hours were spent by the pastor and church office-bearers for an understanding of the Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995 which the Government introduced for the protection of children in the care of adults. In this, Miss Diane McComb, who has expert knowledge of the Order, gave valuable assistance and enlightening explanations at a lengthy meeting held on 7 September 1999, which was specially convened for all who take part in Christian service to children and young people up to the age of eighteen.

An important decision was taken to purchase the house at 3 Tonagh Avenue which became vacant. This adjoins the one already owned by the church, used to accommodate missionaries on furlough.

Our original meeting place, which later became the church hall, had served admirably since 1932. Even though it has cherished memories for so many people, it was recognised that a new building was needed. Protracted consultations by a building

committee with architects, professional advisers and builders have now come to fruition. The old building is demolished. The builders are at work and we look forward with joyful anticipation to a day, which we hope will not be too far distant, when a new hall will be opened to the glory of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

We conclude our review with thanksgiving to our Lord for past mercies and trust Him for His unfailing guidance for all that is to come.

J T Murray

Our Basis of Faith

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The verbal inspiration and the all and sole sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as originally given, the Trinity in Unity of the Godhead, the essential Deity and perfect humanity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the personality of the Holy Spirit, the depraved and fallen state of man, the substitutionary sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ, the justification of the sinner through faith in the Lord Jesus, the personality of the devil, the natural immortality of the soul, the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the body, the eternal security of the believer, the conscious eternal punishment of those who die impenitent, the binding character of the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and the immersion of believers as the only Christian Baptism, and the responsibility of all saved souls to 'live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present age'.”

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