

MOORTOWN BAPTIST CHURCH



The First Fifty Years
1955-2005

"You are Christ's Church; you belong to Him; you are not just a voluntary association, responsible to yourselves alone.... What kind of Church Moortown is in the future generations depends on what you are now; how you worship, work and live."

Charge to the Church April 1955

"We are ordinary people.... but it has pleased God to do something with us, and to lead us into a wonderful experience of his love and grace. We are debtors both to God and man."

Winsor Bond.

"First we must be a friendly community, welcoming people, treating them as persons and sharing our faith with them."

Ralph Drake.

"We now need to show the same vision and zeal which has characterised the church from its beginning, and continue with the mission 'to please God and share His life with others'."

Michael Flowers 2002.

Foreword

It has been suggested that the role of the annalist or chronicler is to record '*what takes place*' whilst a historian tries to look beyond documented facts and figures in order to interpret '*what actually goes on*'.

With this in mind if 100 church members were to recall what actually went on at Moortown Baptist Church in the last fifty years they would, I suspect, produce 100 different versions. The reason is obvious; we have all experienced different aspects of the life of the church and, while we might all be aware of some things taking place, we view what is actually going on differently. In other words we each have our own 'histories' of Moortown.

In this account of the first fifty years of MBC I have been somewhere between chronicler and historian. I was 10 years old in April 1955 and my parents were founder members of the Church. I have based this narrative on reading the written records - Church Meeting Minutes; Church Magazines; Constitutions etc.- but have also been influenced by talking to others and by my own experience. It must be stressed that this is, therefore, just one person's view of the history of the church.

What I believe the narrative shows is that through people in this church (and sometimes despite their failings), God has been at work in this part of Leeds over the past 50 years and we should be thankful.

We should also be grateful to the many people – Church Secretaries, Administrators, Magazine Editors and others – who have kept the records.

R.R. February 2005

ORIGINS

Moortown Baptist Church came into being on Friday April 22nd 1955 in a service held at South Parade Church, Headingley. Here 49 men and women shared worship and Communion together and covenanted “with God our Father and with one another to be a gathered Church for the worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel and the observance of the Sacraments of Believer’s Baptism and the Lord’s Supper”. The Rev. F.W. Bond was inducted as Minister of the new fellowship. At the time the first phase of the Church’s buildings was within weeks of completion, but the true origins of Moortown Baptist Church can be found long before 1955.

Moortown Committees – 1937-52

The Church owes its existence to the vision of people in Baptist Churches in the Leeds District who saw the way Moortown was going to develop as a residential area and the need for a Church there. As early as 1937 a Moortown Committee was set up by the District Council. It was chaired by F.W. Dawson of Blenheim and included one future member of Moortown – Jim Shaw.

However, with the coming of War in 1939 the Committee ceased to function. Then in June 1943 Mr. Dawson persuaded the Leeds District Council to purchase the site at the junction of King Lane and Stonegate Road for some £600 (2700 square yards at 22 1/2p per yard!) from the City Council. A board “Site for Baptist Church” was erected but the war and then post-war economic stringencies delayed housing programmes and made the raising of capital difficult. The project, for some time, seemed to lapse.

In September 1952, again under the impetus of F.W. Dawson (known to some as “FWD” for his energy and drive) the Leeds District Council re-constituted the Moortown Committee with Eric Clarke as Secretary. The Committee was small and included one other future member, Wilf Lewis. It was concerned with reviewing architect’s proposals for the Church Building. The South Parade Church played an important part in supporting the project. Their Minister, Rev. A.N. Wilson, urged his members to support the Yorkshire Baptist Association’s scheme for every church member to give £1 per annum for 5 years to a fund for the proposed new church.

Commencement of Building 1954

In 1954 plans for a ‘two-way’ Church building and Hall had been accepted and the first phase, at a cost of £13,000, was given the go-ahead. On March 14th, 17 years after the idea had first been put forward, Rev. Henry Bonser, President of the Baptist Union, cut the first sod on the site and building work commenced. On July 24th a ceremony of Stonelaying was held with more than 300 people present. Dr. W.S. Flowers (then Vice-President of the Leeds District) presided and six window-sills (in what is now the Church Hall) were placed by representative leaders of the Committee, the Baptist Union and the Y.B.A. In addition funds were raised by ‘selling’ bricks at half a crown (12.5p) each and then allowing the purchaser to lay them in what is now the wall on the left side of the passage from the vestibule to the kitchen (mind how you go!). The bulk of the £13,000 cost had been met by the Y.B.A. from the sale of redundant churches in the Leeds District, much of this from the city centre site of the original South Parade Church. The Yorkshire Association provided an additional loan and many individuals responded to an appeal for gifts and personal loans. Moortown was clearly a widely supported venture. The site was strategically placed between large private and council housing estates, which represented an obvious challenge.

Calling of the First Pastor – 1954

The building work proceeded into 1955 but bricks and mortar do not make a church and the Committee was now busy contacting churches and individuals with a view to transferring membership to the new Moortown Church. They were also looking for a Minister. In November 1954 Rev. F.W.Bond B.A. of Halstead Essex agreed to come and meet the Committee. It was a grey misty day but after touring the building site no-one's enthusiasm had been dampened and, after prayerful discussions with Mr. and Mrs. Bond, the Committee unanimously felt led to call Mr. Bond to the pastorate of the new church. To their joy he accepted and arrangements went ahead for his ministry to begin in April 1955. In the meantime a Manse, in Lidgett Lane, was purchased for £2,500.

Formation of Moortown Baptist Church – 22nd April 1955

As building work had gone slower than anticipated Mr. Bond made arrangements for the use of the Moor Allerton Memorial Hall (then at the end of Stonegate Road) for Sunday Services, and these began on April 17th 1955 with 70 people attending the morning service and 50 the evening. The following Friday April 22nd the Church was formed at a service at South Parade, Headingley. The members drawn from other Leeds Baptist Churches were symbolically “Dismissed” to the new fellowship and other Christians were accepted on Profession of Faith. In all 49 people became Moortown Baptist Church that evening. In the ‘Charge to the Church’ they were reminded “ **You are Christ’s Church; you belong to Him; you are not just a voluntary human association, responsible to yourselves alone.... What kind of Church Moortown is in the future generations depends on what you are now; how you worship, work and live**”. All the Foundation Members signed their names in the Church Roll and in the Pulpit Bible (presented by Eric Clarke).

Moortown Baptist Church, by the grace of God, was born.

Opening of the Building (1st Phase) – 4th June 1955

A few weeks later on 4th June the first phase of the building (consisting of the present vestibule, Church Hall, cloakrooms and care-taker's store) was officially opened. Dr. Flowers was Chairman, the Deputy Lord Mayor attended and the opening ceremony was performed by F.W. Dawson who had worked so hard and for so many years to see this happy occasion come about. The following day, June 5th, saw the beginning of the Sunday School at 10.00am and the first services at 10.45 and 6.30. With the good wishes and prayerful support of fellow Baptists and other local churches, Moortown was under way.

MINISTRY OF REV. F.WINSOR BOND B.A. (1955-1967)

In June 1956 the new church was surrounded by fields except on the Stonegate Road side, but it was clear the Minister and members had no intention of sitting back and admiring the view! Through the summer and autumn of 1955 a basis of organisation and a pattern of activities were developed. Mr. H.J. Smith and Mr. C.R. Sheridan had already been appointed Secretary and Treasurer respectively and in October the first six deacons were elected. Of these only one, Ronnie Payne, is still actively amongst us. The December Church Meeting finally approved the Church Rules. These developments were but preparations for the real business of the Church – to win others for Christ.

Visitation Campaigns and Expansion (1955- 59)

The outstanding feature of the Church in its early years was its growth and ways in which growth came about. On the second Sunday of the Church's life Mr. Bond received enquiries about Baptism. Each Spring and Autumn from 1955 – 1959 intensively organised visitation campaigns of the district were carried out. *Every* edition of the Church's Newsletter carried information from the Evangelism Committee, and thorough preparation of visitors was carried out by Mr. Bond. The whole Church seems to have been involved – if not in the actual house to house calls, then in clerical work recording results of visits or refreshing the visitors, and support of the visitors as 'prayer – partners'. The first area visited was the Carr Manor Estate and in March 1956 a full visitation of the Moortown Estate was started. The response was encouraging in the form of new worshippers and Sunday School scholars and within months of coming into existence the Church was aware that its buildings were inadequate. In addition there were clearly new needs to be met.

In January 1956 the first of the uniformed organisations – the Cubs-began, soon to be followed by Scouts, Guides and Brownies, and already a Sunday School, Women's Meeting, Choir and Young People's Group were catering for different needs. By the second anniversary the Church had 106 members and 188 children in the Sunday School (many of the classes being held in Leaffield Clinic) and had taken the step, in faith, of going forward with the second phase of the buildings.

Further Building Operations

The present Church buildings were completed in three phases. The first comprised the Church Hall, vestibule, cloakrooms and kitchen. The second phase consisted of a 'two-way' hall (with a stage at the rear) representing half the intended Church Sanctuary, and including a 'temporary' Baptistry – still in use today. A mysterious feature was a copper plate of information (perhaps for future archaeologists?) including the names of the members, which was set into the concrete under the floor. It is marked by a small brass disc in the parquet floor. The final phase was to have been the remaining half of the Sanctuary, plus vestries and offices. (This phase was never built as planned but instead other major extensions were made in 1974 and additional offices in 1992).

The work on the second phase got under way in late 1956. As further 'temporary' accommodation the Church acquired a large wooden site-shed from the Coal Board and this was erected at the rear of the new building by volunteer labour. The 'annexe', as it came to be known, was to give over 5 years' service for Sunday School departments and youth work. Some people say that despite all the cleaning we never got rid of the coal dust! As the new

building neared completion more volunteers led by Mr. Bond and Bob Stephens, built temporary vestries against the end wall. The new buildings, which were opened on October 19th 1956, cost a further £13,000 and the Church once again faced a large building fund debt.

Reasons for Growth

In a report on the Church's growth given at the time, Mr. Bond claimed this was due to 1] Faith and Prayer 2] Hard Work 3] Deepening fellowship amongst the members of the Church and congregation. He went on " We are ordinary peoplebut it has pleased God to do something with us, and to lead us into a wonderful experience of his love and grace. We are debtors both to God and man. Let us do all we can to honour the debt".

Debts and their Problems

That 'debt' was partly represented by the loans of over £14,000 which had been received from the Baptist Union and Yorkshire Baptist Association. Another feature of the church's life in those early years was, therefore, the attempts to reduce the debt. It was decided to try and clear the loan from the Y.B.A. first, as their funds were more limited and had pressing calls upon them.

Clearly financial needs did affect the Church in the years which followed, but it was recognised that the debt arose from the way in which the Church was being blessed and somehow repayments were always met. Money –making efforts were never allowed to become the purpose of the Church's existence. There were sales of work, concerts, gift days, etc., but also giving to the B.U. Home Work Fund and to the BMS, as well as to other new or struggling churches.

By 1962 the debt had been reduced to £6,000 when yet another step of faith – the purchase of Stonegate House for £ 10,000 pushed it up again. Moreover in 1961 the Church had come 'off the Home Work Fund'. From the outset the Church had been indebted to the B.U. under the Initial Pastorate Scheme. By this the Home Work Fund had paid Mr. Bond's basic stipend but this now became the Church's own responsibility.

Because finance was a permanent problem of the Church in the early days, it is all the more remarkable that there was such a wide range of activities and outreach. Much of the credit for this must lie with Mr. Bond who occasionally gently reminded the Church that Sales of Work and 'building fund efforts' must never be allowed to become ends in themselves.

Stonegate House

As already indicated, in Autumn 1962 the Church decided to purchase Stonegate House. This decision, which was by a narrow margin was to prove of great value in the future. It also prevented Stonegate House from becoming a pub! Stonegate House was a large property set in 1.25 acres of land a hundred yards from the Church along Stonegate Road. The purchase enabled the Church to get rid of the draughty 'Annexe' but it also meant the need for a full time caretaker. The top floor of the house became a caretaker's flat and offices for the YBA. The remainder was adapted for Sunday School and Young Peoples' work and even the large garage was put to use as a Scout H.Q. The grounds made attractive surroundings for the annual BMS garden parties and the grass tennis court was frequently used – for football! Over the years Stonegate House was extensively used and eventually proved a source of great

blessing to the Church. However, it also caused many problems – the upkeep of the grounds for example, and regular repair bills for damage done to windows and other fittings.

Deepening of Spiritual Life

The rapid growth of the church in its first five years began to level off in the 1960's and the need to deepen the commitment and faith of the fellowship assumed a prominent position. By the 5th anniversary Mr. Bond was talking about the need to grow in 'Quality' as well as 'Quantity' and to this end commended a venture in October 1960 – 'Christian Living Week'. This was subtitled 'A refresher course for Christians of all ages'. Its broad themes were 'Our Faith', 'Our worship', 'Our Baptist Heritage', 'Our Citizenship', 'Our Devotional Life', 'Our Mission in Moortown'. The meetings took place each night for a week and all other Church activities were suspended. Many felt a real sense of spiritual renewal and the venture was repeated under the leadership of Dr. David Russell (then Principal of Rawdon College) in 1963. As Mr. Bond worked to build on these conferences he was helped by a series of Student Assistants from the nearby Rawdon Baptist College.

Wider Involvement

Nor was the church only concerned with itself. From the beginning great efforts were made to make Moortown a Missionary minded Church. Gladys Shaw as Missionary Secretary produced numerous informative articles in the bi-monthly Newsletter and one of the Church's own members Dr. Michael Flowers and his wife June were accepted for service with BMS in East Pakistan (Bangladesh) in 1960. The annual BMS deputation weekends were well supported, and in fact the first deputation preacher in October 1955 was a certain Rev F.N. Carpenter of Dewsbury who was to play such an important role in the church's future. It was a particular cause of joy to Mr. Bond and the church when in 1965 the Bonds' younger son, Stephen, and his wife Lydia were accepted as BMS Missionaries in Congo. The gift of a Furlough House in Parkside Road to BMS by Brenda Toole brought a succession of missionary families into contact with the church after October 1965.

Another important feature to record was the relationship with the Jewish Community. The large Jewish community on the Church's doorstep was a challenge. During visitation campaigns many visitors reported being well received in Jewish homes and, for several years, the Church offered the use of a room for a Jewish service on Friday evenings until the Jewish Hall was completed. The challenge and opportunity to share with our Jewish neighbours remains.

Other forms of involvement beyond the bounds of Moortown itself were those in the Local Council of Churches and with our fellow Baptists in the Leeds District and the YBA. From the start Mr. Bond played a full part in the Moor Allerton Council. An Over 60's Club, which ran for many years, was started in conjunction with St. John's Church in 1965 and over the years Moortown hosted several ecumenical meetings and services. However, this was not always with the fullest support and enthusiasm of the whole church. There seems to have been more support for Baptist causes and Mr. Bond's election to the Presidency of the YBA in 1965 was an honour both for him and the Church – still one of the youngest in the association.

1965 – 1966

As the 1960's moved on the Church remained active and busy. By 1965 (the tenth anniversary) the membership had passed 200 of which 72 had joined the Church through Baptism. However, the annual returns to the YBA showed the Church had 211 members - but only 200 seats - yet, as Mr Bond pointed out in the Newsletter, shortage of seats was not normally a problem! Suggestions from the diaconate that the Church might consider a stewardship campaign were not accepted by the Church Meeting. Mr. Bond was having to appeal for more people to consider supporting the midweek prayer meeting and in the January 1966 Newsletter wrote frankly of some Church members not pulling their weight. "We all need to examine ourselves, and to ask God to show us where we are failing, and what more we should be doingWe must not let ourselves drift into becoming a pleasant little self-contained fellowship..... oblivious to the fact that the purpose of the Church's existence is mission, in the biggest sense of the word"

Early Retirement

Perhaps one reason for Mr. Bond's sense of disappointment at that point was that illness was weakening him and the Church had come to rely too much on the one man to supply its drive and direction. By October 1966 Mr. Bond, who was suffering from Parkinson's Disease, had announced his retirement plans. He spoke of the need for a younger man and his need to take a "few months rest" before considering a new pastorate. The Bonds had bought a cottage at Hunton near Bedale and urged the Church to begin looking for a new pastor, prior to their departure in April.

Summing up

How is it possible to sum up Winsor Bond's remarkable 12 years of ministry at Moortown? He came to Moortown with a varied experience as an S.C.M. organiser, an RAF chaplain and as pastor at Bentley near Doncaster and Halstead in Essex. Under his wise, enthusiastic and vigorous leadership a new cause became a thriving Church of 200 members in 12 years. He was held in respect and affection by all who knew him. Yet he was humble and, according to his wife had a low estimate of his own abilities and high dependence on his Lord.

One deacon said of him " He has shared in our joys and what fun we have had. He has shared in our sorrows and how great was his compassion.....We are all the richer for his conduct of Church affairs." Yet another testified that it was in the 'intimacies of pastoral work' that he was most appreciated. His wife, Connie, knew this, and knew also that this was not easy as 'he was deeply reserved; had no small talk, and about himself and his problems seldom talked at all.' He loved the countryside – especially mountains and the peace of bird-watching. Connie Bond too, cannot go unmentioned. She gave unswerving support to her husband and entered vigorously into the whole life of the Church. As leaders, teachers and preachers, pastors and friends, they would be difficult to replace.

MINISTRY OF REV. RALPH DRAKE B.D. (1967 – 1979)

Call and Induction

The decision to call Ralph Drake to the Pastorate at Moortown was a virtually unanimous one. Mr. Drake was a Yorkshireman who had come out of Manchester Baptist College as an outstanding student. He had wide experience in pastorates at Wrexham, Coventry and Wigan. He came to a church which was in good heart and active but offering the challenge of being led on to deeper commitment, experience and service. In April the Church held a farewell meeting for Mr. and Mrs. Bond. Ralph and Barbara Drake and their three young children arrived soon afterwards and the Induction Service took place on 1st. July 1967. As a real sign of the continuity of the work Winsor Bond was able to be present to lead the Prayer of Induction.

At the outset of his ministry Mr. Drake stressed the ongoing task of the church “ To serve people and to introduce them to the love of God that we have experienced . . . First we must be a friendly community, welcoming people, treating them as persons and sharing our faith with them”. Moortown had always had a reputation for being a friendly community and Mr. Drake was not seeking to make any great break with the past – but there was undoubtedly a new approach.

House Groups and Youth Work

A newlook magazine – the ‘Outlook’ – was soon speaking of the need for Christian Education ‘to give a reason for the faith that is in us’ and this was approached in several ways. Perhaps the most significant was the creation of House Groups. These were planned initially as six monthly meetings from November 1967 to April 1968 on the general theme ‘Talking about the Church’ and designed to “extend fellowship in an informal atmosphere and to help us to think and pray about our faith”.

All members of church and congregation were encouraged to join, and they were arranged in six areas with different homes within each area acting as hosts in turn. The format of regular groups was repeated several times in the early years of Mr. Drake’s Ministry. The House meetings were supported by mid-week Bible Studies. At the same time the ongoing life of the Church was sustained through a continuing emphasis on pastoral care and visiting.

A new development in Youth Work took place in Summer 1968 when Mr. and Mrs. Drake and Margaret Howard took a party of 22 young people to Germany to share fellowship with the young people of the Langenfeld Evangelical Church. The visit was a success and resulted in a return visit to Leeds in 1969 when 21 German youngsters stayed in Leeds and went with a Moortown group for a week’s stay in the Lake District. The Church was, at this time, trying a new approach to Youth Work by restricting the mid-week Youth Club, (which had experienced some problems) to those with a direct connection with the Church – aiming at the ‘spiritual, moral and social education’ of young people. Not for the last time the issue of ‘open’ or ‘closed’ youth groups was being debated.

A Cross, an Organ and a New Secretary

Three other changes deserve mention at this stage. Firstly, the donation in May 1968 of a large wooden cross for the wall behind the platform in the church; secondly, the arrival in summer of the hundreds of parts of a pipe-organ (obtained from a Congregational Church in Morley) to replace the ailing electric organ which the church had had since 1957. The organ was built on the stage at the rear of the Church and dedicated in a service held on 6th September 1969. It also meant a new debt of some £960, which was raised in a remarkably short time as a result of generous giving and much hard work. The third change in September 1968 was the retirement as Church Secretary of John Smith who had held the position for over 12 years of devoted service. He handed over to Arthur Barr, only recently arrived in Leeds, but recognised by the church as the right man for the job.

Continuity and Revival of Earlier Features

Mr. Drake's Ministry not only brought 'newness' but, of course, continuity and in some cases the revival of some earlier features of the church's life. The continuity was represented by the ongoing and prospering work of Sunday School, Uniformed Organisations, Ladies' meetings, choir and many others. Also by the continuing interest in Missionary work, and as the Flowers and Bonds returned to Britain in 1970, Roger and Christine Robson left for Congo.

An example of the revival of earlier features was the decision in April and May 1969 to carry out a new house-to-house visitation in the Carr Manor area. Over 400 homes were visited and useful contacts made. Preparation for this had been made through House Groups and Mid-week Church Bible Studies. In Autumn of the same year a new 'Christian Living Course' was commenced extending over a number of weeks and organised by the Rev. J.G. Hobbs on the theme of 'Using the New Testament' and 'Prayer and the Devotional Life'.

Another feature of the church's life, which had not changed much, was the financial burden. When Mr. Drake became minister the Building Fund was still nearly £7,000 and the Church's giving was disappointing, in respect of both the weekly offering and Gift Day Appeals.

Family Church (1971)

Nevertheless the church continued to look for new ways of improving and developing its work, and an important decision was taken in January 1971 to accept the proposals of a committee for the replacement of the existing Sunday School by a 'Family Church' system. Sunday School numbers had been declining and many parents of Sunday School scholars were uninvolved in the church's life. The proposal was therefore to replace the existing separate Sunday School (meeting from 10.00am – 10.45 prior to the morning service at 11.00am) by a Family Church in which all ages would commence worship together at 10.30 am and then divide into departments by age – the bulk of the adult congregation remaining in the worship service. The new system began on May 2nd 1971 and was seen as 'a positive step to make progress in the realm of Christian Education as well as bringing young and old, the whole church family in fact, together in an opening act of Worship.' That the system has proved its worth over the years is undoubted, but initial problems were caused by the shortage of space in the main church premises and the fact that youngsters - carrying chairs - had to walk round to Stonegate House for their classes at about 10.50 am whatever the weather!

Growth and Renewal

In May 1972 Ralph Drake gave a report on the first five years of his Ministry in which he pointed to some problems and shortcomings in the Church's life – a number of lapsed and non-active members; continuing financial difficulties; the need for sharing the work of the church more effectively "We are a Church of gifted and capable people, but much work falls on too few members and the burden leaves them sometimes frustrated". However, he was also able to detect some clear signs of encouragement and God's hand at work especially in such areas as the newly formed Venturers group for 11-14 olds; the House Bible – Study Group organised by the Cross-Roads Club for teenagers; the Ladies' morning Prayer and Bible-study group and increasing numbers involved in community care through the Council of Churches' Scheme.

1972-1975

These developments were built upon in the next few years and the period 1972 – 75 can be seen as a turning point and considerable step forward in the life of the church. Undoubtedly the Church was responding to the Charismatic Renewal, which was influencing all the mainline denominations in the UK with a new awareness of the person and work of the Holy Spirit. There was vigorous debate about aspects of the renewal movement but, unlike some other churches, which split on the charismatic issue, Moortown stayed resolutely together. This may be because the church leadership worked hard to accommodate a range of views and to value other approaches and the charismatic influences built on much which was already going on.

- Firstly in September 1972 Mr. Drake instituted a new series of mid-week meetings under the title 'Thursday night is Church Night'. Attendance at mid-week meetings had often been disappointing in the past but these meetings attracted up to 40 'regulars' of all ages for prayer, bible-study and discussion.
- At the same time the Young Peoples' Coffee Bar began Saturday evening 'Festivals of Jesus' using films, Gospel music and drama as means of outreach. These attracted large numbers of young people with frequent conversions and baptisms. In 1975 the Green Gables weekend away in Scarborough became the first of a series, which were to lead probably hundreds to meaningful encounters with God over the years.
- In November 1972 the Otley Road House Fellowship began to meet to listen to taped talks by David Watson on the 'Holy Spirit Today', and a large Moortown contingent shared in those gatherings at the home of Michael and June Flowers. The group was to meet every Tuesday for 13 years (latterly at Rose Lea across the roundabout from the church) and 60 to 90 regulars attended, often to hear notable speakers. There was a danger it could become a church within the church or even separate from Moortown, but this was resisted by the leaders. Eventually it was to become 5 house groups and played an important part in many lives as well as influencing the church as a whole. The study of the gifts of the Spirit in these groups began to influence a new openness in worship, and new music and songs being used in Church.
- Some emphases of the Charismatic Movement, however, were looked on with uncertainty by some in the church. Nevertheless, people pulled together and growing interest in the Gospel – among all ages – was shown by the encouraging numbers coming forward for Baptism, 1 in 1971; 10 in 1972; 14 in 1973; 13 in 1974, as well as others joining the church by transfer or profession of faith.

- In January 1973 the Church took a decision which was also to play an important part in renewing its life. The decision was to sell Stonegate House and to build a series of additional rooms and halls on the existing site. These extensions were designed by Rod Russell, whose company carried out the work at cost price. The eventual sale of Stonegate House for £30,000 to the Jewish Housing Association was sufficient to clear existing debts and pay for the new extensions.

An appeal for £1,500 for furnishings was launched and the first Gift Day appeal produced almost £800 – a further sign of change. The decoration of the new premises was tackled by volunteers, ably led by Stan and Rod Russell, and the benefits of working together at a practical job were enjoyed. The new premises, comprising, Meeting Area, Sports' Hall, Kitchen, Corner Room, Lounge, Minister's Office and Music Room were officially opened on 8th June 1974 by Mrs. Connie Bond. It was a time of encouragement and joy, saddened by the memory that in the midst of all this activity the Church's first minister Winsor Bond had died on December 4th 1973.

New Activities

All these threads of renewal were reflected in the widening and deepening of the Church's activities. The membership continued to rise steadily. New activities began such as the Playgroup (October 1974), new house groups, and the opportunity to serve refreshments after Sunday services in the new Meeting Area helped develop the fellowship. The House Groups were a particularly strong growing point in the Church's life.

In March 1975 the Day Care Centre was started – providing each Wednesday, companionship, a good lunch and activities and outings for elderly housebound and handicapped people. This has proved one of the Church's most enduring means of service and outreach to the local community.

Some difficulty was experienced in harnessing all these bursts of new activity and enabling the whole church to be involved. An attempt was made in 1975 to hold a 'One Step Forward' campaign aimed at encouraging everyone to make some new step of commitment "whether in the work of Prayer, Bible Study, Visiting, Financial support, work of Family Church or perhaps for some, to commit their lives to Christ for the first time." The inaugural fellowship meal was well supported but it is doubtful whether the whole scheme was a success. There was coming together through the Conference weekends which took place each September after 1975 until the early 1980's. Each created great interest but the Church did not always follow them up effectively. Perhaps the exception to this was the Conference in 1978, addressed by Rev. Tom Smail which did much to explain the true nature and meaning of renewal – something of benefit to both 'enthusiastic charismatics' and others.

Sabbatical Term for Mr. Drake

The strength and unity of the Church showed themselves when Ralph Drake was granted a well-deserved Sabbatical term at Ruschlikon Baptist Seminary in Switzerland in Autumn 1976. A well – organised team of deacons under Rev. F.N. Carpenter as Moderator was able to keep things running reasonably smoothly, though they were given some insight into the extraordinary range of work with which Mr. Drake had been coping.

1977-1979

On Mr. Drake's return new challenges appeared. The 'Whole Story' Campaign in Leeds in 1977 led by David Watson stimulated interest and brought new converts into the Church, and the desire to further evangelise led to the church becoming involved in the 'Evangelism Explosion' system. There was also growing interest in the Church in the serious application of our faith to social and political issues and this was reflected in a Conference about 'Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger'. For a time this became a major issue for Moortown and in an attempt to 'live more simply so that others may simply live' some in the church became involved in sharing domestic appliances, cars etc. Eventually, as with much of the rest of the Western Church, interest waned, perhaps because the radical changes in lifestyle advocated appeared too much for a church in a comfortable middle-class society. However, a new and lively Church magazine – 'Roundabout Moortown' began to deal with these and other issues.

End of Mr. Drake's Ministry

In March 1979 the Church was surprised to hear of Ralph Drake's resignation and acceptance of a call to Loughton Union Church in Essex. Like his predecessor Mr. Drake had served the Church for 12 years and believed it was right that a new man should lead the work onwards into the 1980's. In summing up his ministry Mr. Drake wrote "The Church has known so much change; people have come and gone; the youth work has grown wonderfully; families have been added to the fellowship; financially we have moved out of the years of struggle and debt; we have developed our community involvement; and all in all the church is maturing into a balanced and loving family of God". He went on with typical modesty "There is no room for self-congratulation. No one is indispensable. What God has done, is all of Him and He has graciously used many people with their many and varied gifts and talents."

Ralph Drake did not accept much of the credit for the developments during his years of ministry but he deserves to. During his 12 years the membership rose by over 100. He baptised over 80 believers, and in an area of high social mobility the church benefited from Christians of varied experience coming to join its fellowship. As preacher, pastor and friend, he showed tireless devotion to the life of the Church. Like his predecessor, a lover of the peace of the hills and of great music, he nevertheless involved himself totally in the busy life of a suburban church and did much to deepen the spiritual life and fellowship.



Day Care Centre



Pipe Organ, 1969-93

INTERREGNUM JULY 1979 – SEPTEMBER 1980

Ralph Drake's departure came at a time when Moortown appeared to be flourishing. The membership, around 350, was at an all-time high; there were more Baptisms in that year than any previous year in the Church's history; Young peoples' work was fruitful; and the Charismatic Renewal was continuing to refresh equip and stimulate new ideas in worship and outreach. The Church had embraced the 'Evangelism Explosion' approach to visiting and personal evangelism and, enthusiastically led by Wilf Wyatt, this was bearing fruit and continued during the Interregnum. At the same time, in addition to maintaining all the Church's activities, preparation was made to celebrate the 25th anniversary in April 1980. A General Election was in progress and Church Meetings seemed equally occupied with 2 key issues - producing a list of Qualities to be looked for in a future Minister **and** producing questions to be put to Election Candidates.

During the vacancy the Church was ably led by Rev Norrie Carpenter and David Wilson as Moderators, and by the Deacons. The search for a new pastor produced several names before Rev Michael Caddick of Wycliffe Baptist Church Reading was asked to visit the Church a second time to meet the members and to 'preach with a view'. The decision to call Michael to the pastorate had only 1 dissenting voice and his ministry began after a memorable Induction Service on 27th September when the charges to the Church and Minister were given by the Rev Dr Barrie White, Principal of Regent's Park College Oxford.

The New Minister

Michael Caddick was a teaching Minister from an education background and with a charismatic theology. Both he and his wife Elizabeth had trained as teachers of Religious Education and had taught in Cornwall and Hong Kong before a call to the Ministry led to study at Regent's Park College Oxford, and pastorates at South Oxford and Reading. Michael had studied church growth both in Britain and the USA and believed in building a ministerial team 'of pastorally qualified people, who would support him in his existing work and provide a think-tank for further spiritual initiatives'. He came to an active Church in good heart but looking to be taken forward both in understanding and harnessing the Gifts of the Spirit and in the application of biblical faith to the many issues and problems of an increasingly divided society and world.

MINISTRY OF REV. MICHAEL CADDICK M.A. B.D. (1980 – 1989)

Continuity and Change

Michael Caddick's ministry began by seeking to build up the community of the church and also to extend the possibilities of ministry. At his first Church Meeting (with 81 present) part of the discussion was about the processing of some 140 questionnaires from the BU's 'Call to Commitment'. Within a few months this led to the Moortown 'Interest and Skills Survey' which all members of the existing congregation and future newcomers were invited to complete. This gave the Minister and Deacons a wealth of detail of gifts (spiritual and others) to use and develop, recorded on a manual filing system and much later (when opposition to such extravagance had been overcome!) on a computer data – base.

At the same meeting dates for a Church Holiday at Blaithwaite, Cumbria (Summer 1981) were settled. At regular intervals since then, Church Holidays have been a feature of the church's life and an important deepener of fellowship and faith.

Some in the Church were already questioning whether the traditional 'one man ministry' was either possible in a congregation of Moortown's size or in line with biblical emphasis on the Spirit's gifts to the whole body. Yet, change could only be introduced very slowly. From the outset Michael Caddick announced that he wanted the former Moderator Norrie Carpenter to run Church membership and Baptismal Preparation classes – almost a revolutionary change to some! However by April 1981 the Church was happy to appoint John Wilson – a young member who had recently finished a theology degree at Oxford – as 'Lay Assistant' for 15 months. John was to be concerned with: Young People; preparation of worship; evangelism; visiting; occasional preaching and Moortown's outreach to Swarcliffe!! Although not officially a minister John was to pave the way for a succession of Youth Pastors and prove that there really was work for more than one man in leading the ministry of Moortown. Shortly after his appointment for the first time the Church appointed a Secretarial Assistant – Joan Hill- for just one morning a week!

Issues in 'Church and State' in the 1980's

The 1980's were politically divided and divisive. Some national and international issues were reflected in the Church's life – notably unemployment and nuclear armaments, but there were also 'church issues' which occupied much of the time of minister, deacons and church meeting. All of these issues could cause disagreement but they also stimulated much thought and prayerful reflection and were instrumental in how the church developed.

The Church's own internal issues, outlined in a series of surveys, included a very welcome problem – what to do about **overcrowding in many Services**; and an issue which persisted through much of the 1980's - **music and worship**.

Overcrowding

The continuing effects of Renewal and Michael Caddick's ministry had resulted in many services having more attenders than seats! The problem of overcrowding was tackled in a number of ways over the next few years. Suggestions included holding 2 morning services (9.30 and 10 .45); rearranging the chairs; and opening a second doorway for an overflow in the Meeting Area at the side of the sanctuary. The latter was accomplished in 1982.

More immediately the rearrangement of the seating into a semi-circular and sometimes complete circle shape was welcomed by many but disliked by others. For a time the church got used to looking at one another during worship and the new format certainly facilitated

sharing in open prayer and worship. The boldest response to overcrowding, however, was to welcome it and to seek further growth by beginning, in Autumn 1981, the Systematic Visitation of the catchment area of the church over the next 5 years. This began with over 80 volunteers visiting 1250 homes close to the church in the Street Lane and Queenshill areas. The visitors reported many positive visits and the attractively produced welcome leaflet (on what was to become the trademark beige paper) showed images of crowded services and housegroups, and detailed the wide range of activities at Moortown throughout the week. The continuing, lively and regular magazine 'Roundabout Moortown' also helped to project the Church to the wider community.

Music and Worship

Moortown's diversity has always been in some ways a great strength and engine of growth and renewal. However, it has to be admitted that at times differences did not always appear positive. This was especially so with the issue of styles of music and worship in the 1980's. At the 1985 AGM, an honest and open account was given by Michael Caddick of the different views held within Moortown about: God, the Bible, the Church and Worship. Michael found himself in the unexpected role of 'Bridge-builder', and in the matter of music it must have often seemed a rickety bridge.

In 1980 the church was already familiar with a growing range of songs inspired by the Charismatic Renewal but also had a choir which felt its role was to lead music in worship and that **the** church instrument was the organ and not guitars! However, no-one could deny that the increasingly informal styles of worship (still, as before, based around challenging biblical exposition) were attractive to many and not just the young.

Sadly, for some the differences were unbridgeable and the Organist and Choirmaster, Don Clarke, resigned in November 1982 followed by Assistant Organist Bill Cantrill in 1983.

As a result of a paper by the Pastor on music in worship, Wilf Wyatt and Michael Flowers were asked to form a 'Musical Directorate' to co-ordinate and prepare the music for worship with the Minister. In April 1984 detailed Guidelines for Music in Worship were produced and although the issue continued to be a problem (at least for church meetings!) the Church stayed together.

Changes in leadership

To many in the Church, these differences - often worked out in letters to the deacons or discussed in Church Meetings - were not the real state of the Church. Moortown was continuing to grow in numbers and in the range of its activities and looking to widen its ministerial team. However, some were less bold about the financial and other commitments needed to employ 'staff' and perhaps too wedded to the traditional one-man ministry. In February 1983 Michael Caddick produced a paper on the needs for personnel in full-time ministry. He and John Wilson had done time sheets for several weeks, which showed both were working much more than 'full time'. However, some were cautious and in March there was an insufficient majority in favour of calling John Wilson as Assistant Pastor. Shortly afterwards John accepted a call to Falmouth Baptist Church. In the same year Arthur Barr, who had served loyally and effectively as Church Secretary since 1968, resigned and was replaced by Roger Hemming. In 1984 an 'in-house' solution was found when June Flowers accepted a call to be Church Pastoral Worker for 2 days a week unpaid, initially for 3 years, a role she fulfilled with great graciousness.

Looking back from today's situation of several full-time staff it may be hard to understand the hesitancy of that time. Nevertheless it did not reflect the vitality of the Church. At the next AGM it was reported that there had been 34 new members that year and that the membership stood at 335 with estimates of 470 families in contact with the church through various groups and activities. A big job for one man.

Widening of the scope of Ministry 1981 –88

If the church was hesitant about increasing its ministerial team, under Michael Caddick's leadership the range of ministry, outreach and community was widening. Some of this was in response to developments in society, especially high unemployment, and some as a result of the continuing and changing influences of Charismatic Renewal.

- In March 1981 an Unemployment Group was formed for church members and others affected by this growing problem.
- In June 1984 a **Healing Group** was formed and Sunday Healing Services began. This was linked to the ministry of John Wimber and the American Vineyard Fellowship. In 1985 numbers of Moortown members attended meetings in London and Sheffield and members of the Wimber Team visited the Church. Their emphasis on Christian Healing chimed with needs at the Church and led to many testimonies of changed lives.
- In 1985 the response to the **Ethiopian Famine Appeal** was rapid and generous.
- Concerns about **social deprivation** in Britain highlighted in Bishop David Sheppard's book 'Bias to the Poor' were also raised in Church Meetings and led to action. A small nucleus of members became involved in 'Faith in Leeds' working on issues raised by the Anglican 'Faith in the City' response to deprivation. In February 1986 Hilary Willmer introduced the concept of a '**Furniture Store**' to recycle used furniture to the needy as a response by the Church to the Thatcher Government's ending of grants for capital goods.
- A Moortown team led by John Petts began regular pastoral work at **Eastmoor** Secure Unit.
- Dr. Doug Duckworth a Christian lecturer in applied psychology began to offer **counselling** sessions through the church to discuss personal problems.
- Local outreach was extended by adding, to existing play-groups and toddlers' groups, the '**Viewpoint**' coffee mornings, aimed at non-church families through meetings at the home of June Flowers, and the **Treasure Seekers** Bible Club for 7-11 year olds. The annual holiday Bible Clubs reached many new families.
- The **House-Groups** were restructured into 12 area groups with 250 people committed to them. They were to be the basis of a new pastoral structure and came out of the 'Saints Alive' study materials.
- In January a report from a Deacons' day of prayer mentioned for the first time the idea of **Church Planting** in the Shadwell area.
- Perhaps the most successful area of ministry continued to be the **youth work** so that the replacement of this aspect of John Wilson's work was seen as necessary by all. In Autumn 1985 John Lowton became full-time Church Youth Worker for 2 years in the first instance. The Church Meeting in November when he was welcomed, also saw the church wholeheartedly supporting the application of Geoff Colmer for ministerial training at Spurgeon's.
- In 1987 John Lowton's contract was extended and Phil Commons was called to service with BMS in Bangladesh.

Such a range of activities seems to encapsulate the nature of Moortown at this time. Different members had different priorities in how they saw the outworking of their faith, resulting in a growing and very active church, where God was clearly working in individuals' lives.

Evaluation of the Church

Self Examination

The differences evident during the '80's can be seen as providing a dynamic tension which was continually leading the church into new ways of doing things. The Deacons were sometimes concerned about division and challenged the church to look at itself. There was even reference in 1987 to the Church 'standing still' in some areas with no allowances in its budget for evangelism and church planting. But was this the true picture?

YBA Evaluators

As part of the 'Advance 87' initiative the Church asked for a YBA evaluation team to put the whole of its life 'under the microscope'. The Report of the 3 evaluators was presented in January 1988 - 42 pages of detailed analysis based on 35 visits, including services, meetings and interviews with individuals. It described a church which had grown to 370 by mid 1986 – the largest in its history. The church had a 'higher proportion of young people and young married couples than in most Baptist churches'. 'The membership displays warm friendship: they have expertise, wide Christian contacts, and are articulate. There is a core of highly committed Christians who give up a great deal of their personal time to the life and service of the church.' The Sunday services had particularly attracted a large number of young people (including students) who 'appreciate the teaching Michael Caddick affords'.

The report noted that Moortown had always been a growing church with particularly intense periods of numerical increase under each of the 2 previous ministries. However, the demography of the church had changed. Growth can come by transfers of Christians from other churches, but also by conversions (shown by baptisms and professions of faith). In earlier years growth by conversion had averaged 11 each year, but under Michael Caddick it had dramatically increased to over 26 per year. This meant that an increasing proportion of the membership were new Christians with keen commitment but no background experience of the traditions and values of the 'established membership'. The church had moved to a large degree to meet the needs of new believers but this had 'sadly..... challenged the accepted standards and patterns which were so dear to those who had been members of Moortown and other Baptist churches for a long time'

This analysis seemed to explain the origins of some of the tensions in the church but was also a potentially misleading generalisation. There were many 'established members' who embraced many of the changes of recent years and new Christians who came to value the wisdom of historical structures. There was a danger of placing individuals in 'camps' and imagining polarisation where it did not exist.

The overwhelming majority of the Evaluation Report was very positive and revealed the wonderful variety of ways in which the activities were being blessed and were a blessing to the community. Even the Church Meeting they attended (so criticised by some) was praised as a relaxed meeting of reports, 2 major topics and 20 minutes of shared prayer in small groups. 'We could have wished that many church meetings elsewhere would follow such a pattern'

Nevertheless with so much going on there were criticisms and positive **recommendations** – 32 in all!

These ranged from minor matters connected with the buildings and routines such as the appointment of a chairman of the church meeting; the need for a regular monthly magazine; Bibles to be purchased for congregational use; the provision of more comfortable seating in the sanctuary; the men's toilets to be cleared of clutter and redecorated!; creeper to be grown up some of the outside walls.

More serious matters about the **direction and vision** of the church were:

- The church to discuss the different needs of mature Christians and new believers.
- As a matter of urgency the diaconate to consider the level of commitment ..throughout the church. The skills survey to be renewed, and targets set for increased giving.
- That over the next 2 years the church look to fill 3 new full-time posts—namely a youth leader; a pastoral administrator; a woman pastoral worker.
- If the church wished to pursue the idea of church planting .. a full-time church planter should be appointed to identify suitable areas, to present the vision to the church and to mobilise a team to establish each new cause.

In 2005 many of us will be able to tell which of these recommendations, small or great, were taken up by the church over the following years. It was clear that the evaluators saw Moortown as a successful church of great potential but felt that it was ‘at a critical stage’. They concluded ‘it is important that the church as a whole should have a clear concept of where it wants to go, and then sets goals to be achieved’. In the remaining years of Michael Caddick’s ministry the need to strengthen the staff team and the growing idea of church planting became the major centres of forward planning. At the same time however, the regular work of the church continued to thrive and even to expand.

1988-89 Staff Changes

The way ahead was not straightforward. In February 1988 John Lowton announced his decision to leave the Church Youth Worker job by summer and Wilf Wyatt became the new Church Secretary. Malcolm Hardyman became chairman of the Church Meeting. Michael Caddick (who had taken a short study leave at Oxford in Autumn 1987) was granted a longer sabbatical, visiting projects in the Far East for OMF, of which he was a regional representative. The search for a new Youth Pastor led to the appointment of Jonathan Hayward in July 1988 and the setting up of a support group for him helped greatly to strengthen the youth ministry. Under this leadership the youth work was to go forward creating a challenging yet nurturing pattern of activities for which many parents, (including this writer) were very grateful. Mention should also be made of the committed work of Neil and Heather Venables and the ‘Upper Room’ group.

The idea of a pastoral administrator took longer to sort out. During 1988 and 1989 Phil Commons, whilst waiting for a visa to go to Bangladesh with BMS, fulfilled much of the administrator’s role. In July 1989 Vera Earl was appointed to the post of Church Administrator—one which she was to fill with such dedication and loyalty for the next 12 years. The ministerial assistant, for whom Michael Caddick had so often asked, was not found. In April 1989 Michael announced to the Church that he had accepted a call to Falmouth Baptist Church with effect from September.

Church planting

At the same time as these leadership changes were taking place the moves to plant new congregations were going ahead. Although a small group continued to pray for Meanwood, in January 1989 it was felt they did not have sufficient leaders to proceed with looking for a base at that time. More prominently a Shadwell group, after starting as a house group, began to meet in Wigton Moor Primary School from April 1989. By May it was meeting fortnightly as the ‘Shadwell Lane Christian Fellowship’ and involved about 30 adults. This was the origin

of the eventual **Street Lane Fellowship** when new premises were found in April 1990. By then the Church was in the middle of another Interregnum.

Conclusions on Michael Caddick's Ministry

The 1980's were a decade of great social change and political division. Some of this was reflected in what happened in the church. Differences of theology and church government, priorities of Christian action, and even tastes in music partly caused by temperament and cultural preferences, all affected church life. Although not a believer in the one man ministry Michael found himself dealing with these issues often very much on his own and in the unwanted role of 'Bridgebuilder'. It is the mark of the man and his gifts and abilities that in this situation his ministry saw so much growth both numerically and in the widening of the ministries of the church. His preaching output was outstanding in its range and quantity covering 2 of every 3 services throughout the 9 years he was pastor. In addition he had extensive commitments in the wider church through OMF and the Mainstream movement. His pastoral counselling was deeply appreciated for his perseverance and his wisdom.

Most of the differences outlined above were not evident in the regular work of the church and the overwhelming majority of the members were committed to the body and to one another. The Spirit was able to bless the church through so much diversity and when we listened we did learn from one another as well. Even a fire in February 1989 which damaged the Sports Hall store-room and the lounge, was turned to good effect as it was rebuilt as an enlarged lounge and an office for the Administrator. The rebuilding was done with volunteer labour - once again an occasion for deepening fellowship by working together. Michael and Elizabeth left a church which was certainly not 'standing still' but going forward with a great range of projects (even new chairs for the sanctuary!) and able to develop during another Interregnum.



Michael Caddick and Young People, 1983

INTERREGNUM AUGUST 1989 – SEPTEMBER 1991

A team of 3 Co-Moderators- Michael Flowers, David Wilson and Wilf Wyatt – was quickly in place and able to oversee the continuity of the full range of the Church's activities. A new Treasurer, Paul Hiley, and new Secretary, John Hornby, were appointed. In January the 'Way Forward Group', charged with filling the 'vacancy', was considering ideas on the future form of the church as well as profile ideas for a new minister. This was because Church Planting was now at the forefront of concerns.

Street Lane Fellowship

The February 1990 Church Meeting was told that the former Shadwell Lane group had found premises at the 'Step up Dance Studio' in Street Lane Roundhay. John Sloan and Neil Venables (with strong support from Michael Flowers) were leading a committee and proposed starting morning only services there on 15th April 1990. They were to remain part of Moortown and share finances. There were some problems about the exact nature of the link with the church. In September John Sloan in a report to the Church Meeting on the progress of the Street Lane Fellowship described it as a 'Satellite' – part of Moortown but with its own identity. Others at the same meeting expressed concerns that the church could develop into three congregations (MBC morning, SLF and the MBC evening service) with 'little common attendance'.

Eastern Europe - Romania

Another important new interest during the vacancy was the Church's response to the opening up of Eastern Europe with the collapse of the USSR and the communist bloc around 1990. In February 1990 Paul and Jean Hicks reported on a letter they had received from friends they had made in Cluj-Napoca Romania. By April 1990 a party was to go to Cluj with a large van carrying relief supplies and to make contacts and by September the church was pleased to endorse Twinning arrangements with the No 1 Baptist Church Cluj and regular visits began. In these ways an important part of the church's overseas mission began. The breadth of this overseas concern was shown by the fact that whilst £6,000 was raised over several months for the Romania relief trip, a one off 'Crisis in Africa Auction' raised £4,600 in a day.

A new Minister

The difficulties over the status of Street Lane and its link to Moortown partly explain the length of time it took to find a successor to Michael Caddick. Several approaches foundered over concerns about the 'dynamics' of the church plant. However, in April 1991 Rev Stephen Ibbotson of Peterborough was invited to 'preach with a view', first at Street Lane and the following week at Moortown, and to visit a range of other activities. It was made clear that he would be pastor to Moortown and to SLF and the decision to call him in May had only one dissenting vote. As preparations for the new ministry went ahead Jonathan Hayward's contract as Youth Pastor was extended to July 1992. A new form of ministry began in June when Margaret and Arthur Barr became trained 'Christian Listeners' the first of a number of members who over the years have offered a valued service of personal counselling. At the same time plans were produced by Rod Russell for further alterations and additions to the buildings involving redesigning the main entrance and vestibule and building extra offices [now occupied by the youth pastors and the counselling room]. These too were to be built partly using volunteer labour.

Stephen and Helena Ibbotson and their two young daughters were coming to a church still very much on the move and needing a clear vision of where God was leading next.

MINISTRY OF REV. STEPHEN IBBOTSON B.A. (1991 – 2001)

A New Beginning

Stephen Ibbotson had spent 14 years in his previous church at Peterborough where he had direct experience of church planting. He was well aware of the steps taken so far by Moortown in this direction and of the problems about settling the relationship between the 'plant' and the 'mother church'. He came with a clear agenda and was soon putting it into practice. At his first Church Meeting in October 1991 he reported on his visits to the membership, including Street Lane Fellowship, and spoke of the need for a 'Corporate Identity' and a church logo. Soon afterwards a proposal to make Church Meetings bi-monthly was accepted in the hope of improving attendance.

In January 1992 a new Leadership Team for Street Lane Fellowship, consisting of John Sloan, Michael Flowers, Michael Freeman and Stephen himself was appointed.

Targets were set for 1992 under the forward looking title 'Preparing for Growth', namely:

- To review the Youth ministry and find a replacement for Jonathan Haywood who was seeking Ministerial training at Northern Baptist College Manchester with the church's strong support.
- To develop a pattern of team leadership.
- To review the character and purpose of Sunday services.
- To develop a holistic mission policy with a view to future church plants.

Youth Ministry

There was little hesitation in putting these plans into action. As Jonathan's 4 years as youth pastor were drawing to a close, Simon Hall, converted through Moortown in his teens and with theology training from Oxford, was accepted unanimously as his successor.

New Leadership Structure

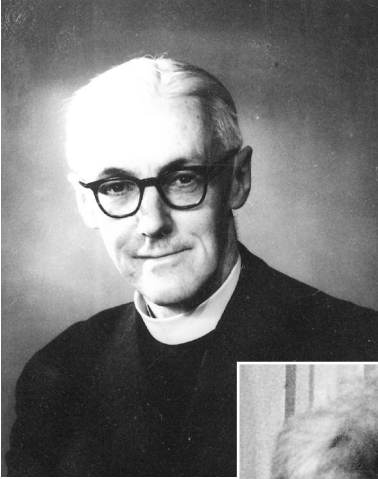
In July Stephen's plans for structural change, with a small leadership team separate from the diaconate, were first announced. There were misgivings expressed about the leadership being able to propose and co-opt new members but the new structure was approved with only four against. At the March 1992 AGM three Leaders, Michael Flowers, Andy Hobbs and John Sloan, were approved. Marcia Colledge was later appointed in 1993. In April 1992 David Newell, who had been Church Secretary since December 1990, resigned and was not replaced, as secretarial functions were now carried out by the fulltime Church Administrator. In May Ian Fulcher was appointed as student pastor/evangelist for the length of his distance training at Spurgeon's, with main responsibilities for Street Lane Fellowship.

Sunday Worship

A physical change to the interior of the sanctuary came as part of the review of services. The decision was taken at the beginning of 1993 to remove the ailing pipe organ (installed in 1969) which covered much of the rear platform. It was replaced by the present electronic organ donated by Edna Chadwick in memory of her husband, the artist Sam. This provided a solution to the long term seating space problem. The Church still had differing views about styles of worship. Imaginative attempts to meet a range of needs and preferences led, for a time, to setting up a system of three alternative evening services in different parts of the building- a celebration and preaching service in the sanctuary; a prayer and reflection service in the old hall and a youth celebration in the sports hall. The system, known as '**3 in 1**', was featured on BBC 'Songs of Praise' in a programme about Christian youth culture.

Mission

There was also a new approach to mission. The search for a logo had produced a symbol and the phrase 'Sharing Life'. Under this heading a varied mission strategy developed including:



Winsor Bond



Ralph Drake



Michael Caddick



Stephen Ibbotson



Gordon Hindmarch



Building Site, 1954



Church Service, 2005



Minister and Deacons, 1955



Staff and Deacons, 2005



March for Jesus, 1989



Church Holiday, 1998

the 'Roots' project to contact people with former connections with the church; the first use of the Alpha course; using gap-year students to help with the youth work; house to house visitation; and even Cabaret in clubs and pubs. But the main emphasis was on further church planting.

As there was a group of people both at Street Lane and Moortown who lived in the Chapel Allerton area, it was unanimously agreed by the church meeting that a new congregation should be started there. Following a period in which they met as a house group, under the leadership of Michael and June Flowers and Rick and Joy Walker, **Chapel A** met for its first Sunday Worship on 5th December 1993 in the local Primary School.

What's in a Name?

A "how did we do? review of 1993" in January 1994 could certainly point to progress on all of the 'targets' for the year. Ambitious new targets, including a Vision Statement and Constitution for the network of congregations and identifying and responding to social needs in each congregation's area, were set for 1994. However, none of this could be tackled until the thorny question of what to call the new and rapidly evolving organisation was resolved. Was it still Moortown Baptist Church?

The leaders and deacons proposed that the Church was to be known as 'Sharing Life Church' with three constituent congregations. Over the next months various members wrote to express feelings about the matter of the church's name. These varied greatly from those wanting an entirely new name which retained a clear Baptist identity – 'North Leeds Baptist Church' - to others who, whilst stressing the identity and reputation which Moortown had built over many years both within the Baptist community and also in the locality, nevertheless recognised that we were functioning as 3 separate congregations in other geographical areas and that to them 'Sharing Life' had gained some common meaning. The Special Church Meeting in March 1994 which had to resolve the matter was a painful experience for some because of the apparent antipathy of some in the 2 church plants to being associated with the name 'Moortown' and even 'Baptist'. In the end the meeting accepted an amendment proposed by Norrie Carpenter and Paul Hiley that 'The Church now known as Moortown Baptist Church be known as **Sharing Life –a Baptist Church Network**' leaving the three congregations free to continue with their existing names of Moortown Baptist Church, Street Lane Fellowship, and Chapel A. Inevitably the shortened form 'Sharing Life' was widely used.

Sharing Life - a Baptist Church Network March 1994 – March 2002

As a multi-congregational network Sharing Life was to exist for eight years during which there was growth in total membership, the addition of 2 further church plants, the addition of 4 new pastors to the team, the separation of 1 congregation and 1 pastor and an impressive range of new ministries and activities influencing the lives of people of all ages. Moortown Baptist Church developed both within the network and as a distinct congregation –paradoxically the network was both a source of learning, growth and blessing and, at the same time, a confusing experience affecting some peoples' sense of belonging. For some at Moortown, fellowship with old friends who went to start new plants was maintained, but gradually the common experience everyone once shared was reduced, as the activities of the separate congregations naturally became central to their members. This was reflected in the new structures. Even before the agreeing of the network name, each congregation including MBC had instituted Congregational Meetings to deal with issues specific to them. Each also had a leadership or Steering Team. However, the ultimate decision-making meeting was the

quarterly '**Sharing Life Night**' and this was rarely well- attended, sometimes non-quorate for important decisions. The constituent congregations developed their own and very different meeting and decision- making styles, which made it increasingly difficult to have a network meeting to suit all, and, in any case, the Congregational and Sharing Life meetings often appeared to duplicate each other. The present writer has only had access to records relating to Moortown as well to the minutes of 'Sharing Life Nights'. Much of the account of this period is therefore from a Moortown perspective and it may be for other 'historians' to try to tell the story of the different church plants.

Going forward together

As the three congregations (Moortown, Street Lane and Chapel A) continued to minister to their memberships and communities there were many ways in which the network functioned as a whole.

- In response to developments in the wider world church some in Sharing Life were drawn to reports of the 'Toronto Blessing' resulting in a brief visit to Canada by Stephen Ibbotson, Michael Flowers and John Sloan in June 1994. They reported back with enthusiasm on what appeared to be a significant movement of the Holy Spirit. For a few months 'Open to God' meetings were held on Friday evenings in which people from all the congregations allowed the spirit to move. Some found these meetings strange and some were greatly helped.
- Across the network new '**Sharing Life Ministries**' were developed to meet varied needs. To the Alpha courses already being run, **Beta** was added as a discipleship course. Paul Hiley introduced a **Debt Counselling** service and the **Pathways Counselling Service** was developed under the guidance of Tony Ruddle, Rosemary Glover and Vera Earl. Plans for sports and outdoor activities ministries were later added.
- Church Holidays, alternately at **Moorlands** College in Dorset and **Asburnham** in Sussex, were a way in which members of the whole network could relax and grow together. They were not a new idea but became an essential part of church for many.
- The Youth Ministry continued to operate across the whole network. In May 1996 Simon Hall gave notice of his resignation as Youth Pastor. He described a flourishing range of groups for all the congregations and particularly spoke of **Revive**. This group for older teens and twenties had grown out of alternative styles developed during the 3 in 1 evening services. They were looking to "do church" in new ways to reach young people with no church background. Within a year Simon was being supported for BU recognition as pastor of a new Revive congregation working in the Hyde Park and Burley areas and using rooms in pubs for worship. In October John Hawksworth came as Simon's replacement and began his youth ministry called to the whole network.
- To supplement the evening services as a bringing together of the whole church for worship, the idea of a quarterly celebration, later known as the '**Gathering**', was begun in 1997. The venue was often Allerton High School Hall on Sunday mornings and, at this time, the congregations were able to fill it!
- In 1996 a new '**Sharing Life Magazine**' was introduced. It was some time since there had been a regular publication and there was an obvious need for a means of circulating family news and sharing views and passions. The early editions of this new venture included introductions of leaders of the different congregations and were well produced and full of interest, but sadly production was not sustained for long. What they reveal is a vibrant group of congregations with a mission to reach out to their communities.

- In order to hold the network together it was also necessary to develop a new constitution. Over many months leadership and church meetings worked on this - the **'Foundations' Document** - outlining the vision and the structure of Sharing Life. This was to replace existing Moortown church rules and included the differing procedures of the three congregations. It aimed to "enable the development of relatively autonomous congregations benefiting from growing within a framework of mutual support and legal interdependency". The document was agreed in September 1995.
- Above all **plans for more church plants** were brought to fruition. The idea of a church in Meanwood had been first mooted back in 1988 and a small group had retained a sense of call to that area ever since. In July 1995 14 people met in the Beckett's Arms pub and by 1996 had obtained a place to worship in the local Working Men's Club as well as carrying out door to door visiting. Led by Andy Hobbs, Paul Hicks, Stan Woods and Phil Gomersall they grew in numbers and eventually moved to the Community Centre in 2003, becoming the present **Meanwood Valley Baptist Church**. Also in 1997 **Revive** became a full Sharing Life congregation and Simon Hall became part of the Sharing Life Leadership Team.

Problems, progress and a new Moortown Pastor

In 1995 Street Lane was flourishing and out-growing its premises. However, its relationship with Sharing Life came under strain as some of its members came to desire independence. In addition disagreements arose within its leadership team and the team leader, John Sloan, resigned from Sharing Life, leaving Ian Fulcher to provide interim leadership. (John's role on the Sharing Life Leadership was subsequently filled by Bob Corrie). By November some stability had been restored and a new leadership had been appointed and in March 1996 Paul Dowson became pastor of Street Lane and a staff member of Sharing Life.

At the beginning of 1997 the network was continuing to generate new ideas and activities. While total membership stood at 380, there were an estimated 680 congregation attenders. In addition 387 children aged 0-12 years and 150 young people aged 13 - 19 were regularly involved in the various youth groups. Targets for the year were: to introduce further Sharing Life ministries; to further develop the congregation in Meanwood; to establish a Learning Centre to equip people for more effective ministry; and to appoint a pastor for Moortown. Over the next year this latter aim was repeatedly brought before the Church by the Sharing Life Leadership.

It was not difficult to see why. Chapel A, Meanwood and Revive were growing realities with radically different approaches to being a church in 'culturally relevant ways' to a new generation. A group connected to the **'Storehouse'** (the new name for Street Lane after it returned to the Shadwell Lane area) started meeting in Armley. Furthermore the idea of a 'cell church' known as 'New Hope' was brought to the Sharing Life night by John Sloan and Richard Burwell. Stephen argued that maintaining and administering all this, let alone extending it even further, meant that he was not able to pastor Moortown effectively. He saw his role as overseeing the network and extending the vision and felt an Assistant Minister was needed. In September 1997 'Staff Appraisals' were introduced, the first of which recommended that Stephen should be granted a Sabbatical of 3 months in September 1998 by when a **new Moortown Pastor** should be in place.

The search led to **Rev Gordon Hindmarch** of Lower Earley Baptist Church Reading being invited to visit and preach and he and Simon Hall were approved by the same meeting in March 1998 to join the staff of Sharing Life. Gordon was coming to his second pastorate following a career in industry and training at Regent's Park Oxford. A service of welcome took place for Gordon and Rachel on 6th September, and for the first time Moortown had two fulltime ministers as well as the network having two part-time pastors [Simon Hall and Paul Dowson], a full –time Youth pastor [John Hawksworth] a fulltime Administrator, and a part-time caretaker. This was clearly going to be a considerable financial responsibility and not all in the congregations saw Sharing Life as their main priority. By the AGM of March 1999 balancing the budget was proving difficult for the Sharing Life treasurer Paul Smith.

The departure of the Storehouse May 1999

Despite Stephen Ibbotson's best efforts to preserve the existing framework of Sharing Life, a Special Church Meeting –held on 20 May part way through his delayed Sabbatical – was told that the Storehouse wanted to leave Sharing Life in order to join New Hope Ministries, the cell church established under the leadership of John Sloan. Faced with this request the meeting sadly agreed to the departure. Unhappily divisions within the Storehouse itself saw a majority of them agreeing to this change, some going to other churches, and a few leaving the church entirely.

Searching for a way forward

In spite of these traumatic events the remainder of Sharing Life –a Baptist Church Network continued to develop. Change was gradual. In June 1999 Vera Earl announced she would slowly reduce her role as Church Administrator of Sharing Life towards retirement in March 2000. Geoff Fennell took over as Sharing Life treasurer from Paul Smith and there were changes to the Moortown Congregation Team. As we moved into the new millennium ambitious plans for the evangelistic ministry of the church were drawn up which included further church planting.

However by June 2000 there were serious concerns over staffing, with what was now a reduced financial base. In September a budget deficit for Sharing Life was declared.

On October 19th 2000 an extra Sharing Life Meeting was called to consider the future of the network. It was significant that it began with tributes to the life and work of Norrie Carpenter who had just died. Norrie was one of the greatest servants of Moortown Baptist Church as deacon, moderator, preacher and above all wise counsellor at times of difficulty. The church was searching for such calm wisdom now.

Michael Flowers outlined the history of Sharing Life as he saw it. He noted both the advantages of church planting – it releases gifts which are locked up in local churches, more people are reached for Christ and it makes space in the sending church: but also the downside – the losing of people and friends.

Next John Hawksworth outlined the great range and strength of the youth groups across the network and then each of the congregations Chapel A, Revive, Meanwood and Moortown reported on their strengths and their views about Sharing Life. The meeting then broke into groups who later reported back.

Although all expressed a desire to relate to the network and believed that youth work, counselling, the gatherings and church holidays all worked well, there were real problems to be faced. Comments were made that the decision making process was 'at too high a level';

the evening service needed promoting in all congregations; there was not enough relating between congregations; and above all the finances were seen as a 'black hole'.

The End of Sharing Life – a Baptist Church Network.

The October meeting showed that, although there was a residual desire to work together, the congregations which made up Sharing Life were moving towards becoming independent churches. Over the next 18 months this process speeded up.

In December 2000 Chapel A shared that they had decided to look for their own pastor within Sharing Life. However, the key factor appeared to be the budget deficits for 2000 and 2001. The staff agreed not to have pay rises and Vera's full retirement by March 2001 would make savings, but despite a special gift day Moortown reserves had been used up on the deficit. There were also difficulties with the evening service. This had once seemed the powerhouse of the network but now had declined drastically in attendance. Although the church meeting recognised that 'Church attendance patterns were changing nationally' it nevertheless seemed to indicate that there was no strong desire in the network to come together in worship on a regular basis.

All these developments led Stephen Ibbotson to announce to a surprised Moortown morning service on 18th March 2001 that he was 'actively looking for where he should minister next'. He went on " We have loved being in this church. It has been a good 10 years for us on the whole..... I have especially valued the breadth and depth of Moortown and this congregation....But we sense it is time for both the church and ourselves to move on". He was going to speak to each of the other congregations the same morning, and as he went to Chapel A, Ashley Hardingham was there preaching 'with a view'.

The AGM on the following Thursday was an emotional occasion. Stephen outlined the reasons for his decision to leave. Sharing Life had been unable to eliminate the budget shortfall with only 4 congregations.

" We pulled in different directions instead of rallying together". Chapel A had called a pastor, Meanwood were now seeking their own pastor. He felt he needed a place where he could 'minister with greater freedom and renewed motivation'. Referring to his calling he said he was " not afraid of diversity but was afraid of a divergent church... The diversity has been used to develop new congregations and to give place to everyone, but now there is a sense that the same word is carrying them from us and there is sadness at leaving mixed in with gratitude and hope".

The hope was shown at the same meeting as each congregation expressed optimism about their current state and numerical growth and the ongoing success of the youth work. It also appointed Marion Corrie as Moortown's part-time Administrator. Moortown was planning an away day at Rothwell in May to discern the way ahead. By then the work of undoing the network was starting. John Hawksworth was to be employed entirely by Moortown whilst still working with Meanwood as well. In June Stephen informed the Church he had accepted a call to Altrincham Baptist Church as 'Minister for teaching, spirituality and discipleship' and his last weekend was to be the 'Gathering' on 15th July 2001.

An Appreciation of Stephen Ibbotson's Ministry

In 1991 Stephen Ibbotson came to a church which had already started the process of congregation planting, arguably because it had become too large and needed to release some of its most gifted members into other areas. He brought a vision of how that could be taken

on. The network of congregations more than doubled in membership in the period up to 2001 both by new converts and by people from other Christian backgrounds finding a new enthusiasm in the different styles of the 'plants'.

It is probably too close to the events to determine why the network ended. Various views have been advanced including that, as time passed, the planted congregations 'inevitably' felt less attached to Moortown (the 'mother church') and were ready for independence; and that some new members and leaders did not always support the Baptist tradition of the centrality of the Church Meeting in decision-making. Whatever the pros and cons it is clear that Sharing Life was used by God to form flourishing new churches.

There was real sadness at Moortown, as elsewhere in the network, at Stephen's departure. He brought a wide vision and decisive leadership to the Church. Some Moortown members may not have been carried with him in all his plans, but the vast majority appreciated the depth of his preaching and teaching and his pastoral concern and care. His openness to new thinking and concern to find ways of reaching people in a society increasingly divorced from any experience, knowledge or understanding of Church ways or of the basics of Christian Faith, produced a fruitful ministry. Stephen will be remembered both for Sharing Life and as a successful Minister of Moortown Baptist Church.



Sharing-Life Gathering (Allerton High School), 1998

MINISTRY OF REV. GORDON HINDMARCH B.SC. B.A. (1998 –PRESENT)

Although Gordon Hindmarch was appointed as Moortown Pastor within Sharing Life back in 1998, from 2001 he found himself sharing in the difficult process of undoing the network and leading the re-shaping of Moortown Baptist Church once it no longer had responsibility for the other congregations.

Making Four Churches September 2001 – March 2002

The remaining Sharing Life congregations had declared their intention to form 4 self-governing churches, which would ‘continue to associate as churches with shared histories, resource relationships and activities.’ As the ‘mother church’ of the network Moortown had to re-construct itself along with the other three congregations and find again God’s way forward:

In the Autumn and Winter of 2001-02 the decision to become 4 autonomous churches (Moortown Baptist Church, Chapel Allerton Baptist Church, Meanwood Valley Baptist Church and Revive Baptist Church) all affiliated to the YBA and to the Baptist Union was confirmed, and the congregations busied themselves developing their own new constitutions. At Moortown this was directed by a Task Group led by Gordon Hindmarch and Malcolm Hardyman and involved complicated proposals about matters of finance, legal and property issues and the production of Church Rules based on the YBA model adapted to our needs.

One potentially difficult issue was what to do with the Trust Fund held by the YBA for the whole Church. This stood at around £86,000 of which well over half had come from the sale of Kaulin House. This had been bought in the 1980’s and ultimately was managed by St George’s Church as a home for the homeless. Most of the funds had come from the sale of the original Church Manse. In the end the fund was divided amicably, half going to Moortown and the remaining half split equally between the other three churches.

On 21st March 2002 Michael Flowers chaired the final Sharing Life Church Meeting. Only 34 members turned up to hear Michael remind us of how God, through Sharing Life, had changed lives - through the Youth Ministry and Church Planting and under Stephen Ibbotson “a leader who facilitated a multi-congregational style of church”. We stood on the threshold of becoming 4 strong independent churches and had made major contributions to ‘New Hope’ and to the Adel church plant linked to South Parade Baptist Church. We now needed to show the same vision and zeal which had characterised the church from its beginning, and continue with the mission “to please God and share His life with others”. The names of the 11 who had served as Leaders of Sharing Life were read out and appreciation of Michael’s chairmanship and own contribution was shown by prolonged applause. Sharing Life –a Baptist Church Network was ended.

The new Moortown Baptist Church

The process of making 4 churches from the Sharing Life network was accomplished remarkably smoothly. This bears testimony to the efforts of Gordon and the other leaders and to the goodwill within the network. Certainly, and perhaps inevitably in view of what had happened, there were some who were unsettled and a certain amount of movement between the 4 new churches took place.

Moortown itself was now a church of around 200 members – smaller in membership (though not in attendance) than at any time since the 1960's. However, it retained a strong range of activities and ministries and a basis of people of all ages to reach out again into the community and wider world.

Moortown Baptist Church 2001 to 2005

Focus groups

The church awayday which met at the Radio Worldwide headquarters in Rothwell on 1st May 2001 involved some 145 adults and was very positive and forward-looking. Arising from it over the next few months Focus Groups were set up from which the leadership of minister and deacons developed Main Strategies to form the core of all church activity and direction – namely Building Community; Discipleship; Pastoral Care; and Outreach. The Groups reported back to the whole church in October at a well-attended day conference at Moortown. Some of these groups soon began to function as action groups. These included the Overseas Missions Group, which instituted a monthly Sunday Spot to highlight mission needs and opportunities. It has already born fruit through a number of young people taking part in BMS Summer Teams and several members joining with Michael and June Flowers on short working visits to Chandraghona Bangladesh. Interest in the work of Chris and Bela Singh and Radio Worldwide and in MAF have developed. A memorable MAF flying day at Sherburn –in –Elmet was organised by David Casson in 2003.

Community Mission

Another important development began in 2002 when several members took part in the One City Project sponsored by the Leeds Church Institute. As a result a Community Mission Group was formed to look at how the Church could re-connect with its immediate neighbours on the Queenshill and Leaffield Estates. After a survey of people working professionally in the area and of residents, a Report was presented at a public meeting and action began to be taken on the recommendations. One particular result of this new approach was that more community groups began to use the Church building and this meant new relationships could grow. More children and young people began to link with the church.

Youth Ministry

Much of the emphasis of concerns expressed in the Survey was about Young People and Children and these were reflected in the Church's decision to seek a new staff member specifically for Children's Work. This idea was strongly supported by John Hawksworth whose own ministry as Youth Pastor was drawing to a close in 2003 when he and Liz felt called to work with Youth for Christ in Newcastle. Their work in seven years at Moortown had been so fruitful that it seemed a daunting task to replace them. During 2003 the Church was led to appoint **Martin and Glenda Tanner** as joint Youth Pastors and later one of our own members, **Jan Fennell** (an experienced primary school teacher) as Children's Worker. In these ways the strong young people's work which had been a feature of the church over most of its history was being maintained.

New vision and ongoing activities

At the beginning of 2003 new Church Rules were finally approved after a lot of hard work by the Task Force and a new leadership team, based on the traditional diaconate system, was appointed in April. Another new organisational feature was the nomination of some members as 'Co-ordinators' for the Main Strategies of the Church's life and ministry.

Thanks to Bob Corrie and Paul Hiley, among others, a new vision for MBC began to form, which we are still working out. In July 2004 the leadership team of Minister, Youth Pastors, Deacons and Co-ordinators met for a day with the YBA Regional Minister Bill Allen and after a further away day in October reduced the earlier Main Strategies to three which are currently being introduced. These are to develop 'Meaningful Outreach', to equip 'Small Groups' (notably house groups), and to provide a 'Framework for Pastoral Care'. These have been major aspects of the Church's life through most of its history so there is no major break with the past but, as has happened before, this seems a time to affirm the Church's mission again.

At the same time the wide range of the church's activities continues to thrive and none more than the work among the elderly. The **Autumn Leaves** Group has developed as a very active house group for the retired which takes a prayerful interest in the whole church, and the Day Care Centre continues to perform an important service to the community. The church is hugely indebted to Wilf and Irene Wyatt for this ministry.



Women's fellowship and Autumn Leaves

LIFE IN ALL ITS FULNESS

In trying to write a narrative of events of the past fifty years this writer has relied on the church's written records. However, much of peoples' experience of the Church – the relationships enjoyed, the regular activities which have become central to peoples' lives – not to mention the regular worship and preaching, have not been recorded on paper. Moreover there have also been passing references to some aspects of the Church's life which have been much more important than so far indicated. The following attempts to recognise some of them, and to acknowledge that the 'real' history of the Church may not lie in the 'big' events.

YOUTH WORK

Undoubtedly throughout the 50 years of its existence work among young people has been a priority and a strength of MBC.

Sunday School and Family Church

On 5th June 1955 a Sunday School began - particularly due to the enthusiasm of Ronnie Payne who served as secretary for many years - with 20 children and 10 teachers. It met before the morning service at 10 am as there was insufficient accommodation for both at the same time. Within 18 months there were over 200 children and at one point in the 1960's a peak of 280 was reached. Housing them was difficult and at various times Leaffield Clinic, the 'annexe' (ex-Coal Board hut), Stonegate House and the homes of members living close to Church were all used. In 1971 the decision to change to a Family Church approach, where all ages met together for the start of worship at 10.30 am followed by children leaving for their own groups, created the opportunity for the Church to become more inclusive and the 'childrens' address' became an integral part of services for many years. The extensions to the buildings in 1974 solved many of the accommodation problems.

However, the outstanding feature of Sunday School and Family Church has been the willingness of so many people to serve as teachers and helpers over the years. It would be wrong to single out any individuals, but it has been a joy to many to see the fruits of their work in the continuing high numbers of youngsters in Family Church and in those coming to commit their lives to Christ and joining the Church through Baptism. No doubt this faithfully maintained work has been a major reason for the attraction of Moortown Baptist Church for young families throughout the 50 years.

Uniformed Organisations

Perhaps the same can be said for much of the 50 years about the Cubs, Scouts, Brownies and Guides. In the early years when they began (the first were the Cubs in 1956) they were seen as part of the way the Church involved the children of its own members in activities which offered fun, challenge and socially useful training. But they were also a concrete way of relating to the local community and bringing young people into church through the monthly Parade Services. Winsor Bond was the first Group Scout Leader and over the years Church members have seen it as part of their service to train (sometimes from positions of no previous experience of the movements) for leadership. In 1986 the then Scout Leader Ian Stowers produced a history of the first 30 years of the Scouts with some references to the other organisations. The accounts of awards, camps and pack holidays make clear the fun many youngsters were able to share and the ways Scouting and Guiding added to the sense of the family of the church. These activities continued through into the 1990's and although some may feel that they eventually no longer fitted the youth culture of the new century it was

shortage of adult leaders rather than of children which led to the closure of all 4 organisations by 2001. Although a large amount of camping and climbing equipment eventually had to be got rid of, it is pleasing to see that outdoor pursuits continue to be important to young people and that residentials at places like Barcaple are important parts of the ongoing programme of the church's youth work.

General Youth Work

Obviously young people are the future of the church, and while nationally the last fifty years have seen a decline in the number of teenagers involved in church activities and becoming committed Christians, Moortown has been blessed in having been able to counter that trend. From the early days groups for teenagers were set up meeting both after church on Sunday evenings and during the week or on Saturdays. The latter were often with a more open membership. Leadership was by volunteers who played a crucial role in the church's life. Michael and June Flowers, Brian and Jill Kemp, Alan and Jean Croall, Rod Russell, Royce Bates, Rita Carpenter, Adrian and Sylvia Hopkins and Neil and Heather Venables, are among the many who played valuable roles.

In the 1950's and 1960's table-tennis, records, coffee and chat and regular hikes in the dales were mixed with Bible-study groups in leaders homes. In the 1970's the Charismatic Renewal led to more evangelistic Saturday Coffee Bars with key speakers and bands. The enthusiasm generated led to new approaches to faith-sharing, including experiments with drama both in services at church and also on the streets. There are many committed members of Moortown and other churches who are deeply grateful to those who 'gave up every Saturday night for us'. There was also a realisation that younger children needed the opportunity to talk about faith at Friday evening Treasure Seekers (the forerunner of J Zone) started by Irene Wyatt, and then Venturers was started by Robina Wilson, Maureen Wicks and Margaret Barr for the awkward in-between age (11-14), later evolving into Rock Solid. The long summer holidays also gave opportunities. The first Holiday Club took place in 1968 led by Barbara Drake and, with changing formats, has become a fixed part of the Church's calendar for both church children and the local community.

Another enduring feature of youth work was the annual February weekend for young people at Greengables, Scarborough, which started in 1975. Over the years this became a time when probably hundreds of young people encountered God in significant ways.

The success of the volunteer led Youth Work led in 1981 to the appointment of the first of a series of fulltime Youth Pastors, **John Wilson**. At that stage the Church could not quite see that there was more than enough young peoples' work for him and loaded on responsibilities for Swarcliffe and some preaching to make sure he was busy! John's gifts for preaching and leading worship brought increasing use of drama to services and to open-air work. When John left for a pastoral post in Falmouth in 1983 there was a brief return to the volunteer leadership but it was now clear that there was fulltime work for a youth pastor and in 1985 **John Lowton** was appointed to that task. Under his leadership new groups were developed and outreach into the community partly through work in schools continued. John's love of football and ability to get alongside young people was used to good effect. John went on into work in drug rehabilitation in 1988 and, after a more formal process of advertising and interviews, **Jonathan Hayward** replaced him.

Jonathan's 4 years' of work saw particular fruit among teenagers and were notable for a strong group of support leaders and innovative ideas which included organising 'Formal Dinners' by young people for older church members; 'Christmas Cracker'- when young

people ran a Café for Third World charities; and identifying with the under-class through sleeping out under cardboard boxes (in the church car-park!). Jonathan's own development at Moortown was to lead to a clear call to pastoral ministry, training at Northern Baptist College, and he and Vero settling into the pastorate at Cockermouth Baptist Church.

When **Simon Hall** followed Jonathan in 1992 he found himself in a growing and changing situation as the church planting developed. Whilst building on the work of predecessors and strongly maintaining the existing groups he worked at developing new forms of worship for young people during the period of the 3 in 1 evening services. These became known as 'Revive' services and included new music and an increasingly professional band 'Bodica'. Out of this came a particular concern for a largely 'unchurched' generation and this led to a new style of 'church plant' in the Revive congregation of Sharing Life working in the Hyde Park and Burley areas through pubs and clubs as well as home groups. In 2002 Simon was ordained as pastor of the Revive Baptist Church.

Long before this in 1996 Simon had been replaced as Sharing Life Youth Pastor by **John Hawksworth**. John came to both Moortown and Street Lane and soon the range of his responsibilities widened through the development of Chapel A and Meanwood. Under his leadership new groups, Rock Solid and J Zone, developed and his own enthusiasm for sport led to football and rugby teams and to the outdoor pursuits residential at Barcaple. John also developed the work in local schools very effectively so that Moortown continued to be a focus for young people from a wide area. John's speaking gifts also widened his role in the church so that when he and Liz announced a call to a senior position with Youth for Christ in Newcastle in 2003 they seemed very hard to replace.

Although now based only in Moortown the church had no intention of cutting back on young peoples' work and in 2003 took another step of faith by appointing *two* youth pastors, **Martin and Glenda Tanner**, and shortly afterwards a Childrens' Worker in **Jan Fennell**. The result has been a range of exciting new developments and opportunities, which God continues to bless. Jan's links with other children's workers have led to involvement in the city-wide 'Excite' project and to new proposed younger age residentials and a nursing Mum's group. Martin and Glenda have been able to contact and to draw in increasing numbers from local estates through 'Impact', and have also developed an 18 – 25 group and a Moortown Baptist Church Youth Web-Site.

MISSION

Moortown has been a growing church for much of its history and although there may have been periods when it has been less outward looking it has taken the Great Commission 'to go and make disciples of all men' seriously.

Overseas

The main and consistent channel for interest, support and service overseas has been the **Baptist Missionary Society** (now BMS World Mission). The first members of Moortown sent out with BMS were Michael and June Flowers who served in East Pakistan/Bangladesh from 1960 to 1970. They were followed by Stephen and Lydia Bond in Congo 1965-70 and Roger and Christine Robson Congo/Zaire 1970 –73. In 1976 Adrian and Sylvia Hopkins, who had been in membership here until shortly before going with BMS to Zaire, began their long work in Africa which is ongoing today. From 1989 Phil Commons gave 15 years of dedicated service in Bangladesh until 2004, and Ian and Sally Smith worked with BMS in Nepal from 1983 to 1999 before moving to work with the W.H.O. in Geneva where their

strong Christian presence is so important. After their pastorate in Falmouth John and Sue Wilson went to serve with BMS in France in 1990 and are still Moortown's missionaries in Lyon.

In addition to these, a number of (mainly) young people have taken part in BMS Action and Summer Teams giving them often life changing experiences and the chance to serve. Among them have been Debbie Hobbs, Nigel Cope, Ellen Armstrong, John Mark Hindmarch, and Jane Coates.

The presence of a BMS Furlough House in Parkside Road in the 1960's and 70's brought a number of returning missionary families to Moortown who stayed to make outstanding contributions to the church, among them Michael and June Flowers, David and Robina Wilson and Keith and Maureen Wicks.

Bangladesh

The Church has developed a particular involvement with the work of Chandraghona Hospital in Bangladesh. Both the Flowers and later Phil Commons worked there and people in the church joined a sponsorship scheme which began in the 1960's and provided clothes and education for hundreds of children of leprosy patients. Then from 1986 the Flowers began to make annual visits taking teams of medical professionals and others for short periods. Over 30 Moortown people have taken part. Recently BMS have taken over arranging recruitment for the teams on a national basis, but our churches have been represented every year. In addition for the last seven years the church has funded work with a leprosy village, Jhum Para, providing pigs for income generation, housing improvements and education. One result has been more opportunities to explain the Gospel and one of the first children to be sponsored in the 1960's, Guni John Tripura, has planted 160 churches in remote tribal areas and, following his visit to Leeds in 2004, our church network is funding 5 evangelists in the area! The former Sharing Life churches can look back on holistic contributions amongst needy people over a long period and share in an ongoing demonstration of the love of Christ.

Others have served with **other Missions** including Andrew and Valerie Wilmshurst in the 1980's in Nigeria with SIM; David Lewis in Central Asia and the USSR from 1980's to present; Sarah Holding in the 1990's in Albania; Ian and Janice Armstrong from 2000 to present in Jerusalem and Istanbul; Gill Thurgood in Honduras; Peter and Miriam Le Feuvre in Uganda 2000-01; and Andrew and Penny Ewbank in Costa Rica since 2003.

At various times other overseas Missions have been supported by the church, notably OMF and Mission Aviation Fellowship (MAF). Since the early 1990's Moortown has closely supported the work of Chris and Bela Singh and Radio Worldwide – part of WEC.

Eastern Europe – Albania and Romania

The opening up of Eastern Europe in the 1990's gave new opportunities. Exploratory visits by David Wilson on behalf of BMS and W.H.O. led to a Moortown Albania group being formed and developing support over several years. Both Sarah Holding and Gill Thurgood worked there and the group was also able to raise considerable sums for Kosovo Relief.

Since 1990 Moortown's links with churches in Romania have been an important part of its life. However, their origins lay much earlier and the Romania Story is told in detail by Keith Wicks in an Appendix to this booklet.

Fair-Trade

The church has also been involved with the developing Fair-Trade movement which seeks to market agricultural and craft produce from the third world and give their producers a premium for development above the normal 'market-price' offered by big companies. In 1991 Karen Green began to run regular stalls of produce (mostly from the Christian company Traidcraft) at Moortown until she moved to Chapel A. In 2000 she and others from Moortown and Chapel A set up a small shop and café – 'The Beehive' - in Chapel Allerton which is staffed by volunteers from the churches and has grown into an important Fair-Trade outlet in the city. It also supplies a number of churches of all denominations to enable them to run Fair-Trade stalls. There is ongoing interest in the Trade Justice movement at MBC with some involvement in local and national activities.

Home

Church –based groups for young and old

Mission and Outreach to the immediate neighbourhood has been a consistent part of the church's life. In the 1950's and 1960's house-to-house visitation with an invitation to the activities and worship was a regular feature, involving a majority of the membership. At various times in each of the following decades this sort of visitation was attempted with some results but the most successful and enduring methods of involvement with the local community have been through groups set up to meet needs and offer service and friendship.

The most effective have been for young mothers and the elderly. Through much of the 1970's, 80's and 90's a pre-school Play-Group flourished and many people gave lengthy service including Marion Hemming, Valerie Wyatt, Carol Boldison, Hilary Riches, Alison Sturges, Elaine Wyatt, Diane Sunter, Jan Fennell, and Carol Pike, with oversight from Irene Wyatt.

For Mum's and Toddlers a succession of groups involving the young mothers in the church have brought friendship and support to mums in the community and brought people into the church.

In 1965 an Over 60's club began in conjunction with St. John's church, which ran for many years, and in 1975 Mr Drake started the Day Care Centre, which still gives a vital service to elderly housebound people. Teams of ladies have produced countless meals and fellowship – one of the most long-lasting of the church's activities.

Furniture Store

Another major venture, which has been very fruitful and necessary, began in 1986 when Hilary Willmer introduced the idea of a 'Furniture Store'. This was a response to the government's cessation of capital grants for needy people for basic furniture and domestic appliances. The idea was simple: Ask those replacing still- serviceable furniture, to donate it and redistribute it to those in need - referred by agencies such as probation and social services. At the same time the scheme could create jobs and training for long-term unemployed, some from among the churches. Starting with an old crew-bus, later a horse-box and storing furniture in the first worker's cellar, later St Aidan's church basement, the Store grew because it had found and begun to meet a real need in society. Premises were found in New York Street, then Meanwood Park Hospital, then Skinner Lane and latterly in Burley each an improvement on the former and the number of people employed grew. A partnership was formed with Leeds City Council and the Store, now called '**Leeds and Moortown Furniture Store**', has become a large registered charity and company with 10 permanent staff plus trainees and 3000 deliveries a year. For many years it was run by a

voluntary committee of mainly Moortown members and even today they form a majority of the Trustees. Although the Store has grown into a large operation and provides secure employment for loyal staff, Moortown continues to be a regular funder and the furniture vans, seen all over Leeds and beyond, all still carry a large cross-logo to show their origins and motivation.

Listening to the Community

Churches have sometimes acted as though they know what's best for people. Although in some ways (the message of the Gospel!) this may well be true, there have been times where we have realised the need to seek to understand how people in the local community see their own needs.

In the early 1980's, at a time of racial tension nationally and locally, some women in the church wanted to develop contact with Christians in the ethnic minority communities and this led to the '**Olive Branch**'- a prayer and bible-study group involving women from Moortown and the New Testament Church of God. At the time of the Inner City riots (1981) they wrote a joint letter, which was broadcast by Radio 4 and produced study materials about racism in employment. Meeting in each others' homes and with an annual dinner including husbands, the group which included Elizabeth Caddick, Susan Hartley, Rosemary Laxton, Marion Hemming, Hilary Willmer, Robina Wilson, Cathy Simms and Pat Umpleby met for many years.

In 1994 a brief campaign on the Lingfield Estate involved trying to talk to a selection of residents about their situations and conducting 'prayer -walks' when small groups from the church prayed for the situations they found around them.

In recent years a new approach has begun. Following a number of Moortown members taking part in the 'One-City Project' run from Leeds Church Institute, in which visits were made to various projects working with marginalized people, a **Community Mission Group** began to meet to reflect on how the church could respond to needs in its immediate neighbourhood. In 2002 a Christmas party was run for local children only to discover that there were fewer families in the immediate area than we thought. This led to an attempt to find out more about our neighbourhood by carrying out a survey of people working professionally in the area and of residents. The resulting report was presented at a public meeting in February 2004 and discussions raised further recommendations for action. These included organising Children's Christmas Parties (now an annual event), joining with the Queenshill Residents' Association and Friends of Highwood to run community clean - ups and a Fun Day, a Carol Service on the Queenshill Green at the request of local people and a Community Directory listing all facilities in the area including the church's activities. Good contacts have been made with local Community Groups, which are there to be built on.

Cricket Club

Over the years the church has been able to offer something to the community by way of activities which have no specifically Christian purpose but which have provided a link, sometimes tenuous, with MBC. Most notable among these has been the Cricket Club which started one year after the church was formed. It began as a club almost entirely consisting of church members and until about five years ago there were always one or two church members playing. That is no longer the case but until 2003 there was still a group of players playing local friendly cricket as 'Moortown Baptist Church Cricket Club'.

Full-time service and outside links

Moortown has produced a number of people who have gone on to fulltime Christian work. Apart from those already mentioned as missionaries several have entered the Baptist Ministry as accredited ministers. These include Rev Michael Hawden now in Hull; Rev Geoff Colmer now Regional Minister for Central area; Rev Jonathan Hayward of Cockermouth; Rev John Wilson of Falmouth and then Lyon; Rev Simon Hall of Revive; Rev Ian Fulcher of Rhyl and Rev Andy Hobbs of Meanwood Valley. Graham Baul, converted through Moortown in the early 1970's, is currently training for the Anglican Ministry.

The church owed its origins to the Leeds District of Baptist Churches and to the Yorkshire Baptist Association. Over the years several members have served as president of these organisations including Rev Winsor Bond, Rev Ralph Drake, Mr David Wilson, Mr Michael Flowers and Prof Haddon Willmer. Since 2001 Rev Gordon Hindmarch has been Chairman of the YBA Executive. In addition several ministers who came into membership in retirement have served the District and Association as Moderators of churches without ministers notably Rev Keith Wicks, Rev Norman Hiley and Rev Stan Woods.

Church Magazines

Over the years the Church has tried to inform and develop its own sense of community and inform the wider community through newsletters and magazines. There are rich sources for a different perspective on Moortown's History in these publications (including the human stories and interests of the church family) and the church should acknowledge its gratitude to the many dedicated people who have acted as editors and contributors. All that can be done here is to list the different publications produced over the past 50 years:

1. *'Moortown Baptist Church Newsletter'* – published bi-monthly without a break from May 1955 to April 1967.
2. *'Outlook'* - bi-monthly from May 1967 to January 1978.
3. *'Roundabout Moortown'* – bi-monthly from December 1978 to December 1986 becoming less regular towards the end.
4. *'Moortown Roundabout'* – intermittent - 15 editions between Christmas 1988 and New Year 1993.
5. *'Sharing Life Magazine'* – about 12 editions between Spring 1996 and Autumn 1999.

Summing up

No account can fully do justice to the day-to-day activities of MBC. Church parties; Barn Dances with the 'Happy Sound'; bands formed by young people (does anyone remember 'More about Bat Radar'?!); performances by choirs; gifted musicians in worship groups; the messages of Karen Ross' Banners; great times on Church Holidays; *all* may be highlights in many memories. However, it has been the regular groups to which people have belonged and the weekly coming together to worship God in Christ which have enabled so many people over these fifty years to find meaning and fulfilment or, at least a glimpse of the Kingdom of God and of what Life in all its Fullness can mean.

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

Any conclusions I may draw on this array of events over 50 years can only be tentative. We are perhaps too close to some of them to see their long-term significance. In putting forward these thoughts, I am aware that other different views may be equally valid.

1. At the last Sharing Life ‘Gathering’ on 15th July 2001 the preacher, Glen Marshall of Wakefield, described Moortown as a ‘Fecund Church’ – fertile in teaching, nurturing and developing so many people over the years, but also in ‘sending out’ so many to Christian work elsewhere. This does not just mean those mentioned in this booklet, but also the hundreds whose lives have led them elsewhere but who still remember their Moortown years. Throughout its 50 years Moortown has been able to maintain an amazing unity of people who were very diverse theologically, culturally and temperamentally, and this is what has made the Church so fertile and resulted in God using it in so many different ways.

2. Moortown’s history has clearly been influenced by major developments in the wider church, notably the Charismatic Renewal. The impact of the new understanding and experience of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit in the 1970’s and of the new emphasis on Christian Healing of the whole person in the 1980’s brought energy and vision and new approaches to so much: especially music, worship and personal praise. In Michael and June Flowers it produced charismatic leaders who in turn saw other gifted people emerge. The Church Planting of the 1990’s was driven by these folk. In all this massive change, and despite disagreement, the Church held together and grew through diversity

3. Britain in 1955 was very different from today. Being a member of a Christian Church was normal and respectable! Now we face much greater scepticism if not hostility. It is Moortown’s success at meeting a wide range of needs (particularly those of young people) and remaining a family, which has enabled it to grow in a period of general church decline. The founder members developed a wide range of activities and grew together through them. The originators of Church Plants got to know each other well as they planned the new congregations and this helped build new Church Families.

4. Although we may appear to rely more on paid staff today to head up important aspects of the Church’s life, we are still largely a body of volunteers and there has been much dedicated service throughout our history. However, one area where participation has declined over the 50 years is the Church Meeting. There have been a number of reasons advanced for this including some people disliking disagreements in meetings whilst others have felt the meeting has been marginalized by small leadership teams. Nevertheless Moortown has maintained the Baptist tradition of regular Church Meetings as the means available to all members for sharing in decision-making about the life and direction of the church.

5. Not by accident, Moortown has a prominent position on a hill and at a cross-roads. It has a public impact on society through occasions such as dedications of infants, marriages, and funerals, and people far beyond the membership will be grateful for these. Through its many groups and activities it has enriched people’s lives, but the main conclusion I draw from all this is that Moortown Baptist Church has faithfully witnessed to the saving power of Jesus and has been greatly used by God for 50 years. It is my prayer that it continues to be so. The world around certainly needs it to. May we look to God with thankfulness and to one another in love as we seek to serve.

The Romanian Adventure

It was in 1972 that two students, Paul Hicks and Jean Mackintosh (later to become Jean Hicks), went with two other friends by road to Romania. Their purpose - to take theological books for Josef Ton, a Romanian Baptist pastor who had been studying at Regent's Park Baptist College in Oxford. They also took in some desperately needed Romanian Bibles. Although shadowed by members of the *Securitate* (the State Security Service or secret police), they completed their mission. Along the way, they made contact with Monica Dan (later to become Monica Achim). Her father had been one of the founding members of the Baptist Church in Romania, and she was an active member of the Mânăstur Baptist Church in Cluj. These were very difficult times for the Romanian evangelicals, and Jean and Paul's efforts and enterprise were very much appreciated.

On returning home they kept in touch with many of the people they had met, but when Paul later became a police officer they were advised that it would be unwise to travel to Romania again as they would undoubtedly attract the unwelcome attention of the authorities. This could jeopardise the safety of their Romanian friends. They continued for eighteen years to maintain these contacts by letter. Unbeknown to them, as a student, Howard Dews had also ventured into Romania and had seen something of the struggles and hardships that Christians there endured.

Towards the end of the Eighties, however, things began to change. The communist system in Eastern Europe began to collapse. In particular, the events of December 1989 in Eastern Europe opened up the possibility of more active fellowship with our brothers and sisters in Christ on the other side of what had been the Iron Curtain.

In 1990 Paul and Jean returned to Romania and met up with their long-standing friends. They also made new ones, notably Pastor Noemi Soos from the Hungarian Reformed Church in a little village called Stejeris, a few kilometres south of the town of Târgu Mures in the very heart of Romania. (They sat next to Noemi on the aircraft from the UK where she had been attending an ecumenical conference in Bath.) Paul and Jean felt a strong leading from God to invite Moortown to link up with the Mânăstur Baptist Church. At that time the Baptist Union of Great Britain was also inviting churches to link up with Baptists in Eastern European and it seemed natural and right for Moortown to take up this challenge.

The Church responded wholeheartedly. At Eastertime in 1991 Rod Russell, Howard Dews, Trevor Trout, Dave Newell, Helene Haque and Bill Moody went by lorry and car to Cluj. They took much needed food, clothing and medicines, as well as furnishing and other materials for the new church building. In about 6 weeks Moortown church members raised over £7000 to fund this. In May of that year, Rod Russell, Paul Hicks, Veronica Lovell, Phil Bennett and Keith Wicks went out for the opening and dedication of the new building. Both groups also made the difficult journey to the desperately poor village of Stejeris, to meet Pastor Noemi, her husband Csaba, the local vet, and their young daughters Eموke and Zsuzsi. Stejeris is home to some 130 Hungarian - speaking families. Hungarian is the medium of instruction in the village school.

These members, with Jean Hicks, formed the nucleus of the **Moortown Romanian Support Group** [known as **Mrs G**]. Others have joined since, and over the years the group has sustained a membership of about a dozen from Moortown and Meanwood Valley Baptist Churches. From the beginning some began to learn Romanian - and a few have even sustained their interest in the language!

Since 1991, members of the Romanian Support Group and others have visited Romania many times to take medicines, clothes, electrical and other equipment and material for Baptist churches in Cluj and for the Hungarian Reform Church in Stejeris. They have provided and fitted an alarm system at the Mânăstur Church, and a computer network at the Emanuel Christian School in Cluj. They have assisted at youth camps and with church outreach, preaching and teaching (in both English and Romanian). Every year funds are sent or taken to support impoverished families in city and village, to pay the fees of poorer pupils in the Christian school and to provide book grants for Christian university students. Up to half the salaries of four Baptist pastors and evangelists are also paid. The Baptist Church at Mânăstur has become eight, including one which works and worships in a Romanian Gypsy community. The group has also met travel costs for village ministries, and for evangelistic work among students and other young people. From early on it has given financial and practical support for a children's home in Cluj. One of our younger members, Michelle Sunter (now Michelle Laxton), spent several months there helping to care for the children.

The first venture in Stejeris was the purchase of farming implements. The collective farm had employed most of the villagers. When it closed down they were left with small plots of land but no efficient way of cultivating them. Much time, will and energy were expended in finding, purchasing and repairing an ancient well so that clean water could be piped into the village. Each family had its own well, but a hydrologist who went out from England on our behalf confirmed the reports we had heard of serious pollution in every household's water supply. There were many frustrations and complications. After five years of sustained effort, including a successful appeal in the High Court in Bucharest against a xenophobic and adverse decision of the regional court, we were able to set up an independent charity in the village to be responsible for the future maintenance of the well and pipeline. As a result, the village children should grow up much healthier than in the past.

We were also able to bring Csaba from Stejeris for an urgent operation on his back, here in the UK. Later we obtained and sent, with even greater urgency, some very expensive "Factor 8" medicine to save the life of a young haemophiliac boy in another nearby village. The local Hungarian language newspaper reported our enterprise in a fully illustrated two-page spread.

To raise funds, the group began to purchase craft goods in Romania and bring them back to England for re-sale. Members of the group organised a whole host of social and fund raising activities to help meet all these commitments, and members of the church and other friends have responded with generosity and enthusiasm to support the work. Indeed, we could never have achieved all that we have done without their constant help and encouragement. Since 1991 the Romanian Support Group has raised and sent out about £100,000. When you consider that in Romania this is worth ten times its value here, the whole church has made a significant contribution to spreading God's love abroad and encouraging the growth of the gospel in that place.

As a group we have constantly to adapt to the changing situation in Romania and at home. Our focus has shifted from providing materials to supporting people. The emphasis of our fund raising has moved from activities to straightforward giving through the "*Friends of Romania*" scheme. All the time there are new opportunities and challenges but the one constant is our relationship with ordinary people: our brothers and sisters in Christ. In this respect the joy of sharing with our Romanian friends is made complete by their wonderful hospitality, fellowship and Christian love. We have also made it possible for many Romanian friends to visit us here in Leeds or join us on church holidays in Dorset. This has all helped to strengthen the fellowship and friendship and bonds of Christian love between us.

We now look to the future and to other (perhaps younger) members and friends to carry on this work. We are not just linked with the church in Cluj: we are "**twinned**" with them. The work and witness in Stejeris would also suffer without our support. We pray that others will take up the challenge and share something of the excitement and the rich blessings our relationships with them in Christ has brought and will yet bring.

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Indirectly, the influence of the group has extended far beyond the churches in Mânâstur and Stejeris. In Romania primary and kindergarten teachers are trained in specialist pedagogical schools. As a result of his Romanian link, on the invitation of the Soros Foundation, Keith Wicks was instrumental in interviewing and selecting, in Romania, some 30 teachers from these regional schools over a period of three years and bringing them to further training courses in York and Ripon. This has influenced methods of teacher training throughout the country. Again by invitation, as visiting lecturer to the Orthodox University of Timisoarâ, he delivered to future teachers and priests, uniquely as a Baptist, possibly the first ever course in the teaching of Religious Education. This also made a small but significant contribution to ecumenical understanding in that city, and in a country where relationships between Orthodox and Evangelicals (primarily Baptist and Pentecostal) are generally based on mutual suspicion and even hostility.

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TIMELINE

DATE	MINISTERS	SECRETARIES	TREASURERS	ADMINISTRATORS	YOUTH PASTORS	CHILDREN'S PASTORAL WORKERS
1955						
1960	Winsor Bond (1955-1967)	John Smith (1955-1968)	Roddy Sheridan (1955 - 1964)			
1965						
1970	Ralph Drake (1967-1979)	Arthur Barr (1968-1983)	Keith Hill (1964 - 1977)			
1975						
1980	<i>Interregnum</i>		Wilf Wyatt (1977 - 1984)			John Wilson (1981 - 1983)
1985	Michael Caddick (1980 - 1989)	Roger Hemming (1983-1988)	Malcolm Robinson (1984 - 1989)	Phil Commons (1987 - 1989)		John Lowton (1985 - 1988)
		Wilf Wyatt				
1990	<i>Interregnum</i>	John Hornby	Paul Hiley (1989 - 1994)			Jonathan Hayward (1988 - 1992)
		David Newell (1990-1993)				
1995	Stephen Ibbotson (1991 - 2001)		Paul Smith <i>Sharing Life</i> (1994 - 1999)	Vera Earl (1989 - 2001)		Simon Hall (1992 - 1996)
2000			Charles Taylor <i>MBC</i> (1997-2003)			John Hawksworth (1996 - 2003)
			Geoff Fennell <i>Sharing Life</i> (1999 - 2003)			
2005	Gordon Hindmarch (1998 - Today)		Jo Hambling (2003 - Today)	Marion Corrie (2001 - Today)	Martin & Glenda Tanner (2003 - Today)	Jan Fennell (2003 - Today)

