

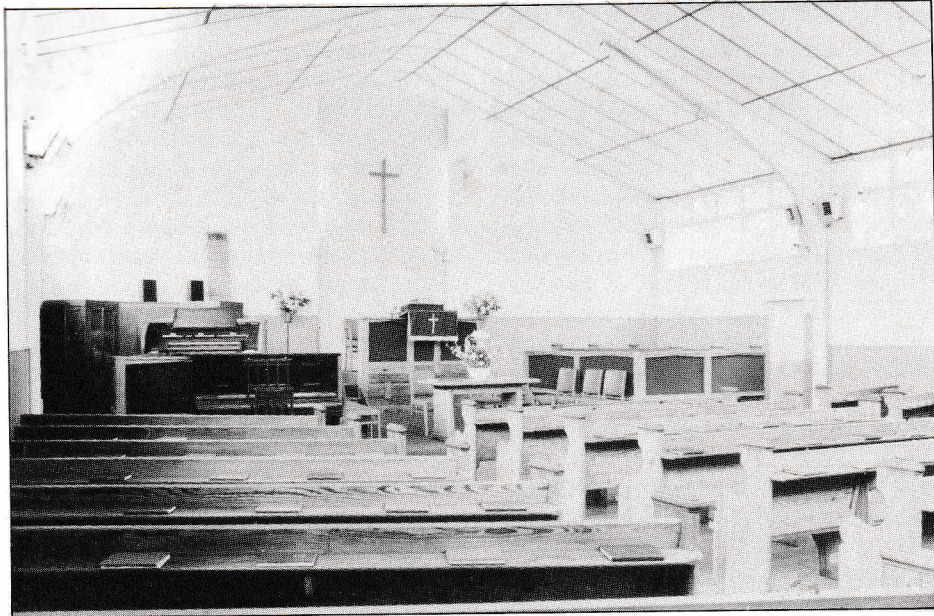
Whyteleafe

United Free Church

1885 - 1985



The story of 100 years
of Free Church
witness



PRESENT CHURCH BUILDING
Dedicated 3rd October, 1970.

WHYTELEAFE UNITED FREE CHURCH

1885 to 1985

Dear Fellow-members and Friends of the United Free Church,

For a good many years (certainly from the time of our 75th Anniversary celebrations) I have been pressed by friends to write down some kind of record of the remarkable history of Free Church activity in Whyteleafe. I have hesitated to do this because the story I have to tell must inevitably rely on my own memory and on the memories of those, now with the Lord, who told me about the earliest days of the inspired group of witnesses from which our own church has sprung.

When John Newberry died in 1928, the buildings which he had provided to house the church passed under the terms of his will to the Salvation Army. The Church Council of those days, fearing that the minute books and other important and, in some cases, confidential documents might fall into hostile hands, decided to destroy all the church records. It is for this reason that I do not claim that what follows is either a complete or a definitive account; but I am satisfied that, though much is omitted, that which is included has been checked by actual eyewitnesses of the events which I have recorded. Chief among these must be my father, who was one of the young people invited by Mrs. Hodgson to meet in her front room at the Post Office on Sunday afternoons for Bible Instruction.

Before Mrs. Hodgson's initiative, Whyteleafe on a Sunday afternoon was filled with young people with little or nothing to do. In those days they were inhibited from free play by the universally strict observance of the sabbath, even by those to whom true Christian practices meant very little. Nobody seems to have felt challenged to do anything for these young people, until it was laid on the heart of Mrs. Hodgson to invite them into her home for a time of simple Bible Study. Unusually for those days, she led this study herself. She must have been an attractive teacher, for, after a few weeks, her large front room was filled to overflowing, with part of the class sitting in the corridor and even up the stairs. At the same time, the young people took home such a glowing account of the happenings at the Post Office that parents asked whether they might join their children in sitting under the instruction of the one who had stimulated such interest among the young people.

Lacking records of any kind from those days, I was much exercised to establish a reliable date for these beginnings, in order that a credible Centennial Year might emerge. For some years, I could get no further back than 1887, until I was shown a copy of Braid's Penny Guide to Caterham and District in which it was plainly stated that Whyteleafe Mission began in 1885. More recently, I have had my attention drawn to the Caterham Directory of 1901, from which one might well infer that by 1885 the inclusion of adults was a regular feature of the meetings; in other words, by that year the meetings were already an established going concern.

Most probably Mrs. Hodgson had begun to gather her class of young people before that date. Her method was spoken of by those who were so gathered with profound respect, even awe. She was a person of considerable presence, and, on Sunday afternoon, she would walk through Whyteleafe, asking young idlers in the street what they intended to do for the next hour or so. Their usual reply was, "Nothing". She then issued an invitation which most of them felt to be a command to come to her house to hear about the Lord Jesus. According to my father, there was no way of refusing, such was the power of her personality. Once

inside, they felt no wish to leave. The way Mrs. Hodgson talked about her Lord and Saviour was compelling, and many, indeed most of them, committed themselves to Christ, and lived out their lives in service to Him.

The Whyteleafe of 1885 was very different from Whyteleafe today. It was separated from Kenley by open country. The actual centre, or Square, was very much as it is today, except that the Post Office and Saddler's was one of the shops in the Square. Going south, from the public house on the right were the houses of which two were recently demolished to make a car park. Beyond them, still on the right, were shops, much as today, except again for demolition to provide another carpark. But on the left, from the present garage site to Station Road was a green bank with trees or bushes, topped by a flat field. After Station Road, still going south, there were houses on both sides of the road for a short distance, after which came a space, until on the right were a small group of houses surrounding the then-named Warlingham Station. On the left-hand side the now quite narrow road was fenced, without a foot-path. The fence was a quite substantial one, of strong timber, topped by a heavy iron strip upon which stood little iron pyramids, intended to discourage even the most active small boys from climbing over. This was a necessary precaution, for on the other side of the fence was a surprisingly deep and wide watercourse, which, for the greater part of its life contained only a trickle of water, but, when the Bourne flowed, it filled up with a rushing torrent of beautifully clear, and immensely cold water.

The Bourne itself rose in fields just the other side of Wapses Lodge, on the road to Woldingham. Charles Phillips, my grandfather, who lived at Well Farm, grazed his cows on meadowland, which stretched from the entrance to the Lime Pits, now Hillside Road, to Wapses Lodge. He was at great pains to prevent his animals from drinking freely of the water, for experience showed that, in hot weather, they found it so attractive that they over-indulged, and became ill. Some indeed died from this simple cause. The answer was to dig a steep-sided channel down which the cows could not climb — quite an enterprise, since it extended from Wapses Lodge to the Lime Pits entrance.

Going north, the Bourne passed under the railway through a large culvert, and flooded the fields which are now the allotments and part of the school grounds. Passing under the road near Bournecroft, the stream went behind the railway goods yard, passed under both railway and road near Maple Road, and flooded the fields from there down to the gas-holder.

Eventually the Bourne flowed into the Wandle in Croydon, after causing floods at Little Roke, Kenley Cricket Ground, Purley Corner and other places en route. For this reason alone it would have merited the name Woe Water, but, as the years passed, there were those who were convinced that a Bourne-flow presaged some great disaster. In recent years both frequency and flow have diminished as the water table has fallen as a result of increasing demand for water supplies for domestic and industrial use.

In 1885 the road from the Square to Warlingham passed through the arch under the Upper Warlingham railway as now, but was immediately in practically open country. The road to Caterham Hill was but a cart track, upon which grass grew within living memory. Whyteleafe had no station. The level crossing gates were not protected by signals, and were not infrequently rammed by London-bound trains, as the

curve of the line did not give drivers a sufficiently early view to enable them to stop in time. After considerable public outcry, this situation was remedied by the provision of a tiny signal box and signals far enough up and down the line to give drivers adequate warning. The signaller lived in a little house beside the line.

From the level crossing to St. Luke's Church there was a well-maintained footpath, but the roadway, such as it was, was often inches deep in mud. The road now known as Hornchurch Hill was but a cart track leading to a gate at the top of the hill, beyond which were fields that were strictly private, extending almost to Kenley Station. Church Road was reasonably maintained, probably by the owners of a few large houses, but the steeper part, leading into Salmons Lane was very rough and muddy.

St. Luke's Church was built in 1866, and was distinguished by having no pew rents at a time when most churches considered them to be an essential part of the financial provision for their work. The building was graced by a slender spire situated about halfway along the roof. When the bell was rung it was possible to see the weathercock which surmounted it shaking. We wondered whether it was dangerous. Years later, the architects decided that it was, and the spire was removed, the bell being housed in a tower at the West end, as it is at present. Thus, Whyteleaf in 1885 was a self-contained community, a village surrounded by open country, adequately served by businesses capable of supplying most of the needs of the community. But, in those days there was no way that people of Free Church persuasion would make common cause with the Parish Church. Instead, they went to considerable lengths to travel to churches of their own denomination. A long walk did not deter them, but there can be no doubt that, when Mrs. Hodgson's meeting began to cater for adults as well as for children, the well-managed meeting right in the centre of the village compared very favourably with churches which could only be reached by a long walk, whatever the weather.

When Mrs. Hodgson opened her home for the children of Whyteleaf, this was a Sunday afternoon Bible School for them alone. When, in 1887 or 1888, she agreed to include adults in her arrangements, she continued to be responsible for the instruction of those who gathered. This, in those days, was a very unusual situation, and there can be no doubt that she felt herself to be led of God to make such provision, and that, in all this inspired activity, she was supported and encouraged in every step by her husband, the highly regarded Postmaster of the village.

Very soon the accommodation at the Post Office was filled to its limits. The meetings overflowed from the large front room into the passages. People even sat on the stairs. By standing in the open doorway Mrs. Hodgson could be heard, if not seen, by all those present. Clearly this arrangement would, sooner or later, present such difficulties as to discourage some from continuing to attend.

Opposite the public house on the way to the level crossing there stood a wooden hall, which was owned by a Mr. Griffith, who used it apparently as a carpenter's shop. Mrs. Hodgson approached him with a view to using this undistinguished-looking place as a meeting room. Having secured his agreement, she then sought the help of Rev. William Heather, Minister of Caterham Valley Congregational Church, of which she and her husband were members.

Mr. Heather gladly undertook to provide preachers for Sunday morning and evening services. Mr. W. Garland Soper was one of the most regular of these. Mr. Heather

himself came down frequently. At the same time a Sunday School was commenced under the leadership of Mr. W. Thompson, who drove over from Caterham every Sunday afternoon for several years by pony and trap, bringing helpers with him. He also took turns with the others in the adult services. The Minutes of Caterham Congregational Church (now the United Reformed Church) record that in 1893 his faithful service was recognised by the presentation of a marble timepiece. From the same source we learn that the first Communion of the Lord's Supper was held at the Whyteleaf Mission Room, on 16th March 1890, when thirty communicants participated. By this time the services were so well attended as to fill the room to capacity, especially the evening Gospel Service.

Throughout our church's history it is very clear that the Lord raised up the right person to meet an immediate need. So it was in this case. When the church leaders were becoming seriously concerned as to how to accommodate the steadily-growing congregations, Mr. John Newberry of "Maes Mawr", recently retired from highly successful business in South Africa, was looking around for a spiritual home. He attended the Evening Service on several occasions and was deeply impressed with the quality of the teaching and with the evident sincerity and enthusiasm of the congregation.

It was my very great privilege to hear many times from Mr. Newberry's own lips the story of what followed. He would say, "I was surprised at the people's joy in the Lord. They took no notice of the many difficulties — in winter a smoking fire that produced little heat — in summer inadequate ventilation — always hard seats — usually every seat taken, causing some to stand all through the service. In the end I felt that if they could remain loyal and even praise God for such a place, I must provide them with premises worthy of their zeal and faithfulness." He would add that, in addition to a chapel, Whyteleaf seemed to him to have two other needs. The young people needed a place where they could use up their energy without doing damage or causing annoyance to those around them. The main traffic through the village in the 1890's consisted of wagons drawn by powerful horses and driven by men who were often the worse for liquor, for the only places of refreshment were the public houses along the route.

Mr. Newberry's vision, therefore, was a suite of buildings, comprising a chapel, a gymnasium and a coffee tavern to supply meals with tea or coffee, and also, if required, simple, inexpensive overnight accommodation.

According to the Caterham Directory of 1901, the building was completed of "a fine block of buildings known as the Whyteleaf Mission House and Temperance Boarding Hotel, which includes a coffee bar, reading room and gymnasium." There were also two pleasant houses intended for a caretaker and the pastor, both of which had direct access to the other buildings by short footpaths leading directly into them.

The Minutes of Caterham Congregational Church record "first services held at the new Mission Room at Whyteleaf, Sunday April 24th 1892. Morning Service conducted by Mr. Thompson, evening service by Mr. Heather. In the afternoon Mr. Soper addressed the Sunday School." Soon the name Mission Room was superseded by the title Tabernacle, the name by which the building was known thereafter until it passed to the Salvation Army in 1928.

It became apparent in those days that the Tabernacle congregation depended rather too heavily on the help of friends from Caterham for Sunday ministry, and Mr. Newberry then undertook to provide the stipend of a resident

evangelist. Caterham Congregational Minutes for February 2nd 1893 contain the following statement: "Report of meeting at Whyteleafe to recognise and welcome the Rev. W. Woodhouse as Evangelist, and presented to Mr. Thompson a marble timepiece as a token of appreciation of long and earnest services. The new Whyteleafe Mission Room is the property of Mr. Newberry, who provides all the funds, including the stipend of the Evangelist. Letter from Mr. Heather to Mr. Newberry confirming verbal agreement that Mr. Woodhouse be responsible for the general oversight and conduct of services on Sundays and weekdays under the superintendence of the Pastor of the Caterham Church, with Mr. Thompson and friends living on the spot. Meeting passed a vote of thanks to Mr. Newberry for his generous erection of the buildings at Whyteleafe."

The Revd. William Woodhouse was not only an excellent Bible teacher, but also a gifted musician. It was therefore no great hardship to him to have to conduct Sunday worship without an organist. It is said that he had connections in Holland, where it was then common practice to play on after a hymn to give the congregation time to compose themselves for the next part of the service. In his hands this interlude often became an impressive commentary on the subject-matter of the words which had just been sung. It must have made quite a strong impression, for, when others presided at the organ, they felt themselves under some degree of obligation to try to do likewise, and so it continued until some time in the 1930's, when it was felt that "playing on" had little practical use.

In November 1893 the Minutes of Caterham Congregational Church report correspondence between Rev. William Heather, Rev. William Woodhouse and Mr. John Newberry to the effect that the friends at Whyteleafe intended to manage their own affairs. A resolution of the Church Meeting of November 11th 1893 expressed regret at this decision, but the severance received the assent of the Caterham Church. What had happened at Whyteleafe was that the church had decided to become fully undenominational, in order to meet, as far as possible, the needs of all Nonconformists.

A church which was to be independent needed a Doctrinal Basis and a Constitution. The Council sought the advice of a valued friend of Mr. Newberry, Sir Washington Ranger. He was a bright Christian, a lawyer who, though blind from birth, had risen to the top of his chosen profession. To him we owe the form in which our Doctrinal Basis presents the Biblical Truths as they are stated in the historic creeds. The present Constitution dates from the same time, with certain changes, such as the name of the fellowship, some rather strict rules about the age of church members and church officers, and even stricter rules about who should or should not conduct meetings. On the whole, these rules recognise that there is no lower age limit for a young person to commit himself or herself to Christ, but that there is a need for some degree of maturity in a Christian before he is fully capable of taking an active part in church business.

The origins of the Church were in Congregationalism, and its practices remained those of that denomination even after the severance of the Congregational connection. When, however, certain friends of the Baptist persuasion made common cause with the Church, it was agreed that, regarding modes of Baptism, those who recognised each other as true Christians would pledge themselves to respect the convictions of others where they differed from their own. Hence article 3 of the Constitution reads, "The Ordinance of Baptism to be administered to adult believers when desired; and the service of dedication or baptism for children

according to the desire of the parents." This statement typifies the attitude of mutual toleration which has made it possible for Christians holding different points of view to work together in harmony and common loyalty to Christ.

Keen evangelical Pastors served the Mission through the years. Most of them passed on to distinguished service elsewhere, and their names are still remembered with affection in the district. Mr. Springhall followed Mr. Woodhouse, and he, in turn, was followed by Mr. Carter.

Mr. Carter was taken seriously ill with heart trouble, and the doctors said plainly that his days were numbered. However, it was laid on his heart that he should ask the elders of the church to pray with him and anoint him in accordance with James 5. 14 and 15. Without further intervention of the doctors, he made a complete recovery. When he left Whyteleafe in 1901, it became a regular practice to invite him to preach on one of the four Sundays of the Pastor's annual holiday. Thus it came about that, as a young boy in 1913, I heard his testimony to the completeness of his cure. It made a lasting impression on me, which encouraged me to proceed with a similar service, when Pastor Tranah requested it some seventy years later. Mr. Tranah lived on to the age of 94 years, and, despite gradually-increasing weakness, retained his sight, hearing and a clear mind to the last. Thus the Lord honoured the faith of his children when exercised in accordance with the clear directions of His Word. Circumstances have prevented similar action for others, but, on innumerable occasions, the church has proved that "the prayer of faith will save the sick."

From those days till now, the church has been strongly missionary-minded, and, in the first decade of the century, young men and women were accepting the challenge, and setting out for service in foreign lands. One of their most energetic supporters was Samuel John Woolmer. When he died at the comparatively early age of 51, a Board was erected in his memory upon which were inscribed the names of missionaries who had gone out from the church, and, in a second column, other missionaries who were associated with the church — that is to say, not actually members, but regular visitors and correspondents. This board showed that, by 1909 there were nine members of the church on the mission-field, and about an equal number of associates.

Pastor Gerald R. Coultas served the church for eight prosperous years. Records of numbers attending disappeared with other church documents in 1929 when the newly-named United Free Church vacated the Tabernacle premises, as provided in Mr. Newberry's will, in favour of the Salvation Army. But an odd page of the Mission Magazine survives, in which it is stated that it was agreed at the Sunday School Teachers' Conference to honour the Sunday School class which contributed the largest offertory for the half-year with some distinction. Mr. Humphreys very kindly designed and painted the framed testimonial — and the first to win the coveted prize were the infants! There being some 130 little ones, they outdid the elders, and for six months it graced the walls of their room. The boys of the first class resolved to recapture it for the Senior division. Their determination and self-denial won the victory.

If one takes a Primary of 130 and applies that number pro rata to all the departments of the church as it is at present, one can easily visualise the size and flourishing condition of the church in the early years of the 20th century. Those of us who are able to recall the church before 1914 remember well how every service was crowded with worshippers, and the place became hot by Sunday evening because the sun shone in in summer, and the heating system was highly efficient in

winter. It was not unusual for ladies in those days to be overcome by the heat and the enthusiasm of the meetings. When this happened, the service went on uninterrupted, while those in the immediate vicinity cared for the one who was indisposed.

Ten years after the opening of the Mission buildings (24th April 1892), Mr. Newberry provided additional space by adding a New Wing. Owing to the shape of the site, this had to be at right angles to the existing building; not an ideal arrangement, but the best that could be devised without major alterations to the Tabernacle as it stood. The New Wing was opened on 18th May 1902, and, on the following day, which was Whit Monday, Pastor Gerald R. Coultas and Miss Annie S. Hodgson were married, to begin a life together of active and fruitful service for the Master.

Pastor Coultas laboured so diligently and successfully, that, in another three years' time, a second New Wing became necessary. The two wings together held as many worshippers as the original building. Each was capable of being separated from the rest of the building by roller shutters, a feature regularly used by the Sunday School. After their opening exercises, which were taken all together, the Bible Class went into the second New Wing, the senior classes into the first New Wing, while the other classes, seven in number, with about a dozen scholars in each, spread over the main building.

There was one other building on the site. This was the Band Room, which, for obvious reasons, stood apart from the other buildings, and was entered by climbing up several steps. It served two purposes. First, it was the home of the Mission Band, and secondly, it gave good space to the Infant Department of the Sunday School, which, for many years, numbered over 100.

Music played a large part in the services from the beginning. Singing in the Hodgson home was accompanied on a harmonium. When the services moved to the wooden hall, that harmonium was carried from home to hall for each service, and back again afterwards. The Tabernacle never aspired to a pipe organ, but Mr. Newberry provided a handsome "American" organ upon which the Rev. William Woodhouse played with energy and evident pleasure. In passing, perhaps it had better be made clear that the adjective "American" does not indicate the country of origin, but the manner in which the air circulates through the instrument. The bellows of the American organ draw in air over the reeds. Those of the Harmonium compress air, which is blown out through the reeds. Consequently the tone of the American organ is much smoother than that of the Harmonium, which can be made very loud, indeed, strident by blowing hard, and is just right for keeping together a large group singing in the open air. In addition to the big organ, Mr. Newberry provided two harmoniums and a piano. After service, on Sunday evening, one of these harmoniums was carried down to the open air pitch. This was an amphitheatre with seating, located where the garage or car showroom is now. Singing would attract a crowd, some of whom would draw near, while others stood on the other side of the road. Speakers would proclaim the Gospel. Tracts were offered. A ten feet square screen was erected as soon as it began to get dark, and a lime-light projector showed pictures illustrating Scripture stories, or testimonies to the saving and keeping power of Christ.

Mr. Newberry enjoyed the friendship of General William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, and, after the General's death, members of the Booth family were frequent visitors to Maes Mawr. No doubt this connection influenced Mr. Newberry to suggest to the young men of the

Tabernacle that, if they were willing to apply themselves diligently to learning to play brass instruments, he would supply both the instruments and an instructor. The young men jumped at the chance, and a Mission Band, some twenty strong, became a feature of church life. They had their own uniform, and any movement of Tabernacle members in a body was led by a well-ordered group of players.

Once a year, Mr. Newberry would hire a complete train to take the villagers to the seaside. Everybody was invited, and the day school took one of its ration of "occasional closures". These were great occasions, and, on arrival at the chosen destination, the whole group would form up to march behind the Band from the station to the sea front in a Procession of Witness. Mr. Newberry would even, at some places, hire coaches (then called charabancs) to take his guests on a tour of places of interest in the locality. A picture of one of these survives. The passengers are sitting well in the open. There is no roof or hood, and there are side openings, but no doors. The front wheels have pneumatic tyres; the rear ones are solid. All the tyres are entirely void of tread of any kind.

The 1914 War brought most of these blissful activities to an end. The bandsmen were almost all called up. The railway informed Mr. Newberry that there was no rolling stock available to run the annual train. Street lighting was extinguished, so that the open air witness had to finish before darkness fell.

In 1909 Pastor Coultas, who had encouraged missionary interest by every means available to him, found himself called by God to volunteer to serve as a missionary in Ceylon. His returns home on furlough proved to be high spots in the life of the church. His lantern slides, and well-chosen specimens of objects commonly encountered by those living in Ceylon, together with his lucid manner as a lecturer, ensured a nation-wide demand for his services, and brought in funds for the Ceylon and India General Mission.

Somehow or other the C.I.G.M. managed to get Mr. and Mrs. Coultas home for a much-needed furlough early in 1918, but, when the time came for their return, they were officially banned from travelling, and it was not till well into 1919 that they returned to a warm and heartfelt welcome.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the world, in Cuzco, Peru, Thomas Ernest Payne, who had set out in 1902, was experiencing amazing acceptance after years of hostility both from the government and from the church authorities. His tentative inquiries in 1902 had made it clear that no Protestant missionary would be permitted to enter Peru. Still very clear that the Lord had called him to Peru, he therefore applied for permission to set up an engineering workshop in the remote city of Cuzco, very high up in the Andes. This was readily forthcoming, as the civic authorities were deeply concerned about the long and dangerous journey to the coast which was involved in getting the most insignificant repair carried out. A resident engineer was (in more senses than one) a Godsend.

Mr. Payne planned to drive the necessary machinery in his workshop by a steam engine. On arrival at the seaport, the engine was dismantled and packed in cases of the right weight for a mule to carry over the mountain trails which were the only means of access to the city. Mr. Payne used to tell of his amazement to find himself sitting gasping for breath in the rare air, while the well-loaded mules and their deep-chested drivers scrambled along without showing any signs of distress. In a year or so Mr. Payne was as happy to walk the trails as were the local inhabitants.

The boys of Cuzco found the steam engine absolutely fascinating. Where is the boy who would not? Mr. Payne encouraged them to come and watch, some of them even to

learn the engineering processes. Among these boys he was able to do his first simple evangelism.

He was a man of many parts. The people, in the main, scratched a meagre living from the earth as subsistence farmers. Looking at their animals, poultry, grains and meadow grasses, he proposed to the farmers that, in all these cases, the breed could be improved by importing fresh strains from the outside world. Yes, they said, no doubt this is true, but we need money to do this, and we have none. Mr. Payne therefore decided to purchase a farm, and work out his theories. By this means he was able, over the years, to offer the neighbouring farmers better seeds, better poultry and better cattle. The Urco farm became famous as a centre for advanced farming. Side by side with this, it also became known as an active centre of evangelism. In a few years, the whole way of life of the area was revolutionised. The "evangelico", whose activities had been viewed with suspicion and antipathy a few years before, was invited to be Mayor of Cuzco, and eventually served two terms in that office.

In 1905 he married Lily, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Hodgson. Their son, Ronald, as he grew up, was found to be suffering from tuberculosis. They were admirably placed to try the most highly recommended cure available in those days. The patient must be banished to the high pine forests, there to live, day and night in the open, for a year. The cure worked, Ronald used to tell how he felt the odours of the pine-woods penetrating, sometimes quite painfully, into the deepest recesses of his lungs. After a whole year of this treatment he was pronounced cured, and was sent home to his grandparents who lived in Kenley, with a view to his following a conventional programme of education up to Matriculation standard, at Purley County School. After this he studied Medicine, and completed his preparation to join his father in Peru by a course at the Bible Training Institute in Glasgow. We saw him regularly, and felt no doubt that he was obsessed with the desire to serve the people of Peru among whom he had spent his childhood years. In due time and with great rejoicing, his father received him at Urco farm, and it seemed that the prospect of many years of profitable service for the Master lay ahead.

After a brief period of happy cooperation, they were faced by a devastating plague of typhus. Dr. Ronald threw himself with characteristic energy and enthusiasm into the task of helping the sufferers, thus, as it were, signing his own death warrant; for, when he contracted the disease, he had so exerted himself that he had no strength left with which to fight it. His mortal remains lie buried beside those of his mother at Urco farm. All those qualifications and all that preparation wasted? No indeed! Along the way he had challenged many to face Christ's claims upon them. The manner of his death opened many a heart to the incoming of the Saviour whom he had served with all his talents and with all his physical strength. To this day "he being dead yet speaketh".

In 1909 when Pastor and Mrs. Coultas left for Ceylon, Thomas George Black was appointed Pastor. He was a Scot, and, as children, we were often puzzled by his accent. But he was a splendid preacher, and a conscientious pastor. Mrs. Black was always at his side when they went out visiting the flock. Some members were located at a distance. To them they rode on two immaculately maintained bicycles. They always arrived smartly, but not showily dressed, and without a hair out of place. Their outward appearance was part of their Christian witness, and betokened the well-ordered minds that motivated them in all that they did. Under them the church flourished. There was one cloud on the horizon.

Mr. Black believed that a young minister should not stay long in one place, and, from the beginning, announced his intention of moving on after three years. So, at the beginning of the Great War, in 1914, it seemed that Whyteleafe came to a standstill, while everybody went to Upper Warlingham Station to bid farewell to those who had, in so brief a time, made for themselves a place in many hearts.

Robert Stanley Bradbrook was welcomed as Pastor at Recognition Services on 16th December 1914. He was an older man, with much experience as an evangelist. His previous charge had been at Hyde Park Hall, where he had not only acted in a pastoral capacity, but had also pursued a policy of open-air evangelism in Hyde Park itself. From Hyde Park Hall, and from his previous pastorate, Alexandra Hall, Penge, came several members, who testified to the wide scope and effectiveness of Mr. Bradbrook's ministry. Mrs. Bradbrook, too, was invariably included in their encomiums. Like Mrs. Black, she stood shoulder to shoulder with her husband in all his undertakings for the Master. Her Young Ladies' Bible Class is still remembered with affection by the now dwindling band of those who attended it.

They came to Whyteleafe at a time when unprecedented stresses afflicted the people. 164 men and 4 women from Whyteleafe are listed as serving in the Forces. First the young men, then the breadwinners were called up. There were no social services to give help. The few men who were retained in essential work were so overworked as to be unable to give time to their families, though many of them did find time to exercise a fatherly function in the homes of neighbours where the mother was struggling to bring up a family on a minimal income, and in conditions of severe rationing.

The Tabernacle fellowship felt called to a very special ministry in the village. The Pastor and his wife moved among the homes, comforting the bereaved, and encouraging those who feared for the lives of their dear ones in the firing line.

In January 1915 Mr. Newberry, a long-time widower, married Miss Jean Perry, a former missionary with the Japan Evangelistic Band. Together they threw themselves wholeheartedly into caring for the people of the village. Among many acts of kindness which went unrecorded, one stands out which by its very nature became known by everybody. The Tabernacle had (as we still have today) a band of women who had made garments to be sent to the mission field. They found themselves hindered from continuing in two ways; there was no way of sending to the mission field, and materials were hard to come by. To them Mr. and Mrs. Newberry proposed that they should sew garments for needy families in the village, using materials that Mr. and Mrs. Newberry would provide. This initiative resulted in the making and distribution of hundreds of garments. The Pastor was able to say with justification that the children of Whyteleafe continued to look healthy and cared-for, while children in other places showed every sign of poverty and enforced neglect.

The records show that 26 Whyteleafe men laid down their lives in battle. Of these about two-thirds were associated with the Tabernacle. Others returned, as a result of wounds and sickness but shadows of their former selves. Unemployment was rife. Those who found employment had to accept incredibly low wages. Several of the more enterprising chose to emigrate. As a consequence of this, the church which had shone so brightly and courageously during the War, began to show signs of declension.

In 1923 Mr. Bradbrook accepted a call to the Stratford Tabernacle, in East London, where Mr. Ken Saunders of the

Bible Society, a good friend of our church, is Pastor today. From then until 1951, no further pastor was appointed. Mr. Newberry, now old and in declining health, found that his many years of open-handed liberality to all who called upon him to help them in propagating the gospel, had so impoverished him that radical retrenchment was necessary. For nearly thirty years he had maintained the Tabernacle buildings and paid the Pastor's stipend. The people's giving had been almost entirely devoted to overseas missions. The missions concerned were all personally connected with the church here: the South Africa General Mission with Mr. Newberry himself; the Evangelical Union of South America with Mr. T. E. Payne; the Ceylon and India General Mission with Mr. G. R. Coultas; and the Japan Evangelistic Band with Mrs. Newberry. Mr. Payne was a founder-member of E.U.S.A. Mr. Newberry had supported individual Christians to go out to South Africa as businessmen-missionaries after the style of Mr. Payne in Peru. Most of these had been evangelistically successful, but not all had been as successful as Mr. Newberry himself had been a generation earlier in matters of business.

Mr. Newberry died on 27th April 1928, at the age of 90, and thus ended a period of magnificent Christian service in the village, which had not only exercised a strong influence in Whyteleafe itself, but had involved the members of the fellowship in missionary endeavour to the far ends of the earth.

Mr. Newberry had felt doubts as to the small and apparently dwindling body's capacity to sustain the witness as hitherto. He therefore left the Tabernacle buildings to the Salvation Army, with the proviso that they should continue to be used for the proclamation of the Gospel, and that the Coffee Tavern, which, under the enthusiastic management of Mr. Charles Dean, had rendered a valued service both to the people of the village and to passers-by, should be maintained.

The Salvation Army invited the existing members to continue in the buildings until officers and staff could be found to continue the work. A few years before, Mr. Ernest Turner, on his return from service with the R.A.M.C. in the 138th Field Ambulance, which had continued to serve after the War in the Army of Occupation in Germany, had been approached to assist the Church Secretary, Mr. Harris, with a view to his becoming Secretary when Mr. Harris left the district on retirement from business. The transition appears to have been carried out in stages in 1925 and 1926. At all events, the young Mr. Turner was bearing full responsibility for running the church by 1928. In addition to his duties as second to the ageing Mr. Francis, Head Gardener at Martinhoe, he had put his nursing skill freely at the disposal of those who were caring for Mr. Newberry in his last illness. Other members of the Church Council had taken their share in keeping a twenty-four hour watch over Mr. Newberry. They willingly undertook the night watches, despite the heavy demands of their daily toil, usually in those days between 40 and 50 hours per week.

Various thoughts have been entertained as to what exactly were Mr. Newberry's intentions in leaving the Tabernacle to the Salvation Army. After mature consideration, one can only conclude that he had thought that the existing fellowship, after working happily under his protection for so many years, would be glad to accept the umbrella of the Salvation Army, and would immediately affiliate themselves thereto. But their distinctive witness still leaned more towards Congregationalism than to the form of discipline and extrovert behaviour of the Salvationists known to them in those days. They therefore applied themselves diligently to the consideration of ways of maintaining their independence.

For some years Mr. William Forrest, Superintendent of the Browning Bethany Homes for Old Folks in Whyteleafe Hill, had been a welcome visitor to the Tabernacle pulpit. Especially memorable had been his children's addresses, some of which are remembered among us to this day. To him the fellowship turned for guidance, and he readily agreed to act as Chairman of the Council.

For some 35 years, the fellowship had been known by the name of the building in which it worshipped — the Tabernacle. It was clear that, when that building was vacated, the church would need a new name which would indicate oneness in Christ, with no denominational barriers. Mr. Forrest, being a Scot, felt that the title United Free Church would suit the case. The title was adopted, together with the appended explanation, "evangelical and undenominational".

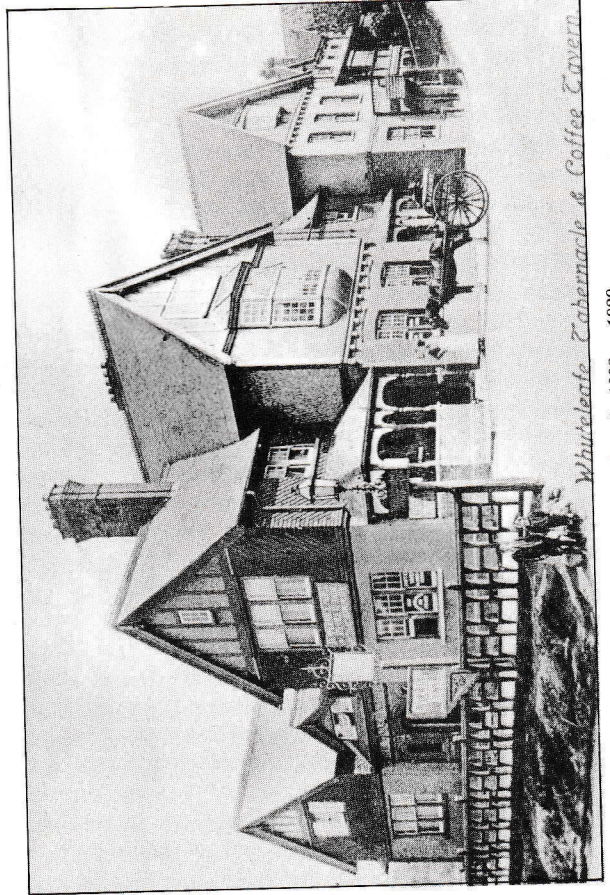
The question now arose as to where services could be held. After the War, the old Mission Band had not reformed, but eventually the decision was taken to establish a village band with no church affiliations. A distinguished bandmaster was found in the person of Mr. Peter Clarke, who was well-known as an adjudicator at the National Brass Band Festivals at the Crystal Palace. Under him Whyteleafe soon had a band which played in tune and with a gentle, cohesive tone, which made it deservedly popular. A Band Hall was built for practice on a site just west of the level crossing. As some members of the church were also members of the Band, it was natural that they should look towards the Band Hall as a place for holding Sunday Services. On inquiry, it was ascertained that the hall was free on Sunday mornings and evenings, but was already being used by St. Luke's Church for Sunday School in the afternoons.

The old wooden hall on the Square, from which the Church had moved in 1892, never thinking to return, was still standing, and available on Sunday afternoons. To this place, considered unsuitable 27 years before, the Sunday School returned. Eventually, it became possible to secure an exclusive tenancy, and weeknight meetings became numerous and well attended. On Sunday mornings, after service, a procession moved to the small hall, carrying forms etc. for the Sunday School. Before service in the evening, a similar procession carried the furniture back again for the Evening Service. These conditions obtained for just under four years, and the work grew and flourished beyond our highest expectations. The move from the Tabernacle took place in April, 1929.

Although the difficult conditions evidently acted as a challenge to the loyal members, it was clear that the adverse conditions would, sooner or later, militate against the further expansion of the work, and the Council initiated a two-pronged method of making provision for further advance. First, there was an all-out effort to raise funds, and, secondly, a sharp look-out was maintained to find a site suitable for a permanent building. A good many sites were considered, but most of them had conditions attached to the proposed contract of sale which ruled them out. For instance, the most suitable was owned by a builder who would sell only if he were granted the exclusive right to build the proposed new church. His ideas were so expensive as to put his scheme entirely out of our reach. The present site came with the condition that the house (now 157, Godstone Road) must be purchased with the land. Its situation away from the road commended itself to the Council, as the Tabernacle services had often been interrupted by noise from the road, whereas the quiet here was only disturbed by an occasional rumble from the railway. The purchase was completed in September

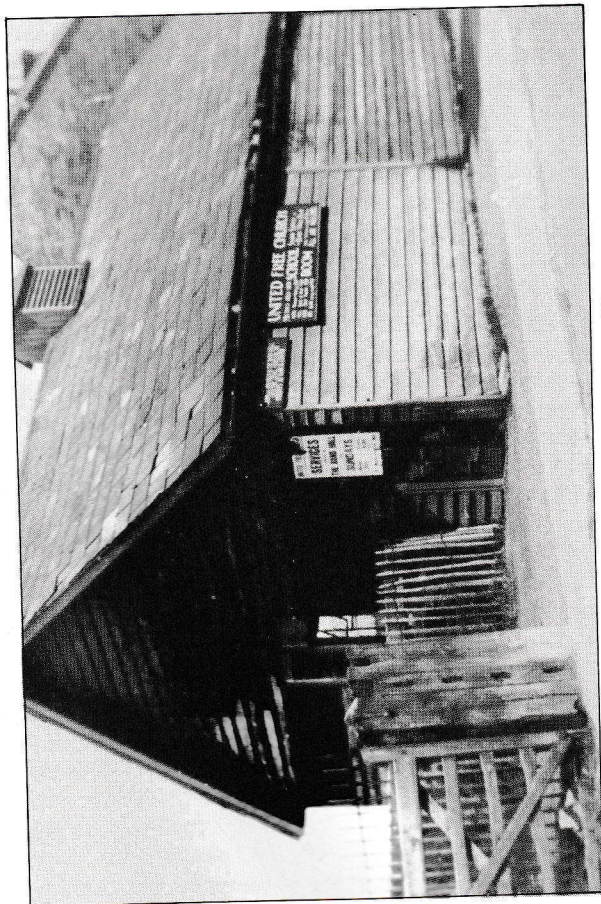


*BOATING ON THE BOURNE WATER
Doris Turner and Florrie Coppard.*

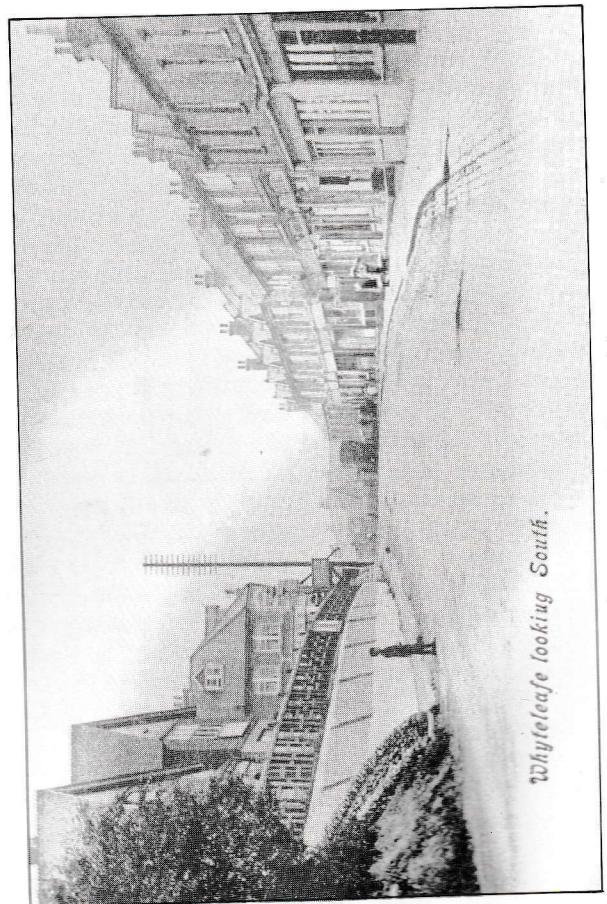


Whyteleafe Tabernacle & Coffee Tavern

Home of the Church, 1892 to 1929

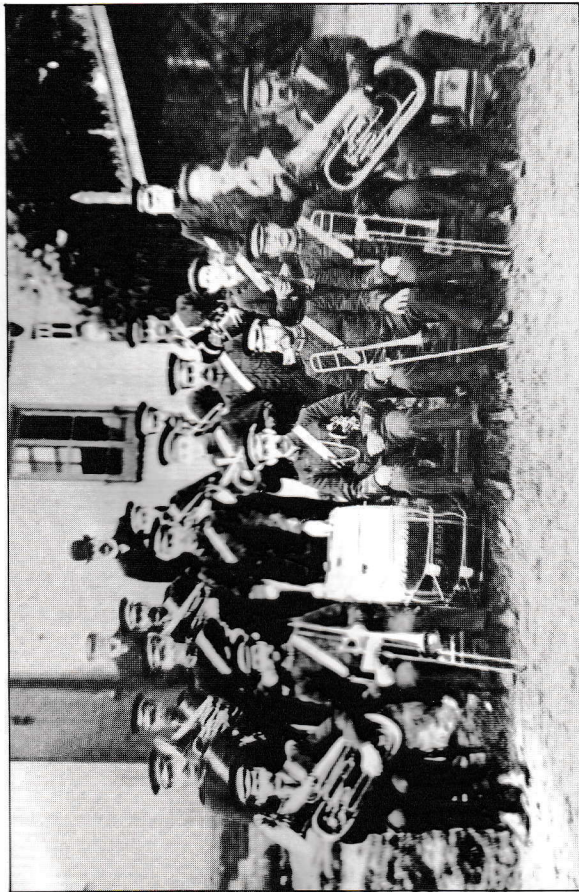


*FORMER CARPENTER'S SHOP
Used for Church purposes, 1888 to 1892 and again 1929 to 1933*



Whyteleafe looking South.

Tabernacle Buildings on left.



MISSION BAND 1910
in front of Band Room

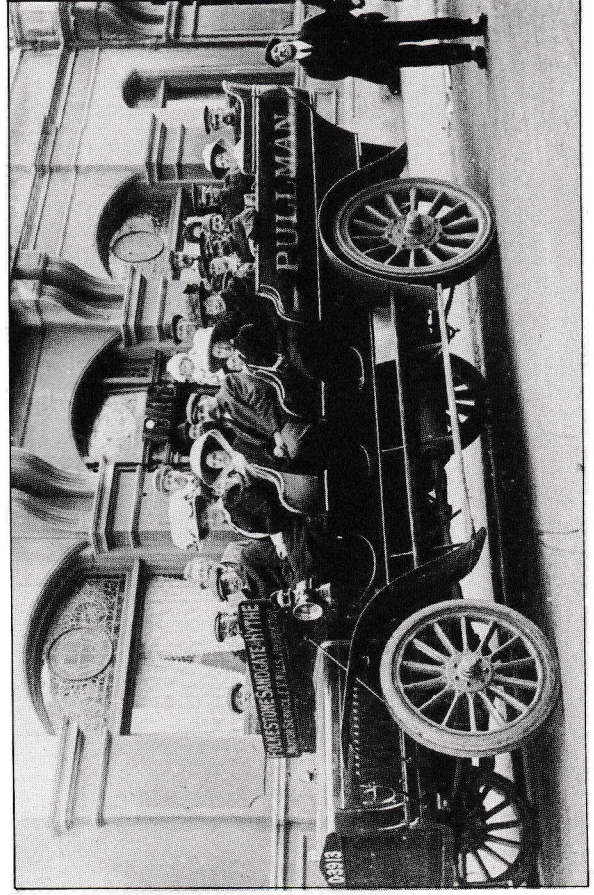


S. A. G. M. Convention, Maes Mawr, Whyteleafe.

S. A. G. M. CONVENTION, MAES MAWR, WHYTELEAFE, 1906
Such gatherings were a regular feature in the spacious grounds of Maes Mawr.



TABERNACLE COUNCIL 1913
Messrs. STONE, HARVEY, LANAWAY, TURNER, MARTINGELL,
GRICE, BLACK (Pastor), NEWBERRY, COATES, DEAN.



SUNDAY SCHOOL EXCURSION, 1912
This is the leading coach of a cavalcade conveying the whole party round the district.
Note Mission Band in uniform.



CIRCA 1908
Tiered arena for open air meetings
just past the last shop.

Whyteleafe. The Square.

WHYTELEAFE
Circa 1910



High Street.

Whyteleafe.



DEDICATION OF THE NEW BUILDING,
3rd OCTOBER, 1970

B. Cushing J. Rivers
Rev. R. Fletcher Rev. H. W. Janisch B. Bickel E. Tall
E. Cushing Pastor S. G. Tranah C. J. Harvey

1932, and steady efforts were made to raise an adequate building fund.

In 1933, the attention of the Council was drawn to a temporary building offered for sale by the military authorities at Farnborough. Mr. Eli John Bird Marwood, the local builder who had built the Browning Bethany Homes for Old Folks, and was a member of the Church Council, undertook to purchase and erect this building. As the Building Fund was not quite adequate to meet the total cost, he also loaned the outstanding part of the cost. Although externally only a "tin tabernacle", internally it was well appointed, and substantially constructed of materials of the highest quality, some of which still serve in the present buildings. Mr. Alfred E. Billingshurst, a comparative newcomer to the district, and a loyal and enthusiastic supporter of the Lords Day Observance Society, was entrusted with the duty of applying for the Worship Certificate required under the Act of 1885. He hit upon the happy definition of the church as being composed of "Christians not otherwise designated", a definition which admirably suits the church as it is, and has been for 92 of its 100 years.

The new building was first used on 28th December 1933, when the Dedication Service was held. On the following Sunday, 31st December 1933, it was in full use for the morning and evening services, and, in the afternoon, for a large Sunday School.

On the following morning, the owners of the old wooden hall on the Square, which had served our church well at two significant crisis points of its history, commenced to pull it down. It was with feelings of profound thankfulness to Almighty God that the members of the church acknowledged that the provision of the new building had come at precisely the right moment.

To many of us who experienced them, the five testing years which followed the death of Mr. Newberry proved to be highlights of spiritual experience. Working, planning and always praying, we found ourselves working with an ever-growing assurance of Divine Guidance. Each difficulty proved in the event to be but another vehicle for the demonstration of God's Faithfulness. Week by week the Word was faithfully preached, and the Saviour thus uplifted was drawing men and women, boys and girls unto Himself.

Now, settled in a comfortable and well-appointed building, members felt themselves free to invite neighbours to join them in the services. Numbers attending grew steadily. Especially was this so in the Sunday School. In reconstructing the building for our use. Mr. Marwood had provided two vestries, separated by a corridor which gave access through the back door to the platform in the main building, or to either vestry, without interrupting whatever was going on in the other. On Sunday afternoons, the main building was filled with Sunday School scholars, and the vestries with Primary scholars in the one, and Bible Class in the other. When the Primary reached about thirty, and the Bible Class about fifteen, it became clear that ampler accommodation must be found. An immediate step was to remove the partition between the passage and the vestry used by the Primary. This was but a temporary palliative, and active consideration was given to the erection of a hall to accommodate the Primary. Under Mr. Allen's guidance, a sectional building was constructed by a DIY team, and opened free of debt in 1936. In this place the Primary School quickly grew to 100, and the Monday night Prayer Meeting to 40. They were happy days, and the young people who grew up in them learned not only to think about their own Salvation, but also to be responsible members of the church.

Today, many of them are still serving the Lord actively and successfully in other places.

Meanwhile, Mr. Forrest, now nearing retirement, withdrew from active participation in the work, leaving Mr. Ernest Turner, the Church Secretary, to shoulder the responsibility for the actual running of the church. This he did, without show, but with a deep sense of responsibility to God, through the difficult years of the War, and on into 1946, and many there were who had good reason to thank God for him. In all he did, his wife Rose, and daughter, Ruth, were at one with him. Their home was a place of warm hospitality, and they were the most welcome visitors in the homes of the people of Whyteleafe. Where there was a need, they would be present to help.

Ernest Turner was a man of many gifts. His chosen work was in the garden. In gardening circles he was highly regarded, so much so, that his advice was often sought by members of the Royal Horticultural Society, of which he was a Fellow. He was an excellent artist, though few examples of his work have survived. He was gifted musically, singing until late in life in a high but unforced tenor voice, and playing both brass and woodwind instruments. In any of these fields he could have achieved the highest place had he concentrated on it. But, in the end, his two great aims were to perform his daily work to the best of his ability, and to serve his Lord and Saviour with all his heart. In fact, these two aims were not separate, for his love to Christ was the mainspring of all his activity. He was not a man to divide life's labours into sacred and secular. Through and through he was Christ's man, and, in everything he did, this fact shone through. He was trusted and loved throughout the whole community, and the better one knew him, the more one loved him.

The pulpit was served, Sunday by Sunday, by different preachers. Spurgeon's College greatly helped by sending out both students and tutorial staff. Successive Principals of the College, from Dr. Evans onward, have occupied our pulpit, and several who first preached in our church as students have returned later as members of the staff, or as holders of other offices of distinction.

After the War similar arrangements were made with London Bible College, whose Principal, the Revd. Ernest F. Kevan, was a regular visitor to our pulpit. Until the College moved out to Northwood, both members of the faculty and students served us regularly. Friendships thus formed have continued to the present day, and one of our young men, Roger Bishop, now Pastor of Banstead Baptist Church, followed a course of study there.

Recognising the need of consecutive teaching, Mr. Turner arranged from time to time conventions extending over a week or more, during which one or more distinguished visitors dealt in depth with Biblical subjects. These did not stop when war came, but were well attended by people hungry for the deeper understanding of the Word of God.

As members were called away for war service, he wrote to each one every month, and sent a helpful book and a copy of the current Monthly Circular. Some of us still treasure a card with photos of those serving in the Forces. Thus those at home prayed for those away, and those away prayed with equal urgency for those at home, for, in a very real sense, both were in the firing line. How much those faithful prayers meant to those who faced special danger we shall not know this side of heaven. Suffice it to say that in due time all returned thanking God that, at home or away, they had been conscious of Divine Guidance and Protection, even in the places of greatest danger.

During the course of the blitz the church was very near to

the spot where a fire-bomb fell, but, although the windows on the side nearest to the incident were so hot as to be untouchable, no material damage was done.

When war ended, the Sunday School, which had perforce suspended operations for a time, having in mind the safety of the children, quickly returned to its full numbers, and all the available space was filled. For a time immediately after the war it seemed that Youth Work would not pick up as the other departments had done. The Youth Leaders, however, refused to admit defeat, and persisted in visitation and in going out into the street to invite young people to their meetings, until the numbers began to increase. Two other factors helped to attract the young people; some of the meetings were held in the leaders' homes; and the very happy and well-run Camp, held at Cole Kitchen Farm, Gomshall, in a remote and beautiful site. Somewhat later came the Christian Archery Movement, known at first as the Latimer Youth Movement. It catered at first exclusively for boys, and the Girls' Brigade ran in parallel with it. In more recent times the Christian Archery Movement has catered for boys and girls, juniors and seniors.

The growth of the work among the children and young people had, by 1948, presented a problem of accommodation every Sunday afternoon. A building committee was formed. Their first decision was that it would be unwise to accept the obvious palliative of the erection of another temporary building. The next building must be the first of the permanent provision for the needs of the church. It would be necessary to have an overall plan for all the buildings envisaged for the future, and such a plan was prepared. It was agreed to recommend to the church that a beginning be made with a Hall. Long and patient effort had raised some £700 — a considerable sum for the immediate post-war days. On July 19th 1949, the Building Committee laid before the Church Meeting the proposed design of this Hall. Disappointment was felt when it was revealed that the lowest estimate for its construction was near £1,000. Judging by the length of time that it had taken to raise the £700, it would be a long time before the needed £300 could be raised. There was silence for a time. Then it seemed that the Spirit of Giving moved in our midst. One member offered an interest-free loan of £50. Another offered a similar loan of £100 but immediately changed it to a gift. His wife made a gift of a similar amount. Two other sisters made gifts of £50 and £25, and the fund was complete.

The new Hall was dedicated on the morning of Sunday, 5th March 1950. In the afternoon it was well filled with Primary scholars, and, later in the week, with a good company of members of the Youth Fellowship. Since then hundreds of children and young people have received Bible instruction from a succession of devoted teachers there. Later, the Prayer Meeting moved there, and between 30 and 40 members gathered primarily for prayer, but also to study God's Word, and to hear from visiting speakers about efforts being made, both at home and overseas, to spread the Gospel among those who had not hitherto heard it, or, having heard it, had so far resisted the offer of Salvation through Christ Jesus Our Lord.

At some time during the War it was realised that we were supporting missionary societies and rather lacking in personal contact with missionaries. It was therefore a joy to receive into membership Harold Coleman, who was preparing to go to Congo with the Heart of Africa Mission. The Monthly Circular for August 1946 contains pictures of Mr. and Mrs. Coleman over the caption, "Yours in His glad service on the Belgian Congo." Their ministry was greatly used of the Lord, and some of Mr. Coleman's letters read like quotations from John Wesley's "Journal". So powerful was

the effect of the preached Word that people were throwing themselves to the ground and calling on God for forgiveness. This was not a passing hysteria, for the church so begun endured through the disturbances, and, when the Colemans returned (they had fled for their lives from the advancing Simbas) the Christians emerged from the remote fastnesses of the forest, and there was a grand reunion of those who had suffered much, but could praise the Lord for preserving them in soul and spirit, as well as in body, through the troublous years. Now retired from the field, Mr. and Mrs. Coleman still witness for the Lord through the Swahili broadsheet "Upesi", which corresponds with "Soon" in English, and "Bientot" in French, many thousands of copies of which are distributed. Each issue brings testimony to the Lord's working through this publication, and additional copies are requested by those who have been brought to the Lord by its use, in order that they may share the blessing which they themselves have received.

Since the Colemans went out, there have been other fruitful contacts with mature Christians whom the Lord has thrust into His harvest field.

None of those who were present will ever forget a winter evening in which we heard Miss Hilda Steele on Nepal and its needs. Her burning desire to help those who were suffering from leprosy, and the story which she told of the Shining Hospital at Pokhara, led to ever closer ties, which eventually encouraged her and her sister to become members of our church, an association which has proved to be a great blessing both to the Misses Steele and the church.

In November 1946 we were visited for the first time by Miss Muriel Ainger of the Gorakhpur Nurseries. The whole philosophy of the leaders of those beautiful homes, springing from the Lord's word to Miss Warburton Booth, "Take this child," so appealed to us that a close and enduring link was forged, which endures to this day. For years our ladies of the Missionary Working Party sent parcels to the Nurseries, and we looked forward eagerly to visits from Miss Page and Miss Hill, Miss Ainger, Sister Thilde and Dr. Rosemary Page. It would be hard to overestimate the good that their visits did to us. The sweetness of their relationships, and the obvious success of their methods of bringing up children in a Christian atmosphere, in homes where it was as natural to turn to God in prayer as to seek help from older human friends, both warmed hearts and sweetened our own relationships.

Then came Phillip Wiles, called to Italy, and, in the beginning, working among soldiers at Udine, where churches were founded which endure. Nowadays he is working in Catania, Sicily, where, despite strong and sometimes dangerous opposition, people have been brought to Christ, and churches have been founded in different parts of the city.

Contacts with workers such as these challenge and encourage us, and in a very true and scriptural sense "do us good."

Our own people have responded to the challenge to full-time Christian service.

Gordon and Rosemary Newall, after enthusiastic service in our own church with the Christian Archery Movement and Girls' Brigade, felt the call to North Africa. As missionaries they would have been excluded. Gordon sought employment, and thus gained entry. Their perforce low-key witness was blessed, though from time to time they found themselves in peril when their witness became known to the authorities.

Jennifer Turner, after qualifying as a nursing sister, offered herself to serve with the Leprosy Mission in Nepal,

eventually being posted to the hospital at Anandaban, some ten miles from Kathmandu. We were assured often that the patients there, for whom we so often prayed, having committed themselves to the Lord, were just as earnestly and sincerely praying for us.

David Bickel, after gaining experience as a teacher and with VSO, was led to offer himself to the Sudan United Mission. This led on to his present connection with the Church of Christ in Nigeria, and a strong desire to offer Christ to the Kanuri people. The Lord has greatly used David's talent for forming relationships, and there are many who come to him, early or late, for advice and practical help. This involves being at everybody's beck and call, all the time; but God has given him grace and strength to offer such service gladly.

When Overseas Missionary Fellowship set up their home for missionaries' children at Maxwell House, Westhall Road, they brought back Louis Gausson into our fellowship. Forty years had elapsed since, as a student, he had preached for us, but we picked up the threads of the friendship of earlier years, as though it were but yesterday that he went out for service with the China Inland Mission. Our close association with OMF led on eventually to the departure of our member, Mrs. Sheila Davies for Chefoo School. Left a widow, with two young daughters, she waited until she saw them well established in their chosen careers, one as a teacher, and the other as a doctor; then, with their encouragement, she offered herself for service with OMF. They applied her gift for working imaginatively with children in Chefoo School. After a time there, they brought her back to England to care for retired missionaries at Cornford House, Pembury. In such widely differing responsibilities she has proved herself equally able to inspire confidence and affection.

Her daughter Mary, after a spell of teaching, is now at Bible College, preparing to move into missionary service as the Lord directs.

Graham and Liza Cooke, who were actually members of our church for one year, but known to us for much longer, and still in contact, are now at All Nations Bible College, awaiting the direction of the Lord as to their future sphere of service.

Our Monthly Circular of August 1946 reports regarding the July Church Meeting, "In view of the Secretary's unsettled circumstances and uncertain stay in Whyteleafe it was agreed to appoint a new Secretary. Mr. C. J. Harvey agreed to undertake this office at the wish of the members."

Monthly Circular No. 133, October 1946 was jointly edited by Mr. Turner and myself. It contains an extract from Council Minutes of September 11th 1946 as follows. "Mr. E. Turner stated that he now felt that the time had come for the action outlined at the Quarterly Business Meeting of July 11th 1946 to be put into effect . . . This was agreed, and Mr. Harvey took over formally the duties of Secretary." The appointment was expected to be of a temporary nature, pending the return from war service of other members of the church. It has lasted, however, so far, for 39 years, the burden of total responsibility having been shared with others as opportunity offered. Despite the rather urgent terms of the resolution quoted above, Mr. Turner did not actually leave the district until January 1952, and his advice and assistance were readily available, while Mrs. Turner continued to lead a devoted band of sick visitors, whose caring was by no means confined to the circle of church members.

In January 1936 there had joined us Mr. and Mrs. Tranah, both possessing a wealth of experience in work among the youth. Until the war, Mr. Tranah led the Senior Christian

Endeavour, and Mrs. Tranah presided over the Primary Sunday School. Opportunity, it is said, comes in vain to him who is unprepared. Many have been the tributes paid by C. E. members to the way Mr. Tranah guided them in methods of presenting their Faith in Christ to others, whether those others were inquirers or scoffers. When opportunity came, they were prepared. Equally, the Primary School staff who served under Mrs. Tranah's leadership learned quickly how best to interest the little ones, and implant in their memories truths which have borne fruit in later life.

War service had taken them away to Bath, where Mr. Tranah had rendered yeoman service as a local preacher, being ready to cycle to outlying churches when, as often happened, no other transport was available. Mrs. Tranah returned from Bath shortly after war ended, but Mr. Tranah's services were still required in Bath. He did not return home until May 1947. His coming was very warmly welcomed.

Monthly Circular No. 142, July 1947 reports as follows. "Provision was made to share some of the duties hitherto undertaken by the Secretary. From this time until further notice Mr. Pryer will make the arrangements for the Monday Prayer Meeting, Mr. Tranah will arrange for all other services and preaching engagements, and Mr. Harvey will continue to keep the church records and to supervise the publication of the Circular." I will not deny that I found this assistance urgently necessary. Very soon we were able to see definite progress in the church in all departments. Sundays saw the church full on three occasions. The Prayer Meeting steadily increased, and, at the members' request, Mr. Tranah undertook a series of Bible Studies, from which all profited. These were taken in the beginning on Thursdays, but eventually moved to be incorporated with the Monday night Prayer Meeting. Mr. Tranah also undertook consecutive ministry on at least one Sunday a month.

The steady progress and happy fellowship were sadly interrupted by the sudden death of Mrs. Tranah on 28th October 1950, after a day strenuously spent in shopping in preparation for the Primary Christmas Party. Thus she was, as she would have wished, active in the Lord's Work to the end. Supported by the love and concern of his fellow-members, Mr. Tranah continued to serve the church with his own unique blend of love, sternness and humour, which was soundly based on his deep understanding of Scripture. He not only knew his Bible, but reached through its words to comprehend, more than most, the Mind of God which inspired them. A man so close to God walked humbly with his God, and, when suggestions arose that the church should seek a Pastor, joined in the discussions with no thought of finding himself in that place of honour.

At the Annual Church Meeting in January 1951, the Council members reported to the church on the remarkable events of their meeting earlier in the month, when, having discussed and prayed over the matter of the pastorate for months, they all found themselves impelled to turn to Mr. Tranah saying, "You are the man." At one minute they felt themselves at their wits' end. The next, they had complete assurance that they had been moved by God to act in this spontaneous and unanimous way. Mr. Tranah wished that every member of the church should be asked to vote on whether he be invited to the pastorate or no. At the April 1951 Church Meeting a vote of 59 in favour and 2 against was recorded; but the two who had voted to the contrary made it known that they did not wish to use the title "pastor", but they were quite willing to serve under the leadership of Mr. Tranah. This seemed to us all to be as near unanimity as a church composed of people of differing

backgrounds could expect to achieve.

The Recognition Service for Mr. Tranah as Pastor was held on Saturday 19th May. Mr. E. Turner took the Chair. He reminded the congregation that there had been several times during the last twenty years when he had been instructed by the Church to take exploratory action regarding the appointment of a Pastor. In all these cases God had led *away from the person under consideration. Now God had led definitely to one of our own number. We could not doubt His Guidance in this.*

Mr. Halsey gave the Charge both to Pastor and People. He commented that this meeting was unique in choosing a Pastor as we had done. The healthy state of the Church was largely due to Mr. Tranah's having been among us. Having tried him and known him, we had chosen him. God had promised His Presence and Protection, but the continuance of these depended on God's words to Joshua, "This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth . . . meditate therein day and night . . . then thou shalt have good success." Our brother had already had a measure of success, because he had already met the conditions of the promise.

Mr. Tranah, in reply, said that the Lord had given him the word first given to Moses. "Certainly I will be with thee." He continued, "At the Church Meeting I said I wished to be among you as one that served. I mean that with all my heart. 'In love serve one another.' I do praise God for the love that is here. I do not say that to flatter you. Those who come here to preach all say how easy it is to preach in this church. They are received with love. You come expectantly. You love the Ministry of the Word of God. When Paul commended the Philippians for their love, he added, 'I pray that your love may abound yet more and more.' That is what I say to you. I pray that our love to Him and to each other may abound yet more and more. If this is so, then He will be glorified."

Thus began the pastorate of a man already in his sixties, an age when most people would be looking forward to rest and relaxation. Twenty-one years later, when the same man gave notice of his need to lay down the pastoral responsibility, there came a flood of testimonies to the success of the ministry of one who was genuinely loving and genuinely humble, but "strong in the Lord."

Meanwhile, after some four years as a widower, he announced his engagement to Miss Alton, and, on 10th July 1954, surrounded by their many friends, they were married, Mr. George Halsey officiating. Their happy partnership proved to be a great force for good in Whyteleafe, and their home was a place where God was honoured. To it came many who needed advice not only on spiritual matters, but on many other concerns of daily life. In due course they celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary, and Mr. Tranah became one of that necessarily small band who have celebrated two Silver Weddings.

In all departments of the church Mr. Tranah was supported by capable and willing helpers. A good many of these took over work from which senior members now found it inevitable that they must retire. Indeed, the process had begun before Mr. Tranah became Pastor. Mrs. Terry, for instance, ceased to lead the Sisterhood in 1946, and it was recorded that she had given 55 years' unbroken service, first, as Leader of the Infants' Sunday School, then as President of the Sisterhood. Mrs. Willson led the Sisterhood from 1946 until January 1954, during which time it was agreed to give this meeting a more up-to-date image by calling it the Women's Fellowship. When Mr. and Mrs. Willson emigrated to New Zealand, Mrs. Pryer led the meeting until, on Mr. Pryer's retirement, they moved to Hailsham. Mrs. Tranah then undertook for the Women's Fellowship as well

as for the Primary Sunday School, just as Mrs. Terry had done many years before.

From the earliest days the Sunday School had been regarded as of the greatest importance, a fact not surprising in the church which was in its inception a place for Bible instruction of the compulsorily idle youth of the village. After Mrs. Hodgson, Mr. Thompson and Mr. Soper cared for the Sunday School. Then, for a while the Pastor cared for it. Early in Mr. Coultas's pastorate, Mr. John Harvey, father of the present writer, was invited to become Superintendent, in which position he continued into the early 1930's. After 28 years, he was awarded an illuminated address by the Sunday School Union. This did not mark the end of his period of service, but, eventually, illness compelled him to resign. Mr. Charles Turner, for many years Bible class leader, took over, but, after an accident at work, handed over to Mr. A. Milborrow. In those days the total roll of the Sunday School was over 200, but, when the war came, parents feared to let their children go far from home, and, in any case, many were evacuated to areas considered safer. Nevertheless, Mr. Rees kept together a nucleus when Mr. Milborrow was taken from the district in connection with his work. After the war, Mr. Milborrow returned, and the Sunday School quickly recovered to the flourishing condition which had prevailed up to the war. At the 1951 Annual Church Meeting, Sunday School Secretary, Mr. Faulkner reported 236 children and young people in all departments, and that 210 passengers in 5 coaches had enjoyed the Sunday School Outing to Littlehampton.

Mr. Moxham reported that the senior young people, numbering about 20 had had a happy year. Four converts from this group were seeking church membership. The Camp at Gomshall had brought blessing to many.

In January 1947, Mr. Milborrow had to resign for health reasons from the post of Sunday School Superintendent. Mr. John Rivers took over the post, and thus began a period of no less than 28 years of happy and prosperous service. Characteristically, Mr. Rivers had undertaken this service with some trepidation, feeling that this high place would be better served by a person with wider experience than he himself had acquired. Under his guidance the Sunday School prospered. In September 1975 Mr. Rivers proposed that he should be allowed to resign, and that Mr. Bradbury, who appeared to all concerned to be a natural successor, should be appointed in his place. This suggestion met with general agreement, Mr. Bradbury becoming Superintendent, and Mr. Rivers graciously continuing to serve as a class teacher under him.

As the church increased to the extent that extra seats had to be found for late arrivals at the services, and attendance at Communion Services grew to a peak of 89 at one service, there arose a strong feeling within the fellowship that the old temporary building, which had served us for thirty years, and the military for sixteen years before that, would soon fall due for replacement.

As on so many occasions in the Church's history, the Lord raised up the men to meet the need. The Treasurer in those days was Mr. Eric Cushing. He was in the best possible position to realise that the Building Fund would never rise to the position which would enable the church to put the work of building new premises out to contract. But he was a successful exponent of DO-IT-YOURSELF, and the idea grew in his mind that a loyal work-force, using the funds already available, could erect a worthy building to replace the old one. In this he was encouraged by Mr. Eric Thomas, who had recently joined us from the great Baptist Church at Ferme Park, where he had been Superintendent of a large

Sunday School. They, with others, travelled far and wide to see buildings which might prove suitable as models for our own. The outcome was that, if a roof could be erected by contractors, most of the remaining work could be done under cover by DIYers. This scheme commended itself to the church, and Messrs. Tyler, the builders of agricultural buildings, undertook to erect the roof.

The schoolroom, built under Mr. Allen's direction, stood exactly where the centre of the new church building was planned to be. It could have been demolished, but our planners had other ideas. Mr. Blundell proposed to winch it to another part of the site. When this was done, without even breaking a pane of glass, the building was divided into two parts, one part to be the store for materials for the building, the other to be their own retreat for the Youth Fellowship, who decorated it to their own design, and made it a real home from home.

Some five years of planning by Mr. Cushing and the Building Committee had passed before they were able to lay specific plans before the Church Meeting early in 1963. The plans were made plain by Mr. Cushing's clear diagrams and beautifully constructed models.

Clearance of the site began in April 1963, but it was not until October that Messrs. Tyler received the Urban District Council's approval of the plans. They erected the roof in February 1964, and a new landmark in Whyteleafe was noted from that date. The DIY party took over from that time, and progress was steady from then on. In six years of steady work progress was sufficient to give reason to hope that another year would see the church building ready for use. Perhaps, to use a motoring metaphor, the effort was running on light throttle, when the event occurred which put us into overdrive!

We were arriving for a Church Meeting on 21st April 1970 when it became clear all was not well. The "tin tabernacle" which had served us so well was on fire. Standing looking at the destruction, Mr. Tranah received from the Lord a clear word, "As for God, His way is perfect," which he shared with us at the earliest opportunity. (2 Sam.22.31 and Ps.18.30).

On the following day, Wednesday April 22nd, a party of ladies and senior male members descended on the Lower Hall to prepare it for use for Sunday worship. In two days they completely redecorated it, and for six weeks we were able to worship in congenial surroundings, but with every square inch of space occupied. Meanwhile, day and night, willing workers toiled to have the church building and one vestry ready for use at the earliest possible moment.

That day proved to be June 7th, the day long appointed for the 19th Anniversary of Mr. Tranah's pastorate. This could not be a grand official opening, but was rather very much a family gathering round the Pastor. The text for his first sermon in the new sanctuary was, "Looking unto Jesus," a text which always floated on the Camp Banner above Gomshall Camp.

Thereafter, work continued to prepare for the Dedication Service, appointed for Saturday, October 3rd, which duly came to pass. Ministers were Pastor Tranah and the Revd. Hubert Janisch, for 26 years Minister of Worthing Baptist Church and a former Moderator of the Free Church Federal Council. His connection with our church arose from the meeting of his wife, Dr. Ruth, née Parker-Grey, and Mrs. Harvey at a Northampton clinic for evacuee children. This meeting led to a friendship between the Janisch's and the Harvey's which lasted until the former received the home-call, after lives devoted wholeheartedly to the Lord's Service, and to the care of the needy, whether their need were

spiritual or physical. During the years that I have acted as Church Secretary in Whyteleafe, I did not fail to seek Hubert's advice and encouragement, and many were the evangelistic enterprises when I was happy to act as organist to one who was a Prince of Preachers, and totally dedicated to the Salvation of Souls.

3rd October 1970 was a day of Joy and Love and of high hopes. It was also a time of thanksgiving for the 85 years during which, under God, the witness had been maintained against formidable odds by men and women who felt themselves to be called of God, and therefore certain that He would see them through.

Unexpectedly, but most joyfully, we continued our celebrations on Sunday, October 4th under the ministry of Dr. James Williams from Texas, on sabbatical leave from his duties in America. He stood in, at very short notice for the appointed preacher, who had to withdraw. Even in this we felt that the Lord's Hand was in it, for Dr. Williams struck a note of rejoicing and challenge which was admirably suited to the circumstances of that particular weekend.

In the following months there was a campaign of visitation in the surrounding district, spearheaded by Mr. Roger Bishop, to whom also fell the distinction, with Margaret Rivers, of being the first couple to be married in the new building.

At the Annual Church Meeting on 18th January 1972, Mr. Tranah asked to be relieved of all his offices in the church, with effect from May 31st. Thus his pastorate would have lasted 21 years, during which the Lord had given blessing and strength, and many signs of His favour.

The Secretary responded. With the passing of the years, this moment was inevitable. We could not fail to be grateful to God that He had so prolonged the Pastor's active service, for, when, under His Guidance, we had called Mr. Tranah to the post, we could not have expected a man then in his sixties to be active twenty years later. Church life had been enriched by his prayer, his missionary interest, his opening up of the Scriptures, but most of all by the fostering of a loving spirit within the fellowship.

Thus the Pastor's 21st Anniversary was also a Service of Thanksgiving for the blessings of those years. At 85 he still seemed to possess much of the vigour both of body and mind that he had displayed all through his pastorate; but he himself was aware of a general slowing down, and a tendency to tire, which pointed to the need for him to relinquish the responsible position which he had occupied so graciously for so long.

Should we immediately seek another pastor? It was then that we realised that for 21 years we had enjoyed the services of an active pastor at the minimum cost to ourselves. Were we in a position to go straight ahead to invite a pastor for whose salary and housing we would have to take full responsibility? On the whole the feeling was that we were not.

There followed a period of experiment, both as regards church government and also as concerned the Ministry of the Word. Much time was devoted to study and prayer, but no proposal seemed to achieve such a consensus as had led to the invitation to the pastorate of Mr. Tranah. The majority of the members were convinced that, unless there were something very near to such a consensus, it would be clear that the course of action then under consideration was not the Lord's way ahead for us.

Eventually two courses of action were agreed. First, members and friends of the church were invited to state how much they were willing to pledge themselves to give regularly in support of a pastor. If this response was deemed

sufficient, it was to be taken as a signal to go ahead and seek a pastor. The response was magnificent. A long-standing friend of the church — Mr. Naismith — was invited to act as Moderator, and, with constant advice and encouragement from him, we went actively ahead to seek a pastor.

There followed some five years of seeking during which several young men were considered, and three were found so apparently suitable that they were invited to the pastorate here. Two of these accepted invitations elsewhere, and the third, though happy among us, did not feel led of the Lord to enter into a pastoral relationship with us. Two widely experienced older men were also considered, but the necessary consensus was not reached and matters went no further.

We had let our need of a pastor be known to certain Christian groups in which we had confidence, and in October 1980, the Evangelical Alliance put us in touch with Rev. Leslie C. Smith, who was at that time Director of Leeds City Mission. Our negotiations were unhurried, prayerful and, we all felt, God-guided. At the Annual Church Meeting on 21st January 1981, the members authorised the Council to meet Mr. and Mrs. Smith, and to discuss with them on the basis of a document prepared for our guidance by our Moderator, Mr. Edwy Naismith.

The meeting with Mr. and Mrs. Smith duly took place at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Rivers, on 3rd February 1981, Mr. Bickel in the chair. After prayer, there followed some two hours of free and frank discussion, which concluded with

unanimity in the Council that Leslie Smith was God's man for our church at this time. There followed 3½ years of ministry by a man who proved to be a keen and effective evangelist. He challenged the committed Christian to a closer walk with God, and called for decision for Christ by those who had hitherto been not more than mildly in agreement with the Christian ethic. The committed Christian was challenged to seek out those who were outside the fold, and was shown how to set about witnessing for Christ in a winsome and effective manner.

At the end of 1984 Mr. Smith tendered his resignation to be effective from 31st March 1985. It would be too early to assess the value of his ministry here overall, but it is certain that there are people in Whyteleafe who will testify that they owe it to Leslie Smith that he presented clearly and persuasively God's claims upon them, and led them on to the point of decision for Christ.

His resignation means that we shall celebrate our Centenary without a pastor. While we are praising God for the way he has led the church here over its first hundred years, we shall also be earnestly seeking His guidance for the way ahead. Of one thing we can be certain. The Unchanging God, Who has vouchsafed much blessing in days past, will lead us, if we are willing, into new fields of blessedness and fresh areas of service.

"Thy people shall be willing in the day of Thy power."
Psalm 110. v.3.

C. J. Harvey, Hon. Sec.