

ABUNDANT HARVEST

***The history of Poynton Baptist Church
from early beginnings up to 1970***



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*Transcribed from the original printed booklet
that has been long out of print
and now made available electronically as PDF.
Transcribed by Mike Ashton*

POYNTON, CHESHIRE, 1855

There is more than one Poynton (or Pointon as it was sometimes spelt) in these Islands of ours, but the one concerned in our story, is the lovely village of Poynton with Worth, situated about twelve miles south of Manchester, nestling in the foothills of the Pennines and sheltered in the East by Sponds Hill (1,348 ft.) whose graceful slopes overlook the verdant plains of Cheshire.

As expected, with land so fertile, agriculture and dairy farming were amongst its principal industries until the early nineteenth century. At that time, coal was discovered in commercial quantities and vied for pride of place, probably becoming the pre-eminent (though now extinct) industry.

In this period, almost the whole of Poynton was owned by Lord Vernon (the Rt. Hon. George John Warren, fifth baron) and evidence of his care for his colliers may be seen around the village, in the "Rows" of cottages which he provided for them, the rents of which in those days varied from 1/6 to 2/3 per week, including rates. Some of them have now become comfortable homes for several members of our Church family.

A library had been established in Poynton in 1853, supported by the voluntary contributions of the colliers, and we know that the population of the village around this time was about 1,750. This figure rose in the next ten years to over 2,000, but, alas, the aftermath of the Industrial Revolution in general, and the cotton famine of 1862-64 in particular, had a seriously adverse effect on trade and many nearby townships suffered. For example, many mills in Stockport were in distress and the need for coal became negligible. The effect on Poynton was immediate and the collieries were virtually closed for a period of ten months.

None of the inhabitants, however, became in urgent need or want for Lord Vernon in refusing a donation from the Central Relief Fund, wrote: "So long as I have the means, those who have contributed to my fortune shall be assisted, relieved and comforted by me and me alone."

As nearly as can be ascertained, the wages of the colliers at that time averaged, according to their varying skills, from 22/6 to 35/- per week, from which their rents were deducted. They were an industrious and hard-working body of men, thrifty and charitable. Poverty in Poynton was almost unknown, owing to the vigilance of the Vernon family, so that towards the end of the nineteenth century the village, with its balanced economy, was considered prosperous.

The existing churches in this era were the Parish Church of St. George, the Methodist Church at Hockley and the Primitive Methodist Church in London Road South (now a private residence facing Queensway). They appeared to be fully supported in every way and Poynton was then considered a religiously conscious village. A contributing factor, no doubt, was the strong communal spirit that had developed over the years.

Further evidence of the charitable nature of the community was evinced when the six Gothic-style alms houses were erected in the precincts of the Church grounds in 1855. They were built exclusively for the use of aged and infirm colliers and cost altogether about six hundred pounds, which was raised entirely by public subscription. This was surely a practical example of caring for one's neighbours.

The area of Poynton known as "Midway" is that part leading southwards from St. George's Church, along London Road South (then known as the Turnpike Road) to Lostock Road (the site of the original railway station), then one-quarter of a mile eastwards and returning to Park Lane. This was the area that became the springboard for the Baptist movement in Poynton.

in the beginning...

(GEN. 1:1)

The Baptist Church, at Cheadle Hulme, Cheshire, had been built by a Christian gentleman by the name of William Fowden, a local man of comfortable means, who paid for the erection of the building entirely from his own resources. It was his original intention that it should become a place of worship for evangelical friends. Prior to the completion of the work, however, he came under the influence of a dynamic young Scot, John Alcorn, who was an ardent Baptist and it was not long before Mr. Fowden realised the strength of the Baptist position and became a staunch supporter of Alcorn.

Accordingly, the Cheadle Hulme premises opened as a Baptist Chapel in 1840. John Alcorn, at the age of twenty-two, became the first Pastor and prior to 1860, preaching missions were sent out on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings to Poynton, Bollington and Alderley Edge. The first meetings at Poynton were held in the cottage of Mr. William Hooley, of Grahams Row, Midway (now absorbed into London Road South). His neighbour but one was Joseph Smith, another Baptist pioneer in the Midway area.

In the beginning, the meetings in Poynton were attended with varying success. Slowly but surely, however, the momentum increased until in 1860 it was decided to rent the Saddle Room from John Potts. (Potts was a master saddler and tarpaulin manufacturer, employing one improver and one apprentice. His Saddle Room is now part of a private residence in London Road South). At the same time, it was decided to commence a Sunday School.

Shortly afterwards, meetings were commenced on Sunday evenings and these were conducted entirely by lay friends, amongst whom we discover the name of George Walker. Mr. Walker was a resolute deacon of our Cheadle Hulme Church and later became the leading figure in the establishment of the Baptist Church in Poynton.



George Walker
First Honorary Pastor
1862-1903

Mr. Walker was employed as a Goods Agent by the London and North Western Railway Co. at Heaton Norris Station and prior to living in Chester Road (formerly Station Road) he resided at the house on the south-west corner of Clifford Road and London Road South. In the garden of that house flourishes a large and fruitful pear tree. It appears that whenever children attempted to emulate Eve and were apprehended by Mr. Walker, they were made to repeat the eighth commandment until he was satisfied they understood the error of their ways.

It became obvious in 1861 to those who attended the Saddle Room meetings that premises affording more comfortable accommodation were very desirable. Lack of zeal, courage and wealth, however, plus the small numbers caused this desire to be temporarily suppressed. One year later, however, on the 28th September, 1862, the Baptist Church in Poynton was first formed, being composed partly of persons who had separated from the Church at Grove Lane, Cheadle Hulme. Names mentioned are George Walker, Joseph Smith, William Hooley, James Davenport and R. H. Isherwood and these, amongst others, may be considered the founder-members of our Church.

The sermon for the opening service was preached from I Peter 4: 13-16, after which the Brethren broke bread, their deacon, George Walker, presiding.

In the early part of 1865 it became clear that in order to keep pace with the growing witness, alternative premises must be secured. None suitable could be found in the village, however, and so after mature consideration and prayer, it was decided to make a vigorous effort to secure funds for the purpose of building a new Chapel. A committee, composed of male members of the Church, was elected to solicit funds for this enterprise and George Walker was appointed treasurer. It was in this year that the Lancashire and Cheshire Directory refers for the first time to a Baptist Preaching Room in London Road South. At the same period, the Potts family disappear from the records as saddlers.

An active canvass was commenced for subscriptions and it is interesting to note that the first pound was donated by Grace Isherwood, the grandmother of Mrs. Darwen, a devout member of our Church, who was called to higher service in 1969. By the close of 1866, sufficient funds were received warrant

the commencement of decisive steps being taken in the purchase of land and two of the Brethren were appointed to procure a site for the Chapel. This was no mean task, however for the establishment of any alternative denominational Chapel or meeting room to that of St. George's Church was strongly resisted by the incumbent of the day, Rev. Robert Littler, M.A., and after the disappointment of a refusal by the Trustees of Lord Vernon, the Baptists eventually succeeded in procuring a piece of land in a central position in Park Lane on advantageous terms.

Four gentlemen - George Walker, Robert Alcorn, John Alcorn and Robert Atkinson on 25th May, 1866, purchased from William Harrison, a yeoman, two hundred and six square yards of the twenty-acre held for fifteen pounds, plus an annual chief rent of seventeen shillings and six-pence. This is the land on which our Chapel now stands. On 18th January, 1905, this land and property was transferred by Robert Alcorn (last survivor of the four purchasers) to the Baptist Union Corporation Ltd., and at the same time, the chief rent was purchased outright.

The original building was rectangular in shape, approximately thirty-five feet by twenty-six feet, plus the entrance vestibule. The Church occupied the upper floor with the Schoolroom beneath. The kitchen, vestry and heightened roof was added later in the Spring of 1867, the first stone of the new edifice was laid. There was no formal or public ceremony on this occasion but many and fervent were the prayers of the Church for the blessing of Immanuel upon the undertaking.

On 1st September, 1867, the new Chapel was opened and two sermons preached by the Rev. G. McCullum, of Dewsbury. On the following Sunday, worship was led by the Rev. Joseph Powell, of Stockport, after which collections were made towards the Building Fund. The services were deeply impressive and brought a very substantial addition to the funds. The cost of the Chapel and School with furnishings was near three hundred pounds and after paying all due demands, a debt of one hundred and ten pounds remained, which the members were hopeful, with God's blessing, would be liquidated in a few years.

The attendance at services since the opening of the new premises had more than surpassed the most sanguine expectations, whilst the large accession of scholars to the Sunday School, as well as additions to the Church, gave pleasing evidence of the Lord's blessing in connection with the work. Continual exhortations, however, failed to stimulate sufficient attendance to warrant two weekly meetings, so the Prayer Meetings which had been held on Tuesdays and Thursdays were later reduced to Tuesdays only.

It is interesting to note the deeply religious fervour of those days, for we read of "members being excluded from the Church for their irregular attendances at the Lord's Table, schismatism and persistently falling into sin." There were frequent upbraidings for the meagre offerings as anxiety persisted about the slowness of reducing the debt. To this end, therefore, on selected Sundays two sermons were preached and two collections taken - one during the service and one on retiring.

“ a grain of mustard seed.”

(MATT. 13 31)

In 1868 it was resolved to purchase a harmonium for the use of the congregation and a committee was formed to put this into effect. Two years later it was agreed that the Church should face up to the need to reimburse its visiting preachers and that they should be paid "as funds would permit" and thus relieve them of pecuniary loss. In 1871 the premises were fenced and a further effort made to complete the furnishing of the Schoolroom. Shortly after, it came as a great shock to the Brethren to learn that their senior deacon and honorary pastor, George Walker, contemplated leaving the district. Urgent representations were made to him to continue the oversight of the Church and great joy was expressed when he acceded to their requests.

The year 1875 was one of further expansion. A tender from Mr. Howard, of Poynton, was accepted for "the raising of the roof, adding a vestry, kitchen, two closets, a new rostrum and baptistry, a new heating apparatus for the Chapel and the Schoolroom to be fitted up with Gas" all at a total cost of little more than three hundred pounds. Thus the completed building had by now cost six hundred pounds! During these alterations the Church worshipped in the Schoolroom, the reopening services being held on 12th March, 1876, when two sermons were preached by the Rev. W. Chamness of Stockport. The attendances were excellent, the Church and new Vestry being crammed to the door and the collections amounted to £15/3s/10d.

The first Baptismal Service took place in the Church on Monday evening, 3rd April, 1876. Five persons (including Mr. Walker's daughter, who later became organist of the Church) were baptised, after giving evidence of their faith in Christ. This deeply memorable service brought forth the utterance, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." All five believers were received into full membership the following Sunday.

Eight months later the members sent a petition to the House of Commons opposing the proposal to open the British Museum on Sundays and on 8th October of that same year (1876) the offerings were donated to the Bulgarian peasantry. In October, 1879, the Church became a member of the Baptist County Union of Cheshire, which later became an integral part of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association, which we joined by resolution on 3rd November, 1891.

During 1882-1883 determined efforts were begun to introduce more musical harmony into the Services. Mention is made of Bro. James Buffy for his long and efficient service as leading singer and Bro. D. Birch was appointed choirmaster (the latter being a forebear of the families now worshipping with us and bearing that name). An organ fund was opened to purchase a replacement for the Harmonium and a Sale of Work was held, the entrance fee being one penny, credited on the sale of goods. Later, by a unanimous decision, the funds standing in the organ account were appropriated for Church funds, as concern was still being felt at the slowness of reducing the outstanding debt on the premises. Additional efforts planned to this end were the commencement of a Ladies' Sewing Class and further Sales of Work.

It was during this period that the Thursday evening Prayer Meetings were restricted to the ladies of the Church but in 1889 the restriction was lifted and mixed meetings re-established, successfully improving the attendances.

In January, 1886, a letter was received from the local Co-operative Society suggesting that the Church should co-operate with them in a concerted effort to get the price of gas reduced. It was arranged that Bros. J. Unwin and John Wood should attend the meeting convened for this purpose.

The question of another organ was raised in July, 1888, as there was a strong feeling that the present one was too weak in the treble clef. Another instrument was "on offer" and the Chairman was empowered to make the purchase. About this time, the Choir had intimated that they would be willing to give a Service of Song for the benefit of the funds and to assist in purchasing new hymn books for the Choir singers. Items by the Choir were now becoming a more popular feature in the services and anthems were given at the anniversaries and on special occasions, prominent amongst them being "Daybreak in Heathen Darkness," "River Singers" and "Alone in London."

During this same year, reference is made to a complaint received from the local colliers "that the fires in the Schoolroom were not being lit early enough on the nights of their meetings and that the room was not sufficiently aired." Two of the Brethren agreed to remedy this and in addition put a pipe over the slopstone and connected the drains.

In 1892 the Deacons were requested to wait upon Mr. Greenwell (agent for Lord Vernon) to see if his Lordship would supply the Church with free water if we would pay the expenses of putting in the pipes. The results are not recorded.

By now, annual "treats" had become an established feature of Church and Sunday School life and discussions took place as to whether the Choir might enjoy a similar privilege for their services to the Church. Opinions as to the method of transport varied widely - train, wagonette and a joint picnic with the Sunday School were all discussed, but in the end the matter was left in abeyance. The writer remembers with pleasure his Whit-Thursday trips from Longsight Baptist Sunday School to Poynton Baptist in the early years of the century - the games and races in the field at the back of the Church and the "buns and milk" in the Schoolroom. Happy days!

Soon the need for a third musical instrument (to be used in the vestry) was referred to and ways of raising funds for such a purpose were discussed, but members were of the firm opinion that the FIRST special effort should be for the "Pewing" of the Chapel and so pews became priority number one and an effort was immediately commenced towards this end. Two of the brethren promised ten shillings each and these gifts, along with a one-shilling profit from a tea became the foundation of the Fund. In the following months, tea meetings and sixpenny teas in the homes of members, aided the fund. The Women's Sewing Class also displayed great zeal in making garments and organising Sales of Work.

In 1893 there were signs of growing concern with regard to the Sunday School. The teachers had been attending irregularly and the Superintendent impressed upon them their responsibility to provide substitutes whenever they were absent.

“planted in a fruitful field. “

(EZEK. 17: 5)

First references begin to appear in 1894-95 with regard to forming a branch of the Christian Endeavour movement and in June a branch was established under the auspices of the Sunday School Teachers. Later in the year a deputation from the Young People's Society of the C.E. (attached to the Stockport and Macclesfield Association) visited our premises to seek the sympathy and support of our branch for the movement in general, and on this occasion, teas were served at sixpence per person. A weekly Mothers' Meeting was also commenced around this time.

In this period, a letter was received from the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches enquiring if we would be willing to receive a deputation. Its purpose was to explain a new scheme for raising funds for Chapel extensions and aid to Missions. It was felt, however, that no useful purpose would be served owing to the depressed state of trade at that time and the Church could do no more than send the usual annual contribution,

A desire had been expressed by the Parish Council in May, 1897, for a procession of Sunday School Scholars and Teachers to take place on 22nd June for the celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. The Council Secretary had written to our Superintendent inviting the Baptist Sunday School to join in and the Teachers and Church members readily acquiesced. The lack of Teachers in the Sunday School was still a cause of major concern and Mr. Unwin undertook to try to revive interest among the older girls who had forsaken the top class. In order to improve the behaviour of the children during public worship, a suggestion that parents should sit with them was put into effect.

As the nineteenth century drew to its close, a somewhat more affluent note may be detected. We read, for example, "that Mr. Walker be requested to ascertain from Mr. Booth if he would be willing to hire his lorry for the junior scholars' outing" and allow Mr. Bradley "leave of absence to drive same." Also, "to see if Mr. A. Clarke would grant the use of his wagonette for the conveyance of adults to Lyme Park." The proposed charges were juvenile scholars free, senior scholars and adults eight pence, including tea.

On 11th November, 1900, a fortnight of cottage prayers was commenced.

The twentieth century opened with a request from the Salvation Army to hold a lantern lecture in the Schoolroom. This was granted with an appendage "that the school only be let twice a year and only once if gas and coke were required!" Reference is made to a forecast debt of twelve thousand pounds by the Baptist Missionary Society for that year.

Happily, 1901 saw the fulfilment of the plans for the reseating or "pewing" of the Church. Tenders having been received, enquiries were made as to why local tradesmen had not been invited to quote. The Committee explained that they considered local firms were not sufficiently experienced in this kind of work and could not compete with the larger ones who had steam apparatus.

The tender of Mr. John Clayton, of Macclesfield, of one hundred and thirty-four pounds one shilling was finally accepted. This left a deficiency in the funds of forty-six pounds sixteen shillings, which the Treasurer undertook to pay, members being urged to remember this debt when making their weekly offerings. Thus five years had elapsed since the inauguration of this fund,

Shortly afterwards, a committee was appointed in an attempt to resuscitate interest in the Band of Hope Movement (a society dedicated to encourage total abstinence from alcoholic beverages). Ultimately, a branch was formed, the subscriptions being two pence a month for adults and one penny for children.

The last Minutes of that great Christian gentleman, George Walker, are dated 7th November, 1903, for on the 30th of that month his passing came swiftly following an attack of pneumonia. From the inception of the Church he had been its first Deacon and then Hon. Lay Pastor, continuing as such for forty-one years. Part of the tribute paid to him reads as follows: "He was the foundation-stone of our present Church and the inspiration of all his associates. His varied and interesting personality was full of noble and endearing qualities. His sturdy frame and somewhat rugged aspect was indicative of the moral granite that lay within and whilst accommodating and conciliatory in matters of procedure, he was

always firm and true He had a deeply religious nature and loved the House of Prayer. Sometimes the truth stirred him so deeply the he found difficulty in expressing himself on account of his deep emotion. He loved children, he was tender and reverent towards womanhood and a true friend to all. Those who were permitted to enjoy his inner confidence counted his friendship as one of the prizes of life. May his example be our inspiration and the Church he loved our delight and care."

The three stained-glass windows in the rear wall of the Chapel were presented to the Church by his two daughters in memory of their beloved parents, George and Sarah Walker.

“spreadeth out her roots. “

(JER. 17: 8)

The first meeting of the Church after the loss of their Pastor was held on 20th December, 1903, under the Chairmanship of John Champion. The following officers were elected.' Church Secretary, Miss Ada Evans; Treasurer, Mr. Joseph Unwin; Joint Superintendents of the Sunday School, Mr. Samuel Bradley and Mr. R. H. Isherwood. At the following meeting, however, Miss Evans intimated that she would rather not take the office of Secretary and Mrs. Tomlinson was elected in her place.

At the next Church Meeting held on 9th January, 1904, an invitation was given to the Rev. H. V. Thomas, Secretary of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Baptist Churches, and the Rev. C. S. McAlpine, of Manchester, to confer with Mr. Champion as to the best means of securing the future of the Church. As a result, three possibilities were placed before the members.

- (a) To continue the present system of conducting the Church by means of local preachers.
- (b) Whether another Pastor could be found or some gentleman of means with a little time at his disposal, who would be willing to undertake the pastoral work of the Church.
- (c) Whether it was possible to group two or three Churches together under one Pastor.

All three suggestions were spoken of favourably, but finally, after the report of a special committee appointed for this purpose, it was decided unanimously, on 10th December, 1904, to invite the Rev. John Lister, who was then Pastor at Disley Baptist Church, to add to his present duties the pastoral oversight of Poynton for a period of twelve months. The Church at Poynton agreed to pay to the Lancashire and Cheshire Association the sum of thirty pounds per year towards Mr. Lister's salary. Mr. Lister accepted this invitation and commenced his duties in the New Year of 1905.



Rev. John Lister
Pastor
1905-1935

The first twelve months were spent happily together and at the end of that time Mr. Lister was invited to continue his pastorate indefinitely. At the Sacramental Service the following Sunday a letter was read from Mr. Lister accepting the invitation. Thus began a Ministry that was to last thirty years. The new Pastor then called a meeting to consider holding special evangelistic services. After a postponement of

one month to consider the matter it was decided to hold a week of special services preceded by a week of cottage prayers.

The year 1908 will be remembered sadly by the Church, for during that year three members were removed by death and one of the most acceptable lay preachers, Mr. O. Longbottom, died after an operation. He had served his Church faithfully and well, without fee or reward and a high appreciation of his work is recorded. The annual Missionary Meeting that year was held on Wednesday, 11th March, when the Rev. A. E. Greening, on furlough from North China, gave an excellent address. The chair was taken by the Pastor and a further address given by the Rev. Boccock. Moneys collected in the Missionary Boxes during the year amounted to £17/16/-.

On 3rd April, 1909, a combined effort was made to raise money for working expenses. The men gave subscriptions in cash, the women held a "cake and apron" sale and these, together with the Opener's guinea, realised a total of twelve pounds - a satisfactory result indeed.

We now arrive at a point of some difficulty in our story, for there is a complete blank in our records from 1910-1931 careful searching and extensive enquiries have yielded no material for this important period. It cannot be urged too strongly for the future historians of Poynton to learn a bitter lesson from the past - and ensure that valuable records pass into the right hands. Perhaps then, we can use this break to pursue a few statistics.

Prior to 1910 only scanty references are made to attendances. Phrases such as "well attended" and "goodly numbers" are fairly common, but we find that in that year, Church membership stood at twenty-three. The lowest recorded number is twenty-two in 1958 with a "high" of thirty-one in 1938. Similarly with the Sunday School. We have "lows" of thirty scholars in 1949-50 and 1952, with a "high" of eighty in 1929. It may be fairly assumed, therefore, with other figures available, that a fair average between the years 1910-1960 would be: Church members, twenty-five; Sunday School scholars, fifty; and the Teachers, seven. Figures for 1961-1970 are referred to later.

The year 1931 was concerned with further physical changes in the premises. The tender of Mr. Kellock for wiring the Chapel and Sunday School for electricity was confirmed. In celebration B social was held on Saturday, 12th September, with reopening services the following day under the new lighting system. Mr. Brierwood presided. The boiler, which had also been giving trouble, was repaired by Mr. Butterworth, of Whaley Bridge, who also gave the door which Mr. Oliver erected between the Sunday School platform and boiler house. Later in this year it was decided to ask the Sunday School to be responsible for the week-night service.

Twelve months later, it was resolved to observe the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper once a month instead of weekly and Mr. John Singleton agreed to be responsible for the monetary gifts at these services. It was also considered necessary to have the outside of the Chapel painted and have new window frames fitted in the Schoolroom and tenders were invited. At the Church Meeting, held on 4th January, 1933, at which Mr. Lister presided, Mr. Bradley agreed to accept the duties of Church Secretary in place of Mr. Dakin, who had resigned, and Mr. Oliver was invited to take over the duties of Choir Master. On 23rd April of that year, six candidates were baptised and later received into membership, some of whom are active members in our fellowship today.

It was also noted that there was a shortage of cups and saucers and although it was decided to purchase four dozen, it was not far short of two years before this was accomplished. This was because the oval identification transfer stamp, which was a distinguishing mark on all our crockery, could not be found. Differences of opinion were strong as to whether the new cups and saucers should be with or without the identifying mark. It was also decided not to have the land in front of the Sunday School asphalted but cleaned up in time for the Anniversary.

Hospitality for student preachers at this time had become rather a problem but several of the ladies remedied this with offers of assistance. The urgent need for redecorating the interior of the Church and Vestry was again referred to, but there was no option but to postpone the work owing to lack of funds.

For the Anniversary Services in 1935, it was decided to invite the Rev. Carey Bonner to lead the worship and, failing him, the Rev. Herbert Motley. These were two well-known names. The Rev. Carey Bonner was Secretary of the National Sunday School Union from 1900 to 1929 and Mr. Motley was General Superintendent of the North-Western area from 1934 until 1949. Later in 1935 the Church received the sorrowful news that the Rev. John Lister had decided to retire from the active Ministry. He had been their spiritual leader for thirty years and it had proved a wonderful and happy partnership. A subscription list was opened and the result was presented to Mr. Lister as a practical expression of the love that had flowed between kindred spirits.

Immediately steps were taken to find a successor. It was resolved to invite the then Pastor of our Disley Church, the Rev. D. Gareth Owen, to add to his existing duties the oversight of our fellowship at Poynton. It was a great joy and relief when he agreed and his Ministry commenced on 4th January, 1936, when three services were held. It was arranged for him to preach on alternate Sundays and take the weeknight services whenever possible. Mr. John Singleton undertook to supervise the latter in the absence of Mr. Owen.

Soon after Mr. Owen's settlement, an enquiry was made from the pulpit as to how many would like a change of hymn book and would be prepared to purchase their own. Finally, it was resolved to buy fifty new books at ten shillings each, twelve at four shillings each as well as the hundred hymn sheets. A special inaugural service was to be held when they came to hand. At the same time, the Choir agreed to open the Services with an Introit and close with a Vesper.

”..and it grew..”

(LUKE 13 :19)

During these years the financial resources of the Church fluctuated widely and in an effort to maintain a reasonable credit balance, various efforts were instituted. Favourite among them appear to have been the Garden Parties. Venues mentioned are the field opposite Clumber Road Methodist Church, the grounds of "The Spinney," Chester Road, and Barlow Fold Farm. Repeatedly we find the Women's League working quietly and efficiently in the background, usually being responsible for the excellent quality and quantity of the teas provided. A typical menu of the time was lettuce, tomatoes, potted meat, buns, cakes and tea all for sixpence! But in spite of this abounding enthusiasm, it was stated in November, 1939, that there would be a debit of about fifteen pounds at the end of the financial year.

The year 1939 was a fateful year for our country. War clouds were gathering and hopes and fears were tormenting the minds of many. Special prayers of intercession were offered in the Churches and strenuous efforts made by the Government to reach a peaceful solution. In spite of all, however, the lust of mankind supplanted the love of mankind and on 3rd September we were at war with Germany for the second time in the century.

During this year, the Church accepted a recommendation from the Baptist Union to postpone all renewals and terminations of Pastorates for a period of twelve months, but before this period elapsed, Mr. Owen had already tendered his resignation having accepted an educational appointment in one of the schools.

Mr. and Mrs. Owen still reside in Poynton, and though Mr. Owen is in poor health, it has been good to have contact with him during this past two years.

In January, 1940, an enquiry was received from the Secretary of the Free Church Council as to whether the Council should be disbanded or continued. Each Church was asked to contribute five shillings to the funds, which were insolvent. We replied "that we would support the Council in every way and forward the required subscription."

Arising from the hostilities with Germany it was deemed advisable, in view of the possible dangers from air-raids and the enforcement of "black out" restrictions, to transfer the evening services to the afternoon during the months of November, December, January and February and also to affix adhesive tapes to the Church windows to minimise splintering.

The following year, help was given by our friends at Macclesfield and we were now under the guidance of the Rev. L. C. H. D. Elliott, Minister of the Baptist Chapel in St. George's Street. He preached his first sermon in our Church on 5th May, 1941, and had agreed to help by conducting our evening service on one Sunday per month and also the midweek services. Mr. Elliott arranged the loan of table-tennis tables and other sports equipment to establish a Saturday evening club in our Schoolroom. This was attended by about seventeen teenagers, from which originated the Young People's Fellowship League.

The premises were now in a state of disrepair and in urgent need of decoration, but once again, lack of funds was the difficulty. In an endeavour to overcome this, Mr. Elliott decided to sit in the Vestry from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m. on Saturday, 9th November, to receive gifts for this purpose.

The question of the Church Constitution had been a ticklish one over many years and through several Pastorates. In 1939 a revision was recommended and application made to the Baptist Union requisitioning the Trust Deeds - presumably with this redrafting in mind. The matter appears to have

been finally resolved, however, when on 5th May, 1942, a special meeting of the Church was called to study proposals drafted by the Minister and Deacons. Each of the seven rules was read over and carefully explained by Mr. Elliott and all were approved. Nevertheless, four weeks later a heated argument arose relative to membership under this new Constitution. After a most lengthy and heated debate it was decided that the two applicants for membership could be admitted within the framework of its interpretation.

It was about this time that Mr. Elliott intimated his intention to take up a Chaplaincy in the Royal Air Force. Mr. Elliott departed in August, 1942, to take up this commission. At the time of writing he is actively engaged as Minister at East Acton Lane Baptist Church, Acton.

Awareness of the possible hazards of being without a Minister again, particularly in wartime, prompted a suggestion by Mr. Elliott that we consider inviting Mrs. Lisa Goertz to be Pastor for a trial period of three months. Mrs. Goertz was a German Jewess who had escaped from Germany after Gestapo oppression and torture. A ballot was taken on 26th June with regard to this matter and it was made clear that acceptance of Mrs. Goertz must be a 75% majority. The result was ten for and seven against.

In an unenviable position again, it was agreed that the Minister, Secretary and Mr. I. C. Barlow meet the Rev. Herbert Motley at the Brookfield Cafe on the following Monday to see if any solution could be found with regard to the Pastorate of the Church after Mr. Elliott had completed his Ministry. The following possibilities were explored: -

- (a) The appointment of a lady, *pro temp*, whilst a permanent settlement was sought.
- (b) Grouping with Cheadle Hulme and consideration of how much we would contribute for shared services.
- (c) To enquire about the Rev. C. B. Combe, of Stockport Baptist Church, or someone else. If such a person could be found, the Church would be willing to contribute one hundred pounds plus a grant of sixty pounds for a married man, or twenty pounds less for a single man.

After a prolonged discussion it was decided that we ask Mrs. Goertz to take over for a trial period of three months, commencing in August, 1942. After this trial period had expired and proved satisfactory, it was resolved that she should be engaged for the duration of the war. A proviso was also agreed that two months' notice of termination of engagement must be given by either side.

The first recorded Church Meeting held under the presidency of our first lady Pastor took place on 8th July, 1943, when a new Diaconate was elected by ballot. Mr. Greenwood was appointed Treasurer and Mr. Barlow Secretary. The former Secretary, Mr. Bradley, had indicated his desire to resign, at the same time offering his continued support to the newly appointed Secretary as required. The financial position had now taken a turn for the better and great joy was expressed at the satisfactory position of both the General and Renovation Funds, it was accordingly decided to accept the tender of thirty-two pounds submitted by Mr. Holebrook, of Hazel Grove, for plastering the whole of the Sunday School. As a further stimulus for this fund, it was agreed that the Pastor, Mr. Singleton and Mr. Greenwood sit in the Vestry on Saturday, 1st May, from 3 pm. to 5 p.m. to receive gifts.

The Pastor expressed grave concern at the inadequacy of the existing fire precautions and enquired as to the action to be taken in the event of an air-raid whilst the children were in Sunday School. It was decided to ascertain the agreed pattern at Clumber Road Methodist Church. The resources of the Comforts Fund also came under scrutiny and were placed on a proper footing. Controversy had arisen with regard to the serving of the Sacramental Elements and whose duty it was to preside at the Lord's Table. For guidance, an appeal was made to the Rev. Herbert Motley, who, in his reply, stated that the proper course was for the Pastor to preside at the Lord's Table. After further discussions it was decided (by only one vote) to follow this procedure.

The Church had now decided to join the Fellowship Scheme, with a view to a joint Pastorate with Cheadle Hulme. It was agreed, therefore, that no action should be taken with regard to the Pastor's offer to accept a reduced stipend. This relates to a letter from Mrs. Goertz stating that she had decided to take up full-time war work in an attempt to relieve her distress at the loss of loved ones in Axis territory at the hands of the Nazis. The Secretary, however, was asked to communicate with her and express the feeling of members as to the effect full-time war work was likely to have on her Pastoral duties, at the same time reminding her that she had not previously consulted with the members, as previously agreed. With one exception the members endorsed this action taken by the Diaconate, as the only course open to them. At the meeting held on 23rd July, 1943, a letter of resignation was read from Mrs. Goertz and accepted.

“and did yield fruit that sprang up...”

(MARK 4 : 8)

Notwithstanding persistent problems and hazards, the Baptist cause in Poynton could never be accused of indulgent introversion. Instances of the "outward look" have already been referred to and we find support in 1944 for the Education Bill then before Parliament. It contained a proposal that a daily act of worship should be compulsory in our schools. By a unanimous decision, the Church Secretary was directed to write our local M.P. (Brigadier-General Machin) stating that the Poynton Baptist Church gave its full support to this Bill. Further, it was decided to send a copy of the Resolution to the Minister of Education, then the Rt. Hon. R. A. Butler.

Attention was drawn to a letter from Solicitors on behalf of the late Mr. Butterworth, stating that the sum of seven pounds had been left as a legacy to the Church and this gave much satisfaction. The question of the vacant Pastorate was foremost in the hearts and minds of members. On 6th June, 1944, therefore, the following Resolution was passed: "That subject to it meeting with the wishes of our friends at Cheadle Hulme, the Rev. W. Lazenby, of Fenton, Staffordshire, be invited to take up the joint Pastorates." Apparently the result was not favourable, for later we find a similar Resolution with the name of the Rev. William Mudd substituted. It was at this meeting that the decision was made to purchase the 345 square yards of land in the rear of the existing Church building for the purpose of erecting a new Sunday School.

About this time, the Constitution of the Church again came under criticism but it was decided to defer any action pending the arrival of a new Minister. As our financial resources were quite sound, it was agreed to confer with Mr. Bath, of Stockport (who had already inspected the interior of the Church and existing organ) about the advisability of purchasing a larger instrument which was on offer by our Baptist friends at Radley, near Leeds. After visits by Mr. Bath and the Secretary to Radley, however, it was decided to accept the advice of the former --that it would be better to have the present organ overhauled rather than trying to find a suitable position in the Church for this much larger instrument."

On the recommendation of the Deacons at the meeting held on 10th February, 1946, members unanimously agreed to invite the Rev. S. H. D. Froud to become their Pastor on a part-time basis. The commencing stipend was to be thirty pounds per annum plus travelling expenses to be reviewed at the end of the first quarter. A cloud was lifted when Mr. Froud's acceptance was received and he commenced his duties on Sunday, 7th April, 1946. In addition to preaching on alternate Sundays, he expressed a desire to lead the weeknight services.

Convergent opinions confirmed a suggestion that a fitting tribute to the memories of the Rev. John Lister and Miss Walker (who had been organist and deacon for a great many years) should be made. Tablets were mounted on the interior of the Chapel walls commemorating their long and faithful service. It was also readily agreed to take steps to place a Roll of Honour in the Church, recording the names of all those from our fellowship who had served in the 1939-1945 war. A reunion weekend for all who had a connection with our Church was also planned. This Social was held on Saturday, 18th April, 1947, refreshments were provided and no charge made. Personal letters were despatched concerning this and recipients were also invited to the Church services on the following day.

Then appear copies of a letter sent to the Rev. H. Motley and Mr. Brunt, Secretary of Cheadle Hulme Baptist Church. Dated 10th May, 1947, the letter reads: "Referring to the joint Diaconate meeting on Friday last week, I have to inform you that our members at a special meeting last night, decided unanimously in favour of continuing the present arrangement with Mr. Froud as our Pastor, the voting being by ballot." This then would appear an annulment of the former resolutions with regard to joint Pastorates.

During 1947, moneys received from the sale of Harvest gifts were divided between Macclesfield and Stockport Infirmarys. Necessary repairs to the Church hymn books were also carried out. In response to an appeal for financial assistance to restore war damaged Churches in Liverpool and other Lancashire areas, it was decided to donate the offerings on 2nd November, plus donations received, to this worthy object.

At this time the Pastor reviewed the present position of the Church and expressed his very deep concern with the apparent lack of progress, especially among young people, also his consequent anxiety for the future of the Church and Sunday School.

The great importance of these matters was recognised by all present and it was decided to call a special meeting of the Diaconate to consider ways and means of effecting improvements. This took place on Friday, 7th November, when it was agreed to commence a weekly meeting for our young folk. It was inaugurated on 26th November and Mr. Stonier kindly offered to defray the cost of the refreshments.

At the Deacons' meeting on 7th May, 1948, called to deal with a proposed amendment to the Constitution of the Church, it was agreed to recommend to the members that Rule 4 dealing with the election of Officers to the Church, be amended to read as follows: "The election of Deacons shall in future be by nomination and ballot and each Deacon shall serve for a maximum period of three years. The Diaconate shall consist of nine persons in the proportions of two gentlemen to one lady. One-third of the Diaconate to retire each year, but shall be eligible for re-election if nominated." However, at the meeting on 3rd September, of this same year, it was unanimously agreed to delete this Minute of the previous meeting dealing with the election of the Diaconate and continue with the existing practice.

In 1948 it was proposed to hold the Communion Service monthly instead of fortnightly, but it was pointed out that this was at variance with the Constitution which did not allow for any alteration. It was, therefore, decided to bear this proposal in mind when drafting the new Constitution, after bringing the matter to the attention of members for their comments. The matter was finally resolved in August, 1949, with the result of a ballot showing twelve in favour of a monthly Communion and seven against and so the change was made.

It was with sadness that early in 1949 the Church received the resignation of Mr. Froud along with a letter explaining his reasons for accepting the full-time Pastorate of Bethel Baptist Church, Macclesfield. He spoke of the happy times he had experienced at Poynton during the three years of his Ministry and thanked all who had contributed to that happiness. In reply, the Secretary, supported by Mr. John Singleton, expressed appreciation of the excellent services he had given to our Church and his efforts to spread the Gospel message. The Chairman paid a glowing tribute to the Treasurer, Mr. Greenwood, for his meticulous bookkeeping and as the Secretary, Mr. Barlow, had tendered his resignation, Mr. Froud spoke feelingly of the work he had done in enhancing the spiritual value of the Church. Mr. Tant then agreed to accept the Office of Secretary *pro temp* at the same time expressing a wish to relinquish the position as soon as another Secretary could be found.

After Mr. Froud had taken up his new duties at Macclesfield members were still most anxious to have a Pastor of their own. Special announcements were made that this matter would be placed before the members of the Church and congregation on Sunday, 10th April. Meanwhile, Mr. Stonier, from the chair, proposed we contact Mr. Motley with regard to obtaining interim Preachers and that we enquire the fees, etc., of engaging a full-time Minister. In his reply Mr. Motley stated, "that a stipend of £312 per annum would be expected for an unmarried man." He also pointed out that we should not be eligible for a grant on account of the size of our Church. Later in the year an offer from the Rev. H. L. Watson (the newly appointed General Superintendent) to come and talk this matter over with us was gladly accepted. The outcome of these talks resulted in a decision to enquire if Cheadle Church would be in a position to share costs and Pastors; alternatively, to see if we could procure a house. If so, Mr. Watson knew of a Superannuated Minister who would be able to come to Poynton. Enquiries were made regarding Minshall's Farm House, but information was received that this was not available.

Only fleeting references to the Sunday School are recorded in this period, but no wide variations in attendances are noted. A great deal of concern, however, was expressed with regard to the ever-widening gap between school and Church (a common factor in religious experience). Lack of helpers willing to give guidance and understanding to potential Church members was at the root of the problem. but little at this stage could be done to ease the situation.

To the credit of the Church and Sunday School Officers, in spite of the many vexed problems that beset them no Pastor, shortage of Teachers, a desire to recommence the Christian Endeavour and lack of funds these matters were never allowed to become dormant and were prosecuted with vigour. Regarding the vacant Pastorate, we had already been in touch with the Rev. H. L. Watson to see if help might be forthcoming from either Macclesfield or Stockport. The Rev. G. Batten, of our Stockport Church, was approached. He informed us that owing to his commitments he could offer only limited assistance.

Various suggestions were forthcoming. Amongst them was a proposal "that we consider the appointment of a Deaconess at a salary of two hundred and fifty pounds per annum with possible help from the Sustentation Fund." Many were of the opinion that the Church was lacking in faith not to try this venture. Others remarked "that without a Pastor we will get nowhere." Finally it was decided to ask Mr. Batten for help and failing that, to approach a Deaconess. Two years later, it was proposed that we spend the money in the bank to pay a Ministerial Stipend and to have one or two Ministers to preach with a view to the Pastorate. About this time a letter from the Lancashire and Cheshire Association was

received drawing attention to the Town and Country Planning Act which might affect the plot of land reserved for the new Sunday School. This matter was placed in the hands of our Association Solicitor.

“ *but the labourers are few.* ”

(MATT. 9 37)

By 1956 Mr. John Singleton, the Senior Deacon, had become permanent Chairman of Meetings. It was much to his and the members' regret when the Secretary reported that all efforts to obtain a Pastor had come to naught and that the difficulties were greater now than ever before, owing to the increase in stipends. Anxiety was again expressed that former scholars of the Sunday School were not entering into our Church life. Thus the new vitality so much needed was not forthcoming. Conversely, however, it was gratifying to note an increase in our congregations and a new influx of scholars to the Sunday School. The Diaconate was informed that the boiler was holed and Mr. Proctor was invited to examine it.

The following year opened with another serious loss to our fellowship. On New Year's Day, 1957, Mr. John Singleton was called to higher service and to commemorate his long and devoted service to the Church he loved so well, it was decided to place a plaque on the wall adjacent to the Communion seat where he regularly sat. Mr. W. Smith was elected as his successor.

A letter of thanks was sent to Mr. Robinson, Secretary of the Manchester Baptist Lay Preachers Association, expressing our gratitude for the valuable assistance they had rendered to our Church. It was revealed that a certain amount of money was standing to our credit in the Banner Fund and that further gifts toward this object would be appreciated. Once again the poor condition of the roof was referred to and repairs were clearly a matter of urgency before the winter set in. A special meeting was called to test the feelings of members with regard to inviting Mr. R. T. Valentine as part-time Pastor. Opinions were divided and some uneasiness detected. Although it was agreed to ask him to preach the sermons in December, due to the Secretary having been taken ill, the invitation was not sent and so the matter was "left on the table."

Mr. Tant resigned as Secretary in 1959 and Mr. J. Birch was elected in his place. However, Mr. Tant agreed to be responsible for Pulpit Supplies. A suggestion had been put forward that the Church be developed on more evangelical lines and the matter was referred to the Deacons for their consideration. After Mr. Smith had expressed a desire to relinquish the Office of Senior Deacon, Mr. D. Bailey agreed to accept this position and it was decided to give the former suggestion a trial for twelve months. During the intervening years, 1950-1960, several names and suggestions had been put forward with regard to the vacant Pastorate, but it was not until early in 1961 that positive results could be acclaimed.

To the abounding joy of all concerned it was announced at the General Meeting that "under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, working through the Baptist Union, a Minister would shortly be living in the district, who would be able to give limited pastoral oversight to the Church." He would preach each Sunday when not required for duty in his capacity as Chaplain to Industry (to which he would be fully committed during the week) and his stipend would be paid by the Chaplaincy authorities. The Church agreed to subscribe one hundred pounds per year for his part-time services. Thus, The Rev. R. T. Millerchip commenced his Ministry with us on 1st January 1961.

As is evidenced time and again, whenever a Church is blessed with Ministerial leadership after a period in the wilderness, enthusiasm and unity are usually restored and so with us. The Sunday School continued to improve and helped in the distribution of relief to the sick and needy through its Benevolent Fund. Miss A. Bann became the Secretary of the Sunday School and two new Deacons were appointed to the seriously depleted Diaconate of one Deacon Mr. Oliver. They were Miss M. Birch and Mrs. Stones, who took office on 16th July 1961. Both are still serving as Deacons with continued integrity.

It is worthy of note, that on the retirement of Miss Walker as organist in 1930, Mrs. Stones accepted this office and has continued with unbroken regularity ever since.

It was resolved that the weekly offerings of the Sunday School be divided as follows: Two Sundays per month for School funds, one for Missionary funds and one for the Benevolent Fund. It was also decided to recommence the Christian Endeavour on Friday nights and to have a trip to Alton Towers on 9th September.

The year 1962 was the Centenary of the Church and plans were discussed for the special services to be held in September. The Chapel was open each Saturday night from 6 to 8 p.m., for the purpose of prayers for the forthcoming Mission, and finally the following plans were adopted: Saturday, 22nd September, a Family Service: Sunday, a Prayer Meeting, 8 to 8-30 a.m., followed by Morning Service at 10-30, a Children's Service at 2-30, and a Centenary Service at 6-15. At this service the soloist was Mrs. Lees and the day concluded with Communion. On the Tuesday a Service of Baptist Witness was conducted by the Area Superintendent, Rev. N. B. Jones, M.A., B.D. A Service of Worship was held on the Thursday between 8 and 9 p.m. and finally on Saturday, a Buffet Tea at 5-

30 followed by a Service in the Chapel which included the witness of young people. This concluded a very happy and successful week.

Questions regarding the painting of the outside of the Chapel were raised and after several meetings it was confirmed that Messrs. Smith & Eaves be asked to proceed with this work. When completed, the Minister agreed to attend to the signwriting of the notice-board which was to be affixed to the middle of the Chapel wall.

Mr. Millerchip completed his engagement as Chaplain to Industry in the Manchester area in 1963 and subsequently accepted a call from the Stony Stratford group of Baptist Churches. Once more the Church entered one of its now customary periods without Pastoral oversight. For a time the momentum continued, followed by a spell of "slack water" and then the ebb tide began to flow. No records of either Church or Sunday School activities can be traced for several years, apart from Anniversaries, which were forever popular. Congregations dwindled rapidly and an era of passiveness ensued. Maybe this was the nadir of our Church life, for it is open to question whether we should have been able to continue without the wonderful assistance contributed by the Preachers' Association. Continually and conscientiously they provided "supplies" for our pulpit over several years and too high an appreciation of our gratitude to them cannot be expressed.

Towards the end of 1967, the first murmurings were heard of parties becoming interested in our Church site as a potential development area and tentative approaches were made by developers. It was pointed out that on several Sundays during the year observations had been made on the number of persons attending the evening Service and we were informed that from twelve to thirteen persons was a fair average per service. To our chagrin, we were unable to dispute these figures. Morning Services had always been sporadic rather than a pattern in the Church, yet Sunday by Sunday, a small, but dedicated, band met in the vestry at 10-30 to seek guidance from the Holy Spirit and deliverance from our dilemma.

“ . . but God gave the increase. ”

(1 COR. 3 :7)

As the darkest hour of the night is the one before the dawn, so with us. In November, 1967, a comparative stranger entered the Chapel and introduced himself as David Pringle, of Marple Bridge. He stated that until recently he had been the Hon. Lay Pastor of Glodwick Baptist Church, Oldham, whose membership was now strong enough to support and had engaged, a full-time paid Minister. He felt sure that his footsteps had been directed to Poynton in its hour of need and he declared that if acceptable to the Church, he was prepared to become its Pastor on a purely honorary basis. Hurried consultations followed and enquiries were made, which resulted in a unanimous decision that the offer be accepted with a deep sense of gratitude. The membership at this time was sixteen, with about ten scholars in the Sunday School.



David Pringle
Pastor
1967-1977

Proceeding prudently, Mr. Pringle arranged a guest Service for 11th February, 1968, which was attended by seventy persons. Encouraged by this success, a further series of this type of service was planned. Mr. Pringle applied himself to personal visitation of former adherents and new contacts which, accompanied by powerful and intelligent preaching, with no punches pulled, attracted more and more to our fellowship. On Easter Sunday, 1968, morning services were recommenced. Meanwhile, it became more than obvious that the interior decoration of the Church left much to be desired.

Coincident with our own unhappiness about the state of our premises came a splendid offer from the Poynton Council of Churches, promising man (and woman!) power to undertake the repainting. So it was that "Operation Spring-clean" was launched. It is a pleasure to record that men and women from every Church in the village worked harmoniously together "mid toil and tribulation" and within the space of one week the job was completed. What a brilliant example of Christian Unity in action this was. For the Sundays on which our premises were closed for this operation, an offer by the Vicar of Poynton, Rev. R. H. C. Lewis, M.A., allowing us the free use of St. George's Hall, was accepted with gratitude. The reopening services were held on Easter Sunday, 6th April, and in the evening six believers were baptised and received into membership before a crowded congregation.

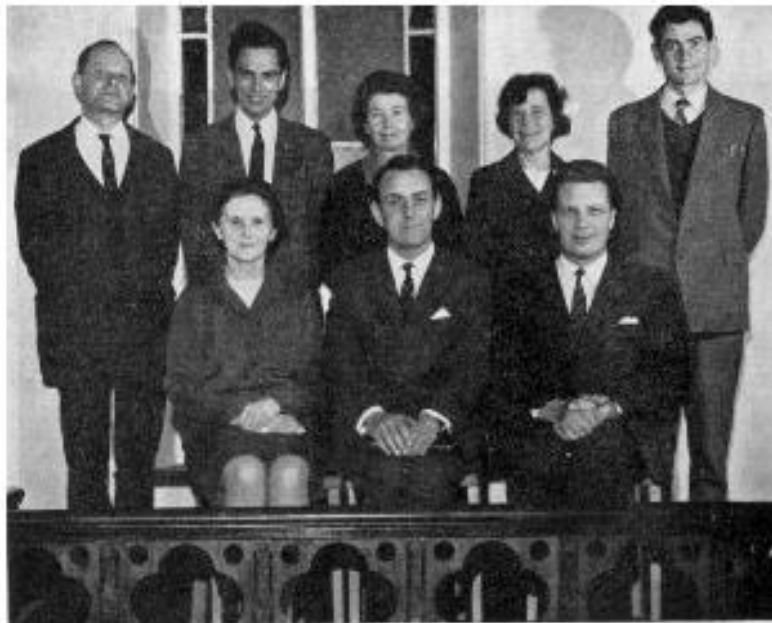
We had now begun to advertise our activities in the local press and on nearby railway stations. Many young people were being attracted to our fellowship and on 5th May they conducted the evening service entirely by themselves and with great credit. A strong liaison had now developed between the local branch of the Crusader Movement and ourselves, with mutual benefits.

The Youth Group, after conducting further services in the Church and thereby gaining more experience, expanded into outreach missions and were responsible for services at several Churches in the Greater Manchester area, all of which gave good reports of their endeavours.

For the Sunday School Anniversary Services in July, 1968, we had the unusual experience of having an American Baptist Minister as our guest preacher. The Rev. Ray Walker, of El Paso, Texas, was studying in Manchester for an advanced degree and the two hundred and forty-four friends who listened to his messages that day were greatly rewarded for the inconvenience of the overcrowded conditions. Then on the 13th of the same month we joined with other Churches of Poynton in the annual Procession of Witness around the district, marching to the strains of the Poynton Band.

During the earlier months of 1968 preparations were being steadily implemented for the Induction Service of our Minister on 20th July. The Rev. N. B. Jones, M.A., B.D., the North-Western Area Superintendent, gave the Charge to the Minister whilst the Charge to the Church was given by the Rev. E. J. Metcalfe, B.A., of our Gorton Churches. One hundred and fifty-six attended, including all the clergy from the Poynton Churches who expressed greetings to Mr. Pringle on behalf of their members. The evening concluded with a fraternal "get together" at which an abundance of refreshments was enjoyed.

After the conclusion of the summer holidays the Minister and Deacons reviewed proposals for -the coming winter, amongst which were three Film Services and several Guest Services. They were happy to note a resurgence of interest and attendance at the B.W.L. and Prayer Meetings, and also a gradual but steady growth in the Sunday School. An innovation at the Harvest Festival was that the gifts were principally of the tinned and preserved food varieties. These were stored until the winter and distributed during the worst of the weather to the infirm and elderly of the neighbourhood.



PASTOR AND DEACONS 1970
 Mr. JOSEPH BIRCH, Dr. JOHN P. RYLEY, Mrs. GRETA ALSTON, Miss MARGARET BIRCH,
 Mr. NEIL V. EVANS
 Mrs. MARY STONES (Treasurer), THE PASTOR, Mr. J. I. BRIAN STRANGWARD (Secretary)

It was in September, 1968, that the newly installed gas-fired central heating system came into full operation. This provided greater comfort for the congregation and there was the added advantage of a provision for heating the water in the Baptistry, which had previously been something of a hit-and-miss affair. This happy and eventful year concluded with a Family Party on 14th December, the Pastor controlling the over-enthusiastic games with skill. A Service of Carols by Candlelight was held on 22nd December amid a crowded congregation and a brief but intimate service on Christmas Day. There had been fourteen Baptisms in the year and an increase in membership of seventeen, now a total of thirty-three.

The year of 1969 opened with more positive overtures from the Building Contractors interested in our site. They wished to ascertain what our reactions would be to a proposal for having a new Church provided over a new supermarket. At the Church Meeting called to discuss this matter, varying opinions were expressed, but ultimately a resolution was agreed that we employ the services of an architect and surveyor to study the feasibility of this project. This was put in hand. Sometime later, however, we learned with regret that negotiations had been discontinued, the developers having completely withdrawn from the negotiations.

By now, it was plain to see that the existing premises were totally inadequate for the rapidly expanding work of Church and Sunday School. There were over forty scholars with virtually no classrooms. Growing attendances were also building up the Church, so that more commodious accommodation was essential. Like our forefathers, we put the machinery into action. Donations towards the building of a new Church had already been received. We also had various amounts standing to our credit in local banks. It was, therefore, decided to consolidate these into one central fund to be known as "The Building Reserve Fund" and so the first stone of the new edifice was virtually laid.

"for the harvest truly is plenteous"

(MATT. 9 : 37)

The search for suitable building land now became intensified, but the magnitude of the problem was realised as disappointment followed disappointment, all possible sites apparently being earmarked for future development in Poynton. Frustration was our daily companion, so much so that it was decided to commit the matter to the Lord daily in prayer, whilst continuing to pursue every lead that presented itself.

At the same time the needs of others were not forgotten. We instituted a Benevolent Fund to be dispensed at the discretion of the Minister. Financial assistance to the World Hunger Appeal was spontaneously given. As a result of a sponsored walk by our young people (twenty-one miles) one hundred and twelve pounds was donated to our adopted Missionary Hospital in Berhampur, India. Coupled with the profits from our coffee mornings, a total of over two hundred pounds has been raised for Foreign Missions during 1969. Meantime we support the Baptist Homework Fund, which exists for the strengthening of our Churches in the home land.

On the reverse side of the coin, however, the Church was thrilled and very thankful to receive a gift of one hundred pounds from Mrs. Higginbottom (a member and former Sunday School scholar) towards the cost of the newly purchased Baptist Hymn Books.

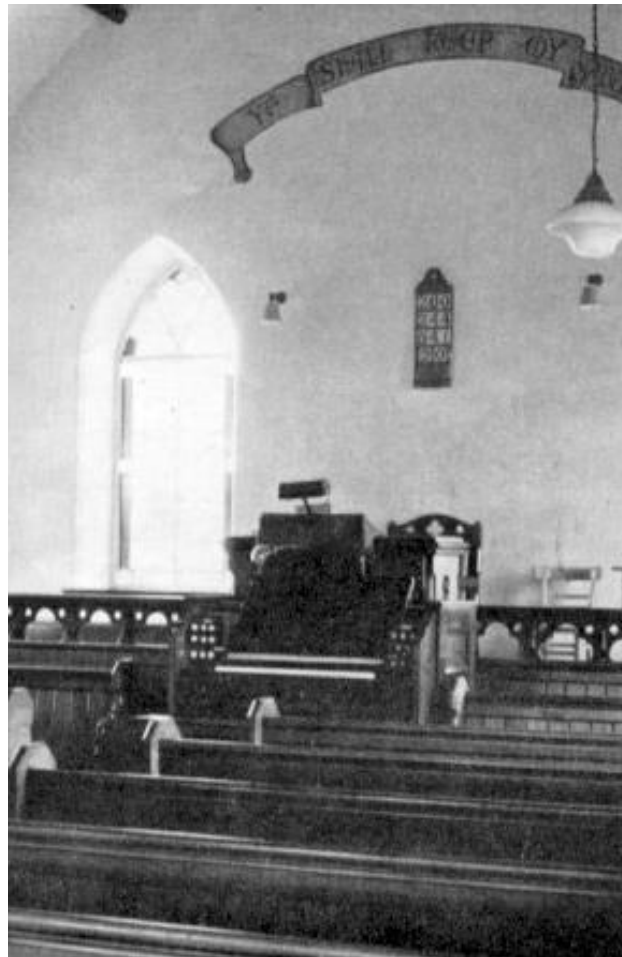
Probably one of the most interesting events of 1969 was the exchange of Pulpits arranged by the Baptist Union between Mr. Pringle and the Rev. Kurt A. Klingbeil, Minister of the First Baptist Church, Poughkeepsie, New York State. On Saturday, 19th July, fifteen of our fellowship bid au revoir to Mr. and Mrs. Pringle and their family at Ringway Airport as they left for Kennedy Airport, New York, and Mr. Pringle preached his first sermon in America a few hours later. Mr. and Mrs. Klingbeil and two of their three daughters arrived at Manchester Airport (via Rome, where they had been sightseeing) on Friday, 1st August, and Mr. Klingbeil commenced his engagement at Poynton the following Sunday. Both families were warmly received into the hearts and homes of the Churches. They also exchanged each other's homes and cars and visited many places of interest in the "foreign lands." The whole experience was a complete success in every way and when the time for partings came there was a lack of fluency in the final words.

At a recent Social Evening in the Schoolroom, we were privileged to see some of the colour films taken by Mr. Pringle of their sojourn in America, both Mr. and Mrs. Pringle acting as hosts. The films exhibited portrayed various members of the Poughkeepsie Church family and their environment. As a result, we feel that the "tie that binds" has become much more personal. It appears that pen friendships have already been established and we hope that the links between Poynton and Poughkeepsie will continue to grow.

Within the entrance to the Chapel a bookstall has been firmly established. Books to suit all ages available at reasonable prices, and special requests can be procured quickly. Favourable comments have been made with reward to the high standard of literature offered and the spiritual recreation they have induced.

In an effort to attract the unchurched teenagers of Poynton, a Coffee Bar has been opened on Friday evenings in the Schoolroom. The programme includes modern-style music and a brief address an evangelical speaker. This innovation is still comparatively new, but if numerical strength is to the criterion then it must be considered a huge success. To assess higher values is much more difficult and a little early. There are, however, visible signs in this direction and hopes are high that primary object to spread the Good News - is being achieved.

During 1969, the Church organ had begun to show positive signs of approaching senility. The lows were weakening and the foot-pedals operating them becoming more difficult to operate. It is, therefore, decided to have an electronic instrument on trial. Variations of tones on specific notes, however, influenced the members against making a purchase of this type of organ. The suppliers need to let us have a second-hand two-manual reed organ in its place. This proved much nearer to our requirements, but the uncertainty of our tenure of the present building and the need for conserving funds towards the building of a new Church became the predominant wish of all concerned id the Agent was advised accordingly.



As the year turned, the Church once again thanked God for clear and unmistakable signs of His Holy Spirit working in their midst. In the two years, 1968 and 1969, there had been twenty-four baptisms, whilst thirty-four friends had been given the right-band of fellowship as members. There had been steady prayers and increasing interest in Bible study; work amongst the women, the young people and in the Sunday School was still growing, whilst in the new year work amongst men was to bud and then quickly blossom into life. And beyond all this a new sanctuary was planned, fit for the demands of the 1970s. God was obviously at work!



1970

Nobody yet knows who will write the next chapters in the story of our Church, for history has no ending. If, however, we are willing to learn, and to be enthused, by the record of the past, then deed with the hymn-writer we shall sing:-

"Rise up, O men of God,
Have done with lesser things;
Give heart and soul and mind and strength
To serve the King of kings."

Acknowledgements:

The indebtedness of Mr. Younghusband & myself extends to the following:-

**Mr. H. Trippier for his assistance with the historical background of Poynton.
Mr. S. J. Hemington & Mr. S. Siddall for photographs of the Church.
Mr. & Mrs. Tom Neild for proof reading.
Mrs. Betty & Mr. John Younghusband.**

D.D.P.

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

When Mr. Eric Younghusband laid down his pen after writing this historical account of Poynton Baptist Church, none of us knew how very close he was to the end of his earthly life. His death, on 22nd November, 1969, came very suddenly, and within minutes of his having finalised completely new plans for a rebuilt Church and Sunday School. To the end, he had been busy for the Master!



Eric Younghusband
Church Secretary
1967-1969

This is not the place to speak of his mighty contribution to the revival of the Church or of his outstanding work as its Secretary, but it should be put on record that his researches into the history of the cause alone took many hundreds of hours. It was his desire that no fixed price be put upon this finished booklet, but rather that: reading the story of God's goodness in days past, friends would wish to contribute generously toward~ the building of the new Church and Sunday School.

In that spirit this history is offered, with the Christian greetings of Pastor and Deacons to all who read it.

"Freely you have received, freely give"

DAVID D. PRINGLE 1970.

If you wish to reference any content, you are welcome to do so, but we request that you mention *Abundant Harvest* and Poynton Baptist Church