

A Brief History of Hillingdon Park Baptist Church 1931 - 2006



In 'The Free Church History of Uxbridge' written by L. Donald Jarvis in 1953, we find the following extracts which put a little background to the Baptists in Hillingdon:-
"It was in the late 1920's and early 30's, that the district known as Hillingdon began to be developed. With the coming of the Underground and a station here, and with the construction of Western Avenue, much building was done, and Hercies Road was laid out together with Long Lane, Sweetcroft Lane and Hillingdon Circus as a residential suburb. It was in the year 1928 that there came to live in Granville Road, Hillingdon, a Mr J.R.Hart, who moved here from the Watford area. He had been actively connected with one of the Baptist churches of Watford, and immediately on coming to Hillingdon he set to work to organise a Sunday School at his own house from the new estates now developing. This work met with encouraging success, and Mr Hart then made contact with the Salem Baptist Church at Hayes which was under the ministry of the Rev H.R.Rutherford. He was soon able to convince them and the Baptist authorities that the time was opportune for the establishment of a Baptist Church in this area."

In early January 1930, a card was sent inviting Baptists living in the neighbourhood to a meeting. The local newspaper for the 24th January reported on the meeting that:- *"a number of those present expressed their views and emphasised the need of such work in the centre of such a rapidly growing neighbourhood. It was unanimously decided to start services on Sunday next, when Mr George Ellis, of Hanwell, will conduct the first service. For the present Mr and Mrs Hart are generously putting their drawing room at the disposal of all who gather for evening worship."*

Thus perhaps the first service of worship of the church was on the 26th January 1930, but it wasn't until Monday 12th October 1931 that the first members of the newly affiliated Baptist Church at Hillingdon Park were first received into membership at a special Communion Service of the Lord's Supper.



Shortly after the first meeting in January 1930, land was purchased in Hercies Road and Mr L. A. Freeman was instructed to build a Church. The Advertiser and Gazette on December 12th 1930 reported :-



"A trail of planks and sawdust led across the muddy foreground to the site of the new Baptist Church in Hercies Road when those energetic people, the Baptists of Hillingdon area, held the stone laying ceremony in connection with their new church." A few Baptists friends met and discussed the need for some place of worship with the result that one threw open his house and started a Gospel service every Sunday evening.

Today's Church at worship



This booklet adapted by Reg Craig from a script by Richard McKay
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grow and develop. Without our volunteer base we could not have done or still be doing the work God has called us to and we pay tribute to them.

Over the years we have sought to be a people who are related in Christ as a family of God's people. We believe that the Church is not a building it is a family of people and we would love for you to be a part of it. Our history goes on and we seek to let Christ be known through our life and witness in the community. 21st century Britain demands a Church that is relevant to its many needs, with that challenge before us we embark on the next chapter of our journey of faith.

At the rear of the worship area in our building is a large collage. This was made possible through a small legacy in the will of Mr & Mrs Hart seniors. Designs were provided by Margaret Gribble and the work put in hand by church members. Above the collage are the words, "**Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever.**" Whether we are 20th century or 21st those words never lose their power. Our history is His-story.



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Sunday School has also been started and fifty or more children gather Sunday by Sunday in his drawing room. But the matter was not allowed to rest there and a suitable site, in a central position, and incidentally a site that will increase in value when the new Western Avenue arterial road is opened, was secured and a building to seat 200 people, complete with vestries etc. is now being erected. This building, a brick one, will be set well back, thereby allowing room for the eventual church to be built in front, and will then form the Sunday School premises."

The Church Minutes record that on Saturday 6th December 1931 the Rev H.R.Rutherford of Salem Baptist gave the financial position up to the time of the stone laying. He said the "total cost would be £1039.18s 0d, of which £775-3s-6d had been collected either by way of loan or subscription, so that £264.15s was still needed. But it must be remembered that loans would have to be repaid, so they really needed more. Mr Freeman of Watford, was erecting this building entirely without profit, as his contribution to the scheme. This church, he added, would be at least 1½ miles from the nearest free church. Hymns were sung by the children's choir and the stone laying began. A free will offering amounted to the excellent sum of £55!"

L. Donald Jarvis records:- *"that the opening ceremony of the new premises was held on Saturday 28th March 1931. To mark this historic day a large congregation assembled and the door was opened by the Mayoress of Ealing who was accompanied by the Mayor. A great public meeting was held in the evening and the offerings at these services amounted to over £60."*
The minutes of a Church Business Meeting on October 3rd 1931 record:- "It was proposed by Mr Hart and seconded by Mrs Harris that the church apply for affiliation to the Baptist Union."

Thus as mentioned earlier at a special Communion service on Monday 12th October 1931, Mr & Mrs J.R.Hart were the first to be accepted into membership of the newly affiliated Baptist church. Thus was Hillingdon Park Baptist Church born. For the next 37 years until 1968, Hillingdon Park was to be served by four lay pastors.

The first of these, **Rev T.J.Pannell** served during 1934. Due to ill health and financial reasons he was compelled to retire at the beginning of 1935. In the autumn of 1935 a large marquee was erected in the front of the church and evangelistic services were held under the direction of **Mr Sam Couser**. At the November Church Business Meeting, he was invited to become pastor of the church, with the Rev H.R.Rutherford continuing as supervising minister, a position he was to hold for 15 years, retiring at the end of 1949.

Between the years of 1936-1941 the church was used by the council as a maternity and child welfare clinic and in 1945 the church applied for permission to conduct Marriages at the chapel.

Little is known of life during those years except for a small



S. R. COUSER
HONORARY PASTOR OF
THIS CHURCH 1936-49

glimpse - the Rota for lighting the radiators for the Winter season 1945-1946

It is not clear from the minutes when the building loans were paid off, but at the Church meeting, of 15th February 1945 it was recorded that "the pastor mentioned that we still owed £40 and the cash in hand would thus reduce this to £17-14s-0d. He stated that he had two gifts towards this amount, one of £5 and another of £2 as well as a promise of a gift of £10. The amount from the box opening was then announced as £3-0s-5d." Thus the loans were repaid with some cash in hand!

After Mr Couser retired the minutes show that Mr Jarrett, the church treasurer, pointed out that he felt there was a need for the church to appoint a full time pastor. Although a resolution to this effect was passed by the meeting, it wasn't to be for quite a few years yet.



Pastor Harris was inducted to the church on 4th November 1950. He lived in Fulham and Mr and Mrs Patterson acted as hosts for him at the weekend. During that time, there were only 5 men in the fellowship. They were the backbone of the church and it was by their faith and love for the Lord that the work of the church continued. It was financially hard, anything that needed to be done was done by them. Mr Edwin Hart did any handiwork and

repairs, Mr Jarrett was treasurer and helped many people (he ran a greengrocer shop in the parade and would often give fruit and vegetables to the sick even though things were hard for him), Mr Stevens was secretary, Mr Patterson ran the Sunday School and Young People's group. He also drew at least five different designs for a new church building which were presented to the council, all to be rejected.

It seems as early as the 1950's, there was the possibility of the A40 diversion around Hillingdon Circus and it wasn't the design of the church that was wrong, but rather that the council thought that the new A40 could come right across where the church is now situated.

During these years a number of alterations were made. A 'Nissan' hut was put up at the rear of the building for youth and Sunday School work. A new entrance and toilets were added, effectively turning the church around. A sign post was put up at the front.

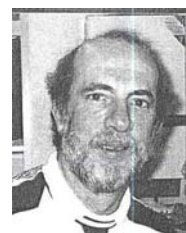
At a Special Church Meeting in November 1958 the church accepted the resignation of Pastor Harris and at the following meeting in January 1959 it was proposed and accepted that they call **Mr Gibbons**. His Induction service was held on Saturday March 21st 1959.

In January 1965 Mr Jarrett went to Australia. He was conferred with the title of 'Life Deacon' and had served the church as treasurer for 34 years. Mr Stevens the secretary was then given the job of treasurer as well. Mr Gibbons served the



In 1995 we were saddened by the death of Betty Bates, who had been a faithful praying member since 1962. However our sadness was turned to praise and thanks for her as she left us a legacy which enabled us to pay off the remainder of the loans that were raised to build the extension.

We were now being challenged by the number of young people attending and again after much prayer we sought the employment of a Youth Worker, **Paul Bennett** was welcomed to the church at a special service in September 1997. Part of Paul's responsibility was to assist Reg at Brunel University at the Chaplaincy. The Church has had long associations with Brunel and is blessed today with former students being members of the Leadership team.



Dovetail had always had a vision to serve lunches for the older people in the community. To realise this vision we knew that we needed specialist help and a Catering Coordinator was sought. We applied to the Council for a grant to cover the wages of someone for 25 hours a week. For four years we were turned down, but through prayer and persistence our application was approved in March 1998. **Trevor Hitchings** started at the end of July 1998 with the first luncheon club meal being served in October catering for 20 people.

This side of our work in the community has grown apace and we now open for lunches five days a week, supported by the Hillingdon Social Services Dining Centre structure. Aably managed by Ray Wadham, who attended the church as a child, our Catering Department continues to grow and attract rave reviews on the quality of what is served.

We have over 30 non-church groups using the premises on a regular basis. Sometimes it gets very difficult to fit any more in and still have use of the building for ourselves!



Paul Bennett left us in 2001 to become Director of Youth for Christ in Cheltenham and in December 2004 the Church called **Phil Hibbert** from South Africa to be our Church Worker with responsibility for young people and their families. Phil's coming has given our youth leaders extra support and vision. A feature of the years has been the sacrificial work many have given to help the Church

rapid renovation of the manse at 8, Bridge Way so that everything was in good order for their arrival on January 3rd 1991. The Induction service was on Saturday 16th February 1991 and this time there was plenty of room for the occasion. Reg's former Church in Exeter hired a coach and brought 50 people along!

In September 1991 a video entitled "The First 60 years" was produced and some of what you have just read was the text for that video.

In 1992 Reg encouraged us to produce an Action in Mission Report, with both local and church member surveys. This was to establish where our real mission field should be. Findings showed that there were many older people in our area and we would need to make provision for them.

Rob MacIntyre (a retired Chief Constable from the Midlands and a student at London Bible College) continued this research in 1993 with a survey of Community Needs within One mile of the church. A Leadership for Growth study was produced in the June of 1993 to complete these findings. This led the Church to a strong realisation that if we were to grow and develop as a Church Community we needed more paid staff on board. In 1994 after much discussion and prayer it was agreed to appoint a Church Coordinator, applications were sought and interviews planned. Reg says, "Just before the interviews, on a quiet day, I was troubled in my spirit. The Lord took me away from everything and I ended up at 'Fran's Tea Garden' at Denham Lock. On a table in the garden, fuelled by many cups of tea, there the Lord gave me a vision about how to move the Church forward into the community."

The organisation was to be called **Dovetail Community Outreach 'seeking to bring healing and wholeness to Hillingdon's Community'**. The plan was to link in with local voluntary and statutory bodies in the areas of Older people, Youth, Family, Unemployed and Health. The vision was presented to the Interview panel on the morning of the interviews.

Richard McKay who had been a member since 1970, was appointed to work 20 hours a week, he was commissioned to the task in October 1994.

Soon the Church agreed that Dovetail should be encouraged and a logo was commissioned, along with it's own Constitution. If you look closely at the logo the dove has 5 tail feathers, representing the 5 areas of work.



In March 1995, with the help of Age Concern Hillingdon, a daily drop-in was established and we were open for tea and coffee from 10 - 12. We opened a Building Society account to bank the proceeds of the drop in with a £1 deposit. It is exciting to record that the very first person to use this new facility became a Christian.



church until 1966 when the Rev Clement Connell was asked to be the Moderator.

It was at this point in the church's history that things began to move at a great pace.

We are told of the regular and faithfully held prayer meetings where the need for an influx of young couples into the church was laid before the Lord. God is faithful and answers prayer and it was through the careful guidance of Rev Connell, an LBC lecturer, that the church began to believe that they could call a full time pastor. The Church Minutes on 27th July 1967 record :- "*It was pointed out that before any such assistance (financial assistance with the Initial Pastorate Scheme) could be forthcoming, it would be necessary for weekly income to be approximately doubled from £10 to £20.*"

The same minutes also reported that the Secretary (Mr Stevens) was the only remaining deacon, it was proposed to take early steps to see if the position could be improved.

In March 1968:- a challenge was set before the members to give one shilling (now 5p) per week, or more as they were able. This would set the Church up well so that an application for assistance from the Baptist Union could be submitted. In April the church officially applied for financial assistance from the Home Work Fund (now the Home Mission Fund) and in May the church unanimously called Tony Mason, a London Bible College Graduate, to become its first full time minister.



At a Special Church Meeting on 30th May 1968 it was agreed to purchase a manse and with a generous gift of £1000 reported it was agreed to go ahead. A manse committee was formed and within a short time 43, Sedgwick Avenue was purchased as the church's first manse.

On Saturday 14th September 1968, the Induction service of Anthony Mason ALBC was held and the Gazette reported:- "*A cheque for £1000 was paid into the account anonymously. 'We have no idea where it came from' commented the Acting Treasurer Mr Edwin Hart. 'We have been looking for money but we weren't holding a big appeal.' The money was to be used for a new church but the Baptists decided that having their own minister came first.*" *The report ends with these words from Mr Hart, "It's really wonderful having our own minister! Great things could happen here."* How true those words were.

Just because the church now had no building fund did not stop it from planning and hoping and praying. As early as 1969 Tony Mason was in touch with a firm called Reema and as we now know, in 1976 that firm put up the present church. Under Tony's ministry and visitation, the church really began to grow and within a few years membership had doubled and the young couples that had been prayed for began coming into the church. The mortgage on the manse was paid off in 2½ years instead of the 10 years. The possibility of flatlets for old folk were thought of and a new organ was purchased and the church repainted by sponsorship. The greatest delay in how the work progressed was to whom the land to the rear of the

Church could be sold. A developer bought the houses to the left of the church and demolished them. Then the council made a compulsory purchase order on that land. This was contested right up to the equivalent of the Department of the Environment. The council lost but straight away the developer sold the land to the council. The council then had Auriol Housing Foundation build the present flats. All this coming and going made it a hard job for the church to find out who to talk to and when.

In May 1973 the Rev Mason accepted a call to the ministry at Bushey and in October '73 the church extended an invitation to Rev Derek Moore-Crispin to become its pastor. In November 8, Bridge Way was purchased as a new manse and plans for an extension made to it.



Derek Moore-Crispin's Induction took place on Saturday 30th March 1974 and due to the lack of space the tea was held at All Saints Parish Hall. Also in March 1974 negotiation with Reema and the developers continued and due to prices escalating because of the delays and inflation, it was decided that the work would have to be carried out in two phases.

The new building came high on the demands of time and attention of the new minister and by January 1975 negotiations were completed with Auriol Housing Foundation. They purchased the land behind the church at approx half of the building costs of the planned building. Without that we could even now be without a new building.

Reema started work on 2nd January 1975, the members having done a lot of initial clearing work.

Because of the way Reema constructed the walls of their buildings in their factory and then transported them to site, suddenly on July 30th, the walls were up! The Gazette headline read:- "Baptists' answer to the walls of Jericho" It was an exciting time!

The church was opened on the Pastor's 2nd anniversary Saturday 27th March 1976 which was also the same weekend as the original church opening 45 years before. The church continued to grow in numbers and financially and by November 1977, even with a big mortgage, the minutes record that:-

"We were urged to take a step in faith, with a hand in the pocket, and come off the Home Mission Fund" and so the church was self supporting again in 1978.

However the car park was still to be completed and mountains of earth were moved by rota before it could be completed.

However Derek Moore-Crispin was to accept a call to Lansdowne Evangelical Church and was inducted there in May '78.

Work continued and the church continued to grow. A Golden Jubilee service was held in 1980 and the church rules were altered to include 'Elders' in the church executive.

It was during this interregnum, whilst **Rev Peter Cotterell** of London Bible College was

moderator that the church asked for someone to give regular teaching on Sundays rather than a mix of lay people. Peter mentioned that his twin brother **Cliff** did some preaching and so Cliff came and taught for two out of four Sundays a month.

The church were encouraged by his ministry and asked him to become their full time minister. As he was not an accredited minister with the Baptist Union the church had to ask for a waiver of the Trust Deed to call him. This was given in September 1980 and an Induction service was held on Saturday 3rd January 1981.

The work of the church continued, greater links with other churches in Long Lane were formed and regular Easter marches down Long Lane were started. It became obvious that we still did not have enough space for all the church to meet together on Sunday as we continued to grow. Plans to complete the 2nd phase of the building were started. After many meetings, plans were finally drawn up and agreed and the work started in 1988. It was decided, that to save money, we would ask the builders just to build a 'shell'.



The church members themselves would complete it, doing all the plumbing, wiring, floor boarding, partitioning, woodwork, painting etc. In November 1988 the builders handed the 'shell' over to the church and for the next two years, Saturday mornings were given up to work on the building.



In March 1989, after 58 years of useful life, the original church building was demolished to make way for the new car park. We would like to thank all those members who faithfully served in that church over the years and thank God for all the lives saved within that building. For some of us it was a sad day with so many memories to recall. However God had

bigger and greater things for the Church.

In October 1990 the official opening of the church extension was made by Rev. Peter Wortley, Secretary of the London Baptist Association. Hillingdon Park was ready to start on the next phase of its future.

About a year before this opening, in September 1989, Cliff Cotterell decided to step down from the ministry of HPBC and so the church was again treading the road of seeking the next full time Pastor. In fact this was a time of considerable blessing, Sunday Services were led by our very faithful Elders, several London Bible College students, as well as numerous other outside speakers. The young people's work was also seen to grow rapidly.

After many meetings and one or two false starts, the church called its new pastor the **Rev Reg Craig** a Baptist minister from Exeter. The church waited on tenterhooks for what seemed like ages while Reg, Brenda and family prayerfully considered the call. On November 6th 1990, convinced the call was of God, the phone call was made. Immediately there was a

