

A brief history of the Church meeting at Napier Road, Tottenham



GRACE BAPTIST CHAPEL
Napier Road
Tottenham
LONDON N17 6XX
Telephone: 0181 801 6549

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Written, compiled and laid out from Church records by
Pastor Gavin Childress and Kevin Green.

Acknowledgements

Among those who kindly contributed
written material to this history are
Ken Dawson, John Glenham
Doris Patmore and David Rumford.

The Birth of a Church

It was 8.30pm on Thursday 27th May 1884. Seven men met as a committee in a house in Somerset Road, Tottenham. Theirs was intended to be the first of several such meetings to establish “a Strict Baptist cause in the parish of Tottenham”.

The eyes of the world were upon troubles in Egypt, and at home the House of Commons debated the rights and wrongs of the new Franchise Bill. But for this area of Tottenham a church was beginning, and with it light was to be shed upon those who once walked in “the vanity of their mind”.

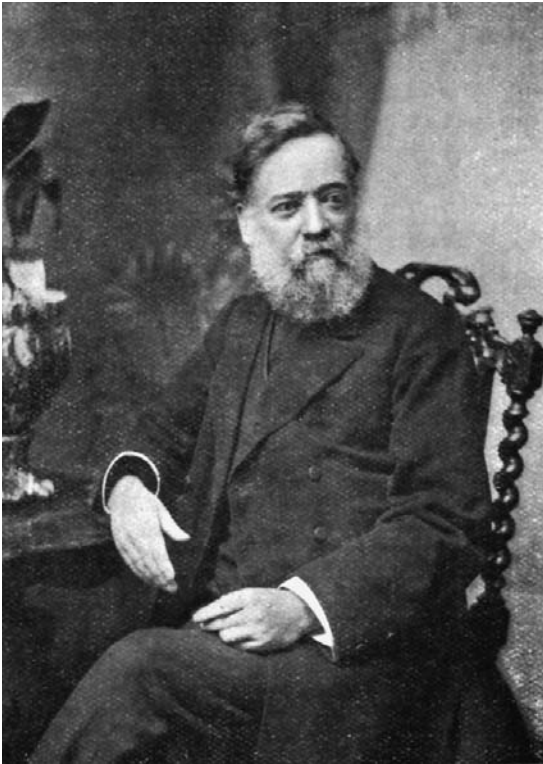
The men agreed to meet fortnightly, as a committee, and their first task was to look into the possibility of hiring a hall in Tottenham High Road in which the new Church would be formed. Some might imagine that their task immediately bore fruit, but it was not so. Within a month three out of the seven men resigned. The minute book for the 18th June that year records: “these resignations (as no reasons were given) were sent in on account of pressure from Mr T———, the Superintendent of the Free and Sovereign Grace Mission.” Just why such pressure was applied remains a mystery. What is clear from Scripture is that Satan hates to see the work of God prosper and loves to “sow discord among brethren”.

However, in the Hands of our God, who designs all things to work together for good to them that love him, the remaining four men pressed on with their original aim. Undaunted by the problems they had encountered, on Thursday evening October 23rd 1884 the new Church was founded. Mr W. Flack (Pastor of Salem Chapel, Wilton Square, London) presided

The Original Committee

Mr Thomas House	2 Wilton Cottages, Chesnut Road (Chairman)
Mr F. Smith	2 Garibaldian Villas, Somerset Road (Secretary)
Mr H. Drew	High Road (Treasurer)
Mr J. House	8 Maitland Terrace, High Road
Mr A. Elkins*	14 Baronet Terrace
Mr George Trigg*	2 Palm Villas, Birkbeck Road
Mr J. R. Webb*	19 Highweek Road

* Shortly afterwards resigned.



Thomas House, the first Pastor of the Church.

at the meeting, and it was declared that the new Church would be formed “upon the New Testament order (commonly called the Strict Baptist Principles)”.

The new congregation met at Welbourne Hall (near High Cross), a building hired week by week until suitable premises could be constructed. By 31st October 1884 eight applications for membership were received. The first Treasurer (Mr C. Eastty of 1 Beaconsfield Road) faithfully served the Church for 25 years, and only resigned when ill health prevented him fulfilling this office.

With a few amendments, the Church adopted the Articles of Faith of Little Alie Street, 1842. Gadsby’s Rules were also used, and for a hymn book “Denham’s Selection” was chosen. The custom of many churches was to read aloud, line by line, each verse of a hymn before it was sung. However, the new Church decided to sing hymns

right through during public worship (as is the custom today).

In 1885 the Church called its first Pastor, Thomas House; a man who had chaired the original committee in 1884. Under his leadership a plot of land was found in Napier Road, and building work began. It took two years to complete. A glance at a map from that time reveals that almost no houses had been built in the immediate vicinity. Aside from Philip Lane the area around the Chapel consisted of undeveloped land. On December 27th 1887 the premises were formally opened for use as a Chapel. It was to be called “Ebenezer Strict Baptist Church, Napier Road”.

The name Ebenezer means “hitherto hath the LORD helped us” (see *1 Samuel 7:12*). Thereafter, for obvious reasons, the congregation loved to sing at members’ meetings and on special occasions:

“Here I raise my Ebenezer,
Hither by Thine help I’m come,
And I hope by Thy good pleasure
Safely to arrive at home.”

Early Years

In March 1888 a Trust Deed was adopted, and before the year was out the Church agreed to align itself with Gospel Standard articles of faith. As a measure of the “strictness” of the Church at that time, the minute book for 23rd March 1885 records: “Mr W—— attended to give an account of the Lord’s dealing with him, and while satisfying the Church as to his call by grace, refused to give an undertaking not to engage in any public service apart from those of our own faith and order.” Consequently the candidate for membership was given further time to reconsider his application.

Similarly, “Rule 26” was adopted by the Church, and states: “Female members may ask questions through a male Member, but they are not permitted to speak at Church (business) Meetings. Should any female Member persistently violate this Rule, she shall be liable to be suspended for three months.”

The Church had three Pastors between the years 1885 and 1913. Thomas House was Pastor from 1885–1896. There followed two others: John P. Gibbens (1898–1905) and Albert E. Brown (1907–1913). During this time the membership increased from 35 in 1902 (it must be noted, however, that of these 35 only 27 took the Lord’s Supper that year) to 69 in 1908.

The Scripture declares: “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other...” (*Ecclesiastes 7:14*). With the increase in numbers there appears to have been an increase in strife and division. During Albert E. Brown’s ministry there were financial troubles and internal factions.

The Gospel Standard

Gospel Standard churches have always adhered to fundamental doctrines; for instance the inerrancy of Scripture, the eternal Sonship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Sovereignty of God. What is characteristic of the Gospel Standard in practice is its emphasis on deep inner experiences of the workings of the Holy Spirit, and communion with Christ. However alongside orthodoxy there has always existed an admixture of error. Ministers are forbidden to call upon mixed congregations [of believers and unbelievers] savingly to repent, believe and receive Christ since this is to imply “creature power” to do what only the Holy Spirit can perform (Article 33). Additionally believers are not encouraged to see the Moral Law as their rule of conduct, but the Gospel only (Article 16). It is probably because of such errors that the Church later sought fellowship among the Metropolitan Association of Strict Baptist Churches (MASBC), now the Association of Grace Baptist Churches (South East).

Although his Pastorate was both faithful and fruitful, he announced in 1909 that "a house divided against itself cannot stand" (*Mark 3:25*) and that those within the fellowship who sought division should either leave or he would be forced to resign. It was swiftly agreed that the Church members separate themselves from the "troublers of Israel" since it was felt "this strained feeling is injurious to the Church and is hindering the Lord's work." Mr Brown continued as Pastor for four more years.

How clear Scripture is when it reveals to us that strife and schism proceed from the flesh: "For ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?" (*1 Corinthians 3:3*). If only we took these words to heart, what peace there would be in our churches and what prosperity in the cause of truth!

What is clear from the records we have is that Albert E. Brown loved the fellowship and maintained his affection for the Church members throughout his ministry. Below is a facsimile of a letter dated 16th February 1912.

5-2 Dundas Avenue
West-By-green N.
Feb 16th 1912

**Letter from Pastor
Albert E. Brown to
the Church dated
16th February 1912.**

Dear Brethren and Sisters in the Lord

I have received your unanimous invite to remain amongst you as pastor for which I thank you.

I have given the matter my careful and prayerful consideration, and feel led to accept the same.

I cannot help but feel that the great head of the Church has revealed His mind and will in the matter in the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace that exists among us

May we all unite in prayer that the blessing of the Lord may continue to abide with us, even in a

With hearty Christ in love to you all
From
Your affectionate Sp.
Albert E. Brown

This Indenture made the day of
1888 Between Thomas House of N^o 3

Philip Terrace Philip Lane Tottenham in the County of Middlesex,
Baptist Minister Robert Place Dawbarn of Northumberland
House Northumberland Park Tottenham / aforesaid Commercial
Traveler Henry Drew of N^o 30 Lordship Lane Tottenham
aforesaid Warehouseman, and Edwin Bartholomew of
N^o 3 Upper Fore Street Edmonton in the County of Middlesex Baker
of the one part, and the said Thomas House, William
Brown of N^o 42 Malvern Road Hornsey in the said County of
Middlesex Builders Foreman the said Edwin Bartholomew
and Mark John Sims of Elm Cottage Winchelsea Road
Tottenham aforesaid Cabinet Maker William Little of 9
Wishin Terrace Clyde Road Tottenham aforesaid Blind Maker
Samuel Brown of 9 Cullton Road Tottenham aforesaid
Merchant Clerk David Frear of 20 Milton Road West Green
Road Tottenham aforesaid Painter William James Wright
of The Green Tottenham aforesaid Manufacturer Walter
Welfare of Downhills Cottage Tottenham aforesaid Gardener
William Taylor of 7 Circular Road Honeley South
Tottenham aforesaid Labourer, Ebenezer Shaw of
Manchester House Clyde Road Tottenham aforesaid Draper
and Charles Costry of 28 West Green Road Tottenham

The front page of
a copy of the Trust
Deed adopted by
the Church in 1888.

Front page of the
Articles of Faith
attached to the
1888 Trust Deed.

The Schedule above referred to

Articles of Faith

1. We believe in the Divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures and receive them as a gracious revelation of the mind and will of God; and we believe that therein are revealed all the doctrines and truths which we here state.
2. We believe that there is but one living and true God and that there are three Persons in the Godhead the Father the Son and the Holy Ghost and that these three Persons are equal in nature power and glory and we believe that the Son and the Holy Ghost are as truly and as properly God as the Father.
3. We believe in the everlasting and unchangeable love of God, and that before the foundation of the world the Father did elect a certain number of the human race unto everlasting salvation whom he did predestinate unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself according to the good pleasure of His will and we believe that in fulfilling this gracious design He did make a Covenant of grace and peace with the Son and with the Holy Ghost on behalf of those persons thus chosen and that in this covenant the Son was appointed a Surety and all spiritual blessings provided for the elect and also that their persons with all the grace and glory designed for them were put into the hands of the Son as their covenant Head and made his care and charge.

Mr Plail's Ministry: 1917-1965

By far the longest and most fruitful ministry was to be that of W.C. Plail. Today (1994) there are still many alive who greatly valued his work and profited under his ministry.

He and his first wife, Lilian, had been in membership at St John's Wood Road Baptist Church. On 2nd April 1917 the decision to call him to be Pastor in Tottenham was carried unanimously. In a short space of time the congregation expanded, and the income of the Church increased. In 1919 his annual stipend was raised from £60 to £100 "to show a practical expression of our love and esteem to our Pastor as we consider the finances were much improved instrumentally through him."

The Plail family resided at Shamrock Villa, Clyde Circus until 1927 when they moved to 7 Bedford Road. Mr Plail's first wife died in 1933 of pneumonia and peritonitis. Despite the grief he must have experienced at that time the Lord who "comforteth those that are cast down" raised up a second wife for him. In 1934 he remarried, and Lydia Plail was to survive him by 18 years.

During the 48 years of his ministry he saw many changes. The Church grew until at its zenith the congregation numbered well over 100 on Sunday mornings, and the afternoon Sunday School received over 170 regular children.

Although the Church experienced two World Wars during his ministry there are no records of any casualties among the membership. His son, John Plail, affirms that Church members were preserved completely through World War II

**W.C. Plail, Pastor
of the Church from
1917 to 1965.**



despite frequent air raids.

In addition to his labours as Pastor, Mr Plail became Chairman of the Committee of the Strict Baptist Trust, of the Strict Baptist Pension Fund, of the Calvinistic Theological College and was a member of the Council of the Strict Baptist Mission (now Grace Baptist Mission). After the second World War he entered the payroll of the Strict and Particular Baptist Society (which later became the Corporation). He preached at Ebenezer every Sunday, but the declining congregation after the war could no longer support him entirely themselves.

Although the Chapel remained in good repair during this period, it had to have a temporary closure in 1929 for renovation. The total cost was £170. How times have changed!

Mr Plail used the AV Scriptures throughout his ministry, and preached from a different text each sermon, rather than expounding books of the Bible consecutively. In those days a raised pulpit and platform stood at the north end of the Chapel, over which a semicircle of words in beautiful script read "O worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness" (*Psalms* 96:9).

During this time the Church was active in evangelism. The Church magazine Ebenezer Monthly (see frontispiece opposite) was circulated. A church member, Miss Nellie Clark (who lived at Lordsmead Road), used to invite youngsters to help her count, fold and place in envelopes the tracts published by the Strict and Particular Baptist Society. Hundreds of homes were regularly reached in this way.

Sadly, after 1945, church members began leaving Tottenham. The slow exodus was not matched by sufficient additions to the fellowship. By the early 1960s the Chapel barely had double figures in attendance. Aside from the Church Secretary, Miss Coles, Pastor Plail had no one with whom to share the burden of running the Church. He often felt unwell, and suffered from angina. When Miss Coles died the burden of church responsibility fell entirely upon the Pastor. In October 1965 he suffered a massive heart attack after a Sunday evening service. He never preached in the Chapel again, and spent most of his remaining days in hospital (the Prince of Wales, Tottenham, which closed in 1988). He had, in former days, seen the Chapel full to the brim with families and alive with the eager faces of over 170 children. His ministry had outlived two world wars and touched upon the age of space exploration. He had to leave the fruit of his ministry to the faithful care of his Lord. On 1st March 1966, at the age of 78, he passed into glory.

No. 18.

NOVEMBER, 1932.

THE
Ebenezer Monthly

ISSUED FROM

EBENEZER BAPTIST CHAPEL,

Napier Road, Philip Lane, Tottenham, N.

Pastor - - MR. W. C. PLATT.

You will be warmly welcomed at the following
Services:

LORD'S DAY.

Prayer Meeting ... 10-15 a.m.

Evening Service ...
Sunday School, Morning
" " Afternoon
United Bible Class

WEEKLY

MONDAY Women's Guild
" Prayer Meeting
WEDNESDAY Young People
THURSDAY Preaching Service
" Bible Study

Readers having space
to write to THE EDITOR, &
Letters will be treated in
help given.

A visitor will be glad
aside by illness, if desired.

PLEASE LET US

R. Einbick, Printer.

All that remains in
the Church records
of the front page
of a copy of The
Ebenezer Monthly.

A handbill for the
11th Anniversary
of the Pastorate of
W.C. Plail in 1928.

TOTTENHAM,
EBENEZER STRICT BAPTIST CHAPEL,
NAPIER ROAD, PHILIP LANE.

THE 11TH
ANNIVERSARY

Of the Pastorate of Mr. W. C. PLAIL

WILL BE HELD (D.V.) ON

TUESDAY, 10th JULY, 1928.

A SERMON

In the Afternoon at 5.50, by

Mr. R. MUTIMER

OF BRENTFORD

A PUBLIC MEETING

In the Evening at 6.50.

Chairman: H. BRAND, Esq.

Addresses are expected from the following Brethren:

**J. CHANDLER, R. MUTIMER, J. WILLOUGHBY,
M.A., and our Pastor, W. C. PLAIL.**

TEA provided at 5 o'clock.

Collections for the Pastor.

TRAINS:—L.N.E. Rly., Seven Sisters Station; L.M. & S. Rly.,
South Tottenham Station.

BUSES & TRAMS:—High Cross, Tottenham.

Young People

It was not until 1907 that Sunday morning addresses to young people began. In 1927/8 there were 220 “scholars” on the Sunday School register of whom 171 attended regularly. There were six teachers during Sunday mornings and twenty (including the Pastor) engaged in the work on Sunday afternoons. On Thursday evenings many young people met together for a full hour, before the main Ministry Meeting at 7.30pm. 60 gathered prior to 1939 and half that number in 1950.

A “Cradle Roll” existed for infants. This was introduced in 1927 and when it began 29 children were registered in this way.

Among the activities arranged for young people were preparatory lessons for the Metropolitan Association Sabbath School exams. Over 30 children attended these annually. There were also sewing and woodwork classes, and any items produced were sold and the proceeds sent to the Strict Baptist Mission and Aged Pilgrims Friends Society. Additionally regular outings took the children to such places as High Beech and Theydon Bois.

In order to involve parents in the work of their children arrangements were made for regular “parents’ social and prizegiving meetings”.

It is encouraging to read the Sabbath School annual reports and to see how spiritually minded the teachers sought to be. Here is an extract from the 1927/8 report:

“Amongst all those who know anything whatever of Sabbath School work – the tendency of the times must now be fully recognised and it is needless for us to reiterate here those conditions which tend to empty our Sunday Schools. But knowing all this it yet remains for us to put our trust in the Lord, desiring of Him that we may by all prayer, precept and practice seek that God’s glory and His word may yet be honoured in this land. So we would go forward, seeking grace that we may not be weary in welldoing.”

Pastors of the Church

Thomas House
Thomas House 1885-1896

John P. Gibbens
John P. Gibbens 1898-1905

Albert E. Brown
Albert E. Brown 1907-1913

W.C. Plail
W.C. Plail 1917-1965

Brian Keen
Brian Keen 1967-1970

John Glenham
John Glenham 1972-1976

Ian Jemmett
Ian Jemmett 1976-1983

John P. Bodner
John P. Bodner 1984-1986

Gavin Childress
Gavin Childress 1987-

The Rebirth of a Church: 1965–1994

Though the root thereof wax old in the earth, and the stock thereof die in the ground; Yet through the scent of water it will bud, and bring forth boughs like a plant. (*Job 14:8,9*)

The Chapel closed in August 1966. The few remaining members had felt overwhelmed by the problem of organising a church, and Mr Plail's wife was not able to keep the building running herself. To outward appearances it seemed the work at the Chapel had come to an end, and the lamp had been extinguished.

Yet this was not the case. In 1967 the Holy Spirit equipped and moved a group of men and women to re-open the Chapel. In February of that year the MASBC approached Pastor J.W. Yourle of Hainault Road Strict Baptist Church in Leyton to see if the Church could be re-established. The members agreed to help and a committee was formed, which years later became known as the "Tottenham Panel".

The Assistant Pastor at Leyton, Brian Keen, was to have overall responsibility and became the main preacher. Others on the Committee who ministered regularly were John Glenham (a future Pastor at the Chapel), Mr K. Dawson, Mr D. Dawson and Mr D. Everett. Later Mr F. Moore became Treasurer and Mr D. Rumford the Sunday School Superintendent. Doris Patmore and several other members at Hainault Road, Leyton also helped to establish the work. It was an overwhelming task, and how grateful to God we are for their work of faith and labour of love!

In these days of so much spiritual darkness and confusion, few have the vision to rekindle a work that seems to have been extinguished. It warms the soul to read of the quiet endurance and considerable sacrifice which led to the rebirth of the Church at Napier Road.

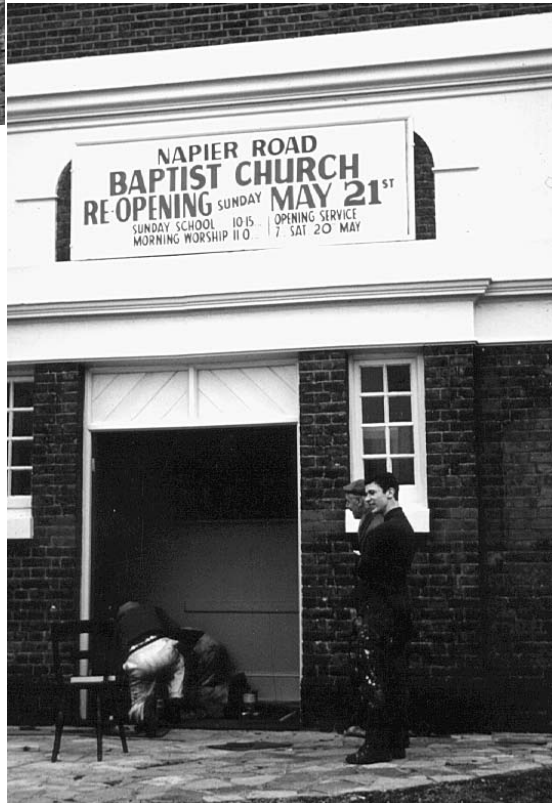
Some weeks prior to the re-opening of the Chapel door to door visitation was carried out. The re-opening date was set for May 21st 1967. During this time the Chapel was cleaned, and the overgrown shrubs and weeds outside the building cleared away.

David Rumford recollects: "The premises, including the front garden, needed extensive work done on them before they could be used. The front garden was head high in weeds. Ken Dawson laid a crazy paving path from the main doors down to the front gate."

At the first morning service, beyond all expectations, 60 children arrived for Sunday School! John Glenham remarks: "Many of these youngsters had to be chased as they played a game of 'hide-and-seek' behind the old



Work in progress on the Chapel and grounds before the re-opening of the Church in 1967.



pews!” Only ten adults attended the first service, but how wonderful that the Lord had brought such encouragement to the new church!

Later an evening service was introduced. The Lord’s Day programme looked something like this in the latter half of 1967:

10am Sunday School

11am Morning Service

Home for lunch

Mid-afternoon back to the church for prayer and door to door visitation

Back to the Chapel for tea

6.30pm Evening Service

David Rumford writes: “The main Chapel building once in use proved to be really cold during winter. There was one classic occasion when the huge electric heaters were inadvertently left on for an entire week. Temperature at the services on the following Sunday was just about right! Due confession was made to the treasurer at Leyton before that quarter’s electricity bill arrived.”

Mrs Patmore and others can still recall how well they were received when visiting door to door, many being invited into homes to share the Gospel.

The Leyton team were conveyed to and from the Chapel in an old mini-bus which formerly belonged to the Strict Baptist Open Air Mission.

Brian Keen assumed overall responsibility for the work in approximately August 1967. A pool of 9 preachers supplied the pulpit when Pastor Keen was away. He faithfully led the Church until May 1970 when he was called to the pastorate of the Church in Kings Road, Chingford.

During the next two years many visiting speakers came to preach. It was decided to book men for several weeks at a time to help provide a sense of continuity until a pastor could be called.

The office of Sunday School Superintendent initially belonged to the late David Everett, but after six months this responsibility was given to David Rumford. In a short space of time a midweek activity for young people was begun, and two older girls were saved. Following baptism they were quickly received into the Sunday School staff. Later a “Friday Club” was started for teenagers.

Mrs Patmore recalls that during those early days an encouraging request was received from the young people themselves. They were aware that adults were now gathering on a Monday evening for prayer, and several of them approached her asking if they might meet for prayer as well. She agreed, and a weekly meeting of about ten youngsters was started. An evening would have comprised a time of games to ‘let off steam’, followed by Bible reading and an extended time of prayer.

John Glenham succeeded Brian Keen as Pastor. His involvement with the Chapel extended back to 1967, when the building was re-opened. At that time he was just 24 years old. He became increasingly involved in the work and was set apart for Pastoral responsibilities in October 1972.

He writes: "I became increasingly involved in the general coordination/administration of the work. Essentially this meant ensuring that the rota for Sunday evening service organ playing and transport was in place and carried out, booking preachers for the services, etc. Late in 1969 the Lord really challenged me concerning my personal commitment to Napier Road Church and more particularly the people of the surrounding area.

"I became aware of a real burden from the Lord and a stirring of His Spirit with mine. A growing 'vision' and anticipation was given as to what He could do, indeed what was on His heart to do. This was His idea to re-open the old church. We, with others, had "ploughed in hope". There had been much "watering" of prayer but now it was time under God to make things happen; to sow effectively and by His grace to reap a harvest. My wife Carol shared this vision and we encouraged others whom we felt God was touching to commence a weekly programme of visitation, evangelising and witnessing to Christ. We began one cold January afternoon and we were immediately assured that God was with us as one dear lady was led to the Lord. She continued in the Church for a number of years until her death. This early 'result' appeared to release God's blessing upon us as for a number of weeks following one by one others accepted Jesus as Saviour. Some of these continue with Him in service and in fellowship within the Church.

"These were great days filled with expectation and confidence that the Gospel, clearly set forth, was the power of God unto salvation. We know that God gave us a strong desire to see His Church built and an assurance that He was going to do it. He gave us a real love and concern for the people of the Church and district, a desire to spend and be spent for their sakes. It was inevitable that a mid-week prayer meeting and Bible study commenced where we could share together the needs of the people of the immediate area and bring those needs as an act of fellowship to the Lord.

"I was invited by the deacons at Leyton to become the 'pastor-in-charge' of Napier Road. This invitation I gladly accepted and held this office for a period of some 3½ years.

"We had always believed that God sent us to Tottenham for a limited period and a specific task and during 1975 it became clear to us that each of these were fulfilled. This was confirmed to us in 1976 when we were called to another ministry in Ilford.

"We look back to those days at Tottenham with great joy. We know from all that has taken place there since we left that our labour was not in vain in the Lord."

Ian Jemmett became the Pastor of the Chapel in the summer of 1976. He had recently attended Belfast Bible College, and had spent the previous August with the Church at Hainault Road, Leyton, gaining pastoral experience. The MASBC was instrumental in the financial support of his family, and the Church at Wood Green (Park Ridings) offered the use of a flat for several months until a suitable manse could be found. A house at 42 Chester Road, Tottenham was purchased by the MASBC. Under Ian the Tottenham Committee became the Tottenham Panel, and was in effect the “officership” of the Church. Support from Leyton was gradually phased out as the Tottenham Church became more self-sufficient. David Rumford was the last to leave in 1981.

In that year Ian Jemmett’s annual stipend was increased to £3,000. As the Chapel membership grew so did its ability to support the Pastor financially. Ian’s direct, clear preaching and strong leadership skills helped the Church to become established and independent, with a vision for the future.

On Tuesday 21st November 1978 the Chapel officially became independent of Leyton. Although there were a few more, only seven signed the Covenant as members. Concluding the service, Pastor Robert Sheehan (then at Bexleyheath) defined a Gospel Church as “A company of baptised believers in submission to the Lord Jesus Christ in everything, dependent on the Lord Jesus Christ for everything and receiving one another as Christ has received them.”

In 1983 Ian Jemmett felt that his work at the Church had come to an end. He resigned as Pastor, and the family moved to Suffolk. He undertook secular work for a time, but in 1986 he was called to be Pastor at Canterbury Road, Ashford, Kent.

His successor was a Canadian Minister, John P. Bodner. He took over the Pastorate in the summer of 1984. His ministry was searching and he

The Tottenham Panel

When it first took over from the Tottenham Committee the Tottenham Panel comprised Pastor Jemmett, Pastor Dawson from Leyton, Edward Bishop (treasurer), Ken Dawson and David Rumford. Edward Bishop later passed into glory and his place on the Panel was taken by Frank Moore. Dennis George also joined the Panel.

Early Members

Following the rebirth of the Church a membership roll was only officially begun in the early 1970s. Those who signed the Covenant as members of the Church on 21st November 1978 were Mr and Mrs I. Jemmett, Mr and Mrs P. George, Miss J. Mayers, Mrs P. Grant (who went to be with the Lord in October 1993) and Mr C. Shakespeare.

had a great burden for the unsaved. He laboured day and night to reach the lost and edify the saints. During his ministry the Church enjoyed especial growth. For a short time, as the Church was looking for a new manse, he lived inside the Chapel building. However, in January 1986 his ministry ended abruptly, due to a combination of tensions within the Church and his own ill health. He is now pastor of a work in Ontario, Canada.

On August 2nd 1987 Pastor Gavin Childress took over the work. He had been ordained in July of that year and in September was formally inducted. The Church had now become financially independent, and to date has shown prayerful love, support and care toward him and his family. The Church has also enjoyed growth in attendance and membership.

“Neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase.” (*1 Corinthians 3:7*)

Gavin Childress, the present Pastor of the Church.



Refurbishment

In the six months from September 1993 to March 1994 a substantial part of the Chapel building was refurbished. This followed 3–4 years of prayer and preparation.

A deacon of the Chapel, Paul Scott, himself a professional architect, undertook to design the drawings and help to oversee the work throughout. Refurbishment was undertaken primarily to provide better Sunday School facilities and to upgrade the Chapel porch area. The bulk of the money required was raised from members of the Church. Additionally many gifts were received from sister churches and individual friends. It is wonderful to see such a demonstration of Christian fellowship and kindness between churches.

During the alterations the Sunday School met in a Portacabin placed just outside the Chapel. The disruption was greatly reduced when we discovered we could continue to use the Chapel auditorium throughout the period.

Following completion of the work a Thanksgiving service was held on 30th April 1994 at which Pastor Nigel Lacey from Stowmarket preached. He called upon the Church to use the premises to the full for prayer meetings and the evangelisation of people of all ages and backgrounds.

We pray that having increased the building's potential use, the Lord will greatly bless and guide us as we seek ways of using it to the full!



A view of the Chapel before refurbishment. See the title page for the same view after completion



Above: The roof space above the Fellowship Hall before the refurbishment work.

Below: The same space converted into Sunday School classrooms after the work.



The Church Name

For nearly a century (1887–1976) the Church was known as “Ebenezer Strict Baptist Church, Napier Road”. From 1976–1984 the name “Ebenezer” was dropped and it was known as “Napier Road Strict Baptist Church”. In 1984 the name was changed again – to “Grace Baptist Chapel, Napier Road”. The minute book records: “The older denominational tag “Strict Baptist” is meaningful only to ‘insiders’, just like the old name ‘Ebenezer’... but to the outsider it is strange and forbidding.” Why did we change the name to Grace Baptist Chapel? The reasons are twofold; first to give the opportunity to speak of God’s grace before our strictness, and secondly the word ‘Chapel’ is used to equate the Church with the people, not the building.

“Ye also, as *lively stones*, are built up a *spiritual house*, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 2:5)

* * *

As we look back over the past century we see in a glorious way how the Lord’s strength is made perfect in our weakness. We see that the Lord Jesus Christ, who purchased his Church with his own precious blood, will not abandon her to schism or defeat. What encouragement it gives us, as we look towards the future, that God has never left us to the will of our enemies, but has humbled then blessed us, emptied then filled us. Truly “Hitherto hath the **LORD** helped us”.

* * *