

Mainstream *baptists for life and growth*

Newsletter No. 4.

April 1980.

How large is our faith?

This April Dr. David Russell will be presenting to the Assembly a 'strategy of faith'. "We dare to believe", he writes, "that God is about to do a 'new thing' among his people. We eagerly desire that his Baptist people be given a full share in the working out of it and to this end, with renewed confidence in God and the power of his Gospel, we are challenged to offer ourselves afresh to him for the fulfilment of this task".

It is within this context we need to ask the question: How large is our faith? What are we expecting to happen? As Peter Wagner says, "Without faith it is impossible for churches to grow. If Christian people do not look ahead and see their church growing it will not grow". In one sense, of course, this is not a theological truth - it is a universal truth. To approach anything in a spirit of hopelessness is to make it impossible. But it is also a spiritual truth: unbelief hinders the work of God (Matthew 13. 55-58), whereas with faith "nothing will be impossible" (Matthew 17. 20).

Faith, however is more than expectancy. We see this clearly in the story of the epileptic boy (Matthew 17. 14-21). The disciples expected success - they expected to be able to heal the epileptic boy. Indeed, not only had Jesus given them authority over 'unclean spirits' (Matthew 10. 1), they had apparently already had some success in meeting men in their need. (Luke 10. 17). So why the failure? Is it possible they had become overconfident - overconfident in the sense that they had come to place their confidence in themselves and not in God?

How large is our faith in God? Let not our confidence be in our "Signs of Hope", however encouraging they may be. Rather let our confidence be in the God who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead and who is pouring out his Spirit on all mankind.

Paul Beasley-Murray

New Subscribers

Wanted: more subscribers! Does your minister, fellow-deacons, or church members subscribe to the Mainstream News Bulletins? If not, encourage them to send £2 to Rev. Peter Grange, the Manse, Church Road, Kirby Muxloe, Leics., and in this way ensure themselves of a year's issue.

Conference 1981

Following this year's successful conference we have booked Swanwick for next year - 19th-21st January 1981. Further details in the next issue. Please book the date in your diary. Total cost £16.50 none returnable deposit of £3.50 sent to the Rev. Jack Ramsbottom 2, Lovelace Drive, Kidlington, Oxford OX5 2LY secures a place. Cheques made out to "Mainstream" receipts only with S.A.E.

A Message from next year's President of the B.U.

WHY I SUPPORT MAINSTREAM

by Stanley G. Browne,
CMG, OBE, MD, FRCP, FRCS, DTM, FKC

"I support MAINSTREAM because I believe that it does indeed represent the main stream of Baptist belief and witness.

Its waters rise pure and undefiled in the impregnable rock of Holy Scripture, and come right down to us today in cleansing renewing and invigorating power.

Historically valid, and never completely suppressed from apostolic times until now, MAINSTREAM continues its course, passing by various muddied side-currents and deceptively attractive whirlpools. MAINSTREAM will doubtless in the future welcome compatible inflow from tributaries as it pursues its way.

God bless MAINSTREAM, and use it in our denomination, and beyond - is my earnest prayer".

We send our good wishes to Dr. Stanley Browne as he assumes the Presidency and wish him much joy and blessing during his year of office.

Points to Ponder

Points made by Tom Houston at the 1980 Mainstream Conference.

1. It is God's work to make churches grow so we should find out how and where He is working and work with him (1 Cor. 3. 6-9).
2. It is man's work to 'harvest' so we should learn all we can about it (Matthew 9. 37-38).
3. There is continuity and consistency in how God works so we should learn from our own and others past experience (Psalm 103.7, 145. 4f).
4. The field is the world and the church is one, so our vision must take in the whole and the parts both in our churches and in our community (Phil 2. 22-24).
5. Faith is a factor in achievement, so we should learn how to harness our common faith in setting shared goals for church growth (Matthew 11, 22-24).

OPTING OUT - Tom Houston at the Mainstream Conference
originally adapted from Christ Church, Winchester.

There are 566 members in our church,
but 100 are frail and elderly

That leaves 466 to do all the work,
But 80 are young people at college.

That leaves 386 to do all the work,
But 150 are tired business men,
So that leaves 236 to do all the work.

And 150 are busy housewives with children,
That leaves 86 to do all the work,

And a further 46 have most important outside interests,
That leaves 40 to do all the work,

But 15 live too far away to come regularly,
So that leaves 25 to do all the work,

And 23 say they've already done their bit for the church,
That leaves you and me,
And I'm exhausted.
Good luck to you!

A Call to Commitment: Baptist Christians through the 80's

(A strategy document presented to the
Baptist Union Council March 1980)

The challenge and optimism in Signs of Hope continue. Six sections in the Call cover worship and prayer, evangelism, learning, caring, service and release for leadership. In the opening section, "Worship that is reverently aware of the awful presence of God and celebrates that presence in joyful praise.....Nourished on worship our witness will flourish and bear fruit to the glory of God" - positively, albeit cautiously there is an approximation to A.W. Tozer's penetrating dictum that effective evangelism takes place when we answer the questions raised by the quality of our worship. There is a healthy recognition that all is not well with what we do on Sundays and more consideration is needed especially for the ministry of preaching.

A general call to repentance is repeated in several places. Add this to the specific reference to "practical help by stimulating prayer groups" and we see clearly the spiritual potential waiting to be released. Has the pattern of Bible study and prayer groups experienced at Brighton last summer influenced our churches and Associations?

The longest section deals with evangelism stressing "effective planning for growth". This is clearly spelt out by urging the Union "to accept a growth budget for 1981" (and beyond into 1982....?) "with an emphasis upon evangelism". This is welcome language and we must have the courage of our convictions by producing and accepting such a budget. The movement from what we can afford to what we ought to give in the light of present day opportunities is long overdue.

Signs of Hope had a purple passage in its section 5:4:3 and those recommendations are continued in detailed proposals for new evangelistic projects over the next 5 years. People working in such pioneer ministries will be good publicity for the Union.

Reputable religious organisations use hard sell techniques and the issue of the image of the Union needs further consideration. The vexed question of communicating reasons for ecumenical involvement does not appear to have been followed up.

Here and elsewhere there are strong pleas for working with the Associations and their attention is drawn to 4 areas of difficulty that merit special attention. These are rural churches, the city centre, the inner city and municipal housing estates. Arguably these should be for the attention of the Union primarily. To initiate and monitor these

projects calls for a person with executive power (a Director of Evangelism?) able to relate directly to the new Strategy Action Group which is being proposed. More attention is urgently required for the problems and opportunities of the smaller churches which constitute about half of our denomination.

In the third section on learning there is the suggestion of a month of simultaneous preaching and study based on an agreed part of the Bible. This should be acceptable to remind us of our fellowship as "Baptist Christians" - an interesting designation. This could include the special Day of Prayer mentioned later. An imaginative idea of a team of field officers for work among young people is canvassed and as if to remind us how much we have to learn there is mention of "an adventurous budget over succeeding years"

The best section concerns pastoral care. Our system of commending (or failing to commend) members when they move to another part of the country is given helpful attention. The churches are urged to an attitude of "openness to consider new methods". If we plug these gaps, i. intergrating new converts fully. ii. following members on the move. iii. Spotting the early warning signs of members about to lapse, then a major factor in decline will have been tackled. There are many proposals for action by the Union, Churches, Associations and Colleges. A small point - the review of care for ministers and their wives should be put on the church's agenda as well as on the Union's (see 8:4 in Signs of Hope).

By contrast the material on service is the thinnest. This may reflect the fact that Signs of Hope had little by way of specific recommendations here. It also emphasises that each local situation is different and thus these should be a unique creative response by each church. The suggestion that Associations in turn study a subject of social or international concern for presentation at either Council or Annual Assembly has interesting possibilities.

The final section on leadership contains the key to the whole Call. The Union "commits itself to give priority to a strategic spiritual leadership with a view to the growth of the Church". Dr. Russell appeared somewhat shaken at Council when asked to produce such a strategy. He has demonstrated leadership abilities, notably in dealing with Eastern European issues. Now is the time to pray that he may be able to give the same personal touch to this call that will encourage us to move forward on the home front with confidence.

From the many helpful suggestions, priorities must emerge so that we can move from talks about reports to their actual implementation. Churches could end up in a spiritual flat spin, at the sight of the many topics that are raised. The way ahead? - A Deacons Day Conference, or a section on the agenda every month, some hard work for the Associations. For the Union however it must be a minimum statement of intent which will not be whittled away.

David L. Taylor.

(Minister: Rising Brook, Stafford)

Charismatic Churchmanship

When the fresh winds of the Spirit began to blow through the Church in the 1960's I was ministering in the midst of the dry bones of the orthodox evangelicalism which has proved to be remarkably resistant to this new move of the Spirit. None the less it would be only with great difficulty that the evidence for the worldwide upsurge of charismatic activity through almost all sections of the Christian Church could be dismissed today. In its essence it is the re-discovery of a new spirituality feeding the tap roots of personal faith through which the whole church grows. Its manifestations are bewildering in their variety and it lacks any organisational cohesion. There are, however, certain characteristics which are common, which describe the new kind of churchmanship now an established fact of our life.

Most obviously there is the new emphasis upon the activity of the Holy Spirit who is understood in terms of immediate presence more than retiring influence. This insight is capable of many applications to the life of the individual believer, but in the life of the fellowship it has led to the recovery of that central strand of Paul's theology of the Church as the Body of Christ. As Paul shows, this indicates not only the necessity of the inter-relationship between all the members of the Body but also the relevance of the ministry that each member has to offer through their Spirit-inspired charism. The acid test of any movement of the Spirit is in what it has to say of Christ. It is in the vividness with which He is recognised in worship, which is the central function of our life that this test is passed.

If greater measures of freedom in worship are more commonly accepted as a result of all that has happened some of its associated accompaniments would not have been as welcome, at least in some Baptist churches. For instance, it is plain that if liberty is not to turn to licence, the new-found freedom in worship needs more careful control than the very predictable diet which it is in part replacing. On such pragmatic grounds most churches involved in renewal have found it necessary to revise their leadership structures in such a way that fellowship life and worship is well ordered. This is accomplished through the creation of Elders sharing overall responsibility with the Pastors for the wellbeing of the Body. In some cases this has led to the suppression of the life of the Body in the government of the church, which is simultaneously being released into new freedom in the worship of the church, and this is clearly a nonsense situation. In most cases, however, the consequences are more constructive. They allow for the fuller development of ministry teams within the Body through which Pastors are relieved of the burden of the omni-competence with which some congregations would still like to invest them. More positively still they release the church from the ponderous perils by which many fellowships are held through what is supposed to be the democracy of our church structures. In such hide-bound situations the speed of change is often determined by the slowest member, and the most minimal improvements, like the disbanding of those awful choirs-with-geriatric-voices which affront our worship, are postponed for ever and a day. If that is what democracy means in practice it would seem that some Spirit-led dictatorship is not out of place, at least in directing our freedom.

Charismatic churches are among the first to recognise the new depth of meaning for the sacraments. This is no doubt due in part to the ecumenical frontiers which open up at this level, but even more to the

recognition of the immediacy of the presence of the Spirit of Christ as Christians celebrate together. It is my own conviction that we are not well served if freedom in worship operates without any kind of ordered liturgical framework. I have seen enough of dead informality to realise that it does not differ in essence from the dead formality it seeks to replace. But the recovery of the value of the Lord's Supper as Eucharist for His presence in the midst, and the celebration of Baptism as His seal to our initiation of which the coming of the Holy Spirit is Divine confirmation, gives as strong counter-balance away from any undue subjectivity. To share our understanding of these things with fellow Christians from other traditions obviously proves to be mutually beneficial. To do so with the recognition that the Lord is blessing many with his Spirit, with whom some of us would have had no contact before, means to be moving purposefully along a new ecumenical road under the leading of the Spirit on a new basis of trust. It may well prove to be a more adventurous basis for more progress than anything that could be achieved by talks or talks about talks. It certainly means that Spirit-led unity for the Church of Christ in our own locality becomes an urgent quest.

Whilst there are many other aspects of church life to which no reference has been made in this very fleeting glance, perhaps one of the most significant qualities which emerges has to do with the kind of salvation which is on offer through the Gospel. Whether this is considered in community terms through the hazardous but brave experiments in community living in which many are taking part, or whether it is seen in terms of the saving forgiveness for which all of us must pray individually, it is plain that our 'soteria' has assumed broadened perspectives. For me it was at this point that I received an incidental confirmation of the sheer reality of the coming of the Spirit through the ministry of deliverance and healing which fell open before me. I fancy that in today's chaotic world there will not be much deep penetration into the godlessness of our society unless our message is similarly anointed and earthed. At which point I observe the clear insistence of the Spirit regarding our primary consideration in Mainstream for Life and Growth. For it is the quality of our life which will exclusively determine the reality of our growth. Nor can we really grow in quality unless something happens positively to our spirituality. And that is the point at which in this brief article we came in.

Douglas McBain,
Minister: Lewin Road, Streatham.

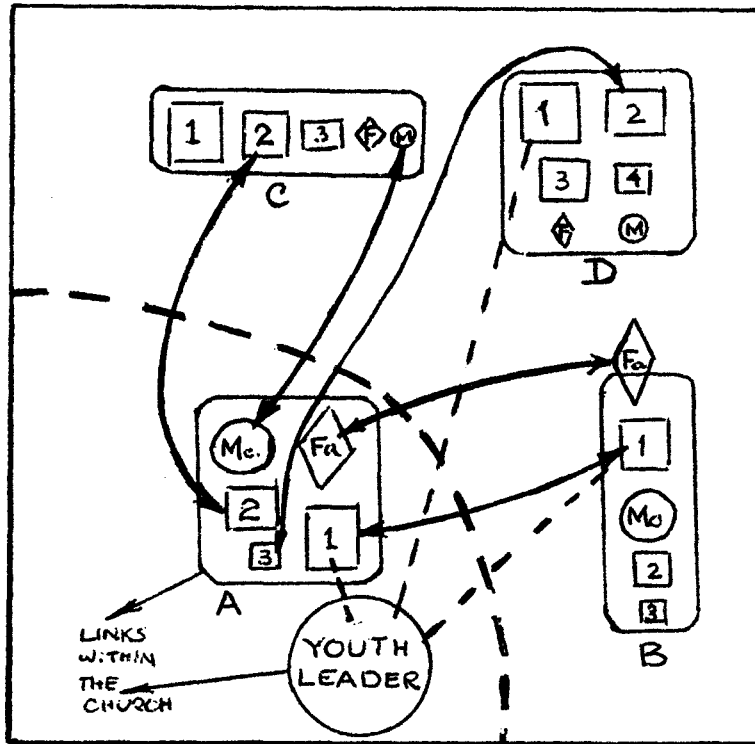
Where we all come in.

Isn't it remarkable how different the temperaments of members of the same family can be! One is equable, large-hearted and reasonable whilst his sister is extroverted, pushful and manipulative. And when a third member comes along, he is likely to manifest all the symptoms of a conviction that he is the natural centre of the universe - and thus to need all the security of firm handling and affection to ease him through the ego-denting discovery that other people, too, have a right to exist.

Perhaps this is one reason why family life does so much for the spiritual education of all the members of a family. Not only are the children learning to honour their parents : the parents are learning, with equal difficulty to manage their relationships with their children so as to avoid constant frustration, "so that (their) children do not lose heart." (Cd. 3.21) After all, a child who feels he has been unfairly treated may well express his sense of injustice in childish anger only, he may discover that it is expedient to divert it from the real source of his provocation onto someone less threatening.

Then, there are the friendship relationships with other families. Some of these homes will be based on ideals and standards very different from Christian values, whilst others may altogether evade the costly discipline which sits equally on all the members of a well-ordered home.

The diagram below attempts to illustrate a part of the network of friendship between such a group of families. Family B see very little of their father, as he often gets home late from his demanding job, and



is frequently out for much of the evening as well. He is worried about the way his family is developing - and especially about the life-style of his eldest son (now in VIth form) who is finding that lavish pocket money does bestow power and influence. Father A has been friendly with this 'absentee father' for some years, and now finds that discussion of these problems has brought them much closer together, and even opened up opportunities for meaningful Christian witness. More recently, the two eldest sons have struck up a friendship too.

Family C is completely dominated by the children, who vie with one another in stratagems of selfishness, and are really quite unruly

(though pleasant and attractive personalities, one at a time). Mother and daughter in Family A are great friends of their opposite numbers in this family - a fact which can create problems when No. 2 tries out some of the power strategies which she has learnt from Teenager C. Moreover, the Christian mother finds it difficult to cope with the antics of Teenager C when she visits their home, though she is almost a 'lifeline when things begin to get on top of Mother C.

Both the parents of Family D abdicated long ago, and are now beginning to fear that the policy of 'peace at any price' is turning out to be 'no peace at whatever price'. It does not in fact help that both parents feel that they must work, consoling themselves with the reflection that their children are able to go on all the foreign holidays which the school cares to organise. No. 2 in this family is not yet 13 years old, but she can out-shine anyone in the girls' club when it comes to dress or fashionable accessories. No. 3 of the Christian family is her closest friend, and they are in and out of one another's homes all the time - though parents A are a bit worried about the obvious influence of the friendship on their daughter's thinking.

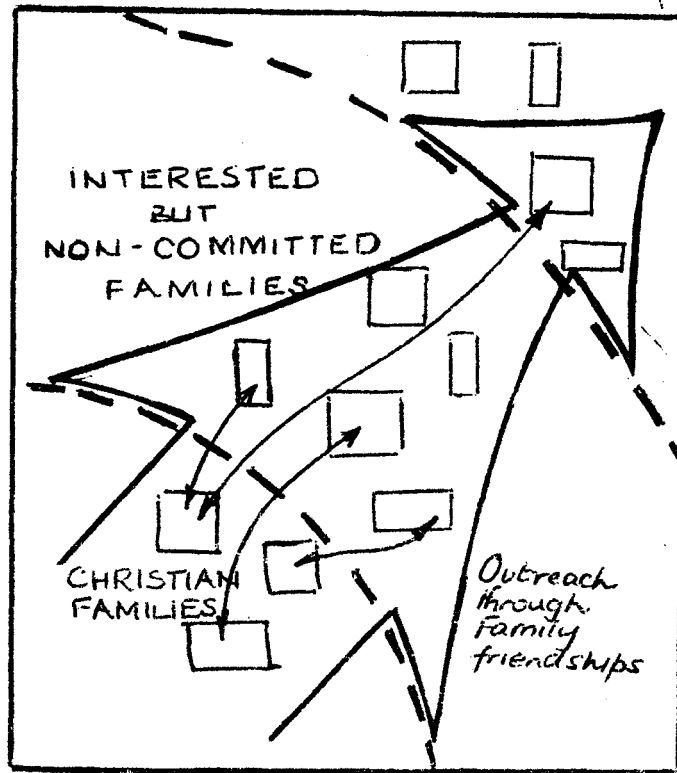
Thus, the Christian family is under constant pressure from alien norms : "Oh, Mum, you really are hopeless, everyone else in my class is allowed to . . ." or "Dad, do we have to go to Church tonight : none of my friends do. Couldn't we watch the service on telly?"

And what are we doing within the fellowship of the Church to re-inforce the sinews of reciprocal deference or to revitalise the relevance of Christian values? After all, Families are in themselves a crucial arm of the Christian witness of the Church. Homes are one of the most effective instruments of evangelism - not so much by the words spoken

as by the life exhibited and the spirit (or Spirit) embodied in their life style.

There is also the fact that several of the children in these four families are in Church Youth organisations. In this Church, the Youth Leaders and Sunday School teachers visit all their families about once every two months - often with an attractive folder from the Church. They started with short three-minute calls, but they are now welcomed in to sit down and chat, because of their real interest in the youngsters. So, the Church is carrying on implicit evangelism in its neighbourhood all round the year.

Many will feel that this is a rosy romantic ideal, rather than the real truth. And perhaps that shows how much we need to stand back and take a cool look at the christian work to which we devote much time, effort and often sacrifice; we need to assess whether we are aiming at the centre of the target - or even at the right target. The Baptist Union Mission Department have just published a pack entitled "LOOKING TOWARDS THE FUTURE OF OUR CHURCH" (40p each 3 for £1.00) which is designed to help Churches do just that. It has five sections, concerned with the overall programme of the Church, adult week-night activities, youth weeknight activities, children's instruction and worship, and teachers and teaching. It includes brief resources and address lists. These are not a questionnaires to be returned to someone else but a tool which may help Churches to forge all their activities into a co-ordinated strategy for future growth - both for enrichment and expansion.



John Goddard.

Waterhouses Association of Baptist Churches

The two villages of Ushaw Moor and Esh Winning lie a few miles to the west of the ancient cathedral city of Durham. Both have a population of about seven thousand and both have gone through a process of change. Not so long ago they were thriving mining communities. But now the collieries have closed. New private housing estates have been erected while the older homes are being bought up cheap and renovated by young marrieds. The retired mining community remains but now side by side with the new residents. I frequently hear, 'The village will never be the same again'. Certainly the easily identifiable community spirit of a few years ago has been eroded.

The Baptist witness in Esh Winning is over a century old, and so remarkable was its growth in the early days that within a few years mission churches had been planted in nearby villages, including that of

Ushaw Moor. The chapel life thrived until the 20's but was badly hit by the effects of the depression and has since slowly declined.

When I came to be minister of these two churches 'fresh from college' in June 1978, I discovered that the fellowships were small (Esh Winning 35 members, Ushaw Moor 13 members) and were made up to a considerable extent of older people. However each church contained a small nucleus of dedicated spiritually minded workers in the young to middle-age age range. (one evidence of this dedication has been the phenomenal financial giving of the church members).

There seemed then (and sometime still seem) to be many obstacles in the way of progress; two buildings which are a continual drain on money and energy but are far too big for present needs; lack of man power resources when it comes to putting into operation new projects, with the majority of the active people having to devote much of their time to administrative tasks; the problem of finding time for systematic evangelistic work in the village myself - because two churches means at the very least twice the usual meetings for the minister and because older congregations require more regular pastoral visiting than younger ones.

But we have seen the Lord work in very definite ways and this has given us encouragement for the future. When we came there was a great need for the baptistries to be opened - in one church this had not happened for over ten years. Four baptismal services have been held - the candidate at the first was the church organist from Ushaw Moor; at the second an ex-Sunday School scholar from Esh Winning; at the third a lady first contacted through visitation in Ushaw Moor. All were excellent candidates. The fourth service was held as a joint venture with a nearby house fellowship and reflected a willingness within the churches to be open to the Holy Spirit's prompting into fresh paths of witness and service.

And in addition there have been those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus. One man in his sixties stands out. A regular church goer for many years he has gradually come to spiritual understanding in the last couple of years and has been particularly blessed through our last two anniversary weekends. A small but faithful young people's group has also been stimulated by the addition of a Friday night meeting to our regular activities and some of these youngsters have made professions of faith.

We trust and pray that these blessings are the beginning of a larger harvest. We long to see numerical growth on a much larger scale than has so far been the case. While the Ushaw Moor evening and Esh Winning morning congregations have risen slightly the only meeting to have shown a marked improvement in numbers has been the Esh Winning Bible Study which has nearly doubled from a dozen to regularly over twenty. This has been encouraging and an experiment to hold this gathering in homes to save oil and to enable housebound members to be involved on occasions has been very successful. May this numerical advance and the increased warmth of fellowship to which it has led be reproduced in every other area of our churches' lives.

So in Esh Winning and Ushaw Moor God is working, and incidentally you have been involved in that work through your giving to the Home Mission Fund, for we are supported churches at the present moment. The situation here is challenging; often it is a stimulus to patience - not my greatest virtue! But it is certainly a privilege to be the pastor of so faithful a group of people, several of whom through constancy of their trust in the Lord in the midst of personal trials and burdens very often minister to me. Please pray that the ongoing witness of our fellowships will be effective in the communities, especially among those newcomers to whom I referred at the beginning, and that the contacts I am building up by being here and trying to follow up leads will eventually result in conversions to the Glory of God.

Richard Allwood

The Church of the Redeemer, Birmingham.

The exact statistics are not at my fingertips and are not important. The two and a half years when the church had no building and no minister saw the first growth in membership in many years! In the last 2½ years the congregation has trebled, the membership risen from around 70 to around 110; a community bookshop has opened in the Post Office opposite the new building which itself is being used more and more for the community; new groups, prayer groups, study and teaching groups are emerging, attendance at church meetings is rising. We are looking forward to appointing Elders, healing ministry is a normal part of worship and ministry, worship is growing in vitality.

Life and growth for which we thank God. Out of our experience together in the Church of the Redeemer three words emerge: 'Change', 'Renewal' and 'Presence'.

John Taylor in his book the 'Go-between God' in describing principles at work in the Heavenly Father's ongoing creation writes:

"It is as though his ceaselessly repeated word to every detail of His creation is: 'Choose'. I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse; therefore choose life. Stay as you are and drop out, change, however painfully, and move towards life. . . .".

The Church of the Redeemer has faced change. The fine, grand building belonging to the church was demolished over four years ago. The decision to continue to witness in the inner city led to a joint building with the Anchor Housing Association for the elderly consisting of 41 flats, a Day Care Centre and the church accommodation. The decision is also leading to changes in ways of evangelism and worship and in the concept of the church. John Taylor continues:

"To embark upon a change of place, a change of habit, always feels like a little death. Every step forward into fuller dimensions of life is a kind of dying . . . real advance never feels like self-fulfilment, though that is always what it is; it is always experienced first of all as self-surrender".

It is not easy, but the wind of change is blowing and we are prepared to face it, not as one change but as a continual process. It is the wind which is blowing - the wind of God's Spirit.

The decision of faith to rebuild in the inner city, to become an urban-village church has led to radical change and the acceptance that growth means change and change again. What we are today is not what we will be tomorrow.

'Renewal' is a word which is being increasingly used. Within the church it points to that experience which catches again the immanent presence of the living Christ with power. Individuals and groups are seized again by the power of the Holy Spirit confidently renewed in purpose and effectiveness declaring God's love by being His people. Worship is revitalised, witness is powerful and service finds new opportunities and ministry belongs to the whole body of Christ not just to a specialised few. Receiving the power and renewal of the Holy Spirit is not an isolated, one time, all time, experience but rather it is that renewing which enables people to commit themselves daily more deeply to the Lord Jesus and daily take up the cross, and daily receive the vital experience of his presence. Renewal belongs to no one church or denomination or movement, to no one type of theology, no one age or time. But now at the Church of the Redeemer recognised there is a movement of the Holy Spirit for which we thank God, by which we are gratefully touched and in which we gladly participate.

'Renewal' is the word also used widely outside the church. Through urban renewal programmes and through many a voluntary organisation there is a desire and thrust to rehabilitate the urban city area. In Birmingham, as elsewhere, there is a commitment to improve both the physical fabric of the inner city as well as the community life of the area.

The Lord is bringing together these two aspects of renewal in a wonderful way. The Spirit is renewing us to rise to the new opportunities of mission and service He is opening up. Also renewal is coming to the neighbourhood of the church. The new Edgwood Court complex, the involvement of private companies and housing associations is ensuring the renewal of the fabric of the area. We trust that our new buildings will give a new community focus in our particular part of the inner city. Both aspects of renewal have inspired the renovation of three houses opposite the new building.

This brings us to the third and most important word from which we began 'presence'. My family and I moved into the area into a house renovated by church. Next door a young couple have bought, renovated and moved into their house; next door to them a similar process has taken place again by a church member; next door to them is the local Post Office above which two members of the church live in flats and in which members of the church have opened a community bookshop. Disciples of the Lord are moving into the inner city area to join those already living there. And there are others from other churches who feel the Lord is calling them to live in this area. But why? Because only where there is presence can there be witness. The power of corporate witness of Christians who live closely together is that the life of Christ is shared and flows outwards. As a minister in the middle of Leeds put it: "The witnesses are so few. The need for people who will make up this living presence in these areas identifying fully with the ethos and culture of the inner city".

First and foremost then in the radical change caused by renewal there is the necessity to build up the presence of the body of Christ by living presence of those who are already disciples. This does not mean that everyone in the church ought to move into the immediate area - the Lord is calling some in that way. The presence of the body of Christ is manifest in many other ways especially in the inner city to which people come for work, to shop, for commerce and from which they depart. There is a resident population, there is a daytime population, there is a night-time population. Committed and anointed service to these different groups constitute presence. There is no blueprint for renewal in the individual, in the local church, nor in the neighbourhood. What is called for is total commitment of the whole of life. This is the call of the Spirit.

So we begin by growing into a vision presented by the Lord through the prayerful courage of the church who decided to follow Him whatever that meant. It has meant change and so growth; learning new ways of structuring, equipping, encouraging; new ways of being the body of Christ. We shall be God's family, by the power of His Spirit, before we shall act.

As as we worship, as we share our lives together in loving commitment to one another, as we lose ourselves in anointed service in the neighbourhood, expressing and using the gifts the Spirit has given, ready always to give account of the faith and hope within us, so shall we be the presence of the body of Christ. Where Christ is, there is change and renewal.

The 'change' turns out to be sacrificial and continual, the 'renewal' is radical - individual and corporate, the 'presence' means long-term identification with the neighbourhood.

Calvary Baptist Church, Cardiff

"TWO INTO ONE CAN GROW"

The birth of Calvary Baptist Church in January 1972 came about by the uniting of two existing neighbouring churches, 'Hope' and 'Victoria', serving the adjoining districts of Canton and Riverside. Two features made Calvary's beginning unique:-

- (a) the two churches were both 'going' concerns prior to the merger - they joined not because they had to for survival but because they chose to believing it to be God's will for growth, expansion and more effective witness; and
- (b) both the former churches moved to and took the decision without full-time leadership. In the summer of 1972, Rev. David Barter was called to be the first minister of the new church.

This embracing of a new situation with the acceptance of adjustment and change, has paved the way for the steady growth of the church in the last eight years. True, growth has not been dramatic in terms of membership statistics as in some situations (they are 214 of us at present) but a regular stream of baptisms, greatly increased attendance at worship and midweek fellowship, the fact that half of Calvary's present members have joined since the merger, giving has quadrupled in the last six years and that the church has just appointed one of its members as full-time Pastoral worker, are sufficient to show that the Lord has built on the unique foundation laid in 1972.

If the history of the church has been a vital factor in Calvary's development, there have been others also, none of them radically new in the British scene but some less commonly found in Wales.

The inheritance of a strong young people's group, together with a growing number of students attending and an influx of young couples among us. While the presence of youth is a great advantage, there are also problems - half our members are under 35 but we are anxious that we do not become a 'young people's church'.

From early days, Calvary has made use of House Groups, a new experience still in the Welsh scene. Seven years ago there were only monthly and an alternative form in homes of our regular midweek meeting, with Bible study, discussion and prayer being the regular diet. In 1978 we decided to move the groups to once a fortnight, to appoint mature couples in the church as group leaders and to make it clear that it would be within the context of such groups that everyone's Christian discipleship, nurture, prayer and fellowship should be stimulated. The closer relationships developed have deepened our love for each other. The leaders are free to plan their own group programmes, and they meet together regularly to share experiences and problems and to ensure that the general thrust of the groups is kept together. We are now devising a new network on pastoral care throughout the church, based on the house group system.

We have learned a great deal about the stewardship of the Lord's money. Since 1972 our giving away each year has gone up from around £500. to nearly £6,000 last year. Proving the Lord's faithfulness in this practical way has enabled us to trust Him in less tangible areas of life too. At Calvary, we have sought to develop teams to share in the various ministries of the church. We have a Preaching Team of a dozen or so who meet regularly with the minister to plan the worship and teaching in the church, on Sundays and midweek. Though the minister does the bulk of this, there are now few Sundays when one or more of the team members are not sharing in worship in some way, whether leading or preaching. The team has training sessions on the principles of worship, sermon preparation,

leading into prayer, etc., in order to develop the gifts of our members. Most Sundays, some members of the team are out ministering in other churches in the area, so many of which are small and pastorless.

We have had a Pastoral Team of members with pastoral or caring gifts, who have been responsible for keeping in touch with members on their list, visiting when appropriate and getting alongside as a church friend. There have been difficulties as well as advantages with this scheme and we are hoping that the change to house group based care will give a more even and comprehensive approach to both members and other attenders.

We have developed a Music Group of singers and instrumentalists to lead our worship from time to time. There is much to develop here, but the wide range of ages involved in the group and the enthusiastic reaction of others to the group's contributions to worship give encouragement.

We also have a Drama Group who are exploring the use of mime and movement in our worship, from time to time, particularly in our quarterly Guest Service when our approach is less Traditional.

Our Community Needs Group meet to examine our church's relationship to the community in which we are set, and bring suggestions and recommendations to the church for action in response to local needs. The Sunday School, Covenanter and Bible Class leaders meet monthly to pray, train and prepare together for the teaching to be given in the next four weeks. These meetings are deepening the bonds between the teachers in all departments as well as equipping less experienced folk for more effective ministry.

These and other developments like the church Play group, Mums and Toddlers, Summer Adventure Bible Club, Church Family Holiday and Deacons and Wives' Retreats, along with existing organisations like YPF, Men's Group, Womens' Fellowship and Pensioners' Group, mean that our church has commitments across a broad spectrum of activities and there are inevitable needs for visitation, follow-up and counselling among our growing number of contacts. This led us last year to consider the seeking of a second full-time worker at Calvary to broaden the base of leadership. The presence of our Minister and a large Preaching Team led us to feel that a second ordained man was not what we needed and we sought other and complimentary gifts. We looked among our own members and were ultimately led to a young woman, Miss Tricia Wiltshire, who has now become our Pastoral Worker. She was formerly a Senior Social Worker and has been involved in many areas of our church life. Her new responsibilities are in the areas of Pastoral Care and Counselling, Children's Work, Administration and the development of Calvary's ministry to the community.

Last summer, we held a Bible Society church growth weekend at Calvary and the insights gained have helped us to set our priorities for the 1980's. We are determined to strength our prayer life, to follow up carefully the many visitors who worship with us and to gear ourselves effectively for outreach and evangelism, through the commencement of Evangelism Explosion later this year.

The church has learned to be open to God and to pray we will remain so. Many challenges lie before us and we feel we have much to learn in many areas, but we are also excited in our life together and confident in the Lord and in His Gospel.

. David Barter
Minister : Calvary, Cardiff.

BOOK REVIEWS

EVANGELISM - NOW AND THEN by Michael Green.

IVP. pb. £1.25

Michael Green is always good reading. His earlier book "Evangelism in the Early Church" was one of scholarly research. This book is much lighter and sets out the principles, motivation and methods of the early Christians in evangelism. Ministers will find it full of good sermon material and churches preparing for evangelism will find it an excellent basis for study by the deacons and by groups. It stimulates understanding, enthusiasm and a wealth of ideas.

Lewis Misselbrook.

THE NEXT STEP by R.J.Young (Baptist Union of Wales)

This is a brief 16 page pamphlet issued by the Welsh English Union to help the churches to consider the next step they should be taking in responding to the call to evangelism. A rather more sombre picture of the state of the Union is given - the vast majority of churches have small and ageing congregations; of the 213 ministers on the Accredited List, 104 are over 64 years of age, and within the next ten years another 41 will reach retirement age; in each of the last ten years the number of baptisms per year has been lower than the number of churches.

The intention of the author is that this booklet should be considered by every church member and then discussed at church meetings with a view to action. Thus its content tends to be light and popular, though this does not mean it evades the basic issues. Its brevity means that there is very little exposition, but rather a pin-pointing of the areas which church members should be considering, eg. the need for motivation, and the means and methods to be used in evangelism. Suggestions are made for action at Union, church and personal levels.

But perhaps it is in the final section that the author reveals the basic problem, namely, that our churches will never be right unless there exist within them the will to evangelise, the willingness to face the personal cost involved, and a sense of urgency that we are on important business for Christ. The thing that really matters, then, is the next step after 'The Next Step'.

David Neil
Minister : Whitley Bay.

OPENING OUR DOORS TO GOD By Revd. Dr. B. R. White, Principal of Regent's Park College, Oxford. Is the text of an address given at the Mainstream Conference in January. It is now available in booklet form price 25p. (excl. P. & P.) from Revd. Peter Grange, address below.

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