

# 'And So It Was'

A History of

CLIFTON METHODIST CHURCH

1975 = 2000

All aspects of the Life of the Methodist Church at Clifton from 1975-2000 are contained in this short History. Joy and laughter, sorrow, pain and sadness. Achievement from disappointment and hard work. Frustration overcome by love and the love of God ever present.

We acknowledge that some parts of this pamphlet have already been printed previously in "Key to the Door" 1975. But we think it necessary to include in this edition in order to retain continuity.

We are grateful to Mrs Wendy Godfrey for reading our original copy and making valuable comments and suggestions.

Thanks also to Mrs Janet Carver for deciphering our handwriting in the typing of this work.

This booklet is not a work of scholarship. We feel that to cite its many sources would not be possible. But we thank members of St. Francis Church for their help and co-operation.

Audrey and Ken Harrison April 2005.

In a quote from "Key to the Door" - authors Audrey Harrison and Betty Newton - celebrating the first 21 years of the Methodist Church at Clifton - the final paragraph reads "In the year 1975 it is our intention to enter into a Shared Church Agreement with St. Francis Church. This will entail a church council jointly responsible for the pastoral care and worship of the "United Anglican Methodist Church of Clifton". From this will follow joint control of finance and upkeep and usage of buildings" In the words of the Declaration of Intent "To work together for the union of our two churches to be more effective in our Mission to Clifton, and to encourage all Christians in Clifton".

In 1975, before entering into a sharing agreement, commissions were appointed in order to report progress. At a joint stewardship supper, held at St. Francis' Church,

conveners to the commissions were appointed. Mr Eddie Barber was accepted as stewardship controller.

#### COMMISSION 'A'

Finance: Mr Fred Key  
Worship: Mr Douglas Jenkinson  
Evangelism: Mr Ken Harrison

#### COMMISSION 'B'

Property: Mrs Audrey Harrison  
Pastoral: Mr Eddie Barber  
Social Action: Mrs Mary Shepard

Until the Sharing Agreement had been legalised a Joint Church Council was put in place, and the minutes of both Church Councils read and accepted. At a Joint Church Council Meeting, Mrs Clare Booth, Mr and Mrs Harrison, Miss Aileen Glew and Mr John Fee represented the Methodist Church. From memory, the decision making process of both Councils differed. Whereas in some cases the Vicar had the final say. In the Methodist Church the Council, under the Chairmanship of the Minister, made the decision. This needed some adjustment and understanding for the representatives of both churches. However, through the year the Joint Church Council continued to meet for support and, encouragement, for it was indeed a new and exciting venture of Faith and Hope.

Here it must be remembered that much planning had taken place in both Churches to enable this stage to be reached. We were much encouraged by the work already undertaken. Activities still continued at Rivergreen Methodist Church. Although the morning service congregation was small the Junior Church and Boys' Brigade flourished, as did the Playgroup. The rooms of the Church were hired out to the Karate Club, Weight Watchers, Senior Citizens and others.

Some members of the church were anxious that the building looked cared for, clean and refurbished. Family morning services, planned by the Rev. Gordon Squires, were often informal and a delight, with the involvement of Minister, children and congregation.

In 1976 the delay in receiving the Sharing Agreement, which would make the decision legal, was causing some disquiet. Because of uncertainties on all sides a clause that the agreement could be rescinded by either side, with due notice, had been inserted. The document was duly received and signed by representatives from both congregations. It was felt that it should be more fully explained to the congregations, and to this end an inaugural service was planned for both congregations on November 1st. This service was well received and

enjoyed. However, some members from The Methodist Church appeared mortified at the thought of lighting the candles, at their own services. "Going to Rome" was their expression! And the bells? Should they be rung before Methodist Services? In fact, they were rung by Mr Ken Harrison, and the candles were lit by a Steward. In spite of the intention to unite the finances, the Finance Commission decided at this stage that the Methodist Church would pay rent, a wise decision as the future could not be foreseen. What, we wonder, would have been the consequences if joint financing had taken place?

Although many meetings and discussions took place, we continued to enjoy each other's fellowship. Together we went on a picnic to Barton in Fabis, being welcomed by the Vicar, but at the appropriate time the Methodists returned for their evening service at St. Francis. It must be said, though, that Methodists were welcome at Anglican Morning Eucharist and Anglicans at Methodist Evening Services. Parties and a gala were held at St. Francis on June 12th and again on August 28th, at Rivergreen Methodist Church. Mrs Vera Barnwell organised a sponsored walk in aid of church funds, as the Methodist Church still paid their assessment to the Circuit, and also paid other financial commitments.

At about this time efforts were made to unite the 28th Boys' Brigade at St. Francis with the 44th Company at Rivergreen. Unfortunately, no progress was made as there was resistance from both Boys' Brigade Companies. Alongside this some members of the congregations felt excluded from fellowship because information about events was not reaching them. The use of both notice boards for visiting lists and notices overcame this anxiety.

In September 1976 we said farewell to the Rev. Gordon Squires and family. He was to become Minister to a Church in Birmingham. In that month the Rev. Roger Moore became our Minister and we welcomed him in the friendly atmosphere of a party.

In October the decision was taken that the two Church Councils would continue to meet separately once a month and that the JCC (Joint Church Council) would also meet once a month. Obviously this caused concern amongst those attending these meetings, each church having other obligations, such as the DCC (District Council for the Anglicans) and Circuit Meetings for Methodists. A Minute on November 24th expresses frustration over the number of meetings per week. A restructuring of Committees took place.

We were saddened that the Rivergreen Playgroup, after so much effort, closed for lack of numbers. But the Junior Youth Club, led by Mrs Jennie Burton and Miss Julie Riley, was still in being at Rivergreen Methodist Church.

At St. Francis Church, under the leadership of the Vicar the Rev. Frank Crowther, the possibility arose for the members of the Community of Hope to have the

tenancy of 108, Southchurch Drive, and to make it their centre. The Rev. Frank Crowther came from an ecumenical church at Rise Park, and was the prime mover in this outreach. The hope being that 108, Southchurch Drive would be the centre for the group, then house groups would meet at various parts of the Estate for prayer and bible study, and an Advice Centre at St. Francis to be manned by those members. It was registered as a charity and grants were received to buy the house. Mr and Mrs Barber and Mr and Mrs Bull had hoped to become part of this project, which was not associated with the church as such. However it failed through lack of support.

On June 14th 1977 an application was considered for a license to allow Methodist Ministers to officiate at Wedding Ceremonies in St. Francis Church. This was granted in September the same year.

Although we had been worshipping together at St. Francis and enjoying the fellowship for some time, there were still members who felt disturbed. The Rev. Roger Moore asked that "we go out of our way to remember in prayer, and care for both congregations, so that the ultimate aim would be not to leave casualties". It would seem he had sensed some concern, which had not been generally realised. Maybe St. Francis had a similar concern, for at their Annual District Meeting the proposal read "That the people of Clifton St. Francis extend to Clifton Methodists a sincere invitation to share fully in an equal partnership and management of St. Francis Church" From these assurances by both Churches we continued to fulfill the commitment. The property accounts show that six weeks rent, £24.00, was paid by the Treasurer Mr Ken Harrison.

The Society Minutes at this time emphasise that we should enjoy ourselves, as too much work and discussion was taking place. And yet at the Methodist Anniversary picnic and ramble on June 19th it was suggested we take with us the elderly and infirm residents of the Spinney Care Home, along with the staff. (Not sure whether we did).

The Sunday School at Rivergreen were experiencing a shortage of teachers, nevertheless they had a successful outing to Barton. In order to support the Sunday School, Mothering Sunday was incorporated into their worship.

Around this time a Baptismal Policy was put in place by most Churches on the Estate, which stated "Children not to be Baptised if parents did not attend Church, but parents could attend a course of instructions". In later years this policy was abandoned.

In March 1977 Rev. Frank Crowther left St. Francis to become priest in charge of St. Thomas Church, Kirkby in Ashfield. To help in this situation Rev. Roger Moore offered to preside on alternate Wednesdays at St. Francis Communion

Service, and to circulate "Contact" a Methodist paper in the "Franciscan" Anglican news sheet. These offers were received with gratitude.

Both Methodist and Anglicans became under the care of pastoral visitors.

In October 1977 Rev. Allen Wakefield was appointed vicar of St. Francis Church. Mrs Audrey Harrison was appointed representative to the P.C.C. Steering Committee.

The elderly and infirm from both churches were not neglected, and produce from the Harvest Festival (tins of fruit and meat) was distributed in Christmas Parcels.

1977 finished on a welcome note. Mr and Mrs Danny and Maureen McGreish were accepted as members from the Grantham Circuit.

In 1978 Rev. Roger Moore became responsible for Ruddington, Bradmore, Gotham and Clifton Churches. From the Peptecostal Church we received a request to use our premises. Rev. Moore said it needed careful thought, and the Trustees were to be supportive if it went ahead.

We were delighted to accept an invitation from the Rev. Gordon Squires to attend the 100th Anniversary of his Birmingham Church. We had a great time of singing and praise. Later, with joy, we welcomed a group of members from Birmingham to attend our Anniversary Service.

A momentous change was now to come. At a meeting of Clergy, Wardens, Treasurers and Stewards it was decided that all worship was, in future, to be held at St. Francis Church. And so it was.

In spite of meetings being held very frequently, we still found the energy and time to enjoy ourselves and have social activities. We embarked on an "All Fools" social, "Social Madness", and a Spring Fever Concert in support of Christian Aid. We also had an outing to Newstead Abbey. Amidst this jollification the Church wall at Rivergreen was repeatedly vandalised, so we took it down ourselves, brick by brick, in barrow loads. Audrey Harrison sold the bricks for 20p each, advertising them through Radio Nottingham, and raised a considerable amount of money.

In November the Manse Fellowship was formed and the Clifton Council of Churches inaugural meeting was held at Blessed Robert Widmerpool School. Mrs Vera Barnwell became secretary to the Clifton Council of Churches. From this meeting the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity was begun.

We were pleased to be able to offer an interest free loan to St. Francis Church for their Boiler Appeal Fund, which was gratefully accepted.

Problems were now beginning to surface. An agreed proposal: "that worship be held at St. Francis Church, and all Youth Activities be held at the Methodist Church", sensible though it seemed, could never be implemented because neither Youth Groups nor Uniformed Organisations wished to change their premises. The proposal asserted that no organisation was to be moved against their will". So that was that. We held an outing and party in Alvaston Castle grounds - a relief from tension.

On August 19th 1979 the Rev. Roger Moore preached his last service at Clifton, and at the social gathering Mrs. Peggy Footitt, Mary and Arthur Fearn from St. Francis Church, and others joined us to thank him and wish him well.

For a short period we received pastoral oversight from the Rev. Fraser Smith, Minister at Bridgeway Hall Church, but this did not long continue as Conference moved a minister from the Circuit Mission Outreach.

Mr Eddie Barber and Mr Douglas Jenkinson were the Stewards at this time, and Mr Barber outlined the problems which arose over not having a resident minister. The responsibility of Stewards for every aspect of church life was particularly onerous in this unique period, which required their presence and understanding at all times. Mrs Audrey Harrison was approached and accepted the position of third Steward. We were glad to receive the assurance from the Rev. Vernon Hamer, Superintendent Minister: "that he would give us as much aid as possible.

Although no services were being held in the Methodist Church, Manchester Property Committee ruled that our premises could not be let. Finance was still needed and after a Saturday Evening Social a "Buy a Brick" scheme, and a "Talent" scheme were launched. Not many came to the social, but the spirit was good. However, we held a gift day raising £207.00, and fellowships were held in people's homes.

The year 1979 closed still without a Minister in residence and effects from this were being felt in many ways. The Mums and Toddlers Group closed, having made a good start. The Youth Club closed.

The 44th Clifton Brownies, meeting in the Methodist Church, returned to St. Francis. The Sunday School was geared to Youth Organisations, so when parades took place at St. Francis there was no Sunday School. The teachers having prepared on-going work felt justifiably frustrated. You can see the problems facing the Stewards.

However, all was not doom and gloom. Paul Carver and Julie Riley met to consider plans for J.M.A. Mission work. Mrs Maisie Snell and Mrs Barbara Archer were representatives at a Local Preachers' Meeting for a special musical service. Both were very gifted. Mrs Dorothy Till was appointed Communion Steward.

Approval was given for the Girls Brigade to be run by Mrs Nettleship. The first edition of the News Letter by Audrey Harrison and typed by Miss Aileen Glew went to press, and in 1980 we looked forward to having a Minister.

The February 1980 Church Minute stated "that a Minister for Clifton was of paramount importance". With regard to worship "more variety" was suggested. Youth Organisations and the House Fellowship might take part. There could be a choir and organ recital and an Industrial Sunday or an Industrial Harvest. The Industrial Harvest did take place, when members brought the tools of their trade.

On April 23rd we were glad to receive into the Manse Mr Cyril Copley and his wife Gillian, both local preachers. Mr Copley, a part-time pastor, had candidated for the Ministry, but had not been accepted. He was a very kindly and caring man, taking an interest in members' well-being, concern for them, enquiring after their job of work. An excellent pastor. He was welcomed by the Rev Vernon Hamer at the Harvest Supper. The Rev Vernon Hamer retained oversight of the Church, and at the Church Council, members were asked to consider whether they would be better by being in the Mission Circuit? The answer was a resounding "NO we did not want to be yoked to Bridgeway Hall, and preferred to stay in the Nottingham South Circuit!" And so the future of the Clifton Methodist Church was considered. Several suggestions were put forward:-

There was a certain feeling of empathy with Musters Road Church, West Bridgford whose Minister was the Rev. Douglas Gowman.

That we ask Mr and Mrs Copley to stay another year.

That a Supernumerary Minister could be appointed.

At the end of 1980 there was still no Minister appointed to Clifton Church.

From St. Francis Church the Rev. Alan Wakefield moved to Bilborough, and the Rev. Frank Baldwick was licensed in his place. At some time during that year St. Francis' members said they regretted that Methodist members did not take part in their house groups.

Over the past six years we had surmounted many difficulties with a great deal of enthusiasm, and hard work, but we began to wonder if this was the beginning of a cooling off period.

In June 1981 came news of an appointment of the Rev. Robert Stone. A widower and Supernumerary, on a part time basis, for a minimum of three years. In October Mr Cyril Copley took his final service, and we said goodbye to him and his wife Gillian. The same month a young man from Carlton, John Davis and his wife felt a calling to serve at Clifton. He felt Clifton needed help. He came to live at Clifton,

and became a member of the Methodist Church, leading a Sunday Evening Fellowship of Boys and Girls. Rev. Robert Stone hoped he would become his pastoral assistant, but it was not to be. John later became the Pastor of the Baptist Church at Clifton and eventually moved on. Rev. Robert Stone came to live at the Manse, continuing his Ministry and became a much loved friend, a real traditional Methodist. One of his first moves was to form a Ladies Fellowship (traditional for Methodism!). His Ministry the beginning of our leaving St.Francis and eventual return to Rivergreen.

## [Chapter 2](#)

In 1982, under the leadership of and guidance of Robert a series of Lent Fellowships took place. From this one or two thoughts, considerations and facts emerged clearly.

### What was needed?

1. A well supported and planned family service.
2. Building up of our Methodist Society.
3. An Anniversary Service in June, with Morning Service at Rivergreen and Evening Service at St.Francis conducted by Rev. Robert Stone and Rev. Frank Baldwick.
4. A jollification and Barbecue at the Manse.
5. A Clifton Festival Service to be held in Rivergreen grounds.

In July 1982 came a defining moment. Robert thought our joint potential with St.Francis Church had not come to fruition. He emphasised that we were a Methodist Church, in a Methodist Circuit. It was proposed and agreed that we should hold our Family Service at Rivergreen, and regularly each month after that. This would be the only service of the day. In the light of this, Robert suggested that the Christmas Service should be held at Rivergreen, but it was felt that arrangements already made must stay for the year.

In 1982 new discussion had taken place Nationwide between Anglicans and Methodists which produced ten propositions, but these discussions broke down in 1983. However, the breakdown of these discussions was not the reason for our decision to return to our Methodist premises. It was felt by all that the time had come for this move.

In October Robert invited Mr Bob Smart, Regional Director of NCH (National Children's Homes), to make a permanent office in the Church for work in the Midland region. Everyone agreed. And it helped financially. It was staffed by Netta, a full time worker, who became a friend of all. Mrs Clare Booth worked

with the National Children's Homes distributing parcels to needy people at Christmas.

Again we finished the year on a welcome note. Mr Brian and Mrs Janet Carver became members of the Methodist Church at Clifton.

In 1983 with the love, understanding and affection from the members of St. Francis Church, Methodists made plans to return to their church at Rivergreen. Mrs Eileen Price, of the Anglican Church, said it had been a great learning curve for both communities. We realised that there was not deep commitment to make the two churches into one, but there is still a strong fellowship.

Work took place in August at Rivergreen for our return to the premises. It was a case of all hands helping. Our last Evening Service was held in St. Francis on October 9th, and the last payment for rental completed on October 15th 1983. The first evening service took place at Rivergreen in that month. The Chairman of the District, the Rev. Brian Greet, came to support us. In some ways we were glad to be back. We had learned a great deal, and had come to understand and appreciate Anglican traditions, and also come to recognise the importance of Liturgy; although different from our own form of worship, the Liturgy was for us, a blessing. We invited St. Francis members to our Anniversary Service in June 1984, and welcomed them to our Harvest Supper. We attended a joint service of Lessons and Carols at St. Francis, showing continued friendship and regard.

In 1984 Robert proposed that a traditional Church to seat 200 people be built facing Southchurch Drive at a cost of £130,000, later to rise to £170,000. A great deal of discussion and objections took place between Robert, the Stewards, the Treasurer and Manchester. Resignations were threatened by the Stewards, the Treasurer and members of the Property Committee. All were adamant that this was neither a viable nor feasible project. Unfortunately, costly plans had already been drawn up. A Church Council Minute reads "The new building was not to be further discussed" .

Because John Davis had felt unable to be Robert's pastoral assistant, Robert, with the agreement of the Church Council, suggested that Paul Carver attend Cliff College for one year, in the belief that he would further support the work needing to be done at Rivergreen. Paul was an, excellent choice, and his commitment over the years has proved so. Money was raised to subsidise and support him.

The Methodist premises had been used by only the Boys Brigade for around ten years, and although Mr Frank Thompson, as Property Steward with others, had tried to keep the building cared for, it sadly needed attention in many ways. By 1986 the Toilets and side rooms needed painting, so scaffolding from St Francis was brought by Eddie Barber, Ken and Audrey Harrison and Frank Thompson, to be erected in the church in order to paint the walls. (How did we do it?). The

door from the outside into the kitchen was removed, and a wall built in its place. The church was enlarged by moving large cupboards and placing on the stage. (This was done on the authority of Robert Stone, and without the knowledge of the property Committee) but, with hindsight, was a good move. The brown chairs, although old, were dyed red in order to brighten up the premises. At the end of the year 1986 the church was in a satisfactory condition and we could now worship in pleasant surroundings.

Whilst work was taking place on the property, and members were becoming adjusted to the situation, our spiritual life continued to develop. At the A.G.M. Eddie Barber was congratulated on becoming a Circuit Steward, and thanked for his faithful Stewardship to the Church. Audrey Harrison became Senior Steward and hoped to fulfil the post just as faithfully.

The Luncheon Club thrived under the leadership of Mrs Clare Booth and Mr Albert Frost.

During Robert's stay Dorothy and Len Till supported and helped him in many ways. Bible Study at the Manse Fellowship had much to offer. Robert said that he was sorry he could not do everything, but was willing to stay on for a further year.

A letter to Mary Fearn of St. Francis Church giving notice to terminate the Sharing Agreement was sent. She acknowledged it and hoped for continuing friendship.

The year ended with Carol singing at the "Top Shop" with others on the Estate.

During the following year, 1986, committees reported back to the Church Council. The Pastoral Committee was asked to enlarge its scope, and to discuss times of the Covenant Service. The Bible Study Group talked about lack of support and the Family Committee organised meetings entitled "What on earth is the Church for?" and also discussed the possibility of a Morning as well as an Evening Service.

Again the Church premises came under scrutiny, because the grounds were overgrown, people took a short cut across them. It was proposed by the Property Committee that a fence be erected round the edge of the grounds. Robert commented "There will be no respect for our Church if we don't have a fence". Much discussion took place "it tells the outside world they are not welcome" was one of the comments, but with the agreement of Nottingham Environmental Department the palisade fence went up at a cost of £3,400. It caused a furore in the "Evening Post". Questions were asked. Why should the Methodist Church be allowed a fence when others are not? The City Council said it was to be taken down, but having received permission from the Environmental department by letter which Audrey Harrison had kept, it stayed up - and how thankful we have been!

In April 1986 Mrs Betty Newton sadly died. She was co-author to "Key to the Door" and a loyal member.

### [Chapter 3](#)

As a new Church was not further to be discussed our thoughts turned to an extension to be used as a Vestry, as our original Vestry was being used by the NCH.

We had £25,000 in the Building Fund from the sale of land to the Doctors' Practice adjoining our premises, which would enable them to build a Medical Centre. It should have been £33,000, but because Nottingham City Council sold the land to the Church at a reduced price, it was agreed that if the Church sell any of that land, then the Council would claim a percentage of the proceeds. Which it did.

Mr Allen Joyce, Architect was asked to prepare a plan and Hoftons, the Builders won the Contract to build at a cost of £34,000. Grants were received from Manchester, the Circuit and many local firms.

Robert did not see the completion of the building as he retired in August 1987. It was with Robert that we returned to our Methodist premises and Rivergreen. He was a Minister of the "Old School," he loved us and cared for all. Each Monday morning he phoned Ken Harrison to ask how much collection was received on the Sunday and who was missing from the congregation. At marriage ceremonies he instructed one and all that the new curtains had been especially acquired for them and that "his Steward" had been working for them all morning so asked if they would show their appreciation by contributing to the expenses. £20-£30 was often raised by that eloquent appeal!

We said our Goodbyes in August, and often visited him at his bungalow in Edwalton.

### [Chapter 4](#)

In September 1987 we welcomed our first probationer Minister, Rev. Andrew Howarth, his wife Barbara and family into the Manse. This was his first Church. He was a young man with qualities of sympathy and understanding, and his interest lay in drama, which was much appreciated in many ways.

He had much to learn and to offer and we supported him in every way, enjoying the freshness of his approach.

The building begun in 1987 was finished in 1988 complete with cross etched into a small circular window. This building became our Chapel. On March 2nd the Chapel was ceremoniously opened and blessed with praise and thanksgiving. Those present were the Chairman of the District, Rev. Brian Greet, Rev. Robert Stone, who had returned from retirement to be present on this occasion, our Minister the Rev. Andrew Howarth, representatives from the Circuit, Hofton the Builders and Mr Allen Joyce the Architect. It was a happy and joyous celebration as we entered for our first service.

In this year 1988 Derek, husband of Clare Booth died after a long illness. He had been a Sunday School Teacher and Local Preacher. He was sadly missed. Later in the year Mr Harry Newton donated the table in the Chapel in memory of his wife Betty, and Clare donated the chair alongside in memory of Derek. For these gifts we were grateful as they completed the furnishing of the Chapel.

Andrew, having been Minister for six months, outlined a new format, which had been suggested by the Worship Committee. As from March 1988 it was as follows:-

- 10.30 Opening Service:
- 10.45 Into Groups: Discussion.
- 11.25 Summarising of Groups: Refreshments.
- 11.30 Final act of Worship.

The Sunday Evening Service was to remain unaltered. In Andrew's Report of April 11th, he was pleased that this style of worship was proving helpful. Andrew had a vision for Clifton becoming a real family Church with room for everyone, and all playing a part for the work of the Kingdom of God.

Rev. Andrew Howarth's Ordination Service took place at Peterborough on June 25th 1989. As tickets were available many went to celebrate this important occasion. With Andrew's ordination came also a fresh approach to Church life. The Church Council gave permission for those interested to attend their meetings. People on the fringe of the Church were visited by Mrs Ivy Barber, and training for their membership took place.

Reports to the A.G.M. were to be published, rather than read out. Mission and outreach was to be taken more seriously. It was thought Students could help, and leaflets through letterboxes could also help.

The N.C.H. was still working on the premises. Their financial help was needed as much work was being undertaken in the building. Toilets for the disabled were needed. Mr Allan Clark, Architect was contacted to advise us. He commissioned Mr Steve Williamson to draw up plans. Grants were obtained from Mr Don Greenwood, the City Council, Age Concern, the Circuit and shops on the Estate. A

ramp outside was needed. All this was proposed and completed before legislation made it compulsory, and it was all very costly!

We were very pleased to welcome the Rev. Clifford Bell to our Anniversary Service. He was one of our first Ministers and undertook much work, ably helped by Gladys his wife.

The following year we were delighted that the Rev. Peter Barber officiated at our Church Anniversary. Peter, who came up from the Sunday School, is the son of Mr Eddie and Mrs Ivy Barber. It was a pleasure to have him with us.

It is to be wondered why, in December of all months we agreed on a Communion Service at 9.30 am. We were still debating whether Morning Worship should be in the Chapel or Church. The May 1990 Minute reads "Doom, gloom and despondency".

The Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade were asked to attend church services more often, as this was part of their membership commitment. The B.B. Headquarters ruled that the Boys Brigade and Girls Brigade were not able to be united. The 11th Company of Nottingham Girls Brigade was disbanded and the girls became part of Boys Brigade.

A further report from the Worship Committee suggested "Senior members could come earlier to sit with the children and help them to sit still and keep quiet". (Who was to keep who quiet?).

Yet all was not "doom and gloom". We had a musical evening with Bob Ilett, Maisie Snell, Aileen Glew and Barbara Archer. The Luncheon Club had an outing to Skegness. A Tramps Ball was a huge success, as was a very enjoyable Sequence Dance Evening. Much work was done by the Ways and Means Committee promoting these activities for our pleasure, and raising much needed funds.

The B.B. had acquired a minibus which was parked in the grounds. Much discussion took place as regards its use. Someone suggested that it could be hired out! However, Mr Frank Thompson was to air his views. Frank was the Boys Brigade Captain, a forthright man. It was sold.

Around this time preparations were being made for an Easter Mission in 1991. Three or four students from Hartley College were to come and stay for a time during Easter. Hospitality was required, and members were asked to welcome them into their homes. A budget of £250 was needed and a grant of £10.00 for each student was made. Mr Eddie Barber was to oversee the campaign. Students were to involve themselves in the ongoing work of the church, the Playgroup, a Holiday Club for 90 Children, Mothers and Toddlers, Maundy Thursday Eucharist at St.

Francis Church finally Easter Sunday celebrations. It was reported afterwards that this mission had been a huge success.

Over many years members had become a close knit fellowship sharing together the life of the Church, so it became natural that not only did we share our faith, but enjoyed each other's company. And so to Alvaston Park we went for a picnic, leaving at 12 a.m. after Morning Service and returning for the Evening Service. Quite a day!

There is more to tell than can be written, but in the five years of Andrew's Ministry with us we learned a great deal and were blessed by his presence and his family. In September 1992 we held a party to say our "Good byes" as he left to continue his Ministry at Guiseley, Yorkshire. We still remember him and his family.

Into the life of the church came probationer Rev. Phil Summers, his wife Jo and Eleanor their daughter. The Church membership was 65. We were now concerned by loss of revenue from the National Children's Home, having closed their offices due to re-organisation. In 1992 the Methodist Conference voted to improve radically Ministerial stipends, the consequence being that for the first time in many years our weekly giving did not cover our quarterly assessment. An appeal to members by letter suggesting an increase in their weekly offering did not have the desired effect! An impromptu conversation with one of the doctors practicing next door led to a discussion with Audrey and Ken Harrison, Eddie Barber and Frank Thompson as to the possibility of their renting two rooms in the church. The Church Council agreed and the old NCH room became a Baby Clinic, and the store room a Psychiatry Consultancy, after various alterations to make it suitable. This restored our financial position, and until this moment still does! Later the Consultancy had to close.

In this atmosphere of change Phil, a young probationer, suggested a worship consultation be resurrected with music to play a large part. "We need to look at our Style of Worship, and our historical background of Methodism. Morning Communion would be appreciated and perhaps Vespers?" Phil also suggested a conversation between the two age groups - young and old to further relationships. He suggested a plan for outreach, perhaps involving students from Trent University, with a Musical Evening as part of the witness.

Maisie Snell our organist would have played a large part in this, but was being cared for in Richmand House, West Bridgford, having been unwell for some time. She was a personal friend of Eddie and Ivy Barber, and we kept in close contact with her. Maisie had recently received a certificate for 50 years as an organist in the Methodist Church.

It was with sadness that we received news of Mr Frank Thompson's sudden death. We held a minute's silence at the AGM, remembering him with great affection. He

was one of the church's first members. Frank had captained the Boys Brigade and held many offices in the Church. He was also a local Magistrate.

Around this time the ordination of the Rev. Phil Summers took place. We received 25 tickets and invited members of Keyworth Church to join us at that happy time.

Although Phil previously suggested a musical evening, the problem arose as to who was to play the old pedal organ, which came originally from Wilford Road Church. With Maisie unable to play and neither Barbara Archer nor Aileen Glew able to play the organ, we decided to sell it, and buy a piano. Mrs Kath Simms let us buy a piano she no longer needed. A collector bought the organ for his private collection, and although sorry to see it go, we were pleased it had a "good home".

The grounds around the church, being landscaped to include a patio, had been looked after for many years by Mr Brian Monks, who provided many trees and shrubs. Before he and his wife moved to Wollaton he helped plant a tree in memory of Douglas Jenkinson and one in memory of Frank Thompson. Brian and Maureen contributed greatly to the work of the Church. Maureen had been a Church Steward and Brian supported in many ways.

The question once again arose:

Are we doing all we can?

Can we do more as a Family Church to make others a part of this family and feel welcome?

Our answer was:-

We are offering a service to the Community and people feel connected to the Church through its activities.

All activities and people are held in prayer, by the small prayer group led by Vera Barnwell, for which we were, and still are, thankful.

In 1995 Phil encouraged the Youth Fellowship to meet in the Manse to enable them to become part of the life of the Church, to this end plans were made for a week-end away. Apparently we needed to "build up ourselves". Paul Carver booked a week-end at the Briars Residential Centre, Crich, Derbys., at a cost of £43.00 each for full board. Fund raising started straight away with coffee mornings and Bring and Buy Sales. Phil, needing a theme, wrote to Rev. Trevor Lockwood and together they were to lead the week-end. The Rev. Trevor Lockwood was concerned about Mission and Ministry on Urban Estates and his book "Church on the Housing Estate" was published by Home Mission in 1993.

The week-end was an excellent time of fellowship and witness. Barbara Archer said it had been the best thing she had known, although she was poorly at the time.

She died some time afterwards. In life Barbara showed a sense of humour, and great courage. She was a breath of fresh air and a lively personality. With her legacy we were able to buy a font, kneelers and hassocks in her memory. Maisie Snell, who had transferred to a Nursing Home in Ruddington, also died. We remember them with love and affection. Maisie left a legacy to the Church some of which was later used to finance the Wall hangings.

The inspiration for the beautiful hangings, covering the end wall of the Church, came from Jo Summers. She drew the pictures and from that came the pattern. With the tuition and guidance of Mrs Betty Ilett the ladies of the Church, in an atmosphere of fellowship, worked many hours at the various skills needed to complete six large wall hangings, stencils, embroidery and painting. Taking great care with the choice of colours and stitches. The result was a work of outstanding beauty and admired by all to this day.

Phil was a good Minister, outgoing, hardworking and with a dedication not all could match. The Youth Fellowship flourished under his guidance, and they still have contact with him. So time moved on and we held a party, gave our love and best wishes to them both, as Phil took up his Ministry at Wolverhampton.

## [Chapter 5](#)

The Rev. Nick Baker, his wife Petra and family arrived in September 1998. He started his Ministry by suggesting we should watch a video on "What is a Minister for?" He was our third probationer Minister and also became Chaplain at Nottingham Trent University. The video was "thought-provoking", it emphasised new thinking about Ministry, as compared with the traditional view. It suggested that Ministers' hours fall in line with more normal working hours, and they were not to be available at all times. The Minister's wife should not be expected to be his assistant, for she had her own life to live. To some extent we understood and sympathised with this. A leadership structure was to be put in place consisting of the Minister and Steward and one or two members from the Church Council. Thus enabling the work of the Church to be more effective.

Ken Harrison, having been Treasurer for 15 years handed over to Brian Jones and Linda Wright became Church Secretary. Sunday School teachers became troubled that they were unable to attend worship because of looking after the Creche. Parental assistance was considered, but not taken up. However Brian Jones and Christine Mason offered their help. During worship Sunday School, and young children were offered Communion. Although some members of the congregation felt happy about this, others were not so sure. Christine Mason was Nick's loyal Steward, and his support, and with her assistance a questionnaire was circulated on:-

1. How to improve our numbers (again)?
2. Who would like Bible Study?
3. Whether we felt comfortable, young and old together?

Only the few interested answered. With 54 on the membership roll it was a sad response. In the discussion that followed the questionnaire several points arose:-

1. Things provided were not well attended.
2. People hadn't time for things that needed doing.
3. Should some people "let go" to make room for others?
4. Should evening worship be discontinued?

Bible study did take place. Nick led the first one, but expected others to lead further studies, which proved too difficult. Nick decided to speak to us on his Chaplaincy at Nottingham Trent University and emphasised the problems of combining Ministerial work with Chaplaincy. It proved a difficult task for a probationer Minister.

In 1999 when Nick was ordained at Southport no-one from our Church was able to be present, but a service was held afterwards at Nottingham Trent University, and it was there that we celebrated his ordination.

## [Chapter 6](#)

2000, The Millennium! Our Methodist Society at Clifton was now 45 years old. It was in a temporary hut on December 14th 1955 that the Rev. James Jackson conducted a Dedication Service.

The Millennium was celebrated with all churches in Clifton walking in procession, and uniting at St. Francis Church for celebration and fireworks!

Rev. Nick Baker, a young probationer Minister, must have felt some difficulty in ministering to a church of mainly older people. His gifts of thought and perception lay with the younger people and he excelled in his work as Chaplain at Nottingham Trent University. We were pleased for him when he became Chaplain at Leeds University and offered him, his wife and family our love and good wishes.

The Circuit Meeting proposed that only one Minister should replace the two that were leaving, so Clifton Manse and people would be without a Minister.

We are thankful that in the year 2001 the Rev. Brian Spencer, Superintendent Minister, became (and still is) our Minister. He has the love and affection of all our members, as does his wife Fay.

Since 2001 Brian and the Circuit have been a great strength, and have supported us in all our work. We offer our thanks and appreciation to those who have given of their time and service for us.

We hope and pray that members and friends of Clifton Methodist Church continue in love and fellowship with each other.