

MEREDITH  
MEMORIES

20TH OCTOBER 2018

MEREDITH ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH  
COVENTRY



Sally Noon helping Nicole & Rhianne Light Party October 2009



Church banner representing each group's activities



John Nicklin and Sam Schoolar teaching stories & building skills!



Three little girls learning about string puppets in 2006



Emma & Maren making bubbles on Fun Day 2015



Judith & John Jones outside the church building in 1980s



girls of the Hosanna dance worship group performing in 2006



God's Squad Bikers address the Men's Breakfast in the church hall



Mike & Linda Asbery, out walking with Rose, Marinella, Liz & Jenni



Ellie, Angus, Anna & Emma lead worship at a family service 2016



Helen and Maurice praying for a Tracey Arnett at her baptism



Adam Burton, Daniel Griggs & a friend at Light Party October 2012

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# INTRODUCTION

Today members of **Meredith Road Baptist Church** are celebrating **fifty years** since the opening of the main church sanctuary in Meredith Road, Coventry on **19 October 1968**. This booklet is a collection of our memories from the past 50 years with our hopes for the future. We hope you enjoy it!

Special thanks go to our **Church Anniversary Committee**: Helen Wisdish, Martin and Gill Preston, Lynn Salt, Libby Cardew, and Howard Wisdish for all their work in organising this weekend and gathering the stories to share with you.

## Key dates

**c.1614-1626**

First Baptists to meet in Coventry under Rev Helwys

**25 August 1822**

General Baptists gather at Bell Court, Much Park St

**24 April 1825**

Opening of St Mary's Mission in Whitefriars Lane

**4 May 1869**

Opening of Gosford St Chapel

**26 August 1922**

New hall behind Gosford St opened

**25 October 1928**

City celebrates Tercentenary of Baptist cause

**20 October 1940**

Bomb damaged Gosford St Chapel, so for 3 Sundays we met together at St Michael's Baptist, Hay Lane

**14 November 1940**

St Michael's Baptist in Hay Lane destroyed, so joint congregation meets in rear hall at Gosford St Hall at Meredith Road opened

**14 January 1950**

**30 September 1954**

Gosford St. Michael officially separate geographically

**1 December 1956**

Garlick Room added behind Meredith Rd hall

**19 October 1968**

Family services begin in new Church sanctuary

## Pastors at Meredith Road

**1940-1955**

Rev Joseph Richards

**1955-1959**

Rev Elvet Bryn-Jones

**1960-1966**

Rev Richard Garrett

**1966-1972**

Rev David Beer

**1972-2009**

Rev Maurice Markham

**2009-2014**

Ian Burton

**1 October 2014**

Induction of Rev Mike Asbery

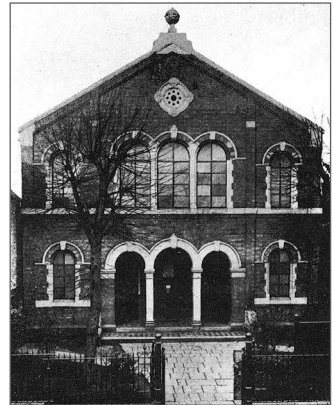


# OUR ORIGINS

## Reasons for leaving Gosford St. Michael Meredith Road & city archives

Before the second World War, the members of Gosford Street Baptist Chapel (which stood at the top of Gosford Street hill), wanted to do an outreach into Stoke, where a lot of houses were being built but there were no churches.

Then in 1940 a bomb was dropped down the side of the church building making it unusable. For three Sundays we were able to worship with St Michael's Baptist in Hay Lane, but then theirs was destroyed. So we all squeezed into the lower church hall for our church services, and we became known as 'Gosford Saint Michael'. The minister at the time was the pastor of St Michael's, the Rev Joseph Richards, who led us through the war period.



The front of Gosford St Baptist c1930s

Afterwards, the War Damage Commission offered churches and all buildings that were destroyed an amount of money to rebuild. But the church decided they would do what they had planned to do, and go out into the suburbs of the city. Sites were offered by Coventry City Council, and were surveyed by the members, and it was decided that Meredith Road would be the right place to go.

The St. Michael's congregation had a problem with their Quinton Park site, which delayed the building of their church, so to help Meredith Road get started, some of the money that they were allocated was given to us, so that we could start to build the hall. Quinton Park Baptist Church started around 1954. When we knew we were going to come into this area, the Sunday School got started in a classroom at Ravensdale Junior School, while the Boys Brigade Company met in their hall for their activities.

As you will appreciate, in 1950 the members were extremely excited about coming out to the new church hall, as we'd been struggling in a very small room

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with quite a lot of people for a long time and, although the hall was small by today's standards, it was really nice to go to.

The field on which this church stands now, was extremely rough and bumpy, so what we decided was to even it out and straighten it up. Harry Ferguson who wanted an excuse to test his agricultural implements, said, "We will do it for you free!"

They had a go, but they damaged their equipment, because what we didn't know was that there were air-raid shelters underneath which had all been filled in, so it was all concrete!

However we worked around that problem and we cleared the ground, and lots of people spent a lot of happy hours having garden parties and field days, and the young people were able to use it for activities.

The church grew, we had a very large youth group. Eventually the hall became too small, and the church began to raise funds and, with the help of a Baptist Union loan, in 1968 this building was opened.



## Vision for Meredith Road in 1950

Joyce Hammel

When the momentous decision was taken in the late 1940s by the members meeting at Gosford St Michael not to rebuild the two bomb-damaged churches in Coventry city centre, but to take them into the suburbs where the people were, it was George Smith who immediately started to look for a suitable site on the eastern side of the city.

I remember him talking enthusiastically about this vacant plot of land he had found on the corner of Meredith Road and Tennyson Road, which was surrounded by new housing and which he was convinced was where the church should be built. It is really because of his vision, enthusiasm and



The 1950s hall entrance on Meredith Road

practical guidance that we have the church today. When the style of building was being considered, we went to look at a church in Birmingham, between Sheldon and Yardley, which had just been built.

When the day of the opening arrived on 14th January 1950, there was a great sense of excitement and anticipation that the Lord was going to do great

things. The foundation work with the Sunday School at Ravensdale Road School was behind us and we must make the most of the opportunities ahead. My overriding memory of the ceremony itself is of Sir Cyril Black, dressed all in black, towering over Rev and Mrs Richards and everyone else, and especially over a little girl called Maureen from the Sunday School who, with the oldest church member, was the first to enter the building.



The playground at Ravensdale Road in the 1950s

### **The Choir**

In the 1950s the church choir built up quite a reputation under the able leadership of Albert Wadley, and was partly responsible for Meredith Road being known as a church where the singing was wholehearted. Each Easter friends joined the choir to sing either 'Olivet to Calvary' or 'The Crucifixion' on Maundy Thursday or Good Friday evening. The choir also joined with other church choirs in the city for Festivals of Praise at Queens Road Baptist, Warwick Road URC or the Methodist Central Hall.

The arrival of Rev Elvet Bryn-Jones in 1955 with his beautiful Welsh tenor voice enhanced our reputation. We were soon in demand for concerts at some of the outlying churches such as Hawkesbury and Lenton's Lane, and even as far afield as Stoney Stratford.

The programme would include such pieces as 'The Ladies of Leamington', 'The Old Woman', 'The Long Day Closes', and the highlight was usually 'Les Beaux Gendarmes' sung by our well-known trio: Elvet (tenor), Albert (baritone) and Bill Smith (bass).

### **New bike for the minister**

In 1965 the Sunday Evening Group (we never did settle on a more dynamic name) decided to hold a sponsored walk of 12 miles to raise money to buy a new bike for the minister, Rev Richard Garrett! With great secrecy as to what the money was

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for, the group set out from Fillongley on a trek previously mapped out by Ann and Phil Malin.

Some of the group found the last few miles really hard going, and at one stage we feared that Kate Banbury would have to be carried the last bit, but with lots of encouragement we all made it. The utter surprise on Mr Garrett's face when he was presented with his new bike made it all worthwhile.



## Planning & Raising the Funds

**Judith Jones**

I've spent a large percentage of my early life playing on the field where the new church would be built, playing and waiting for my parents, Ray and Irene Walters, while they were busy doing things. But it was great fun and you used to be able to climb behind the Garlick Room and have great fun behind there as well!

I have probably spent the whole of my childhood in fundraising activities for this building. The one I remember most clearly was that each child was given a card with 12 little pockets in it. I don't know where we had to get the pennies from, but somehow you had to collect 12 old pennies and put them into this strip, and then it made a whole shilling. (We needed 20 cards to make just a £1!)



So it felt as if the whole focus always was on building this sanctuary building. And one of the things I really do remember, and I think Mike and Edna Ball might have been around then, was when they put these orange-coloured girders up, you can imagine how stark that was, during the winter of 1967-68 and it was snowing. We came and stood under the girder outline with the snow on the ground and we were just so excited then that finally it was all happening.





# Building the New Church in 1968

## From church minutes & MRBC website

### The Planning Committee

The Rev Elvet Bryn-Jones was followed by the Rev Richard Garrett 1960-1966 during whose ministry the planning of the new Church building and Joseph Richards room began. The Planning Committee was set up in 1963, five years before the new building opened.

By 1964 a proposed budget had been set, with the aid of a blackboard. The estimated total expenditure was going to be £1,300 so they planned to raise £25 per week.

Orders of Service were sent out in January 1968 inviting other churches for the stone-laying ceremony. From 10th February 1968, paper 'books of bricks' were made available for sale to raise more funds. 252 books were printed, each with 50 'bricks' to be sold at 6d (half a shilling) per brick.



Mr George Smith, church treasurer, lays the foundation stone 1968 (Cov Evening Telegraph)

### Laying the foundations

The foundation stone to the new sanctuary was laid on 17th February 1968 by Mr George Smith the Treasurer at the time. On that occasion of the laying of the foundation stone for the 1968 building, this vision for the centre was proclaimed:

*A centre of love and Christian friendship,  
where everyone can have the opportunity  
to experience the greater life  
which God intends for every person.*

### Official church opening

At the Deacons' Meeting in May 1968, Mr Ray Walters reported that he expected the builders to hand over the keys on the 9th October.

It was agreed that Sir Cyril Black, MP for Wimbledon, would be invited to open the new building. Sir Cyril was a prominent Baptist leader and a committee member in the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association at the time.

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### **Future Anniversaries**

Mr Lillford proposed that the church's annual anniversary date be moved to the 19th October to continue to observe the opening day of the new church in future years. Mr Allen concurred that in future the third Sunday in October each year should be known as Church Anniversary Sunday. This tradition continued for several years. 50 years later we are observing it once again today.



Rev David Beer outside the new building 1968

### **Joseph Richards Room**

The Deacons' Meeting on 21st October 1968 was the first to be held in the Joseph Richards Room which had been included behind the new church sanctuary. This room was named on 24th October. Unfortunately the new plaque was not ready in time, so they used a printed card. (This is still displayed inside the room above the foundation stone moved from the Gosford St Chapel.)



### **Sunday School**

In 1968 the Family Church classes were changed to Beginners, Primary, Junior and Senior. Another change to Family Church was that it was moved from the afternoons to the mornings. Yet, because of lack of space, the crèche continued to be held at the home of Mrs Chapman. She was paid a small sum of money to cover her heating costs.

Family Worship services in the new church building led to a larger congregation and an increase in numbers attending Junior Church. What is now called the Rainbow Room was added soon afterwards in the 1970s, to accommodate these and other increasing activities of the church.

### **Many changes in 1972**

The Rev David Beer concluded five years of fruitful ministry in January 1972.

The Rev Maurice Markham, a graduate of Spurgeon's College, was inducted as Pastor on 9 September 1972, when we were celebrating the 150th year after the first gathering of the Much Park Street congregation in 1822 (from which grew the

St.Mary's Mission Chapel in Whitefriars Lane, who built the Gosford Street chapel in 1869).

From the church records from the period we spotted that in 1972 new blue chairs were purchased at a cost of just £4 each. These were still being used until quite recently!

### **Daughter churches planted**

The seventies and eighties were a period of numerical growth, with the church completely filled on a Sunday morning. A growing number of people were living in the nearby village of Binley Woods, which had no church of its own. We felt God giving us a vision for a Christian witness within the village. This led finally to the planting of a church jointly with St.Bartholomew's, the local Anglican parish, which launched in 1984.

At around this time another group of members, who lived in the Coundon area of the city, felt called by God to worship at Lawrence Saunders Road Baptist Church, which was at a low ebb. One of them was subsequently invited to become the lay pastor. That church has since grown considerably and they embarked on an ambitious building project a number of years ago.

### **The charismatic movement**

During the same period MRBC was greatly influenced by the rediscovery of the person and work of God's Holy Spirit, known as the 'Charismatic Movement'. In our growing openness to this experience in both our individual and corporate lives, the church embraced activities which are more familiar today, such as house groups, more leadership responsibilities delegated to the elders and deacons, a freer form of worship, and a healing ministry.

We found the need to increase our staff, and different members served in a part- or full-time capacity since 1983, culminating in the appointment of an Associate Pastor in 2004.

### **Raising up new leaders**

Ian Burton took over responsibility for services and outreach to the community, and we saw the church premises open up more and more for this purpose. The church has run a rolling schedule of Alpha Courses for 12 years, through which a significant number of people have come to faith in Jesus and been baptised.

The work among children and young people remained consistently strong during that whole time. This momentum has been sustained by the enthusiasm and energy of young people like Caroline Atkinson.

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The Rev Maurice Markham retired after 37 years of faithful service in July 2009. Ian Burton, who had joined Maurice as Associate Pastor in 2004, took over as our full-time Pastor. During Ian's time the emphasis was on using our buildings more effectively, and some in the congregation became involved in Mission Direct. In March 2014 Ian moved on to work for Christians Against Poverty.



Rev Mike Asbery and his wife Linda moved from Lancashire, and Mike was appointed as minister on 1st October that year. Together they have continued to encourage the church's passion and prayer for mission involvement (as well as football).



# OUR MEMORIES OF 50 YEARS

## A Brigade to Serve the Girls

**Pam Reeve**

The 'Girls' Life Brigade Company' was started at Meredith Road Baptist Church by Mrs Sturgess back in 1958, and it was affiliated as the '13th Coventry Company' in November of that year. This means, of course, that we will be celebrating our 60th Anniversary in November this year!

The Brigade was at that time for girls aged 6-18 years, and had three sections: Cadets, Juniors and Seniors. The age at which girls can now join has been lowered to four. In the 1960s and 70s there were about 100 girls in our Company, and in recent years we had the largest company in this District, with 50-60 girls in regular attendance.

Our Company has had four Captains (or Team Leaders as they are now called), Irene Walters, Jill Hollingworth, Pam Reeve and now Lesley Peckham, with Cecilia Nicklin as Acting Captain for a while. They have been supported by numerous Officers and helpers who have been invaluable in the smooth running of the Company – each Captain being very appreciative of their loyal support.

Each evening is based around a four-square programme, with Spiritual, Physical, Educational and Service activities. Over a period of about six weeks, the girls earn badges for each activity they have taken part in.

As leaders we aim to provide a safe, secure and loving environment for all the girls who attend week by week. In many cases this was, and still is, the only contact with a Christian organisation some girls have had, and it is 'church' to them, if they are unable to attend Sunday services.

Monthly church parades were held when the Company marched around the local streets before coming into church. In the 1980s we had a Company Band (bugles and drums), and the girls were trained by Carol Duffy, one of our young leaders at the time who later became an Officer, and the girls loved marching behind the Band on church parades.

Jill Hollingworth and Gina Archer introduced the Duke of Edinburgh Scheme to our older girls, with some help from their husbands for the expedition part of

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each Award. This scheme was run for several years, and many girls obtained their Bronze and Silver Awards.

Three girls attained their Gold Award: Suzanne Austin, Carol Duffy and Norma Willis. Accompanied by Jill as Captain and one parent each, they went to Buckingham Palace to receive them.

Clare Brown, another of the Senior girls, was nominated for an Endeavour Award for looking after her disabled parents. She was presented with this national trophy at the Annual GB Rally held at the Royal Albert Hall.

Each year we hold an Awards Evening at Meredith Road, when the girls are presented with the badges they have earned during the year. Trophies are presented to each GB section for highest attendance, and for church attendance. We have a special trophy called the 'Caring & Friendship Trophy' donated by the parents of Corinne Weaver, who died tragically at the age of 10.

When the GB Band was formed, for a number of years we hired the school hall at Richard Lee School for our Award Evenings, where the Band gave a display, along with an item of entertainment from each Section. When the Band was no longer permitted to march around the streets (for safety reasons), Awards Evenings were once again held on the church premises. This year, a new trophy was donated by the family of Norma Bowers (nee Willis) who died from cancer in December 2016.

Back in 1983 Coventry 13th Brigade won the Divisional Netball Competition which was held at Stoke Park School, and on two occasions our girls took part in the display at the Annual Girls' Brigade Rally at the Royal Albert Hall. Over the years they have also taken part in District and Divisional Parades, several GB Camps, day trips to the seaside, theme parks, Cadbury's World, Coronation Street, Snibston Discovery Park, as well as outings to local places like Coombe Abbey Park, and St. Nicholas Park.

To celebrate the Centenary of Girls' Brigade, we took part in a concert, and put on a performance of the Roger Jones' musical, *Jairus' Daughter*. Both events were staged at Bedworth Civic Hall. Several girls went right through the Company and became Officers: Gina Archer (nee Wilkinson), Carol Heath-Smith (nee Duffy), Norma Bowers (nee Willis), and Andrea Howe (nee Jackson).

There have been changes to modernise GB over the years. The leadership titles no longer use military terms like Captains, Lieutenants, Warrant Officers, Staff



Carol Duffy, Suzanne Austin, Norma Willis with their DOE awards

Sergeants, Sergeants, Corporals, and Lance Corporals. We now refer to Foundation, Intermediate, or Advanced Sections, to Young Leaders, Helpers and Team Leaders.

The uniforms have also changed from the braided hats, blazers and ties, to more informal and practical t-shirts for both girls and leaders alike. Come see us on parade at our Anniversary celebrations on 25th November! Although there may have been big changes through the years, the ultimate aim of the Girls' Brigade still remains the same:

*To help girls to become followers  
of the Lord Jesus Christ,  
and through self control, reverence,  
and a sense of responsibility,  
to find true enrichment of life;  
And to achieve our Motto:  
Seek, Serve and Follow Christ.*



## The Wedding of the Decade Maurice & Helen Markham

At the end of the service on Christmas morning in December 1980, the congregation were stunned by the announcement of our engagement.

Few people had any knowledge that we had become romantically involved. Although Helen had come to Coventry to manage the Christian Bookshop, she had moved down to London the previous May to work at the headquarters of OM's Send The Light publishers in Bromley.

In response to the engagement, one couple wrote us a poem which began,

*We've heard it from the horse's mouth;  
It's all been happening in the south ...*

We told the church we planned to marry at Meredith Road on 28th March 1981, and immediately people offered to help in any way they could. In conversation, church members would frequently refer to ours as 'The Wedding' – ignoring

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that of Prince Charles and Diana, which had been announced just shortly after our engagement!

The Wedding Day dawned bright and dry, but windy – the one aspect we had failed to pray about! Paul Bowes, who with Angela had been instrumental in our getting together, performed the ceremony, and two other friends also took part in the service. In the middle of the vows, Paul asked Maurice one



of the questions, but he did not get a response. For a moment the whole congregation held their breath, thinking, “Surely he’s not going to pull out now!”

The situation was resolved when Maurice whispered to Paul, “You’ve turned over two pages!” (Paul had omitted the legal part.) Paul’s immediate response was, “Well, it’s the first time for all of us, isn’t it?”

The whole congregation burst out laughing, as a result of which Helen and I also started to relax and enjoy the ceremony.

### **An American element**

The service included several American traditions. The five-year old flower girl came down the aisle first, followed in turn by each of the bridesmaids, with Helen and her father behind them.

After we were pronounced man and wife, we simultaneously lit one ‘Unity Candle’ from two smaller candles which represented our previous separate lives. We also had two receptions, firstly an American-style coffee and cake reception for everyone (which was an innovation in those days), and then a more formal reception in the church hall, where we managed to seat 120 guests.

We did not warn Helen’s father until he was safely in this country, that at an English wedding the bride’s father gives a speech. However he rose to the occasion without any difficulty. Altogether it was a memorable day, and one of great rejoicing.

In 2006 we celebrated our Silver Wedding Anniversary at the church with a Renewal of our wedding vows, and a buffet lunch for everyone. This time Maurice printed out the words for Paul onto one sheet so that he didn’t risk turning over two pages.





## Junior Church

### Martyn & Angela Thompson

We are delighted to be able to share with you some of the highlights of leading the work of the Junior Church at Meredith Road Baptist Church over the 36 years from 1980 until 2016, as part of your celebrations marking the 50 years since the opening of the worship sanctuary.

#### **God's Blessings**

It was a privilege to be involved in helping shape the spiritual lives of so many children and young people during these years and seeing many come to a saving faith in the Lord, many teenagers choosing to take the step of baptism and later on in adulthood marrying at church, having a family and bringing their children to Junior Church.



The Lord richly blessed the Junior Church over the years and we are so grateful to the church who consistently prayed for us and our army of volunteers. The children and young people's groups on Sundays and through the week drew many families to become part of the 'church family' over the decades. These groups included many children from unchurched backgrounds.

#### **Faithful servants**

The foundations of a strong Sunday School were in place when we arrived (Beginners, Primary, Juniors and Seniors groups) thanks to those who had the vision to build the church.

We were inspired by the many long-serving and faithful workers of the past, such as Joyce Hammel who led the Primary Department (later called 'Friends Of God') for 44 years, and like Cecilia and John Nicklin, who continue to serve faithfully.

In the 1980s as we reached out to the local community, with events such as 'March for Jesus' and 'Parade Sundays', we continued to grow as a church and attract families from further afield. Despite being blessed with lots of accommodation in the 1980s, the Junior Church grew to seven classes each Sunday morning (Scramblers, Climbers, Sparklers, Friends Of God, Y2J/Xstream, Conquerors, and TROGs) so we needed to expand, and this was made possible by the arrival of a Portacabin!

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### **Times of Change**

When we first joined Meredith Road, many children who were part of the Sunday School were also part of the uniformed organisations of the Girls' Brigade or Boys' Brigade and also part of the amazing Junior Choir (Supergang). A particular highlight was the children's involvement in Sunday morning worship service and in particular the monthly Family Services. It was a time of charismatic renewal, and the Lord led us into new and innovative ways of leading all-age worship.



MRBC Junior Church Youth 2005

During the last two decades of the 20th Century as rival activities competed for the children's attention every Sunday morning, the number and variety of week-day activity groups grew. Fun activities with a 'God slot' such as JAM for primary age and G-Force (now Bulletproof) for secondary aged children became firm favourites. The dance worship groups (Hosanna and Celebr8) were also popular.

Children who played instruments and loved singing have enjoyed being part of the Junior Worship Band which still regularly contributes to Family Services. Girls' Brigade meet each Wednesday evening and with Pam Reeve (and now Lesley Peckham) as their leader, girls of all ages enjoy an amazing variety of activities to gain badges. There is often a waiting list with more girls wanting to attend than they can accommodate.

### **Focus on the Truth of the Word of God**

Junior Church marked many activities in the Christian calendar and every year celebrated Christmas with amazing parties, Mothers' and Fathers' Days, and of course the most important festival of Easter. Teaching in each group was age specific but always was centred on the Bible, the infallible word of God. We regularly used Scripture Union resources that followed important biblical themes, and as a team we quickly learned to adapt the material to our situation to make it relevant to each group. In 1988 we started teaching children as young as 21 months about the good news of Jesus, and it was at this point that Angela wrote regularly for Scripture Union preparing some of the first material for this age group that was used throughout the UK and also abroad.

Our teaching programmes sought to cover the main themes of the Old and New Testament over a three-year period and were supported by Bible story books available for borrowing from the Junior Church library, still ably run by Sally Noon.

## **Amazing Celebrations**

The Sunday School Anniversary was replaced by Junior Church Sunday that was held in June each year and the children loved being part of leading this special Family Service. We had so much fun preparing sketches often telling a biblical story and songs and dances that could be shared with the congregation. Sometimes we used puppets to share a story and this made really good use of the lovely wooden pulpit at the front of the sanctuary. Everyone was invited afterwards to games and a picnic in Coombe Abbey Park.

A particular highlight of the Junior Church calendar was the annual Light Party, a Christian alternative to the dangers of Halloween. Started with the help of Ann Baker in the 1980s, the Light Party attracted over 100 children from the community of Junior School age and was an amazing time of fun as well as an opportunity to share the gospel.

One year word got around the local schools and we were inundated with over 350 children! The millennium Light Party was celebrated in spectacular fashion when we travelled back in time, 'meeting' people from the past whose lives had been changed by their encounter with the living Lord Jesus over the last 2,000 years. This memorable event involved travelling in a time machine that was created and operated by Martin Preston.

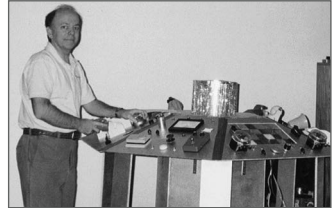
Special memories linger of the several occasions when the whole church family went away for a weekend house party at Clovelly Hall in Shropshire and had the most amazing time together. A large number of families joined together with thousands of other Christians at Spring Harvest in Skegness enjoying rich times of worship and being built up in their faith. We can all fondly remember leaders who have played a part in bring us to faith, and no doubt Chris Darlington and others who arranged Christian 'Wild and Wacky' adventure weekends away.

## **With God's help**

As God opened the doors for us to come to Coventry, we felt Him saying that he wanted us to devote our working lives to serving Him at Meredith Road Baptist Church. For us to be Junior Church Co-ordinators for 36 years was an extraordinary blessing and we counted it a privilege to serve God and his people in this way. Thank you for your many wonderful expressions of love and support over



(above) Light Party 2007 and (below) Martin Preston's 'Time Machine' 2000



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these years and we continue to pray for all the new things God is doing and has in store at Meredith Road.

*We will not keep them from our children;  
we will tell the next generation  
about the Lord's power and his great deeds  
and the wonderful things he has done.*

*Psalm 78 v4 (Good News Bible)*



# Welcoming the Older Generations

## Jean Schoolar

### **The monthly Silver Service**

Our 'Silver Service' started in 1999. Kathy Green and Tony Moore headed this up, with Frank and Doreen Hoskins and their team who provided a two-course meal. Around 40 people attended every second Wednesday of each month at 12:30pm. After a lovely meal we had entertainment which varied from musicians and singers, to quizzes and even informative or challenging speakers. We always had a pleasant afternoon followed by tea and biscuits.

This proved very successful and, as well as meeting a need for our church family, we reached out to our older neighbours. Our aim was to reach the community by having fun and building friendships. We had many happy years with this older age group, and shared a lot of good times, comforting each other on bad ones.

### **The Weekly CAMEO**

Fun and friendship is just as vital for the older generation, as it is for the younger ones. CAMEO ('Come And Meet Each Other') evolved out of the Silver Service around 2002. We continue to meet every Wednesday at 1:30pm.

Once a month we go to the local pub for our lunch, and we enjoy various outings and parties, and have a happy fellowship together.



# Church Administrator – learning new skills & welcoming visitors

**Pam Reeve**

As I look back over my time working in the Church Office it brings back lots of happy memories. For those of you who were not around at that time, the Office was constructed by taking part of the Rainbow Room (then called the New Room), moving doors and putting in the office door.

When the Church Office opened in 1987, I was offered two mornings a week and the other 3 days were staffed by Helen Markham, Sue Lucas and Mary Spencer also on a voluntary basis. After a while, I was employed for 5 mornings a week as the Church Administrator. This was an answer to prayer, as I needed a part-time job to support my family. Helen and Sue continued to help out if things got particularly busy, which I appreciated very much.

It was a time of developing new skills too, as when the Office opened I only had a typewriter (which I was used to). Then along came the computer age, which caused me quite a few headaches until I went on a course to learn the Basics of Computing and the rest was picked up by 'trial and error'! The photocopiers got more and more complicated, but thankfully, I gradually adjusted to these new pieces of equipment.

My duties including taking dictation from Maurice, typing letters, answering phone calls, compiling and typing up the weekly noticesheet including drawing up the prayer diary, taking minutes at meetings and typing them up, typing and photocopying the Footsteps magazine which was produced quarterly, preparing and issuing various rotas, cash counting and putting accounts on the computer, plus all the normal clerical jobs that were needed. I guess it is much the same for Vanessa Sprigg now but the equipment is more sophisticated and she has better computer skills.

I also produced Orders of Service for weddings and funerals when appropriate. At Dedication Services, I typed up an explanation of what a Dedication Service is, and this was given out to people who came from different denominations or did not normally attend church.

The office became the first 'port of call' to any visitors, tradesmen, etc (as it still is of course), and it was a joy for me to help wherever I was needed.

I remember when we had an overseas team from OM come to help at a 'Love Coventry' event and who were based at the church. It was a very busy time but it was good to meet Christians from other countries working together on outreach

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in Coventry. During my time in the office I saw workmen putting up the new roof on the sanctuary, the Portacabin being lowered over the hedge by a big crane and being installed as it is now, a new kitchen being fitted, building the disabled toilet where the coat racks used to be, double glazing being installed, fans fitted in the roof of the sanctuary, as well as the normal maintenance jobs which are needed on a more regular basis.

When it came time for me to retire in 2005 it was with a heavy heart, as I loved serving the Church in this capacity. I remember it as one of the happiest periods of my life. Thank you to all those who encouraged and supported me.



## Guardian Angels: St.Frank & St.Maurice Edna Ball

Life before we had fences and gates was very interesting, as Pam Reeve, the then Secretary, experienced a few times.

One summer afternoon she was alone in the building, as Playgroup only met in the mornings then and the rooms were rarely let out. Pam heard the patter of tiny feet overhead! As it happened the feet were not so tiny – a lad was on the roof. When challenged, he said he was ‘sunbathing’ and would only move when he felt like it!

When it was discovered that the windows at the back of the Garlick Room had been broken and used matches had been found on the floor inside, Frank and Doreen came to the rescue. Frank, and his builders’ mate wife, breeze blocked the windows up – so now it’s an impenetrable wall.

*Score: Meredith Rd Guardians 1 – Vandals 0*

There used to be large glass windows into the sanctuary above the main foyer. They became targets for local youths, and consequently got cracked and broken. At the end of one day of action, Frank and Mike boarded up these windows with plywood. Another good job done.

*Score: Meredith Rd Guardians 2 – Vandals 0*

Yes, it took the deacons a considerable time to be willing to spend thousands of pounds on fences and gates, but with them we did gain control of the church grounds, and could protect the premises and people more easily. Even the police and residents of Meredith Road thought that this was a very good move and had recommended it.

Mention should also be made of Maurice's sprinting, when he heard stones being thrown at the big side windows. He chased one boy all the way to his house, and reported to his parents the damage. The shocked parents made some recompense and apologised.

So you can see – life without fences indeed added certain problems to church life! And we are now very thankful for the security at MRBC.



## Young Leadership – a new broom

**Ian Burton**

Where to start? So many memories from our 10 years in leadership at Meredith Road Baptist Church (2004-2014)! Memories of family, fun, discipleship, teaching and even a few bumps in the road with our amazing church family.

As church is a group of people and not a building, we can't confine MRBC to the one small plot of land sandwiched between Meredith and Tennyson Roads, but so many memories are tied up there! Memories for all four of us that includes Sundays that have been so varied, so challenging and so inspired. It includes youth meetings, deacons, elders, messy church, Christmas socials, etc.

### **We have changed**

Our experiences all add up to the fact that we are no longer the people who turned up in 2004 with two very small boys, who were so welcomed into the MRBC community. The teaching has built us up and challenged us to live a life worthy of our Lord. The fellowship has helped us in life's ups and downs. Having so many supportive, challenging and caring people around us made our time at MRBC so much easier. Yes there were difficult times, as there are in any family, but small compared to the blessings.

Take Messy Church for example. What fun, amidst the chaos of children's work on the run, and of planning all that food for Friday evenings. For us both, our

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recollection is of an amazing vast team all doing their bit to serve so many who came from the community.

With the youth work, we had many great times with our young people in our first five years, whilst we led the work. Thirty young people from across the city met for a year in small groups in the sanctuary, in the Joseph Richards Room and in the tiny prayer room.

The trip to Bosnia influenced all who went, and the summers camping at the Soul Survivor festival were always the highlight, followed by drying our soaked tents in the sanctuary! Then Ben and Louisa took a role with the youth, taking things forward and building relationships across the board. We also remember so many times of all-age worship at family services, with an amazing team willing to embrace these times with us (which didn't always flow as we'd planned). Thanks for being so forgiving!

The visits of the OM mission teams followed in 2013 and 2014. Les Wade had to persuade us to take on our first team, as we were very unsure. But what a blessing we believe they were to the church, and many of our own young people and those from the community. Each OM member brought a vitality and passion for the gospel which had its own flavour – be they from Germany, South Korea, Switzerland, Brazil, the States or Hong Kong.

### **Using the Building**

The church building itself is a wonderful resource for MRBC and the community we served. So much space to do things, including regular games of hide and seek with TROGS (the Older Group) in the dark!

Making the most of the building was a strong aim for Ian, as it was not being used to its full potential when we first arrived. So here is our confession – to do that we had to 'get rid of' a lot of things which, if we'd asked people, would never have gone! Shall we just say they 'disappeared in the night'! And for 99 percent of those things (eg. old pamphlets, teaching guides from the 1970s, worn out tools) no one ever asked! Please forgive me for the 1% you noticed!

We developed a building that is used so much by the community, which is significantly what MRBC is about – reaching and serving the local area for our Lord.

I remember so many days with 'payback' teams when many of you mucked in and so many really grafting to make the gardens clearer and more attractive. You were laying patios, clearing trees and borders, building sheds and outhouses.



Ian Burton assisting Maurice baptise Chris Walker



But our main memory of Meredith Road is not the grounds, the sanctuary, the halls or the food, but is of all the people who made up the best church family we have ever had. We are purposefully not naming people here, as that would be wrong – but so many people have spoken into our lives, and have served us and walked with us, people who have listened to us and challenged us. And most of that took place inside the building, in one corner or other!

Thank you for your teaching, challenge, service and your listening ear. Thank you for your input to our boys Zak and Adam. Thanks also for putting up with Ian's humour and wind-ups, for the banter given and taken. You are and always will be our family and that building is significant but not crucial in that.

Here's to many more memories!



## Lifting our Horizons – touching the world Les Wade & Howard Wisdish

Covering all our mission involvement (local, city-wide, national and worldwide) would take a lot of space, because through the years Meredith Road Baptist Church has supported and enabled several mission agencies and mission projects through prayer, finance and some participation.

Locally, much of our outreach was through musicals like 'Come Together', 'If My People', and 'The Witness'. Tony Finch and Vilma Weaver launched a choir called 'God's People Together' which for many years was effective in evangelism. Members joined with other city churches in projects like 'Love Coventry', 'Christ in the Precinct', 'Kidz Klub' and 'Spark in the Park'.

During 1973, Les led one OM team responsible for organising evangelistic counselling in the Midlands. This involvement led to MRBC members receiving teams on mission work.

For two weeks in the late seventies, MRBC hosted a mission team from First Baptist Church, Dallas, where Maurice had served. The mission leader had hotel staff scurrying around because, on arrival, he announced that he was an 'Ambassador' (ie. for Christ)! Howard was impressed by how forthright the team were. The outreach culminating in a Sunday Service where a good number responded to the final message.

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Other initiatives included weekly visits to the Swanswell, offering refreshments and prayers to the public, and doing some outreach in Stoke Aldermoor.

Due to our growth in membership and out of the overflow of our spiritual life, the elders had a vision to plant new churches, thus was born the Church in Binley Woods and a fellowship in Stoke Aldermoor. When Lawrence Saunders Baptist Church were down to just twelve members, our own Tony Finch was invited to pastor there, whilst others launched fellowships in their own suburbs of Coventry. The Alpha Course has enabled many to come to faith in Jesus, and more recently Messy Church events have reached many families beyond our own church family.

On the international side, Les and his first wife Dot served as a family with Operation Mobilisation for 33 years, three of which were on board ship MV Logos, which is a floating bookshop. They sailed around Asia twice, North Africa, Southern and Northern Europe. Then the Wades spent 12 years leading more than 20 one-year OM teams, seeking to reach every Asian home in the UK with the gospel. The charity Heartlink was formed to enable teams to be sent to India and Sri Lanka.

Church members have continued to go abroad with mission agencies, or to visit our missionaries abroad. Through our BMS and other connections, we give thanks for Veronica (in Kenya), Jacqui Wells (with the Karen on Burma-Thailand border), Ann Baker (in Albania), Greg and Sue Roff (in Bulgaria), and more recently we have adopted BMS missionaries, Peter and Louise Lynch (in Bangladesh). Andrew and Elaine Bullock have become more involved with Mission Direct, regularly visiting Zambia, and others visit India regularly.

The building now hosts the Zimbabwean Methodist congregation on Sunday afternoons, while we watch our own congregation becoming more multi-cultural. The church's involvement in mission has always been through people with a vision, encouraging and supporting them through the Lord's leading and enabling.



## Kitchen Chef – the red-striped apron Lynn Salt

How did I ever end up wearing the one and only Red Striped Apron in the kitchen at Meredith Road Church? I'm not known for my culinary skills (ask my family) – so we thank God for ready meals!

When I first volunteered to cook for the Alpha Course some years ago, I was stepping out of my comfort zone. Along with my kitchen assistant, (Auntie) Margaret Bee, we cooked meals once or twice for the enquirers who attended the weekly course.

This meant that I first had to do some basic 'Food Hygiene' training. The course frightened the life out of me. Life in my kitchen at home has never been the same since! The training now meant I had a qualification to do more cooking!

Then 'Messy Church' arrived at Meredith Road. What a brilliant idea this family worship time was, and our church became full with families. I became part of the Messy

Church team, and it was such a blessing working alongside everybody. I sometimes helped in the kitchen. There were lots of blue-striped aprons, but for some reason I was drawn to wearing the one and only red-striped apron. Gradually it got into my head that when I wore it, I asked people to call me 'Chef'.

I have had such good times in the church kitchen wearing 'my' Red-striped Apron. Along with the banter, I have had so much fun and fellowship in that kitchen. Now and then God puts us in situations we may not be comfortable in, but there is always a reason why he does this. Had I not cooked for the Alpha Course, with or without the 'Red-striped Apron', I would not have got to know all these people as I do.

If you ever see me wearing the 'Red-Striped Apron' please don't feel you have to call me 'Chef' – it might go to my head.



Rosie Wisdich, Doreen Hoskins, Libby Cardew, Chris Vaughan & Edna Ball in the kitchen 2007



## My Testimony – a friend in need

### Sue Rattigan

You have been told many times that people come to faith in Jesus through people's kindness. Well, I can tell you all reading this that it is true!

Twenty seven years ago, I was a teaching assistant (TA) at Gosford Park School. I've always had a heart for children's well-being, and I loved to help little ones to

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explore new things, to be creative, to see joy in their lives, learning to read, to sing, to dance, to become aware of love and friendship etc.

I'd just been transferred from Stoke Primary School, and I was feeling a bit lost and out of place. It was a move sideways, that I had to make, not my choice. Gosford Park School had lots of new people, it was open plan with lots of new ideas which were good but different, and I was missing my old friends I'd left behind. Yet I was willing to make new friends.

Like most schools, we received help in many different forms but especially from the parents. As the new school year began, I was very pleased that Kathy Green's sister Sue Walker (now Mrs Nobbs) walked into the classroom to bring her Christopher. Sue was one of those eager parents who helped me. She just joined in, smiled, talked, encouraged, and put everyone she met in a good mood. So we became close. Two years later her Loren came into the classroom, always with a big smile too. Both of her children have been a delight to know.

After a few weeks I was still a bit lonely and I heard about a pre-school Parents, Children, and teacher Worship Group that met once a week, I believe it was on a Wednesday morning from 8:15 to 8:45am. So I plucked up courage and started to go. I made friends; it was great! I can see you thinking: "So what! What's so special about going to a Worship meeting once a week and making friends?"

Let me tell you, as a child I had known Christ in my life. I'd gone to a Church of England School, had learned about singing to Jesus, knowing Him, praying to Him as my friend. I went to Sunday-School as a young person and a teenager, I was an active member of Christian Endeavour and the church youth club, etc.

But life does not always run smooth and care free. We can stumble through or even fall. When we are badly hurt or heart-sore, these things test us or can make us shut down, turn away or take a wrong path.

I was often the butt of other school children's hurtful ridicule; their teasing or worse was hard for me. I often felt alone, but in my early years always had Jesus as a friend and one or two special people who helped when I felt like this.

### **Tough experiences that make you wobble**

I went to live for a time with people who made a big difference in my life when I most needed it. At the age of 11 years my mother became very, very, ill. She almost died on several occasions and was in hospital for 9 or 10 weeks and not really the same when she came home.

But God is good! My mum's best friends, Auntie Vera and Uncle Eric as I called them, cared for me all the time, and had prayed for me ever since they knew me as a baby.

A bigger blow happened when I was 14 years old. I went away on holiday with the youth club to a Christian camp event for a week, we had a great time. But on my return home, my father had left! So I came back to no Dad, and a very hurt and vulnerable Mum, whom I felt responsible to care for.



Sue (standing) hosting her Striking a Balance Slimming Club

I'm sorry to say that my relationship with Father God was damaged. I blamed Him for my lost childhood, my own father's short comings, and all the hurt that I swallowed and hid trying to protect my mum. All this damaged me inside; I lost my childlike trust that I'd been able to depend on before.

I'm ashamed to say that I told God I'd NEVER trust anyone ever again, even Him. So I began to try and do things my own way. My inner fire for Jesus was very dim, and everyday life pulled me away from church, and the need for God diminished.

I was still 'going to church' at this time, and my dear friend Beryl who had taken me to youth club with her, tried to support me. But I'm sorry to admit, if Jesus was a bubbling pot I'd turned down the heat. He was very much on the back burner. I'd lost my faith in people and also in God.

### **But the Lord is good**

Yet 52 years ago God kindly placed a lovely boy in my path called Terry. We met while following the cross on Good Friday, and that dear lad became my husband. We are celebrating 50 happy years together this October, just like this Church celebrates its own golden anniversary.

But being married at the young age of 17 (16 for Terry) meant hard work as well as happiness. We lived with my mum for three years, while saving very hard to buy our first home. We had our first baby David soon after we married, and our first mortgage at the age of 20 years, then our second baby Julie was born when I was 21.

In my working life, after Terry and I became parents, I'd always had jobs that fit around our children: cleaning at the Club One Bingo Hall while Julie was in nursery, as a child minder, or a dinner lady, and then as a TA.

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At this time Terry had two jobs, one an apprentice accountant five days a week; while on Saturday and Sunday he was a general maintenance cleaner in a factory. Sometimes he was painting perched on a ladder over large vats of acid. (No health and safety rules then!) He also went to evening classes three times a week to improve his education and provide for us all.

I was telling you about my dear friend Sue Walker and her lovely children, Christopher and Loren at Gosford Park School. When her Loren started school, I was about 39 years old, and it proved to be a year of great trial for me.

### **How good it is to have good friends who care!**

My health began to deteriorate, I was in pain if I stood for too long, if I sat for too long I would sometimes seize up and not be able to move, and most evenings I was reduced to crawling on all fours like a dog, going to bed in pain and waking in pain. I had pain in my head, neck and shoulders with nerve damage which caused other problems.

After the school holiday in the summer when I was just 40 years old, the doctors told me I would not be able to work ever again. An MRI scan had revealed six discs in my lower back and neck which had become crushed.

Sue Walker came to visit me at home all summer, praying for me and bringing me tape recordings of Maurice Markham's sermons to listen to. She was so faithful. She took me and introduced me to her friends at Young Women's Group which met on a Wednesday morning. They helped me so much.

I was becoming aware of Jesus, His love for me through these very lovely young ladies! I became a mother figure to them and their lovely babies that are now young mothers themselves. It was great to feel loved by them. But even better I once more felt comfortable in Christ Jesus, He blessed me so much!

Although I could not work anymore, God's Word imprinted into my heart and soul, I sang in tongues and, hungry for more, I also joined another group. It was the Older Ladies Fellowship which met on a Tuesday afternoon. Winnie Woodford, her friend Mary, Yvonne Orchard, Muriel Jones, Betty Driscoll, Nora Wigston and a few more all became 'mother figures' to me. God's love exploded once more.

Because my dear friend, Sue, took time to come each week to see me and pray for me, she took me back into the fold of church at Meredith Road and into the arms of Jesus. May we all do this: share Jesus, so that others may find Him who loves always and forever.



## The Big Welcome – a bride for Pete Penny Ivers

My first memory of walking into Meredith Road was slightly intimidating, as I knew everyone wanted to see who their elder, Pete Ivers, was going out with! However I was met at the door by Libby, and we hit it off straight away. I was really impressed with the genuine desire to worship God, and how many people wanted to pray out loud! I also remember having a good chat with Marjorie Dumbleton and Betty McKelvie who were both wonderful women of faith.

The following year, having decided to get married and take Pete down to Worthing, we were given a wonderful send off by Maurice in a morning service. Little did we know that just six months later, Pete would be in intensive care with a serious mystery virus. Email messages, cards, visits and phone calls came from so many people at Meredith Road, that I was quite overwhelmed.

A prayer meeting was immediately called for that night at the church, and someone had apparently asked God to provide a Christian nurse to look after him and pray for him. The next morning when I went to the hospital, one nurse introduced herself and told me she was a Christian, and had been praying for Pete throughout the night!

In the months that followed the support didn't wane, and we found ourselves regularly coming back to Coventry and to the church where we felt at home. A couple of years later when a job became available for me at Emmaus, we decided to move back to Coventry and make our church Meredith Road. This was partly in recognition of the love and support which we received at such a difficult time in our lives, but also somewhere we could serve God in practical ways.



## Acorns into Oak Trees Grow Denise Watson

Oaks and Acorns is a parents' and toddlers' group which meets every Tuesday afternoon. It first started 27 years ago, when a team of us felt it would be a fantastic outreach opportunity to provide a church-based toddler group for the community.

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Gradually the team reduced, as people left the church and moved on to other things. As a result the group discontinued for a few years. It started again 13 years ago, with Caroline Atkinson and myself leading the group, helped by a team of people. Libby, Susan, Pam and Edna do the refreshments and Rachel comes each week to draw alongside the families. The whole team of volunteers bring to the table a rich array of professional and personal expertise.



Some of the little ones having games in the park

Our vision has always been to provide a safe, happy environment for the children to play and a welcoming place for parents and carers. We provide the following range of activities which are a soft-play room, a bike room, craft activities, singing and lots of toys to play with. Through all this the children learn and interact together.

Refreshments including tea, coffee, fruit and biscuits, are served by the team. The number of families attending has grown especially since a Baby Weighing Clinic moved into the church last year. We now have up to 30 families attending. People come with between one and four children per person but the charge is always a £1, however many children they bring. All families fill in a registration form and are given a welcoming letter. Every child's birthday is celebrated with a card and present, and the children sing 'happy birthday' to each other.

We give every child a children's Bible storybook, when they graduate from us to go to school, and the families enjoy receiving these gifts.

Through Oaks & Acorns we promote the other groups which meet in the church, such as Girls' Brigade, Junior Church, and our seasonal themed services such as Christingle and Harvest festivals. Some families have also joined the congregation after attending Oaks & Acorns. It has been wonderful to see some children get more involved through the Cherubs Playgroup and attend Messy Church.

Our continuing vision is for Oaks & Acorns to be a welcoming and supportive environment for both the children and adults, providing a great place to meet new friends and seek support and advice. Many of the friendships made continue outside of the group.

Our group can and has been a life-saving resource for families in crisis, where we can signpost those in need of extra help on to relevant professional organisations. This has been a lifeline to many parents and carers. Some have faced



difficulties in life such as bereavement or post-natal depression. We offer a listening ear and show unconditional love, help and support.

We cherish all the parents, carers and children, and make them feel they are an essential part of the group and we encourage them to help us in its smooth running. We consider it a privilege to serve those who come through the door each week. Our vision is to continue to play such a valuable role and ministry within the community, and to show God's love in all we do.



## 50 Years of Cherubs Playgroup

**Sharon Roberts**

### **The past**

Fifty years ago, a group of ladies had the vision to start a playgroup at Meredith Road. For the first forty years it wasn't called 'Cherubs' – the name came later. These women were addressing the needs of the community, long before the local schools in the area officially recognised the benefits of nurturing learning through play experience for children.

There is a clear link between the past and present and, as the current Manager of Cherubs, I am privileged to hear from families who have stepped over the threshold into the church. We have parents who came to the playgroup as children themselves, and we have grandparents who brought their own children. My memories include there being a stage at the far end of the old hall, and of our 'group biscuit times'.

### **The Present**

I first walked in through the doors in January 2004 to manage the newly named 'Cherubs Community Playgroup'. At that time the playgroup only offered morning sessions, but since then we have developed to provide more sessions.

Cherubs Community Playgroup has official charity status from a business perspective, and we are heavily reliant on Council funding given for 2, 3 and 4 year olds. We have seen the families' needs change, and we are called to support agencies to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all the children who attend Cherubs. Cherubs have links with the local schools, mainly Richard Lee with whom we have a very strong working relationship which benefits all involved. Other schools that

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we have worked with are Ravensdale and St.Gregory's.

Cherubs have also enjoyed a good relationship with Oaks & Acorns, our parents' and toddlers' group, which serves the community every Tuesday and has done for many years. On a Wednesday afternoon our Cherub children have recently been joining with the older people's CAMEO group, and we hope that can continue, as research has shown that there is a positive outcome for both generations spending time together.

Cherubs have worked closely with the Health Visiting Team who use the church premises on Monday mornings between 9am and 11am. It is a good outreach opportunity. We can chat with parents who use the clinic. We invite them to attend Messy Church, and inform them about other activities happening on weekday evenings. So this partnership supports all who use Cherubs and the Clinic. We have seen former Cherubs children go on to attend Girls' Brigade on Wednesdays or JAM Club on Tuesdays.



The Cherubs' creativity on display

### **Cherubs of the Future**

Working from and with Meredith Road Baptist Church, we would like to raise the profile of both Cherubs and the church within the community. Our hope is that we can help the children in our care to develop and thrive, and later bring their own children to Meredith Road Baptist Church in the fullness of time!



# OUR VISION

## The Congregation of the Next 50 Years Mike Asbery

### A Retro-Church

What will Meredith Road Baptist Church look like in the future? I hope it will become a 'retro' church, ie. looking a little bit like the very earliest church described in Acts chapter 2 verse 42:

*"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."*

Many modern Christians have become less passionate about the **Bible** and less passionate about listening to sermons. I hope our church bucks this trend so that the congregation has a continuing hunger for the 'apostles teaching' and for the Word of God.

MRBC has emphasised the place of **meaningful fellowship** amongst the many people who have made it their spiritual home over the years. My future hope is that this is strongly maintained, and becomes more inter-generational, so that people of all ages can feel comfortable in this church.

The '**breaking of bread**' has lost its central place in some churches. We have been invited by Jesus himself to regularly look back at what he has done for his people and to regularly look forward to the day of his return when this sacred ceremony will cease. May MRBC continue to think about the cross whilst partaking at the communion table in the coming decades.

Fourthly, the day a church abandons **prayer** is the day a church stops functioning

### Life after death?

During the last four years, since I've been the minister of MRBC, many people have expressed gratitude for all the caring people within the church fellowship. I experienced this personally after heart bypass surgery when a lot of Meredith people visited me in hospital and at home.

Later, I learned of the shock of a church member who came to the hospital to visit me but was told, "Oh I'm so sorry, I'm afraid he's died."

Needless to say, this was an unintentional mistake, as I was on the mend and had been discharged!

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as part of the body of Christ. This is the fourth leg of the 'table' which needs all its legs to remain upright. A healthy church is full of the Lord's disciples who talk to him when they are together and when they are alone. May MRBC have a deserved reputation as a praying church in years to come.

Finally, though not mentioned in that Bible verse, **outreach** absolutely dominates the Acts of the Apostles. The future MRBC must not be an inward-looking church but one which discovers innovative and relevant ways to reach out to many 'not yet' Christians within the local community and further afield.



# The Junior Church of the Next 50 Years

## Caroline Atkinson

### Church is a Family

Our main vision is for all the children and youth of the church to feel accepted and loved for who they are. Just like our Lord Jesus, we want to celebrate their individuality. We want the children and youth of Meredith Road Baptist Church to feel valued and to feel that they are part of our church family, an important part. Children and

young people need opportunities to share God's love in action, both within the congregation and in the wider community. We need to be a family, a big family.

We want to support them in having their own relationships with God, and to feel they can communicate with Him one-to-one in whatever ways works for them. We need to be role models, helping them to become disciples in Christ. Give them the confidence to share their testimonies and experiences of God. Let them know we are committed to hearing their voices and that we value their opinions.

We want all children and young people to experience prayer in a wide variety of forms and grow in confidence to pray, so it becomes an essential part of their daily lives. For this vision to happen, we need to support our children through teaching and listening, to provide opportunities and environments for them to



Kathy Green with the Xstream kids of Junior Church 2008



Our senior youth group ready for Real event at Easter one or two years ago.

experience God by understanding the Scriptures, and then to recognise the impact which they can have on the lives of others.

If the whole church gets to know our children and families, we can work together to help them identify their gifts and talents, and encourage them to use them and become leaders of the church of the future.

### **Growing our church family**

We have a vision for full Junior Church departments (Rise & Shine under 5s, Friends Of God school years 1-3, Xstream school years 4-7, TROGS school years 8+), for the growth of our monthly Messy Church (families worshipping together), and for the regular mid-week groups: Oaks & Acorns (parents with toddlers), our Cherubs playgroup (ages 2-4), Girls' Brigade (ages 4-17), JAM Club (school years 3-6), Bulletproof (school years 7-10), Youth Band (school years 7+), and both Junior Cell groups (covering school years 7-13). *(See overleaf for meeting times.)*

We pray for new families in the congregation, and for old friends and families who return. We thank the Lord that we are blessed with an amazing group of volunteers, but we do hope for even more volunteers to help with Sunday and mid-week groups.

We want to watch our church grow into a sanctuary for the community, empowering a massive and effective outreach, a sanctuary where the needs of all ages are met, and where nobody feels unworthy, unloved or lonely.

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May Meredith Road Baptist Church continue to be:

*A centre of love and Christian friendship,  
where everyone can have the opportunity  
to experience the greater life  
which God intends for every person.*



**© 2018 Meredith Road Baptist Church**

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**[www.mrb-church.org.uk](http://www.mrb-church.org.uk)**

**SUNDAY** 10:30-12 noon  
aged under 5

**RISE & SHINE**

Rise & Shine (Rainbow Room)

**SUNDAY** 10:30-12 noon  
school yrs 1-3

**FRIENDS OF GOD**

Friends Of God (Garlick Room)

**SUNDAY** 10:30-12 noon  
school yrs 4-7

Xtream Kids (Joseph Richard Rm)

**SUNDAY** 10:30-12 noon  
school yrs 8-13

**TROGs**

The Rather Older Group (Lounge)

**SUNDAY**  
6:30-7:30pm  
school yrs 7-13

**YOUTH  
WORSHIP  
BAND**

Youth Worship Band (Sanctuary)

**every WEEKDAY**  
aged 2-4 years

**CHERUBS**

*Through play we learn and grow.*

Cherubs Community Playgroup

**alternate MONDAYS**  
4:30-5:30pm  
school yrs 7-10

**JUNIOR  
CELL GROUP**

Junior Youth Cell Group

**alternate MONDAYS**  
7:30-9pm  
school yrs 11-13

**SENIOR  
CELL GROUP**

Senior Youth Cell Group

**every TUESDAY**  
1-2:30pm  
parents & toddlers

**OAKS &  
ACORNS**

Oaks & Acorns

**alternate TUESDAYS**  
school yrs 3-6 6:30-8pm

**Jesus And Me Club**

Jesus And Me Club

**alternate TUESDAYS**  
school yrs 7-10 7-8:30pm

**BULLETPROOF**

Bulletproof

**WEDNESDAYS**  
6:30-8pm  
aged 4-17 years

**the GIRLS'  
BRIGADE**  
ENGLAND & WALES

*Discovering life to the full!*

Girls' Brigade



# Meredith Road Baptist Church

— COVENTRY —



Worship Services  
Sunday & Thursday 10:30am



Baby Dedications



Believer's Baptisms



Weddings