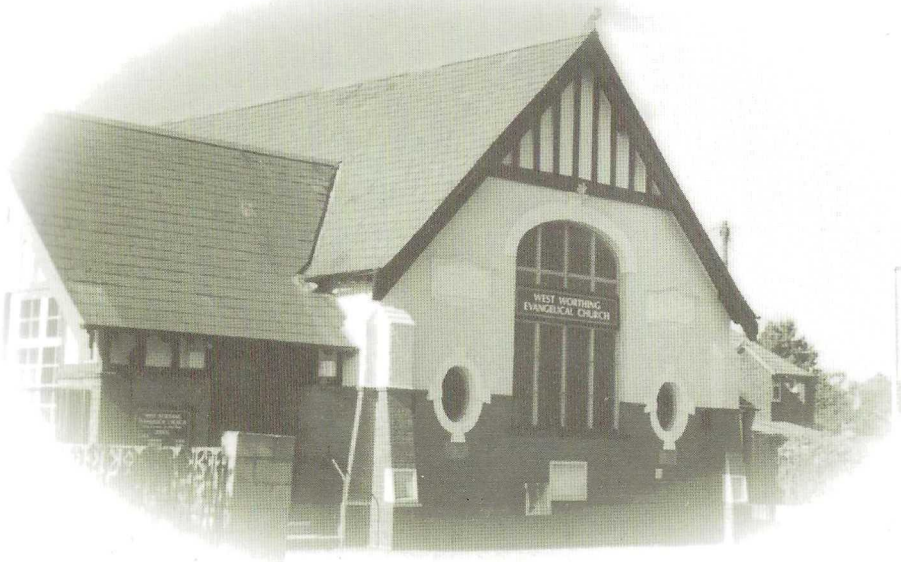


A house the LORD built



A short history of West Worthing Evangelical Church

1900 - 2000

PREFACE

The principal aim of this book is to provide a record of the work and witness of the evangelical cause which was established in Elm Grove, Worthing, in 1900.

I have striven to be objective and factual, largely relying upon the records which the church holds – documents, minutes etc. Where archival material has been augmented by personal contributions by friends – or past or present members – great care has been taken only to include information which is verifiable.

The book is dedicated to all who have helped further and maintain a faithful Gospel witness in the part of Worthing situated around Rugby Road.

The compilation of this history has proved to be a most interesting and challenging task, possibly rather more demanding than originally envisaged. The input and help of many friends has been invaluable, indeed without such assistance much of the book would have been devoid of vitality.

The task of unravelling the tangled skein for some of the earlier years has not been easy!

However, the whole exercise has been both fascinating and rewarding. Every care has been taken to ensure accuracy contents but if any mistakes or omissions have escaped detection those responsible for compiling and checking the material sincerely apologise. It is hoped that the book will prove to be of interest and more especially encourage the fellowship in its ongoing endeavour to bear a faithful witness to Jesus Christ.

This book is dedicated to the Pastors and committed men and women who have sought to labour in this corner of the Lord's vineyard over a period of one hundred years.

Pastors

John Onions	1906 - 1925
Theodore H. Bendor-Samuel	1927 - 1931
Frederick H. King	1934 - 1939
Norman Cogley	1942 - 1944
Ernest W. Bacon	1945 - 1948
Charles F. Brown	1954 - 1962
Trevor Manning	1963 - 1973
Clifford Mothersdale	1974 - 1976
William Hamilton	1980 - 1983
John W. Billett	1991 -

It has not proved possible to include a list of all who have served as Officers and leaders since 1900. Although the Church is favoured in having various Record and Minute Books covering most of the period there are times when unfortunately the records are incomplete. In addition because of the length of time covered the number of individuals

involved would be quite considerable. The omission of any name in no way therefore infers that the person's contribution is considered to be unimportant; we salute all the men and women who over the Century have played a vital part in the ongoing witness of the cause.

Keith Morgan Crane - compiler

**“Except the LORD build the house,
they labour in vain that build it”
Psalm 127:1**

Acknowledgement

Sincere appreciation is expressed to all who have assisted in any way towards the production of this history, including those who have kindly supplied information, helped verify data or offered advice, checked the material and assisted in many other ways. Especial thanks are extended to Miss Angela Stringer who has painstakingly typed the drafts, patiently made various emendations and then finally provided the text for the printers.

K.M.C.

SETTING THE SCENE...

The compilation of a Church history is never an easy task because one is relating an ongoing spiritual story – the real truth of which is only known to our Heavenly Father. There is a sense in which a Church history is not simply recording events and circumstances, but is an attempt to gain a glimpse of the true significance of the local witness. We recognize that the Almighty Father furthers His divine plan through the ministry and power of the Holy Spirit. Thus providing for the needs of His people, blessing, sustaining and encouraging them, and transforming them as His Word becomes a living reality in the lives of those whom He has called to be His sons and daughters. The local fellowship of believers exists solely as His tool of ministry in a particular locality; it is quite unlike those groups which meet simply to satisfy human interests and aspirations.

The godly souls who were challenged to gather for Bible Study and prayer in Elm Grove back in 1900 did so because they sincerely believed that their Lord was calling them to establish a Gospel witness in the area. How very different circumstances and social conditions were in those far off days! Things which we now take for granted were still to be invented or discovered! However, the people then – as now – needed to hear the Good News of salvation.

What was the area around Rugby Road like in the early part of the 20th Century? Let's take a step back in time and consider some circumstances, and aspects of the district. There was no old age pension; no social benefit; no free health care – those who were unable to support themselves might find that they were sent to the workhouse, where not infrequently they were treated as though they were criminals. To be destitute was not only considered to be 'a crime' but also 'a sin'!

Worthing has for long been known as "sunny Worthing" and this is indeed true as far as the number of hours of sunshine is concerned, but the town is also 'sunny' as far as its favoured position between the sea and the beautiful Southdowns is concerned. Indeed its sunny location has influenced the town in many ways. In the early years of the 19th Century Worthing was but a small fishing hamlet, outshone in importance by Broadwater and Tarring, both of which can trace their history back over very many centuries. When it became fashionable "to take the sea air" Worthing was one of the places on the south coast which attracted patronage from titled folk and the gentry; the fact that the town was but 58 miles from London by stage-coach made it comparatively easy to reach. However, when the railway was extended along the coast from Brighton, via Shoreham, in 1845 expansion was assured, especially so when two years later the line reached Portsmouth.

Worthing prospered through visitors coming to benefit from the sea air and to enjoy the golden sands; - only the more daring visitors actually bathed in the sea – we still have

the sea air but the sea stole the golden sands a long time ago! "Day excursionists" were also attracted to the town as the rail service improved, after a line linking the town to the main line to London was built just east of Hove. During the second half of the 19th Century Worthing expanded considerably; guest houses and hotels were built and the new pier was a great attraction. The gentry and other monied folk chose to come and live in the town and many grand houses were built. Building development gradually crept westwards, embracing the old village of Heene and eating up pasture land. By the 1880s so much new housing had been built to the west of the old town that a plea was made for a new station to be built to cater for West Worthing. The railway obliged even though the new station was but ¾ mile from the main one in the town; no doubt the rather grandiose scheme for building large hotels on the front at West Worthing, and the construction of another pier, influenced the decision! So in 1889 West Worthing got its own station, and this was to play an important part in the development of this part of the town. Worthing's climate made it ideal for growing produce and the town became known for its acres of glass-houses, market gardens and horticulture holdings.

Worthing tomatoes and cucumbers were famous. To meet the need for quick and easy shipment of produce out of the town the railway built a very large goods yard just to the west of the West Worthing station, north of the line. The yard employed a good number of men and the railway became an important focus in the life of the local community. Local horticultural growers took full advantage of the railway to send produce to London, Portsmouth and elsewhere. Housing development of a more modest kind was attracted to the west of the town, and both Tarring – north of the tracks – and Heene – south of the line – greatly expanded towards the close of the 19th Century and in the early years of the 20th. The railway, the hotels and big houses, as well as the horticultural trade, provided plenty of employment. Although development was taking place in the area the locality was still quite rural in character, and between the houses numerous market gardens and greenhouses could be found. In 1900 'going to church' was the respectable thing to do on Sundays, and Sunday Schools were attended by the vast majority of the country's children; in fact in many places failing to attend church was considered rather *infra dig* by many folk! The easy-going acceptance of Christianity – where there was sadly often little personal commitment to Jesus Christ – was shattered by the appalling suffering and carnage which the Great War inflicted upon society. In many respects the Church in England was never quite the same after 1918.

In the 1920s and 1930s further housing development took place in the area around the church and the last of the horticultural holdings was swept away from that part of the town, although the industry remained strong in other local areas. Like other towns in Victorian England Worthing gradually became less and less isolated; events and trends filtered down to local communities much more quickly as national newspapers were distributed much faster by the rail network.

THE INFLUENCE OF RELIGIOUS DEBATE...

In the late 1880s the Baptist denomination was deeply troubled by what became known as the "Down Grade Controversy". This arose from the grave concern felt by a considerable number of ministers and churches in the Baptist Union over trends within that body relating to the authority and authenticity of the Bible, and the nature and person of Jesus Christ. This controversy resulted in a considerable number of ministers and churches withdrawing from the Baptist Union, and amongst the consequences of this was the establishment of a number of 'independent' or 'undenominational' churches. These churches often stated that they were emulating the churches of the New Testament and were therefore, by implication, 'Baptistic' in policy. The rise of these churches was met by many with some suspicion because historically nonconformist churches in Britain had largely followed three denominational strands – Baptist, Congregational and Presbyterian. Even though there were distinct groups within the Baptist denomination each was easily identifiable as Baptist. As the 19th Century progressed more and more independent Mission Halls were established; some of these were sponsored by individuals with a philanthropic concern and others were opened by City Missions. Many of these independent Missions were associated with one of the Temperance organisations and were largely of an 'undenominational' character.

The ripples of the controversy in the Baptist Union reached Worthing and in 1895 the minister of the Christchurch Road Baptist Church withdrew from the Union and resigned his pastorate. His decision to leave was not in any way related to any disagreement within the local church but was solely concerned with the situation in the Union. The minister was Pastor C. D. Crouch who soon felt led to establish an 'undenominational' church in the town, and in due course he secured the premises known as "St James' Hall" in Montague Street. Within a comparatively short time he built up a sizeable congregation. The establishment of such a church in the town was not welcomed by everyone; 'denominational loyalty' tended to be highly prized in those days.

1900: AN INDEPENDENT CHURCH EMERGES IN WEST WORTHING...

In 1906 Pastor and Mrs John Onions came to live in the town; it had been suggested that Mr Onions' frail health might benefit from Worthing's mild climate. It seems as though Pastor Onions also had misgivings about the Baptist Union and sought fellowship with Pastor Crouch's congregation. However within a very short time his attention was drawn to a group of believers meeting in Elm Grove. He found these friends to be of like mind as himself concerning the Scriptures and the person of Jesus. He approached Pastor C. D. Crouch to see if some help might be given to this embryonic cause by the St. James' congregation but learned that this was not possible because plans were in hand to acquire a plot of ground in Chapel Road and build a new church.¹ Pastor

¹ The present Worthing Tabernacle in Chapel Road opened in 1908.

Crouch assured Pastor Onions of his prayerful interest but was unable to offer any practical assistance. The cause in Elm Grove was, at the time, known as "The Elm Grove Udenominational Mission". The actual reason for the establishment of the cause is not known but is believed to be related to concerns over the drift towards ritualistic sacerdotal worship in some Anglican churches in the town. (This is well documented in general histories of the town). The division within the Baptist Union, to which reference has already been made, also seems to have played a part. The premises where the little congregation met in Elm Grove was in fact a family laundry owned by Mrs Sarah Henderson, who had willingly opened her "upstairs drying room" to the congregation in 1900. Pastor Onions became the Mission's pastor on Sunday 25th March 1906, and he soon set about placing the cause on a firmer footing. He clearly recognised the truth of I Cor. 3:11 "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Christ Jesus". His motivation and principal desire was to establish a Christ centred church, where Christ centred preaching would lead to Christ-centred believers witnessing and serving their Lord and Master. Like Paul of old Pastor Onions determined to know nothing amongst his little fellowship save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (I Cor. 2:2). Pastor John Onions carefully ensured that the cause was firmly established upon sound Biblical principles, and his forethought and care has been of tremendous value and strength to the fellowship all down the years.

In attempting to compile a brief history of a Christian fellowship one is very much aware that one is engaged in a very sensitive undertaking because as the story unfolds, the spiritual struggles and trials, as well as the aspirations of those who have gone before, reveal how men and women – just like us – strove to overcome difficulties and disappointments, and did their best to maintain a true and faithful witness to their Lord and Saviour.

We are greatly indebted to Pastor John Onions, for not only did he carefully ensure that the cause was established upon sound Biblical principles, but he also kept a meticulous record of all that happened in the little cause until his home-call in 1925.

1906: THE CHURCH IS CONSTITUTED...

In 1906 the friends at "Elm Grove Udenominational Mission" felt led of the Lord to place the cause on a stronger footing and agreed to subscribe to a Constitution and Declaration of Principle, and open a Register of Members. The Constitution faithfully reflected the original aim of those who commenced the Elm Grove cause, which was to establish a sound Gospel witness in the area. The men and women desiring to be associated with the cause covenanted together on 26th August 1906 and the Register of Members was commenced with 11 names, including Mrs Sarah Henderson and her daughter Minerva, with Pastor Onions at the helm. On the same Sunday the first gifts towards a site and new chapel, were received.

The title chosen for the newly constituted fellowship was somewhat unusual for a Free Church cause of the time but probably reflects the desire to stress both the independence and New Testament nature of the fellowship. "Elm Grove Udenominational Mission" became "The West Worthing Assembly of Christian Believers"; which, if the friends had not appointed a resident pastor, might have given the impression that it was a Brethren meeting.

Mr James Sainsbury was the first Elder appointed; this local family had associations with the church for a considerable number of years following. On the 9th September 1906 it is recorded that 20 persons were present at the evening service, and that this was followed by an "Outdoor Meeting" at which some 70 were present. We need to bear in mind that in those days people were far more likely to be walking along the pavements – rather than using some form of transport – and that there was a far greater interest in religion. Even those who didn't have a real commitment to Christ nevertheless still had a deep respect for 'the Church' and 'feared God'. Right from the beginning of the Elm Grove cause 'Prayer Meetings' were clearly seen as most important and were well supported. On the 9th December 1906 "nine friends from the fellowship spent a night in prayer". The Sunday School was well supported but we see from "the record book" that boys and girls were also attending the morning service and that "an address was given for the children".

Increasing attendance encouraged the Elm Grove friends to give prayerful consideration to the possibility of having their own premises. Although the cause was fervently independent it was clearly baptistic in its policy. Friends applying for membership who had not been baptised by immersion were encouraged to submit to this ordinance. The fellowship saw baptism as a public sign that the individuals had repented of their sins and had submitted to the Lordship of Christ Jesus, and not that baptism itself somehow made a person a Christian. This is still the position of the Church. We are not told where baptisms took place, presumably at another church or possibly in the sea. At this time a Young Men's Bible Class was commenced, which was soon followed by one for girls.

1907: THE FELLOWSHIP MAKES A SIGNIFICANT DECISION...

The fellowship came to the conclusion that the Lord desired them to have their own premises, so that the work might expand. In the summer of 1907 a deposit was made on a plot of land in Rugby Road; the ground was owned by a fruiterer and greengrocer who had a shop in the town, and who no doubt grew some of his own produce.

On the 3rd February 1907 the first of many Missionary Prayer Meetings was held, thus establishing a practice which has continued throughout the long history of the fellowship. On the 3rd May a missionary from Brazil addressed a meeting "and gifts

were placed in the box which the missionary had brought with him"! Interestingly some 55 years later one of the members of the church would go out to Brazil as a missionary.

The Sunday School had been an important aspect of the work right from the earliest days and in August 1907 the school's anniversary was celebrated, and on the Monday the girls and boys were given "a treat". The same month a missionary from India visited "a home prayer meeting and spoke of his work".

In the September of 1907 a CSSM Beach Mission – a comparatively new innovation for the period – was held on the beach at Worthing; this was attended by over 100 girls and boys, although it would be nice to think some of these attended the "Elm Grove Undenominational Mission Sunday School" we have no way of knowing! A photograph exists which shows that even attending a Beach Mission required the wearing of one's Sunday best!

In the latter part of the 19th Century a tradition grew up in nonconformist churches in this country for the Sunday morning service to be designed for "the saints" – in other words the service included a good deal of teaching. The evening service was for "the sinners", where the emphasis was on Gospel preaching. This is clearly shown in the church's "Record Book" by the way in which the morning service format – on more than one occasion – was suddenly abandoned and the meeting changed into "a time of prayer" because "the Lord's presence was particularly real"; the sermon being held over for another time! This clearly shows that those present were 'saved persons' and unlikely to be disturbed or embarrassed by such a change!

Pastor John Onions was clearly a man of deep religious conviction, who was anxious to declare a truly Biblical concept of Christianity, and who earnestly strove to avoid his people viewing this in a shallow or frivolous way, as perhaps some were inclined to do in those days. Pastor Onions' notes in "the record book" make it clear that he did not shrink from stressing that following Jesus Christ would not necessarily be easy, and that disciples would need true dedication and resolve. The texts for his sermons (which he lists each week) consistently show that he proclaimed that repentance and faith in Christ alone were necessary for salvation.

The fellowship, from the very beginning, resolutely determined against promoting in any way the erroneous notion – but nevertheless popular one – that salvation, and the reward of heaven, could be secured through human effort or good works. There were many then, and indeed many since, who seem to prefer relying upon their own efforts to gain heaven, rather than trusting in God's declared way. The Biblical stance adopted by Pastor John Onions, and the founder members, remains the position of the Church at the opening of the 21st Century, and is likely to remain so until that glorious Final Day. The message that those without Christ Jesus as Saviour will slip from this world into a Christless eternity wasn't popular back in 1900, and it's not popular a hundred years

later, but that is the truth which the Evangelical witness in West Worthing proclaimed, and continues to proclaim.

Having paid a deposit on land in Rugby Road the church then prayerfully considered the need to draw up plans for erecting a suitable building. Interestingly they decided to go for a permanent brick structure and not "a tin tabernacle" (corrugated iron sheeting) which was a popular option at the time. There was no public appeal for funds but people gave as they felt able.

Meanwhile the general activities of the little fellowship continued. On the 8th November 1907 a Ladies Working Party was commenced, when 19 women gathered. The purpose of the meeting was "to make garments for the poor of the neighbourhood". This is an interesting insight into church life because it indicates that some of the families living in the Elm Grove area were not all that well off.

In the early 20th Century Elm Grove lay on the north western borders of the Parish of Heene, which had then only recently been incorporated into the Borough of Worthing. It was an area largely devoted to horticulture and the district was quite rural in character. At the top of Elm Grove a "foot crossing" was provided, to enable pedestrians to cross the railway line and continue by footpath up to West Tarring village and beyond. A "crossing keeper" saw to the safety of people!

"The Record" which Pastor Onions so carefully compiled concerning the church and its activities reveals that deep concern was felt over the lack of converts; even so there was a sincere sense of earnestness and expectancy that blessing would come. Pastor Onions often inserted a comment in "The Record" of a spiritual nature: "a good day; the Lord's presence was felt" or "Good services; praise the Lord". Occasionally he remarks that inclement weather prevented some from attending services, reminding us that the majority of folk had to walk!

The year closed with a watch-night service, when "the Lord was praised for His goodness to the fellowship".

1908: MISSION OUTREACH AT HOME AND OVERSEAS...

1908 opened with the fellowship looking to the Lord for help and blessing. The members were clearly exercised concerning the needs of the growing residential area around them and in the June of that year "a Tent Mission" was held. Tantalisingly just when we expect to find some comment in "The Record" we are disappointed and in this instance the Pastor makes no comment. It seems likely that the erection of a tent in one of the local fields would have created some interest and that folk would have attended, out of curiosity if for no better reason!

Pastor John Onions did not enjoy very good health and he was not always able to preach at both services on a Sunday. "The Record" reveals that amongst the visiting preachers

were persons of note. For example in July 1908 the Town's Mayor – Alderman Frederick C. Linfield, J.P. - was the preacher at an evening service. He was a keen local Free Churchman. Other preachers mentioned from time to time include: Surgeon General Partridge, Colonel Puckle, Colonel Wakling etc. The owners of "Cissbury Court" – Mr and Mrs Hall – were evidently sympathetic to the cause and a mid-week Bible Study meeting was sometimes held in their home. A number of the principal businessmen in the town were staunch nonconformists (e.g. Mr Bentall of the Departmental Store), and they had great influence on the community. The church was not only concerned about the need to reach out to the local neighbourhood with the Gospel but also continued to recognise the need to spread the message overseas. In November 1908 the missionary from Brazil with whom the church had established a link, once again visited Elm Grove. Home prayer meetings were evidently a growing feature of the fellowship; sometimes these were of a general nature and on other occasions they focused on missionary work; on the 26th August 1908 a missionary from India was present at one such gathering.

1909: THE PASTOR PROTESTS...

1909 opened with "a week of praise" but sadly we are not told what this involved; however "the record book" does tell us that it was "a very good week".

During the early years of the 20th Century there was a fierce controversy between the Church of England and the various Free Churches; the latter believed that the former were trying to control the teaching of Religious Knowledge in day schools. This resulted in many Free Church folk refusing to pay "the Education Rate", and in due course many were prosecuted. Pastor John Onions was amongst those summoned in Worthing for non-payment; in fact he records the fact that he was summoned no less than 16 times.²

Reference has already been made to the fellowship holding an Open Air meeting, and evidently these became a regular feature of the church's witness in the neighbourhood and often drew 50 or 60 folk. Harvest Thanksgiving services then – as now – were very popular, and were seen as a means of outreach. With all the horticulture in the area the displays were no doubt quite lavish!

In April 1909 we have confirmation that those attending meetings embraced a fairly wide age range because a young couple brought their baby "for a service of thanksgiving". In June 22 friends from the fellowship travelled up to London and visited an exhibition about Palestine.

² The British & Foreign Schools Society (Nonconformists) 1808 and the National Society (Anglican) 1811 – predating compulsory Board Schools by some 60 years – were jealous of their heritage!

In November 1909 a special tea was held for the members and friends of the fellowship, when all the workers were thanked for their labours. The same month a lady missionary from the Congo visited the church and gave an interesting report of her work.

1910 saw the work and witness of the cause faithfully continuing; the Sunday and mid-week services, along with the Sunday School, were seen as making a real contribution to the spiritual needs of the area; the record shows that the Lord was blessing the work and the saints felt encouraged. In July the Sunday School went to Bramber for their outing, but we are not told whether they went by wagonette or motor charabanc – how ever they travelled it was no doubt quite an adventure for the youngsters.

Interspersed amongst the notes relating to the Elm Grove cause we find frequent references to Pastor Onions visiting other Free Churches in the area. He was closely involved with the establishment of the Free Church in Durrington. The year brought sadness to the fellowship; a couple lost their eldest daughter and her baby. The deaths clearly had an impact on the church.

1911 opens with the church praising the Lord for His goodness, and we see from "The Record Book" that all the meetings seem to have been supported, although clearly there is a longing that more boys and girls – and men and women – might recognize their need of a Saviour. There is clearly much joy when it is reported that some of the young people are "growing in the Lord", and that some backsliders have been restored to fellowship. Pastor John Onions clearly continued to preach nothing but Christ crucified, risen, exalted and coming again, and faithfully proclaimed the truth that salvation for repentant sinners could be found in none other but Jesus, God's beloved Son. Pastor Onions never shrank from warning sinners of the everlasting punishment which awaits those who spurn the gracious mercy of God. He was a man of deep spiritual conviction, and sought to deepen the prayer life of both the church and its members. He was clearly very distressed if he felt low attendance at an evening service may have been due to lack of consecrated prayer and preparation of a spiritual nature.

1912: A MOMENTOUS YEAR FOR THE FELLOWSHIP...

1912 witnessed many events nationally; Captain Robert Falcon Scott and other members of his ill-fated Antarctic expedition perished as they struggled to return to base, and the "Unsinkable Transatlantic liner Titanic" sank with great loss of life on her maiden voyage. So confident in man's prowess were her owners that they failed to provide sufficient lifeboats to cater for all her passengers and crew. Not only were they considered unnecessary but it was thought that they would "make the ship look untidy"! Events of this nature greatly disturbed the nation, where an unshakeable faith in man's achievements was beginning to undermine belief in a sovereign God. Evangelical preachers seized upon such events to press home their message, and many did indeed flee to Christ.

“The Record Book” tells how the fellowship bade farewell to a couple early in 1912, who were “emigrating to Australia”; they were presented with a Bible and a purse containing £8.00 (quite a sum for the time.). The Women’s Meeting membership had reached 35 and this was the cause of much rejoicing. In the April the final payment was made for the plot of ground in Rugby Road; the total cost being in the region of £300.00. This was paid off as and when gifts came in, there being no major appeal made.

The 20th July 1912 was a very important day for the fellowship; members and friends gathered on the site in Rugby Road to give thanks to God for His goodness and to lay various commemorative stones. There were some 200 present at the ceremony and this must have been a real encouragement to pastor and people.

Mr Sainsbury – Elder and Sunday School Superintendent – laid one stone; this bears the text “Suffer the little children to come unto me” Luke 18:16. Three of the Trustees laid the stone: “God is faithful” I Cor.10:13. The occupations of these gentlemen reflects the commercial interests of the town at the time: Mr J. A. G. Vine (Temperance Hotelier); Mr H. C. Saunders (Fruit Grower); and Mr J. E. Savage (Trader in Fancy Goods). Interestingly these three also had connections with the Tabernacle in Chapel Road, because their names appear on the document regarding the conveyance of land for the new church in the town. Pastor and Mrs John Onions laid the central stone, which gave the title of the fellowship as “West Worthing Assembly”³ and boldly stated that the cause was “Protestant, Evangelical and Free”. At its foot, the church’s faithfulness to the Word of God and the Saviour are declared to all who pass by: “Crucified – Risen – Exalted – Coming”. The original covenant of the church required it to be “Protestant, Evangelical and Free”: Protestant to declare that it adhered to the Reformed doctrine, as championed by those who desired to return to a truly Biblical faith; Evangelical to testify that it understood and accepted the Bible to be the inspired Word of God and His testimony to mankind, being the source of all true wisdom and the authority in religious belief and practice; and Free to proclaim that the church was independent of man orientated denominationalism, and the perceived restraints and demands such affiliation imposed.

Two further stones were also laid: “Have faith in God” Mark 11:22 – this one appropriately enough by Mrs Sarah Henderson – and the other “God will provide” Gen.22:8 by Pastor Onions. Later, as the building work progressed, two large attractive stones encircling two texts were erected further up the wall of the front of the church; “God is Light” 1 John 1:5 and “God is Love” 1 John 4:8.

³ Within a short period this had been amended to “West Worthing Tabernacle” carefully avoiding the use of the word ‘church’ and by inference ‘denominationalism’.

The Indenture for the plot of ground in Rugby Road is quite detailed and was drawn up with very great care; this document clearly defines that the plot – and any buildings erected upon it – may only be used for the purposes of Christian worship, in accordance with the tenets ascribed to by Evangelical Protestants. Worldly uses – such as a “dance hall or public house” – are firmly proscribed; neither may the premises be used by the Established Church, nor by churches which reject a Trinitarian view of the Godhead or by unbiblical cults. How much heartache and sadness might have been avoided if throughout this land other churches had drawn up their legal documents with such care. We owe a great debt to Pastor John Onions and his officers.

Following the dedication of the plot one senses that there was a great sense of expectancy in the fellowship, as they continued to meet in the Elm Grove room. We can picture folk eagerly watching the new building in Rugby Road taking shape.

Although the little fellowship had committed themselves to considerable financial outlay, they were nevertheless very much concerned about missionary work overseas; little did the friends realise that this prayerful concern would still be an important feature of the church some 90 years later.

The fellowship had already established links with missionaries from Brazil, India and the Congo, and then in August 1912 – Mr J.E. Blanford, - a missionary who had laboured in China, spoke at the Elm Grove mission hall. When a missionary visited, it was the practice for a collecting box to be displayed so that friends might “contribute as they felt led”. Once again we see how a practice commenced some 90 years ago continues today!

Right from its earliest days the Church had covenanted to remain true to the Gospel, and the fellowship was most careful to ensure that it faithfully proclaimed a Trinitarian view of the Godhead. Christ Jesus was not only acknowledged to be Saviour but also Lord. The Sovereignty of Almighty God was uncompromisingly preached. 100 years later the same is true! Praise His Name.

The last service in the Elm Grove laundry drying room was held on the 6th October 1912, when praise and thankfulness to God was expressed; His hand of blessing had clearly rested upon the cause since its foundation some twelve years earlier. The work in Elm Grove came into being because of a desire by local people for a Gospel witness to be established in that part of the town. One of those who earnestly prayed that such a witness might be established was Mrs Sarah Henderson, whose subsequent involvement went much further than simply offering part of her premises as a venue for the meetings. It is quite possible that Mrs Henderson was one of the prime motivators of the witness. When the legal document concerning the transfer of ownership of the plot of ground in Rugby Road was signed we find Sarah Henderson’s

signature on the Indenture, along with that of John Onions and the Trustees. Culturally at that time it was most unusual for a woman to be accorded such a privilege.⁴

The actual premises used by the "Elm Grove Udenominational Mission" are no longer extant, having been considerably rebuilt and modified over the years.⁵

Confirmation of the high esteem in which Mrs Sarah Henderson was held is further revealed by the way in which she was invited to "open the doors" of the new building in Rugby Road, and unveil a tablet in the entrance lobby. The tablet commemorated the fact that the fellowship had met at her Elm Grove laundry premises for 12 years. Earlier reference was made to the part taken by Mrs Henderson at the Stone laying ceremony.

The architect engaged to design the new building in Rugby Road – Mr J.E. Lund – had, in 1907, designed the building for the Evangelical Protestant Church in Chatsworth Road (now sadly demolished); it was no doubt his work for this church which encouraged the leaders of like minded churches to approach him when they were considering erecting a building. Mr Lund was also responsible for the Worthing Tabernacle in Chapel Road (1908); Durrington Free Church, Greenland Road (1911) as well as our own building in Rugby Road (1912).

On the 16th November 1912 friends eagerly gathered for a picture lantern show, when slides depicting "Pilgrim's Progress" were flashed on a screen; this seems to have been the first instance of "modern visual aids" being used by the church. One wonders whether some questioned whether it was right to use such newfangled devices in church?

1912 was indeed a truly momentous one for the fellowship and although there was much rejoicing "The Record" discloses that by the end of the year the earlier euphoria associated with moving into a new building had some what diminished. Building work on the site in Rugby Road went forward apace and the premises were ready for the Dedication Service, which was held on the 9th October 1912. We sense from "the Record" that this was an occasion of both great rejoicing and deep thankfulness to God. In just 12 years the embryonic little cause had been able to purchase a plot of ground and build a handsome building dedicated to the glory of God.

⁴ The exception being where the woman happened to own the land or property.

⁵ Following careful research – and with help from friends – it has been discovered that Elm Grove was re-numbered shortly following the second World War, and that the premises presently bearing number 20 is not the one referred to in earlier Church literature as number 20. This has been independently confirmed by the kindness of the present owners searching their Deeds. The "Oaklands" centre now stands on the original site.

The principal address at the opening service was given by Mr G. E. Morgan, Editor of "The Christian" (a greatly respected journal of earlier years). The afternoon service was followed by tea, and then there was an evening meeting at which no less than seven gentlemen gave an address! We are left wondering what time the session ended! The clerk of works for the project was presented with an inscribed Bible, and on the following day there was a supper for the 22 workmen and their wives. Each man received a copy of the evangelistic book "The Traveller's Guide". On the Sunday following there were again special services.

"The Record" shows that following the opening celebrations a full programme of activities was commenced. In addition to morning and evening services each Sunday, there was Sunday School at 10 a.m. and again at 3 p.m., when there was also a Young People's Bible Class. On Tuesdays at 7 p.m. there was a Young Disciples Class, which was followed at 8 p.m. with a Praise, Prayer and Testimony Meeting. On Thursdays at 6.30 p.m. the Junior Disciples Class met, which was followed by the church's Bible Study meeting. The popular Women's Meeting also continued to meet. Comments in "The Record" show that there was clearly a sense of great expectancy as the saints looked to the Lord for His blessing on the work.

It speaks volumes for the fellowship that they had opted to erect a brick structure and not simply a "tin tabernacle" – which were very popular at the time. The members clearly believed that the Lord had great plans for the cause. The endeavour was intended to be permanent ... no 'temporary tent'.

We find the pastor expressing disappointment that the anticipated increase in attendance had not materialised. No doubt the evil one had something to do with the despondency which was evidently being felt. Even so there was at least one area where there was encouraging signs of growth, and this related to the work amongst the girls and boys.

1913: LOOKING TO THE LORD FOR BLESSING...

1913 dawned with the fellowship looking to the Lord for blessing, and much prayer was evidently offered. Within a few months we find pastor able to record signs of blessing in "The Record", and the Lord is once again being praised for His goodness to the Church.

In February 1913 an evangelistic mission was held at the church and although "The Record" indicates that God's blessing rested upon this we are not told whether this endeavour resulted in spiritual fruit. All the various services and activities continued and in August the Sunday School again visited Bramber. The following month Open Air services were being held, presumably in the immediate neighbourhood. The Rev. E.J. Poole-Connor – who was to play a leading role in the formation of the body which was to become the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches – was the preacher at the services to mark the first anniversary of the opening of the building.

In March 1913 Worthing was hit by a tremendously violent storm. This caused considerable damage, especially along the sea front. The pier – which was a great attraction for holiday-makers – was completely wrecked. This was a severe blow both to the town's pride, as well as its economy because at that period Worthing was heavily dependent upon its holiday trade. It was evidently still very stormy on the following Sunday and Pastor Onions records this and regrets the very low attendance at services. Although the sea played such an important part in the life of the town – for example there was at the time a sizeable inshore fishing fleet and Worthing was immensely proud of its lifeboat – Pastor Onions surprisingly makes no reference to such matters in his "Record". He lived in Rowlands Road so was presumably aware of all that was happening a few hundred yards away! One is also a little surprised to find no mention of "holiday visitors" being present in the Sunday congregation, especially as "church attendance" was seen at the time as part of normal social custom.

The picture lantern was clearly frequently used and amongst the slides shown in 1913 were some depicting "missionary work in Japan" and "an illustrated lecture on the life of David Livingstone".

On the 12th October that year a service was held in the new church to bid farewell to a number of friends from Worthing who had felt called of God to go to China as missionaries. It will be recalled that just a few years earlier "The Boxer Rising" had occurred in China, resulting in the deaths of a considerable number of westerners, including missionaries and their families. This led to greater interest in China and a burden to evangelise amongst the people of this vast land.

Mr J.E. Blanford's addresses in 1912 challenged a number of young people in Worthing, amongst whom were Fred Savage and Geraldine Holms, along with her two sisters Hilda and Victoria, as well as Gladys Carpenter. The Holms' sisters' parents were missionaries in Brazil with the Regions Beyond Missionary Union. They had come to England to finish their education and Mr and Mrs Savage senior had acted as guardians. Having been accepted by the North West Kiangsi Mission the friends left for language study in China, before commencing their ministry. In 1915 Fred and Geraldine were married. They served in the Kiangsi Province but in 1927 anti-western feeling caused them to return to England with their children. In due course they returned to China but changed circumstances necessitated their removal to Shanghai. They were still resident there when the Imperial Japanese army arrived and they were interned in the Yangchow concentration camp. They were freed after 2½ years and then endeavoured to assist Chinese believers who had struggled to maintain work originally established by western missionaries. Convinced that Chinese believers were best equipped to reach their own people Fred Savage aligned himself with the "Chinese Native Evangelistic Crusade" (later Christian Nationals Evangelism Commission). He travelled to various western nations speaking about the work in China, before returning

to the field. Fred and Geraldine retired to Canada; Fred was called Home in 1972 and Geraldine in 1980.

Although the original "Farewell Service" was held at the Rugby Road church some of the friends were more closely associated with the Tabernacle in Chapel Road. One of those who evidently maintained a close link with Rugby Road was Miss Hilda Holms who returned to Worthing in the early 1970s and was welcomed into membership of the church, assisting with the children's work and in other ways.

1913 was evidently a good year for the West Worthing Tabernacle and at its close the fellowship was praising God for His goodness to them.

1914: UNEXPECTED TRIALS AND MUCH UNCERTAINTY...

Early in 1914 we are reminded through Pastor Onions' "Record book" of the way in which medical concerns suddenly confronted parents in those days, causing great anxiety. In February Pastor and Mrs Onions' young son David was taken seriously ill with the feared diphtheria. This prevented the couple from attending church, and no one from the fellowship was allowed to visit their home for a little while due to the quarantine regulations. Pastor Onions' health was never very good and it seems that the anxiety over his son and his own inability to attend the church seriously affected him.

In 1914 the country itself was facing all kinds of problems; there was political unrest in Ireland, there were strikes in the mines and in industry, and soon the horrors of the Great War were to be unleashed. Pastor Onions was unable to attend his beloved church for one reason or another until July but evidently the work had been maintained and "The Record" shows that on his return there were a number of friends waiting to be received into membership.

At first many imagined that hostilities would only last but a few months, not perhaps fully realising the political complexities with so many nations involved.

One would have expected to find some reference in the Pastor's record book to the First World War but careful examination reveals but one brief reference to "a black day" in August 1914. Many Free Church people of the time held strong pacifist views – which made them unpopular – and one is left wondering what the friends in Rugby Road thought of the hostilities and the huge loss of life which the War caused?

Later in 1914 Pastor Onions' health was again giving cause for concern, and the Church found itself having to rely upon visiting speakers, or ministry provided by its own men.

Evidently 1915 saw the various activities of the fellowship progressing and blessing and encouragement were acknowledged. One senses that both the Church Anniversary and Harvest services were seen as more important than those at Easter and Christmas; these

latter services were it seems regarded more as contemplative times for the fellowship, rather than occasions for outreach.

On the 5th November a missionary from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) addressed a meeting at the Church. A severe gale struck the town on the 1st December and it is reported that considerable damage was done to the church building. 1915 closed with a Watch Night Service, something which certainly wouldn't have been contemplated in the Second World War!

Only very occasionally does the "record book" mention offerings; the fellowship clearly regarded the question of giving as strictly a matter between the individual and their Lord. The Sunday attendance seems to have varied week to week, but appears to have been between 30 and 50+. The ability of folk to give was dependent upon their income, and bearing in mind wages were generally quite low, it is not really surprising to find that on one occasion the total offering is recorded as being 5/- (25p.) At the time some in the "working class" were earning perhaps 7/6 or 10/- a week (37p/50p).

Despite the fact that the country was at War the Church seems to have settled into a contented routine, with Sunday services, Sunday School, Women's meetings and the rest. The fact that less than a couple of hundred miles away thousands of men were being killed, or maimed, seems not to have been appropriate for pastor to record! On the other hand he does record that God's blessing was continuing to rest upon the cause.

Missionary work continued on most fields during the period of hostilities and the Church's interest and support also continued; indeed on the 13th June 1916 a missionary from the Regions Beyond Missionary Union visited the Church and spoke of their work in the Congo.

In the summer months "The Record" shows that Open Air meetings were still being held! One wonders what might have happened if an air-ship (Zeppelin) or a bi-plane, bearing the familiar "black cross", had appeared in the sky, having made the short trip across the Channel? Sunday Schools evidently continued to be well-attended and the Rugby Road school seems to have been amongst these. Although perhaps Pastor Onions found it distressing to have to face the awful fact that the country was at war, one is somewhat surprised not to find some reference to tragic situations affecting families living in the neighbourhood.

The First World War jolted many men and women from their complacent easy going acceptance of Christianity; some turned away altogether, whilst others sought a less dogmatic interpretation of the Scriptures and a more liberal view of doctrine. One senses that Pastor Onions may have been amongst those Christians who felt very ill at ease with the popular view that all who perished for the honour of their country would automatically find favour with God.

The imagined early end of hostilities soon evaporated. Compulsory enlistment orders brought home the seriousness of the situation to people of every social class. Further evidence of this came through the frequency with which Post Office Messenger Boys were seen delivering War Office Telegrams, which mostly carried sad news. People were also shocked by the physical and mental injuries borne by those invalided home. The fact that their injuries had been inflicted by so called "Christian nations" made matters worse. Indeed the conflict caused many to turn away from Christianity.

The Armistice was signed in November 1918, although it took another five years before all the various "Peace Treaties" had been finally agreed and signed. Pastor Onions makes no comment regarding the end of the War, except to give the title of his sermon for the evening service on the 17th November; "This Present Time", with the comment that he hopes this may do some good. Possibly this indicates his tacit acknowledgement of the fact that the Great War had done a great deal of harm and had dramatically changed the concepts and values of society in radical and far-reaching ways. The ordinary man in the street was far from pleased to discover that the £1 in his pocket would only buy half what it had before hostilities commenced. Churches and mission societies felt the resulting pinch.

The Victorian era, and the Edwardian period, witnessed Church attendance on Sundays becoming the socially acceptable thing to do. There was almost a universal acceptance of the ethical and moral teaching of Christianity, but not all accepted the necessity for an individual to express repentance and personal faith in Christ in order to lay claim to being a Christian. Evangelicalism was not favoured in every church. Such attitudes were having a subtle effect upon British society and these would become more apparent in the next decade.

1920: A NEW DECADE...WITH A HOST OF PROBLEMS...

The 1920s were popularly seen as a new beginning, a time when old ways would be left behind and fresh exciting times anticipated. The Great War was seen as the war to end all wars; people were inclined to believe that the sacrifice of so many gallant lives would guarantee a better future. The illusion was soon dispelled! Following the Great War there was a marked decline in Church attendance, which caused some churches to seek new ways of attracting people. Some decided to provide recreational clubs – cricket, tennis etc. – in the belief activities of a general nature would attract men and women back to church. Other churches considered such attempts "too worldly" and a betrayal of Biblical standards. Modernism and Liberalism were live issues within the churches, and attempts to attract people through social activities were often seen as linked with views of this nature. The West Worthing Tabernacle refused to be influenced by such trends and remained firmly committed to a Biblically based sound Gospel ministry.

The decade witnessed many changes; the Great War had quickened the pace of mechanisation in factories. All kinds of new products and gadgets started to come on to the market. More and more cars, petrol lorries and buses were appearing on the roads. Possibly the arrival of "The Wireless" was the most far reaching innovation of the decade; this enabled the whole country to receive 'news' at exactly the same time, something which had never been possible before! Later when it was proposed to broadcast Services many felt unsure whether this was acceptable, after all people might not be found in appropriate circumstances or places to receive sacred discourse! One wonders what the good folk in Rugby Road thought of such matters?

Pastor John Onions continued to write up his "Record" and although he declines to comment on things in society around he gratefully acknowledges God's gracious goodness and blessing, and we find the oft repeated remark "Praise the Lord".

One Sunday evening in November 1920 an awkward situation arose when a group of "Pentecostal people" arrived at the church, claiming they had been told to take the service. Pastor Onions resisted their intrusion and continued with the service.

The Church was clearly still keen to reach out to the community with the Gospel and in June 1922 the "Record" tells us that an evangelistic campaign was held. This was led by "The King's Own Band" from Birmingham; meetings were held at various points in the neighbourhood "and gifted brethren delivered a message". The Saturday was wet so an indoor meeting was arranged. On the Sunday afternoon and evening further meetings were held in the open air. Unfortunately we are not told if there was any spiritual fruit following the Band's visit.

The fellowship's interest in foreign mission work continued and in the same year a speaker from the Heart of Africa Mission visited the church.

Following the campaign in June the church continued to hold open air meetings in various parts of the neighbourhood on into the autumn.

Like many other nonconformist churches the fellowship in Rugby Road had built up a happy relationship with a number of lay and ministerial preachers, whom they were pleased to welcome to the pulpit from time to time. The need for others to fill the pulpit sadly became increasingly necessary as the 1920s progressed due to Pastor Onions' disability. Amongst those who frequently preached on a Sunday – or spoke at the mid-week meeting – at this time were the Rev Harcourt Samuel, the Rev Elijah Bendor-Samuel, as well as his son Theodore.

In the 1920's there were moves within the Free Church Denominations in England and Wales to create a United Free Church, where doctrinal and other issues once considered so essential, would be set on one side in the interests of 'unity'. We know that in our town the "Worthing Free Church Council" became quite an influential body. In some

towns Free Churches were established, where affiliation was with more than one denomination. Whilst such moves were welcomed by many there were others who viewed such schemes with misgiving, believing that such 'unity' was largely motivated by man, rather than by truly spiritual inspiration. "Modernism" – and all that this stood for – was seen by many as the means whereby the Christian Church would be seen as credible by the masses, and would induce many to return to the fold of the church. Others saw the liberal and modernist ideas as unspiritual ploys of man. "The Record" shows that initially Pastor John Onions was attending meetings of the "Worthing Free Church Council" although noticeably such references later seem to be omitted. We know that the West Worthing Tabernacle was amongst the many evangelical churches nationally which stood firm against all such trends, remaining true to Christ Jesus and the Word.

The terrible legacy of the 1914-18 War lingered on through the 1920s. A huge number of families had either lost a close relative themselves, or a close friend; families who hadn't lost someone themselves frequently knew a family who had. Not only were there many War Widows, but also many engaged girls found themselves bereft of their loved-one. Service men who had been injured could be seen in every town. To make matters worse the economy of the country was in a poor way, which resulted in unemployment for many.

Many churches in industrial and poorer areas set up schemes to help those in desperate circumstances, and whilst such efforts were highly commendable, sometimes the desire to meet social needs tended to be seen as more important than ministering to the soul. The easy-going acceptance of Christianity in Edwardian times made it much harder for Evangelical Churches to convince people of the relevance of Biblical faith. The West Worthing Tabernacle did its part in proclaiming the Gospel to the local community, even if at times it was rebuffed. "The Record" shows that 1921 closed with a "Praise and Testimony Meeting" – which presumably means that the fellowship had things for which to give praise and that there were some able to testify to the Lord's hand of blessing upon their life.

The West Worthing Tabernacle continued to reach out into the local community with tracts, and open air meetings were held in different parts of the area, including outside West Worthing Station. The position of the church with regard to the Bible, moral issues and Sabbath observance, and similar matters, caused irritation amongst some in the community. Some were inclined to see the Rugby Road church as somewhat hidebound and prejudiced against what the man in the street saw as 'progress'. Evangelical Christians were frequently seen as 'kill joys' because of their vocal opposition to the growing acceptance of worldly ideas and pursuits, as well as liberal attitudes in general. In the eyes of quite a few in the 1920s and 1930s attendance at a church like West Worthing Tabernacle meant one was "narrow minded". The truth was, those who attended the fellowship were simply seeking to be faithful to their Lord and Master, whom they loved and earnestly desired to serve.

Door to door visitation was undertaken in these two decades but it seems that there was little lasting fruit from such efforts. Pastor John Onions' health was causing increasing concern as the 1920s progressed; one of the last contributions he was able to make to the cause was the drafting of a new Trust Deed. This carefully defined the church's doctrinal position, and gives clear guidance should it ever become necessary to terminate the cause.

The high moral and spiritual tone set by Pastor Onions clearly made its mark upon the fellowship. On one occasion he recorded: "a most powerful service. Several convicted of sin. Two have since professed faith in Christ. All praise to Him! Oh Lord do greater things." John Onions recognised that he was but a humble servant and that any blessing that came to the church wasn't the result of anything he may have done or said, but rather solely the result of the Lord graciously working in the hearts and lives of people. It is most noticeable throughout the whole period of his ministry how he continually gave all the praise to God for blessings received. God honoured the faithfulness of His servant, whom He called home in 1925.

The solid foundations laid by Pastor Onions still benefit the church today.

John Onions was a devout and dedicated servant of God. His principal joy in life was to make known the gracious goodness of the Almighty Father in sending His Son into the world as Saviour. John Onions' service for his Master was somewhat hampered by continuing ill health. He never ceased to give thanks to God for the way in which prayer had been answered in 1875 when he had been very seriously ill. John Onions testified to the way in which the Lord had renewed and restored him to a measure of health, giving thanks for His gracious mercy and goodness. He resolutely strove to serve his Lord as best he was able, always proclaiming a sound Biblically based message, meticulously recording the text and date each sermon was delivered. In the latter years of his life his throat and voice repeatedly made it difficult for him to speak in public. He was convinced of the necessity for foreign mission work and encouraged his people to support such ministry by prayer and through giving. He exercised a dependable ministry and cared greatly for his people, always deeply concerned if any displayed signs of irresoluteness. John Onions will chiefly be remembered for his work in establishing – under the hand of God – the evangelical cause in Rugby Road, Worthing, which is an ongoing memorial to his devotion and service. When he received his home-call in 1925 he had faithfully preached the Gospel for 46 years, having first been commissioned to minister the Word in 1880.

In 1926 changes were made to those serving as Trustees: Mr H.C Saunders and Mr G. Hide stood down. Mrs E. Onions, Pastor J.H. Curtis – who had frequently ministered at Rugby Road - Rev. Elijah Bendor-Samuel (Theodore's father) and Mr David J. Malin (John Onions' son), were added. Mr David Malin (who had chosen to change his name from Onions) was appointed Church Secretary in August 1926.

Sadly the Church Records after 1926 to the early 1950s have all been lost; however it has proved possible to ascertain a good deal of information for the period from other sources.

1927: BUILDING ON SOLID FOUNDATIONS

In 1927 the church invited Theodore H. Bendor-Samuel (who had married John Onions' daughter Dorothy) to become its pastor; he faithfully preached the Word and maintained the solid evangelical ethos of the fellowship. Like his predecessor he refused to compromise over the Scriptures or embrace liberal views of any kind, seeking to make known the truths of the Gospel in all suitable ways.

Right from its earliest days the cause had been run on the "faith principle" and no appeals or "seat collections" were taken up; offering boxes were provided for those who wished to contribute to the ministry and general expenses. The offertory box for the general funds of the Church was the responsibility of the Church Treasurer, who recorded the weekly sums and reported the figures to the Church Members from time to time. The box marked "Pastor's Support" was unlocked by the minister, who alone held the key. This meant that members had no means of knowing whether the pastor was receiving adequate financial support, because figures were never reported at Church Meetings. Members believed that such giving was strictly between them and their Lord. Some support for the pastor was given in kind through anonymous gifts of fruit or groceries etc. – boxes being left on the minister's door-step. This method of support for the minister remained basically unchanged until the 1980s.

In 1931 the Rev T. H. Bendor-Samuel received a call to minister to the church in Winchester, which the Misses Perks had helped found. Later he was to render sterling service on the Council of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches – which had been founded under the enthusiastic leadership of a good friend of Rugby Road, the Rev E.J. Poole Connor, in 1922. The Rev T.H. Bendor-Samuel served as President of the F.I.E.C. in 1967 and again in 1978. He later became Director of the Mission now known as the Messianic Testimony, where he did valiant work in encouraging witness amongst Jewish people. Mr Bendor-Samuel continued to have a deep interest in the work of West Worthing Tabernacle right up to his home call in 1998. Following Rev T.H. Bendor-Samuel's move to Winchester there was an interregnum of 3 years, during which various preachers ministered the Word.

Worthing's prosperity had been built upon the holiday trade and horticulture. The First World War had seriously affected the former, and the economy and related conditions meant that the town's anticipated return of the summer holiday makers in huge numbers never materialised. Whilst the holiday trade remained important it never again reached the peak of Victorian and Edwardian times. The horticultural trade continued to flourish, although gradually more and more holdings were being sold for building development. The district around Rugby Road was one part of the town affected in this

way in the 1920s and '30s. The Church welcomed the development, believing that this would result in many more children and adults attending. Sadly the anticipated increase never seemed to materialise, which was clearly a matter of deep regret to many in the Church.

In the inter-war period Britain witnessed considerable industrial unrest, with strikes, social hardship and unemployment being the lot of many. There was also political agitation and economic recession. The "Irish Question" remained unresolved. People's attitude towards Christianity somewhat changed, and the situation wasn't helped by the uncertainty and questioning within the churches mentioned earlier. Sadly the clear Scriptural emphasis of nonconformity of earlier generations was oft times replaced with a gospel which was more willing to accommodate man's ideas.

The West Worthing Tabernacle – as the church was known until the 1960s – faithfully continued to maintain its loyalty to evangelical protestant teaching. It also firmly adhered to its policy of relying upon the free-will offerings of its own members to fund the ongoing witness of the cause, rather than making 'appeals' of any kind or seeking public support; steadfastly refusing to adopt funding through 'jumble sales' or the like.

The weekly congregations at Rugby Road, prior to the Second World War, never seemed to attain the level of those seen in many other Free Churches in the town, even though at the time it was located in the centre of an area of expanding residential development. This may, in part, be explained by the way in which the church's conservative attitude was perceived by many outside the fellowship.

BLESSINGS IN THE 'THIRTIES'...

Although Sunday congregations were perhaps not all that large, averaging around 35 – 45, the dedication of those attending was earnest and sincere. The Sunday School – which, at the time, met in the afternoon – was a very important part of the church's witness in the local community. Even though parents may not have attended church regularly themselves they often sent their children to Sunday School, believing that it "would do them good". The long established practice of rewarding children for regular attendance continued, and the Sunday School Anniversary was seen as an important occasion, when boys and girls were addressed by a visiting speaker. Sunday School anniversaries were once seen as one of the major annual events in the life of a local church and this was certainly true at West Worthing Tabernacle. Amongst the speakers whose visits were eagerly anticipated in the 1930s were Mr Marcus Collins and the Rev Arthur Coffey. Mr Collins was the Borough Engineer and he always brought with him one of the models which he had constructed to illustrate his talk. One example of this was the model lighthouse which he brought along one year; this not only lit up but flashed brightly too. One boy was so impressed he remembers it clearly over 50 years

later! Another remembers how fearful he was when he needed to go into the vestry to tell Mr Coffey that he wanted to follow Jesus.

It is encouraging to be able to report that some of the children who attended the West Worthing Tabernacle Sunday School in the 1930s, and who made a commitment to follow the Lord Jesus, went on to serve Him in various ways. We know that one boy entered the Baptist ministry, one became a lay pastor and two others entered full-time Christian service; all four giving life-long commitment. These are but a sample because we know of others whose dedication held as they served their Saviour in their ordinary occupation. It has often been said that those who have faithfully served as Sunday School Teachers or Youth Leaders, will never fully know the actual fruits of their labours until they reach Heaven.

Mr Walter Withers was leader of the Sunday School in the late 1930s, and his wife helped lead a mid-week meeting for children. In this same period Mr Ernest Smith served as Church Secretary. Mr Jack Jewell was another Church Officer at this time; he was amongst those who had been converted under the ministry of the Rev. Theo. Bendor-Samuel. Mr and Mrs Mitchell were also stalwart workers in the church in the 1930s and '40s. Mr J. H. Bayes also rendered dedicated service in the 1940s, both in a leadership role in the church, as well as in the Sunday School; he also preached from time to time. For a great many years the manual organ was played by Mr King, who had a jewellers shop in the Tarring Road. There were of course many others who served the church in various ways during the years prior to – and during – the War; without their contribution the fellowship would have been the poorer. The Women's meeting – started in the early 1900s – continued to play a vital role in the life of the church, and drew a number in from the neighbourhood. Although we may not have all the names of those who served in positions of leadership in the Church – or in one of its various departments – we know that all who in their day faithfully sought to serve their Saviour are known by Him.

When the building was opened in 1912 it was both lit and heated by gas. In the early 1930s the Church decided to change to electric lighting, although retaining gas heating. Seventy years later this is still the position, although both lighting and heating have been updated and improved. Originally the water for the baptistry was heated by a coke boiler, which was located adjacent to the church in the old kitchen. Evidently making sure the water was of just the right temperature was quite an art!

Throughout the 1930s the Church's interest in foreign missions continued and at the time societies supported included The Mission to Lepers (now Leprosy Mission) and the Latvian Christian Mission. In the latter part of the decade two Latvian brothers visited the Church and are remembered for their fair hair and great height. In the two decades which preceded the 2nd World War the West Worthing Tabernacle was a vibrant local Christian fellowship, with a deep concern to witness to the growing neighbourhood around them. Prayer and personal commitment to Christ and His cause

were seen as vital to this. The Women's meeting and the Sunday School were both seen as agencies for outreach to the community.

From time to time the Church was privileged in receiving frequent visits from well-known speakers, both on Sundays and at other times. Amongst the visitors remembered are Dr Edwin Orr, the Biblical Scholar and author, and Lieutenant General Sir William Dobbie, who was closely associated with a number of Christian organisations – including The Officers Christian Union; SASRA; Sandes Soldiers and Airmen's Centres; the Mission to Military Garrisons as well as the London City Mission. The Rugby Road Church was indeed most privileged in having visiting speakers of such calibre.

1934: A NEW EXPERIENCED AND RESPECTED PASTOR ARRIVES...

In 1934 the Rev. Frederick H. King was inducted as pastor; he had previously held a number of prominent pastorates – Kensington Chapel, Bristol; Toxteth Tabernacle, Liverpool; Longley Road Baptist, Tooting. He had actually come to Worthing to 'retire', but like many others before and since, discovered that the Lord had further work for him to do. The principal speaker at his induction service was the well known preacher and prominent Freechurchman, Dr. Campbell Morgan of Westminster Chapel. Interestingly Mr King had been a student of the redoubtable Charles Haddon Spurgeon. During Mr King's pastorate the Sunday congregation averaged around 50 – 60. The premises were modified and considerably extended at the rear of the building. Originally a small kitchenette was located alongside the vestry at the rear, with a door to the side path; a toilet, with access from the outside, was located at the back. In 1935 changes were made to this part of the building, and a new large room was constructed abutting directly on to the rear wall of the chapel. This new room provided additional accommodation for the Sunday School; access was provided to the old rear rooms, as well as directly from the chapel. There was also a door on the west wall of the new room providing access from the outside. On completion of the extension the Rev. Fred King laid a commemorative plaque near this door. (The whole of this rear accommodation was adapted as a minister's flat in the early 1950s; a partition was constructed through the large room, thus creating the present corridor, and the room was divided in two by a folding wooden partition with glass windows).

The whole of the rear of the building was provided with a flat roof, with scope for a second storey to be added in the future, thus creating a large upper room. (This possibility was considered in the 1980s but shelved).

The Saturday evening Rendezvous meetings were a popular feature of the later 1930s; these were sometimes of a devotional or evangelistic nature, and at other times had a missionary theme. These gatherings were supported by friends from other local churches, as well as by folk from the neighbourhood.

At the close of the Rev. Fred King's ministry in 1939 the Church had a membership of 48, with some 60 boys and girls in the Sunday School, who were divided into Primary and Junior departments, with a Bible class for older children. The younger children met in the side section, divided from the Juniors by a sliding wooden partition; the boy's Bible class met in the room near the main entrance (This was more recently adapted as a cloakroom etc.).

The Magic Lantern – introduced in Pastor Onions' time – continued to be well used and attracted much interest. A skilled operator could ingeniously put through a series of plates, making it appear to the audience that people were 'moving'! Originally the Lantern was powered by a special kind of gas container but was later adapted to electricity. The original pulley wheels, which were used to lift the huge sheet screen, remain in place.

At this time – as indeed in later years – a happy relationship was maintained with local like-minded evangelical churches, including the High Street Free Church, Worthing, and the Fishergate Mission, Portslade, where Mr Jack Jewell and others from the Rugby Road fellowship frequently preached.

It seems that in the eyes of some of the residents around West Worthing Tabernacle the church was still seen as being rather "narrow minded" and generally unwilling to move with the times. This is somewhat borne out by the way some members viewed some of the activities engaged in by the children who attended the mid-week meeting for boys and girls. Evidently the youngsters played games and did P.T. to music, which some thought far too worldly! With attitudes of this nature it is not surprising that the Church never considered forming a unit attached to one of the Christian uniformed youth organizations. Consideration was given to forming a branch of one of the non-uniformed youth movements, at one time, but suitable leadership was not available.

The West Worthing Tabernacle had had friendly relations with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches since the formation of this body in 1922, although the church had never actually become a member. However in 1939 the church decided to seek full affiliation, and a copy of the original application is in the possession of the church.

The 1930s were years of uncertainty and difficulty for many; the economic situation caused widespread unemployment in the industrial regions and there was much poverty. At this time Worthing was still heavily dependent upon the 'holiday trade', although horticulture continued to play an important part in the economy of the town. Events in Europe cast a shadow across the decade leading to much uncertainty and fear. Efforts to avert another major war seemed to achieve very little. It fell to the Rev. Fred King to solemnly announce to his congregation on Sunday morning 3rd September 1939 that the country was at war with the German Nazi regime. Evidently Mr King had feared the worst and had brought his 'wireless receiver' with him to church!

1939: THE CHURCH FACES THE UNCERTAIN YEARS OF WAR ...

The Rev. Fred King was now well past retirement age and soon after war was declared he resigned from the pastorate. A large number of people in the country had refused to accept that war was looming, preferring to ignore the signs. In many respects the nation was ill prepared to face another conflict. Rumours and counter rumours abounded. Many folk along the south coast imagined Nazi troops would be marching up their beaches within a short time. The West Worthing Tabernacle was not alone in its apprehension and uncertainty! The Government assumed control and started to issue all kinds of decrees and directives. When the 1918 War had commenced it all seemed far away and at first the civilian population carried on life as before. However, things soon proved to be quite different in 1939. In the very early part of the war one or two younger men from the fellowship joined up. The departure of Mr King meant that the officers of the church had to make arrangements for pulpit supply, as well as all kinds of contingency plans. The Government ordered that all buildings —both domestic and otherwise — must have adequate covers fixed internally to all windows in order to prevent light escaping. The church officers had to have large wooden shutters made and fitted to all the windows, although the top clerestory ones were permanently blacked out. All outside doors had thick heavy curtains made to draw across internally, and there were also curtains at every window. War time travel restrictions prevented preachers travelling any distance to fulfil engagements, consequently suitably gifted men within the fellowship had to fill the pulpit, with the help of ministers who lived locally. One such minister who assisted the fellowship during the war was the Rev. Fred G. Money, who had moved to Worthing in 1942, and who fellowshipped with the friends at West Worthing Tabernacle. In 1947 he left Worthing, having been invited to pastor a church in Bedford. However 13 years later he was called to minister to a church in Brighton and renewed his association with Rugby Road. Mr H. G. Goddard — a long standing friend of the fellowship — also helped the church during the 1940s, both with preaching and in practical ways. Mr Jack Jewell was one of the church officers at the time and helped the fellowship in all kinds of ways, including serving as Church Secretary and Sunday School Superintendent; he also preached on a number of occasions. The Rev Fred Skeet — then minister of the Broadwater Baptist Church — also preached at Rugby Road from time to time.

In the 1920s and '30s the Women's meeting had been a vital part of the life of the church however the War inevitably interrupted the continuity of the gathering, although efforts were made to maintain companionship as best they could.

The nearness of the Continent became only too clear in the 1940s! Worthing was subject to frequent air attack; some raids were "tip and run" which meant bombs fell without warning. There were a number of injuries — and sadly fatalities — in the town.

Churches which tried to keep their Sunday School open during the war years encountered all kinds of problems. Securing sufficient staff wasn't all that easy because many younger folk had been drafted into the services. If the air raid siren sounded during a session teachers had the worry of coping with nervous and fearful youngsters. Some Sunday Schools had to close. However the West Worthing Tabernacle endeavored to keep their school open, although for a time it met in the morning rather than the afternoon.

Churches, like West Worthing Tabernacle, which had a deep and practical interest in overseas missionary work were very concerned about the safety and welfare of those serving the Lord in lands overwhelmed by war. Western missionaries serving in many African lands, as well as in India, often remained at their station, although this usually meant they had to forgo furloughs and were denied much contact with home. Those who had been serving in North Africa or in Europe in 1939 sometimes fared less well, if they had not been able to return home. Those working in the Far East or in China frequently encountered many problems, and violent aggressors did not always treat them kindly or show any respect. Friends at West Worthing Tabernacle were concerned about the welfare of the Latvian brothers who had visited the church just before the war. Missionary Societies were frequently unable to maintain contact with their personnel, and the transfer of funds was impossible at times. At the home end income dropped, and continued to be low in the years immediately following the War.

Although many children from Worthing were evacuated away from the town to other parts of the country which were considered more safe, surprisingly large numbers of youngsters from the London area were sent down to Worthing, where they were billeted with local residents. The vulnerability of the town to cross channel raids by enemy planes evidently being overlooked. In fact the number of boys and girls coming to the town exceeded the number sent away. This presented a problem to the local Education Authority, who had to turn to churches for help. The West Worthing Tabernacle responded to the urgent appeal and classes were held there during the week — in conjunction with the Elm Grove School — for the greater part of the War. Sunday and evening mid-week services continued to be held throughout the period, although there were occasions when raids and other circumstances made it impossible to meet.

Some churches in the town were affected in other ways. For example the church's sister F.I.E.C. church in Pendine Avenue, East Worthing, was taken over by the Civil Defence and used as an emergency store.

A considerable number of service personnel were based in the district and from time to time servicemen and women found their way to the West Worthing Tabernacle, where they received a warm welcome. Some service personnel became quite involved in the life of the church during their stay in the area.

During the dark and uncertain days of War the Church invited the Rev. Norman Cogley to minister to them and he pastored the fellowship from 1942 to 1944. Mr Cogley hailed from Ulster and was committed to a staunchly Protestant ministry. The Church rented a house for Mr and Mrs Cogley in Church Road, Tarring. The 1940s were difficult years for the nation, and there was much suffering and sadness, which also touched some in the local community. Every available plot of ground was used for the production of vegetables, and the land adjacent to the chapel was utilized in this way. Following his pastorate in Worthing Mr Cogley moved to Devon, where he ministered at the chapels in Winkleigh and Hollacombe.

1945: PEACE – BUT AT ENORMOUS COST ...

The understandable national euphoria, which greeted the end of the War in 1945, was comparatively short lived once people realized the enormous cost in human life, as well as the financial burden which the nation faced. The War had left the nation drained economically, physically and spiritually, indeed every area of life was affected in some way or other. Raw materials were in short supply, which in turn affected industry and the supply of goods. Rationing increased, and the demand for coal failed to meet the requirements of industry and the power stations. In order to conserve power electricity supplies were switched off for extended periods; different localities being affected on different days. This meant that both children's and adult meetings on winter evenings sometimes had to be cancelled at short notice. Some of the winters in the 1940s were bitterly cold, which added to the problems. The West Worthing Tabernacle – like many other fellowships – faced the difficulties of the period with fortitude, and resolutely determined to minister to those in the area as best it was able. It was in these difficult days of the mid-1940s that the Church invited the Rev. Ernest Bacon to become their minister.

The West Worthing Tabernacle building had survived the war comparatively unscathed, although the scurrying feet of spirited school children, together with the general lack of maintenance due to the prevailing circumstances, resulted in the chapel's appearance being less than pristine! Like most other buildings at the time the years of scrimping and 'make-do and-mend' were only too apparent to all who passed by. The congregation was quite small but nevertheless determined to re-establish a vibrant fellowship. Mr Bacon, together with a loyal and devoted band of helpers, willingly set about the necessary material and spiritual tasks requiring attention with dedication and zeal. Many war time restrictions were still in place and it was not always easy to secure materials for building or decoration.

Ministering to those in need wasn't easy. The war resulted in many being hurt physically, emotionally and spiritually. There were many within the churches who had difficulty in coming to terms with the way War had affected them or their families. Reaching out and ministering to folk in the neighbourhood with the Gospel sometimes resulted in rebuke or rebuff; there were many who were inclined to blame God for

allowing the War. Bitterness often clouded people's response to the church's outreach; men and women frequently seemed reluctant to accept that human sin was at the root of the conflict. Conversely some in society still retained "respect for the Church" and, even if they were not prepared to attend a place of worship themselves, they were more than willing to send their children to Sunday School, believing that this would "help prepare them to face life's demands". Consequently many churches found themselves with large numbers of youngsters in their Sunday Schools who often came unwillingly and under protest! The lack of suitable personnel in many churches exacerbated the problem. It seems that the West Worthing Tabernacle Sunday School was quite well attended at this time, although finding enough teachers was a problem.

The Rev. Ernest Bacon shared his time between the Christian Bookshop which, at the time, was located in Chapel Road near the junction with Teville Road, and the Rugby Road Church. In fact Mr Bacon lived in a flat above the Bookshop. Mr Bacon had previously ministered in Chipping Sodbury and in Lincoln, and during the War had served on the headquarters staff of WEC. He concluded his pastorate in Worthing in 1948. He then undertook various pastorates and also lectured at a Bible College. In 1959 he moved to Birmingham becoming one of the first Lecturers at the new Bible Institute, where he served until 1962. Ernest Bacon retained a fondness for the cause in Rugby Road. In the latter years of his life he encountered sight problems, eventually becoming blind.

1948: UNCERTAIN TIMES ...

Following the departure of the Rev. Ernest Bacon visiting preachers, and some from within the fellowship, sought to maintain the witness. Amongst those whose ministry was appreciated were Mr J. H. Bayes, Mr H. G. Goddard, Mr R. Thorns, Mr J. Jewell and Mr L. Land. To illustrate how things stood at the close of the decade we quote one Local Preacher who had been invited to take the Easter Service in 1949; "...when my wife and I arrived we found a congregation of 5 to greet us".

Mr Leslie Land – mentioned above – was the Headmaster of Seaford College – the eminent school for boys - and the brother of the Rev. Eric Land. The College was at the time located in Worthing, but later moved to near Duncton. Mr Leslie Land was a good friend to West Worthing Tabernacle, and his help and advice were much appreciated.

One of the many effects of the War was the change in public attitudes towards various social and moral issues, resulting in a more liberal and broad-minded position being adopted by many. Prior to the War the Churches – both Established and Nonconformist – enjoyed a favoured position in society and "the Nonconformist conscience" carried considerable weight both with the national Press, and with local and national Government. However following the Conflict this position gradually slipped away. Over the next two decades Evangelical churches expressed alarm over the influence of the Cinema, and the way in which Dance Halls were attracting young people. Strong

drink and gambling were amongst other issues which caused grave concern. When television sets became more widely available in the 1950s – and many more families started to own cars – these too were seen as further eroding the position of the Church, and influencing people away from church attendance. The West Worthing Tabernacle joined with other churches in the town in expressing concern regarding the way in which the Town Council intended to relax bye-laws, allowing recreational and sports activities to take place upon the Sabbath which had previously been proscribed.

There were all kinds of pressures being faced by the friends at Rugby Road in the early 1950s but, despite all the problems, members made strenuous efforts “to keep the doors open”. Difficulties increased and the future of the cause was, humanly speaking, rather bleak. There was nevertheless a deep sense of expectancy and much prayer ascended. The Rev. T.H. Bendor-Samuel – a former pastor and a Trustee – retained a keen interest in the work and although not living in the district rendered assistance by giving help with administration and acting as Treasurer.

Following the Second World War the religious climate in Britain was in a state of flux. In the popular view “Christianity” was often perceived merely as a cultural identity, or simply as something those who happened to be interested in ‘religion’ took up, almost in the similar vein as a hobby. Many men and women appeared to imagine one could justly claim to be ‘a Christian’ even if one hadn’t made any particular commitment to Christ; gaining the ‘reward of Heaven’ was often seen as being largely dependent upon one’s moral life-style and the ‘good deeds’ performed and the ‘merit’ thus acquired. The religious and moral turmoil of the decades immediately following the Second World War dramatically changed the whole ethos of belief in God, long held views were dismissed by many; and, in the latter years of the Century, the legacy of such upheaval is still with us.

The anticipated renewal at West Worthing Tabernacle following the war years had not materialized and the future seemed unpromising. Records are rather scanty for this period but it appears that the friends worshipping at Rugby Road approached the Rev. Eric Land, the minister of the Worthing Tabernacle (Chapel Road) to see if he could help them. Mr Eric Land had been President of the F.I.E.C. in 1942 and had subsequently remained closely involved with the Fellowship and its concern for evangelical causes. Mr Eric Land evidently agreed to give some kind of general oversight to the West Worthing Tabernacle and in 1952 he arranged for Dr. Alfred Marshall – a member of the High Street church in the town – to undertake pastoral responsibility at Rugby Road. Dr. Marshall was a noted Greek scholar and had earlier been a Lecturer at the National Young Life Campaign Training College in Surbiton. Whilst his preaching was both sound and Biblical it was possibly rather deep for the little company in Rugby Road, and the arrangement ended after a few months. The cause in Rugby Road was somewhat languishing by 1953, attendance having considerably declined. The premises presented a down at heel appearance to the neighbourhood and in due course the Rev. Eric Land considered that the situation could

not be easily resolved and decided to close the church. A board outside the building announced that until further notice the church was closed. The sudden closure was seen by many as rather arbitrary. This unfortunate situation was deeply distressing to the remaining Church members, as well as to a number of former members and other friends, and it seems as though much prayer ascended. The Rev Ernest Bacon was particularly grieved and sought to have the decision reversed. A letter still in the possession of the church shows how much he regretted the closure of the church in 1953.

1953: THE LORD’S HAND OF BLESSING WAS NOT SHORTENED...

In the goodness of the Lord the closure of the building was but for a comparatively short while, and the cause was soon destined to wonderfully rise phoenix like from slumber. Those who believed that the Lord had further plans for the West Worthing Tabernacle were soon to have their inner convictions confirmed.

In 1953 Pastor and Mrs Charles Brown moved to Worthing. Mr Brown had rendered stalwart service with the London City Mission, followed by two pastorates: Willesden Evangelical Church and Stockwell Baptist Church. The couple thought that they had come to Worthing to ‘retire’ but seemingly soon discovered that the Lord had other plans. In the gracious providence of God Mr Brown ‘discovered’ the closed church building in Rugby Road, and the Lord laid it upon his heart to endeavour to revive the cause. Mr Brown immediately commenced to make enquiries concerning the building and with the blessing and support of the F.I.E.C. and local evangelical pastors and others, was encouraged to proceed. The Trustees (still individual persons) readily agreed to Mr Brown’s plans. Approval having been secured Pastor Brown set about the daunting task of renovating the building and reviving the cause. This step of faith was indeed blessed by the Lord in both practical and spiritual ways. Expressions of support and answers to prayer were a clear indication that the Lord did indeed have plans for West Worthing Tabernacle, and that the cause would play a further part in the work of the Kingdom. Building work was put in hand and at the same time the Schoolroom, which had been added in 1935, was modified and made into a flat for Mr and Mrs Brown. Promises of prayer and financial support continued to be received, further tokens of the Lord’s hand of blessing. Some of those who had had connections with the church in earlier years were thrilled by the prospect of the church being re-opened for worship.

On Whit Sunday 1st June 1954 special services were held to mark the re-opening of the building, and its rededication to the service of God. There was much rejoicing as yet another chapter in the life of the church commenced. The membership having lapsed Pastor Charles Brown ran the cause on “mission hall lines” until it proved possible to establish a fully constituted church once again.

Amongst those who rendered considerable assistance to Mr Brown at this time was Mr H. G. Goddard, (President of the F.I.E.C. in 1952) who had been a frequent visiting preacher at West Worthing Tabernacle over very many years and who had at one stage in the 1940s served as Moderator. In addition to giving spiritual help he was also able to give practical assistance with decorating and building repairs. Ten years later Mr Goddard was to move to Suffolk, where he was instrumental in establishing the Datchet Evangelical Fellowship and where Pastor Brown was later to join him in this work.

In 1955 the Church sold a small plot of ground adjacent to Ripley Road, so that the local Electricity Board could build a sub-station. An ongoing practical gesture for the benefit of the local community!

1957: THE CHURCH REVIVES

The 7th August 1957 was another day which marked an important event in the life of the church; this was the day when Pastor and Mrs Charles Brown – together with 22 other men and women – covenanted together to reconstitute the West Worthing Tabernacle and establish a new Membership Roll. This point had been reached after considerable effort, both in prayer and physical labour. A new Constitution – and Doctrinal Statement – which fully encapsulated that of the original was drafted and after prayerful consideration, agreed by the membership. Some of those who renewed their fellowship with the Church had been associated with the cause for a number of years.

On the 27th November 1957 a service of Thanksgiving and Consecration was held to mark the re-establishment of the church, at which appropriately the Rev. T.H. Bendor-Samuel preached, thus re-establishing a link with the early days of the fellowship.

1957 drew to a close with all in the fellowship having a sense of great expectancy as they looked to the Lord for His seal of blessing. Regular Sunday Services were once again being held, with the Lord's Supper on the first Sunday evening and third Sunday morning of each month; a practice which continues today. Over the next few months mid-week and other meetings were commenced, and an Evangelistic Mission was conducted by Mr Dennis C. Clarke.

Leaflets announcing the activities of the Church were distributed around the homes in the local roads, and nearer to Christmas one inviting folk to the special services.

Adjacent to the church building there was a large plot of ground which had not been utilized for many years. Mr Brown saw the potential here for supplying his needs for vegetables and other crops. Soon after he had started to turn the ground over with a spade someone came by and offered to do the job with his rotavator, an offer which was gladly accepted. So the land was again returned to its original horticultural use!

Soon after the West Worthing Tabernacle was re-established the fellowship agreed that special services should in future be held each year on Good Friday; Easter Day; Whit Sunday; Harvest Thanksgiving and Christmas morning and, where appropriate, such services should be of an evangelistic nature. It was also agreed to hold an annual Missionary Weekend; interestingly the church continues to honour this decision some 42 years later.

A year later the church was pleased to be able to record that congregations were increasing, although the actual membership was only 27. Mr Brown's earlier experience with the London City Mission meant that he was well qualified to lead a team in door to door visitation in the locality. This team of workers became known as "the Fishermen's Club". Some visiting preachers were surprised to hear reference to this in 'the notices', thinking at first that the church evidently had a number of keen anglers in its membership!

One of those who took part in this visitation ministry was Mr Patterson, affectionately known as Pat. He had been very seriously wounded in the Second World War; his injuries affected both his speech and his walking but he did not allow his disabilities to restrict his service for his Saviour. He also served as a Council Member and for many years as Hymn book steward. Indeed despite his incapacity he willingly undertook many other duties in the church. He had a winsome personality and a lovely smile. When visiting he would partner another door to door worker and would smile and pray whilst his colleague spoke. Pat was also a keen tract distributor and would sometimes stand near West Worthing Station. He had a specially adapted tricycle and sometimes he would ride down to the sea front and distribute tracts there. Until the latter years of his life Pat and his wife had a keen interest in White's Homes, and sometimes youngsters from there would spend a week's holiday with them at their home in Reigate Road. One year Pat and his wife spent a month at the Home in South Woodford helping out. Mrs Patterson predeceased her husband but Pat remained active in the fellowship right up to the day of his homecall in 1997. He was a gracious and godly man, much loved by the whole membership.

Right from the very commencement of the cause the financial income had been entirely dependent upon the generosity of the Lord's people, as they felt led to give. No fund raising efforts of any kind, nor appeals, have ever been made and God has honoured the fellowship for its adherence to this principle. Bazaars, and the like, have never been considered appropriate or necessary. With the appointment of Pastor Charles Brown it was agreed that the church should pay all legitimate expenses but his own support would be dependent upon gifts placed in a box in the chapel marked "For Pastor's Support". The fellowship felt so strongly about this principle that publicity leaflets distributed around the neighbourhood mentioned the fact that "no seat offerings" were taken, even now the collection is always introduced as being "a free-will offering".

During Mr Brown's pastorate the long established missionary interest was revived and in 1958 gifts were sent to the Bolivian Indian Mission (now SIM); the London Embankment Mission (now LCM); the North Africa Mission (now AWM); Africa Inland Mission and the Unevangelised Fields Mission.

The need for the fellowship to meet together regularly for united prayer was addressed early in Mr Brown's ministry, and various meetings were arranged. Once again we notice how this emphasis has continued all down the years.

In 1958 the Church protested to the BBC concerning the prominence being given to horse racing, and the way "betting prices" were quoted. The fellowship believed these might encourage people to gamble.

The following year missionary interest and giving was growing and amongst the societies supported were the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM); Missionary Aviation Fellowship (MAF); European Christian Mission; Wycliffe Bible Translators; the Poona and Indian Village Mission (now SIM) and the Red Sea Mission, amongst others. During the 1950s and 1960s the church had a special interest in one of its members – Mr Richard Roche – who was serving in Brazil with U.F.M.

1959 also saw the regular visitation of the neighbourhood continuing, and outreach to girls and boys receiving additional attention. Further work proved necessary in the church when the wiring had to be improved, and at the same time new fluorescent lighting was installed.

It is clearly not possible to refer to all who have at one time been linked with the Rugby Road Church but it is interesting to note that quite often the fellowship had amongst its number those who had earlier served on the mission field. In 1959 Miss Smith, who had spent some years in Poland as a missionary, was welcomed into membership. Later that same year Miss Jean Guy, who had been a missionary nurse in Tanganyika (now Tanzania) was also received into membership. In subsequent years others also sought fellowship.

On the 15th October 1960 the fellowship was able to strengthen its links with "Whites Homes" in South Woodford, when a party from the church travelled over to Essex to see the work at first hand.

All the various activities were maintained by the church and the Gospel was faithfully preached. The fellowship acknowledged with gratitude that the Lord's hand of blessing was resting upon the cause, and in reliance upon Him looked to the future with anticipation.

Even though many religious views which had been widely accepted by earlier generations had, to some extent, been discarded by many there was none the less still a measure of acceptance of Biblical moral values by society in general in the 1950s.



Pastor John Onions
1906 - 25



The Church Building
1962



The Church Hall
opened November 1993



The Church Building
2000



The Church & Hall
May 2000



The Church Interior
May 2000



Part of the Present Congregation

Christianity continued to influence people's moral and ethical attitudes in various areas of both individual and community life. The fact that the majority of men and women had attended Sunday School when young meant that they were inclined to view life from a religious point of view. However, the belief that citizens can be cajoled or forced to accept a particular religious code of behaviour through education or legislation hasn't necessarily been proved to be enduringly true!

1960: "THE WIND OF CHANGE" BEGINS TO BE FELT BY THE NATION

Door to door visits by those from the fellowship were proving less easy. Visitors were not only finding coolness and indifference towards the Christian message, but also in some cases hostility. The ready acceptance of the truth of the Bible found in earlier years was being replaced by doubt and opposition, sometimes the result of war-time experiences. God was often blamed for the horror of war, rather than folk recognizing the plain truth that the sin of mankind was the root of the problem. Door to door visitors also found that the 'absolutes' accepted by earlier generations were beginning to evaporate, and long accepted 'Christian principles' were being discarded by many. Worthing ... along with the rest of Great Britain ... had decided to seek new paths to fulfillment. The situation facing churches wasn't helped when, in the mid 1960s, prominent national 'Churchmen' suggested that the God of the Bible was dead! Churches which held tenaciously to the Sovereignty of God, the full deity of Jesus Christ and the infallibility of the Bible, often found themselves criticized and unpopular.

"The Children's Hour", together with "Ambassadors" for older children, were popular meetings in 1961; these were held on Wednesday evenings. The Women's Meeting was also well supported. The Rev E.J. Poole-Connor – the leading figure in the formation of the F.I.E.C. – made a welcome return visit to the Church this same year and was no doubt delighted to see how things were progressing. Mr Poole-Connor was one of the leading figures in the fight to maintain Biblical truth, and separation from liberalism and doctrinal error. The F.I.E.C. was founded to provide mutual encouragement amongst independent Bible Churches. Further building work at Rugby Road had to be undertaken in 1961 both in the church itself as well as in the Pastor's flat. This year also saw further evangelistic outreach in this country by the American evangelist Dr. Billy Graham; the central meeting was "relayed to venues throughout the country". The Rugby Road Church distributed cards advertising the local meetings.

Pastor Charles Brown was a man of many talents, which included being an accomplished concertina instrumentalist. This talent proved most useful in children's work, as well as in open air outreach.

In 1961 the Register of Members stood at 46, and although this was encouraging, regret was expressed that the outreach of the fellowship to the local area seemed to result in few converts. It seems that most of the members had been received into fellowship by transfer from elsewhere. This same year a Men's Meeting was established which at first met one afternoon a week, although evidently the time was soon changed to the

evening. The important event of 1961 was the marriage of Mr Richard Roche – the Church's "own missionary"; Richard married a fellow Unevangelised Fields missionary from Canada. The couple served in Brazil, working amongst the Kayapu Indians. Richard was the son of Dr and Mrs Maurice Roche; Dr Roche served as an officer of the Church for many years. 1961 closed with the fellowship giving praise to God for all His gracious goodness and blessing.

1962 saw the commencement of a twice monthly meeting on Saturday evenings. These soon became a regular and well supported feature of the Church, attracting a large number of people. Although the intention was that these would form part of the church's outreach, many of those who came were from other fellowships. There was a varied programme; sometimes popular hymns were sung by request; sometimes the Lancing Male Voice Choir rendered items and on other occasions there was a soloist. Some Saturdays Missionary Slides or a "Fact and Faith" film was shown, and other weeks guest speakers from various walks of life gave their testimony, and spoke of how their faith impinged upon their life and work. One of the speakers was a Police Officer who powerfully spoke of how his faith had a bearing upon the community in which he served. There are many who still look back to these meetings and rejoice in how they helped them grow spiritually. Changing patterns in society meant that later on these meetings were only held once a month.

During the 1950s and 1960s Open Air meetings continued to be an effective means of outreach (only a few families owned a car!); sometimes these meetings were held in the neighbourhood, although in the summer months the venue was sometimes the seafront.

1962: A YEAR OF MIXED EMOTIONS FOR THE FELLOWSHIP

In August 1962 Pastor Charles Brown announced that he had received a call to Suffolk, to assist with building up village causes; believing that this was of the Lord, he had accepted. It is difficult at this distance in time to sense how the fellowship felt – 'stunned', probably sums it up! Although the fellowship recognized that Mr Brown needed to respond there was nevertheless much sadness amongst the members. The closing months of his ministry in Worthing witnessed spiritual blessing and there were encouragements of different kinds. The fellowship rejoiced in the number coming forward for believer's baptism.

A farewell service was held for Mr and Mrs Brown on the 1st September 1962, at which deep appreciation was expressed concerning their dedicated service amongst the people of West Worthing. During Pastor Brown's pastorate a tremendous amount had been achieved; the church had been re-established and the witness to the neighbourhood had been extended in various ways.

With the departure of Pastor and Mrs Charles Brown another era in the life of the church drew to a close. During the ensuing interregnum Pastor Ralph E. Morrish of the

High Street Free Church graciously gave pastoral oversight to the West Worthing fellowship in Rugby Road.

On the 13th October 1962 special services were held to mark the jubilee of the erection of the building; the guest preacher on this occasion was the Rev T.H. Bendor-Samuel, former pastor. Mr David J. Malin – son of the first pastor and former Secretary and Trustee – also took part. The fellowship acknowledged the goodness of the Lord to the cause since its inception, and thankfulness expressed for His goodness through all the vicissitudes of the years.

The church was delighted to learn that the Rev Theo. Bendor-Samuel had recently been appointed General Secretary of the F.I.E.C.

1963: SEEKING AND FINDING A NEW PASTOR

During the next few months the church set about prayerfully seeking the Lord's will concerning the pastorate and amongst those invited to preach was a student from the London Bible College, Mr Trevor Manning. The church felt drawn to his Biblical ministry and after further consultation and prayer decided to invite him to become the church's minister. Following Mr Manning's acceptance of the call an ordination and induction service was held at Rugby Road on the 31st August 1963; the Chairman was the Rev Ralph Morrish, and the Rev W.J.C. White, and the Rev Ronald Evans, participated in the ordination and also spoke. Mr and Mrs Manning took up residence in the flat at the rear of the church premises.

For many years the church had been known as the West Worthing Tabernacle – although it was frequently referred to as the Rugby Road Evangelical Church – subsequently the fellowship used the title West Worthing Independent Evangelical Free Church, which although it faithfully reflected the church's doctrinal position was nevertheless rather cumbersome. With the consent of the F.I.E.C. – which body had in 1968 assumed responsibility as Trustees – it was agreed that the title should be shortened to West Worthing Evangelical Church, the name by which the church is known today.

At this juncture the church was holding Sunday services morning and evening, with Sunday School in the afternoon. During the week the fellowship met for prayer and Bible study, and in addition there was a Women's meeting, as well as mid-week meetings for girls and boys, and young teens. Door to door visitation was also being undertaken. The Saturday evening meeting continued, although this was held monthly. During the 1950s and 1960s the Rev Claud Trigger – then pastor of Lancing Tabernacle - frequently preached at the church, and helped in other ways as well; his visits were always much appreciated.

The Church's interest in missionary work remained as keen as ever, with a special committee to co-ordinate support and representation. Once again we see how arrangements made in earlier years continue to the present time.

The 2nd World War and its aftermath resulted in the country and its citizens facing economic difficulties; few had expected rationing still to be in place in the 1950s but this proved to be the case. This was a testing period and Rugby Road, like many other churches and organizations, were hard pressed at times to meet expenses. Despite all the anxiety and problems the members nevertheless remained faithful to the Church's policy and no recourse to "appeals" proved necessary. In the 1960s additional expenses were incurred because new regulations were imposed upon churches and other organizations, requiring them to have adequate insurance cover regarding public liability, fire etc. The church was at the time operating a mini bus and whilst this clearly met a real need it was an additional expense. The records show how the fellowship recognized that when the going seemed hard the Lord was indeed with them, and helping them to meet the challenges along the way.

In the 1960s Mr Horace Thompson was a well known member of the Church; he was noted for his expertise as an optician and for his frequent visits to mission hospitals in Africa. He ran training courses and advised medical staff on aspects of eye care, as well as carrying out operations himself. The church took a prayerful and practical interest in this important ministry of compassion. Mr Thompson was ably assisted by Miss S. Harrison.

In 1964 the church's Young People's Fellowship was quite vibrant, and the young people were responsible for recording services (on "a reel to reel" recorder) and then visiting elderly and shut-in folk with a tape recorder. Amongst those who willingly helped with this was Miss Mary Lovesay, who although handicapped herself – and had walking problems – used to regularly visit shut-in folk. Mary went to be with her Lord in 1999 – the last link with the early days, for she had been amongst the children who had attended classes at Rugby Road during the War, when the premises were used as a school.

The Church's interest in "White's Homes" continued and members made a further visit to South Woodford in 1964.

When the Rev Trevor Manning was appointed Pastor it was agreed that the Church would pay all his expenses, as well as bills from the utilities etc. Mr Manning accepted the pastorate on the understanding that his support would be dependant upon the giving of the Lord's people – as they felt led – via an offertory box labelled "For Pastor's support". This continued a practice established in the early years of the cause.

The West Worthing Tabernacle members were very appreciative of the "systematic and sound Biblical ministry" given by Mr Manning. The records show that the Lord

honoured his faithfulness to the Bible, and that there was both spiritual and numerical growth. A regular monthly magazine was introduced called "The Signpost" – which was produced on an ink duplicator. The magazine featured a range of articles, news items and missionary notes, and was very much appreciated by members and friends.

In January 1965 the town was once again hit by a severe gale and the church building suffered quite a lot of damage. In the same year we find that the membership of the Women's Meeting stood at 20; the Men's Fellowship had 12 members; the Y.P.F. had 10 and the Sunday School and Bible Class 18 between them. "The Fishermen's Club" was still active and busily engaged in door to door visitation and in tracting. The Church membership stood at 26 men and women, some of whom were elderly and unable to attend services. The missionary interest remained as robust as ever.

In the 1960s many Christians were alarmed by some of the developments in society. Gambling was one of the numerous moral issues which concerned many, especially when "betting shops" in the high street were legalised; the type of programmes being shown on Television also provoked criticism from many Christians. It appears that the fellowship in Rugby Road shared these and similar concerns, and alarm was expressed over trends in society, especially regarding how these might influence young people morally.

In the summer of 1966 Dr Billy Graham conducted a further series of evangelistic meetings in London and a party from the church went up to Earls Court.

In 1966 the weekly meeting for 7 to 11 year old girls and boys was re-launched under the title "Adventurers"; 16 youngsters attended the first meeting. The year also saw the church being blessed and enabled to maintain all its services and other activities, and the fellowship felt encouraged by the progress being made in many departments of church life.

The Rev Trevor Manning organized a number of holidays during his pastorate, mainly from 1965 onwards. The first two of these were by coach to Holland (1965) and Germany (1966) with young people from Rugby Road being joined by those from other fellowships along the coast. Later in his pastorate he took smaller groups by minibus to visit missionaries in Belgium, Austria and France. Fraternal links were forged with some of the missionaries and at least one of the party later served on the mission field. In 1971 and 1972 parties consisting of a wider age group visited Holland and Luxembourg. Mutually beneficial contacts were made with believers on the Continent in this way. These events were much appreciated by all who participated. Mr and Mrs Manning's growing family persuaded some church members that the possibility of securing a Manse should be explored; there was some hesitancy on the part of others because the membership was not very large and some were finding it a little difficult to maintain their giving. The situation was further complicated by an additional proposal that the long established practice of the church not paying the pastor

a regular stipend, should be reversed. It was agreed that all these issues should be made a matter of prayer by the members.

In August 1967 a Holiday Bible Club was held and this resulted in a few more children joining the Sunday School. The Church Minutes also show that all the various activities of the fellowship were continuing to function, although disquiet was expressed concerning the low number of children and young people attending. The church's mini-bus was still much appreciated by those who needed to use it; another indication that at the time few of those attending owned cars is the report that "a cycle shed" had been erected at the side of the church.

One Saturday evening, towards the end of the 1960s, a sizeable congregation had gathered to hear a visiting missionary speaker – Gladys Aylward, little of stature but a great servant of God. The hushed congregation clung to her every word as she related how she had sought to serve her Lord in China. Her harrowing war-time experiences and hazardous journey on foot through the mountains when taking children to a place of safety, made a deep impression on many young people who were present that Saturday evening in the Rugby Road Church. Gladys Aylward testified how she had known God's presence and guardianship in most remarkable ways. Within just a few years of this visit the Lord called Gladys home (1969).

1968: A YEAR OF TESTING, SADNESS AND BLESSING

In August 1968 another Holiday Bible Club was held; the result was encouraging and the Sunday School membership rose to 35. The mid-week meetings for children continued to be popular; Adventurers had 21 members and Seekers (for 11 – 15 year olds) was commenced.

The need for corporate prayer continued to be recognized by the church and an additional meeting was commenced at 10.30 a.m. each Sunday morning.

In earlier days the fellowship had chosen to use the same motto as the Keswick Convention; "All one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians c.3 v 28) – and this was painted across the arch above the pulpit, reminding those who gathered in the chapel of their unity in the Lord.

The West Worthing Tabernacle greatly valued its independence and had initially appointed private Trustees, following the common practice of the time for such churches. However over the years the demands placed upon those serving as individual Trustees of churches, and similar bodies, gradually grew more onerous because of changes in legislation and public liability regulations etc, and in 1968 the church decided that it was more appropriate for its Trusteeship to be in the hands of a recognized corporate body and the F.I.E.C. was asked to assume this responsibility.

At certain times the very sensitive matter of personal giving caused "a little tension" in the fellowship, mainly because this was seen as a private matter between the individual and their Lord. When the proposal that the church should purchase a manse came before the Church Meeting it unexpectedly proved to be "a hot potato", opinion being somewhat divided. A large sum was offered specifically for the purchase of the manse and some members felt they were being pressurized to contribute towards the balance. It was agreed "to test the waters" and a deadline was fixed. If the sum of £3,000 had been received by that time, then a house would be purchased. Sceptics doubted if this was realistically achievable but were discomfited when, within 30 minutes of the deadline, adequate donations had been received or promised. The Church purchased a house in Harrow Road in 1968. The faith of the majority of members was fully vindicated and this episode seemed to encourage the fellowship, and the Church went forward trusting the Lord to meet all its needs.

In November 1968 the church was delighted to receive a visit from Mr and Mrs Richard Roche, the fellowship's 'own' missionary couple, who were on furlough from Belem, Para, Brazil, where they served with U.F.M. The couple returned to the field in March 1969 but a month later sad news was received that Richard had died. A memorial service was held at Rugby Road on 30th April, at which representatives of the Unevangelised Fields Mission were present. Dorothy Roche, and her young son David, returned to her home in Canada. Richard's father – Dr Maurice Roche – had faithfully served the church in Rugby Road as both Secretary and Treasurer over many years. The moving incident of Richard's early demise deepened the resolve of the fellowship to support the work of mission.

Coffee mornings were commenced in the summer of 1969 as a form of outreach to the neighbourhood, and these continue to be part of the ongoing witness of the church.

Over the years a close relationship had been built up between the church and "White's Homes", and as well as visits being arranged to the Homes in South Woodford, gifts of packet and tinned foods from the Harvest Thanksgiving service were donated as a token of the church's practical interest in the work.

In 1970 the local F.I.E.C. churches agreed to explore the possibility of establishing a Christian retirement home in the area and the West Worthing fellowship readily agreed to support this venture.

"The Signpost" magazine was still proving to be a useful vehicle for sharing news and bringing matters to the notice of folk. In the school holidays – under the able leadership of the Rev and Mrs Manning - Bible Clubs were held and although these attracted a substantial number of girls and boys, few actually joined the Sunday School, which remained quite small. The mid-week meetings – Adventurers and Seekers – fared better and in the early 1970s had some 50 members between them. The Women's meeting had 30 members, who appreciated this weekly gathering.

In the early 1970s Miss Holms – who had gone to China in 1913 as a missionary – returned to Worthing and joined the fellowship in Rugby Road, where she assisted with the work amongst the children and helped in other ways.

In 1971 the fellowship revived the Sunday evening after-church fellowship meeting; at the time this was held once a month and soon became a popular feature of church life. In the summer of '71 some of the older children from the Sunday School and mid-week Children's meeting, were taken to Fittleworth for a week's Camp. This venture proved to be quite encouraging.

During the 1970s the Church paid for a Scripture Text poster to be displayed at the West Worthing Railway Station; a practice which continued on into the 1980s with the support of members.

In 1972 we find that the Church's mini-bus was once again causing some anxious moments because of mechanical problems; running costs were also a headache. In March a Young People's Conference was held at Chelwood Gate, Ashdown Forest; and in August a Children's Camp was held at the same venue. The Church gave consideration to the possibility of revising the Constitution and the introduction of an Eldership. Many years elapsed before the latter was finally agreed. The fellowship longed to gain the interest of more young people and to assist with this a monthly Youth Squash was commenced every second Sunday evening, which followed on from the service. In November a Church Quiet Day was held at the Evangelical Free Church in Aldrington.

Towards the close of 1972 the fellowship was saddened to receive the news that their beloved pastor – Trevor Manning – had received a call to work with Christian Mission to the Communist World.⁶ Mr Manning indicated that he believed this to be of the Lord and would conclude his ministry in Worthing in April 1973.

1973: ANOTHER ERA IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH ENDS, BRINGING NEW CHALLENGES

At the beginning of 1973 the Church Membership stood at 29, although others were regular members of the congregation. On the 24th March a Valedictory Service was held for Mr Manning, during which many friends expressed their sincere thanks for his faithful ministry over a period of 9 years. Prayerful good wishes for his future service were voiced. Mrs Manning was also thanked for her work in the Church. Following their removal from the town Mr Manning made frequent visits back to the fellowship to speak about the work of the Mission. Both Pastor and Mrs Manning were greatly loved

⁶ now Release International

by the fellowship, and their unstinting service and ministry had indeed been a blessing to many.

In the 1960s Mr and Mrs David Cave, and their daughter Miss Carol Cave, had moved to Worthing from Kent, where Mr Cave had pastored a Church. On Mr Manning's departure the fellowship at Rugby Road asked Mr Cave to give oversight. Mr Cave added this responsibility to that of Church Secretary; indeed his dedicated and loyal service to the Church over many years was most significant. Amongst others who helped the Church during this period was Mr David Illott.

The Rev and Mrs John Pickett were amongst those who joined the Church in the early 1970s. They had served with SIM in Nigeria in the 1960s, and on their return to the U.K. Rev Pickett had been appointed to the home staff of the Mission; later he was appointed Director of SIM U.K./North Europe.

In the mid-1970s the church held a regular Prayer Meeting on Sunday mornings at 10.30, with worship at 11.00 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The Sunday School and Bible class met at 3.00 p.m. On Mondays the Women's Fellowship met at 2.45 p.m., with Adventurers – for 6 to 10 year olds – at 6 p.m. The mid-week meeting for Prayer and Bible Study was on Tuesdays at 7.15 p.m. The Men's Meeting met weekly on Thursdays at 3.00 p.m., with Seekers – for 11 to 15s – at 6.45 p.m. The records show that there was a real and sincere desire to reach out to those of all ages in the local community. Evidently erratic attendance amongst the children was a problem because some weeks 8 youngsters would arrive for Seekers, but 30 might come the following week, making forward planning difficult, especially so if a visit to the local Fire Station, or some other venue, was on the programme. Both the young people's meetings had a varied and interesting range of activities, and each session always ended with a devotional period.

Following the departure of the Rev Trevor Manning the church was once again dependent upon visiting preachers and although the ministry of these brethren was appreciated the fellowship felt the need for a resident pastor. The membership was comparatively small and not everyone felt able to fully tithe their giving. This resulted in considerable discussion and prayer, because in addition to the felt need of a minister both the manse and the church building required renovation and decoration. Conscious of the soundness of the long established practice of relying upon the Lord's people to give, as they felt led, the church was faced with a dilemma. The will of the Lord was sought, and it was eventually decided to proceed with the necessary maintenance work and to seek a pastor, relying upon God to undertake.

1974: ANTICIPATION AND DISAPPOINTMENT

The membership particularly felt that if a pastor was called then he should be one who had experience in outreach to children. This was laid before the Lord in prayer and in

due course the Rev Clifford Mothersdale – who once was pastor of the Evangelical Free Church in Bolton – was brought to the notice of the fellowship. Mr Mothersdale had had experience with the Child Evangelism Fellowship and, following visits to Rugby Road, the church invited him to become pastor.

The call was accepted and the Rev Clifford Mothersdale was inducted to the pastorate on 27th July 1974. Those participating in the service included the Rev Fred Money, of Brighton, and the Rev John Savage, both long standing good friends of the West Worthing Church; the chairman was Mr Stuart Pierce, at the time Secretary of the Sussex Auxiliary of the F.I.E.C. The new pastor and his wife moved into the Manse in Harrow Road, and the fellowship looked forward to a time of blessing under his leadership. Support arrangement for Pastor Mothersdale remained the same as those offered to earlier ministers. It later became apparent that Pastor Mothersdale's health was not very good.

In April 1976 Pastor Mothersdale's heart condition appeared to worsen and become more serious, and on medical advice he had to reduce his duties and avoid stress. This news was received by the Church with great sadness. In the November of that year pastor's medical condition necessitated his resignation from the pastorate. A farewell meeting was held on the 27th November, when Mr Mothersdale was thanked for his ministry and a gift presented from the Church. Prayerful good wishes were extended concerning his health.

During Pastor Mothersdale's short pastorate he and his wife had endeavoured to build up the children's work. Early in his period at the Church a Children's Mission was held, which although quite well supported failed to secure a significant increase in the number of boys and girls attending the Sunday School.

Sadly West Worthing Evangelical Church proved to be Clifford Mothersdale's last pastorate before his homecall.

Following Mr Mothersdale's enforced early departure the pulpit was once again supplied by visiting preachers. The Rev John Savage – a good friend of the church – kindly gave pastoral oversight during this unexpected interregnum. Mr Savage had served as a missionary in South America with the Evangelical Union of South America (now Latin Link); he returned to the U.K. and was appointed General Secretary of the Society. On retirement he settled in Worthing and fellowshiped with the friends at Rugby Road.

In 1976 the fellowship bade farewell to Mr Jack Jewell, who was moving away from the town to be near his son. Mr Jewell had been closely involved with the cause since the late 1920s, and had greatly assisted the Church in many diverse ways over some 47 years. Sincere appreciation of his loyal service was expressed.

Over the next few years Gospel witness was faithfully maintained, souls were saved and there were additions to the membership. Even so there was a deep longing that the church might have a deeper more lasting impact upon the local community. There was also concern over the low numbers of boys and girls attending the Sunday School.

When it had first been proposed that an evangelical Christian retirement home be established in Worthing, amongst the first churches to express support was West Worthing Tabernacle. The fellowship was keen to offer practical help by allowing its empty manse to be used as storage space for furniture, and other items, which were being donated for the new home. "Koinonia" (as it was to become known) opened in Winchester Road on the 10th September 1977. The church has supported the work ever since.

1978 saw all the various activities of the church continuing, but members felt the need for the life of the fellowship to be deepened both in prayer and in other spiritual ways. In this connection a Quiet Day was held on the 2nd January 1979, when members prayerfully considered their own commitment to their Lord, and sought guidance concerning the way forward for the fellowship.

In February 1979 the Rev John Savage's advancing years meant he had to relinquish the pastoral oversight of the Church. The fellowship expressed its sincere gratitude to him for his dedicated help over a period of some 3 years, as well as in earlier days.

All down the years the church had felt that it should, in thankfulness to God, mark the opening of the church building in 1912, and the yearly Church Anniversary related to this (and not the actual foundation of the Church fellowship as is usual). The Anniversary Services became a feature of church life and well-known preachers were invited for these occasions; there was usually a meeting on a Saturday afternoon, which was followed by tea, with special services on the Sunday. Historically we can see how the church building is the bridge carrying the cause over the years through all the vicissitudes of its life and witness.

1980: EXPECTATION AND PRAYERFUL TRUST

Almost four years had elapsed since Pastor Mothersdale's illness and sad demise, and although the Church had appreciated the ministry of some of its own members, as well as visits from lay and ministerial brethren, it recognised the benefits of having a resident minister. This whole matter was laid before the Lord in prayer and guidance sought. A number of men 'preached with a view', amongst whom was Mr William Hamilton, a student at the South Wales Bible College. After much prayer and due consideration an invitation was extended to him to become pastor. Mr Hamilton accepted and his ordination and induction service was held on 12th April 1980, amongst those taking part were the Rev John Savage and Rev H. Morgan. During the interregnum the church had

decided to sell its manse in Harrow Road; fortunately Mr and Mrs Hamilton were able to acquire their own house in the town.

The practice of ministers of 'undenominational' Free Churches not receiving a "set stipend" – but instead rather relying in faith upon the Lord to meet their needs through His own people – was commonplace in earlier years amongst both Baptist and Congregational churches. Indeed the practice of paying nonconformist ministers a "set stipend" only became generally accepted as the 19th Century moved towards its close, and in some places the practice was not introduced until much later. This had long been the practice for the West Worthing Tabernacle and Mr Hamilton was in fact the first minister of the Church to be offered a "set stipend", although it must be said that this was quite modest.

From 1912 onwards it had been the practice to close off the alcove at the left of the church sanctuary by means of specially fitted wooden sliding doors. In fact these were only opened on special occasions when more space was required. In more recent years these doors were completely removed due to the 'running mechanism' having failed. The alcove then simply became an extension to the church, and provided suitable space for the organ.

The 1950s – 1970s were decades when the West Worthing Tabernacle was served by a number of men, whose contribution was both diverse and significant. It has been said that in one sense the strength of a church is revealed by its lay leadership. If this is true then Rugby Road has been blessed in consistently having had a dedicated band of men at its helm. Amongst those who served during these years were Messrs. W. Carter; D. Cave; Cox; P. Dowler; R. Gasson; Gibbs; Greenslade; D. Hollis; P. Hooper; A. Kempson; L. Jones; Lingwood; A.W.B. Lovesay; E. Swain; S.G. Taylor – although it is believed this list isn't complete. The omission of a name in this church history is quite unintentional but for some periods during the past hundred years records extant are not sometimes as detailed as they might have been. Indeed there has been considerable hesitation in even including 'names' because of the desire to avoid omitting mentioning everyone who has played a part in the life of the Church. In the case of men it has proved rather difficult to ensure a measure of accuracy; when we come to ladies the problem is even more hazardous! Amongst the many who have helped the church in these three decades were Miss C. Cave; Miss P. Cumberlege; Miss Previtt; Miss Roffey and Mrs R. Sainsbury. The wives of those dedicated men mentioned above also mostly helped in the Church in some way or other. Indeed without the yeoman service of its ladies much of the work of the Church would have been extremely difficult or even left undone! Pastors' wives have certainly played a significant role!

It is interesting to see how attitudes and customs have changed through the Century; in earlier years everyone was addressed as "Mr., Mrs or Miss" followed by their surname – the Church records reflect this. Even when the minutes made reference to a person, rarely is their Christian name included, often initials are omitted. This strict formality in

churches has only changed in recent years; probably our forefathers would be quite shocked by the way everyone – including Pastor, Elders, Deacons – is casually addressed by their Christian name. Perhaps we more closely reflect the New Testament Church in this respect, when everyone seemed to be known by their forename?

1980: NEW CHALLENGES

As the new decade of the 1980s arrived it seemed as though all the changes in technology and in society – and in life in general – which had slowly been occurring suddenly took off. In many ways the Christian Church in general seemed to be sidelined and often viewed as an irrelevance. Changes in the pattern of social life and other aspects affecting human existence, all played a part in changing attitudes. Society seemed far more ready to accept standards in chastity and moral behaviour, which in earlier generations would have been frowned upon. Like other Bible believing evangelical churches Rugby Road found itself having to confront these new challenges without in any way compromising the Gospel.

During the early 1980s the Women's Fellowship, the mid-week meetings for girls and boys, as well as the Coffee Morning in the summer months, were continuing to meet. The Sunday services were "encouraging", along with the mid-week Bible study; there was a renewed emphasis upon personal and corporate prayer. However there was continuing deep concern over the low numbers in the Sunday School. The ongoing interest in mission work at home and overseas remained as strong as ever.

Various attempts were made to increase the numbers in the Sunday school, including holding Children's missions and Holiday Bible clubs, and although the number of girls and boys attending the Sunday school improved for a time sadly attendance soon declined. It was recognized that the attendance reflected changing moral attitudes in society, and the sad increase in the number of marriages which were failing, resulting in children becoming unsettled and often confused. The whole issue of outreach in the local community was a matter of much prayer.

Each Easter, Harvest and Christmas leaflets announcing the various services were distributed around the neighbourhood; special services were quite well supported but there was little evidence of lasting fruit. In the mid-1980s the membership of the church stood at 38. The church had used a mini-bus for many years but it was proving increasingly costly to maintain the vehicle and secure the services of drivers. In addition insurance costs were rising and various new regulations had been introduced governing the use of such vehicles. Eventually it was decided to dispense with a mini-bus and greater use made of members' cars, reflecting the increase in car ownership. In February 1983 Pastor William Hamilton resigned from the pastorate. Mr David Cave was once again called upon to give pastoral oversight to the fellowship.

One of the issues which the West Worthing Evangelical Church had to face along with like-minded churches was the question of involvement with other churches through the ecumenical movement. Although there was a desire to work with other fellowships where this seemed right it was recognized that this was really only possible where the Bible was accorded its rightful place as the Word of God, and where the full sovereignty of God and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ was in no way compromised. The church felt unable therefore to lend its support to the local or national ecumenical Council of Churches. Nevertheless the West Worthing Evangelical Church desired to work with all truly Gospel-loving Bible churches, and sought to do this through the British Evangelical Council and the F.I.E.C.

1983: MUCH LONGING, MUCH PRAYER

The church's link with the F.I.E.C. was greatly valued and at the Anniversary services in 1983 the General Secretary, the Rev David Mingard, was the preacher. The opportunity was taken to discuss the future pastoral leadership of the church with him. The membership once again felt the need for united prayer and special "evenings of prayer" were arranged. In addition an early morning prayer meeting was commenced on Thursdays, together with one at 6 p.m. on Sunday evenings. (The Sunday evening one continues).

The church felt it desirable to establish links with a couple serving on the mission field and in November 1983 Mr and Mrs Jonathan Burt – who were serving with S.I.M. – were adopted as the church's particular focus of prayer and financial support. This link continues until the present.

In 1984 Mr David Cave stood down from his leadership position, following many years of dedicated service to the Church, which included filling the office of Church Secretary. His place as moderator was taken by the Rev. John Pickett. In that same year ten friends joined the Church by transfer. The mid-week meeting for boys and girls – led by Miss Carol Cave – was quite well attended but sadly the same could not be said of the Sunday School, where numbers were small and the attendance irregular. Later that year Miss Joan Voysey was asked to assume the leadership of the Sunday School. The Church's prayerful interest in missionary work continued. In the mid 1980s it was found necessary for the electrical wiring throughout the premises to be renewed. Although the membership of the Church was not very large friends believed that the Lord would use the fellowship to win others in the coming days, and advice was sought concerning the possible options regarding redevelopment or extension. The financial burden this might place upon the members was recognized but as in past days, it was believed that the Lord would undertake. At the close of 1984 the membership stood at 35.

In the mid 1980s the church was saddened to receive the news that two couples were to move away from the town: Mr William Dyer – who had helped with ministry and in many practical ways – and Mr David Illott – who had served as Treasurer for a number

of years, as well as helping with the children's work. They, and their wives who had also been involved in the work, were thanked for their contributions.

Door to door visitors of later years were not only confronted by relativism and apathy, but were also finding the secularization of society, with its own ideas concerning how Sunday should be used, and pluralistic religious belief, were making their task even more difficult. Culturally, socially and morally, society had changed dramatically since the little cause commenced in Elm Grove.

1986: LOOKING TO THE LORD FOR BLESSING AND A NEW UNDER SHEPHERD

In the midst of numerous practical concerns spiritual matters were not lost sight of; there was much agonizing over the lack of conversions and "Days of Prayer" were held in April and again in October 1986.

The fellowship once again felt the need for a resident minister having at the time been without a pastor for 3 years. Much prayer was focused on this need. In the meantime the Church continued to depend upon its own members, or visiting preachers, for ministry both on Sundays and mid-week. It was recognized that such ministry, although much appreciated, could not satisfactorily replace the regular and systematic preaching and teaching, so much enjoyed earlier. There was clearly a longing within the fellowship for a deepening of its spiritual life, and for saints to be built up in their Christian walk. There was also a real desire to reach out more effectively into the local community. Amongst those joining the Church in 1985 were Mr and Mrs Ron Thorns; Mr Thorns had often preached at the church in earlier days.

October 1987 will long be remembered for the fierce hurricane force storm which struck the country, causing tremendous damage all across southern Britain, as well as some other parts. Worthing suffered greatly and the Rugby Road church premises were amongst the buildings damaged. The fellowship rejoiced that the Lord had shielded the building from even more serious harm.

The year drew to a close with the fellowship once again praising the Lord for all His goodness to them; there was also clearly a prayerful desire that He would guide them as they sought a new 'under shepherd'.

Although the Church was, as ever, deeply grateful for its premises the fellowship realistically recognized the fact that parts of the building were dated and in need of improvement. Such concern certainly didn't arise from any sense of pride but solely in relation to having a building which might assist the fellowship in reaching out into the neighbourhood. For many years the need for a church hall had been perceived. The membership, which was still quite small, realized that whatever scheme was eventually adopted considerable financial outlay would be incurred. At this juncture Mr R. Ling

and Mr H. Erbetta were able to help their fellow members by offering professional advice. Various possible extension schemes to the premises were considered, even adding a second floor hall extending over the whole of the ground floor rear accommodation, was amongst the options discussed.

In the mid 1980s Mr Stuart Pierce was appointed Church Secretary; he and his wife – along with a number of other friends – had joined Rugby Road following their decision to leave the High Street Church. Mr Pierce had been an officer of this Church, and had also served for a number of years as the Secretary of the F.I.E.C. Sussex Auxiliary. Mr Pierce had earlier held a lay-pastorate, and had served as a local preacher in the area for many years.

The 1980s closed with the Church prayerfully considering extending the Church premises in some way, and to the possibility of once again having a resident minister, the Church having then been without one since 1983. Mr Stuart Pierce was amongst those who willingly filled the pulpit, along with various visiting preachers. There was deepening spiritual interest and the dedicated membership prayerfully sought the will of the Lord concerning the pastorate, outreach to the neighbourhood and other matters.

The general programme of activities and meetings continued. Although the Sunday School and mid-week Children's meeting continued to meet there was a lack of regularity in attendance, particularly on Sundays. The low attendance of children, and regrettable lack of parental interest, were made matters of prayer by the fellowship.

The decade saw the fellowship endeavouring to continue to reach out to the neighbourhood around the Church. Letters and leaflets were distributed, and doors knocked on, but sadly as in earlier days there was little response. In 1989 Dr. Billy Graham – the American evangelist – made a further visit to the British Isles and his principal rallies were “relayed” to different parts of the country. Rugby Road was amongst the churches which supported the local “relay centre”, distributing invitation leaflets and organizing parties to attend these local meetings.

Plans to extend the premises, as well as the desire to appoint a pastor, meant that the members had to examine their financial responsibilities to the cause. Despite these concerns the fellowship's commitment to home and overseas mission work remained as strong as ever. Visits to the church by representatives of the Christian societies particularly supported by the Church were both appreciated and well attended; members and friends welcomed the opportunity of gaining a greater insight into the situation in other lands, and the needs of those serving there. This concern didn't simply relate to finance but also to gaining a better understanding so that prayer could be suitably focused.

THE TURBULENT '80s DRAW TO A CLOSE

The decade drew to a close with the Register of Members at West Worthing Evangelical Church showing the names of 38 men and women. The 1980s had been somewhat difficult for the fellowship in the early part of the decade, but nevertheless overall the period had been one of blessing. Once again we find the fellowship praising God for His goodness to the Church. It is easy to detect from the records an unswerving trust in the gracious sovereign goodness of God.

The spiritual depth of a church can perhaps be seen by the way in which the particular fellowship views the needs of men and women – as well as the children – living around its place of meeting. Where deep spiritual awareness exists one can usually expect to find a real concern to reach out with the Gospel to those who as yet know nothing of Christ Jesus and His love; the records of West Worthing Evangelical Church certainly reveal this to be true of this fellowship. The records for this period - as indeed those for earlier years – show that there was deep concern and sadness because conversions seemed to be so few, and that the baptistry was rarely used; we also see how these were matters of much soul searching and ongoing prayer.

The Church was founded upon the principle of having an “open table” for Communion, although at the same time it fully recognized that baptism by immersion is the scriptural way of publicly declaring one's faith in Jesus as Lord and Saviour. Over the years much sadness has been expressed concerning the dearth of candidates coming forward for believer's baptism.

The 1980s drew to a close with the Church still prayerfully considering the most appropriate way forward, both concerning pastoral leadership and improving the premises. The sole motivation in this last respect was a deep desire for the Church to be better equipped to reach out with the Gospel.

Consistently, through the years, members of the fellowship have earnestly desired to know personal quickening, so that they might better serve their Master through a deeper walk with Him. Indeed this has been a significant ongoing characteristic of the Church, where prayer and Bible study have always been regarded as vital to the believer's pilgrimage. The Church records that many times there has been a deep longing on the part of the fellowship that true spiritual revival might come to the locality, as well as to the nation. This longing has been tempered by the recognition that such an awakening cannot be initiated by man, no matter how sincere and ardent that longing might be. The use of gimmickry or ‘entertainment’ as a means of reaching out to men and women has always been spurned. Filial dependence upon the gracious mercy and goodness of God in extending His Kingdom through the ministry of the Holy Spirit has been the consistent stance of the fellowship.

Once again we see from the minutes that Easter, Harvest thanksgiving – with the Harvest Supper – and Christmas services were all times of blessing and encouragement, with folk from the neighbourhood attending. The Church also found its Anniversary Services – with a visiting speaker – encouraging.

During this period an annual Missionary Weekend was re-introduced and this has become a regular feature of the Church's calendar. Speakers from different mission societies have helped members and friends gain a better insight to current needs and situations. Many members have found that an interest in missionary work overseas has helped deepen their own spiritual life, as the difficulties and frustrations facing brothers and sisters in the Lord Jesus in many lands across the sea has been brought home to them.

1990: CHALLENGE; COMMITMENT & CONFIDENCE IN THE LORD

The decade of the 1990s opened with the Church still prayerfully seeking the Lord's will concerning an 'under shepherd', and also guidance concerning possible building work. During this time the names of various men were brought to the notice of the Church, and some came to preach; the whole process was bathed in prayer. In the meantime the Church relied in the main upon visiting preachers. At this juncture the membership roll totalled 44.

The Church members particularly felt led to consider the Rev John Billett, who had preached at the church some years earlier but who was now pastor of an Evangelical church in Loughton, Essex. Mr Billett, and his wife Barbara, visited the West Worthing Church, and Mr Billett preached. They subsequently paid a further visit to the Church. After much thought and prayer the members felt led of the Lord to invite the Rev John Billett to become their pastor. Mr Billett felt drawn to the fellowship and believed that it was in the will of the Lord that he should accept the call. His Induction Service was held on the 8th June 1991, when a large company of friends gathered to welcome the Church's new minister. The principal speaker on this occasion was the Rev Colin S. Smith, President of the F.I.E.C.

The Church had by this time been without a resident minister for almost 8 years, and this lack was being felt both by the leadership and the members. The Church had, as mentioned earlier, prayed much concerning the settlement of a minister, and fully recognized the practical implications for each member regarding financial support and related matters. The members agreed to pay a regular stipend to the new pastor, and be responsible for all appropriate ministerial expenses.

Following the settlement of the new pastor the membership gradually increased, although many of the friends joining came via transfer from other fellowships elsewhere. The cry went up to the Lord for others to come by conversion, and this was backed up by schemes to reach out into the local neighbourhood. By this time the

Children's work was again at a low ebb and in the autumn of 1991 a holiday Bible Club was held, although attendance was rather disappointing.

In 1991 Mr Stuart Pierce was succeeded as Church Secretary by Mr Leonard Trew, who with his wife, had moved to Worthing a couple of years previously. The fellowship expressed its appreciation to Mr Pierce for his conscientious service.

The church's regular magazine had ceased publication some little while earlier but the growing congregation – as well as the increasing number of folk in Retirement Homes looking upon Rugby Road as their spiritual home, - led to a bi-monthly publication "Prayer News" being issued. In addition to giving information about friends in need of prayer, this contained a short spiritual message and items of news about the fellowship. It also listed the preaching and speaking engagements of members gifted in this way, together with information concerning the missionary interests of the church. "Prayer News" was also appreciated by those who had moved away from the district but who still wished to keep in touch with the church. Later a List of Associate Members was commenced so that friends living away could maintain a link with the Church.

Over the years the church has greatly valued its links with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, and when possible has sent delegates to its Annual Assembly and taken a keen interest in the organization's efforts to establish new evangelical causes in various parts of the country.

The Rugby Road Church has sought to foster fraternal links with its 14 sister F.I.E.C. churches in West Sussex, regularly remembering each one in prayer.

1992: THE LONGED-FOR EXTENSION BECOMES REALITY

"Adventurers" – the mid-week children's meeting – had lapsed but was re-launched in 1992, together with Searchers for older girls. The Sunday School continued to meet but the membership was quite low and attendance irregular, although dedicated staff remained committed to the endeavour. The Women's meeting continued to be a popular gathering and drew a good number from the neighbourhood. The Church Roll totalled 53, although there were a number of other friends who regularly worshipped with the fellowship.

For some years the church had been exploring the possibility of improving the premises and possibly adding a church hall, and much prayer had been offered as the membership wrestled over the question of finance and the best extension option. In due course negotiations opened with the Borough Council, it soon transpired that in addition to the hall extension various alterations would have to be made to the existing premises. In addition new local government regulations required provision to be made for a car park to be laid, which further added to the cost. The fellowship was convinced of the rightness of the scheme and rose to the challenge and pledged their support. The

Church remained faithful to the principle of having no public appeals for funds and the Lord honoured their resolve. The local authority eventually approved the plans early 1993 and the work was soon put in hand. The whole project – alterations to the existing building, the new hall and the car park – was bathed in prayer and the necessary work went ahead apace. There was eager anticipation in the fellowship and evidently considerable surprise in the local community to see so much building work going ahead on the church ground! After all there had not been so much construction work there for around 81 years! All the building work inevitably caused some disruption to the general programme of the church, although most activities continued.

At this time the practice of holding a weekly mid week morning prayer meeting in different members' homes became an established feature of the life of the church, and this continues today. In order to meet the challenge of a new era in the life of the church the membership decided to give consideration to revising the Constitution, and this was given prayerful attention.

When the church opened in 1912 seating was provided by wooden chairs and, when it became necessary to replace these, similar style seating was chosen. The need again arose to purchase new seating in 1993 and it was decided to have metal framed chairs, with padded seats and backs; the chairs also had a fitted hymn-book rack and holder for a communion glass. New metal framed stacking chairs were also ordered for the new hall.

1993: JUBILATION AND PRAISE

There was great rejoicing on the 6th November 1993 when a large company of members and friends gathered to express thankfulness to God for His goodness. The occasion was the opening and dedication of the new Church Hall. One of the long-term aims of the fellowship – going back long before the War – was that the Church might have a suitable Hall. In fact it seems that when the present church building was erected back in 1912 it was intended that in due course this would become the church hall and that a church sanctuary would be built alongside. However, things worked out differently and the original building remains the church, with a new building alongside. The guest speaker at the Thanksgiving Service on the 6th November was the Rev. John Tindall (standing in at short notice for the Rev David Abernethie who was unwell), and the architect – Mr P. Dennis – and the builder – Mr A. Overton – (both of whom were believers) also took part. The erection of the new Hall, together with the necessary alterations to part of the old building, cost in the region of £80,000.00, which was fully funded without recourse to any kind of public appeal, or fund raising scheme.

The new and improved facilities greatly increased the Church's ability to cater for its own needs, as well as enabling it to reach out more adequately to the local community in different ways.

The morning service at Easter, Harvest Thanksgiving and Christmas have in more recent years taken the form of a "Family Service", when the children of the Sunday School have participated; these have become a feature of the fellowship and much appreciated. These services have also been seen as an opportunity for outreach.

Support for the bi-weekly Saturday evening gatherings – once so popular – had waned quite a few years earlier, but twice monthly "After Church" fellowship meetings on Sunday evenings are valued and appreciated by both members and visiting friends. The "After Church" fellowships, include a wide variety of "talks" – sometimes a visiting missionary has spoken and sometimes a member has given his testimony, or a spiritual talk of some kind. The new Hall has proved to be most useful for this kind of gathering. The Sunday School – now called "Sunday at eleven" –; The Thursday coffee morning; the Men's Meeting and the new Mothers and Toddlers group, have been amongst those to benefit from the Hall, as well as the mid-week Children's club – "Adventurers" – also the club for young teenagers.

The 1990s has not proved to be an easy decade for ministry amongst boys and girls; the Sunday School has had to contend with erratic attendance and small numbers. Regular attendance at Sunday School is hindered, unless parents themselves have an interest in the Christian faith. Attendance at "Adventurers" is generally much better and full advantage of this is taken by giving Bible teaching each week. Changed social conditions – as well as differing attitudes towards religious belief - have greatly affected Church attendance in general. Sadly so many social, sports, and leisure activities now seem to be held on Sunday.

The West Worthing Evangelical Church has witnessed with concerned regret the gradual change in the observance of Sunday, having seen it decline from a day set apart for the worship of God to one given over to pleasure seeking and commercialism. It has been rightly stated that "Sunday is the barometer of the spiritual state of a nation", and the decline since the Elm Grove cause commenced back in 1900 is most marked. Sadly at the close of the Century only a minority of people show true respect to God on His day.

1994: AN ELDERSHIP IS INTRODUCED

Since the 1950s the Church has been blessed and encouraged by those who have settled in the town for their 'retirement'. Some of these friends had had wide experience in Christian service; some having served as pastors or preachers, or been engaged in some other form of Christian service. Each was able to make their own contribution to the fellowship.

In 1994 a new regular meeting for younger church members was commenced called Bridge Builders, and this has a varied programme of activities. An important event that same year was the adoption by the Church of a revised Constitution, which although it

faithfully mirrored earlier ones was designed to meet the needs of the Church at the end of the 20th Century. In this new Constitution provision was made for the establishment of an Eldership and a Diaconate. The first Elders appointed under this new scheme were: the Rev John Pickett; Mr Stanley Purr; Mr Leonard Trew and the minister, the Rev John Billett, who was also recognized as fulfilling this office.

The Church was ever mindful of its responsibility to offer the Gospel to those in the local community and door to door visitation continued. Although door to door workers were generally received politely the response was often rather negative. The Women's Meeting and the Men's Meeting – which re-opened after a short break – were regarded as vehicles of outreach.

In 1995 the Church Membership stood at 74; whilst it was encouraging to see the numbers on the Roll increasing it was nevertheless true that most had joined through transfer from fellowships elsewhere. The lack of additions through conversion was still a continuing matter of deep regret. The cry "O Lord, wilt Thou not save the lost" has frequently been on the lips of folk! In addition to those whose names appeared on the membership Roll there were a considerable number of friends who were regular members of the weekly congregation.

The Church quickly recognized, and valued, the contribution which the Eldership was making to the life of the Church, and decided to strengthen this body by electing the Rev. John Miller as an Elder. Mr Miller and his wife, had recently retired to Worthing. Earlier he had preached at Rugby Road. Sadly in the October of 1996 Mr Stanley Purr, who had assisted the fellowship in many ways, including serving as Church Treasurer, and who latterly had served as an Elder, was called home.

The growing Sunday congregation – particularly in the morning – prompted the Church to consider the possibility of erecting a gallery at the rear of the church sanctuary. In due course plans were submitted to the town Council's Planning Officer, something which our friends back in 1912 didn't even have to consider! Approval was finally given and building work commenced. During the construction of the gallery all services and meetings were held in the church hall. The completed gallery added a further 40 seats.

Although the Church had agreed to establish a diaconate – along with an eldership – in 1994, over twelve months elapsed before the first Deacons under the new Constitution were appointed; Mr Peter Giles ⁷ and Mr Harvey Ward.

The 1990s saw the Church's interest in overseas missionary work further strengthened when Miss Daisy Marsh was welcomed into membership. Miss Marsh had served in Algeria for many years, following in the footsteps of both her parents and grandparents

⁷ Mr Peter Giles subsequently resigned.

in missionary service amongst the Kabyle people. The Church was also blessed in having Mr and Mrs Tony Lambert regularly worshipping with them; they had served with O.M.F. in Hong Kong and were closely involved with work in China. In 1996 Mr and Mrs Keith Crane, who had for many years served in the administrative offices of various missionary societies, (T.L.M., S.I.M. etc) were received into membership. In 1999 Mr & Mrs Raymond Castro were welcomed into the fellowship; Mr Castro had earlier been an evangelist with the National Young Life Campaign. This was followed by service with the International Christian Fellowship (P.I.V.M./C. & I.G.M.) as U.K. General Secretary. (I.C.F. merged with S.I.M. in 1989). All were able to contribute in different ways towards the Church's missionary interest.

In 1995 – under the F.I.E.C. Church Planting scheme – steps were taken to establish a new evangelical witness on the Moulsecomb Estate in Brighton, and the Rugby Road Church agreed to give the resident evangelist both prayerful and practical support.

The Christian Retirement Home – "Koinonia" – founded in the 1970s, with support from local F.I.E.C. churches, continued to fill a real need. Some of its residents were able to attend the West Worthing Evangelical Church, and members of the Church were involved in various ways; some served on the staff, whilst others regularly took the evening epilogue or served on the Management Committee.

A group of members from the Church regularly visited a few other retirement homes in the town, taking a short service one afternoon a month.

The fact that the Church is located in a seaside town means that the fellowship is often encouraged by having visitors worshipping with them on Sundays.

Another very interesting and helpful development in the 1990s was the establishment of fraternal links with Pastor Debey Sayndee, leader of a group of Evangelical Churches in Liberia. Pastor Sayndee was able to visit the Rugby Road Church on a few occasions and speak about the needs in his country, as well as the work being undertaken by evangelical believers. The West Worthing Church was able to channel both monetary and practical aid to Pastor Sayndee.

The fellowship has – as readers will have realized – always sought to reach out into the local neighbourhood; in the latter 1990s it was felt that there was a need to help young mothers and their youngsters. Following prayerful consideration the Church decided to establish "Jellytots" in 1998, meeting once a week on Wednesday mornings in school-term time. This was enthusiastically welcomed by a number of mums.

In 1998 the Church decided to strengthen the Diaconate, and Mr Glyn Evans and Mr Keith Crane were elected Deacons. The following year Mr Evans became Church Treasurer (an office temporarily filled by Rev Pickett following the home call of Mr Purr). Mr Crane assumed responsibility for all the missionary matters formerly

undertaken by Rev Pickett. Mr Leonard Trew had succeeded Mr Stuart Pierce as Church Secretary earlier in the decade, and continued in this office.

Prayer has always been recognized as an important element in the life of the Church, and various opportunities were provided for corporate prayer. The mid-week morning prayer meeting – usually held in the home of a member – continued to be well supported throughout the decade. Prayer at these home prayer meetings tends to concentrate upon the concerns of the fellowship, as well as members and friends with particular needs. The prayer meeting prior to the evening service – which had once been a regular feature – was revived towards the end of the decade.

A CHURCH WITH A HEART FOR MISSION

During this same period a short “Missionary Spot” was introduced into the evening service; during this time news was shared concerning specific matters – particularly where there was urgent need of prayer. This became a regular feature and is much appreciated. Occasionally one of the missionaries linked with the fellowship spoke briefly about some aspect of his ministry, or reported on a recent visit which he had made overseas. Sometimes the “After Church” gathering provided the opportunity for the missionary to report in more detail.

The Church’s Missionary Committee continued to keep members and friends informed of needs, and helped co-ordinate interest and support. The annual missionary weekend gradually grew to become an important feature of Church life, when visiting speakers were able to give an indepth view of situations and needs, on mission fields in various parts of the world. In addition one or two Tuesday midweek meetings a quarter are addressed by a missionary, or by someone representing a particular society. In 1999 the Church agreed to “adopt” another missionary couple – Pastor and Mrs Tony Swanson; they had recently been accepted for service with A.I.M. in Tanzania. Rev Swanson had previously been minister of the Fittleworth Free Church.

The fellowship recognized the need for members and friends to be kept fully informed concerning both individual missionaries – and the mission societies – in which the church had a prayerful interest. In this respect Missionary Prayer Letters and Magazines are systematically distributed amongst friends in the fellowship in order that meaningful prayer support may be given.

The strong interest which the fellowship has had in missionary work since its very earliest days has not only enabled friends to gain a better understanding of the difficulties and needs experienced on the field, but has also helped the Church feel part of the Worldwide fellowship of the Lord’s people. Many members have also found that interest in mission work has helped deepen their own commitment, as well as their personal prayer life.

In the summer of 1999 the Rev and Mrs John Pickett moved from Worthing to Kent, in order to be near their children. They had first joined Rugby Road in the early 1970s and the Rev Pickett had served in leadership for most of that period. On two occasions he gave pastoral oversight during periods when the church was without a resident minister; he had also led the Church in its missionary interest for the whole of that period. The Rev and Mrs Pickett were thanked for their outstanding contribution to the life of the fellowship over a period of some 29 years.

Since the settlement of the Rev John Billett as pastor in June 1991 the fellowship has been greatly blessed through his conscientious caring ministry, both through his sound Biblical teaching and preaching, as well as through his pastoral care. Mr Billett and his wife Barbara have endeared themselves to all in the congregation through their devoted unstinting service to their Master.

At the close of the 20th Century the Church rejoiced in the fact that the Register of Members stood at 80.

REJOICING IN BOUNTIFUL BLESSINGS

The last decade of the 20th Century proved to be an eventful one for the Church; a new pastor was appointed and welcomed; renovations to the premises, a new Church Hall, a new kitchen, a gallery in the Church, the floor of the church sanctuary fully carpeted; were all undertaken and although the total cost was in the region of £100,000.00 the fellowship remained true to its principles and no public appeals of any kind were made; the Lord honoured the faithfulness of His people. In addition to all these extra expenses the Church met all its routine outgoings, and increased its support for missionary work. Not surprisingly the membership was filled with praise for the way the Lord had blessed the fellowship.

The various alterations and extensions were undertaken by the Church in the firm belief that they would honour the Lord, and enable the fellowship to meet the challenge of the new millennium, if the Lord tarried, and in His goodness and mercy called others to receive the blessing of salvation. Visitors often comment upon the building and its facilities. Indeed viewing the building from the outside is rather deceptive because one may easily gain the impression that the church is not very large, whilst in fact it is quite spacious.

This little volume contains but a glimpse of the work undertaken by the fellowship of the Lord’s people in West Worthing through a Century of immense change, both nationally as well as locally. Indeed the friends who worshipped in the church in earlier days would be amazed by many things; steam trains no longer chug along the nearby rails; horses and carts have gone and so too have the market gardens and nurseries! Innovations and inventions have come with increasing speed; the technology we now take for granted would have seemed impossible to many of yesteryear. Significantly the

“utopia” of which many dreamed before the First World War never arrived! Whilst concerns over such things as diphtheria may have gone, other fears have come. Heaven cannot be achieved through man’s own human achievements; if anything the wickedness of man’s heart – concerning which preachers have spoken of from the pulpit in West Worthing Evangelical Church all down the years – is possibly far greater now than when “Elm Grove Undenominational Mission” first met in 1900.

The West Worthing Evangelical Church has been blessed by the Lord in so many ways. The original pastor whom He gave them was a godly soul, one whose love for His Lord and His Word was both deep and practical. Pastor John Onions laid the foundations well. Those who ministered throughout the years which followed have also been men who loved the Lord, and who strove to maintain a Bible believing fellowship. Such pastors have been ably assisted by men and women committed to an evangelical faith, people who loved God’s Word and sought to make known the blessings which can only be known and experienced through faith in Jesus Christ - the One who is indeed the Way, the Truth and the Life.

In these days of moral confusion and spiritual need regular visitation of homes in the local community continues. However, like so many other places where there is reliance upon material things, supplemented with a vague acceptance of ‘Christianity’ – or at least the popular view of this religion – visitors encounter apathy and impervious resistance to the Gospel. Many perceive ‘religious belief’ as a private matter, and rebuff those who enquire concerning their personal faith. The hardness of man’s heart is the same now as in Biblical times. The Gospel proclaimed by the fellowship has not changed throughout the years; our brothers and sisters of yesteryear might find many things very different from their day but one thing they would recognize and that is the faithful Bible based preaching.

We salute all the men and women who over the years have played some part in the ongoing ministry and witness of the church; each faithful follower of Jesus Christ has made some contribution to the spiritual story of the fellowship. Many of those who have worshipped with the church have felt it to be a fellowship where friendliness and love are very real; a place where a warm and ready welcome is always found. Without wishing to appear trite, the church well deserves its name as a warm and happy fellowship; there is a depth of caring sadly not always found in some places of worship. Those with some need or ailment can be certain of help; love is seen as having a very practical side. Indeed the caring friendliness found in the church has been the means of first interesting some in the Gospel. It has often been said that loneliness is a frightening thing but in a truly Christian fraternity nobody need feel isolated and alone.

During the compilation of this little history many friends have remarked upon the blessedness of the fellowship found with like-minded men and women, and how such a bond strengthens the individual believer. The sweetness of Christian fellowship cannot

be manufactured; it is rather something bestowed upon those loved by the Father; upon those who are truly submissive and who willingly seek to serve their Lord in every way.

A CENTURY OF CHANGE AND SPIRITUAL DECLINE IN THE NATION

When the Church commenced in the early 1900s it was the normal, culturally acceptable practice for children to attend Sunday School, indeed those who did not were a tiny minority. It was also socially the norm for adults to be seen as “churchgoers” if not actually members of a particular church, and the Sabbath was observed by almost everyone. Failure to comply with social practice in these spheres could affect one’s standing in the community, and indeed influence one’s employment prospects. How very different things are a hundred years later. In 1900 church attendance was at its peak in the British Isles and practically every aspect of life – both that of the individual as well as nationally – was in some way strongly influenced by Christianity. In those halcyon days the position of the Christian Church in Britain seemed secure and sacrosanct! The likelihood of the position ever changing would have seemed ridiculous. Yet one hundred years later the position has been completely reversed. It was in this Century of spiritual change that the West Worthing Evangelical Church sought to bear testimony.

In the closing decades of the 19th Century liberal and modernistic religious concepts had begun to affect the views of many within the Established Church, and indeed in some sections of Nonconformity, sadly resulting in spiritual declension. These trends away from Biblical and doctrinal orthodoxy gathered momentum as the 19th Century drew to its close, resulting in many people doubting the accuracy and authenticity of the Bible. People started to question Church teaching and fundamental issues were raised and long accepted views challenged. The position of Jesus Christ in the Godhead, as well as His eternal nature, were questioned. His part in redeeming individual men and women was also disputed. Such issues were hotly debated both within the churches, in society and in the national press.

In the 1920s and ‘30s many churches stressed the humanitarian aspects of Christianity, which led to social needs often being seen as of greater importance than spiritual matters. It was concern over trends affecting belief and practice in many churches once considered to be soundly evangelical which led to the formation of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, the body which Rugby Road joined in the 1930s.

Towards the end of the 20th Century some churches embraced ‘new ideas’ (evidently imagining these would induce people to accept Christianity). In some churches emphasis was placed upon “gifts of the Spirit”, which often seemed to cause an imbalance in teaching. Yet other churches gladly embraced techniques more usually associated with the entertainment industry. The popular “Christian message” of the latter part of the 20th Century seemed to stress the love of God whilst neglecting other aspects of His Divine nature. Quite often emphasis was placed upon man’s ability to

find salvation; repentance for personal guilt and sin often being portrayed as issues of minor importance. In other churches the Cross and sacrificial death of Christ were considered to be rather distasteful. Preachers were afraid people might find reference to the shed blood offensive, preferring a cosy bloodless religion. The Lord's Day – which for generations had been a day set apart for Christian worship – gradually became 'man's day'. Secularization was endorsed by changes in both national and local law, thus enabling all manner of pleasures and pursuits to be followed upon the Sabbath.

In many churches the doctrines of grace and the Sovereignty of God tended to be neglected. To many people Christianity was seen merely as a cultural identity, something which helped to distinguish them from those who happened to follow some other religion. Increasingly people embraced multi-faith ideas, many believing that all religions had equal merit and ultimately honoured the same deity.

In the latter part of the Century the erosion of Christian values and moral standards was sadly often encouraged and endorsed through both national and local government legislation. Biblical principles on which much of British law had rested for hundreds of years were astonishingly abandoned. Such legislative changes shocked and distressed Christian believers, who in various ways sought to register their disapproval of such action by the administration.

Notwithstanding all the changes, pressures and decline the West Worthing Evangelical Church – like many other truly Gospel churches – held firmly to the Bible, choosing to follow "the old paths" and honour their Lord.

The Church was founded as an Evangelical Protestant Bible-believing cause and continues to maintain a faithful and uncompromising Gospel witness, fully recognising the trinitarian unity of the Godhead. The Lord Jesus Christ has always been proclaimed to be the only Saviour and sole mediator between man and his Maker, and that redemption from sin, and the hope of eternal life, can only be known in Him. Assent to the scriptural delineation of original sin, and the fact that the result of sin is eternal separation from the Almighty Father, has always been acknowledged and proclaimed. The fellowship has consistently proclaimed the doctrines of grace and affirmed that no action on the part of an individual man or woman – or perceived merit gained through 'good works' – can overcome the barrier which sin has caused. Deliverance from the ensnarement of sin has uncompromisingly been declared to be through Christ Jesus alone, a message not always appreciated by some. Acceptance by God comes through faith alone, as men and women respond to the effectual call. The founding fathers set out to proclaim the unique meritorious work of Christ, who shed His precious blood upon Calvary's cross in order to meet in full God's required payment for sin.

It is a sad commentary upon the nation – but nevertheless true – the people today probably know far less of the Bible, and what its message really means, than in the days when a little group of believers first met a hundred years ago in a laundry drying room

in Elm Grove. This is not to suggest that men and women were any better then than they are today, but the reality is folk of yesteryear were far more familiar with God's Word, and were therefore far more likely to recognize their true unregenerate position in His sight.

Throughout its long history the membership of the fellowship has waxed and waned, but the message proclaimed from its pulpit has never varied... "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners". There were times when, humanly speaking, the future of the cause seemed bleak but the Lord has graciously undertaken and new life has been breathed into the fellowship.

Like all churches of a baptistic persuasion the fellowship in Rugby Road has always held to the view of "the priesthood of all believers"; each redeemed person having a duty to reach out in love to others with the Gospel. "Justification by faith alone" is the basis of all that the Church seeks to do.

The fellowship's uncompromising Biblical stand on many fundamental spiritual and moral issues has sometimes led to its stance being misunderstood by those favouring a more liberal attitude to many aspects of life and belief.

The 'founding fathers' would no doubt be troubled, shocked, mystified and perplexed to find that Britain had evolved into a pluralist, liberal, multi-faith society; one in which all kinds of previously taboo subjects and practices were openly accepted. What Pastor Onions, and his friends, would not have hesitated in calling 'sin' is now masked by the use of other less clear phrases. The wide spectrum of views within "Christianity" would also astound them. It would have been unthinkable to John Onions, and his loyal band, that some claiming to be Christians might express doubt in the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ in redemption, or that "eternal punishment" might not necessarily mean everlasting exclusion from the blessings of Almighty God.

In carefully reading through Pastor John Onions meticulously kept "Record Book", (how wonderful that the Church possesses this) followed by the Minutes of both Church Council, and Church Members' meetings, one is very much aware of the way in which two factors particularly stand out – prayer and the honouring of the Lord Jesus Christ. These factors have played an important part in the life of the Church; from the very earliest days there has been an ongoing deep desire to honour and faithfully serve the Saviour. He has consistently been acclaimed as the divine eternal Son of God, a co-equal partner in the triune Godhead and man's only Redeemer. In all the years since the cause was first established in Mrs Sarah Henderson's laundry premises in Elm Grove not once has the fellowship questioned or doubted these fundamental truths, neither has the Bible ever been viewed as anything other than the very Word of God. There has always been a clear emphasis upon the need for all members to daily set aside time in order that they may spend time in prayer and meditating upon the Word. The Church has consistently arranged meetings where members could meet together for corporate

and united prayer. Prayer has been both the uniting and strengthening factor which has helped sustain the fellowship. It would seem that in the dark days of the Second World War – when it proved impossible to always maintain regular meetings – there were still those who were praying for the cause. The same is true of the difficult days in the early 1950s, when the doors were closed for a brief period; there were those who were praying that the cause might yet be revived. Prayer may be a mystery to those outside of Christ but to those who have found redemption in His name it is the vital and cherished source of comfort and strength, confirming and revealing God's unmerited favour and grace to His children.

The Church records also reveal how through the years the fellowship has faithfully sought to reach out to the homes in the neighbourhood with the Gospel. Tracts and leaflets; letters of invitation; door to door visits – and in earlier days open air meetings – have all been used to make the message known. The minimal response is sadly indicative of the hardness of the hearts of men and women, and shows how eyes have been blinded to the wonderful truth of the Gospel. Nevertheless the building in Rugby Road stands as a testimony to truth, a lighthouse shedding forth light and warning travellers on the sea of life of impending jeopardy.

The message set in stone “God is Love” – “God is Light”, is as true now as the day these stones were set up in 1912; men and women may choose to ignore what the stones proclaim but that in no way affects their truth!

Even though there is much that would grieve our brother John Onions – as it indeed grieves all who truly love the Lord – there is much which would gladden his heart. The truth of the Gospel is now known in far more countries of the world than was the case 100 years ago, and the means of making it known are beyond anything which our forefathers could possibly have ever imagined.

In compiling a history of this character one is always very much aware that some important aspects of the story have perhaps not been given the honour they deserved. Relying upon written records sometimes means that abbreviated notes in record and minute books fail to tell the full story or relate the significance of some happening or event. Sometimes the contribution which an individual made to the ongoing story isn't always spelt out in sufficient detail and the history hasn't accorded the individual the credit to which he is entitled. In reading through “The Record” and all the Minutes of Church Council and Church Meetings, it has been necessary to try to “read between the lines” and add flesh to bones. It may well be that some who read this history will feel others should have been mentioned or that some event should have been treated differently. Misinterpretations or omissions hopefully are few in number. The compiler has sought to present an honest, helpful picture, indeed one which will assist the Church fellowship to see its place in local history and recognize the importance of its position, and its contribution to HISTORY.

Although the church has maintained cordial fraternal fellowship with like-minded churches, it has never been linked with the ecumenical movement, nor with any group stressing a particular doctrine – or gift – above any other. It has valued its close links with the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, and has sent delegates to the national assembly and fully participated in local events. Its principal aim has been to witness to the local community, serving boys and girls and men and women in making known the Gospel of salvation.

One of the last efforts of the 20th Century by the Church to reach out with the Gospel to the local community concerned the distribution of a booklet. This set out in an attractive way the contribution which individual Christians – and Christianity in general – had made to the life of the nation through the years. This was linked to a three day Exhibition staged in the Church Hall, which was designed to show the true meaning and significance of the millennium in relation to the coming of Jesus Christ, the truth of which seemed to be largely played down nationally during the Millennium celebrations.

In the closing years of the 20th Century many men and women seem to imagine that religion is whatever the individual wants it to be. The same is true concerning the way in which Jesus Christ is perceived; some view Him simply as a remarkable teacher and compassionate humanitarian; an example to follow. Others view Him as a mystical being, whose holy perfection and goodness are beyond human understanding, but whose influence in the world is nevertheless important. The community around the church is a microcosm of the world and is the mission-field on the church's doorstep!

Readers will have readily noticed that the West Worthing Evangelical Church has consistently stood for the truth of the Bible since the inception of the cause back in 1900. For a Century the fellowship has resolutely proclaimed the Bible as the unique Word of God. The message of forgiveness and redemption through the shed blood of Jesus Christ has been boldly told forth. Not once in any of the records held by the church is there any hint that foundational truths have been doubted, or a false gospel preached. The solid Bible honouring position of the Church has marked the cause out as a ‘beacon of truth’ in the district.

The continuing earnest prayer of the Church is that those living in the district around the premises might recognize the truth for which the fellowship stands, and come to place their trust in Christ Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, as the Almighty Father graciously reveals the truth in mercy to them.

The church looks back over its history with gratitude and thankfulness to God, and in faith looks to the future in reliance upon the Lord, looking to Him for help and guidance, praying that the fellowship may ever be found worthy of the King of Kings.

“I AM THE LORD I CHANGE NOT” Mal. 3:6
“HE IS FAITHFUL” Heb. 10:23

APPENDIX I

“Tabernacle” – the portable sanctuary used by the Israelites on their journey through the wilderness, representing the dwelling place of God. ‘Tabernacle’ has been a popular name for nonconformist chapels in Worthing! The first ‘Tabernacle’ was in Montague Street, built in 1830; this was the home of the Calvinistic Independents. They had moved out by 1859 and the premises were redeveloped and then used for lectures and concerts. In 1879 a Baptist congregation began – pioneered by one of C. H. Spurgeon’s students (he used to send men to towns where he thought the residents needed a Baptist church!). This particular congregation met in this Montague Street hall for a few years. In 1888 the same Montague Street premises were re-registered for Christian worship and then used by the Worthing Free Church. This congregation seems to have moved elsewhere and the premises reverted to secular use. In 1896 these premises were again re-registered for Christian worship by the minister – and some of his former congregation – who had withdrawn from the Christchurch Road Baptist Church (originally founded in 1881). The hall in Montague Street – at the time known as St. James’ Hall – became the home of the “undenominational” congregation, which took the title St. James’ Assembly which was later changed to Worthing Free Church. It was the pastor of this congregation – Pastor C. D. Crouch – whom Pastor John Onions approached when he was seeking to establish the “Elm Grove Udenominational Mission” on firmer lines. In 1908 the St. James’ Assembly (still then meeting in the Montague Street premises) moved into their new especially built chapel in Chapel Road; their new meeting place was called “The Tabernacle”. St. James’ Hall once again reverted to secular use. However, in due course it became the home of another Christian congregation in 1917; this one resulted from the withdrawal of the associate pastor of the Tabernacle (Chapel Road) together with a considerable number of members (this was not over a doctrinal matter of any kind). This seceding congregation took the name “St James’ Assembly”. When the new chapel was built in Rugby Road the title chosen was “The West Worthing Assembly” although within a short period ‘Assembly’ was changed to “Tabernacle”, so for some years Worthing had two ‘Tabernacles’! Clearly this led to some confusion and in 1954 the Rugby Road cause adopted the title West Worthing Independent Evangelical Free Church (later ‘Independent’ was dropped from the title, and more recently ‘Free’ has as well, although essentially the Church remains the same!) The congregation which had met in “St James’ Hall, Montague Street” – from 1917 – moved to a chapel building in the High Street in 1926, at first retaining the title “St James’ Assembly”, which soon became “St James’ Evangelical Free Church” and then “Worthing Free Church” – although often simply called “the High Street Church”. When this sadly had to close, some items – including the Communion Table – were taken to the West Worthing Evangelical Church in Rugby Road (where the Table is still in use). The Rugby Road congregation maintained warm and cordial relations with the High Street Church and in the 1960s their pastor – Ralph Morrish – assisted West Worthing Evangelical Church in various ways. Later, when the High Street Church closed, a number of members founded what became known as the Sompting Christian Fellowship.

The reason these “undenominational” churches were so anxious to avoid having to use the word ‘church’ was its close association in people’s minds with the Established Church and denominational churches; it was thought “Assembly” and “Tabernacle” more closely echoed Biblical references to congregations gathered to worship God.

APPENDIX II

1. NAME OF CHURCH

The church shall be known as West Worthing Evangelical Church, which is linked to the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches, who are Trustees.

2. WHAT WE BELIEVE

The churches of the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches are committed to these truths of historic, biblical Christianity:

(a) GOD

There is one God, who exists eternally in three distinct but equal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God is unchangeable in His holiness, justice, wisdom and love. He is the almighty Creator, Saviour and Judge who sustains and governs all things according to His sovereign will for His own Glory.

(b) THE BIBLE

God has revealed Himself in the Bible, which consists of the Old and New Testaments alone. Every word was inspired by God through human authors, so that the Bible as originally given is in its entirety the Word of God, without error and fully reliable in fact and doctrine. The Bible alone speaks with final authority and is always sufficient for all matters of belief and practice.

(c) THE HUMAN RACE

All men and women, being created in the image of God, have inherent and equal dignity and worth. Their greatest purpose is to obey, worship and love God. As a result of the fall of our first parents, every aspect of human nature has been corrupted and all men and women are without spiritual life, guilty sinners and hostile to God. Every person is therefore under the just condemnation of God and needs to be born again, forgiven and reconciled to God in order to know and please Him.

(d) THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

The Lord Jesus Christ is fully God and fully man. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, and lived a sinless life in obedience to the Father. He taught with authority and all His words are true. On the cross He died in

the place of sinners, bearing God's punishment for their sin, redeeming them by His blood. He rose from the dead and in His resurrection body ascended into heaven where He is exalted as Lord of all. He intercedes for His people in the presence of the Father.

(e) **SALVATION**

Salvation is entirely a work of God's grace and cannot be earned or deserved. It has been accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ and is offered to all in the gospel. God in His love forgives sinners whom He calls, granting them repentance and faith. All who believe in Christ are justified by faith alone, adopted into the family of God and receive eternal life.

(f) **THE HOLY SPIRIT**

The Holy Spirit has been sent from heaven to glorify Christ and to apply His work of salvation. He convicts sinners, imparts spiritual life and gives a true understanding of the Scriptures. He indwells all believers, brings assurance of salvation and produces increasing likeness to Christ. He builds up the Church and empowers its members for worship, service and mission.

(g) **THE CHURCH**

The universal Church is the body of which Christ is the head and to which all who are saved belong. It is made visible in local churches, which are congregations of believers who are committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, for pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The unity of the body of Christ is expressed within and between churches by mutual love, care and encouragement. True fellowship between churches exists only where they are faithful to the gospel.

(h) **BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER**

Baptism and the Lord's Supper have been given to the churches by Christ as visible signs of the gospel. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into His Church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice offered once for all and involves no change in the bread and wine. All its blessings are received by faith.

(i) **THE FUTURE**

The Lord Jesus Christ will return in glory. He will raise the dead and judge the world in righteousness. The wicked will be sent to eternal punishment and the righteous will be

welcomed into a life of eternal joy in fellowship with God. God will make all things new and will be glorified forever.

3. The Ordinance of Baptism practised by the church is that of "Believers' baptism by immersion".

4. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Membership is open to all who:

- (a) Profess repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.
- (b) Are in full agreement with the Statement of Belief in Section 2.
- (c) Bear evidence in their lives of their Christian profession.

Scripture references: Acts 2:47; Romans 10:9; Acts 16:30-31.

(The above is taken from the Church Constitution as agreed in July 1995.)

APPENDIX III

Weekly Activities of the Church as at 31st March 2000

Sunday:	11.00 a.m.	Worship Crèche for babies and toddlers Sunday at Eleven for boys and girls
	6.00 p.m.	Prayer Meeting
	6.30 p.m.	Worship
	8.00 p.m.	After Church Fellowship (2 nd and 4 th Sundays) Holy Communion: 1 st Sunday evening and 3 rd Sunday morning
Monday:	2.45 p.m.	Women's Fellowship
Tuesday	7.30 p.m.	Bible Study and Prayer Meeting
Wednesday	10.00 a.m.	Jellytots – Mother and Toddlers' group*
	10.30 a.m.	Home Prayer Meeting
	7.00 p.m.	Wednesday Club (12+ year olds)*
Thursday:	10.00 a.m.	Coffee Morning +
	6.00 p.m.	Adventurers (5 to 11 year olds)*
Friday:	7.00 p.m.	Men's Fellowship +
	7.30 p.m.	Bridgebuilders +

Key: + = as announced
* = during school term

Missionary and other meetings as announced

APPENDIX IV

OUR ADDRESS

Mail may be addressed to the church premises,

West Worthing Evangelical Church,
Rugby Road,
Worthing,
Sussex, BN11 5NB.

Alternatively 21st Century communication facilities are available for those with access to E-mail or the website:

e-mail: wwcc@lineone.net

website: <http://website.lineone.net/~wwcc>

The latter has been carefully designed so that those browsing the net may discover a little of the history of the cause but more importantly find out more about the Christian Gospel.