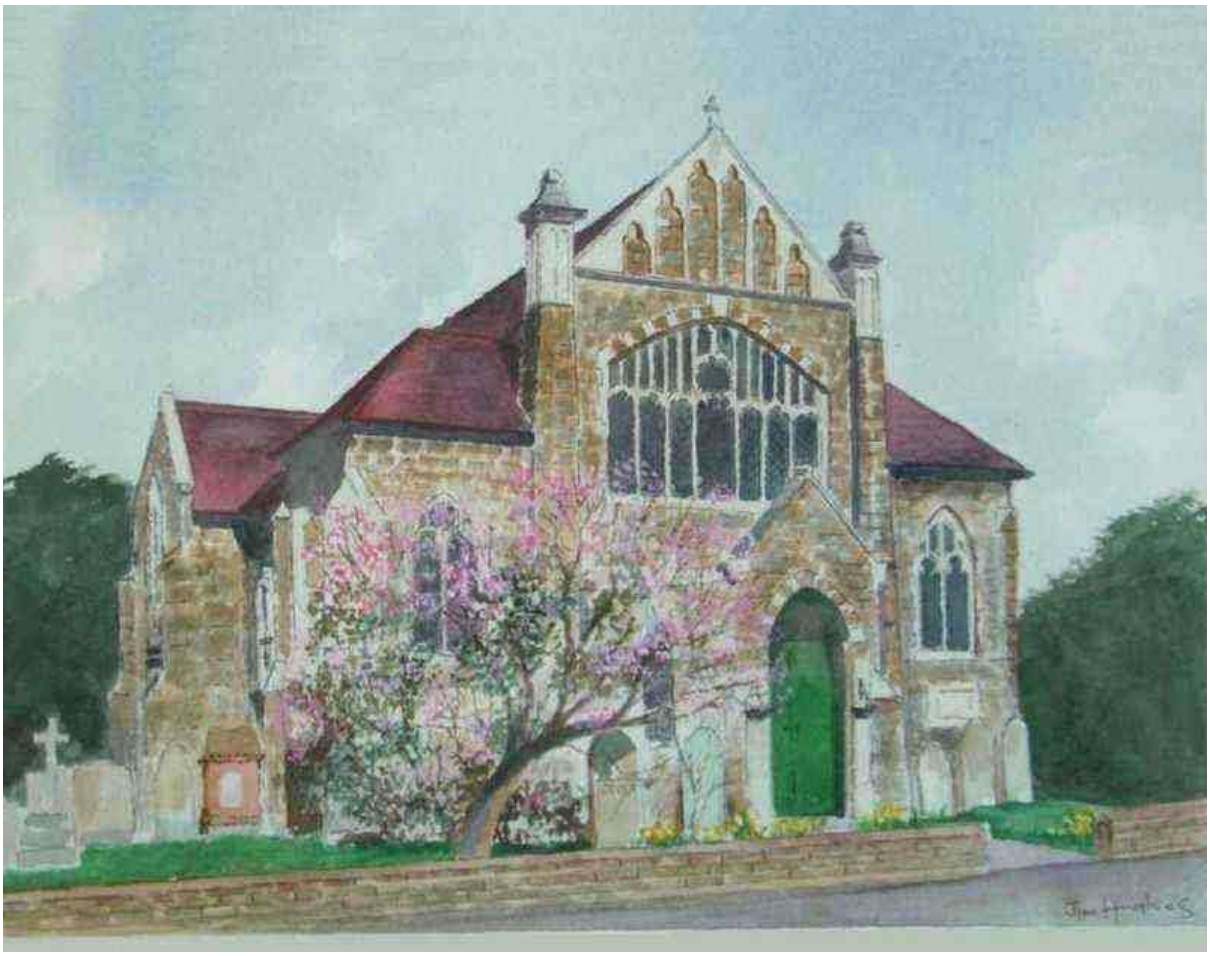
THE HISTORY OF EYNSFORD BAPTIST CHURCH 1775-2010



Researched and compiled by The Rev'd Dr Michael Foster

EYNSFORD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Faith... Hope... Love... These Three Remain

Introduction

Baptists in England initially developed along two different lines. The General Baptists (the first Baptists in England dating from 1611) were so-called because they held to the view of the General Atonement. That is that Christ by his death made possible the salvation of all who would believe. This position is known as Arminianism. In contrast, the Particular Baptists (dating from 1638) were so-called because they held the Particular Atonement, which is the view that Christ by his death saved the chosen (or the particular) known as the elect. This position is known as Calvinism.

The Church at Eynsford began as a Particular Baptist Church, and whilst the pioneers of this Church and many other Baptist Churches were Calvanists, their missionary zeal for Christ led to many people becoming part of the Worshipping Christian community, and gave them a real joy in knowing God in their lives.

There is a further designation of 'Strict' - this was to denote a Church which restricted Communion to those who had gone through believers Baptism and were members of the Church. Whilst Eynsford Baptist Church is generally described as a 'Paticular' Church, one Baptist publication of 1844 notes it as a 'Strict' Church - thus it was a "Strict and Particular" Baptist Church.

This history, is a living history about a people of God, who have sought to maintain a witness in Eynsford and the surrounding area, to the Good News proclaimed by Jesus, and by their care and sacrificial giving to maintain a Minister of the Gospel within the community, to encourage them, and share with them in this task. Within this fellowship of people, Eynsford has seen a Church faithful to the Scriptures for over 234 years.

Rev'd Dr Michael Foster 2010

The History of Eynsford Baptist Church

Chapter 1

1775-1905

As written in 1906

Covering the History of the original purpose-built building

Unabridged and as originally published.

The first entry in an old Church-book, reads thus :-

"The Particular Baptist Church of Jesus Christ, late of Wilmington, in the County of Kent, now is meeting at Eynesford, in the same County."

The date is June 10, 1792. Mr. M. Rogers, youngest son of Rev. John Rogers, tells how that in 1775, a Mr. J. Morris removed from London Wilmington, and opened his house for the preaching of the Gospel. How a Church consisting of five members was then formed. We are looking back one hundred and thirty-one years. Those were the times of stress and persecution, for all who ventured to obey the dictates of conscience and worship God other than in the Established Church. As late as 1792, Macaulay, in his history of England, records that a royal proclamation was issued, forbidding "irregular meetings and the circulation of seditious literature, especially such as was calculated to undermine religious belief, as well as the loyalty of the less instructed portion of the nation." Free, outspoken loyalty to our Lord Jesus Christ is still obnoxious to Cæsar!

The little community at Wilmington increased in numbers, and among those attracted was a working man named Hodges, who lived at Eynsford, and he induced Mr. Morris, and a Mr. J. Stanger, of Bessels Green, to hold services in his cottage on alternate Sundays and once a month on Thursdays. Brave Hodges! In those days to risk so much - a true hero whose love for Christ led to the formation of the Church here. For three years very little success attended their efforts. Still, some six or seven were immersed upon confession of their faith in Jesus Christ, in the river Darenth flowing by the cottage of brave Hodges.

This seems to have aroused attention, and a breath of revival followed, for several were added to their number, among them, Mr. Floyd, of the Paper Mills.

Meetings increased and the Divine awakening then enjoyed, alarmed the Church folk. If these "meetingers" were allowed to continue they would draw all the people away, and the clergyman would only have pews to to preach to! Such words, alas!, encouraged the villagers of the lower class, and the little Church had to pass through some rough times. Music ! from tin kettles, bells, horns, and whatever their ingenuity could devise, attended the worshippers and disturbed their worship. Their intention was declared to be "to drive these enemies of Church and King from the village of Eynsford, and stones often came battering at the door of the cottage in which they met."

However, the little Church persevered and strange scenes were enacted in this beautiful village. One amusing incident is recorded. A crowd of men and boys followed the preacher shouting " Tally-ho " and otherwise annoying him, which so aroused the sympathies of an outsider, Sir John Dyke's steward, who saw it, that with a heavy riding whip, he rushed to the help of the persecuted Minister and his " tallying " was so effectual that he quickly dispersed the " hounds." Bearing with gentleness these insults only seemed to cause their increase and at last the ringleaders were punished by the magistrates.

How wondrously God works. The report of the little Church's endurance was circulated more widely by these proceedings, and many came to hear these "strange doctrines" and found to their surprise the "meetingers" were loyal subjects who even prayed for the King and the Royal family!

Yet what follows in the record reveals the bitterness that dwelt in some hearts. Hodges-brave, earnest, Hodges-had notice to leave his cottage unless the preaching there was discontinued. Another house was offered, and a stable was fitted up, in Priory Lane at a cost of £100 and was opened July 2, 1799.

Sorrow, indignation and joy, struggle in the heart as one tries to think through this period of the Church's history. Sorrow that any people of God should have been subjected to such trial. Indignation that any one Church should attempt to arrogate to itself the right to interfere with the conscience of any ' man. Joy that the brave step of Hodges issued in so complete a success.

The records in the Church-books are of little public interest until we read of the settlement on September 29, 1802, of the Rev. John Rogers upon whose ministry the Divine blessing rested, for in 1804, we find a minute that "a new place of worship is needful" and on July 2, 1806, our new Meeting house was opened, Dr. Rippon preaching from Zech. iv. 6. January 3, 1808. "Resolved that a Sunday School be commenced." In May 13 of the same year, it was found necessary to erect a gallery in Eynsford Chapel.

May 1, 1814, the record tells the tale of continued success under the ministry of Rev. J. Rogers. "In consequence of the increase of the congregation, and the smallness of our vestry for the friends who dine there, an enlargement is necessary."

Incidentally we read that when Mr. Rogers came to be Pastor "great difficulty was experienced in obtaining lodgings for the young Minister, that at one time the prejudice against a Baptist Minister was so strong that the people with whom he lodged had notice to quit their house unless he left, and it was with the greatest difficulty he secured a house when he married."

We need not follow the constant record of God's blessing upon Mr. Rogers' ministry and give our last extract of this time.

September 20, 1840: *"Our esteemed and valued Pastor entered into rest this day. His end was peace."*

September 29, 1840: *"Our beloved Pastor was interred in a vault made in the old Baptistry (by his desire), and was followed by 300 persons who attended to testify the affectionate respect they cherished for the memory of their friend and Pastor. So is 'the memory of the righteous blessed.*"

It was the Rev. J. Rogers' great joy to know that all his nine children learned to love and serve their father's God and became useful, not only in Eynsford, but in other spheres also. Even to this day he is represented at Eynsford by a grandson who is a member and deacon of the Church to which he ministered so ably and so long. "Unto you, and your children, and your children's children," stands the promise.

After the decease of Mr. Rogers several Ministers fulfilled the pastoral duties, and in 1852, a man of considerable distinction, the Rev. Jonathan Whittemore, the originator of the Christian World, the Sunday School Times, and other publications, took charge of the Church. Mr. Whittemore came to Eynsford from Rushden in Northamptonshire. Already the Baptist Messenger one of his first adventures, had a large circulation among the members of our denomination, and he was well known for his interest in Congregational singing, having also published The Comprehensive Tune Book. As he had thus secured for himself a place in religious literature he might have looked for a larger sphere of ministerial labour, but the fields and lanes of quiet Eynsford, and their nearness to London, attracted him. It was on Good Friday, 1857, that the first number of the Christian World was published. Two years later the Sunday School Times appeared. This was the first paper devoted to the interests of the Sunday School ever published, and in a few weeks its circulation had reached 26,000 copies weekly. Connected with Mr.Whittemore in these undertakings was the late Mr. James Clarke, founder of the firm of James Clarke & Co.

The Church enjoyed many advantages through the connection of its Pastor with the great world of thought in London and elsewhere, not the least of which was the willingness of the C.H.Spurgeon, then in the youthtide of his career, to come down and preach, rather frequently in the Chapel or the adjacent orchard. Mr. Whittemore remained the Pastor until his death on October, 31, 1860, and was buried in Abney Park Cemetery in the presence of a notable company of mourners.

From this church, too, came Miss 'Marianne Farningham', so well known in the world of literature. She was the eldest daughter of Mr. Joseph Hearn of Farningham, a deacon of Eynsford Church for many years. Miss Hearn was a scholar and teacher in the Sunday School, and was baptised into communion about the year 1849, during the pastorate of the Rev. William Reynolds. She has always been on the staff of the Christian World, and also for many years the Editor of the Sunday School Times. Miss Hearn took the name of "Farningham" from her birthplace on the advice of Mr. Whittemore.

Of the later years of this old Church, little need be said. Faithful men served it, and the changes through which it has passed are many and varied. It is of interest to note that Rev. E. G. Gange, so well known in our denomination, in his early days, served Eynsford well for some time as Student-Pastor. Also Rev. E. Roberts, now of the South London Tabernacle, preached his first sermon while living at Eynsford. At the present time the Church is fortunate in having as its Pastor, Rev. H. E. Stone, late of Abbey Road, St. John's Wood. Since his coming in June, 1905, the Congregations have much more than doubled, and through his faithful ministry, many souls are being added to the Church. May our God still be gracious unto us.

Eynsford Baptist Church which owes its formation to that brave working man, Hodges, has been an active and progressive Church, for from it the Baptist Churches at Meopham, Sutton, Foot's Cray, West Kingsdown, Crockenhill, Shoreham, Stansted and Farnborough had their origin.

The old building is no longer sound, time has told its tale, and soon it must give place to a new and improved Chapel. One would like to "let it stand," but the price and scarcity of available land render it impossible to build, except on the old site ; and, after all, is not that as it should be? On this site the greatest victories were achieved by the Church-around it are the graves of those who helped in the bye-gone years to resist the tyranny of prelacy, and who suffered for conscience sake. Fitting, surely, that upon that same spot, surrounded by those memorials of its heroic members, a new "House of God" shall be erected and opened in the year that marks the voice of the nation, loudly and clearly raised for "civil and religious liberty" .

Who that reads this short outline of the little Church that for 131 years has stood for the Gospel of the Grace of God, and freedom to worship Him according to the dictates of an enlightened conscience, but will breathe a prayer for God's blessing still to rest upon it in all its future years ?
The original history booklet ends here.

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Additional details not recorded in the original Booklet covering the early years.

In order that the men who laboured for the cause of the Gospel at Eynsford in the early years are not simply names on a chart - further information on these men of God has been researched and the fruits of that labour now appear in this second part of Chapter 1, illuminating the booklet written in 1906. Emerging from the stories of the early leaders, three types of Pastors emerge:

• For some men, such as Pastor John Morris, Eynsford was part of a pioneer ministry. John Morris also served a total of 14 years, ensuring the Church was established before he stepped back into obscurity. However it was not for long, when with others he pioneered Borough Green Baptist Church.

• Other men made Eynsford their life's work, such as John Rogers who once in post laboured for a total of 38 years until he died - from 1802 to 1840 . He was ordained at Eynsford straight out of the Kent Itinerant Seminary to begin his work, and continued to the end of his life. His contribution not only to Eynsford, but to the Baptist cause, and the formation and enlargement of the Baptist Union especially in the planting of new Churches was prolific. He was active until the very end.

• For a few of the Pastors, Eynsford was a place they were passing through. Instructive is the story of William Reynolds. He had a definite calling to the Baptist Church at Wattisham, Suffolk. However through pride over an argument, he accepted a calling to the Church in Hull - though this was not God's calling. He wandered as Pastor after that from Church to Church, of which Eynsford was one. In the mid 1850s retired through ill health he never-the-less became a guest preacher at Wattisham and elsewhere. The Lord had brought him back to the place of ministry where he should have remained. Although of ill health, he was publicly engaged at Wattisham on the 4th of May, 1856, the last full Lord's day in which he was able to serve. Severe ill health took over from that time and he fell asleep in the Lord, 6th of September, 1856, but having returned to the place of God's will. So here are recorded from original sources, parts of the stories of some of the men of God, and members of the Church at Eynsford from those early years

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• **Foundation date of Eynsford Baptist Church.**
1786 is the date given for the foundation of Eynsford Baptist Church, in Haynes' Baptist Cyclopædia. Haynes' Baptist Cyclopædia: or, Dictionary of Baptist Biography, Bibliography, Antiquities, History, Chronology, Theology, Polity and Literature. ... By Thomas Wilson Haynes, Samuel Hart Senior 300 King Street, Charleston: USA 1848, page 306 (Page 10 of the Appendix).

• **The first Pastor John Morris** became a Baptist Pastor, after forming the Church at Wilmington in 1792. It was considered important to maintain the witness at Eynsford, and so John led as Pastor at Eynsford. John resigned the Pastorate in Eynsford in 1806, to join the Church in Croydon. He went on to preach at Igtham, where the Baptist people bought a plot of land at Borough Green. In 1809 John went on to become pioneer and Pastor to Borough Green Baptist Church, Sevenoaks, Kent. He died on the Lord's Day 29th August 1830, aged 76. The full details are as follows;

Baptism at the Ford, in the River Darent. Taken from the local history booklet, "Eynsford A story through the Ages" by William I. Curnow and Barbara Laming.

Published by the Eynsford Village Society on the occasion of the Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II June 1953.

• **Mr. John Morris** died, on Lord's day, August 29, 1830, Mr. John Morris, pastor of the Baptist church meeting at Borough Green, in the parish of Wrotham, Kent, in the 77th year of his age.

Mr. M. was born in London, and was convinced of his state as a sinner under the ministry of the late Rev. H. Foster ; but being persuaded that the King of Zion had commanded all his followers to put him on by baptism, he joined the church meeting in Devonshire-square, then under the pastoral care of Mr. M^{c}Gowan.

About the time of his death, Mr. M. began to speak in the name of the Lord in several workhouses in the metropolis, and soon after at Dartford, in Kent ; but as the opposition there to the Gospel was very great, preaching was for that time relinquished. Mr. M. shortly after came to reside at Wilmington, and preached statedly in his hired house, which being but a short distance from Dartford, several attended from that place, and the prospects of usefulness increased. Here, though he endured great persecution, he not only was enabled to persevere in his labours of love for several years, but introduced the preaching of the word of life into several benighted villages around. His disinterested labours were successful, so that ¡n 1792, Mr. M. and four others formed themselves into a church of Christ, and soon after he was ordained over them as their pastor. Several other persons were added to this infant church. At Wilmington Mr. M. continued to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ until 1798, when it was considered of greater importance to maintain stated worship at Eynsford, a village about five miles from the former. Here the word was multiplied, and grew exceedingly, but in 1802, be thought it right to resign his pastoral office, and. afterwards settled with the Baptist church at Croydon, in Surry, and in 1809, preached at Seal and Igtham ; at the latter place a Baptist church was formed, and he accepted a call to become their pastor. Here he laboured with acceptance for some time : others were added to them, so as to lead them to purchase a piece of freehold ground at Borough Green, and to erect a neat place of worship thereon. Here Mr. M. continued to hold forth the word of life for twenty-one years, when, finding his strength and faculties decline, he resigned his charge, but still administered the Lord's supper, and occasionally preached the word among them.

On Lord's day, July 18, he had a stroke or paralysis, which was followed by others, until his Lord called him home. During these visitations, his mind was generally calm and stayed. The truths he had so long preached to others were his support and comfort. He frequently exclaimed, the Lord was his portion, and that he knew whom he had believed, and was persuaded He was able to keep what he had committed to his hands.

His earthly remains were interred in the burying ground adjoining the meeting, on Monday, Sept. 6. Mr. Rogers, of Eynsford, delivered the address, and the following Lord's day, Mr. Shirley, of Sevenoaks, preached a funeral sermon from 2 Cor. xii. 11. "Though I be nothing." " Be ye followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."
Farningham. I.R. The Baptist Magazine 1830 Vol XXII, George Wightman, London 1830, pages 522-523.

• **The details of the very first Ordination at Eynsford** are recorded about the second Pastor are as follows;

"SEPT. 29 **Mr. John Rogers** (late of the Kent Itinerant Seminary) was ordained over the Baptist church, at Eynsford, in Kent. Mr. Arnold, of Sevenoaks, read a psalm and prayed ; Mr. Stanger senior, of Bessel's Green, introduced the ordination service, asked the usual questions, and received Mr. Roger's confession of faith ; Dr. Jenkins, of Walworth, Surry (to whose church Mr. Rogers formerly belonged) prayed the ordination prayer, accompanied with the laying on of hands, and then gave the charge from Matth. xvi. 24. ; Mr. Upton, of Blackfriars, preached to the people from Eph. v. 8, 9; Mr. Knott of Chatham, concluded in prayer, and preached in the evening. There was a pleasing degree of solemnity, and those evident tokens of the Lord's presence, through the whole of the opportunity, that it is hoped will be long remembered."
Details from The Evangelical Magazine for the year 1802 Volume 10, T. Williams, London 1802, page 510.

• **Pastor John Rogers attended the the Ordination of Pastor William Coleman at Lessness Heath Baptist Church 26th of April, 1810**, where he had assisted in the setting in of the new Pastor following the sad death of the Church's first Pastor Mr. B. S. Lloyd. The Reverend William Coleman had been a supply Preacher up to then (from "A Brief History of Free Grace Baptist Church"). Also in the early 1830s the Pastor John Rogers was instrumental at the creation of a Particular Baptist Church in Maidstone, who assisted in the opening of the Church on the 26th June 1831
The Baptist Magazine George Wightman, London 1831, page 431.

• **John Rogers involvement in the Matfiled Green Church in 1815.** On April 26, 1815, Mr. Thomas Gladwish was ordained Pastor of the Particular Baptist Church, at Matfield Green, near Brenchley, Kent. Mr. Martell, of Burwash, commenced the service of the day. Mr. Stanger, of Bessels Green, offered the Ordination Prayer, and addressed the Minister from Titus, ii. 1. Mr. Rogers, of Eynsford, preached to the people, from. Psalm cxviii. 25. Mr. Martell preached in the afternoon, from Luke, xiv. 17. And Mr. Rogers again in the evening, from Numb. xiii. 27.
The Baptist Magazine Vol VII, W. Button & Son, London 1815 - June 1815, Page 263.

• **Eynsford Baptist Church was a founding member of what became the Baptist Union**, under the leadership of Pastor John Rogers; "The number of the Baptist Magazine for June 1812 contains the following notices, under the head Baptist Mission and Union. ' Since the meeting for the benefit of the above mission was announced to take place on the 24th of June, it has been thought necessary to procure a larger place of worship. It had been fixed at Elim Chapel, Fetter Lane. The Dutch church, Austin Friars, has been kindly granted for that purpose ; Mr. Fuller, the secretary, will make a report of the state of the mission after each sermon. The services will commence at eleven in the forenoon and six in the evening. The next morning, at eight o'clock precisely, a meeting will be held at Dr. Rippon's meeting-house, Carter Lane, to take into consideration the proposed measure for an annual general association of the Particular Baptist Churches'."

A History English Baptists: Comprising the Principal Events of the History of the Protestant Dissenters During The Reign Of Geo. III And of the Baptist Churches in London, with Notices of Many of the Principal Churches in the Country during the Same Period. By Joseph Ivimey. Vol. IV. London: Isaac Taylor Hinton, Warwick Square; and Holdsworth & Ball, St. Paul's Church-Yard. 1830 London, pages 123-124.

• **A Report on the state of the Baptist Union in 1832, where John Rogers was one of the main speakers:**
In 1832 the Union took a new lease of life. A meeting was called to consider the outlook. It met just before William Knibb delivered his address upon slavery in Jamaica. A chronicler of the time says : " The extraordinary excitement of this meeting unfitted most persons who were present for subsequent services." It was agreed to ask for a return of the Churches and a comparison of their condition in 1790 and 1831. The speakers were Messrs. Smith, of Hford, Rogers, of Eynsford, Shirley, of Sevenoaks, Thompson, and Upton. There was a deep note of dissatisfaction when the return was published. It was clear that the denomination had suffered much from the lack of necessary means of communication and co-operation between the Churches. In 1790 there were three hundred and thirty-four Churches and sixty-five pastors ; in 1831 there were nine hundred and twenty Churches and two hundred and eighty-four pastors. The report adds : "It is obvious that such a list as this can furnish but a very uncertain criterion of the degree in which the Baptist denomination has been enlarged during this term. In some cases the multiplication of Churches is an actual diminution of strength. In many country places there were forty years ago large and prosperous Churches, a considerable proportion of whose members dwelt in surrounding villages, where now in each village there is a distinct Church, but not an increase in the aggregate of members at all proportioned to the increase in the number of

Churches ; while, on the other hand, in some districts in which the additional number of Churches is small, the increased magnitude of each Church is very important." Mr. Hinton delivered an eloquent address upon the gains of union, and the ministers passed resolutions pledging themselves to support the attempt at federation.
Rev. Alexander Maclaren, D.D. , The Story Of The English Baptists, Related By John C. Carlile. James Clarke & Co., 13 & 14 Fleet Street London, 1905, Pages, 219 - 220.

• Pastor John Rogers - working to the very end.
Months before he died, John Rogers was found involved in the setting in of new pastors, according to this report;

WOOLWICH. On Wednesday, May 13. 1840, Mr. Chas. Box, was publicly recognized as pastor of the first Baptist church, High Street, Woolwich, over which Mr. Robert McGregor and Mr. William Culver had presided upwards of seventy years, the former having been the honoured instrument of introducing the gospel into this populous town. The services of the day were commenced with the reading of the Scriptures and prayer by Mr. Williams of Grafton Street. Mr. Bowes, of Blandford Street, described the nature of a Gospel Church. Mr. Rogers of Eynesford asked the usual questions and received the confession of faith of Mr. Box, who also briefly stated his Christian experience, his call to the ministry, and his cheerful acceptance of the invitation of the church. One of the deacons gave a statement of the leadings of divine providence relative to the church from its formation to the present time. Mr. Cox of Woolwich, offered the ordination prayer; Mr. Shirley of Sevenoaks, delivered the charge, and Mr. Woodland, (Independent) of Woolwich, concluded in prayer.

In the evening, Mr. Francis, of Waterloo Road, commenced with reading and prayer; Mr. Lewis, of Chatham, addressed the church; and Mr. De;Franc, of Lutterworth, concluded in prayer. The attendance at both services was numerous, upwards of twenty ministers were present, and it was hoped that the solemn and interesting services will long be remembered with pleasure.
The Baptist Magazine, Volume XXXII (Series IV. Vol. III) George Wightman July 1840, page 371.

• The death of John Rogers and his wife. John Rogers died in 1840 (noted in; The Gospel Herald; or, Poor Christian's Magazine, 1865, Vol XXXIV, page114 - the date is recorded in Part 1 as September 20th). The news of his wife's death was given as follows; April 6th, at Sutton-at-Hone, Kent aged 73, Mrs Rogers, relic of the late Rev. John Rogers, many years pastor of the Baptist church, at Eynsford. Her end was peace. She died as she lived, in the enjoyment of the truths of the Gospel, which she had long known, advocated, and honoured
From the Baptist Reporter and Missionary Intelligencer page 204 New Series- Vol. V. 1848.

• The recollections of May Anne Hearn, known as Miss Marianne Farningham (1834-1909) of Pastor John Rogers. Although but a child of 6 when John Rogers died, her autobiography mentions the great influence he had;

"My father and mother were both members of the Baptist church at Eynsford, a pretty village about a mile from Farningham. They were both Sunday school teachers ; indeed, the life of the chapel was their life, and it became mine. I have been told that when I was a month old, and my mother was able for the first time to go to chapel, she took the baby too. It was customary to have tea in the vestry. After tea the friends went into the chapel, and I was laid, happily asleep, on the table in what was known as the " singing pew," in which at the ordinary services the choir sat. As those who formed the tea-party were interested in the new baby which had come to Joseph and Rebecca, they held a prayer-meeting for the child. I have always had the feeling that no baptismal service in any church, though performed by a priest, assisted by godfathers and god-mothers, could have been a more real consecration than that simple prayer-meeting in the village chapel. I was a "child of many prayers," and delight to think friends prayed for me when for the first time I entered a chapel.

The influence of this little dissenting church and its associations, not only on my own early life, but on that of our neighbours, was very great. Eynsford, through its agency, touched many other villages. It was a "Particular Baptist Church," founded in 1775, and consisted at its formation of five members, who were baptized in the Darent on a profession of their faith in the Lord Jesus.

It's first meeting-house was a stable fitted up for the purpose. Much opposition and persecution attended its inception, but the little cause grew and flourished in spite of that. In 1802 a young Baptist minister became its pastor, whose name, John Rogers, will be revered through all generations, for he was one of the most distinguished of the Nonconformist ministers of the time, a man of remarkable ability, of noble character and great power and influence, richly endowed by the Spirit of God. Two

years later a new chapel was erected, which for a hundred years was the home of devotion and love. The wife of Mr. Rogers was the sister of my Grandmother Hearn ; they were both strong, sweet women, of considerable culture and striking mental powers, both women of unflinching principles and strong convictions. I have said that my grandmother was deaf, but she always attended the services, and Mr. Rogers said she was his great helper, for while he preached she prayed, "Save Thy people. Bless Thine inheritance." The church was absolutely Calvinistic, as well as Particular Baptist. Other churches were judged to be in error ; but Mrs. Rogers wanted to tell the people that every one who would might be saved. It is curious to-day to remember what fierce fights were once fought under the two banners of Calvinism and Free Will. I am ashamed to say that the only recollection I have personally of Mr. Rogers is that of his giving me some plums, pushed through his garden gate one at a time. "
Farningham, Marianne, "A Working Woman's Life, An Autobiography" James Clarke, London 1907, pages 14-16

• Eynsford Baptist Church - and its involvement in the abolition of slavery.
Under Pastor John Rogers, the Church at Eynsford was so concerned about the issue of slavery, and the continued encouragement to that unjust institution by some Baptist Churches in America, that they readily consented to a meeting to be held at Eynsford Baptist Church. The minutes from the meetings are as follows;

"At a Meeting of the Ministers and Messengers of the Kent and Sussex Association of Particular Baptist churches, held at Eynsford, Kent, June 8, 1836, the following resolutions were unanimously adopted :-

1. That deeply sympathizing with British Christians of every denomination in the attention they feel compelled to give to the present state of slavery, and the condition of the free people of colour in America, we deem it our duty to avow our sentiments and feelings on that subject.

2. That, having learned with surprise and regret that slavery in its worst forms is encouraged by many of the churches of America, and that ministers, deacons, and private members of Baptist churches in that country equally participate in this flagrant abomination and fearing that the intercourse recently opened between those churches and our denomination in this country, may be considered as implying our sanction of such inhuman and unholy conduct, we feel it our duty to record our public protest against the iniquity, as utterly at variance with every principle of Christianity.

3. That while we feel deeply interested in the prosperity of the American churches, and would gladly co-operate in any measures calculated to promote a more intimate union with them on scriptural principles, we feel it to be our painful duty strongly to discountenance a participation in the hateful crimes of slave-dealing and slave-holding, and in the practice of those churches which make a difference of colour or condition a term of exclusion from the Lord's table.

4. That we feel it to be our duty to afford every encouragement to the friends of the abolition of slavery in America, and fervently to pray that those churches which have partaken in the abomination may be convinced of their sin, and be purified from offences so opposed to the spirit and injunction of Him who came to give liberty to the captives.

5. That these resolutions be published in the circular letter, and advertised in the Patriot newspaper.

WILLIAM SAVORY, Moderator."

Preserved in "Slavery in America", The Reverend Thomas Price D.D. G. Wightman, London 1837, page 44.

• The creation of Foots Cray Baptist Church.
On the 25th October 1807, Mr William Hardiman Colyer first attended a Baptism at Eynsford and responded to the Gospel. He then moved to the village of Foots Cray in 1811, where he rented a house. He licensed the house for public worship. He also preached at Mary Cray in an aged Deacon's House. When the Deacon died in 1813, the Paper Mill (Nash's) at Footscray was opened for "the

Lord's service". The Pastor of Eynsford, John Rogers, preached the first sermon there on the occasion of the deacon's death. There Mr Colyer continued to preach for many years beloved an honoured by his little flock until a Chapel was built. It was on the death of his mother (circa 1830), he returned to Farningham. He served at Eynsford Baptist Church, taking occasional turns to preach for the Pastor. He opened his own house up for public worship in the Evening, as then there was no Evening Service at Eynsford. His last sermon was on the 12th May 1845 at Foots Cray, for their anniversary. He suffered a number of strokes, which did not debilitate him too much, and he died on the 10th September of that year (from The Gospel herald; or, Poor Christian's magazine, 1865, Vol XXXIV, pages 112-114). On the 24th March 1836, on that land, the foundation stone of the Foots Cray Baptist Church was laid, and the building opened for worship in August that year
Foots Cray Baptist Website - no longer in existence.

• On Wednesday, August 24, 1836, a very neat new-built Baptist Chapel was opened at Footscray, in Kent, when three Sermons were preached. In the Morning, by Mr. W. H. Colyer, of Farningham ; in the Afternoon, by Mr. W. G. Lewis, of Chatham ; and in the Evening, by Mr. Rogers, of Eynsford. The services were well conducted; and the Chapel was crowded. There were several lovers of truth from London; and it proved a refreshing season to many of the Lord's family. The collections were handsome.
The Spiritual Magazine or Saints' Treasury Vol XII E. Palmer and Son, London September 1836, page 288.

• The third Pastor to Eynsford appears to have been the **Reverend W. C. Lewis**. For the end of June 1841 he is listed as giving a donation to the Baptist Missionary Society on behalf of Eynsford (Baptist Magazine Vol XXXIII for August 1841 on page 432). Of Pastor Lewis there is little in the way of recorded material, apart from a mention which states he split the Church at Eynsford. There is a note in the biography on William Hardiman Colyer which states; "In 1840, Mr Rogers died, and Mr C. did not cordially unite with his successor, who soon divided Eynsford Church"
From The Gospel herald; or, Poor Christian's magazine, 1865, Vol XXXIV, page 114).

• The forth Pastor to Eynsford was in post by 1843; **G .H. Whitbread**. The information in the Eynsford Church archives gives the name "G. H. Whitehead", but the Baptist Magazines for 1843 and 1844, records this as "G. H. Whitbread" and so this name is used in this history (see Baptist Magazines; Vol XXXVI, November 1843, Houlston and Stoneman London, page 583, and Vol XXXVI (Series IV. Vol. VII) Houlston and Stoneman, London. September 1844, page 468). In 1854, G. H. Whitbread is noted in a list a Baptist Ministers in England (Baptist Magazine 1854 Pages 791 - 800) as being the Pastor for Ashford Baptist Church.
The Baptist Magazine, Houlston and Stonemen, Volume XLVI (Series IV., VOL. XVII) December 1854, Supplement 1854, page 800, and Volume XLVII (Series IV., VOL. XVIII) December 1855, Supplement for 1855, page 788.

• **The Reverend William Reynolds, who became Eynsford's fifth Pastor in 1846**, possessed a chequered history. He was born on the 19th of February, 1788. At 25 years of age, he was baptised by the Pastor Keeble, of Blandford Street, London, and received into the fellowship of the church on the first Lord's day in April, 1813. In the year 1811 he had married Miss Mary Mason, who had also become a member of the same church. She was a person of great discernment, eminently spiritually minded, and proved a very valuable companion. In the month of July, 1817, he began to speak in the name of the Lord. The church having invited him to speak before them with a view to the public ministry. He continued to preach to them twice or thrice every month, to the end of November, when they gave him a cordial and unanimous call to the ministerial office, saying, 'Go. preach the gospel wherever the Lord shall send you.'

In the month of February, 1818, he was called to preach at Ipswich, Suffolk, to a few members from each of the Baptist Churches there (Stoke Green and Salem), who were united in church fellowship, and met for worship in a chapel originally built for the Methodist body. In the month of November following he was unanimously elected to the pastoral office, and was publicly set apart on the tenth of that month, when Mr. Keeble delivered a very impressive charge from 2 Tim. ii, 7. For a short time the church prospered ; nine persons were baptised, three of whom were given as seals to his ministry; but a prospect fair was blighted, discord entered, which ultimately proved the overthrow of the church. The doors were closed, and the chapel converted into dwelling houses. A lamentable fact!

At this time the Baptist Church at Wattisham, Suffolk, was without a pastor, and invited Mr. Reynolds to supply for them four Lord's days, in December, 1819. The cause of Christ there, at that time, was very low, the congregation consisted of only fifty or sixty persons, the church was divided, and the chapel very dilapidated. Through his work because the congregation had greatly increased, in the summer of 1820 the Church cordially and unanimously invited Mr Reynolds to the Pastoral office

which he accepted. The old chapel became too straight to contain those who flocked to Zion's holy gates, and, consequently, it was resolved to remove the old building and erect a new one on the same site, which was done, and opened for divine service, August 2nd, 1826, when the late Mr. John Stevens of London, and Mr. C. Elven of Bury, preached.

Now related is an important part of Mr. Reynolds's history:

In the early part of the year 1829 he received a letter from the Baptist Church at Hull, inviting him to supply them for a month. He offered three Sundays, to this proposal they assented, and Mr. Reynolds named the arrangement to one of his deacons, who acquiesced. When the time came for him to go to Hull, he found all the deacons, except the aforesaid, unacquainted with his intention, he having forgotten to name it to his brethren in office. They, consequently, were much surprised, and one of them strongly opposed it. This gave rise to much misunderstanding and contention. Mr. Reynolds felt his mind wounded and hastily came to the conclusion that the Lord was saying unto him, '*Depart hence*'. Then from the church at Hull he received a pressing invitation to go and preach the gospel to them, and on the 29th of December, 1829, he started from Wattisham for that place. When he calmly considered the past, he felt convinced that he had greatly erred in removing from that place, where his labour had been so signally blessed, and greatly feared the Lord would chastise him for the same ; nor were his fears groundless, as he was never again so happy in his work, nor his ministry so useful. How needful is it that the Christian, and especially the minister of the gospel, should act with caution, as one wrong step, although overruled for some good, may prove a lasting source of sorrow.

In the beginning of the year 1832 he removed to Willingham, Cambridgeshire, having received an invitation from the church there. He found them in a very divided and unhappy state. Hoping, however, that a brighter scene would dawn, he continued until May 1833, when he left, not without having had some tokens of the divine blessing on his ministry. In the month of July following, the Lord directed his steps to Sudbury, Suffolk, where the church was very low, the people had been scattered, and there was a debt of two hundred pounds on the chapel. Everything looked gloomy, but to prevent the chapel from being closed (which was then feared), he determined, in dependence on the Lord, to go there, and continue until the Michaelmas, which he did; the congregation increased during that time, and signs of usefulness appeared. He continued to labour there until the year 1837, and during the four years twenty-eight persons were baptised, the pewing of the chapel was completed, a vestry added, a small burying ground purchased, and the old debt reduced to one hundred and fifty pounds. Pecuniary circumstances, however, induced Mr. Reynolds to remove from this sphere of labour, as he found if he continued there he must be prepared to make further sacrifices, which he was unwilling to do, having already expended a considerable sum, which he had received from a private source.

The Baptist Church at Clare was it that time without a pastor, and in the summer of 1838 they gave Mr. Reynolds a unanimous invitation to the pastorate, which he accepted, and continued there until the summer of 1841. During the early part of his ministry at that place, the preached word was greatly blessed, sinners were born of God, and believers greatly edified and established in the great truths of the gospel ; but the spirit of contention entered the church, and after a stay of just four years, Mr. Reynolds resigned his office as pastor.

On his removal from Clare, he was called to preach the gospel at London Street, Greenwich, and afterwards at Eynsford, Kent. At both these places for a time the word was blessed. At Greenwich he was called to sustain a severe loss in the decease of his wife, who died November 3rd, 1843. In the year 1846, when at Eynsford, he again married, and his new young wife proved a great comfort to him in his long affliction and declining age, but who was left with an infant charge to mourn his loss. In the year 1851 he removed to Otley, in Suffolk, but after a very brief stay there he removed to March, in the Isle of Ely, Cambs. Here he preached in the old chapel, called 'The Tabernacle,' where he found the prospect very gloomy. The church consisted of only nine persons, and the congregation reduced to fifty. He was favoured there to gather a congregation, and to see a Lord's-day school established, numbering seventy children. But in the commencement of the year 1855 he was taken with loss of memory whilst preaching, which his medical adviser treated as apoplexy. It being now evident that a long time must elapse before he would be able again to resume his public duties, in the month of June he resigned the pastoral office. He then removed to Stowmarket, Suffolk, where one of his daughters resided, hoping that change of air, and rest, would be the means of restoring his health. The Benevolent Society, for the relief of aged ministers and their widows, in that county, having kindly voted him the sum of forty pounds towards his support. For a time he appeared to rally. He was enabled to preach several times at Wattisham, Rattlesden, and other places in the latter part of the year 1855, and the commencement of the year 1856. The last Lord's day he was publicly engaged was at Wattisham, on the 4th of May, when in the morning he preached from John xiv, 6 ; in the afternoon administered the Lord's Supper ; and in the evening preached from Rev. xxii, 5. The last sermon he delivered was on the evening of the 7th of May, at Stowmarket, from Rom. xiii, 11, when

he felt very unwell, and quite unfit for the service. Thus ended his ministry, after being upheld for thirty-eight years as a faithful preacher of Christ's gospel, having delivered nearly nine thousand sermons ! From that time his health rapidly declined; disease had taken a strong hold of him, which baffled the skill of his medical advisers. His affliction was a very painful one; at times his pains were distressing. His nervous system, also, was much affected, so that his mind was often beclouded, which was a source of great sorrow to him. However, he frequently enjoyed the conversation of Christian friends, and often testified the truths of the gospel he had so long preached were the solace and support of his mind, and although he had not that amount of enjoyment he desired, he felt satisfied of his interest in the Great Redeemer. During the latter part of August the symptoms of his complaint became much more alarming, and after being confined to his bed rather more than a week, he fell asleep in Jesus on the 6th of September, 1856
From The Gospel herald; or, Poor Christian's magazine Vol XXV. Vol III New Series Houlson and Wright London, MDCCCLVII, pages 17-20.

• **One report of William Reynolds' ministry in Eynsford is as follows;** Eynsford, Kent,—Mr. W. Reynolds baptized four persons on Lord's-day, October 4th, in the presence of a large and devout congregation, when the following hymn was sung:—

1. Jesus in this thy house of prayer,
Thy humble followers see;
In thy dear name assembled here,
To shew their love to thee.

2. Thy love to us did freely flow,
When suffering on the tree ;
Then may onr hearts with ardour glow,
And shew our love to thee.

3. May each with holy rapture say,
" O, why such love to me ?"
By this constrained, without delay,
We shew our love to thee.

4. Drawn by thy lore we upward rise,
From legal bondage free ;
Thy holy precepts now we prize,
And shew our love to thee.

5. May body, soul, and spirit
too,
To thee devoted be ;
Rejoicing, may we onward
go,
And shew our love to thee.

Frater. The Baptist Reporter and Missionary Intelligencer new Series—Vol. III (whole Series—Vol. XX.) Edited by Joseph Foulkes Winks 1846 Simpkin, Marshall and Co., London. page 500.

• **The sixth Pastor to Eynsford was Jonathan Whittemore:**
EYNSFORD, KENT. On Tuesday, July 6th, the Rev. J. Whittemore, late of Rushden, Northamptonshire, was publicly recognized as the pastor of the Baptist church meeting at Eynsford, Kent. The interesting services of the day were introduced by reading the scriptures and prayer, by the Rev. J. Cox, of Woolwich, Kent; the Rev. G. Hall, of Ipswich, delivered a very lucid discourse on the nature and constitution of a christian church, and proposed the usual questions; the Rev. C. H. Hosken, of Crayford, Kent, offered the recognition prayer; the Rev.J. Peacock, of Spencer-place, London, delivered the charge to the minister, from Rev. ii. 10 j the Rev. W. A. Blake, of Shoulham-street, London, addressed the members of the church; and the Rev. R. Hammond, of Town Malling.Kent, preached in the evening from Matthew xxiv. 14. The Revs. Messrs. Wallis, of Bexley Heath, Pearce, of Lessness Heath, Kent, and Geary, of London, assisted in the devotional exercises of the day.
The Church. Vol. VI. M.DCCC.LII (1852) London: Simpkin, Marshall, & Co., Arthur Hall & Co., Page 252.

Here is the story of **Rebecca Hearn** who joined the Sunday School under the ministry of **Pastor Jonathan Whittemore;** The young friend, of whom I would give you a brief memoir, resided at Farningham, Kent. At a very early age she was a scholar in Eynsford baptist sabbath school, and continued so until her declining health prevented. About fifteen months before her death, she became very anxious for her soul's salvation, and was led to the footstool of the Saviour, where she sought and obtained mercy. In a letter to a very dear friend she says, " I trust I have been enabled to decide for Christ; I do feel willing to give up all for him. The world has many temptations, but there is nothing in it worth fixing our love upon. No, all my love shall be the .Lord's, for he alone is altogether lovely to my soul; and it is my desire and prayer that I may always feel as I do now."

She had been the child of many prayers, and this change was hailed by her friends with much thankfulness ; for they looked forward to the time when they should have the joy of seeing her

devoted to the cause of Christ, and a blessing to his church. But He, whose thoughts are not as our thoughts, had appointed otherwise ; for in the early part of the year, which began with so many bright hopes for the future, symptoms of consumption (Tuberculosis or TB) appeared - the disease which had before removed her dear mother and brother to the eternal world.

She had a very strong desire to be united with the Lord's people, and her name was introduced to the church, when the friends expressed their willingness and desire to receive her, should her strength ever be equal to the ordinance of baptism. But it never was; and when next it was administered, she had joined the church above. During her long illness she was not heard to express a desire to recover. " I am willing either to live or die, as best pleases my father in heaven," was language often on her lips; and sometimes she added, " but I think I would rather go."

The day before her death, many friends called to see her; several of whom, in prayer, commended her departing spirit into the hands of the Lord Jesus. She was too weak to talk much, but the little she said proved her to be resting on the Rock of Ages. She sent her love to her class-mates, with the hope that she might meet them in heaven. She requested her friends to read to her from Drummond's " Peace for the Dying Christian," and seemed much to enjoy it. Her breathing now became very difficult; and the restlessness of death was upon her. " This is hard work," she said; "but there is rest in heaven." A few hours afterwards, on Oct. 26, 1853, she entered that glorious rest, aged 17 years ; and is now, we hope and believe, " absent from the body, but present with the Lord."
The Baptist Children's Magazine and Youth Missionary Repository Vol III New Series, Piper, Stephenson & Co London 1853, pages 120-122.

• **Jonathan Whittemore, pastor to Eynsford Baptist Church** died on Wednesday, 31st October 1860, whilst still serving in his ministry. His remains were interred in the Abbey Park Cemetery, on the 5th November. The Rev'd W. A. Blake of Shouldham Street conducted the service. On the following Lord's day a service was held at Eynsford where he had laboured for so long. Psalm xlvi: 10 was chosen by his widow [from The Primitive Church (or Baptist) Magazine, Vol XVII, Arthur Hall & Co. London, 1860, page 282]. Before becoming Pastor to Eynsford he had been Pastor to the Old Baptist Church, Rushden, Northamptonshire [The Church Vol VIII, M.DCCC.LIV, J Heaton & Son, Leeds, page 196].

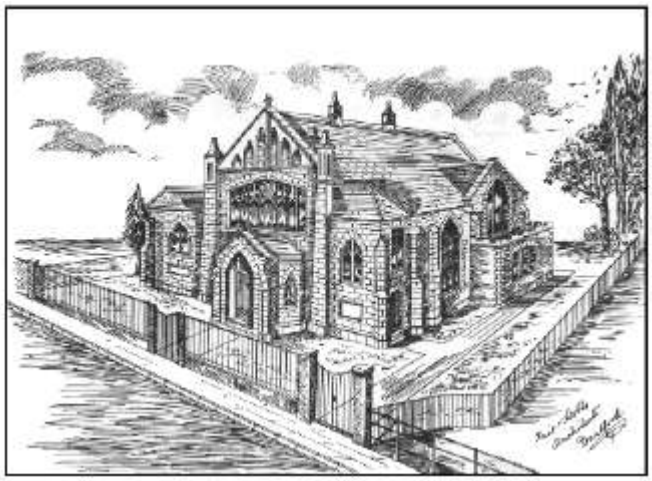
• **J. M. Camp the seventh Pastor of Eynsford** accepted the pastorate of the Church at Parson's Hill, Woolwich in 1871
Baptist Magazine 1871, page 256

• **Pastor George Brooks Richardson** who had been Pastor from 1882 - 1892, had been previously Pastor to Charlbury and Chadlington see under Richardson;
http://users.ox.ac.uk/~malcolm/genuki/big/eng/OXF/Charlbury/kibble.txt

• In the November of 1895, the Rev. George Brooks Richardson accepted the charge of the Battle Baptist Church [East Sussex] for 12 months, not, however, removing into the district from Hastings. Mr. Richardson was at Chadlington and Charlbury 1876-82. Eynsford 1882-92, and after leaving Battle, at Arlington 1900-1908. He was educated at the Metropolitan College.
A History of Battle Baptist Church by The Rev F W Butt-Thompson and Others Page 22.

Chapter 2

1906 - The New Chapel



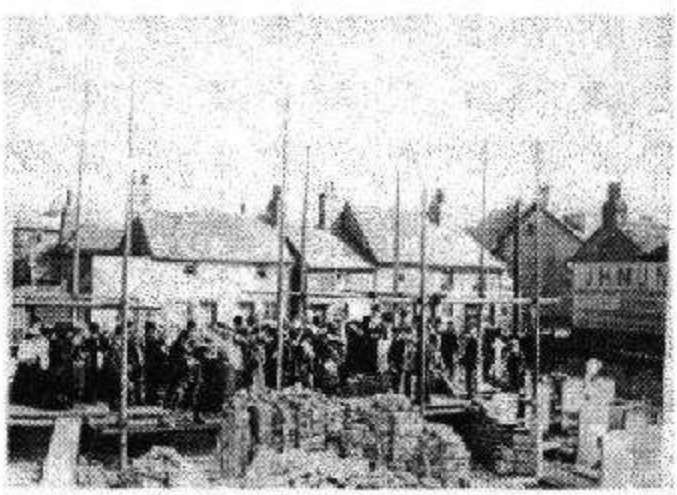
The New Chapel of The Eynsford Baptist Church
founded 1906

In 1905 a campaign was embarked upon to build a new Chapel. The cost of the new Chapel was given as £2,200 -0-0. The drawing above was made by Tait Hobbs the Architect based in Dartford.

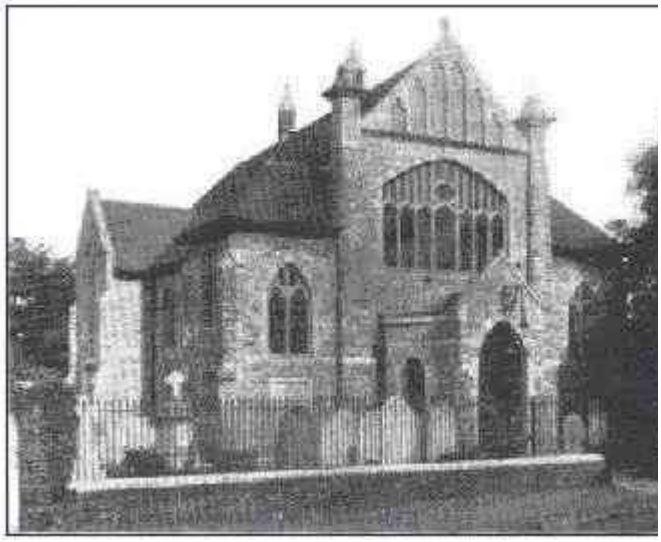
The Church proclaimed the following mottoes as part of the fund raising campaign;

I. THE POWER OF GOD. "Nothing is too hard for the Lord" (Jeremiah 32:17)
II. THE POWER OF FAITH. "All things are possible to him who believeth" (Mark 9:23)
III. THE POWER OF PRAYER. "Ask, and ye shall recieve" (John 16:24)
IV. THE POWER OF SACRIFICE. "She hath done what she could" (Mark 14:8)
On the 16th April 1906, the eight Memorial Stones were laid,and the Chapel completed in that year.

The eight stones were laid either by or on behalf of the following;
Mr. WM. ROGERS, Horton Kirby
Mr. SIDNEY GIBSON, Eynsford
Sir HUGH GILZEAN REID, L.L.D., London
D. CLARKE, Esq., J.P., C.A., High Wycombe
Mr. J. PETERS, London
Mr. T. WILD, Middlesex
The Village Pastors from various Counties
Mr. E. RAYNER, Wadhurst
Henry T Cadbury presided over the Ceremony.



During the building meetings took place in the local Drill Hall. For the stone laying ceremony, the assembly gather at the Drill Hall and sung "God bless our native land".
The assembly moved to the Chapel site where the Hymn "Our Fathers' Friend and God" was sung, and in the evening at the Drill Hall, the hymn "Our Father God, our Fathers' God" was sung.
The silver trowel used for the stone laying was sent to the Baptists in Australia for a stonelaying there, and was subsequently returned in 1958 [Chapter 6]!



New building Circa 1962. Click on Interior image to enlarge.

Ministers of Eynsford Baptist Church

John Morris	1792- 1802
John Rogers	1802-1840
W. C. Lewis	1841-1842
G. H. Whitbread	1843-1846
William Reynolds	1846-1851
Jonathan Whittemore	1852-1860
J. M. Camp	1863-1871
William Mummery	1871-1881
George Brooks Richardson	1882-1892
Henry Dunkley	1892-1895
John Smith	1896-1905
H. E. Stone	1905-1908
Frank G. Dobson	1908-1911
John Felmingham	1911-1924
John. W. Y. Meikle	1925-1925
John Munro	1925-1938
Bertram. H. Carpenter	1938-1940
Stanley Thomas	1941-1950
Arthur T. Stockwell	1951-1960
Arthur J. Hallworth	1961-1968
Cyril A. G. Austen	1969-1974
Malcolm J. Cook	1975-1980
Wilfred B. Stanbury	1981-1999
John &Joan Saunders	2000-2010
Bertram. H. Carpenter (Hon)	2006-2009

Chapter 3

1905-1938

In May of 1905, Pastor Stone started a Men's meeting on a Sunday afternoon to promote thrift, with the last meeting held on the 22nd December of 1907. In the Edwardian years, thrift was a value much prompted, especially among the working class, a world away from the wasteful world in the west, from the latter half of the twentieth century onward!

The debt caused by the new Chapel (in the form of loans from the Baptist Building Fund) which had been completed by 1906, was still being paid off in 1907. By June 1908, Pastor Stone no longer appears in the minute book of the Deacons' meetings. No clue to where he moved is given, but by August 1908, Pastor Frank Dobson was in post.

It was noted in 1909, that the accumulation of ash from the boiler, dumped at the back of Church was becoming a problem and so an approach was made to the local Council for its weekly collection. In 1910, the Church had obtained a new piano, and the remedy for guarding against the adjacent damp wall, according to the minutes was by "nailing on a piece of carpet to the wall and lining it with straw"! On the 2nd May 1910, it was agreed at the Deacons' meeting to pay an annual subscription of 2 guineas a year (a guinea being £1 and 1shilling or today £1 and 5 pence) to the Kent Baptist Union to secure a modest pension to the Minister in old age, and a pension to his widow in the event of his death. Perhaps the Pastor was aware of a declining health or the move was prophetic, as by the end of 1910, the Minister had taken ill. At the Deacons' meeting of the 30th August 1911, it was reported that the Pastor had died two days earlier, at his Father's home in Hitchin. The Church arranged for his body to be transferred by Rail to Eynsford for his funeral.

Any person suggesting that children of a 100 years ago were better behaved, perhaps especially those of Sunday school will be illuminated by the minutes of 30th October 1911, when it was noted that a local resident had written "complaining about the Sunday Scholars trespassing and throwing stones"! In the same meeting, the Deacons discussed happier tidings with arrangements to appoint a successor to Pastor Dobson (deceased). The Reverend John Felmingham of Tooting had been recommended to the Church, and was appointed and in service before the close of 1911. The Reverend John Felmingham had been Pastor of the Northcote Road Baptist Church late 1800s to 1900. This was reported from an interview with Charles Booth of the Salvation Army.

In 1913, the Baptist Union had created a "Sustentation Fund", this was a fund from which to provide for the sustaining of poor Ministers. The Union aimed at finding some £250,000. This was the beginnings of the Home Mission. The matter was considered very important by Eynsford Baptist Church and placed before the Church, and collection boxes were given to members of the congregation to assist in raising £50 toward this cause.

Pastor John Felmingham had shepherded the Church through the years of the Great War with the sad loss of Church members and Sunday School members. On 16th December 1918, discussions began on raising a memorial tablet to those who had lost their lives in the Great War. The tablet was eventually made and erected on the 3rd January 1921.

In March of 1924, Pastor John Felmingham announced that he had accepted a unanimous call to the Baptist Church at Ludham.

Pastor John William Young Meikle began his ministry at Eynsford in the March of 1925, which sadly did not last six months, and he resigned owing to ill health. He had been Pastor of the Woodside Baptist Church for only a few months at the end of 1924, and the beginning of 1925, and had resigned due to ill health, and thought that the demands of Eynsford being a smaller Church than Woodside, would allow him to continue, but this proved not to be the case. He had held pastorates in Forfar and Dartford, and had served as an Army Chaplain in the Great War, before being involved in mission work in Canada, and then back to England.

Following Eynsford, he had a prolonged stay in South Africa and made a good recovery and returned and was able to lead a Mission at Woodside. Eynsford Church did not harbour any misgivings, as in 1938, during an interregnum, they considered an approach to him to conduct services. Ill health continued and he retired to take up chicken farming. He died on 8th September 1967 in a Glasgow Hospital.

John Munro succeeded Pastor Meikle in September, with his Recognition Service on 12th January 1926. His ministry was fruitful, to the extent that in November 1929, that an extension to the Church was considered. The land was purchased and the extension costing £521-7-0 went ahead. A further project was planned - that of providing a better Manse. Land in Priory Lane was purchased in September of 1930 for just over £491, and a house built. The minutes provide an estimate of £1193 for building the House, but additional costs were incurred for putting in Electric Light by Kent Electricity Company in April of 1931. The old Manse "Pendleton" was sold. The Estate Agent had valued the property at £900, but the Church were happy to accept £850. The minutes provided no detail of the eventual sale price. Although the Manse could boast of electric light from 1931, it was only in March of 1935, that the Church gained the same. By April 1933, the Deacons' minutes reveal that repairs had to be undertaken to the new Manse to the cost of £12. A parcel of land attached to the grounds of the new Manse was not needed, and sold for £90, which assisted in balancing the books.

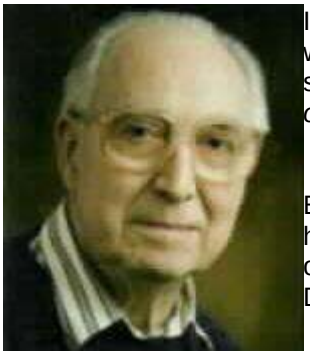
In that year, 1933, the reported Church membership was 104. The Deacons meeting resolved to ensure the figure was realistic be removing those who no longer attended. In 1936 the membership was reported as being 100. This was not evidence of decline, as the roll had been reduced to a realistic figure, and in 1935 the roll stood at 90, following the removal of names of those no longer attending with 10 new members being added.

A Village Council was created in 1931, and unlike the period just before and after the beginnings of the 20th Century, the Baptist Church was accepted as a full part of the Village, and was asked to provide a representative.

The Deacons' meeting for the 20th September 1937, reveals a malaise. A question was raised about nominating a new deacon, as one member felt that "he and others were not able to serve as they once did, owing to increasing years"! In October 1937, after 12 years of faithful service, John Munro had accepted a call to Guilford, leaving the Church in the hands of the elderly Deacons. A farewell service was held on the 5th January 1938.

Chapter 4

1938-1940



In the period of the interregnum of 1938, the Deacons needed to consider what type of man they needed. The meeting of the 31st January, summarised these qualities; *"That he be evangelical, preferably under 50, & one who would get about among the people".*

Bertram Carpenter was considered, a student of Spurgeon's College. He had made a good impression, when he "preached with a view". The contract offered was for three years at an annual stipend of £200. Unusually for the Deacons' minutes copies of the correspondence are preserved;

22.3.38

Dear Mr Carpenter,

We have much pleasure in informing you that after due deliberation & prayer, the Church last evening passed the following resolution, Viz, "That Mr B. H. Carpenter be given a definite call to the Pastorate of the Eynsford Baptist Church for a period of three years, to be renewed if mutually agreeable.

This resolution was supported by a strong recommendation from the Diaconate who are unanimous in their desire that you accept the Pastorate of our Church.

The stipend would be £200 per annum; with the use of the Manse, rent & rates free. In hope and prayers, trusting to receive a favourable reply, and that you may bring to this Church a ministry which may be richly blessed in bringing many souls into the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in establishing and strengthening our Church in the faith.

On behalf of the Church

We are, yours in the Master's Service

24th Mar 38.
Dear Brethren,
It was very encouraging to receive your letter of invitation to the Pastorate of the Eynsford Baptist Church. Although I know you were holding a business meeting which was concerned with settlement, I must confess that I was rather surprised to receive the Call. Consequently you have caught me in a very uncertain frame of mind, and since I received your letter I have been very uneasy.
You, as a Church, have tried to discover the mind of Christ; It is now for me also to find God's will. There can be no use in my coming to you unless I am convinced that God has planned this for us. If there is that conviction, we as a people will have no need to fear.
This is a tremendous decision which I am now called upon to make, for it may influence many lives.
I would therefore ask you to join with me in seeking the guidance of God through prayer. I believe that already he is guiding, and I am becoming continually easier in mind, but I would ask you to be patient with me a little longer that I may be convinced.
This is of vital importance to yourselves as well as to myself should I accept the Call, and I believe you will readily agree with me. At the same time it is not fair that you should be kept waiting long, so that I promise you a definite answer not later than March 31st, one week from today.
I would like to take this opportunity of expressing my great appreciation of the kindness shown to me during my visits, I feel that already I have made many friends, so that I can truthfully say that I feel really at home with you.
Praying that God will continue to guide us, and that He may in his own good time make clear the path before us, and with heartiest Christian greetings to you all,
Yours very sincerely,
Bertram H Carpenter.

Not many days had past, and only four days later the affirming reply was received.

28th March 1938.

Dear Brethren,

The invitation to the Pastorate of Eynsford Baptist Church has been much on my mind since I last wrote to you. I am very glad now that I did not hurry my decision for God can always be relied upon to give us light if we trust Him. Consequently now I am convinced that God has called me to work with you. The least I can do is to obey that Call; but let me hasten to add that I do so with great joy.

I would like you to know, too, that I do not accept the call because I believe the work is easy. On the contrary, I am fully aware of the big task which awaits me. Indeed, it was largely the task which made me hesitate in the first case to accept your invitation, for I felt I was not gifted enough to succeed.

But I know now that with help and guidance of God, and your support in prayer and work, God's cause will not fail.

Meanwhile, I would earnestly invite you all to join with me in supplication before God that He will prepare us all to work together in unity that His name may be glorified and Christ's Kingdom extended among the people of Eynsford,

With warmest greetings to you all,
Y
ours in his Service,

Bertram H. Carpenter.

A meeting was held with the Pastor elect on the 7th April 1938, when Bertram announced that in August, just before he takes up post, he would be married, to his future wife at present living in Glasgow.

The close of the minutes reflected the joy of that meeting "After a very happy meeting Mr Carpenter closed with prayers"!

The minutes of 11th October 1938, reveal an unusual problem for the period. The Secretary raised the question regarding a car park for the Church. It is recorded "Messrs Gibson's yard was being used unofficially, also this was at times inadequate". It was thus proposed that the Village Hall be approached to enquire whether their car park could be used, and at what cost. By January 1939, a reply had been received, that a fee of 2/- (two shillings - 10p) a week was required. This was considered excessive, and the matter dropped.

The problem was unusual for the day, as it was not until the late 1950s that cars became common place and afforded by those of reasonable income! Perhaps the Village Hall, considered that a Church with members rich enough to afford cars, was rich enough to pay the 2/- per week!

The garden at the Priory Hill Manse was very large. In July 1939, the young Pastor, asked the Deacons for assistance with the garden, which was beyond him. The Deacons agreed to help.
The War featured in the minutes of the 2nd October meeting, with seeking to obtain the cost of "blacking out" the Church. Also, the difference in years between the young and inexperienced Pastor, and his Deacons of a more senior age, began to reveal itself, when the Pastor asked if he could commence a series of meetings "for the discussion of Pacifist views", and was warned by the Deacons "that it would be very unwise to hold a meeting of that kind under the present circumstances", and it was therefore agreed to shelve the matter "for the time being".

The Pastor, at the same meeting sought to deal with failing institutions of the Church and proposed that the Christian Endeavour Meetings be replaced by an all age Bible Study. The Deacon who was the Secretary of the Christian Endeavour Meetings strongly opposed such a move, and saved the ailing institution.

In the meeting of February 1940, it was revealed that the 'honeymoon period' of the Pastor's ministry was well and truly at an end, with the Deacons criticising his ministry; asking "*Whether he considered he was giving enough time to the work of the Church and to visitation".* The Pastor answered that he

was, and that he reminded the Deacons that he *"had a considerable amount of study to do for the Baptist Union*". The keeping of the old was not restricted to the Christian Endeavour Meetings, as the dumping of rubbish at the back of the Church was a regular practice, and in May 1940, the Rural District Council had written to the Church to ask them to remove it.

The criticism over visiting was misplaced. Bertram records in a letter sent to the Church only recently; 7th February 2006; "*I did the best I could with visitation. I had to walk everywhere. Sometimes 12 miles there and back as I had no bicycle on £200 per annum I could not afford to buy one. On one occasion I missed a meeting of local Baptist Churches to the annoyance of a wealthy Church member. She said I was paid to go. She was one of those with a car but failed to offer a 'lift' - I would have had to walk 14 miles across country".*

A meeting was held by the Deacons 19th August 1940, to discuss the Pastor's future, and to considered "as two years of the three years for which he was invited, had expired" whether he was to be offered a further period. A meeting was to be held, with ballot papers issued. However by 31st December, it was reported in the minutes that Mr Carpenter had "*received a call to another sphere"*! The note that Bertram had "received a call to another sphere" was a simply an euphemism to cover that shoddy way in which the Church had sacked him. The Church did not allow Bertram to continue his full three years. On returning from a holiday, he found a letter waiting on the doormat, which according to Bertram's notes, informed him that *"a Church Meeting had been held to consider the Pastorate - so therefore your ministry will end Sept 1940*". Bertram notes; "*Of course the basic hostility was that I was a pacifist and the sooner I was 'out' the better. People like Dr. Soper (of Kingsway Hall and a leading Pacifist) was not thrown out - nor Rev Cripps - also a Pacifist and Area Superintendent of the West Midlands Baptist was also spared - and many others. Probably age was on their side."*

Great optimism greeted the beginning of Bertram Carpenter's ministry with a genuine reliance upon the guiding of God. That early ministry certainly would have been a learning curve for the Pastor, but it had become clear, that with his authority being seriously eroded by the Deacons, his time had drawn to an end. He could no longer be effective in those circumstances. Perhaps the recipe of a young and inexperienced Pastor, and elderly Deacons, who had firm and perhaps unreasonable opinions of what was expected of their Pastor had proved a poor combination. The sadness was that the Church had failed a servant of God, and appears to have failed to follow scriptural guidance. Hebrews 13:

7. *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.*

17. Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.

Redemption is the gracious act of God in Christ, and such action can be mirrored by the faithful. Some 66 years later, in March 2006, the Pastor of the Eynsford Baptist Church, along with the Elders, appointed Bertram as an honorary Pastor, a position he happily accepted.

Chapter 5

1940 – 1950

The Deacons of the day may have resolved what they considered to be the issue of their young Pastor, but had failed to do anything concerning the rubbish at the back of Church. The Rural District Council wrote to them again, and suggested a dustbin be purchased, which could be emptied weekly. The Deacons agreed to the purchase of a Dustbin. The Manse garden for which the Pastor had asked for assistance was by May of 1941, in a very poor state, which had to be remedied by paying for it to be put in order.

It was learnt that the Reverend Stanley Thomas, who was one of the supply preachers for the interregnum was seeking a change, and by June had been invited to the Pastorate. The stipend for which Bertram had worked was now increased for the new Pastor by 20% to £240!
Pastor Thomas was able to take somewhat of a greater command of the situation, and provided an upbeat spirit to the Church, by encouraging them to prepare for the ter-jubilee (150 years) anniversary. He stated "that all was well in hand and that" the Church "could look forward to a great time"! A further positive suggestion was that of sending a letter to those members on active service, with news of the Church and Village and other items of interest. However falling on deaf ears was a proposal to appoint district visitors to assist in pastoral concerns! A matter which the Pastor allowed to be withdrawn.

At the Deacons' meeting early 1944, it was agreed to recommend to the Church meeting, that they ask "Mr Thomas to continue his pastorate… for an indefinite period and that his stipend be increased"!

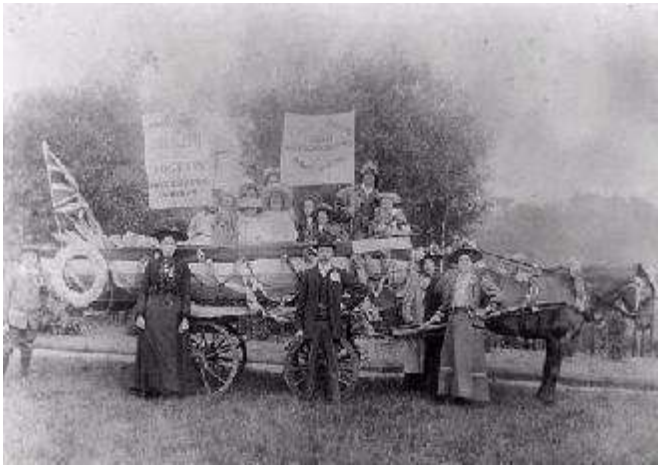
With an eye to evangelism, and to continue pastoral care, at the meeting on the 7th March 1945, Pastor Thomas propose that letters be drafted to those serving in the forces, with a welcome back into fellowship and that they had "on the front page a photograph of the Church with doors open". Given the losses due to those being called away to the forces, and life never being the same following the war, the Church had maintained its strength from its pre-war position of the membership being around the 100 mark. In 1947 the membership figure is recorded as being 98.

There is evidence that Pastor Stanley Thomas worked well with Churches of other denominations. He got the Deacons to agree that other Churches could use the premises for refreshments at a rate of 10/- (10 shillings - 50p). For the 1948 Church Anniversary, Canon Mitchel of Dartford, The Vicar of Eynsford and the Rector of Lullingstone were invited to the Tea held during the Church Anniversary celebrations. Amongst Evangelical Christians this would have been known as being "interdenominational" as opposed to the more liberal term of "ecumenical"!

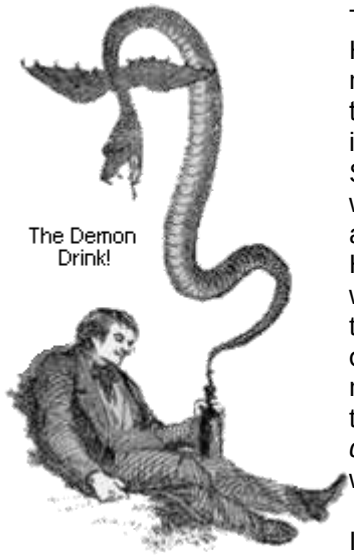
Pastor Thomas also gained the use of Students as supply Preachers allowing them some experience and for which the Church paid each student £2-10-00 (£2-50). Not neglected was the silent and inexpensive witness of "Wayside Pulpit Notices" of which a fresh supply was ordered in July 1947.

In December 1947, at the Deacons meeting it was proposed that the "Band of Hope" could be recommenced at the Church.

Jabez Tunnicliffe, founder of the Band of Hope had been a member of the Hunslet Baptist Church (near Leeds). He and Mrs Ann Jane Carlile had founded the organisation in 1847. This Christian organisation provided activities for children and adults that encouraged them to avoid alcohol. 'Signing the pledge' to abstain from alcohol became one of the 'hallmarks' of the organisation. The misuse of alcohol in the late 1800s and early 1900s was very real. The wording on the pledge cards read; "I Promise by Divine Assistance to abstain from all intoxicating Liquors as beverages and discountenance all the causes and practices of Intemperance".



The organisation today is called "Hope UK" and deals with the issue of the dangers of drugs.



The Temperance movement was wider and earlier than the Band of Hope, which became the most renowned of the organisations. The movement which had its origins in the 1830s gave birth to a new word in the English Language. "Teetotal" was coined by Richard “Dicky” Turner in a speech he gave to a temperance meeting in Preston, Lancashire, in September 1833. Turner was an illiterate working man, a fish hawker, who had visited one of the early Preston temperance meetings in 1832 as a joke while half-drunk, but who came out of the meeting a convert. He had a stutter, and was one of the founding Seven Men of Preston who signed the pledge and became a fervent advocate of that form of temperance that demanded total abstention from all forms of alcoholic drink, not just spirits as some more moderate reformers urged. There’s no formal record of what he said at the meeting — one report claimed that he said in his strong local accent, and with his stutter, *“I’ll be reet down out-and-out t-t-total for ever and ever”*, and the word "teetotal" was born.

In Eynsford in times past the Temperance movement had an Apostle. The Band of Hope had influenced such people as Arthur Mee.

Arthur had founded the "Strength of Britain Movement" at the Hotel Cecil in June 1916. A "Memorial", or petition, was signed by 2448 men and women of influence and delivered to the Prime Minister in Downing Street on 5 April 1917. Arthur turned himself into a one-man Temperance pamphlet factory, working from his beautiful hilltop home in Eynsford Hill, and the introductory volume *Defeat?* (later reissued as *Defeat or Victory?)* was swiftly followed by *The Fiddlers and The Parasite*. Hundreds of thousands of these pamphlets were sold, although they were considered so inflammatory that they were banned in Australia and South Africa, and simply owning a copy in Canada was an offence punishable by five years in jail!

The Manse had sustained war damage, which was under a government scheme put right in June 1948. In that year, the lack of space in the graveyard adjoining the Church, had taxed the minds of the Deacons, and they sought to obtain a new village cemetery using a spare piece of land adjoining the Vicarage, known as the "Jolly Hawgh". However nothing was settled. In September 1948, one of the Church members -William Rogers who had died bequeathed £250-00 for the "purchase of an additional burial ground". The money was deposited with the Baptist Union. In the following year, the money had been paid by the Baptist Union into the Church Reserve fund for repairs and renovations and was soon spent on fabric - but not on a burial ground. The Church had taken the view that it was the local Council's responsibility to provide burial space - which was very true! The generous bequest had its downside. At the Deacons meeting 1st June 1949, it was reported that owing to the loss by death, and some members had moved out of the area, the "financial position was rather low".

The burial ground issue continued to occupy the deacons, and at the same meeting, the levelling of the burial ground for re-use after seven years was discussed but abandoned when it was pointed out that a number of graves were still attended. The following year the matter was still one for discussion, and on the 11th October 1950, it was reported that only 5 grave spaces were left. A Mrs Wren offered to write a history of the Church, and this was accepted but later minute books reveal nothing further about this. These discussion items paled at the meeting when Stanley Thomas announced he had been called to the Pathhead Baptist Churchin Kirkcaldy in Scotland. The next meeting on the 28th October listed the fees to be paid: Visiting Minister £4, Students £2 and lay Preachers their expenses!

The minute books of the Church, also reveal facts about social history. For example the late 1940s and early 1950s was still an age where traditional names were used for certain days - such as St Luke's Day, Whit Sunday & etc. These appear in the minutes.

Chapter 6

1950 - 1960

1950, ended with the Church in Interregnum. By February 1951, the Deacons considered three applicants, the Rev'ds; F R Sage, H J Edgler, A Stockwell. One Deacon stated that Edgler had already accepted a post at South Horwood, and the preferred choice was Arthur T. Stockwell, who was invited to "Preach with a view to the Pastorate". After hearing, Arthur Stockwell, on the 29th March 1951, it was agreed that he be invited for an initial period of five years with a stipend of £400 per year, the use of the Manse free of Rates and Taxes, including telephone rental. Arthur's ministry began on the 17th June.

In March 1951, to make life more comfortable for those being Baptised, heating coils were fitted to the baptistery.

In September 1951, the Ordnance Survey asked permission to put a Bench Mark ⏉ on the Church premises, and this was agreed. These were used for the purposes of triangulation and to provide an indication of the distance above sea level.

In the same month Pastor Stockwell initiated a mid-week meeting on Wednesday at 7.30pm. By October, it was reported that the attendance at the mid-week meeting "was very encouraging". The November meeting provides an insight in to the relationships between the Churches of that period. The "Universal week of Prayer" was discussed. This was to commence on the 6th January 1952. The minutes note: "*Mr Stockwell said that he had discussed the matter with the Vicar the Rev Hill, but he was not very cooperative"*!

In July 1952, the new Pastor began a new initiative to engage young people and began a "Young Worshippers League" formed to encourage attendance at the morning service, and this seemed to help. Pastor Stockwell returned to the debate over a burial ground and suggested at the Deacons meeting of 18th November 1952, that the spare ground at the back of the Church which had been the home of a rubbish tip for a number of years, could be used for burials. The Deacons meeting stated the the Ground was reserved for the site of an enlarged schoolroom.

By September 1953, the Baptistry had been renovated by the application of 'plastic paint'. In November of 1953, Youth Work was still high on the agenda, with the Pastor asking the Deacons for assistance at the Friday Youth meetings. A Youth Club was to be opened in the Village, and this caused some anxiety amongst the Deacons, but the Pastor was convinced that it would not effect their work with young people.

At the start of the following year, 1954, the Deacons agreed to erect a memorial for those of the Church who had lost their lives in the War. The whole project would occupy just short of two years to complete. The Pastor had gained the names from the Paris Church, but other names were needed for those who belonged to Eynsford Baptist Church, but who lived away from the Village, such as those who had lived at Farningham. By April the Deacons' meeting had considered a Brass Tablet upon which to inscribe the names. One Deacon voiced the view that he "*did not think this would serve any purpose"* and suggested that something more useful be considered. This then brought about the proposed purchase of two communion plates which were needed. These would be suitable inscribed. However by October, a Dr Stephen Roger had offered four Communion plates in memory of his father - this offer had been accepted by the Deacons, and instead by the 24th February 1955, it was proposed that the Church buy a "War Memorial Table". This was agreed upon, and the War Memorial Table was commissioned on the 11th November 1955.

The discussion concerning the land at the back of the Church was revisited, and it was reported at the Deacons' meeting, 20th July 1954, that a meeting had been held by the Sunday School teachers who had come to the conclusion that they "*did not feel there was an immediate need for any large extension".* Late 1954, early 1955, the Organ had been overhauled, and at the meeting 18th January, it was reported that this work had been completed.

So please had the Church been with the ministry of Pastor Arthur Stockwell , that at the Deacons' meeting 9th November 1955, it was agreed that they ask him to remain "*for a further period of 5 years & that his stipend be increased by £50 per annum"* providing an annual sum of £450.

The Deacons' Minute Books, do not record all of the life of the Church. This is not for the lack of such a life, but that the meetings had to often deal with very mundane but necessary matters. For example membership figures are rarely given, and whilst there is an occasional mention of a Deacon getting the Baptistry ready, no account is given of the number of members baptised. Occasionally there is an insight to the spiritual life, such as that in the winter of 1956/7 a series of special meetings was held to address the question; "*what Christ means to me"!* The minutes of the 20th November 1956, record that one of the Deacons, Mr Brown, was running a Sunday School at Swanly, in liaison with the nearby Congregational Church. This Church was too far away from where the Children lived, and it was case of taking the Church to them.. The Deacons at Eynsford agreed to support the work with a modest donation of £10 toward some hymnbooks. The minutes also reveal a concern for the work of nearby Baptist Churches.

Temple Mill and West Kingsdown Baptist Churches.
The beginning years of the continued ministry of Pastor Stockwell were taken up with supporting two other Baptist Church Communities, one at Temple Mill and the other at West Kingsdown.

Temple Hill Baptist Church is first mentioned in the minute book, 20th October 1955;
"*Temple Hill. Mr Thorn spoke regarding the stone laying ceremony to be held saturday 12th Nov. at 3 P.M. He said that six stones would be laid Including one by our pastor in recognition of help & interest of our church, & he himself would be laying one as president of the Dartford & District Free Church Federal Council"*

At the Eynsford Deacons' meeting, 5th June 1956, Deacon Thorn tended his resignation to support fully the Church at Temple Mill. He mentioned that "*one of their communion chairs has been inscribed in the name of Eynsford Baptist Church in recognition of the support that has been given to the Church at Temple Hill." The Minutes of 19th February 1957, note that there was to be a Foundation Service on the 23rd February 1957. The Church must have progressed well, as it was reported that an Induction Service was being held on the 28th August 1957".*

West Kingsdown Baptist Church - There is a note in the census of 1851 of a Baptist Church at West Kingsdown. On the 11th December 1861 a new Chapel was opened on Fawkham Lane. It is clear that by the mid 1950s, the fortunes of the Church were at an all time low. In the minutes of the Eynsford Deacons' meeting of the 20th November 1956, it was reported that the Church at West Kingsdown had requested help from Eynsford. Eynsford sought,

with the help of the remaining members at West Kingsdown, to find new leadership. On the 19th February 1957, it was reported that Pastor Stockwell would undertake to provided a quarterly Communion Service for the Church.

The minutes make clear that the Eynsford Church had continued a responsibility for the oversight of the West Kingsdown Church, having been instrumental in its foundation back in the 1850s [see Chapter 1]. On the 17th May 1957, in the Eynsford Minutes it was noted that a Mr Devin was acting as a Lay Pastor. The following month on the 18th June, it was reported that the "*the work appeared to be going steadily forward & the spirit in the church had greatly improved under Mr Devin's leadership".*

It appears from the Eynsford Minutes, that West Kingsdown may well have only had an Evening Service - probably to enable support from Eynsford - as it is reported on the 22nd April 1958, that the Lay Pastor, Mr Devin hoped to begin a morning Service. In the Eynsford Minutes, 15th January 1960, it is reported that the Lay Pastor would be unable to carry on as he was finding it too much, and although he did not resign, the uncertainties may not have help, as by the 27th May of that year it was reported that the "church was experiencing some difficulties", never-the-less, the support from Eynsford continued.

The domestic agenda.
The purchase of a Dustbin, had not proved the end of the rubbish issue, and it still continued to collect at the back of the Church, and the Dartford Rural District Council had been asked to clear the rubbish, but had not done so. The Church then asked a private contractor to move it. This was cleared at the cost of £2-10/- (Two Pounds, ten shillings - £2½).

By May 1958, a decline was reported in the Sunday School. It was reported that the new Vicar of the Parish Church had been successful in young people's work, and had gained a number of former pupils. The lack of Sunday School teachers did not help, and the Church blamed the indifference of the Parents. Within the minutes, discussions on how to address the problem occupied the next three months, with a respite until late 1959.

It was reported on the 18th June 1958, that the "*Evening Service was usually poorly attended. It was generally felt that if the choir resumed its place on the platform it would add to the service, & perhaps be a means of increasing the attendance".* No mention occurs

The international contacts of the Baptist Church were revealed in a note of the 23rd September 1958, when it was reported that *"a silver trowel used in the stone laying of the Church* [chapter 2] *was being sent back to us by the Baptists in Australia".*

One name that had been prominent throughout the minutes of the 1950s was that of Deacon David Salmon, who had served as the Treasurer. At the meeting of the 29th August 1959, it was reported that Mr Salmon had been very ill, and his Doctor had ordered him to spend the next six months by the sea, and thus he was reluctantly forced to resign this post.

On the 27th September 1959, the Sunday School was back on the Agenda. The Sunday School was held in the afternoon, and attendance suffered as some Parents took their children out in the afternoon. A move to Sunday morning before Church was considered. However at the next meeting, 3rd November, "*it was considered that it would not be satisfactory to make such a move yet".*

There was an ominous note sounded at the meeting on the 8th March 1960, when the Pastor warned the Deacons of ; *"his intention to make a change"*. He stated that he had been with them for *"9 years & felt it would be in the interest of the Church and his own to do so"*. He said that *"no definite plans had been made"* and he hoped the Deacons would not break the confidentiality. Just over a month later, the Pastor called the Deacons together before the Morning Service and informed them that he had accepted a call to the Church at Whitsable. He then went on to tell the Church following the end of the Service. The last Deacons' meeting he attended was on the 24th June, and the Church held a farewell meeting Monday 4th July at 7.30 pm. ending another chapter in the history of the Church.

Chapter 7

1960 – 1969

At their meeting 27th May 1960, in making arrangements for the interregnum, it was agreed to pay visiting Ministers 4 guineas (a guinea being £1.1/- One pound, and one shilling [5p] - there was a coin to that value until 1816, and the name continued thereafter), plus the fare for those who had come a long distance.
The Church was not slow, in seeking out a replacement. They had already heard a Mr Hallworth, Pastor of Plumstead preach, and he was seeking a change, and at the Deacons' meeting 16th August, they agreed to invite him to "preach with a view". This was accepted and Arthur J. Hallworth came and preached on Sunday 30th October. The Diaconate was unanimous in its recommendation to the Church to extend an invitation to Mr Hallworth.
The moderator, Mr Fereday of Sevenoaks, drafted the terms of a settlement for the incoming Pastor;

(1) That we, members of Christ's church at Eynsford, assembled in Church meeting, after prayers, believing we are led by the Spirit, invite the Rev. A.J.Hallworth of Plumstead Baptist Church to the Pastoral care of this church and the ministry of the Word and the Sacraments. In so doing we pledge our loyal and prayerful support to Him in the shared service of Christ and His Church.

(2) We agree that should the Rev. A.J.Hallworth accept this invitation as the Call of God to minister among us, the terms of settlement shall be as follows;

(a) The stipend shall be £550 per annum paid monthly.

(b) He shall be required to live in the Manse provided by the Church & it shall be to him free of rates & taxes.

(c) We agree to meet the usual charges, namely the cost of his removal to Eynsford, half the charges of the National health Insurance and baptist Superannuation Fund.

All telephone & postal charges incurred in pastoral service & his expenses when attending as a delegate at the Baptist Union & Associated meetings shall be met by the Church.

(d) The initial period of the pastorate shall be for five years and be governed by the terms of the Baptist Union rules governing the settlement of ministers in a pastorate.

The Call to Eynsford was accepted by Arthur Hallworth, and he commenced his ministry with the Induction Service of the 4th March 1961.

Pastor Hallworth brought some new ideas in to the life of the Church. On the 28th July he got the Deacons to agree with showing a series of Christian Films after the Evening Service - beginning with the Life of Wesley, as a title which would be appropriate to which to invite the local Anglicans.

Church membership more important than Baptism? At the Deacons' meeting 30th October, it was recorded that: "*Malcome Angus had asked for baptism & church membership & expressed the wish that the service be held Sunday 11th November. Mr Hallworth said that he would be happy to comply with his wishes regarding baptism but it would be necessary for him to be interviewed before he could be received into church membership".*

At the same meeting, the Pastor sought to widen the representation within the Diaconate, *"as there was within the membership people from other denominations".* He suggested widening the diaconate to 8, by admitting one new Baptised member (that is by immersion) and one non-baptised. Consideration was also given to extending the Hall, in order to accommodate the Sunday School, which must have grown since the decline reported in 1958. The cost of enlargement was estimated at £2000. No firm decisions were made. The Building Committee had met in May 1962, and a report was considered by the Deacons. In the meanwhile, repair work was done at the Church and Manse, as the

winter of 1962/3, had proved a hard winter, and several pipes had burst, as well as a crack appearing in the Manse toilet pan!

It took until November 1963, to get to the stage when tenders for the proposed alterations to the Church had been given out. The total cost of the project was to be £4000. The Church had in hand £1500, and the rest of the money was to come from various interest free loans, and the remaining £1500 by way of a bank overdraft. The letter to the Bank, is in itself illuminating and gives some idea of the health of the Church at that time; "*Our Church is still flourishing and it is expected that any Bank borrowing will be easily reduced within the period of two or three years, and here it is expected that the Bank borrowing will be the first to be repaid". The Bank readily agreed, and the period offered was three to four years' repayment. The Official opening of the revampt and enlarged premises was held on Sunday July 5th. It was originally proposed for Sunday July 11th, but that conflicted with a meeting at Brands Hatch, when the traffic would be congested and no parking allowed in the high Street in Eynsford.*

Even with the revampt premises, the old school hall roof and the Church roof leaked under storm conditions, and in September of 1964, repairs were put in hand at the modest cost of £44!
The wages of sin may be death - but the wages of death at the end of 1964, was as follows; Funeral fees: Church 2 gns , Minister 1½ gns, Organist 1gn Caretaker ½gn.

West Kingsdown.
At the Deacons' meeting 28th July 1961, a letter had been received from West Kingsdown stated that Mr Devin the Lay Pastor was resigning, and by September he had stepped down. Whilst this was a blow to the Church, it galvanised an effort to secure the right person to step forward to lead the Church forward. A number of good men were approach, but who all declined; The Rev W Baker, and a Mr Etridge. Feeling more optimistic Pastor Hallworth reported at the Deacons' meeting at Eynsford 24th April 1962 that; **"***he had been able to make a little headway".* In June a Mr Oakley was considering the work, but declined, and on the 30th October a Mr E Bragshaw was approached, and in November he had been invited to take charge, which he accepted.

At the Eynsford Deacons' meeting 22nd April 1963, it was reported; *"that the work there showed signs of improvement under the leadership of Mr Bragshaw. The Church was full to capacity at Mr Bragshaw's Induction Service*".

By the 25th November 1963, it was reported at the Eynsford meeting that Mr Bragshaw had been able to do a marvelous work and new members were being baptised. Paster Hallworth was no longer needed for the quarterly Communion Service.

1964
So well had the work gone on that by the 2nd February 1964, a letter had been received from Mr Bragshaw to ask Eynsford to relinquish their oversight. The Rev's V Evan, Area Superintendent had advised Mr Bragshaw "*to proceed with caution",* nevertheless, Eynsford received a letter read to the meeting 22nd June 1964. It was noted that the following resolution was passed at the West Kingsdown church meeting held Monday 1st June 1964;

"*The Baptist Church of West Kingsdown meeting in Church Meeting resolved that the Baptist Church at Eynsford be thanked for their help over the past years and that we now feel ourselves able to carry on independently and therefore request that oversight by the Baptist Church at Eynsford be now dispensed with."*

This of course was gladly accepted by Eynsford Baptist Church, the Pastor and members of which had worked hard to see the work at West Kingsdown flourish.

1965 - Domestic issues.
In September 1965, it was agreed to sing the Lord's Prayer, as for many this added dignity and majesty to the Prayer. A finanical setback came in October, when at the Deacons' meeting on the 4th, It was reported that the boiler had developed several cracks, and was a "write-off".
Various options were discussed - Oil boiler at £700, a Gas Boiler at £222, and a solid fuel boiler at £275. The Church meeting allowed a budget of £700. On the 1st November, the two quotes they discussed was a 250k Gas Boiler from a private firm at £382, plus £212 for a stainless steel flu-liner (£594) - with the need to lay on a 2" gas main, and to rent a meter, of a 250k Gas Boiler from British Gas with an abestos flu-liner at £440-16-0 (£440-80p) - £75 for the Gas Pipe and the meter rent at 18/- (90p). The latter option was agreed upon. At the same meeting the final costs of the building work was given - £4552-2-0. 14% over original budget. Church members lent a variety of heaters to the Church, to allow the Church to get over the Winter period while they awaited the work to be carried out. The Church also discussed adding a pump (given in the minutes as a "water circulator") to the system. It was suggested that this might increase the "efficiency of the sytem". This would assist in the start up of the system, against a gravity fed system, but once up and running, the heat output is governed by the surface area of the pipes and radiators, coupled with the heat output of the boiler.

1966
By the coldest part of the winter, the new system was up and running, as noted by the Deacons' meeting on the 3rd January 1966. Further good news at the start of 1966, was the provision of the new Baptist Hymn Book, paid for, by a bequest.

The Annual Assembly of the Baptist at Hastings had made an impact on the Eynsford Church. The following resolution had been adopted and was noted in the Minute Book 3rd October 1966;

"*Convinced that Jesus Christ is our Saviour for our time & concerned that we are not proving sufficiently effective in communicating this Gospel, every encouragement should be given to our churches to prepare for the Call to prayer & mission being issued by our Baptist Union for January 1st next year."*

The Eynsford Church then embarked on a series of special meetings, which even before the New Year had arrived led to a number of initiatives, such as Home Groups, and a young wives meeting begun in December 1966.

1967
In January 1967, a Young Peoples meeting was begun by the Pastor. A scheme was launched to redecorate the Church.

The Baptist Union had issued guidelines that it intended to raise stipends to a minimum of £700. At their meeting on the 1st May 1967, the Deacons agreed that they would pay their Pastor £555 as stipend, £120 heat and cleaning, and £25 for expenses (not technically a part of the Stipend!!). To assist in funding this a statement was read out to the Church, which asked for a regular increase in the giving. The Deacons had acted in faith, and then shared their commitment with the Church.
At their meeting of the 8th September, the news was given that John William Young Meikle Pastor, for six months had died in a Glasgow Hospital (see Chapter 3).

Sadly after a successful pastorate, on the 27th November 1967, Arthur announced that he would be leaving at the end of February 1968, which marked a "full seven years". Eynsford had marked the last Chapter in full time Ministry, as Arthur had retired from Eynsford.

The Deacons meet on the 11th December 1967, to consider the appointment of a new Pastor, and a salary of £850 pa to include expenses was agreed. As the Deacons were considering a successor to Arthur, it had become clear that the expenditure on maintaining the Manse at Priory Hill was a problem, and it was agreed that the Church would sell that at Priory Hill and buy a new House to serve as the Manse.

1968
Not only did the Church loose a good Pastor at the beginning of 1968, but on the 31st March, David Salmon, a Deacon and Treasurer after years of long service died. It was prayed; "*that the memory of his Christian character and faithful living may inspire us all to a deeper devotion to our saviour and his and a greater loyalty to the Church he loved and served so well".*

On the 30th October 1968, the Deacons noted that the wall behind the pulpit had; "*movement cracks in plasterwork. There appears to be a bulge at the apex of the wall, where one of the cracks forks; is this a lump of plaster ready to bring God's judgment on an errant preacher?"*

At the meeting of the 10th June 1968, grave exception was taken to the Running of a "Donkey Derby" by the Local Scout Group Committee. A motion was passed at the meeting to forward to the Secretary of the Scout Group;

> 10.6.68
> This meeting of members of the Baptist Church in Eynsford whilst recognising the value of the Scout Movement as an influence for good in the formation of the character of its members views with very serious concern the continuation of the 1st Eynsford Committee's Donkey Derby having regard to the fact that methods employed for the raising of funds in connection with this event, seem to us to be completely at variance with the principles and purposes of the founder of the Movement as laid down in his book 'Scouting for Boys'.
> We regard drinking and gambling as being amongst the major social evils of our time and for boys to see these things associated so closely with the activities of their own organisation cannot but affect most seriously the value of the Movement's aims in the building of the character of its members.
> We would like to urge that consideration is given in future years to reverting to the simpler events of the 'Scout Fete' in which all Scouts could participate freely without detriment, and without contravening the principles of their great Movement.

Furthermore the Church objected to the Occasional License for alcohol at the Magistrate's Court, but was unsuccessful in preventing it being issued. The Scout Leaders agreed to discuss the issue with the Church.

Despite having retired, Pastor Arthur Hallworth took the Church Anniversary Service 7th July 1968, and the Christmas Morning Service that year. Many of the meetings in that year were taken up with the issue of the Manse at Priory Lane which was sold for £9137, and in January 1969, 27 Eynsford Rise was purchased at a cost of £8400. Another area of sorting things out, was the Church membership roll, which the Deacons revised in April 1969

One of the Preachers during the interregnum was the Rev'd Cyril Austin, and he was asked to preach again "with a view to the Pastorate".

Chapter 8

1969 – 1980

1969.
Another of the Preachers during the interregnum was the Rev'd Cyril Austen, and the Deacons following their meeting of April 28th 1969, invited him to Preach again "with a view to the Pastorate". However this time, the Deacons had done their homework, and had first established that he was interested - to avoid the kind of rebuff they had been given by Pastor Hopper.
The terms of settlement for the incoming Pastor were an initial period to the pastorate of five years, £850 per annum salary, plus superannuation, church telephone calls and line rental, National Insurance contributions and out of pocket expenses. The reply to the joy of the deacons was positive. Cyril had replied accepting the pastorate and was to begin his ministry on Saturday 5th October. The Induction Service was held at 3.15pm 18th October 1969, when Cyril A. G. Austen was formally installed as Pastor.

Shoreham Baptist Church.
Cyril was a man of wider interests, and at the meeting with the Deacons on the 8th December he shared with them that he was a member of the Dartford Industrial Mission, which only occupied him for a few hours each week. He also informed the Deacons that he had taken on the oversight of Shoreham Baptist Church, which was without a Pastor, and this was a temporary measure, until a lay pastor could be found.

1970.
Having found his feet in his initial period of ministry he proposed a Church Conference on the weekend of 28th February and 1st March where he was asking all Christian friends interested in the Church, to meet to look together at the total life and activity of the Church, to pray and consider the way ahead for the future. From the Conference new activities were begun, a three months trial of a week night meeting of Prayer and Bible Study, and Fellowship for the period of May to July. The Evening Service was to begin at 4 pm in the winter. Pastor Austen had also begun a Junior Youth Club to supplement the Youth Club.

At the Church AGM 16th March 1970, the membership figures were reported as being 79 last year, but 67 for this year following adjustments - Losses by resignation; 2, by "erasure"; 3, by transfer to "Absent members list"; 13. Additions by transfer to the Church; 6.

A glutton for extra work, Cyril had been appointed Chaplain to Livingston and Bow Arrow Hospitals. Not neglecting his work at Eynsford a series of special Sunday evening Services were planned at the meeting 24th June 1970; July - Service led by the Youth Group from Poverest Road Baptist Church, Orpington; August - Baptismal Service; September - Harvest; October - Eynsford Baptist Church Youth Group; November - Guest Night, with a Gospel Service; December - United Christmas Service with St Martin's with Carols and Tableaux. However at the same meeting it was reported that the attendance at the week night meeting "*had not been as good as anticipated*" . These were then suspended, and were to be restored after the Harvest in September.

Other decisions at the meeting concerned the installation of a hearing-aid loop, Dartford Free Church Council, and the Church Missionary Committee. The Church did have an amplification system of sorts, which was ineffective, and it was agreed to install a new system to include a hearing aid loop. Whilst Eynsford Baptist Church had participated in the events of the Free Church Council, it had never been in membership, so it was agreed to join. Although mission events had taken place regularly, the Church Missionary Committee had not function collectively since 1963, and that it ought to be reconstituted.

At the Deacons meeting on the 30th September 1970, new interdenominational (the preferred evangelical term for "*ecumenical*") meetings with the Anglicans were planned. There was to be a joint Deacons/St Martin's PCC meeting on the 6th October, and joint evening services for December 20th and January 17th. It was also reported that a cost of £17, a 25% share in an "electronic duplicating machine" owned by the Eynsford Friendship Guild, had been purchased.

At the Deacons meeting of 16th December it was reported the joint Deacons/St Martin's PCC meeting had; "*led to a better understanding between the our two Churches*", and that the Pastor "looked forward to co-operating with the new Vicar (Rev'd D Sweetman) whose induction was planned for the afternoon of Jan 23rd". Also at the same meetings the Pastor's salary was increased to £950 per annum.

Ministry Tomorrow - A Report of the Baptist Union.
In 1970 a Report of the Baptist Union was yet another subject discussed by the Pastor and Deacons at their December meeting. It was sub-titles "Use, deployment, maintenance of the Ministry" The Report envisaged a smaller number of better trained, better paid, full time Ministers in charge of small groups of churches, with a membership numerically sufficient to provide adequate "job satisfaction" for the Ministry and with the assistance of a trained part-time lay ministry.

1971.
At the AGM 24th March 1971, it was reported that the membership had increased by 2 to 69. Also at the same meeting the Association Church of the Year (the regional Baptist Association pick a Church each year deserving of financial support) was announced as West Malling Baptist Church. The Church faced a debt of £8000 by purchasing a property next to the church to house the Pastor, and with the addition of two floors for children's and youth activities. It was agreed to forward £5 from the Communion fund, and on the 21st April to show a film and speak on the project with a retiring collection.

Many of the Youth Club members failed to attend Church, and so a strict rule had been imposed - only those who attended church could belong to the Youth Group. At the Deacons' meeting 30th June 1971, it was noted the the Youth Club rule applied rigidly; "*resulted in a loss of members to such an extent that it was no virtually impossible for the group to function effectively in its present form*". This topic of discussion continued with the meeting of September 29th when it was suggested that the Church move to the Christian Endeavor programme. At the meeting 1st December, the plan was to re-establish the Youth Club meetings on a Sunday Evening with a Church Service, and a club night on Saturdays. In November the Church members had taken part in the "Grow and Go" Campaign.

Shoreham Baptist Church.
At the same December meeting, Cyril could report that Shoreham Baptist Church had invited a Lay Preacher to become the Lay Pastor of the Church, a full year after he had taken on the oversight of the Church.

1972.
At the AGM 22nd March 1972, it was reported that the membership stood at 69 members with 2 losses and 2 gains. The youth membership of the Church had fallen drastically - under 14s; 18 members compared with 34 the year before, and of the 14-18 year olds, 10 members compared with 27 in the previous year. The AGM laid out future plans 1. Pastoral Letters, 2. Holiday Club, 3. Inner Mission, 4. The Mission to be followed by Evangelical Outreach, and lastly 5. The Front of Church to be made more attractive by the removal of the gravestones and a grassed area forming a garden. From the subsequent history, the latter plan became an unrealised aspiration talked about in subsequent decades, into the decade past the millennium!

At the same meeting it was noted that a plaque had been erected on the front of 54 High Street Farningham commemorating Miss Mary Ann Hearn known by her pseudonym Marriane Farningham, a previous member of the Church (see Chapter 2). She became a noted hymn writer and authoress. Pastor Jonathan Whittemore, had been the main encouragement for Miss Hearn in her career as a writer. For more details of her life see **Marianne Farningham, 1834-1909** on the Victorian Web. What concerned the deacons, was that they had been asked by Farningham parish Council to contribute £14.70. The decision was left at that meeting as the view was taken that it was considered more appropriate to have had a commemoration plaque erected in the Church! The Deacons relented a fraction as it was reported later (21st June 1972) that they had sent £2.50 to Farningham Parish Council. What was not skimped over was the question of an increase in the Pastor's salary, which was raised £100.

In June and July of 1972, the Church's 180th Anniversary was celebrated. At the meeting of 21st June 1972, the non-viability of the Choir was discussed. It was reported that due to the decline in membership it was: "no longer viable for Sunday Services". However it will provide Choir music for special occasions and try to recruit members. However with the ending of Sunday duty spelt the end of its existence.

At the Quarterly Church meeting of the 20th September, the Church committed itself to another of the various campaigns which were doing the rounds - the "One Step Forward" Campaign which would be run on 6 Sunday Mornings.

Local Church groupings.
The **Union Church at Crockenhill** proposed a joint ministry. Also wider links were considered with West Kingsdown and Shoreham - but these proposals were considered second best - instead Eynsford suggestion was for a loose federation.

Sheltering the homeless poor.
In response to an appeal for Temporary accommodation for the Uganda Asian Immigrants, who had been thrown out by the Dictator Idi Armen, the Church offered Eynsford Baptist School Hall , which was; "*agreed without dissent*". Here was the Church at its best, scriptural obedience - with no voice of dissent. However, the offer was not taken up but the decision recorded in the minute book reveals a Church living the scriptures.

"*Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover him, and not to hide yourself from your own flesh?*" Isaiah 58:7

1973.
At the AGM 21st March 1973, the membership figure was given as 69, which meant that the Church was holding still. The Pastor's stipend was increased by £150 to £1230 per annum. Whilst this may seem a generous rise, it was not over generous as inflation was running at 6.4%, and it was a low wage. [For comparison, the compiler of these history pages received a salary of £2000 as a Technical Officer on British Railways]. The Trustees of a small strip of land on the Farningham side at the front of the Church (r/h side looking to the front of the Church from the road) which did not belong to the Church were willing to transfer this as a deed of gift provided the Church paid the conveyancing fees. It was reported that the response to the "Inner Mission" had been poor.
The quarterly Church meeting of 16th September 1973 had reported that the Children's Holiday Club of 21st - 24th August had been a success with an average attendance of 30 children. However there had been no attendance at Church. The Church looked at ways of involving children such as having them as part of the service, but then take them to the Vestry while the Service continues.

Shoreham Baptist Church.
The Shoreham Church continued to be a concern. The Seven Oaks District Baptist Churches agreed to meet on the 23rd November at Shoreham Baptist Church "to pray for the Baptist Cause in that Village".

At the Deacon's meeting 5th December 1973, it was agreed that the Pastor's salary was increased in line with inflation (8.4%) by £100 for the end of 1973.

1974 Resignation of Pastor Cyril Austen.
At the Deacon's meeting of the 26th June a letter which had been sent on the 26th May by Pastor Cyril Austen giving notice of his intention to resign in September of that year, having by then nearly completing five years of ministry at Eynsford. It was agreed at the Deacon's meeting of 18th December to approach Mr Malcolm Cook a student at Spurgeon's College, to preach on Sunday 12th January 1975.

1975, The call of Pastor Malcolm Cook.
A special meeting of the Deacons was held on the 15th January where it was agreed to invite Malcolm Cook for 5 years, at £1500 (representing a decrease in salary as inflation had run at 17.2% for 1974), free use of the Manse, 4 weeks holiday, Telephone rental and calls, Car Allowance, and BU Superannuation. The Induction took place in July 1975, and Malcolm Cook, who had been ordained at the Park Road, Bromley Baptist Church, accepted the call to Eynsford, becoming their next Pastor.

1976.
So respected was Malcolm, that by 15th June 1976, he had been elected the President of the Dartford Free Church Council. At the meeting of 21st June, a £52 increase had been given to Pastor Cook - this was well below inflation then running at 24.2% in 1975! Well into the modern age, it was reported at the meeting of 29th November 1976, that the Services were being tape-recorded.

West Kingsdown.
West Kingsdown came once again to the attention of the Deacon's meeting at Eynsford. It had flourished under its Lay Pastor, and then the Reverend Eric Eyre had been appointed Pastor, but had resigned in the spring of 1976.

1977.
Early 1977 organ repairs were being discussed. Celebrations for the Queen's Silver Jubilee for 7th June 1977, were discussed, and it was agreed to have a Joint Church Float in the procession. At

church that attendance began to flag, and it was reported at the Deacon's meeting Monday 20th June, that on 13 turned up at the Evening Service, and the Pastor expressed his concern about the spiritual life of the Church, with the decline in attendance at Services. The repairs to the Organ were in hand and were to begin on the 19th September 1977.

Bribery and Corruption at the Children's Mission!
At the meeting 24th September disapproval was voiced over how the Children's mission achieved a large attendance - through a promise of prizes!!!! Attempting to move on people's spiritual life it was announced at the meeting of 14th November, that 5 minutes silence was to be introduced before the Service.

1978 Discussions on a team Ministry with the Vine, Sevenoaks.
Local discussions amongst Baptists centred on the possible creation of a Team Ministry with the Vine Baptist Church Sevenoaks. The deacons at their meeting on the 11th September thought it would be unsettling for the Pastor. A further meeting was held on the 9th October. The scheme outlined would be for a full time Minister to exist at the Vine Baptist Church and a part-time Minister at Eynsford. Rev. Leonard Lane at the Vine Baptist Church was retiring at the end of 1978, and Malcolm had been invited to stay at Eynsford until Autumn 1980. The Pastor had considered the only place for him in the scheme he was proposing was if he was to be invited to the Vine Baptist. A further meeting was held on the 1st March 1979, with the Vine Baptist Church, and no definite plans were forged, and no arrangements were entered into, and the Vine Baptist Church responded to the sentiment for closer links with Eynsford (which in reality did not happen, due to a lack of any proximity). The discussions were an obvious response to a decline which had set in at the Church.

1979, Basic salary
It was noted at the meeting of 12th December, that the basic salary set by the Home Mission Fund was to be £2560 inclusive of Manse Allowances. On the issue of decline, one of the evidences was that by May 1979, there were only five fully functioning Deacons, out of a possible eight in number. At the same meeting the Pastor gave notice of his resignation as he was moving to a Baptist Church in Leicester. A farewell Social was arranged for the 8th March 1980.

1980.
After the loss of Pastor Malcolm Cook, the Church took a further three months before getting around to inviting possible new Pastors to 'preach with a view'. The first was invited to preach mid June and whilst the Deacons were impressed the Church was not. It was only three months later on the 17th September that the first invitee was turned down. It would be over a year from the loss of Malcolm, before a new Pastor was appointed.

Chapter 9

1981-1989

1981.
The Reverend Wilfred B. Stanbury was invited to 'preach with a view' and at the Quarterly Church Meeting 24th June 1981, votes were cast. For 18, Against 1, Abstentions 5, and so the ¾ majority required meant that Wilfred Stanbury became Pastor to Eynsford Baptist Church. The evidence is that from the start his emphasis was on evangelism and prayer.
The 2nd of December 1981, was the first Quarterly Church meeting Wilf presided over. News was given of the support for Mission in Orissa, North India. It was also reported that the Sunday School was expanding.

There is no doubt that Pastor Wilf Stanbury sought to reverse the decline in the Church which had set in under previous incumbents, and had accelerated in the 1970s. The Reports and discussions in the latter years of Malcolm Cook's incumbency were in response to that point whereby the decline was having an effect on the income, threatening the viability of the employment of their own Pastor. Eynsford Baptist Church always sought hard to maintain their income to support their own Pastor despite the temptations to go in with nearby Churches. However from now on, finance was always to remain a concern and features regularly in the minutes.

1982 Closure of Shoreham Baptist Church.
At the meeting of 15th September it was announced that Shoreham Baptist Church had closed. At the meeting 1st December, it was reported that both the Junior and Senior Youth Clubs had 30 in each section. Inflation for the past eight years had run in double figures - the pay rises needed to keep up were in the hundreds. The basic stipend for the 1st January 1983 was fixed at £4,750 - a rise of £750.

1983.
It was reported at the AGM, 9th March 1983 that expenditure last year exceeded income by £1,500. To meet present liabilities it was stated that there was a need for a 50% increase in giving. If all the giving was covenanted that would provide an increase of 30%. Wilf had not been idle, and it was noted at the AGM; "*Much blessing had been received through his ministry & his activity in the life of the Church & Village was greatly appreciated*". The AGM also reported on the Youth Groups, which had a total of 60 members, with 20 - 30 in attendance each evening. Church numbers had grown and the verdict at the AGM was an; "*overall picture of increase*". At the Quarterly Meeting of 15th June, it was clear that Wilf had introduced a schema whereby the work of the Church had been categorised into four headings: The Worshipping Church; the Teaching Church Church; The Caring Church and the Mission Church. These Headings were used for all the Agenda and Minutes Headings, and gave a clear indication to the progress of the Church.

"*And How Shall They Hear Without A Preacher*" Romans 10:15
"*Holding forth the word of life...*" Philippians 2:16

<u>Open Air Mission</u>.
As part of the ongoing outreach, on the 19th June an Open Air Service was held, led by Ken Weaver of the "Open Air Mission". The Open Air Mission was founded in 1855, by John MacGregor who had been burdened with the need for people to hear the Gospel when so few attended a place of worship. Having attended an open air witness , where a small crowd had gathered, he realised that this was a way to reach people - he met with the preachers at that meeting - and they agreed to meet and pray together, and the work of the Open Air Mission was born.

At the Quarterly Meeting of the 14th September, it was reported that House Group attendance was growing, and that Prayer cells (house based) were to be created. The Bible Study Groups were experiencing; "*a deeper sense of fellowship & an enrichment in study*".

1984.
At the AGM of 14th March 1984, it was reported that membership had increased from 34 to 37 - 5 new members but 2 losses. These figures reveal a severe decline from the previous decade (1973 recorded 69 members). It was noted that 5 Prayer cells had been created, and that there was a regular Wednesday Morning Group. On the 12th September 1984, Mr R Ettridge resigned as minute secretary having given 45 years service. Mr J Fiend took over. Mr Ettridge was made life Deacon. At the same meeting, it was noted that the less formal evening services were popular with young people. The numbers had increased to 24. Some tensions are evident in the minutes as it is recorded that the Pastor said that they "*needed tolerance of each others point of view and should encourage each other to grow as a family*".

Pub Ministry!
A "Pub Ministry" was begun at the Castle Hotel talking to people contacted on the door to door ministry, however the venture had not been as successful as was hoped, but showed a flexibility of style - being all things to all men. Like

I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.
The Apostle Paul - 1 Corinthians 9:22

all ventures, the outreach was soaked in prayer - with a Saturday Morning Prayer Meetings, and prayer before the Sunday Service. Worship had taken on a new direction and it was noted that a music group had formed with 3 guitars, a Clarinet, a Violin, Piano and a Recorder. There was a concern by one of the Deacons who; "*advised that the Pastor should not let the pressure of church work encroach on his free time*".

1985.
The annual meeting of 23rd March 1985 demonstrated the encouraging changes - with Praise and Prayer as a part of the meeting. It had been an encouraging year for the Sunday School, with children contributing to the family service throughout the year. There were 22 'on the books' with an average attendance of 15. There was to be an Easter Holiday Club with a drive for recruitment. The Senior Youth Club had been closed as it was not viable. There was a Young women's weekly house meeting for prayer and bible study, with a more formal meeting in Church on Tuesdays. Wilf and his wife Helen were thanked for their hard work. The figures for the annual membership, at 40 - which included 3 new admissions to Church membership.

The Church not disheartened continued with mission work. As reported in the quarterly Church meeting, a television was purchased with a video player for showing Video films for youth work. Pastor Wilf also undertook hospital visiting. The meeting 19th June reported that Mrs P Cornfield a Church Community Worker was undertaking youth work and visiting local schools. On the 16th June there had been a healing Service. Joint Church Services had also taken place with the local Anglican Group of Churches - Eynsford, Farningham and Lullingstone. The Outreach work also included and Easter Club which 100 children attended, and five teams had been created for door to door outreach. The Pastor even found time to undertake a sponsored bike ride for the "Friends of Kent Churches".

Sunday Trading.
The meeting on 18th September discussed the proposed Sunday Trading with a complaint to the local MP Mr Mark Wolfson who replied to the Church a few months later. New hymns were to be introduced with many arguing that changes should not be introduced too fast. At the meeting of 1st October the Real Life Mission at Sevenoaks for the 9th June 1986 was discussed. It was reported again that the numbers at the Evening Service were low, and that radical changes were needed. The average attendance at the morning service was 23 of which 7 were under 50 years of age. However, the Deacons argued that evolution was needed not revolution. Although Sunday numbers were down, the Church hosted various activities mid week such as a Keep Fit Club and a Mother and Toddlers Club. At the meeting 16th December, it was reported that the Christmas Magazine had been sent out. The Pastor had undertaken a Counselling Course, undertaken Hospital visiting, and that toward the Real Life Mission, 57 homes had been visited - again concern for what was a very hard working Pastor was voiced - the minutes note that the; "*Church expressed concern that the Pastor's day off was being intruded upon and encouraged the Pastor to take sufficient time off for relaxation*".

1986.
At the meeting 24th February it was reported that the Sunday School had grown since the Easter Holiday Club. The Annual Meeting on the 22nd march revealed that the music group was now with 6 musicians, and that the Christmas Magazine was delivered to 1,000 homes. Door to door work continued for the Real Life Mission. Tension was evident in the meetings with one very enthusiastic member requesting to meet with others "*next tuesday Evening at 8.00pm for a time of praise and prayer where we can each ask God to fill us with the Holy Spirit and for guidance on ways to be obedient to his commandment of 'Go, then to all peoples and make them my disciples' Matthew 28:19'* " - which of course the Pastor and others had been doing for the past few years! Some of the tension was located in the fact that the Church was moving in ethos from a traditional Baptist Church, to that of a Charismatic Church, and the delivery of worship shifting from the traditional organ led hymns to being led by a music group.

At the quarterly meeting 22nd April the Pastor asked members to make the Real Life Mission a matter of prayer. The next quarterly meeting 17th June news was given of being offered a page in the Trident Parish Magazine (which continues to be the case to date; 2009). The meeting 16th September it was announced that there were deficit problems of £200 - £300 each week! Covenants and Standing Orders were urged. Thankfully it was announced at the meeting 16th December that Church Finances were in a satisfactory state.

1987.
At the AGM 21st March it was announced that the income had dropped and £3000 worth of stock had been sold to compensate. The following figures were given Women's Fellowship 12 in number. Easter Club 90+ in attendance. Morning Service 25, and Evening Service (which had picked up) 25-36 in number. There was a Young People's Fellowship following the Evening Service. The Quarterly meeting of 24th March gave details of the cost of a Wedding; Minister £10, Organist £6, Cleaner, £5, and Church £15 - giving a total of £36-00. If in the Winter £15 was added for the heating.

Agnostics Anonymous.
At the following Quarterly Meeting it was noted that a fortnightly Bible Study had been instituted, and the deficit was reported at a more modest £40 per month. Outgoings £940 - Income £900!! However by the meeting of 15th December, it was reported that the deficit had been eliminated. The "*Agnostics Anonymous*" had met 3 times and 5 people attended - this was another venture in outreach - again of being all things to all men. An 18+ group had also been formed, with 10 in attendance, and the Sunday School reported a membership of 35 children with 20-25 in regular attendance. The Holiday Club had reported an attendance of 50 children.

1988 Assistant Student Minister arrives.
At the Quarterly Meeting & AGM of 21st March 1988, the sad news of the closure of Shoreham Baptist Church was announced, and that from the sale, £10,000 had been inherited by Eynsford Baptist Church. This inheritance was to occupy the discussions of the next quarterly meetings of 13th June and 19th September. By the meeting of 14th December it was reported that funds had been used for Graveyard maintainance, Notice Boards, Lounge redecoration and new chairs. 'Assistantship' - Spurgeon's College had offered to supply as part of his training, a Mr Sherwin Chase as an; "***assistant student minister***". The AGM also heard about the Cameo Group - (Come And Meet Each Other). This was a women's group for both Church members and non Church members, which operated under the Cameo name and was to be found in other Churches.

A survey was undertaken whereby the deacons, key leaders and the Pastor were involved in interviewing each other to assess where they were going. The key areas of Church life were examined; Bible Study; Worship Team; 18+ Young Peoples fellowship; Prayer Groups; Cameo. At the top of one of one of the summary sheets was this statement;

> *"The Church's Mission is:*
> *To Love God; To Love your neighbour and; To make disciples of all nations."*

Succinctly the task of the Church had been wrapped into one short sentence combining, the Summary of the Law (Mark 12: 28-34), and the Great Commission (Matthew 28: 19-20). This of course was a task statement for those already converted. One of the facts to emerge from the notes preserved from the exercise was that Eynsford was seeking to assist the Union Church at Crokenhill (see notes in Chapter 8) form a housegroup.

1989.
The fashion of "having a vision" and a "vision statement" had already begun, mainly amongst the Evangelical Churches. At the AGM of 18th April 1989, the Deacons had considered the vision of the Church, and in pursuance of their vision it was stated clearly that;

> *"All activities need involvement of Church members which means a cost, commitment and sacrifice. We need to prioritise our time and give something back to God. If we ask, the Holy Spirit will enable us to do this*"

The Junior Youth Club (9½ - 12) had 8 - 10 children in attendance, and the Senior Youth Club (13 - 17) had 25 young people in attendance. The quarterly meeting of 10th April 1989 discussed support for the Billy Graham Crusade to take place at Crystal Palace 21st, 22nd and 23rd of June. At the quarterly meeting of 19th June, the Holiday Club for the 27th - 30th July was discussed, as was the forthcoming meeting of the "Agnostics Anonymous" for the 7th July. An announcement was given for a mini Spring Harvest 30th June, 1st and 2nd July. At the Quarterly meeting 18th September 1989, it was reported that the Holiday Club had been a great success, and that it was proposed to have an Advice Centre had begun in Church, however it took until the Quarterly Meeting on the 11th December for the Advice Centre to be approved.

In the 5th May and 14th June meetings of the Diaconate the Billy Graham Mission was discussed, with the Church having booked a coach to the event (21st - 23rd June). Door to Door invitations had taken place 23rd May to 10th June - with every house being visited, posters had been put up around the Village. In the Deacons' meeting of 19th July, the Pastor suggested a look forward to 1991, the 200th Anniversary of the Church, and the creation of a Committee to do the planning.

Dilapidated Organ Discussed.
At the Deacons' meetings 13th September, the dilapidated organ was discussed. A temporary repair had been done, and various options were discussed - 'run it into the ground', a rebuild at £5000, a replacement (pipe or electronic) at £2000. The decision (or indecision) was to continue to use the Organ in its present condition for the immediate future. At the same meeting, the issue of the Poll Tax was discussed, and as recommended by the Baptist Union, the "Pastor's Compensation" (Payment package - an American term creeping into UK usage! - which is "Settlement") be increased by the amount for the Minister, his Wife and immediate family. This was agreed by the Deacons, who were considering paying it directly to avoid it being a taxable benefit to the Pastor.

The Assistant Student Minister's time had come to a close at the end of December, and as he had served without pay, the Deacons proposed to give him a gift of £100.

Chapter 10
1990-1999

1990.
Wilf presented at the AGM 24th March 1990, his Report - "The Vision" which centred on a renewed Church. It was reported at the meeting 18th June 1990, that Eynsford Baptist Church had joined the Evangelical Alliance. It was also announced that there would be an "Is there"? series of sermons for Sunday Mornings - for example "Is there a God"? - "Is there Heaven"? etc,. The Deacons' meeting of 11th April reveals that members of the Church were involved in 'Task Force Romania' - this was an Aid effort to seek to aid Children who had been let down by the Communist system and lived in appalling conditions.

1991.
The AGM was held on the 23rd March. It was reported that the Youth Club had a new identity - WACCY - "Wicked And Crazy Christian Youth" - this met Wednesday Evenings in Church and discussed such topics as Creation versus Evolution, the New Age Movement. The Summer Club for Children was badges as the "Young Detectives Club". It was in this year that the Church celebrated their Bicentenary.

1992.
In this year, the Pastor, had begun his second decade. The beginning years were marked by solid mission, and various initiatives seeking to regain ground lost at Eynsford Church in the years before he had accepted the call to Eynsford. The year started well with a join Prayer and Praise Meeting held with the local Anglican Group of Churches, on the 13th January. It was at the AGM where questions were asked - Leadership - who was at the helm. There was pressure from certain quarters - where was the church going? Clear goals were requested. In November 1992, a questionnaire - The Way Forward was circulated.

1993 A Green Church - looking after the environment.
The church magazine for January 1993 revealed a concern about the environment a good decade before it became fashionable so to do. The church magazine had this to suggest;

NEW YEAR GREEN RESOLUTIONS
From the Eynsford Baptist Church Magazine January 1993

This year, I/we will:

- Reduce heat in homes and turn off unnecessary lights
- Use biodegradable cleaning products
- Re-use envelopes
- Resist using the car for short walkable journeys
- Ensure effective insulation of church and home
- Eat a little less!
- Compost organic household waste
- Increase the use of recycled paper for church news-sheets and mailings
- If there are not enough bottle banks or paper collection points in the area, write to the local council OR

ask about more kerbside collection and recycling facilities and how the church can help the council meet its recycling targets

- Take a new initiative to combat poverty
- Use fair trade products such as Cafe Direct or other products from Traidcraft
- Learn how to encourage wildlife in the garden or on church land
- Plant a tree in ' 93

In response to the 1992 Baptist Assembly Resolution, and the Rio Conference on the Environment (UNCED),

and...

". . . in the hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay . . . "
ROMANS 8:21

Decline and the need for remedial action - Cell Church before Cell Church!
The Church at Eynsford had declined slowly - and perhaps imperceptibly. 100 members going down to 95 may not be seen as a problem - and 95 to 90 - still a viable Church. Another generation passes and the Church is down to 80 - still a good number for a Village Church. However the 'imperceptible' becomes very perceptible as the membership nosedives. In 1933 it stood at 104; 1947 at 98; 1969 at 79; 1973 at 69; but by 1984, it was recorded as 37. In the research on the Deacons' minutes, no

numbers were found for the years 1973 to 1984, where the biggest losses are to be located, and in evidence of this, the meetings held in 1978 with the Vine Baptist Church suggest the membership figure was a worry.

Wilf had been engaged in Evangelism from the beginning, and did not wish to stand still. One of the results of the Church Survey was an action plan, this was discussed on the 1st November 1993. Wilf had learnt that one of the ways to grow was via small groups - which today would be labelled as "Cell Church" - this was given more prominence with such books as "*From Cell to Celebration*" by Larry R Evans, The Neighborhood Home Bible Study, 1990.

The Leadership structure had been made leaner, with a smaller Diaconate, consisting of the Pastor and four Deacons, but with a large circle of Leaders running activities. There were 19 programmes or ministries in operation needing communication. This task had been divided between four Deacons to act as link persons to the Pastor. This was a communication structure not an authority structure. One of the questions was "why not Wilf"? - in terms of being the link person. It was argued that the time needed for regular contact with 19 group leaders with his other duties (Teaching Ministry, Pastoral Visiting, the task of being an Elder, and close work with the Deacons) would have meant too large an increase in his work load. The Biblical example was such as the advice of Jethro to Moses - [Exodus 18: 13-27 cf. 2 Timothy 2:2 - also note the advice of Dwight Lyman Moody (1837-1899), a man greatly admired by Charles Haddon Spurgeon "Prince of Preachers" (1834-1892) ; "*It is better to set a hundred men to work than to do the work of a hundred men*"].

1994.
At the AGM of 2nd March, it was announced that EBC had linked with the "Churches Together in Swanley". The Pastor gave his report, which had noted that between 1952 to 1982, there had been steady decline (from the evidence in the mid 1970s the decline accelerated), and in recent years with renewed outreach endeavours the Church seemed unable to break through the 50 barrier. One of Wilf's ways to seek to grow the Church was in small groups (which had proved true in other Church communities, and for which he had argued previously). At the meeting of 23rd May, the following areas of Church life came under the following leaders; Fellowship; Wilf Stanbury (The Pastor), Worship; David Stanbury, Ministry; Alaine Somerville, Evangelism; Marie Wolfe. Also because of the wide variety of activities (or ministries) a Leadership Forum was created. In that period a mission statement was adopted;

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"***A fellowship to share and a faith to proclaim***"

Our fellowship is with the Lord Jesus Christ, a fellowship expressed with one another; it is out of this fellowship with Jesus, and demonstrated in our fellowship with one another, that we have a faith to proclaim to those around us.

1995 "***And Darkness came over the whole land***" Mark 15:33
From 1995, to 1997 formed one of the saddest chapters in the history of Eynsford Baptist Church since the divisions in the Church in 1841. Unnecessary energy was spent on dividing a Church, with a vocal group criticising the Pastor, and the direction of the Church.

At the AGM 27th April 1995, it was revealed that the Pastor was not always paid in full if other costs had to be met. Concern still centred around the low membership numbers. It was judged that if all the members attended, there would be 40 - 46 at worship. The figures for those in worship in 1993 were 34-36, and sometimes as low as 28. Communion was a concern. It was commented that the early Christians devoted themselves to the breaking of bread, but at Eynsford Baptist Church - 6 people! On Good Friday only 7. It was also noted that there was a perceived lack of trust in the Pastor. The minutes note that for example an agreement was sought "*for the Pastor to produce a diary of his weekly commitments*", and comments that this was "*in total opposition to biblical teaching*".

Hebrews 13.
7. *Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith.*
17. *Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

1 Peter 5.
5. ... you that are younger be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
6. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time he may exalt you.

The Deacons' minutes of 6th March and 5th June, seem to indicate much of the issue was about worship, and perceptions of what it was to be 'spiritual'. The Church was emerging from years of being a traditional Baptist Church, to becoming a more charismatic fellowship. For some, the pace was not fast enough.

The troubles continued at the Quarterly Church Meeting 3rd October 1995. The minutes record that the "*Pastor felt that he was being told that he wasn't working hard enough*". A survey was carried out, which whilst it had not demonstrated this from the respondents, it did reveal a divided Church. It was not just the Pastor who was "in the sights", a questions were raised about the "*low profile of the Diaconate*". What a contrast to the comments on the Pastor a decade earlier - when those that made up the Church then recognised the hard work, which had encroached on Wilf's free time! One reply given was that; "*if members of the Church felt that they have outgrown what we can offer in E.B.C. that they may need to look elsewhere for the spiritual growth they require*".

Analysing the Quarterly meeting on the 16th October, the Deacons' were concerned that the Church had reached its low point, and that some folk had expressed a spiritual hunger but felt that they were not being fed. In comment, it could be that such feelings may be located in perceptions, rather than reality - whatever the truth of the matter - there was a lack of full unity which was not helping the Gospel.

At the Deacon's meeting 20th November, there was some discussion on the small group concept - but three out of the four Deacons were not fully convinced about this as a way ahead.

1996.

The minutes of the Quarterly Meeting of January 1996 reveal a continuing problem - however these minutes reveal this, that; "*some members were unclear as to what the problems were*" - they could see no problem! A new Doctor had arrived in Eynsford, with his wife Sally. At the Deacons' meeting of 6th March, it was noted that Wilf had chatted to Dr Delport and Sally about membership and they they were very keen. The arrival of Bennie and Sally was going to prove providential with Bennie, a local GP (eventually becoming an Elder in the Church), and a stabilising influence. At the Deacon's meeting just before the AGM, on the 1st April (***April Fool's Day!***) Wilf requested a Deacon with a church member to visit Bennie and Sally Delport concerning church membership, with a positive outcome.

Alpha Course.

The troubles however continued and further discussions took place at the AGM of 23rd April 1996. Wilf was keen to seek reconciliation with those who were critical of the Church under Wilf's pastorate, and at the Deacon's meeting of 27th June Wilf expressed the view that if reconciliation failed, that there would still the maintenance of Christian love between the parties. Wilf and the Deacons had resolved to seek mediation by a third party to try to resolve the differences. The Swanley Mediation Service was approached. The Service had two committed Christians on the Staff who would by sympathetic to the issues. The mediation meetings took place in August, through to November and some preliminary details were discussed in the Deacon's meeting of 6th October. Whilst such issues dominated the Deacons', and Quarterly Church Meetings, the essential life of the Church continued, and in the Deacons' meeting of 5th August the current Alpha Course was discussed. It was that first Alpha Course which began to turn things around.

Wilf and the Deacons were committed to resolving the differences, so that the Church could utilise the strengths and energies of all its members, for the sake of the Gospel. Despite the attempt at mediation, and the time and commitment given to the process by Wilf and the Deacons, after the mediation meetings and consultations had run their course, a number of resignations were received by the Deacons' meeting 11th November 1996.

The long drawn out episode of a division within the Church was sad and to be regretted, and with the loss of good people it was evidence of failure. Some of those who had left the Church, had been for a period in the late 1980s and early 1990s a part of the Diaconate, and with others had contributed to the work and life of the Church.

Such divisions and failures were not unknown within the New Testament period, as the discussions between Paul and Peter reveal (Galations 2 & Acts 15), and such comments as are contained in 1 John.

> *"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out, that it might be plain that they all are not of us".*
>
> 1 John 2:19.

"*Sometimes it is the way the preacher speaks which is hauled over the coals. Here again is a penny field for fault-finding, for every bean has its black, and every man has his failing. I never knew a good horse which had not some odd habit or other, and I never yet saw a minister worth his salt who had not some quirk or oddity: now, these are the bits of cheese which cavillers smell out and nibble at, this man is too slow, and another too fast; the first is too flowery, and the second is too dull. Dear me, if all God's creatures were judged in this way, we should wring the dove's neck for being too tame, shoot the robins for eating spiders, kill the cows for swinging their tails and the hens for not giving us milk* ".
John Ploughman's Talk, Chapter 2.

"*Faults or no faults, ploughing must be done; imperfect people must do it, too, or there will be no harvest next year. Bad ploughman as John may be, the angels won't do his work for him, and so he is off to do it himself* ".
John Ploughman's Talk, Chapter 10.

Perhaps, if all had read the good and timely advice by Charles Spurgeon in "John Ploughman's Talk; or, Plain Advice for Plain People" things may have turned out differently - especially in the reading of Chapters 2 and 10. The Book is definitely worth reading.

Regrettable as it was, the resignations at least allowed the Church to begin to recover from the darkest period of its life since the problems of the Church back in 1841. At the Deacons' meeting of 9th December, consideration was given for practical steps to take the Church forward. The losses of membership were financially affecting an already precarious existence.

1997.
At the AGM of 5th April 1997 Bennie Delport was elected as a Deacon of the Church. Bennie was able to give real support to Wilf. Despite the encouraging signs, the financial strains were such that at the Deacons' meeting of 12th May, this note appears in the minutes about the fact that the Treasurer had; "*paid off all out-standing accounts which had left the current account with an overdraft of £388.99. which meant that there was no means of paying Wilf's salary this month.*"

The troubles of 1995-1997, did allow Wilf, as a Pastor, a period of reflection, which perhaps would not have been, if life had "sailed on" without incident. At the Church Quarterly Meeting of 27th October, the minutes note this;

"*Wilf explained that when he felt God's call into the ministry he had a vision of how that was to be achieved, he went to Bible College and then was called to a church, but that somehow, how to proceed after that was never considered, it was as if being a student and then being part of a church was just something that 'happened' both for the pastor and the members, but was about the next step? Wilf explained that once he was in a church how to implement the vision for the church was not something that had been part of the agenda at Training College and it had been easy once established in a church setting to become sucked into the day to day activities without stepping back and considering how to achieve the 'vision' but a vision is vital.* "

Wilf then went on to outline his vision for the Church; *1) A Church that glorifies Jesus; 2) A Church open to the Holy Spirit; 3) A Church that fulfils His desires & gives Him pleasure; 4) An outward looking Church; 5) A growing Church; 6) A forward thinking Church; Summed up in Matthew.28:19.*

1998.
Echoes of the difficulties were still to be heard at the AGM of the 7th April. Finances were getting extremely low - and in the Deacons' minutes at the end of the year 18th November, the emergency loan from the Home Missions was discussed. This money was to give a breathing space of nine months. The Home Missions fund was able then to give a grant to support the Ministry. Energies in this year were spent on preparing for a renewed Church and looking forward to happier days.

1999.
At the Deacons' meeting of 26th August, the Constitution was examined, as part of the preparation for the renewed life of the Church. At the meeting of 4th September the new Constitution was discussed, with a new condition for membership being inserted - that was the "*submission to the authority of the Leaders*". Like Moses, Wilf had led the Church up to the boundary of the Promised Land, but did not enter it (Deuteronomy 34:1-4). Although wishing to go earlier, Wilf agreed to stay to the end of the year, having accepted a call to go to Bromley Common, from which after seven happy years he retired from the full time Ministry in 2006.

Chapter 11

2000-2010

This was the era of Pastors John and Joan Saunders.

Full details to follow DV.