

SUPPLEMENT TO
'THE PAULINE'
MAY 2001

St. Paul's United Reformed Church

Croham Road

South Croydon



1901 - 2001

THE CHURCH'S FOUNDERS

Percival Bonwick Beddow

Thomas Belfield Comley

Henry Darley

George Goodsir

William Jeater

Robert Inglis McMinn

Percy Phillips

John Johnstone Reid

FOREWORD

“There has never been a period in our history of greater change, socially and politically, than the sixty years which separate us from the day when St Paul’s was founded”. With these words, Rev. Aled Davies, Minister of St Paul’s in 1961, started the “Foreword” to the booklet which celebrated the congregation’s Diamond Jubilee. The forty years which separate us from the time when Aled Davies wrote these words have seen continuing change, both in the life of the Church and in the life of the world around us. Who, in 1961, could have imagined that there would have been such fundamental changes in the relationships between different Christian denominations? Who, apart from science fiction writers, could have thought that today we would be debating “cloning” and “genetic modification”, and worrying about “global warming”?

Looking back still further, to when Revd. Herbert Stephenson wrote the Foreword to the Golden Jubilee Booklet in 1951, we find the Second World War a very fresh memory and ominous references to the developing “Cold War”. He, in his turn, referred back to 1926, when the first booklet of this type was published, celebrating the first twenty-five years, and he noted how, even in that short period, so much had happened. The Europe of 2001 is almost unrecognisable as the same continent which ruled the world a hundred years ago.

From the Edwardian “calm before the storm”, through the horrors of the First World War, and on into economic turmoil and renewed warfare (during which the building suffered not inconsiderable damage), and then into the second half of the last century with its phenomenal changes, - the Cold War, an end to European empires, and the history of the Berlin Wall - through to the start of a new Millennium, the congregation of St Paul’s has tried to serve God and the community in which we are set, proclaiming and living the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have not always been successful in our attempt, and I believe that Rev. Herbert Stephenson was right in saying fifty years ago that “there is no room in rejoicing for complacency.” But we have much to be thankful for, not least the fact that the life of St Paul’s is regularly renewed as new people come along and become part of the congregation.

The original eight people, who met in 1898 to consider starting a new Presbyterian congregation in South Croydon, would have been heartened to know that more than one hundred years on, their decision had borne much fruit, and that we who gather at St Paul’s are looking forward with eagerness, to discover what God has in store for us in the coming century. Doubtless the rapid change which affected the 20th Century will continue. We can be equally sure that the same God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will call us to serve Him in new and challenging ways, so that the Gospel message may be heard by those new generations which will live in a world very different from the one known by those who met to worship God here on that first Sunday in May 1901.

JOHN BREMNER, *Minister*
April 2001

THE FIRST FIFTY YEARS

On 1st September 1898, a small group of people, who lived in South Croydon, met at Coombe Lodge, the home of Mr J.J. Reid, to discuss the possibility of starting a new Presbyterian congregation which might serve the steadily growing population of South Croydon and Sanderstead. These eight gentlemen were all members of St George's Presbyterian Church, West Croydon, and were united by the fact that regular attendance at church had become, for them, increasingly impracticable. They were all convinced that a new Presbyterian congregation could be founded in South Croydon, under the pastoral oversight of the Minister of St George's, Revd. A.N. Mackray and an assistant (although this arrangement subsequently proved unworkable). With the support of the Elders of the St George's congregation, they wrote to the South London Presbytery (the equivalent of an Anglican or Catholic Diocese) asking for permission to put their thoughts into action. Permission was granted, and work began to start the new congregation.

The selection of a site for the new church involved much labour and protracted negotiations. The decision was narrowed down to the Croham Park Estate which had just been thrown open for development. The purchase of the freehold from the Whitgift Governors was not completed until December 1899. Mr Charles Henman who designed the Town Hall in Croydon was selected as architect and St Paul's chosen as the patronal name.

On 26th June 1900 in a marquee holding 250 people Divine Service was held and the Foundation Stone of the Hall was laid. The contract for the building was £3445, the site cost roughly £1000, and by this date, £1125 had been raised towards the cost. The contract stipulated that the work was to be completed by December but it was some months later that on May 4th 1901 the building, seating about 250, was dedicated to the Divine Service. (A Communion Roll of 42 persons had been formed and a congregational meeting held to consider the question of a permanent minister.) A call to the Revd. A.N. Mackray was made and accepted and his induction took place on June 13th 1901.

At the end of the first year, the number on roll was 87 and by 1904 this had risen to 160. The hall contained 247 chairs and, after allocating chairs for the choir, 227 were available to seat holders, who paid a "Pew rent". After only 18 months from the opening of the Hall, 324 were "let" leaving only 13 seats for newcomers and visitors. It was decided that after two minutes before 11am and two minutes before 7pm all unoccupied chairs should be considered free. The call to proceed with the building of the Church was being forced upon the Session sooner than was anticipated.

A Magazine, called "The Pauline, a quarterly journal of religious and social intelligence" was started in 1904.

On Saturday June 25th 1904 a large marquee was erected on the site where the new Church was to be built and the Foundation Stone was "laid" by the Right Hon. The Lord Balfour of Burleigh. A sealed phial containing a current local paper, a Church Year Book for 1904, a copy of the day's proceedings and the customary coins of the realm was laid in the nether stone. It was suggested at this ceremony, that some

members might wish to contribute the cost of specific portions of the new building. The architect prepared estimates viz. the pulpit £50 to £200, main door stonework £60 and woodwork £25, the East window stonework £75, pillars £27 each, rafters 10s and bricks 2d.

The debt on the hall and site had been cleared, donations, 12 offertories, a Bazaar and a Sale of Work had raised £5304. The new Church cost £8849 and the organ £1344 which was completed and dedicated on May 30th 1906. On the occasion of the Foundation Stone laying the offering was nearly £1200 and a further £1000 was collected when the church was dedicated for public worship on October 7th 1905. A Bazaar on the theme of "Hearth and Home" (stalls representing the different rooms of a house) was held in 1907 which raised not far short of £1800.

In November 1907 the Revd. AN Mackray announced his retirement on the grounds of ill-health and advancing years. In March 1908 the Revd. Henry Crombie was inducted as the new Minister. In 1914 the Afternoon Service for Young People (which had been conducted by the Minister) became the Sunday School with graded classes. The weekly teachers training class was conducted by the Minister. This grading of the Sunday School was most felt after the end of the First World War when the need for more accommodation became pressing. A wooden hut was erected at the rear of the Hall in 1921, and was replaced by the present building in 1935. The pews in the South transept were removed and tables and chairs placed there for lessons and "expression" work, and this part of the Church was curtained off for use of a department. Every room in the building was occupied, including the vestry.

Mr Crombie during the war acted as organiser for the YMCA headquarters, and in 1917 he asked to be released from the pastorate at St Paul's to work for the YMCA full-time.

In 1918 the Revd. J. Pulford-Williams became the Minister. The congregation numbered 268 at this time having doubled the numbers in eight years. The debt on the church was finally extinguished in 1921. During this period the beauty of the church was added to by the gift of the Rose and Resurrection windows in the South Transept, the War Memorial East Window (unfortunately destroyed by enemy action in 1944), many lancet windows in the North and South aisle and the oak panelling in the chancel.

The congregation steadily increased, many new members came from Scotland, working in London and living within reach of a Presbyterian Church. In 1930 the Revd. J. Pulford-Williams suddenly died, and forays were made North of the border to attract a new Minister. The Revd. James Scott from Renfrewshire accepted the call and on his death in 1933, the Revd. John Mackenzie came from Campbeltown, Kintyre.

The start of the Second World War in 1939 saw many changes. Because of the "blackout" the Sunday evening service was moved to the afternoon and later moved to the small hall which could be "blacked out". Between October 1940 and January 1945 the church was damaged by enemy action seven times. Between November 1944 and May 1945 the Church was unusable (the halls having been requisitioned by the Forces) and the services were held in St Peter's Hall.

The Revd. John Mackenzie temporarily resigned in 1940 to join the Army and the Revd. Herbert Stephenson, whose church at Southend-on-Sea was closed, came and took charge of the congregation until 1942 when he was inducted as Minister.

From 1945 to the end of 1953 repairs to the fabric of the church and renovation of the organ took place with a Re-dedication and Thanksgiving Service being held in January 1954. During this period the congregation flourished and a record number of communicants (218) was recorded in 1952.

THE NEXT FIFTY YEARS

We owe a great deal to the Paulines who not only built our beautiful church but who passed on to us the tradition of worship, fellowship, and service which we have tried to maintain. The second fifty years have brought about changes and developments the Founders and early members could not possibly have envisaged.

This period coincides almost exactly with the reign to date of Queen Elizabeth II. The immediate post-war years were concerned largely with the restoration of the buildings and the consolidation of the congregation. The Minister, the Revd. Herbert Stephenson had earlier "held a scattered and sometimes homeless congregation together" but activities which had been suspended or curtailed during the war years were taken up again and the faith of the congregation seemed to have been strengthened, rather than diminished by adversity.

In 1951, the Jubilee of the Foundation of the congregation was celebrated. Services of thanksgiving were held, the publication of the "Manual" was resumed after an interval of eleven years and various social events were held in recognition of this important milestone in our history.

The next year brought the death of King George VI and his passing was marked appropriately. The Coronation of the young Queen merited special services in 1953. Significant events took place here too: one of the North Transept windows portraying St George and the gift of the Guides, Brownies and Cubs was dedicated and restored windows depicting SS Peter and Paul, given in memory of Revd. Henry Crombie were re-dedicated. In 1954 a Thanksgiving service for the complete restoration of buildings and windows (including the restored West window now transferred to the East end) was held.

The generosity of early Paulines as they furnished and enriched the church buildings has been matched over the years. Memorial plaques and windows, beautiful chairs in the chancel, a carved cross, book racks, hymn books, the cross on the spire, a new sound system, equipment of all kinds are just a few examples from many gifts in kind. Gifts of time, energy and expertise have made sure that our inheritance is being maintained.

The Manual, mentioned earlier, was a Year Book which gave account of meetings of the Session and Deacons' Court, had an introduction from the Minister and included

the names of office-bearers and the leaders of various organisations. It contained the Treasurer's report, details of congregational giving and lists of members with their addresses and pew numbers. These publications furnish fascinating formal reports and through them one is able to picture the growth and progress not only of individuals but also of the congregation as a whole. The data has been meticulously collected and presented and is correct in every personal and professional detail. When "The Pauline", the church magazine, began to incorporate details of business meetings and printed annual reports verbatim, it was felt that the Manual in its existing form could be discontinued and for some years a directory or handbook containing essential information has been provided for members and friends. (Regular worshippers who were not full members of the church were earlier known as "Adherents" and then as "Associate Members")

It is to "The Pauline" that we turn in order to find informal accounts as well as letters, reports and news of members. It was established in 1904 with the Minister himself as the editor and he set the high standard which his successors have ably maintained. He abhorred the "adventitious aid of advertisements" and they have never formed part of the magazine (which changed its format in 1971 so that it could be produced "in house"). Originally by subscription only this change has meant that a copy is given free to every household. The letter from the Minister plays a vital part in this and can be a useful vehicle for reinforcing a message given in a sermon or introducing new ideas. Sentiments have ranged from complimenting the flock on "steady progress" to the reproving "attendance at worship is not an option for a member of the church; it is a sacred obligation and a duty"

Attendance and congregational numbers have fluctuated over the years and although there is a faithful nucleus of worshippers, the record church membership of 496 in 1957 has not been even closely approached. When evening services ended Junior Church staff had few opportunities of joining in worship.

Services at St Paul's have followed a fairly traditional pattern over the years. The "Pious Fathers" (the name respectfully given to the eight founding members of the church) would find few major changes. As time has passed, approaches to worship have been less formal, although the essentials remain. Seldom do we recite the Creed or sing metrical Psalms as did our predominantly Scottish predecessors, but the reading of scripture and an exposition of it in the Sermon and the singing of congregational hymns persist. The tradition of holding a pre-Communion service has lapsed, as have the Morning Watch and the Intercession Group and with the demise of the evening service the Lords Supper is, perversely, always in the morning. When the Revd. Herbert Stephenson officiated for the last time as minister the attendance was a record 219 communicants at an evening service.

With the departure in August 1958 of the "well loved Minister and friend" who had served the congregation so well for 18 years, 16 of them as its minister, another chapter was also drawing to its close. The Children's Church held its farewell service. It had been an integral part of the Church's life and many remember with affection the morning services held for young people. When the decision was taken to join with the afternoon Sunday School there was regret and nostalgia but the merger was a very successful one and the newly named Junior Church continues to the present.

From the foundation of St Paul's, there has been concern for young people. The early classes may have been more sedate than the lively, innovative programmes present children enjoy, but they were popular and well-supported as the records show. One of the features of the Fifties was the Scripture Examination. St Paul's candidates were well-prepared and achieved some excellent results (thanks more to the patience of the teachers than the diligence of the students?) In order to continue and expand the sound work of the Sunday School and to provide a group for young people the Bible Class was started in 1955. This proved very popular and gave a focus for the younger members of the congregation, especially those who were not attached to uniformed organisations or whose families were not closely connected with the congregation. The programme was imaginative and not only included the usual talks, debates, and quizzes, but featured a spectacular walk from Brighton.

When the popular Fellowship of Youth closed in 1969 its functions were incorporated into those of the Bible Class. The FOY had been the focus for social activities for young people since 1926. Some twenty years later a junior section was started. "SPY" was the next successful young peoples' group. It began in 1972 and ran until 1980. Several other youth clubs have been run in recent years and have met the needs of particular groups while providing a great deal of enjoyment and interest.

"Afternoon Services for Young People" began in 1901 and the tradition of teaching has continued to the present. The Junior Church participates in Sunday worship, holds its own special services and activities and delights the congregation with dramatic presentations and tableaux. Not only do the children learn about their faith, they are encouraged to work for others by running charity stalls, carol singing, visiting residents in a nearby home and on one occasion organising a "Sponsored Sing" which raised £200. Although its membership is not very large at present - St Paul's is in an area which does not have very many young families - the Junior Church (which incorporates the Bible Class) is a very important part of life of St Paul's. Many members look back with gratitude at the way they were taught as children.

Interest in the wider world has always been encouraged in young Paulines, and from 1937 when the Wolf Cub pack was formed, to the present involvement of Brownies, Cubs, Scouts Guides and Venture Units there have been strong links with the Scouting movement. The 7th Croydon Boy Scout Troop was formed in 1938 (with its own HQ in 1968), the 2nd Croham Hurst Guide Company in 1943 and the Brownies in 1947. The Croham Valley Joint Venture Unit began in 1975 and the 7th Venture Scouts in 1980. Rainbows and Beavers are the latest additions to the Scouting "family"

A Session minute in 1958 indicates that the family of St Paul's was " a strong Christian fellowship, growing in numbers, sound financially and energetic in its organisations" at the end of Revd Herbert Stephenson's ministry. The following year the Revd. Aled Davies was inducted as St Paul's seventh minister. During his twenty-six years' stewardship many changes took place in the church and the wider world. A new Manse was bought for the new incumbent and his family. In the early days, ministers "travelled from their own homes" and then, variously, the manse was at York Road, Spencer Road, Croham Valley Road, Croham Close and eventually Croham Road.

The congregation, too had some new buildings: it had become desirable if not imperative to extend them and to renew some of the facilities. In 1957, the new heating system, the extended halls (now the Crèche and the Youth Room) and cloakrooms were dedicated and inaugurated and a Thanksgiving and Gift service held the following day. In 1968 the church was redecorated for the first time since the war damage had been repaired in 1954. The stonework had begun to show signs of age and deterioration and it was necessary to overhaul and repair it. In 1990 the work was begun ; the Stonework Appeal having raised £30,735. In 1984 the church had been classified as a "Listed Building of Special Architectural Interest Grade 2" in the Borough.

The finances of the church have always been carefully administered and the congregation owes a great deal of gratitude to the Treasurers, Finance Committees and insurance experts whose guidance and advice are freely given. Decisions about saving and spending are difficult ones and there are many statutory claims on income (for instance to the U.R.C.) before plans about expenditure can be made.

St Paul's has always maintained strong links with the Borough of Croydon despite being a "gathered" church with many of its members living outside the immediate area. Civic services have taken place here and several members have been honoured by being elected as Presidents of the (then) Croydon Free Church Federal Council. Support has been given to community projects both in service and financially. Paulines were instrumental in setting up the lunch club for the elderly at Aberdeen Road Christian Centre and in its successor at St Peter's Centre. Individuals have served the borough in their private and professional capacities since the foundation of the congregation: a link which continues.

Mr Davies was keen to maintain these links with the Borough and with the wider church. His influence was to be positively shown in later years and he was responsible for several initiatives in Croydon as well as his own congregation. One of the first of these was the first Christmas Day early morning Communion celebration in the year of his induction. (Later an early evening service of Carols and Lessons was introduced) The following year a Christian Stewardship campaign was inaugurated which sought to utilise gifts of members and extend the influence of the church in the neighbourhood. Early in the pastorate came the ordination of the first woman to the Eldership and the appointment of the first woman clerk of the Deacons' Court. It was a period of change.

For many years there had been talks about Church unity nationally and locally. In Croydon there was a certain amount of positive feeling and in 1961 there was a combined meeting of local churches to consider such unity. Representative clergy of the Anglican, Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian and Roman Catholic churches each presented the case for his respective denomination. This was the beginning of a new closeness for churches in the area. By 1968 Easter leaflets giving details of services were being prepared in Croydon. Later Christmas "cards" were added (1968). The same year, Cardinal Heenan addressed General Assembly and said "Union is here now; unity is another matter." Yet the movement towards unity as far as Presbyterians were concerned continued, for they entered into conversations with the Anglicans and the Congregationalists, the latter eventually bringing about the formation of the United Reformed Church in 1972

Before the Scheme of Union could be completed there were many questions to be answered and structures to be renewed or adapted on both sides. St Paul's session had held an Order of the Day about joining with the Congregationalists in 1968 and Presbytery had received an Interim report about the proposed Union. After the "Decree in Ecumenism" promulgated at the Second Vatican Council (1962) local priests were more in evidence in the Borough and Father Rodell preached at St Paul's Patronal Festival in 1967, but that was unusual and progress on the ecumenical front was slow in Croydon as elsewhere, despite the efforts of the ecumenically-minded of all denominations. In the first year of "The Pauline" these words appear "... the sooner that such merely negative terms as "dissenter" and "non-conformist" are relegated to a dictionary of obsolete words so much the better". They could have formed part of the dialogue taking place sixty years later.

While discussions were taking place at national level, (although they would have bearing and impact on St Paul's) more immediate issues were being dealt with. The Minister suggested the use of service sheets in order to include children more fully in the early part of the service (the Sunday School having transferred to morning meetings in 1958). These sheets were expanded into a service booklet for the congregation and were in use for many years until a weekly order of service was introduced by the next minister. Another concern was the difficulty of visiting, when lifestyles had changed so much. The Minister suggested "At Homes" at the Manse for different districts where members could meet and elders chat informally with their own and other districts. Coffee evenings have been the successors to these meetings and have been valuable social events. In 1974 coffee was served in the Large Hall after the Parade services. This splendid custom has been extended to all morning services in recent years.

After consultation with the congregation the time of the Morning Service was brought forward to 10.30 as the evening services, for some time serving very few worshippers despite attempts to make them less formal and in the form of talks or discussions, were discontinued.

The end of an era came also when the Mission Church was closed. This happened in 1973 and was the end of a long and happy association with Johnson Road. A former Session Clerk writes "the Mission was started there by St George's Presbyterian Church in the latter half of last century, when the neighbourhood was a very poor one.... it invited the London City Mission to base one of its missionaries in the hall so that regular visitation... could be carried out by someone well-versed in house-to-house evangelism." St Paul's took over responsibility of the Mission when St George's closed and supplied Session Clerks, Treasurers and helpers in all branches of church work.

In order to supervise the congregations under their aegis, the Presbyterian Church of England which had been in existence since 1876, organised a system of "Quinquennial Visitations." Although friendly in tone and keen to point out strengths as well as weaknesses and to make positive suggestions for the common good they were "Official." No less official but by invitation came many distinguished guests over the years. These have included Bishop Lesslie Newbigin who preached at the Diamond Jubilee service, former moderators Revds. Malcolm Hanson and Edmund Banyard

and in January of our Centenary Year the present Moderator of General Assembly the Revd. Bill Mahood.

The Church premises are visited by many people during the course of a year. The halls have been the venue for Badminton Clubs, Dancing Classes, parties, Mother and Toddler groups, Barn Dances and a Nursery School as well as the home for the many organisations connected with the church. Connection with one or other of these groups has often been the first step towards becoming a church members. Activity continues outside the church premises and the Tennis and Croquet club thrive in their own grounds in Carlton Road.

Music has always been an important part of congregational life. Blessed with a magnificent Lewis organ (which has suffered various vicissitudes over the years and has been the object of several appeals for repair and restoration) the people of St Paul's have also been fortunate in having gifted and loyal organists. The choir, described as "large and powerful, ably directed by its first choirmaster" has, from the earliest days been an integral part of worship leading the singing and performing introits and anthems.

The non-conformist tradition of "singing the faith" has always been in evidence; although the metrical psalms so beloved of early Presbyterians are seldom used today, the traditional hymns of the faith are still popular. During the Eighties and Nineties when modern hymns were used extensively in our schools they did not often find a home in our services. The Church Hymnary first produced in 1927 and updated in 1970 was given a new lease of life in the revision of 1975 by a committee on which the minister served. It was followed by "Rejoice and Sing", the hymn book mainly used at present. It was introduced to St Paul's congregation in 1993. Several times Junior Choirs have been formed and their contribution to services has brought freshness and enthusiasm.

Several new translations of the Bible have been produced during the past fifty years and these have been used in public worship, albeit cautiously. In 1965 Mr Davies decided to make use of the Revised Standard Version in services (the Authorised Version of 1611, the "King James Bible" had been used up to this point, sometimes in conjunction with the New English Bible). Subsequently the Good News Bible and the Revised English Bible have appeared and these have been used for reading the lessons where the translations seem to be more helpful. The use of an inter-denominational lectionary was also suggested at this point in a move to emphasise the unity of worship in a period of growing ecumenism. In June 1965 in his capacity as Moderator of Presbytery, the Minister was present at a United Service of North and South Presbyteries at Westminster Abbey. As he pointed out this had not happened since the 1640s when Presbyterianism was the Established Church - if briefly - and the famous "Divines" met in the Jerusalem Chamber (to draw up the Westminster Confession which still governs some elements of our church life.)

For many years the Literary and Social Guild played an important part in providing interest and entertainment for Paulines. The manual for 1902 says "our literary Guild seeks to make culture the hand-maid of religion." A lofty aim indeed, but one which did not prevent a great deal of enjoyment from taking place. Talks, discussions, play-readings, and entertainments, socials and public performances of plays in nearby St

Peter's Hall featured in its wide-ranging programme. By 1968, however, the time had come to suggest that a "new and broader pattern of activity be introduced to replace the meetings of the guild" and that year a programme of events for all ages was introduced and "St Paul's Fellowship" came into being.

When Union came eventually in 1972, what did it mean at a local level? The new structure placed emphasis on the authority of Church Meetings and indicated that the role of the Elders should remain, with the added responsibility "To recommend to the Church meeting arrangements for the proper maintenance of buildings and the general oversight of all the financial responsibilities of the local church." This vital function had been that of the Deacons' Court. After careful consideration by senior members of the congregation the so-called Gower Report was produced. This recommended that a "Committee of Management" be appointed, in addition to the Elders' Meeting. Both these elected bodies were to be answerable to the Church Meeting. Thus the status quo was maintained.

No women were appointed as Elders or Deacons in 1901. They organised the Flower Fund, became members of the Women's Missionary Association or the Guild of Women Workers where this "Dorcas Society" was said to do "good service of a useful and social nature". The Women's Guild which encapsulated the aims of all three societies and eventually replaced them has long been important in St Paul's. Only in more recent years has it become St Paul's Guild with more general programmes. The Ladies' Committee has been essential to the smooth running of church affairs, its members' work largely unseen and unacknowledged.

Paulines soon became used to the new structure and name and the congregation continued to develop with increasing awareness and involvement with the ecumenical links that were being forged in Croydon, one of the most successful of which was the ecumenical weekends held at Sayers Common. "Christ in Croydon" was a five-week campaign of meetings and the following year an ecumenical Communion service was held here in which more than 200 people participated. 1985 was the year in which the Revd. Aled Davies retired after 26 years' service as minister and it was fitting that in the January of that year South Croydon Churches held their United Service at St Paul's. The respect in which he was held by his own congregation was great and his service to the Borough and the wider church inestimable.

During the ensuing vacancy, in 1986, the Revd. Charles Meachin came to preach - and stayed for 10 years. His pastorate was characterised by energy and enthusiasm and the way in which he used his considerable pastoral skills. Keen to encourage inclusiveness and fellowship, many social events were organised - often by his wife the Revd. Barbara Meachin, in order to draw members of the congregation more closely together in order to celebrate their faith.

The first Easter Breakfast took place, there were church lunches cooked by the newly-formed and hard-working Catering Committee, Garden Parties, presentations by Junior Church and celebrations of the major festivals of the Christian Year. Especially memorable was the 90th Birthday Party, the Anniversary Open Day and Concert and the Arts and Crafts Exhibition. The Minister organised visits to the Holy Land and to India and encouraged interest in Missionary activities of all kinds, especially in aid of the Leper Settlement in Nigeria where his son and daughter-in-law

did much valuable work. He was instrumental in planning the visit of the Venture Group there in 1991.

There was a growth in numbers in the Eighties and early Nineties (although sadly the young people attached to the youth organisations rarely showed an interest in becoming full church members) and very important additions were made to the spiritual life of the congregation. There were the weekday services for Prayer, Praise and Healing, the Prayer Link and the re-establishing of the Bible Study Group. In 1991 at the Parish Church the inaugural service of Churches Together in the Borough of Croydon was held. Participation was enthusiastic and most heartening for those who had worked so long and hard to establish links between all the branches of Christ's Church. United Services, the Good Friday procession of Witnesses and the Borough Assembly are just a few of the events organised by C.T.B.C. and its influence continues to grow.

In 1992, the pews were removed from the South Transept and replaced with chairs, thus making a more informal worshipping area for small groups. This, together with the ramp for the disabled in the North Transept made the main internal changes in the church building since its foundation and made for more flexibility and freedom. For some time concern had been expressed about access to the Church (it had always been possible to the halls) and after initial designs had been generously subsidised by donors the work was implemented. Special cloakroom facilities and the ramp were completed in 1997.

1995 brought the retirement of the Revd. Charles Meachin. Whether by his sermons, prayers, visits, encouragement or willingness to be involved in all aspects of members' lives he had set his stamp firmly on the life of the congregation.

The Revd. Andrew McCluskey was inducted to the pastorate later that same year. His interest in music was shown in the Celebration services aimed at introducing more modern music into worship. To this end also he encouraged the presentation in Church of a Cantata "New Creation" by an augmented choir in which members of the Junior Church took part. "Alpha" courses, originally aimed at young people were set up. They stimulated interest in basic Christian ideas and were enjoyed by those who participated in them.

A "Vision Workshop" was conducted by the Provincial Training Officer in the same year. Encouraged to re-evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the congregation and to voice hopes for the future, a Working Party was set up to consider the report made by the Revd' Bill McCrorie and asked to make recommendations. A Five Year Plan was produced for congregational consideration in 1996. It was approved unanimously and an action group set up. Some of the recommendations of this group are being implemented at present

The Revd. Tim Fletcher, now a non-stipendary Minister in the Church of Scotland spent six months of his training with us prior to his ordination. We welcomed him back when he took a service during the vacancy caused by the resignation of the Revd. Andrew McClusky in June 1997.

The months following a second vacancy within a very short period put a considerable workload on to the joint Church Secretaries. This was borne with exemplary efficiency, tact, and unfailing cheerfulness. One highlight of this time was the visit of the Wild Goose Resource Group from Iona who led a Seminar, workshop and evening service with the title "Today's worship for Tomorrow's People". At this time, too, a start was made on a major undertaking,; this was the design and execution of eight Millennium Banners depicting the life and work of St Paul. They were hung in the Church in May 2000 and represent the brilliant planning and co-ordination of a project involving many people from the diverse activity groups using the church in its widest sense.

The Revd. John Bremner was inducted as St Paul's tenth Minister on October 3rd 1998. With his encouragement and active participation the Choir has begun to take a more prominent part in worship. Services of Holy Communion on Maundy Thursday have been instituted and a second Bible Study Group begun. We look forward to his continuing Ministry. Writing his first letter in "the Pauline" the newly-inducted minister wrote these words, to which we add our own "Amen", as St Paul's embarks on the next 100 years:

"So let us pray for hearts and minds
which will be open to the Spirit's action
giving thanks to God our Father,
through Jesus Christ our Lord"