

DECADE in DAGENHAM



AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST
TEN YEARS OF THE DAGENHAM SCHEME

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Team Ministry in Practice

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OF THE DAGENHAM SCHEME



THE MINISTERIAL TEAM

Left to right: Rev. Rowland G. Cole, Rev. J. Buckley,
Rev. J. Brian Edwards, B.D., Rev. J. J. Brown, B.D.

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“So when each separate part works as it should the whole body grows and builds itself up through love”

EPHESIANS 4 . 16 (*Good News for Modern Man*)



HEATHWAY LOOKING NORTH, 1972

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Preface

When the "Dagenham Scheme" had been in operation for just over two years the Rev. J. J. Brown, B.D., its Senior Minister, wrote an account of the early days of the Scheme under the title "Rising Tide". It is from that base, and somewhat under the influence of that title, that the present booklet has sprung. But in addition the present author has had the advantage of studying the regular quarterly reports to the Advisory Committee over the past ten years and also the annual reports which have been given at most of the anniversary meetings of the Scheme held generally in the autumn of each year. Material prepared by Rev. Roy Dorey has also been studied. Mr. Dorey was closely associated with the Scheme for about four years and was formerly an honorary member of the team of ministers so that his observations on the working of the scheme have been generally helpful. Much help has also been gained from the reading of Miss Doris Witard's history of Essex Baptists entitled "Bibles in Barrels".

"Rising Tide" was privileged to have a foreword by Dr. E. A. Payne, then General Secretary of the Baptist Union, a preface by Rev. J. H. G. Adam, Eastern Area Superintendent, and a postscript by Mr. Norman Andrews, Chairman of the Advisory Committee. Dr. Payne pointed out that the neighbourhood of "industrial Dagenham" offered a challenge to those concerned for the spiritual welfare of its inhabitants, and he referred to the special difficulties and opportunities facing the members of the Baptist Churches. Mr. Adam, rejoicing in what had been accomplished in the short period over which the Scheme had been viable said: "We are in no doubt as to where we stand. There is much fallow ground which needs to be broken. The harvests we anticipate and for which we pray require tillage and insemination and appropriate climates and 'working hard and waiting long'." Mr. Adam saw in the Scheme the Church militant being recruited into a vigorous offensive for righteousness, and being so deployed that Dagenham might become encircled and invaded by the Grace of God. Mr. Norman Andrews also looked forward, and, heartened by the developments of the first two years, felt that progress was being made, however slowly, and that the Church in Dagenham was on the march. He concluded his postscript with these words: "There is no looking back. A new spirit of outreach has possessed the local church which is now taking on responsibilities which only three years ago would have been impossible. We press on towards our great objective - to win Dagenham for Christ." That was in 1963/4. The following chapters take up the story and attempt to give as full an account as possible of the way in which the churches in the Scheme have discharged their responsibilities and served their Lord and Master Jesus Christ during the first ten years of the venture. "This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes".



BECONTREE HEATH LOOKING NORTH-EAST, 1972
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1. The Ebbing Tide

In the introduction to his work "The Unquenchable Light" that great American Baptist historian of the Christian Church, Dr. K. S. Latourette, likens the spread of Christianity to a flowing and ebbing tide. He speaks of advance and recession, and points out that with the incoming tide, although there are occasions when the water seems to ebb to such a degree as to cancel out all previous advance, yet nevertheless succeeding waves reach higher and yet higher points on the beach. In other words we can be deceived by what seems to be a recession. We have to take a much longer look at what is happening. If we do that we shall see the flooding tide as it really is – advancing steadily towards high water mark. A somewhat similar sentiment was expressed in the middle of the nineteenth century by A. H. Clough in his delightful poem "Qua Cursum Ventis":

"For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in the main"

Dr. Latourette commenting in the 1940's says this about the Christian Church: "If the present age is one of retreat from Christianity, here in this day of seeming reverse, is the preparation for the next advance. If in spite of discouragements, the age is really one of advance, here is the instrument through which the forward sweep of the tide is being manifested". Elsewhere in his book this scholarly historian not unnaturally refers to Christianity as "Light", and speaks, thinking no doubt of the first chapter of John's Gospel, of the light having to contend with darkness. Then he goes on to say: "Sometimes the two have seemed to be mixed. In places the light has been quenched. Yet always somewhere it has continued to shine. When human history is seen in the long perspective of the centuries the path of light has broadened. It has been shining more and more even though the perfect day seems still very remote". Dr. Latourette was, of course, thinking of the world-wide scene, past, present and future, and was taking a view which was as long-term as it was wide. But is it too much to suggest that the picture he presented in global, long-term fashion can also be true on a narrower screen and over a shorter period of time? Might not that screen be Dagenham, and the time 1961 – 1971 – 19 . . . ?

In what is now known as part of the area of the London Borough of Barking but was formerly the Borough of Dagenham, there are four Baptist Churches. All were founded in the, roughly, ten-year period ending with 1938. The first of these churches was established in the southern section of Dagenham in 1927 not far from the great Ford works which came to the district in 1929. This was then *The Dagenham Baptist Church* – in Chaplin Road. Sunday School work was started in a tent in the summer of 1927. The present main

Church building was opened in December of that year and the Church was formed in January 1928. Their first pastor was Rev. Hugh C. C. MacCullough, of "Essex Five" fame, whose ministry extended from 1929 to 1935. During this period halls were added to the premises and the work amongst the young flourished. There was steady development until the outbreak of World War II in 1939, but with that cataclysmic event, subsequent enemy action from the air and the evacuation of many children from the district, the church understandably suffered setbacks from which it found it hard to recover when peace came again.

The next Church to be founded was in the northern part of the area – at Becontree Avenue in 1929 – once again in the middle of a large housing complex. Friends from the adjacent Goodmayes and Chadwell Heath Baptist Churches did yeoman service in helping to establish the work in those early days. The first Minister of the church was Rev. Wilfred Driskell who exercised an effective ministry from 1930 – 1940. But here also the war interfered with the onward progress of the work and it was not easy to secure again the lost momentum of the earlier days.

In both these churches Sunday School work played a great part – a point easily grasped when considering the circumstances attending the development of the huge Dagenham estate by the then London County Council from the 1920's onwards. The efforts of the authority to re-settle folk from the overcrowded East End of London were an urgent and human answer to the desperate needs of working class people. But there was such a concentration on the erection of houses that the need for schools and social amenities was of secondary consideration. It is not surprising therefore that the Sunday schools and the youth organisations were inundated with the young. There was soon a third such Sunday school opened to meet the needs of children and young people in the Wood Lane area, midway between Chaplin Road and Becontree Avenue.

The Wood Lane Church was established in 1932. For a short time in the early 1930's the work there was given oversight by a committee representing various interests. But the one person remembered by all as the guiding spirit in the new venture was Sister Margaret Evans, who served the cause with unflagging energy from 1932 to 1964. She was assisted for 19 years (1934 – 1953) by Sister Kathleen Simmons.

As the Dagenham area continued to expand, the need for a fourth Baptist Church arose in the north-eastern corner of the district contiguous to Romford. The Oxlow Lane cause was therefore established in the Eastbrook locality under the leadership of Rev. T. D. Robinson, formerly minister of the Chaplin Road church. The main premises at Oxlow Lane were opened in 1939. Assistance from the folk at the Main Road Baptist Church, Romford, was an invaluable asset to the

developing work. After the war the work came under the leadership of honorary and lay pastors. During the ministry of the Rev. Seth B. Stephens the additional hall for youth work was erected.

Both the Wood Lane and the Oxlow Lane ventures were also affected to a lesser or greater extent by the war and by the general unsettlement created by the shocks and upheavals of six years of hostilities. Those years had greatly tried the people of our nation. The faith of many had been deeply shaken. Succeeding years gradually healed some of the wounds of 1939 – 45, but the aftermath of the war was characterised by a general slackening in morality, and a further drift away from faith in God and in the Lord Jesus Christ. In consequence the decline in attendance at church which first became apparent in the years following the 1914 – 18 war began to be more and more evident. Our nation, together with other nations of the west, had begun their slow drift into an age of materialism, the affluent society and, as some have termed it, the “permissive” society. Pollution became more evident, in the realm of the spirit and the mind as well as in the air, on land and in the sea.

What happened on a national scale happened also in individual localities. It is not to be wondered at if, during the 14/15 years after the end of World War II the work of the churches in Dagenham became increasingly difficult. No doubt it was due to this and other discouragements that Pastors, though labouring hard and faithfully, began to serve the Baptist churches for short periods only. In the three Baptist churches, excluding Wood Lane, between 1947 and 1959 there were nine changes of leadership (see Appendix A). Many leaders or potential leaders moved out of the area, and many others died or retired. Unfortunately, due to the housing policy of the London County Council (now the Greater London Council) young people growing up in the neighbourhood were generally forced to move away from the Dagenham area when they married, since vacant Council accommodation in the borough was normally let to families still being settled from other areas in inner London. This meant that very often young people brought up in the Churches were compelled to move away. While this was no doubt to the benefit of churches in the country round about London, the Dagenham churches were deprived of the opportunity of using in their work and witness the services of their own young people. This may well be true of many of our Baptist churches in large cities and towns but it has a particularly discouraging effect in the general circumstances which attend any Christian work in such an area as Dagenham.

It has also to be remembered that Dagenham is not an area into which families move *by choice*. Few if any come to live there of their own free will. This affects both church membership and churchmanship. The churches in the outer London belt are much better placed in this respect and the churches of Dagenham would value dearly the

sort of immigration which Nehemiah sought to encourage when he saw the necessity of repopulating the restored city of Jerusalem!

In 1959 the prospects for the churches of the Baptist faith in Dagenham seemed worse than they had been since their formation. Chaplin Road, Becontree Avenue and Oxlow Lane were all without a settled ministry, and the possibility of attracting Ministers to the churches was a question which perplexed and exercised deacons, members and the Area Superintendent alike. What was to be done?

The answer lay to some extent with three men who, under the pressure of the Holy Spirit, had become increasingly concerned with the situation in the Baptist churches of the area. The first was Mr. Norman W. Andrews, whose parents had been associated with the original pioneering work at Becontree Avenue and who was Moderator at Becontree Avenue in 1959; the second was Rev. J. H. G. Adam, M.A., Eastern Area Superintendent of the Baptist Union; and the third was Mr. A. O. Edwards, who, in association with the Chadwell Heath Baptist Church, had been involved in the initial stages of the work at Becontree Avenue. He had also served as Moderator of the Chaplin Road church for a period in 1954. These three prayed and pondered independently on the future of the Baptist churches of Dagenham. When they shared their thoughts they devised, under God's leading, a possible solution to the problem. Under their joint inspiration the churches were persuaded to consider the possibility of working more closely together under the leadership of a Team of Ministers. The revolutionary concept which had now taken firm shape had emerged very gradually over the years. The Area Superintendent, Rev. W. H. Tebbit had in 1946 referred to the possibility, though in the distant future, of a scheme for grouping the Dagenham Churches. Later a proposal for a grouping scheme entailing a senior minister, a student pastor and a deaconess was considered but apparently this suggestion was not favourably received.

On 17th November 1959 the comprehensive ideas envisaged in the latest version of the Dagenham Scheme were first outlined to one of the churches. Later the Scheme which the three men had devised was put to all the churches by the Area Superintendent. After anxious and lengthy consideration, involving numerous consultations of deacons and church members, three of the churches (Chaplin Road, Becontree Avenue and Oxlow Lane) decided to go ahead with this new venture in fellowship. The first meeting of the Advisory Committee, brought into being for the purpose of the Dagenham Scheme, was held on 2nd September, 1960. The scheme which was agreed, though not without hesitations and misgivings, was described fairly fully by Rev. J. J. Brown in his booklet "Rising Tide" as follows:—

"The churches would be brought together under the leadership of a team of ministers, one of whom would be responsible

for co-ordinating the work as a whole. Each of the ministers would have special responsibility for one church and all of them would be available to serve the churches and the neighbourhood according to their gifts, interests and training. The autonomy of each congregation would be respected in the continuation of local Deacons and church meetings. Each church would have a voice and a vote in the appointment of every member of the ministerial team and in matters of general policy. An Advisory Committee would be appointed comprised of two representatives of each of the churches, three representatives of the Baptist Union, three from the Essex Baptist Association, together with the Area Superintendent and the members of the ministerial team. Each church would be invited to contribute a sum commensurate with its resources. This would be held by the Treasurer of the Advisory Committee in a fund from which the ministerial stipends, pastoral expenses and other expenses of the Scheme would be met. Application would be made to the Baptist Union Home Work Fund for a grant related to the needs of the churches and having regard to the exceptional circumstances. It was anticipated that the Essex Baptist Association would provide some financial aid, and that interested friends would contribute as the needs of the work were publicised. It was envisaged that such a plan while enabling the churches to continue their work in a given locality would inevitably ensure that they would be brought into closer working association. Many projects would be planned jointly, and nothing would be arranged without reference to the several local programmes. There would be thinking as well as working together, a true fellowship of mind, heart and soul."

To agree such a scheme was one thing, but to find a team of ministers and particularly a "senior" minister, who would lead the team and be responsible for co-ordinating the work as a whole, was another. Where would a man be found who would assume the mammoth task and be responsible from the outset for clothing the skeleton of the theoretical scheme with the flesh and blood of practical application?

In the providence of God there was such a man and on 30th September 1961, Rev. J. J. Brown, B.D., who had served the church at Queen Street, Erith, for 20 years, was inducted as the Senior Minister. The meeting in the Central Hall, Heathway, Dagenham, at which the induction took place, will live long in the memory of those who attended. A most moving tribute to the esteem in which Mr. Brown was held in his previous church was evidenced by the very large contingent of friends from the Queen Street church who were present, and the platform party showed in what great respect the new minister of the new scheme was held as well as what high

hopes were held for the fulfilment of the new task which lay ahead.

Very early on it was said of the scheme that it was not an *experiment* but a *prototype*, and with the publication of the Baptist Union Report "Ministry Tomorrow", containing as it does many significant comments on the future of the ministry and of the churches within our Baptist order in this country, who will deny the significance of that early observation?



BECONTREE AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH



CHAPLIN ROAD BAPTIST CHURCH

2. The Turn of the Tide

At the end of 1961, therefore, there was in existence a skeleton scheme for the joint working of a team of ministers under the leadership of the Senior Minister. Their field of operation was to be Dagenham – principally in the areas surrounding Becontree Avenue, Chaplin Road, and Oxlow Lane. Their objective: to make a united witness for Jesus Christ. It was hoped that with a unitary leadership such a witness would be more effective than that given by the churches in isolation. But with only the Senior Minister in post how could the Scheme become alive? Clearly one man could not exercise effective oversight of three churches – especially since it would take time for those churches to modify their ideas on independency and learn how to work together for the common good. However, Mr. Brown was not called upon to shoulder the burden alone for very long. In 1962, Rev. W. H. Campbell, B.D., B.Sc., and the Rev. Roy Cave were called to the Scheme. The first accepted pastoral responsibility for the Chaplin Road cause as from February 1962, and the second for Oxlow Lane as from September 1962. These were the two co-workers called to work with Mr. Brown in the earliest days of the Scheme. Both played an important part in getting the new venture firmly on its feet. Although Mr. Campbell's stay was comparatively short his incisive thinking, especially at team ministry level, made a vital contribution in the formative years of organisation. Mr. Cave remained for seven-and-a-half years and helped to give stability and promise to the whole work. During his period of service with the team, Mr. Cave was, inter alia, President of the local Free Church Federal Council, Chairman of the Essex Association Youth Committee, and shared with Rev. Bryan Gilbert and Rev. Roger Collins in the introduction of the "One Step Forward" campaigns of the late 1960's.

With these two fellowlabourers in post Mr. Brown accepted pastoral leadership at Becontree Avenue, in addition to the task of co-ordinating the work of the separate congregations (at that time three in number). From 1962 the churches were able to move forward resolutely in pursuit of their aim for the Kingdom, and became deeply involved in a venture in partnership.

Naturally enough the first year or two of the Scheme did not produce spectacular results. The pioneers of the ideas which began to be put into effect from the latter part of 1961 had devised with care, and after much prayer, had produced a paper scheme which, given the right men, and under God's leading, might well do a new thing for Dagenham. Putting the ideas into practice was bound to be a labour of love and patience. Rev. J. H. G. Adam at one time likened the early history of the Scheme to the building of the Severn Bridge. Much laborious and hidden toil went into the construction of firm foundations. To the ordinary observer what was accomplished in those early days was not clearly visible. Those who expected to see

a magnificent soaring structure arise overnight were bound to be disappointed. There had to be planned and solid growth, stage by stage. Once the foundations were well and truly laid then the work of erection could proceed more swiftly and surely. So with the Dagenham Scheme. The first few years could hardly be expected to produce visible development.

A number of tasks had to proceed simultaneously. Maintaining the ministry of the Word of God Sunday by Sunday and at the week night meetings for prayer and Bible study was an important prerequisite. At the same time several other things had to be done. The ministers deliberately set themselves to consult and co-operate. No longer were they engaged in the leadership of a single church nor were they ministers in isolation. They were joint leaders of three congregations. This meant a good deal of "give and take". This was largely brought about through the weekly team meeting which from the start played an indispensable part in building up a new concept of Church life which featured interdependency, as opposed to previous autonomous thinking. It is not surprising that with their background of local insularity the three churches could not hurry to be integrated. Not only did the ministers have to adapt to a new pattern of ministry but the churches and their leaders had to re-direct their thinking. Trying to change the almost inevitable consequences of the historical background is never an easy task and, although many features of our Baptist way of life should make Baptist folk more, not less, receptive to new ideas it is no surprise if old ideas die hard and new ideas which were the basis of the Dagenham scheme should take time to be assimilated. And it is no reflection on the members of the Dagenham Churches if we say that one of the hardest lessons which had to be learned in the early days of the scheme was about the implications of "togetherness".

Standing outside the scheme now and with but a fragmentary personal knowledge of its earlier years it is difficult for the present writer to be digmatic about what has been the most important constituent in the outworking of the arrangements first proposed in 1960, and their development and progress up to the 10th anniversary of the scheme. But after careful thought there seems to him to be no escape from the conclusion that has been accomplished largely stems from three sources. First the nature, ability and true sense of calling of the Senior Minister; second the Team ministry which has been intensively developed and carefully nursed by him; and thirdly the personality and devotion of successive members of the Team. Close behind these comes, of course, the support of all those in the churches who caught the vision of the possibilities of the scheme from the "three wise men".

At this point it seems desirable to describe the team ministry which has been exercised in Dagenham in some detail. This not an easy task, having regard to some of the imponderables of the situation.

But it is possible to say something about that not inconsiderable feature of the ministry, the team meeting. Of course the best way to appreciate the spirit of the team meetings would be to attend. As that is not possible for most people a description is here attempted, remarking "all these roughnesses, pimples, warts and everything as you see".

Team meetings are usually led by the Senior Minister, who prepares at outline agenda beforehand. Normally they are held on the Monday morning of each week, although this may occasionally be changed to suit particular circumstances. The meetings are held in rotation at the homes of each member of the team. The host member not only takes the bible reading but opens the morning discussion. The team assembles at approximately 9.15 a.m. at the appointed place and there is first an exchange of experiences of the previous Sunday. Since each member of the team regularly visits each church they can converse to mutual advantage on what transpired at each service, or on some detail relating to members of the congregations. In this way the whole team becomes increasingly familiar with the people comprising the four congregations and with the developments in each of the churches. After this introductory ten minutes or so the more organised business of the morning commences with an invocation of God's presence in the midst. It should here be explained that the team usually follows a set line of studies which provides topics or themes for sermons. Reading and discussion will often be related to the topic for the following Sunday. The host having previously selected a reading appropriate to the topic and having opened the discussion there follows a spontaneous, free and frank discussion lasting for about an hour. This period of devotional study is one of the most rewarding exercises in which the team participates and, in the informality of the home, team members can freely interchange their thoughts and seek out the mind of the Spirit together. They can, and do, explore new depths of meaning in the Scriptures, and in fellowship they endeavour to find ways in which spiritual truths can be explained to their people.

After this exercise pressing matters affecting one or other of the churches or in the wider sphere of the County Association or the Denomination may be dealt with and a line of action determined, possibly for presenting to individual church meetings or to the United Deacons' meeting.

Then comes the pastoral session. This is most valuable as the membership of each church is reviewed with special reference to cases of illness, anxiety or difficulty and when instances of blessing and personal commitment are recounted. Particular problems relating to organisations may also be brought into these discussions. During this interchange of information and advice, arrangements may also be made for the visitation of members who may be in hospital locally or further afield. Two members of the team are

official chaplains to separate local hospitals, and it is of advantage if they know of members or contacts who are in, or are about to enter, their hospital.

This session will be followed by a time of open prayer when each member of the team brings audibly to the Throne of Heavenly Grace matters affecting his own church, the churches of the Scheme, as well as other members of the team. The spirit of fellowship within the team is nowhere more felt than in this time of prayer when family concerns are also voiced.

There is a strong missionary interest in the group and discussion will often take place at the team meeting relating to the quarterly United Missionary Prayer meeting and the general programme for maintaining missionary interest amongst the churches. One member of the team is Chairman of the Dagenham Baptist Missionary Council and he brings to the team meeting the matters discussed at the Council so that each minister may be well informed.

Following light refreshments the team will then go on to discuss forward arrangements such as the preaching plan for the coming months, Easter, Harvest or Christmas services, particular meetings of the County Association, local meetings of the Council of Churches, participation in the annual Town show, the local interdenominational "Keswick" meetings, and social service activities in the borough in which the team have a share. From time to time the individual ministers are asked to take part in a local "Learning to Earning" scheme. They are expected to lead groups of youngsters who will soon be leaving school to find employment. The general arrangements are under the supervision of a local Anglican minister. The day is spent in talks by local Personnel managers, Trade Union organisers, the showing of relevant films and in group discussion. The team is represented on the Council of Social Service and members serve the Case Committee and the Community Relations Committee. The team also tries to give time to problems of organisation within the group, e.g. relating to youth activities. They also consider questions which have been brought from, or should be brought to, the united Deacons' meeting which is held quarterly. Occasionally the team will entertain a visitor who may be seeking information on the Scheme or who, on special occasions, may be considering whether or not it is God's will for him to join the team.

All of the above ensures that the time between 9.15 a.m. and 12.15 p.m. is fully spent and indeed at the close of a morning session each member of the team has become more acutely aware than before of the problems and aspirations of each of the churches as it faces the demands of the hour. Recognition of the needs of the district, and even of far wider areas, means that the team members feel themselves thrown back on the infinite resources of Our Heavenly Father. Attendance at this Monday morning session is almost bound to bring to any participant not only the consciousness of his own in-

adequacy ("who is sufficient for these things") but also a renewed sense of confidence in the Lord of the Church. The deep Christian fellowship which has been enjoyed also fortifies each member for the task ahead.

All this has to some extent been a digression. The title of the chapter is, after all, "The turn of the tide", and whilst team ministry played an important part in this turning that is not the whole story. The ministers were not the only ones to co-operate in the first formative years of the scheme. They, it is true, provided the essential leadership, but they were valiantly and willingly supported by those members of the churches who had also caught something of the vision of what might be made possible by the mobilisation of the resources of the churches for a frontal evangelistic attack. They saw that together they possessed a greater potential for reaching the neighbourhood with the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ than if they had decided to "go it alone".

So in the second year of the scheme (1962/3) they began to prepare together for intensified outreach in the autumn of 1963. In this preparation, in which, happily the Wood Lane fellowship was also involved, the churches grew together more and more in eager anticipation of what was to follow. What they did was fourfold. First there was intensive prayer, guided and encouraged by specially produced prayer cards and a prayer letter. Second there was Bible study based on the Acts of the Apostles – twenty-five groups were formed. All this culminated in a conference. Third there was house-to-house visitation. Armed with a questionnaire, visitors from the churches made about 6000 calls and produced some 2000 "contacts". This survey proved invaluable for the campaign which was to follow. Fourth, there was consultation with those who were to lead the campaign. After all that, there came the days of united effort in "Operation Outreach". For eleven days in September 1963 the Faculty and Students of Spurgeon's College, sixty in number, worked with the members of the churches to communicate the Gospel to the people of Dagenham in a variety of ways. The best method of setting out the thrill of those days of adventuring in the early years of the scheme is to quote verbatim from the quarterly report which the Senior Minister gave to the Advisory Committee at its meeting on 6th December 1963.

"A vast programme of visitation was undertaken by the College team and this has yielded numerous contacts with whom we are endeavouring to keep in touch. We are also making use of the opportunities for Christian witness and service in various local organisations. There is ample evidence that the Campaign achieved its purpose, which was to bring the Gospel to the people of Dagenham, especially those who live in the immediate vicinity of our four Baptist churches. We are pleased to report

that some of those who made response to the call of Jesus Christ have requested Baptism and Church membership, and that some who showed interest during the campaign are attending our services. All our churches have been stimulated by this effort, and the results will, we believe, continue to be evident for months and years to come. A prayer letter has been issued which records our thanks to all who helped and encouraged us, and which requests the continuing prayer support of all who will enter the partnership of intercession. We owe a tremendous debt to the Principal and to other members of the College team, many of whom gave themselves without reserve to the work they were called to do. They in turn have acknowledged the spiritual stimulus which the campaign brought to them; and new students unanimously declared that they could have had no better beginning to their college course. The members of the churches did splendid work in the matter of catering and hospitality. Organisations co-operated willingly. The Dagenham borough Catering service won our appreciation ... so did the Civil Defence office ... ; the Harold Park Baptist Church ... and individuals ... loaned equipment. Mr. A. H. Philpot supplied the exhibition of Bibles and MSS. Time would fail us to tell of the baker who supplied the daily loaves, the lady who loaned crockery and the churches and individuals who made donations (£450 in all) to help meet the considerable cost."

There seems little doubt that the evangelistic spirit which was common to each of the churches in their pre-1961 days took a new leap forward in this combined enterprise and that, occurring as it did in the earliest days of the new Scheme did much to bring the churches closer together and to give a welcome impetus to the future development of the new arrangements.

Unity in fellowship began to be in evidence from the earliest days. There was spontaneous remembrance of each other at the weekly meetings for prayer and Bible study. Sympathy was evinced in cases of bereavement of members of sister churches. Readiness was shown by many to join in united meetings and services. As we have seen in the description of "Operation Outreach", unity in fellowship was followed by unity in service. The individual churches also showed their willingness to act as one by welcoming not only the Senior minister to their Deacons' and Church meetings, but also his colleagues. In this way as well as by the interchange of ministers for Sunday preaching, fellowship was built up and maintained between the churches. The situation was aptly summed up in the Senior Minister's comment to the Advisory Committee in June 1962 ... "Each church rejoices in the blessing which comes to the other, and there is continuous fellowship in prayer at Sunday services and at mid-week meetings ...".



OXLOW LANE BAPTIST CHURCH



WOOD LANE BAPTIST CHURCH

3. The Flowing Tide

What is today accepted as commonplace in the co-operative work of the four churches had its origin in the early years of the Scheme. The rhythm of the scheme is now such that the advent of a new member, whether to the ministerial team or to one of the churches, is an occasion of such natural occurrence that the newcomer finds himself, or herself, almost unconsciously proceeding with the same purposeful tread and at the same measured pace as the others. This is not to suggest that a rigid pattern has been evolved which, whether one likes it or not, imposes itself upon all who join the team or the churches. It is rather that the atmosphere in which each of the four churches operates has become remarkably homogeneous. Everyone shares naturally in the life of the whole without becoming painfully aware of any striking differences within the group. Of course this position has only been reached after a series of stops and starts. The proverbial visitor from Mars came to visit the churches in 1971 would find that the notes compiled by his fellow Martian in 1961 bore little resemblance to his own findings. A variety of factors and events have led to the present happy situation. Looking back it is not hard to see how God, by His Spirit, has taken the contents of the passing years to knit together the organisms of the four fellowships to make the life of the whole more truly one. If the Scheme needed a seed thought on which to contemplate its past, present and future activity it might well be the saying of Our Lord: "I in them and You in Me that they may grow complete into One" (John 17v.23).

Let us look at some of the things which have contributed to the present harmony, at the same time keeping in mind that separate notes of themselves do not make the harmony. It is only as the notes are played in sequence, and sometimes together, that the harmony is produced.

But before we do that it is right that we should take note of an important accession to the Scheme which took place in 1964. That was the entrance into the group of the fourth Baptist Church in Dagenham to which some reference has already been made, namely the Church at Wood Lane. In 1964 Sister Margaret Evans who had laboured there for so long, so patiently and with such devotion, felt bound to retire after 32 years of leadership. On her retirement the church at Wood Lane decided overwhelmingly to apply for membership. On 15th September 1964 at a special service held in the Halley Memorial Church, the then existing members of the ministerial team, Rev. J. J. Brown, Rev. W. H. Campbell and Rev. R. Cave, were inducted to the pastorate. The occasion was given a headline in the British Weekly, where the significance of the event seemed to be appreciated. And significant it was. The four Baptist churches of Dagenham would henceforward move together as one. The gap left by the retirement of Sister Margaret was compensated for, at least to

some extent, by the ministerial team taking responsibility for the oversight of the new member to the group, helping it through the inevitable difficulties of what, amusingly enough, we Baptists (for all our democratic way of thought) term an "interregnum"! Now that Wood Lane had become a part of the Scheme immediate steps were taken to add to the numerical strength of the team, a pastor who would have the oversight of the additional congregation. That was to take some little time. But in all other respects the Wood Lane membership and their activities became the objects of the interest and the prayers of the whole of the group and of all those who had supported the new venture from the earliest days.

One of the notable factors in the developing rhythm of the Scheme has been the attention paid to the prayer life of the fellowship. Prayer partners were enlisted in many different places. The whole Scheme was founded in prayer, and it is not surprising that it has continued in the same spirit. In his annual report on the working of the Scheme, given in 1963, Rev. J. J. Brown reported on the first phase of a three-year plan which had been introduced in 1962. Emphasis had been placed on the encouragement of mutual prayer and thought on the part of church members. This was effected by means of a booklet containing the names, set out in alphabetical order, and addresses, of members of all the churches, with a request that each name, or group of names should, be remembered in daily or weekly intercession. Also in the first year of the Scheme a week of prayer was inaugurated and observed in each of the churches in various ways. It was based on a practice which had been in operation at the Becontree Avenue church for many years. This week of prayer has been maintained by the churches in the autumn of each year. Each church makes its own arrangements but there is a joint meeting on the Friday of the week. In 1964 Mr. R. Webb, one of the Deacons of the Becontree Avenue church undertook to circulate a syllabus of prayer topics for the use of members and friends. Mrs. Lawrence, the then Treasurer of the Scheme, agreed to keep prayer partners informed of the needs as well as of occasions for thanksgiving. This latter developed, in due course, into a bi-monthly prayer letter which is still issued by Mrs. Lawrence and is distributed far and wide. In 1965 Mr. Brown said; "It is no accident that signs of progress and the supply of various needs have coincided with the intensifying of our Prayer partnership". Again in 1970, on the occasion of the ninth anniversary, "We encourage one another in prayer. We recognise this as a priority . . . we know how important it is to 'pray without ceasing' ". At the tenth Anniversary attention was drawn to the fact that on the previous Sunday morning at a united early morning prayer meeting there had been a wonderful fellowship in believing prayer. Throughout this land, in churches and homes and "in places where prayer is wont to be made", for the past ten years hands have been raised to Our Heavenly Father in earnest intercession for the work

of the churches, for the unity of the Scheme and for the progress of the Kingdom of God, not only in Dagenham but in all parts of the inhabited globe.

United *in* prayer and *by* prayer the congregations in Dagenham are also united in worship. This has been the experience of the group as the tenth annual report records: "We have seen God at work in the assembly of His people for worship; there have been high and holy moments at united Communion services at Christmas and Easter". United worship has not always been easy to fit into the calendar of the activities of the four churches. Nevertheless, the special seasons of the year have provided the occasions for the membership of the churches to assemble "with one accord in one place", and they have been rich experiences. Comparisons are notably odious, but as they cannot fail to be drawn it could be said that the most outstanding of the very many joint meetings of the churches (and there have been a number of memorable ones) was the celebration of the tenth anniversary on Saturday 6th November 1971. In a crowded church, led by the inspired singing of the choir, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland, Dr. David S. Russell, delivered a stirring address to a receptive audience. On that momentous occasion it would have been easy to say "This is none other than the House of God, and this is the gate of Heaven".

In their growth together the churches of the Scheme have increasingly used simultaneous Bible study on a common theme to build them up in their "most holy faith". Their approach to the scriptures has been facilitated from time to time by the use of Bible study notes specially prepared by one or other of the members of the team, either on selected topics or on those set out in an already existing syllabus of bible readings. On many occasions there have been united conferences at the conclusion of these simultaneous studies. Bible study has also been conducted in house groups arranged by the separate churches. During the weeks of August each year since 1965 they have joined for united study and prayer. This has been a means of enrichment of fellowship and the subjects covered have included: "Christian Life and Witness" (1966), "What we believe" (1967), "The Spirit and the Mission" (1968), "Mission Matters" (1969), "Call to Obedience" (1970), and "Our Baptist Faith and Order" (1971).

Another source of unity has been the dissemination of news among the churches. It is axiomatic that family unity is fostered by the members of the family keeping in touch with each other, by letter, by telephone or by visits. To keep the church membership abreast of family news has been a prime concern since the earliest days. Originally this was effected by the bi-monthly magazine: "The Dagenham Baptist". This continued to be issued, though latterly only quarterly, up to 1970, but rising costs led to its discontinuance

and to its replacement in 1971 by the Dagenham News Sheet, issued every other month. This printed foolscap sheet developed out of an experimental duplicated document edited by Rev. Roy Dorey and published monthly during 1969/70. The news sheet, like the magazine, is circulated to a number of friends outside of Dagenham who are interested in the Scheme, in order to sustain that interest.

Matters of concern to the four churches have regularly appeared on the agenda of the United Deacons' meetings where there has been full and frank discussion of a great number of items. Amongst the major matters recently before this meeting have been "Ministry Tomorrow" – the Baptist Union report, Evangelism, and the Constitution. The recent agreement by the various church meetings on the adoption of the "Guide Lines" (see Appendix C) is a striking example of the hard work which the group of deacons have done over the past four or five years. These guide lines were originally produced in a slightly different form by a specially appointed Study Group, under the Chairmanship of Mr. John Edwards, at that time a Deacon of the Becontree Avenue church. The members of this group considered what had been accomplished during the first five years of the Scheme and, amongst their main recommendations concerning the future operation of the Scheme, set out a proposed United Church constitution. In earlier years the united meetings have considered a number of different matters such as evangelistic witness, the function of a deacon in Dagenham, and Christian stewardship. There have been several conferences for deacons and leaders and in these those participating have been joined by husbands or wives.

Another important factor, in cementing the work together which has not so far been mentioned, has been the family fellowship shared by members of the team and their families, at the home of one or other of the members of the team. Here wives and adult children gather together for a time of relaxation and to enjoy the enriching benefits of social discourse over a pleasant meal, and afterwards.

During the ten years there have been numerous attempts to establish a united Youth Work but for a variety of reasons, geographical and personal this has not yet proved feasible. At one stage consideration was given to the appointment of a Youth Leader for the Scheme. The 1965 Annual Report contains this passage –

"We are also negotiating for the services of a full time, trained Youth Leader, for whom there are boundless opportunities for service to the community through our churches where we already have over 500 children and young people under our care. The potential of our work in this field is beyond calculation. The Local authority has already recognised this by giving generous grants towards equipment. It is our hope that they will

also be prepared to offer substantial help which will make possible the appointment of the Youth Leader."

Hopes ran high but unfortunately a sufficiently high grant was not forthcoming and the prospective appointment of Mr. P. Gusterson, who was at that time leading the Becontree Avenue Youth Club in a voluntary capacity, fell to the ground. Youth work with its known difficulties has nevertheless continued in each of the four churches (somewhat sporadically in some) and although the residential Youth week-ends – on a united basis – have latterly been discontinued, opportunities are taken whenever possible to bring the youth of the churches together, e.g. for specific projects.

Work amongst the womenfolk of the churches has been vigorous throughout the ten years, and sufficiently provided with leaders to ensure that demands upon the ministerial team are kept to a minimum. But work amongst men as such has been hardly attempted. Of course a number of the men of the churches have fellowship through the united deacons meeting but this is rather different from a general work amongst men. However the matter has been under discussion from time to time and in the autumn of 1971 a monthly meeting for men was launched. Meetings are held at each of the four churches in rotation. About 30 attend. It is hoped that this will extend the influence of the churches in the male sector of the population of Dagenham.

The Missionary interest of the group of churches has been regularly fostered by the Missionary Council of the group. This Council has not only organised, in co-operation with the B.M.S., an annual week of deputation in June of each year, but have also arranged quarterly united missionary meetings for prayer and information. In addition the prayer tapes of the B.M.S. issued monthly have been made available for the churches to use at their discretion at the weekly mid-week meetings. The group has personal contacts with the mission field in the persons of Dr. Bernard MacCullough and Mrs. Jean Pradier, children of the first minister of the Chaplin Road church, and through Mr. and Mrs. Charles Brown, former members of the Chaplin Road church. Also remembered are the many visiting missionaries who have taken part in the annual deputation weeks.

The rhythmic beat of the heart of the scheme can be sensed by attendance at one of the quarterly meetings of the Advisory Committee where reports are received from the Senior Minister and from representatives of each of the four churches. There discussion takes place upon matters of finance, forward planning, and, as occasion requires, the filling of vacancies in the ministerial team. When particular difficulties arise, which the team and the Churches feel to be somewhat beyond them, the valuable advice of the Advisory Committee is voluntarily sought and freely given. Because some of

the Committee members are not involved in the day to day work of the churches they are able to view such matters objectively. In this way solutions may be found to the problems which exercise the local fellowships. By means of the interchange of views at these quarterly meetings causes of anxiety and thanksgiving are shared, and the wise counsel of people of proved experience is made available. The interdependency of our Baptist family is demonstrated and the quality of fellowship in the Gospel is greatly improved by these occasions. They also provide a profitable pause in the midst of sustained activity so that problems can be seen more clearly and discovery made together of what the Lord would have His servants do.

It is on the developing rhythm of the Scheme, and on the flowing tide of events, that the future of the Dagenham Baptist Church depends. The existing team of ministers has contributed much to the unity of the churches. The Senior Minister, who has overseen all the projects of the scheme since its inception, together with Rev. W. H. Campbell and Rev. Roy Cave, did much to lay solid foundations on which it would be possible to erect a worthy structure. Mr. Campbell's departure, coupled with the accession of the Wood Lane church, led to the introduction to the group of Rev. Peter R. Mitson, under whose leadership the United Choir was formed and the manse at Wood Lane built next to the church. Meanwhile Mr. Frank Lee, Treasurer to the Advisory Committee and Secretary of the Upminster Baptist Church, became a member of the team and accepted pastoral responsibility at Chaplin Road. That was early in 1968. Mr. Mitson's withdrawal after three years was made good by the appointment of Rev. Rowland G. Cole. Very soon after this Mr. Brown felt led to suggest that he should concentrate his pastoral activities at Chaplin Road and that the next member of the team should assume special responsibility for Becontree Avenue. In consultation with all concerned this was agreed. It was then (Autumn 1969) that Rev. James Buckley became a team member taking over from Mr. Brown at Becontree Avenue. The team then became as strong as it had ever been, was reasonably complete and had withstood successive changes without upheaval or undue friction. The experience, faith and brotherliness of the leader of the team helped newcomers to feel at home rapidly and they quickly absorbed the atmosphere of co-operation, becoming true yoke-fellows from the start. Although very soon after Mr. Buckley's arrival Mr. Cave, in response to the call of God, left for service in Bootle, the smooth functioning of team and scheme was hardly ruffled. Oxlow Lane now experiencing the loss of one who had served them well and devotedly for seven-and-a-half years, received the full benefit of the joint ministry of the three remaining members of the team, together with help from Rev. Roy Dorey. Within the space of eleven months this church was once again enjoying the advantage of a minister who had special responsi-

bility for their welfare. The newcomer was Rev. J. Brian Edwards, B.D. who soon became assimilated to the work.

These three, Rev. Rowland Cole, Rev. James Buckley and Rev. Brian Edwards, although they arrived towards the end of the decade, have each already made a sterling contribution to the work of the Scheme and are poised, at the end of the ten-year period, for further strenuous and faithful service. Their share in the work has been, and will continue to be, to the glory of God.

With the team once more at full strength, the Dagenham Baptist Church was ready, at the commencement of the eleventh year for fresh adventures in fellowship. The component churches were fully aware of the blessing of their comradeship in the gospel and ready to go forward together so that the flowing tide might become a flooding tide.

Becontree Avenue church was founded in 1929. The all-purpose building was opened that same year.

The present modern church building with an open baptistery was built in 1964 and opened in the October of that year.

Secretary—
Mr. L. W. Wilson
Treasurer—
Mr. E. Sterry

Wood Lane church began in 1932 when the present building was opened. The manse at the side of the church was built in 1966.

Minister's Secretary—
Miss J. Dodge
Treasurer—
Mr. G. Romeiser

Chaplin Road church was the first of the four churches to be constituted. The main building was opened in 1927 – two other halls were added later.

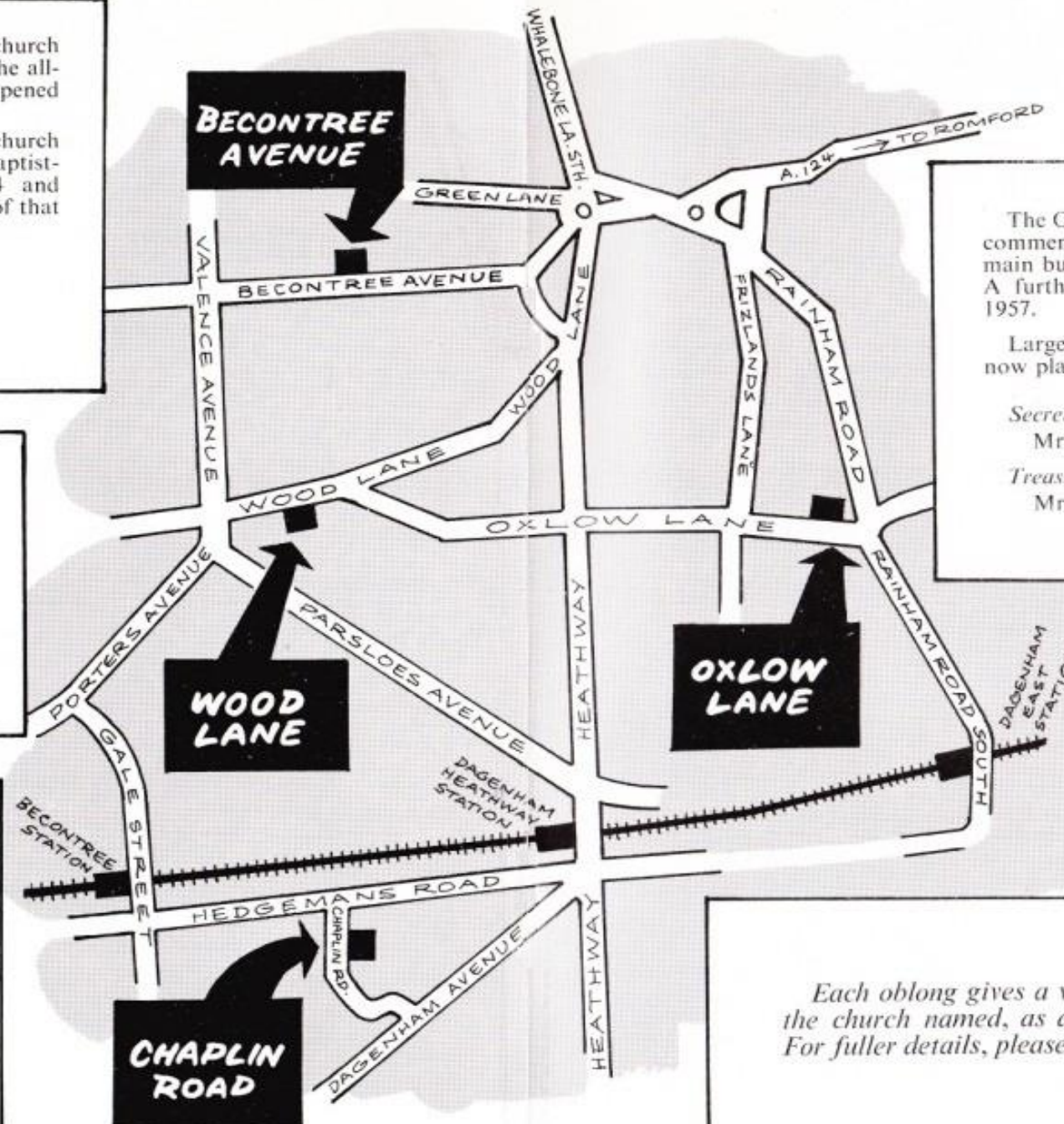
Secretary—
Miss K. C. Vaughan
Treasurer—
Mr. J. H. Taylor

The Oxlow Lane church was commenced in 1938 and the main building opened in 1939. A further hall was added in 1957.

Large scale alterations are now planned.

Secretary—
Mr. J. Walton
Treasurer—
Mr. L. Rogers

Each oblong gives a very brief history of the church named, as at the end of 1971. For fuller details, please see Chapter 1.



4. On the Crest of the Wave

There have been in the short history of the Dagenham Scheme many events which, if woven into the narrative in the order in which they happened, would have diverted attention from the progressive development of the story. It has been thought desirable, therefore, to collect some of the more outstanding items together and to relate them in this separate chapter as random highlights not only for the churches particularly concerned but as forming part of the experience of the group as a whole. There have been events of individual interest to certain of the churches which do not appear here – that is inevitable since this account does not pretend to be a detailed narration of *all* that has happened in the Dagenham churches since 1961. Such items would include the making and dedication of the pulpit at Wood Lane to the memory of Miss Jean Sweet, a member of the Wood Lane church who was martyred in the Congo; and the presentation of new Communion furniture at Oxlow Lane in memory of one of their young lady leaders, Miss Barbara Hole, who was tragically killed in a road accident.

Although the events now recorded may appear to be disconnected to the casual reader, those who are more perceptive will see that all the items have a common feature – they are part of the churches total activity in reaching out to others with the gospel.

“Operation Outreach” to which reference was made in chapter 2 was not, of course, confined to an eleven-day effort in the autumn of 1963. It has been the continuous feature of the work of the churches in Dagenham. This is, after all, the Churches’ business – seeking to bring the good news about Jesus Christ to all men everywhere by every means possible. A few ways in which within the Scheme outreach has been attempted over the years have included special guest services; films; visits of music groups; the chaplaincy to the local Sea Cadet Unit; chaplaincies to the Rush Green and Dagenham hospitals; visits to Old People’s Homes; industrial chaplaincy work; the distribution of the Christian newspaper “Challenge”; and visits by two of the ministerial team to two local public houses on a specified night of the week. A feature of recent outreach from the Dagenham Chaplin Road church has been the distribution by the church members to selected neighbouring streets of questionnaire forms asking local residents what they expect of the church, what they would like the church to be praying for, and whether there are special hymns which they would like sung. One result from this was a request from an eleven-year-old lad that a boys’ club might be formed. After a meeting with this boy and his friends Rev. J. J. Brown started and led a weekly junior boys’ group. It is still running after 2 years with assistance from Mr. C. Mayers.

Let us now look at some items of general interest.

Erection of new Church building at Becontree Avenue

In "Rising Tide" there is a chapter headed "What of the future?" It indicates that one of the early priorities in mind was the building of a sanctuary for worship in Becontree Avenue. There was at that time only one building in use on the land in the Avenue. This had to be used for services of worship, parades and all other activities of the uniformed organisations, Sunday school work, mid-week meetings, classes, socials and clubs. Those who have operated under such conditions know how desirable it is to provide for a separate building for worship. A sanctuary was sorely needed at Becontree Avenue if the life of the church was to be sustained and the young people were to be led to "Give unto the Lord the glory which is due to His Holy Name". Plans were drawn up in 1963 for the erection of such a building with an estimated cost of £17,500. This was an immense task for the friends at Becontree Avenue to undertake. But they faced it with great faith and cheerfulness, knowing that the other churches were supporting them with prayer and such other help as



Becontree Avenue – Opening Day

they could give. The faith of the folk was rewarded by support from a number of sources, such as the London Baptist Property Board Ltd., the Essex Baptist Association, the Baptist Building Fund, the Metropolitan Tabernacle Building Fund, and the National Christian Education Council. Numerous other individual friends also gave financial aid. The President of the Essex Association for 1964/5 nominated the President's Purse fund for his year of office to the fund for the building of the new church. The President in question was none other than Mr. A. O. Edwards, to whom reference has already been made in this account. Sterling service was also rendered by the latter's son, Mr. John Edwards, and by their firm of Estate Agents and Surveyors. The foundation stone of the new building was unveiled on 9th May 1964, and shortly after that date the Building Fund stood at £3,500. The new building was opened for worship on 17th October 1964, amid general rejoicing and great excitement – thirty-five years after the cause had been established. The building was well received in the neighbourhood. A picture of it formed the front cover of a subsequent issue of the Borough of Dagenham's magazine: "The Dagenham Digest". Further afield the weekly religious journal, "The Christian" gave a full back page to publicising the building of the new church. Giving towards the building fund over the succeeding years has been wonderfully sacrificial (over £1,000 a year has been needed) and at the time of writing the members at Becontree Avenue are beginning to see that it will not be too many years before the whole of the debt on church and manse is cleared. The church now stands as a vital testimony to the work and influence of the Holy Spirit in the latter years of the twentieth century. It is a visible sign to all who pass by of the life of Christ's people. Its silent witness as well as the audible vigour with which young and old throng its walls proclaims unmistakably to all that Jesus lives. And the blessing which has come to the Becontree Avenue church has contributed much to the whole of the group. The joys of the one are the joys of the whole. It is a significant thing that increasingly the church in Becontree Avenue is being selected by young people living in the area as the place in which they wish to get married.

Two other of our churches in the group have also had their sanctuaries improved considerably by structural and redecorative work. The members at Chaplin Road redecorated the interior of their premises in the autumn and winter of 1967/8 and the platform was reconstructed with a new pulpit and new communion furniture made by one of the members, Mr. W. Dunn. The Leaguers Hall, as it is called from the days of the "Dagenham Helpers League" formed by Rev. Hugh C. C. MacCullough, was also redecorated through a kind gift of a supporter of the work. At Wood Lane the vestibule of the church was reconstructed and enlarged in 1970 by the voluntary labour of members under the enthusiastic leadership of the then Secretary, Mr. George Piper. Just prior to that the Wood Lane folk

had rejoiced in the liquidation of the debt incurred in the building of their manse, by the generous conversion into a gift of the interest free loan made by a Baptist family when the manse was first commenced. The Oxlow Lane premises are in desperate need of improvement and additional accommodation is also imperative so that the work there may grow. Plans for reconstruction and enlargement are now well in hand.

Industrial Sunday and the Town Show



Industrial Sunday, 7th May 1967, Becontree Avenue

There are two separate events in the civic life of Dagenham in which from the earliest days of the Scheme the group have taken part. Industrial Sunday presents an annual occasion on which, in co-operation with other churches in the district, it is possible for a wider outreach to be made to the non church-going community. With the participation of leading firms in the area industrial products are put on display in one of the local churches on the first Sunday in May each year. One of the local clergy conducts a service at which the speaker is often an important figure from the industrial scene. Mr. R. Lewis, M.P., Mr. Tom Chapman, Mr. Ernest Shippam, Sir Arthur Rubery Owen, Sir Kirby Lang have been among the speakers. Such occasions as this provide opportunities for the churches to witness to the truth that God is the Lord of all life, and that is a necessary thing to say to our industrial society today.

The Dagenham Town Show (formerly known as the Three Towns Show) provides another opportunity for witness to a wider community. The churches of the Scheme have shared in this in fellowship with other local churches, but sometimes making a distinctive contribution in the name of the Scheme. For example in the 1964 Show a special stand was allocated to the Baptists. On this stand the facts of our Faith were displayed, with a special feature on the new church building which was then in the course of erection in Becontree Avenue. Christian literature was also distributed and many people engaged in conversation. The group broke new ground in their witness through the Town Show in the summer of 1971 when they entered a float in the Carnival procession associated with the Show. The float, a lorry kindly loaned by the Council was decorated with large helium-filled balloons of various colours, painted with happy faces. The sides of the float carried banners in white and blue bearing the words: "Christians are happy people". The same words were printed on hundreds of small balloons which were given away to children who lined the procession route through the borough. At the same time leaflets were distributed. These were attractively and colourfully produced for, and obtained from, the British and Foreign Bible Society. A duplicated insert gave details of the four churches. In this unusual way a very large number of people were contacted and a witness made for the Saviour of the world.

General

There have been other less spectacular but nevertheless worthwhile events of a rather more domestic character during the ten years. Of these the passing on of information concerning the aims and practices of the Scheme has been an important feature. The Senior Minister, in particular, has visited many churches to speak about the Scheme or to show a film of some of its activities. Other members of the team have also shared in this instructional rôle.

Visitors have attended team meetings, either on their own behalf or in a representational capacity. For example early in 1970 the team had the pleasure of a visit from Rev. Bruce Stewart, Director of the Board of Evangelism of the Baptist Union of New Zealand. This is but one instance of the world-wide interest which the Dagenham Scheme has aroused.

In March 1968 five members of the team (Rev. J. J. Brown, Rev. R. Cave, Rev. P. R. Mitson, Rev. R. Dorey and Mr. F. Lee) visited Manchester for a conference with ministers of grouped churches in the Lancashire and Cheshire areas, under the chairmanship of the then Area Superintendent, Rev. N. B. Jones. The consultation was on Group and Team Ministry and was held on 20th – 21st March in the Milton Hall, Manchester. In addition to the Dagenham team there were representatives from a number of groups and schemes in and about Manchester, viz., St. Helens, Burnley, Accrington, Wigan, the Mid Cheshire group and the North Cheshire Fellowship. A wide variety of subjects was discussed and there was unanimous acclaim for the benefits to be derived from shared ministry. The distinctive contribution which the Dagenham team was able to make was its emphasis on the importance attached to the consistent use of the team meeting as a time for devotional and spiritual growth.

Whilst on the subject of the spread of information about the working of the group and team ministry it seems right to mention the four-month participation by Rev. John Tall, who, in order to prepare himself for sharing in the formation of a new group at Nelson and Colne in Lancashire, left his church at Chippenham early enough to spend time and to play an active part in the work in Dagenham in the summer of 1968. Mr. Tall, to the benefit of the team and of the churches conducted Sunday and mid-week services, attended the weekly team meetings and was most helpful. During his stay in Dagenham Mr. Tall taught in a local day school.

It can also be added that men preparing for the ministry have also contributed to the work of the Scheme and gathered experience in preaching and pastoral activity in the setting of the team ministry. These have been Rev. Keith Applegate (now at Herne Bay), Rev. Philip Clements-Jewery, M.A., B.D., (now at Botley, Oxford), and Mr. Stuart Petty (Spurgeon's). Other means of outreach have also been practised – apart from such activities as attendance by one or other of the ministerial team at B.B. Camps or the organising and attending of Young People's week-ends at the Leys, Westcliff-on-Sea. In the spring of 1969 an Easter play was given two performances, one at Oxlow Lane and the other at Becontree Avenue. The play entitled "Follow Thou Me" was produced by Mrs. Betty Sadler, a member of the Main Road Baptist Church, Romford, and the various parts were taken by members of each of the four churches. There were excellent attendances at both performances and those

who took part enjoyed much fellowship and felt privileged to make their Christian witness in the media of drama. At the Annual meeting of the Scheme in 1970 the Becontree Avenue friends produced a biblical play, under the leadership of Miss Anne Creasey, which was much appreciated.

Finance

Some reference has to be made to the way in which the Scheme as such has been financed – that is apart from the individual finances of each of the four churches. Broadly the Scheme has been responsible for ministerial stipends, the expenses of the cars of the team (tax, insurance, servicing, petrol), contributions towards Superannuation and the Supplementary benefits scheme of the Baptist Union, national health stamps and any other items which are more properly attributable to the Scheme than to the individual churches. The Home Mission Fund contribution to the ministerial stipends is paid into the Central Fund held by the treasurer of the Advisory Committee. The churches also pay their contributions into that fund, but they are responsible for all the maintenance expenses, including rates, of their own buildings and their manses, and for all the normal expenditure for which Baptist churches find themselves liable – for example, insurance, publicity, printing, postage and expenses of redecoration. The financial story of the Scheme (see the table in Appendix B (b)) is indeed a highlight of the whole story. The figures speak for themselves but perhaps a few comments on them would not be out of place. Once the Scheme was under way with three ministers (1963) the block grant from the then Home Work Fund rose from just under £1000 a year to approximately £1200 a year. The contributions from the churches for the same period rose from well under £1000 to over £1500! With the first full year of a four-man ministerial team (1971) the grant from the Home Mission Fund shot up to over £1600 whilst the contribution from the churches rose to over £2000 – an increase of 44½% over the 1969 figure! Having regard to all the circumstances this in itself is a tribute to the working of the Scheme. In addition to meeting all other outgoings which, in the case of Becontree Avenue included massive debt repayments and in the case of Wood Lane and Oxlow Lane entailed the provision of manses, the churches raised in the ten years the splendid sum of over £12,000. This is a wonderful record. There has been true stewardship on the part of the churches as well as magnanimous response by the Home Mission Fund. Other help towards the finances of the Scheme has also been noteworthy. The Essex Baptist Association has been a constant supporter at the rate of £100 per year. But in 1971, appreciating the increasing need of assistance, it increased its gift to £400. Covenant gifts for the first seven years of the Scheme amounted to £200 or upwards a year, but from 1968 onwards dropped to the £100 mark. On present information they will drop to about half

that amount by 1973 so there is need for an increased number of covenanted subscribers. Their gifts are splendidly augmented by the welcome refunds of income tax. Donations and offerings have fluctuated widely but the average approximates to about £200 a year. It is hoped that this will continue to be the case, uplifted of course to keep pace with the falling value of money. At times the Treasurer of the Scheme has had some difficult moments but his experiences, particularly in 1971, have confirmed him in the faith that the Lord will provide.

This chapter cannot be closed without some reference to the service which the Senior Minister has given in the ten years – this has indeed been a highlight of the situation – and to the way in which that service and his dedication to it has found public recognition in spheres outside Dagenham.

In addition to Mr. Brown's wide acceptance by individual churches in the area, in the local Council of Churches, and in the local Rotary Club, as well as in the local Council of Social Service, there have been a number of positions in which he has served a wider community. He has for a number of years been a member of the Executive and of the Council of Spurgeon's College (his alma mater), the Council of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and of the General Committee of the Essex Baptist Association. He has been Chairman of the Baptist Union Evangelism Committee and of the Essex Baptist Association Ministerial Recognition Committee since 1968. He was President of the Spurgeon's College Conference 1966/7, and President of the Essex Baptist Association in its centenary year 1969–70. Since 1968 he has been the Baptist Union's representative at meetings of the British Council of Churches Committee on Mission. It is true to say of him that he has served the churches, the County Association and the denomination both widely and in depth. His sincere passion for His Master and for the work of His Kingdom has recently and aptly been recognised by his choice as Vice-President of the Union for the unexpired portion of the late Rev. Godfrey Robinson's year of office. Mr. Robinson, who was a fellow student with Mr. Brown and took office to the great delight of many at the Assembly in 1971, was called home suddenly in the summer of that year. He was greatly mourned. Mr. Brown's choice as his successor came just after the tenth anniversary of the Scheme and no more fitting climax to that exciting and exhausting period could have happened. Mr. Brown's Presidential year, which will have already commenced when these words appear in print, will be a marvellous experience both for him, his family and the group. When in 1961 he left Queen Street, Erith, after twenty years of happy ministry, he can have had little idea that in 1971 the Lord would be crowning his crowded years with this high

mark of distinction but we look forward still to yet greater things for "J. J.". Surely the message for him is "Be strong and of good courage" – with the precedent assurance – "I will be with thee: I will not forsake thee".

Note – In view of the demands of the Presidential office and the likely unavoidable and frequent absences of the Senior Minister in the performance of his duties it was agreed, early in 1972, to appoint Mr. Anthony Browne, B.D., of Upminster, an educationalist, as a honorary member of the Dagenham team with special responsibility for Chaplin Road. He will therefore act as assistant to Mr. Brown. This move which had been accepted in principle by the Advisory Committee was unanimously approved by the first united Church meeting held on 5th January 1972.

5. Towards High Water Mark?

That the four churches of Dagenham would have continued in some form or other over the past ten years even without the introduction of the Scheme does not seem to be open to question. One outstanding feature of Baptist witness is its tenacity of purpose, and there is that sufficiency of faith and steadfastness amongst the membership of the Dagenham churches to have ensured that the proclamation of the Gospel would have continued in each of them to this present day. What we cannot say, however, is what impact the witness of the four churches, separately, would have made, and would now be making, in the Dagenham area had they not come together as a group. We cannot truly compare the present position with what it might have been. There is no reason, however, why we should not try to evaluate the Scheme, with its ministerial team and its grouping as these have operated over the past ten years. To do this and to try to form some estimate of the future likely pattern requires that we should look into the inter-relationship between the group of churches, the ministerial team, and the leadership of that team. We shall also have to estimate the extent to which the leadership has influenced the development of the Scheme and account will also have to be taken of the effect on the situation of the very active and independent Advisory Committee.

The viability of the Scheme is there for all to see. It needs no defence. What can be done is to ask for reasons and, on the basis of the past and present experience, to form ideas for the future. Even if no definite answers emerge, the exercise in itself will be beneficial and cannot fail to have shed some light on the road ahead.

Let us then first of all look at the group of churches and the ministerial team. The more analytically minded would no doubt like to take these two aspects of the Scheme and examine them separately. But, to mind of the writer that would be to try the well nigh impossible. It would be an unnatural exercise, full of artificiality and unlikely to yield much profit. The group and the team are linked together in such a way as to make it difficult to separate them. Each has had, and has still, a profound influence on the other so that it is not easy to envisage the team apart from the group or the group apart from the team. It is doubtful too, whether very many people ever try to think of them as separate entities.

Nevertheless it is true that the Dagenham Scheme, as we know it today, largely derives from the nature of the team ministry which has been developed over the years and the kind of leadership which it has given to the group – a leadership which has been inspired throughout by the commitment of the senior minister to the ideals of the Scheme as they were originally conceived. It was through the team “thinking, as well as working, together, a true fellowship of mind,

heart and soul" that the group itself followed the same ideals and was able to actively participate in the outworking of the vision.

Now although the group and the team find themselves inextricably woven together in the fabric of the Scheme that is not to say that the members of the team, or the churches in the group, have lost their individual identities. Although, for example, each of the ministers sees himself as being particularly responsible for the church to which he has been specifically called he also sees himself as responsible for the work of the group as a whole. It is true that the greater responsibility, that of the group, is more diffuse than that of the particular church but nevertheless it is there. Each member of the team can be said to hold not a split loyalty but a multiple loyalty. He has a wider responsibility than to that of the church which is the main centre of his activity – he shares with other members of the team in the overall responsibility for the group and he enters into the life and work of the individual churches, not only through team meetings but by his frequent visits to churches other than his centre and also by contributing in a variety of ways to shared projects and united gatherings.

In the same way members of the individual churches in the group no longer concentrate only on the affairs of their particular corner of the Lord's vineyard but have a broader vision and an enlarged fellowship. By the very nature of our human limitations it is inevitable that the most concentrated ministry which any church member gives must be to the church where his local membership rests, but within the Dagenham group all of the members understand themselves to be members of a larger fellowship and this is shown in a number of ways. To mention only one – the four churches have a joint newsletter issued bi-monthly and this covers the whole fellowship. They weep with those who weep and laugh with those who laugh. The group, in other words, is a practical expression of a belief which we all profess to hold dear – that the Church of Christ is one family, and although its various parts are separated by distance, each group of Christians is part of the One Body of our Lord Jesus Christ. Never is this more realised in Dagenham than at united Communion services or united Prayer meetings.

The reality of this grouping of the churches has surely been evident in the recital of the developments and activities given in the four earlier chapters of this account. Towards the end of the ten-year period this solidarity (if it can so be described) has been demonstrated once again by the recently accepted "Guide Lines" (see Appendix C). These guide lines have been adopted on an experimental basis after full discussion in the churches. The opening paragraph of the document says, as you will see, that the title "Dagenham Baptist Church" shall be accepted as a convenient description of the combined congregations of the four churches. This may be a disappoint-

ment to some but the acceptance of the title, even as an experiment, is truly a landmark of faith – based on experience. The guide lines themselves, and the first united church meeting held under them on 5th January 1972 are an evident demonstration of the “togetherness” of the group and should augur well for future developments in the same direction. There will surely be, in the days ahead, a growing consciousness that the future of each of the churches is bound up with that of the others and there will be an increasing desire on the part of the four churches to maintain their work together for the good of the group and for united venture in Mission – using that term in its widest sense. For example, what might be brought into general discussion by the four memberships, could be such matters as the best uses of the four sets of premises on the four sites; the institution of a play group (or groups) jointly run by the four churches, each contributing personnel, finance, etc.; the erection of new premises whether for worship or for social service by the four churches acting together rather than separately. A joint adventure on the lines of an Old People’s Home might be a case in point.

Many exciting projects lie ahead for the group and the team as together they press on to exploit to the full the nascent possibilities inherent in a dedicated Baptist community, within the Dagenham area, sharing common interest and with a united resolve to go on to serve the Lord in ways which He will reveal to them.

Whatever changes the future may bring, with the excellent foundation laid by Mr. Brown and other successive members of the team, there seems little doubt that the developing rhythm of the past will be maintained in the years to come. Provided always that, should there be sometime in the years ahead a change of senior minister, then the utmost care is taken to ensure that any successor will, as far as can be judged, be likely to pursue the same general objectives, whether or not he himself makes a similar contribution to the work, or whether or not his approach is like or unlike that which has been the order of the day during the first ten years. Too radical a change as to men or methods could have disappointing results. More subtle changes, by shifts of emphasis in which the guidance of the Holy Spirit is clearly evident must in the end produce fruitful developments and an enlargement of the work in Dagenham.

The kind of leadership which Mr. Brown has given to the Scheme has been systematic and painstaking. He has thrown himself wholeheartedly into his involvement with people and causes. He has gone out of his way to explain, to help, to nurture and to care. He has fostered the team spirit with his fellow ministers at all times – he is one with them. He has not ridden a high horse, he has not preened himself upon being the “senior minister”, he has not made junior and less experienced colleagues feel that he is a remote figure to whom they have to defer nor has he exercised oppressive authority. He has

shared with lay members of the team as fully as with ministerial colleagues. There has been no partiality but much patience. He has led from within the team and has been ready to allow circumstances to dictate speed and direction. Mr. Brown knew himself to be called to a particular task in Dagenham and by God's grace he resolved to perform it to the best of his ability. In pursuit of his objective he became all things to all men and he revelled in what to him was a "high calling in Christ Jesus". Looking back it is clear that the kind of leadership which he has given has been well suited to the situation in Dagenham. It has been largely through the concerned, diligent, thoughtful thoroughness of the senior minister that the slow and steady growth of the co-operative effort between the Baptist churches of Dagenham has come about. It is also clear that Mr. Brown possesses, and has used, high gifts of administration, though any idea of him as a back-room "director of operations" is one which must be energetically resisted. Those who know him well know him to be a man of wide human sympathies, one who understands his fellow-men, who prizes the benefits of fellowship and who, subjugating personal predilections, is able to act in concert with the other members of the team and with the group of churches in order to achieve the "utmost for His highest". He is no theorist but a most practical and effective minister. Past and present members of the ministerial team have testified to the support and encouragement derived from the team. Its existence has been a nursery and testing ground for ministers, as well as a ministerial workshop. The maintenance of these characteristics of the team effort must continue to be an essential part of the leadership. The team must continue to function as a unit and it must be the prime endeavour of the senior member to provide that flexible adhesive which will keep the members of the team securely together and to ensure the active cohesion of the whole group.

So far we have looked at the Scheme from the standpoint of the group of churches, the team of ministers and the leader of the team. We have also to consider the part played by the Advisory Committee. This could not be conveyed merely by reciting a typical agenda of a quarterly meeting or by reading its minutes. One has to be present at a meeting, or rather several meetings, to sense the Committee's purpose which, of course, is purely advisory. But one thing would be clear to anyone attending a quarterly meeting, namely the sense of fellowship and the desire on the part of the "outside" members of the Committee to give the utmost encouragement and guidance to the team and the group both in their day-to-day work and in planning for the future. The regular attendance of the Chairman, Mr. Norman Andrews and of the Area Superintendent, Rev. J. H. G. Adam, both very busy men, is some evidence of the importance which they attach to the onward progress of the work. They are willing to contribute as much as they can to the Scheme, as indeed are, and have been, the many others, too numerous to

mention, who serve, or have served, on the Advisory Committee. The current members of the Committee, other than the ministerial team and the representatives from the churches, are shown in Appendix A (iii).

Whether the Advisory Committee will continue to function as it has done heretofore will no doubt form the subject of an enquiry somewhere along the road ahead. The Study Group which was responsible for the original work from which the "Guide Lines" emerged, recommended that the Advisory Committee should be reconstituted and called the "Quarterly Meeting". This new body was envisaged as combining both the Advisory Committee and the United Deacons' Meeting. Its main difference from the present Committee would have been that *all* the Deacons from each church would have been members of the meeting and not, as it is now, simply two *representatives* from each church. The purpose of the proposed change was said to be the improvement of liaison between the Advisory Committee and the churches. Whether that would have been effected by the suggested change we cannot say since the alteration was not made, but it is possible that as time goes by some modifications in the Advisory Committee arrangements will take place. The greater the success of the Scheme the more likely it is that the churches will become a more integrated, and therefore effective, combination with one diaconate and a united Church meeting for other than purely local matters. The need for an advisory body could well then disappear and the local church, albeit meeting in four different premises, assume overall responsibility, including that for finance, for the maintenance of Baptist work and witness in Dagenham.

But for the present the Advisory Committee is effective. It performs a useful purpose and continues to be a forum in which general issues can be raised and at which the concern of the County Association and the Baptist denomination as a whole can be demonstrated. However the Committee may change in the coming days, for the immediate future it will need to continue with its present functions and seek by advice and stimulation to help the Scheme to maintain its way and to progress to a fuller realisation of the original ideals which brought the group together and have been its mainstay in the intervening years.

Whether or not the experiences of the Dagenham Scheme and all that has been part of it can be taken as a guide for similar schemes must be a matter for the decision of those who are exploring the possibilities of development in a similar direction in their own particular locality and circumstance. It would be foolish to say that the pattern which has worked so well in Dagenham can be applied just as it is in any other place. But there are useful lessons to be learned. Many of these will have been picked up from the foregoing

narrative. To summarise some of the more important points, it can be said first of all that there must be careful and patient planning; then there must be a willingness on the part of the participating churches to adventure in faith and to shed some of that independence which they have collected from the past. Following that, bearing in mind what has already been written above, there must be the most prayerful and intelligent selection of every member of the team of ministers, especially the senior minister (however he may be described). Continuity of leadership during the early years of any scheme is vital and this must be kept prominently before the selectors. It cannot be too strongly emphasised that those chosen to help the senior minister must possess to the full a desire to work in co-operation with others to the greatest extent possible in all aspects of the work. The comradeship and spiritual help to be drawn from the existence of a team of ministers and laymen, is an uplifting experience for all those who are willing to accept the discipline of team work. If the mutual sharing of the joys and burdens inherent in the work of Christ's kingdom is irksome the team fellowship will suffer and the work of the team will become incoherent. Individualists have their place, and a very worthy place, but not in team ministry. There must be a common aim and a willingness to share in every conceivable way.

The Dagenham Scheme has established the fact that a team of ministers, and sometimes laymen, working together with a group of churches can accomplish very much indeed. The coming years will demonstrate whether what has already been accomplished can further develop so as to bring the work to an even more effective point. We can as we contemplate the future safely re-echo the words of St. Paul:

"I am still full of confidence for I know whom I have trusted."

2 TIMOTHY 1 . 12 (Good News for Modern Man)

Postscript

*(contributed by Rev. J. H. G. Adam, M.A.
General Superintendent of the Eastern Area)*

It is worth putting on record that the Dagenham Scheme was born not because a formula for the grouping of churches and ministers was imposed upon the local situation from some remote denominational department or because some avant garde denominational personnel wanted to experiment. The Dagenham Scheme was the answer to a need of which local church leaders had become acutely aware. "Why", asked one diaconate, "can not we keep a minister for more than three years?" The most casual examination of the condition which obtained amongst the four Baptist churches, situated strategically abreast of the largest residential estate in the country, accentuated the sense of need. Ministers were isolated from each other, each ploughing a lone furrow without very much hope. The churches worked away independent of one another in buildings which left almost everything to be desired. And just then, in 1959, three of these churches fell vacant at the same time, and we were led to "The Dagenham Scheme" as the answer to the need. This circumstance of vacancy might be regarded as fortuitous. It seemed to us who were involved then, and who are still involved, that Providence created the situation and opened a door of access which would have been very difficult to force. It was possible to invite the three churches simultaneously to accept the Scheme.

"The Scheme" was very carefully prepared, and set forth in writing for scrutiny and appreciation. This should be emphasised. As far as human care could go, nothing was overlooked which should have been included in a plan to relate churches together so that they could be called a fellowship. Every detail relating to the ministry which was to be so much part of the Scheme was spelt out. Then the prospectus was presented to each diaconate in personal meeting. Time was taken to convey the Scheme as a whole and in detail, for questioning and discussion, and thus were the foundations laid on which the rest has been built.

In a very real sense the Scheme concentrated on a Team Ministry. It was necessary, we found, to assure the churches that each would retain its "autonomy". We knew what we meant by this word, although it carries overtones which are scarcely consonant with New Testament teaching. We did say that some surrender of "autonomy" might become necessary, but, in a sense, that this would be in itself an exercise of "autonomy", as in the case of partners in a marriage. From the start, we established that the Team Ministry must consist of a Senior Minister with Associates. That one minister must be the Team Leader was felt to be important in preserving the unity of the

team both in terms of fellowship and purpose. We equally established that each minister must be the appointee of *all* the churches, so that each would be the minister of every church, with access to their diaconates and church meetings, and of all the churches together. To secure this successively throughout the changes which the ten years have brought has not been a problem, but has been smoothly and effectively achieved. We also established that each church should have a minister whom it could look to as its pastor, while at the same time, it was made clear that this could mean that two churches might look to the same man as their pastor. In point of fact, save for brief periods the ministers of the team have, in general, each enjoyed the pastorate of a single church.

As an anchor to the Scheme, and this was peculiarly the case at the beginning and in the early days, there was the establishment of the Advisory Committee. It was brought into being to plan the Scheme, and then to bring the churches into the Scheme, and to guide them into participation. Composed as it was of representatives of the churches, it provided common ground and a two-way traffic between itself and the churches. It was never mandatory in character, but was constantly true to its name, as it still is. Without it, the Scheme would never have lived. There in the background it has never ceased to watch, and listen, and when the need has arisen to counsel and to help. Whatever may become its future role or character, it has been a *sine qua non* to the Scheme.

Let this also be noted and appreciated, that the Scheme was only rendered possible because the Home Work Fund (as it was then called) readily gave its backing and furnished through its grants, the financial support, without which there could have been no ministry. For the first time, a Team Ministry was recognised and was given a block grant to cover the needs of the ministers at a stroke. This corresponded with and became part of the arrangement which has served to create the fellowship of the Scheme, whereby the churches contribute their individual support of the Team to a Treasurer, appointed by the Advisory Committee, who administers the stipends. Over the ten years, approximately £12,000 has been bestowed by the central Home Mission (Work) Fund in grants.

In the light of what the story has to say about the ministry itself and its contribution to the Scheme, little need be said here. However, to preserve the balance in these remarks, it must be stressed that the appointment of J. J. Brown as Senior Minister was decisive. God surely sent him to us. The vital role he and his colleagues have played in the outworking of the Scheme can never be over emphasised.

It is true that the Scheme has not yet fulfilled all the hopes and dreams which it conceived at its inception. There is much in terms of fellowship to be won. Not everybody in the churches has yet succeeded in catching the entire vision. The ministry would fain win

through to a more versatile employment of its powers and capacities. Nevertheless, though difficulties remain to be overcome, and ten years have not been enough to fulfil our intentions, the Dagenham Scheme is still, I am convinced, the best chance for such churches as have to operate to send the gospel on and out in a milieu such as Dagenham.

J. H. G. ADAM

Appendix A

Ministers, Lay Pastors and Moderators

(i) Up to 1961

Chaplin Road

Rev. H. C. C. McCullough	1929-35
T. D. Robinson	1935-38
A. J. Hallworth	1939-41
W. H. Wills	1942-44
C. S. Lower	1947-54
Mr. A. O. Edwards (Moderator)	1954 of Upminster
Rev. D. A. J. Bidwell	1954-59
Mr. S. E. Petts (Moderator)	1960-61 of Elm Park

Becontree Avenue

Rev. W. Driskell	1930-40
Mr. G. Mager	1940-47
Rev. J. Cooper	1947-51
D. L. Allingham	1951-54
E. G. Collinson	1956-59
Mr. N. W. Andrews (Moderator)	1960-61 of Ilford

Oxlow Lane

Rev. T. D. Robinson	1938-46
Dr. J. E. L. Bendor Samuel (Lay Pastor)	1947-54
Rev. W. H. Tebbit (Moderator)	1954-56
S. B. Stephens	1956-59
Mr. F. Booth (Lay Pastor)	1960-61

Wood Lane

Sister Margaret Evans	1932-64
Kathleen Simmons	1934-53

(ii) From 1961 onwards as members of the Ministerial Team

Chaplin Road

Rev. W. H. Campbell, B.D., B.Sc.	1962-65
Mr. F. Lee	1968-69 of Upminster
Rev. J. J. Brown, B.D.	1969 continuing
(from early 1972 Mr. A. D. Browne, B.D. of Upminster)	

Becontree Avenue

Rev. J. J. Brown
J. Buckley

1961-69 also Senior Minister
1969 continuing

Oxlow Lane

Rev. Roy Cave
J. B. Edwards, B.D.

1962-69
1970 continuing

Wood Lane (joined the Scheme 1964)

Rev. P. R. Mitson
R. G. Cole

1965-68
1969 continuing

Honorary member of the Team without specific responsibility:

Rev. Roy Dorey, B.Sc. 1967-71

(iii)**Advisory Committee Membership 1971**

*(Other than members of ministerial team and representatives
of the churches)*

Chairman:

Mr. N. W. Andrews

Secretary:

Mr. J. A. Edwards, B.Sc.

Treasurer:

Mr. F. Lee

Area Superintendent of the Baptist Union:

Rev. J. H. G. Adam, M.A.

Representative of the Baptist Union:

Rev. N. P. Wright, M.A.

Representatives of the Essex Baptist Association:

Rev. T. W. Shepherd

Rev. R. A. Freestone, M.A.

Appendix B

Statistical Tables

(a) Membership and baptisms Covering the ten years 1962 - 1971

Year	Becontree Avenue, Member'sp Baptisms		Chaplin Road, Member'sp Baptisms		Oxlow Lane, Member'sp Baptisms		Wood Lane, Member'sp Baptisms	
1962	76	2	49	2	69	—	66	3
1963		3		—		2		—
1964		4		2		—		2
1965		4		—		9		5
1966	81	4	47	—	74	4	56	7
1967		2		—		8		7
1968		2		—		5		2
1969		2		—		2		—
1970		—		—		1		1
1971	70	2	38	—	64	2	49	2
		<u>25</u>		<u>4</u>		<u>33</u>		<u>29</u>

(b) Finances 1962 - 71

Year	Contributions from Churches	Block Grants from H.M. Fund	E.B.A.	Donations from Other	Covenant Gifts	Tax refunds
	£	£	£	£	£	£
1962	870	646	50	—	200	126
		43 (removal)				
1963	906	930	50	56	200	125
1964	918	1066	100	282	200	126
1965	971	1116	100	385	227	140
		11 (removal)				
1966	1154	1118	100	221	277	189
1967	1253	1161	100	122	288	189
1968	1233	1086	50	158	87	204
1969	1441	1176	150	406	100	171 { 33 }
		72 (removal)				
1970	1527	1243	100	256	100	65
1971	2083	1626	400	270	110	71
	<u>£12,356</u>	<u>£11,294</u>	<u>£1200</u>	<u>£2156</u>	<u>£1789</u>	<u>£1439</u>

Appendix C

DAGENHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Becontree Avenue · Chaplin Road · Oxlow Lane · Wood Lane
*Guide lines for the working arrangements of the combined congregations
incorporating a standard constitution for each local congregation.*

- TITLE** DAGENHAM BAPTIST CHURCH is accepted as a convenient description of the combined congregations centred at Becontree Avenue, Chaplin Road, Oxlow Lane and Wood Lane, and may be used for letter headings, notice boards and other united publicity.
- ADVISORY COMMITTEE** An Advisory Committee shall comprise the members of the Ministerial team, two representatives (one of whom shall be a deacon) of the member congregations, two representatives each from the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the Essex Baptist Association, a chairman, secretary and treasurer, each to be appointed annually by the advisory committee. The said officers need not be members of the Dagenham Baptist Church. The secretary shall convene the advisory committee for prayer, consultation, reports, discussion and recommendations concerning the Church's work as a whole. The treasurer shall be responsible for securing and administering grants and contributions to a Central Fund and for the payment of stipends and Ministerial expenses. Meetings should be held quarterly.
- MINISTRY**
- (a) The Church shall be led by a team of Ministers, each of whom shall have special responsibilities as outlined below, all of whom shall be available to serve the congregations and the neighbourhood according to their gifts, interests and training. Each Minister must be a baptised believer, subject to the conditions of Church membership and acceptable to the Baptist denomination.
 - (b) Senior Minister: The Ministerial team shall be led by a Minister who shall have special responsibility for co-ordinating the work of the Church.
 - (c) Other members of the team will have special responsibility for the leadership of one of the congregations within the scheme and/or such other special responsibilities as may be deemed necessary.
 - (d) Team Meeting: The Senior Minister shall convene a weekly Team Meeting for fellowship, devotions, study, discussion and planning.

- (e) Appointment: Each minister shall be appointed by a united Church meeting on the following basis:— The Senior Minister (and any member of the team with special responsibilities other than specific pastoral charge of one congregation) shall be nominated by the Advisory Committee and approved by a united Church Meeting comprising at least 40% of the total membership, on a minimum two-thirds vote of members present.

Ministers with special responsibility for pastoral charge of one congregation shall be nominated by the congregation concerned to a united Church Meeting as above, and approved by the Advisory Committee.

Invitations to join the Ministerial team shall be issued by the Secretary or Chairman of the Advisory Committee in the following terms:

“You are invited to become a member of the Ministerial team of the Dagenham Baptist Church with special responsibility for . . .”

- (f) Termination: In the event of a desired termination of Ministry, reference shall be made to the Deacons meeting of the congregation concerned, or to the officers of the Advisory Committee for appropriate action.
- (g) When a vacancy arises in the team the Ministers shall arrange for the continuance of pastoral care and leadership in consultation with the congregation concerned. A local congregation may appoint a moderator and it is expected that he will work in close association with the Ministerial team, attending the team meetings if possible.
- (h) United Church Meetings: Such meetings should be held at least once a year and on other occasions as required, for example for the inviting of a member to the Ministerial team. United Church meetings should be convened by a secretary who must be a member of Dagenham Baptist Church nominated by any of the four congregations, elected by a two-thirds majority at a united Church meeting for a period of three years and eligible for re-election if nominated.

MEMBERSHIP The Church consists of those individuals who have become members in the manner hereafter stated:

- (a) The membership shall be open to all who profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and whose lives bear evidence of their Christian profession. Usually members are received after baptism by immersion. The Church welcomes to full membership all who conscientiously follow our Lord Jesus Christ but for some acceptable reason are not baptised.
- (b) **New Members:** Those desirous of joining the Church shall apply to one of the Ministers or Church secretaries or to any of the Deacons. After visitation and a satisfactory report by the Minister and two Church members nominated by the Diaconate, they shall be eligible for election. When elected they shall receive the right hand of fellowship at the Lord's Table.
- (c) **Church Roll:** Individual congregations shall maintain a membership roll and those enrolled shall be deemed members of the Dagenham Baptist Church. Any member will be welcome to attend any of the local business meetings but with voting rights only at the meeting where he is enrolled. Ministers will have responsibility for the pastoral care of those on the local membership list for whom they are said to have 'special responsibility'.
- (d) **Transfer:** Members from other Churches shall be received by letter or transfer and, after visitation by the Minister or secretary, such applications to be voted upon, elected and received as set forth in the previous clause.
- (e) **Commitment:** Members are expected loyally to attend the Church services, to contribute towards its support as God has prospered them, to take part in activities and, with God's help, to lead lives regulated by the teaching and inspired by the Spirit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.
- (f) **Discipline:** In cases which call for discipline, members of the Church shall be dealt with according to the principles laid down in Matthew 18: 15-17, and Galations 6: 1.

- (g) **Deletion:** After due notice and visitation, those absent from the Communion Service without good cause for six consecutive months may be regarded as no longer active members after consideration by a Church Meeting.
- (h) **Non-residents:** If a member removes to some other district where there is no Free Church to which he or she can be conveniently transferred, the name of such members shall be placed on a non-resident members' list and they shall be contacted from time to time both with the object of discovering whether the possibility of transfer has arisen and also to give such members an opportunity to recognise the responsibilities of membership. A list of non-resident members shall be kept.

FINANCE

1. Central Fund

- (a) **Income:** The Central Fund of the Dagenham Baptist Church is to receive monthly contributions from the four congregations. Denominational grants will also be paid to the Central Fund.
- (b) **Administration:** The Central Fund is to be administered by a Treasurer elected annually by the Advisory Committee. The Treasurer will make requests to the treasurers of the four congregations for monthly payments in proportion to their expenditure and their ability to pay towards the Ministerial stipends and allowances as reviewed and increased.
- (c) **Expenditure:** The Central Fund is to be used for the payment of Ministerial stipends and expenses and general expenses of the 'Scheme' such as postages, stationery, travelling allowances and car expenses. Ministerial stipends are to be at least the minimum laid down by the Baptist Union with appropriate allowances and four weeks paid holiday per annum. Each Minister is to be entitled to one free day per week and one free Sunday per quarter. The Manse for the Senior Minister is to be provided and maintained by the Central Fund. If the team is incomplete other arrangements may be deemed suitable.

2. Individual Congregations

Each congregation shall provide and maintain a manse suitable for the Minister and pay all Local Authority rates and water rate. Each congregation

shall be responsible for the maintenance of Church premises and make payment of all expenses in connection with heating, lighting, cleaning and repairs.

- ORDINANCES (1) The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper is to be observed by each congregation at least twice a month. All believers in our Lord Jesus Christ are invited to attend and members should do their utmost to be present at a monthly Communion Service.
- (2) The Ordinance of Believer's Baptism shall be by immersion of those who are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- CHURCH OFFICERS (1) Diaconate: Each congregation shall endeavour to elect from its baptised members, for a period of three years, six deacons (men or women over the age of 21 and who have been Church members for at least twelve months) two of whom shall retire in rotation each year and shall be eligible for re-election if nominated. Deacons shall be elected or re-elected by ballot on a two-thirds majority of those present at a meeting of local members. The written consent of nominees shall first be obtained by two members. At least two-thirds of the number should be baptised believers.
- (2) Executive Officers: A secretary and treasurer shall be elected annually from the baptised members and they shall be ex-officio deacons. The election shall be by ballot or otherwise as the meeting may determine and as occasion may arise.
- (3) Leaders of Organisations: Leaders of all organisations connected with the Church shall normally be members as defined under 'Membership'; but it is recognised that the help of other Christians may from time to time be required.
- (4) Elections: Each congregation shall have discretion regarding the timing of elections, announcements of nominations, method of ballot proxy voting.

- LOCAL BUSINESS MEETING (1) The enrolled members of each congregation shall meet for Christian fellowship and for the transaction of business at least once a quarter.
- (2) A special business meeting may be called at the discretion of the Minister and a majority of the deacons, or at the written request of a third of the local members. Notice of such meeting shall be given at both services on the two preceding Sundays.

- (3) All members on the roll shall be entitled to vote at their own business meetings and the business shall be transacted under such rules as ordinarily govern the conduct of public meetings.
- (4) The Minister with special responsibility or another member of the Ministerial team shall normally take the chair at such meetings. Otherwise, the members present shall elect a chairman and proceed with the business.

GENERAL

- (1) Committees and Control: The Ministers shall be presidents of their respective local committees and societies. Deacons shall appoint one or two of their number as representatives of the said local committees and societies. Meetings are expected to conclude not later than 10.30 p.m. unless special permission is given by the Minister and deacons.
- (2) Premises: Buildings and premises shall be used for the public worship of God, the preaching of the Gospel, the instruction of children and adults and the promotion of such other religious, social philanthropic purposes as shall from time to time be decided.
- (3) Accounts: All organisations connected with the Church must submit annual accounts showing receipts and payments duly certified by the local treasurer.
- (4) Alteration of Rules: The Church shall have the right to rescind, vary, amend or add to the rules by resolutions provided this is in keeping with the Constitution. Such resolutions to be presented to a united Church Meeting.

COVENANT

I, being elected a member of DAGENHAM BAPTIST CHURCH,
acknowledge my responsibilities as under:

1. To live a life consistent with the gospel and worthy of our high calling in Christ.
2. To spend some time every day in prayer and reading the Scriptures.
3. To share each Lord's Day, unless unavoidably prevented, in the corporate worship of the Church and to be regular and faithful in observance of the Lord's Supper.
4. To fulfil the ministry of intercession both privately and by being present whenever possible at meetings for corporate prayer.
5. To live in loyal love and fellowship with all the other members of the Church.
6. To take some part in the work of the Church, according to calling, gifts and opportunities.
7. To accept personal responsibility for the government of the local Church by being present whenever possible at the Church Meeting.
8. To set aside and give a sum of money every Lord's Day for the work of God's Kingdom at home and overseas.
9. To attempt, by personal invitation, hospitality and visitation to introduce and bring others to the Church.
10. To witness to the Lord Jesus Christ by word and deed and to take part in the evangelisation of the world.

Name of Member

Received into Membership

Date of Baptism

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Date of Baptism

Price 20p