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RISING TIDE

A RECORD OF
THE BEGINNINGS
OF THE DAGENHAM
SCHEME BY
J. J. BROWN

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A RECORD OF THE BEGINNINGS OF
"THE DAGENHAM SCHEME"

BY

Rev. J. J. BROWN, B.D.

Foreword by

Rev. Dr. ERNEST A. PAYNE, M.A.,
*General Secretary of the
Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland.*

Preface by

Rev. J. H. G. ADAM, M.A.,
General Superintendent of the Eastern Area.

Postscript by

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Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

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FOREWORD

by

DR. ERNEST A. PAYNE

*General Secretary of the Baptist Union
of Great Britain and Ireland.*

In the minds of many people, Dagenham and Fords are synonymous. Either name suggests one of the special "problem spots" of modern Britain, whether one's special interest is in industry, social conditions or religion.

The pages that follow show that this reputation is hardly fair. They underline, however, the challenge of this great neighbourhood to those concerned for the spiritual welfare of the inhabitants, and for special difficulties and opportunities which face the members of the Baptist churches.

The "Dagenham Scheme," which is here described, is being followed with close interest by many outside Dagenham. It was daringly launched; it is being bravely led. Substantial help is being given gladly from denominational funds, but it is clear that greater resources in dedicated personnel and money are needed if full advantage is to be taken of the gains of recent years.

I hope that this booklet will be widely circulated and read and lead to deepened interest and generous support from many quarters.

PREFACE

by

REV. J. H. G. ADAM, M.A.

General Superintendent of the Eastern Area.

Five years have passed since necessity was laid upon us to take action, more decisive and imaginative than had yet been effected, in respect of the Baptist Churches of Dagenham, strategically set, as they were, in the midst of as great an opportunity for evangelism as exists anywhere in the country.

These years have seen the Scheme which was then awakened in our hearts come to effect. The ministerial team of three, which was basic to our conception, has been complete now for some eighteen months, and it has already proved itself a core of strength which runs through the whole situation. Of the Senior Minister, the Rev. J. J. Brown, we may truly say, "There was a man sent from God whose name was John." With equal truth, so obviously have they become partners together, God sent him his colleagues. Time has only begun to reveal what God will do with them. Distinguished effects are already to be discerned as a consequence of the inter-relation of their lives and ministries in the three churches they serve, but also, beyond the circle of our Baptist fellowships opportunities multiply and calls abound. It becomes obvious that care must be given to the question of increasing the pastoral staff, for even if the strength of the team were to be doubled, each minister could be over-worked.

A reading of this Report will leave it in no doubt that only the opening gambits of the Scheme have taken place. Although we rejoice in so much which has been accomplished, 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." Through this Report, we look back out of the midst of the increase of the labour and the strain which must now be taken, and we thrill to see the gleaming tokens which assure us that we have been led by the Lord, our God. It is impossible not to be certain that the Dagenham Scheme is part of a new and distinct activity of the Spirit of God.

I would fain pay tribute, as part of my share in this Report, to the members of our Dagenham Churches. They have ever been responsive and trusting even if, as may reasonably be suspected, some of them did not quite appreciate all that was involved in this project. They have had to walk by faith. Face to face with their local situation, they have been denied those perspectives which the more distant views give. Yet, they have continued in hope. They have remained faithful to all their commitments. There has been no shirking, but rather devotion and much unrecorded service. This steady continuance is absolutely vital to the Scheme.

Ere we read the Report, let us be reminded that this Scheme is being pursued so that the Light of the Gospel may shine, and Christ, the Lord, the Saviour, be preached and commended. Here is the Church militant, being recruited into a vigorous offensive for righteousness, and being deployed that Dagenham may become encircled and invaded by the grace of God.

Dagenham

Images

"Mammoth municipal ant hill"—"a monstrosity"—"a company town with Caledonian overtones whose inhabitants huddle round Fords like some medieval hamlet around the castle of the Lord of the Manor"—"a place where Zephyrs roll off the assembly line to the ecstatic squeals of girl pipers." These are samples from a long catalogue of comments drawn from the writings of sociologists, journalists, half-day visitors and local wags. No citizen of the world-famous Borough would want to pretend that it is a holiday resort to which people come for the good of their health. Nor would the most loyal citizen deny that there is a certain maze-line pattern in the layout of the streets, and a monotony of architecture. Both these characteristics make it easy to get lost. Which is precisely what some of its infuriated citizens would like to happen to those who project a false image of the locality. Such an image, like mud or a dog's bad name, tends to stick. In the report made for the Pilgrim Trust in 1934 attention was drawn to the misleading publicity to which Dagenham was subjected. It still happens. So much so that a notable burgher delivered a verbal rocket to some pressmen: "Gentlemen," he bellowed, "We are heartily sick of you!"

Facts

The simple fact is that Dagenham is what it is—a housing estate erected in the 1920's as an urgent and human answer to the desperate need of working class people for accommodation in which they could enjoy a measure of freedom, comfort and security at a reasonable cost. It involved the re-housing of a hundred thousand people by one local authority in one place, and it was a gigantic and courageous operation urgently required. It need not surprise us that the planners gave priority to the erection of houses where people could live leaving social amenities as a secondary consideration. Even school buildings were deferred—a matter which had serious social consequences. The fact remains that the dominant need was for houses, so houses were built—thirty thousand of them eventually. But to speak of Dagenham as a desert of houses is nonsense.

Vistas

It would come as a surprise to many people outside the Borough who have been fed on the false image to learn that there are considerable stretches of open space—green at that!—within the Borough boundaries. After all if Dagenham has its feet in the Thames it has its head in Hainault Forest. And there are open spaces south of Chadwell Heath. There is Central Park—one hundred and thirty-five acres of it. In addition there are numerous pleasant parks and gardens. There is, for example, Valence Park in which stands an ancient Manor House set beside a swan-graced pond shaded by an ever-green Holm Oak 50 feet high and 20 feet in girth—three hundred years old.

Industry

Equally surprising to many others would be the fact that only a small proportion (about a quarter) of the forty thousand employees of the car factory live within the confines of the Borough. And although the Ford Motor Company is the largest employer of labour locally there are many other firms engaged in the local industrial scene. In 1887 Samuel Williams & Sons moved to their present site at Dagenham Dock, specialising in transport and storage. Telephone Cables set up its factory in 1912. Pritchett & Gold moved in a year later. Writing in *THE DAGENHAM BAPTIST* the Manager of the Dagenham Employment Exchange pointed out that "In the closely knit area (around Dagenham Dock) with its road, rail, dock and wharfing services are manufactured cables, accumulators, pre-cast concrete products and wood preservatives." May & Bakers, whose "M. & B." 693 (sulphapyridine) revolutionised the treatment of bacterial pneumonia, occupies fifty-seven acres. Other factories include Sterling Engineering, Ever-Ready, Hector Powe, Stafford Bakeries, Bergers Paints, Baird & Tatlock. All contribute substantially to the national economy and boost the export trade.

Culture

Many people would not at once associate Dagenham with culture. But there are several well equipped libraries where in addition to a substantial reference and lending section, exhibitions of art, books and manuscripts are frequently presented, and musical programmes are given. Recreation is encouraged, and the playleader scheme which provides supervisors and equipment in the public parks has been pioneered in Dagenham. A directory of local organisations and activities contains the names of over two hundred associations, societies, clubs and committees which cater for every age group and a wide variety of spiritual, social and physical need.



*Aerial view of Central Park taken during the famous Town Show.
The Civic Centre is in the right foreground. Photograph by courtesy of Dagenham Public Library.*

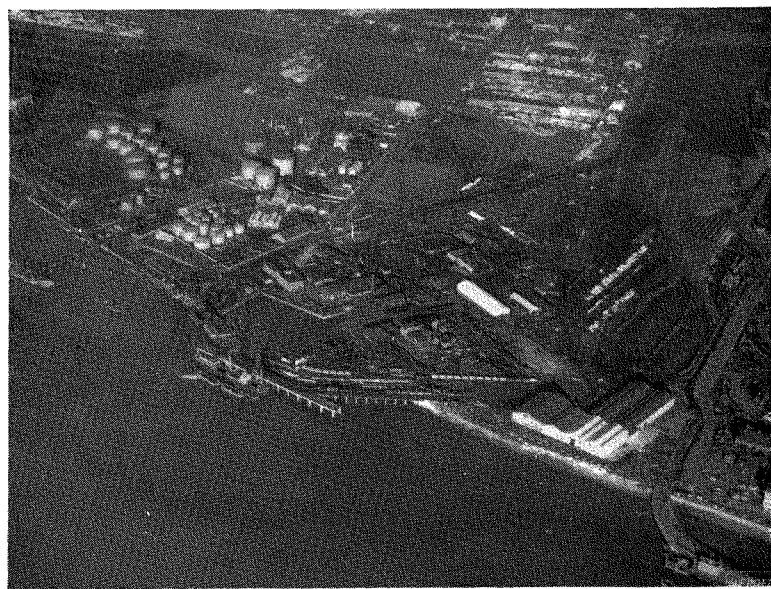
Religion

Religious belief in Dagenham was the subject of two articles in a well-known monthly magazine. A journalist interviewed a number of people in the Borough and came to the conclusion that the citizens were, in the main, godless and rather ashamed of it. He cited dogooders who had literally no time for the church, though not many, it seems, denied outright the existence of God. These articles under the title "Has God been elbowed out?" described Dagenham as "officially godless" and this brought a fierce comment from the editor of the lively quarterly journal of the Borough. In issue No. 61 (September, 1963) the editorial jolt pointed out that although in the main ordinary people had turned their backs on the Church of England the Nonconformist churches still attracted congregations (though smaller than they were), that the three Roman Catholic churches celebrated eighteen Masses every Sunday to large congregations, and that the Christian rite of baptism, marriage and burial are eagerly sought after in the churches. In short, Dagenham is little different from many other parts of the country, and it is the same as any other

working class area. Industrial man is notoriously distant from the church and equally hard to get across the threshold. He has no time for the church as an institution and is very critical of the behaviour of its representatives and adherents. He expresses himself strongly against ecclesiastics who are said to earn fabulous salaries, and he thinks he can be a Christian without going to church. He goggles a bit at the parson who meets him in the pub (especially if that parson drinks nothing but a harmless orange juice), but he is willing to talk about religion and life, provided there's no preaching and as long as there is an honest expression of opinion. He recognises sincerity when he sees it. He also recognises the phoney and rejects it.

Baptists

South of Green Lane there are four Baptist churches. The first of them was built in 1927 in Chaplin Road. The second in Becontree Avenue in 1929. The third in Wood Lane in 1932. The fourth in Oxlow Lane in 1938. They are in fellowship with the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland and the Essex Baptist Association. Their total membership is about 250. So they are comparatively small in numbers and resources. But they are faced with a tremendous opportunity for evangelism. A new approach seemed to be called for. One which would encourage the local companies of believers and enable them to fulfil their mission efficiently and effectively. It was this which brought into being "The Dagenham Scheme."



*Air view, Thames Bank, showing Dagenham Dock.
Photograph by courtesy of Dagenham Public Library.*

The Dagenham Scheme

Three Men and a Scheme

"Venture in Fellowship" would perhaps be a better descriptive title of the new approach. Three men were chiefly involved in its initiation. Their interest in Dagenham stemmed from different roots, but they had a common concern for the wellbeing of the churches, and the needs of the area were a challenge to them.

The interest of Mr. Norman Andrews sprang from the fact that his parents were among the founder members of the church at Becontree Avenue. Before the first premises were erected meetings were held in their home. It was a natural and happy thought which led to his becoming Moderator of that church during the vacancy which occurred in 1959.

Mr. Alex. Edwards was among the enthusiastic members of the Baptist Youth Movement who helped with evangelistic work in Dagenham in the early "thirties". He later became Moderator of the Chaplin Road church, and has remained in close contact with Baptist witness on the estate.

The Rev. J. H. G. Adam was appointed General Superintendent of the Eastern Area in 1958, which meant that the Baptist churches south of Chadwell Heath were in his constituency. He showed a lively interest in their welfare.

In 1959 three of the churches were without full-time ministers and there seemed to be little prospect of an early settlement. It was evident that, in any case, the length of pastorates was destined to be short. Yet they were each set in the centre of a vast population which represented a staggering evangelistic challenge and opportunity against which they appeared to be numerically weak and inadequately equipped. Furthermore, housing policies had forced young married couples to find accommodation outside the Borough, a policy which bleeds the churches of the personnel they need. It would have been surprising indeed if, following the decline of the churches in the post-war years, the members had not felt some measure of discouragement. Yet the times called for strong, virile memberships which would not only maintain the recognised congregational activities within the pre-

mises, but embark on a sustained mission to the neighbourhood. But how was it to be done ?

The Plan

Faced with this burning question the three men gave themselves to thought and to prayer. When eventually they shared their findings they discovered a significant similarity of approach, although they had devised it without collusion. They produced statistics concerning the ministry, the membership and the financial situation. They were led to believe that the Baptist congregations in Dagenham could best be served and the evangelistic opportunity most firmly grasped if they would accept the leadership of a team of ministers one of whom would be responsible for co-ordinating the work as a whole, each of whom would have special responsibility for one church, and all of whom 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' meetings 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 from each of the churches, three from 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 in 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 were publicised. It was envisaged that such a plan while enabling the churches to continue their work in a given locality (and there was every justification for this in view of the fact that there are some ten thousand people resident within a quarter of a mile of each church) they would inevitably 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 hand.

Fears

This was the basic plan which was put to the churches in 1960. It was considered at length by three of them. There were numerous

consultations of deacons and members. Many questions were asked—as was right and proper. Misgivings were expressed by some. The main fear seems to have been that local congregations would lose their individuality. No one could foresee exactly how the Scheme would work out in practice. Not everyone was eager to take the plunge. But eventually the three churches agreed on the appointment of a Senior Minister who was Inducted in the presence of a large congregation on Saturday, September 30th, 1961.

Titles

At this point a word about nomenclature might be appreciated. The term "Senior" was preferred to that of "Superintendent," although the latter term probably describes his function more accurately. He co-ordinates the work of the churches by presiding at the weekly meetings of the ministerial team and at the united deacons' meetings, and by attending, though not necessarily presiding over the deacons and church meetings of the three congregations. His colleagues are described as "Associate Minister," not, it should be observed, as "Assistants," because each has full pastoral responsibility at the church to which he is assigned. Decisions are taken in consultation. There is very little that does not pass through the crucible of team discussion except matters which for one reason or another are confidential to the team member concerned.

Team Work

There is no more important meeting connected with the Scheme than the weekly team meeting which is normally held in the home of one of the team members on a Monday morning, and it seldom lasts for less than three hours. It is here that plans are formulated in the interests of Christian fellowship, worship, service and witness. Projects which have a purely local reference—special services, meetings and the like—are brought to the team's notice, partly to avoid the clashing of dates, and partly to share ideas. It is recognised that what is appropriate for one church or locality is not necessarily the best for another. In the nature of things the team members are able to give concentrated attention to many aspects of the work and they derive considerable benefit from the interchange of insights, criticisms and ideas which each can bring to a particular plan or problem. Burdens and blessings are shared for mutual concern and rejoicing. Frustrations often dissolve in the fellowship. There are precious moments of prayer and reading of the Bible. Sermon themes are prompted and even prepared in consultation.

Danger

There is a danger, to which the team is alert, namely that this close and constant liaison (which is something much stronger than the

usual Fraternal) can draw to itself too great a responsibility and become a kind of hierarchy from which decisions are imposed upon unwilling deacons and members. No such dictatorship is desired or intended. Let it be admitted that the team is in a position to give strong leadership. And once the churches are prepared to place confidence in the team and appreciate that the church meeting remains the ultimate authority in the business life of the church, then the fear should be proved groundless.

That such a Scheme should create certain limitations of freedom need not be denied. The fact that anyone belongs to a family creates limitations in the sense that each member will usually accept the disciplines which are recognised by the others, their actions and plans will not be made without thought of the other members of the family group. They will do some things in support of one of the members which they might not do if left to themselves, they will refrain from some things, maybe, if by doing them they would harm or inconvenience the others. This is the limitation of family life and love. The limitations recognised by the Scheme are those of Christian love and fellowship. Members of the ministerial team accept the limitations of which they might not be conscious if they were working in complete independence; they are no longer a "law unto themselves"—they are working with and for one another. There is nothing foreign to Christianity in that! The limitations are not irksome where they are accepted in this spirit.

Considerable importance is attached to the variety of age and experience which is represented in the Dagenham team. A man who has been in the ministry for twenty years ought to be able to contribute to the team discussion that which only experience can teach. Equally important is the contribution of fresh and zestful ideas which younger brethren bring. This makes for healthy tension, freshness of outlook, adventurous planning and wise action. There may still be mistakes; but perhaps not so many or so great as might otherwise be the case.

Specialisation has not yet been exploited to any great extent pending the appointment of more personnel. Christian education, youth work, outreach to industry, and community service are some of the areas into which tentative inroads are being made.

Exactly what has been done in the first two years to implement the Scheme is set out in the next section.

What God has done

When Paul and Barnabas had completed their first missionary expedition they "gathered the church together" and "rehearsed all that God had done with them". That represents the purport of this third section which describes what has been happening since the inauguration of the Scheme in September, 1961. Let the reader judge for himself how far the declared objectives are being attained, and how much evidence there is of a rising tide of spiritual life.

Three-point Programme

The churches were asked to work to a three-year plan. In the first year the emphasis was placed upon strengthening fellowship and



Mr. Norman Andrews addressing the meeting on the occasion of the Induction of Rev. J. J. Brown.

(See "key" on page 21)

Becontree Avenue church was founded in 1929. The present building was opened that same year. Rev. Wilfred Driskell was the first minister, and he was succeeded by Pastor George Mager, Rev. John Cooper, Rev. Douglas Allingham and Rev. E. G. Collinson.

The present building has served as church and hall for 35 years. A new place of worship is scheduled to be opened in October, 1964.

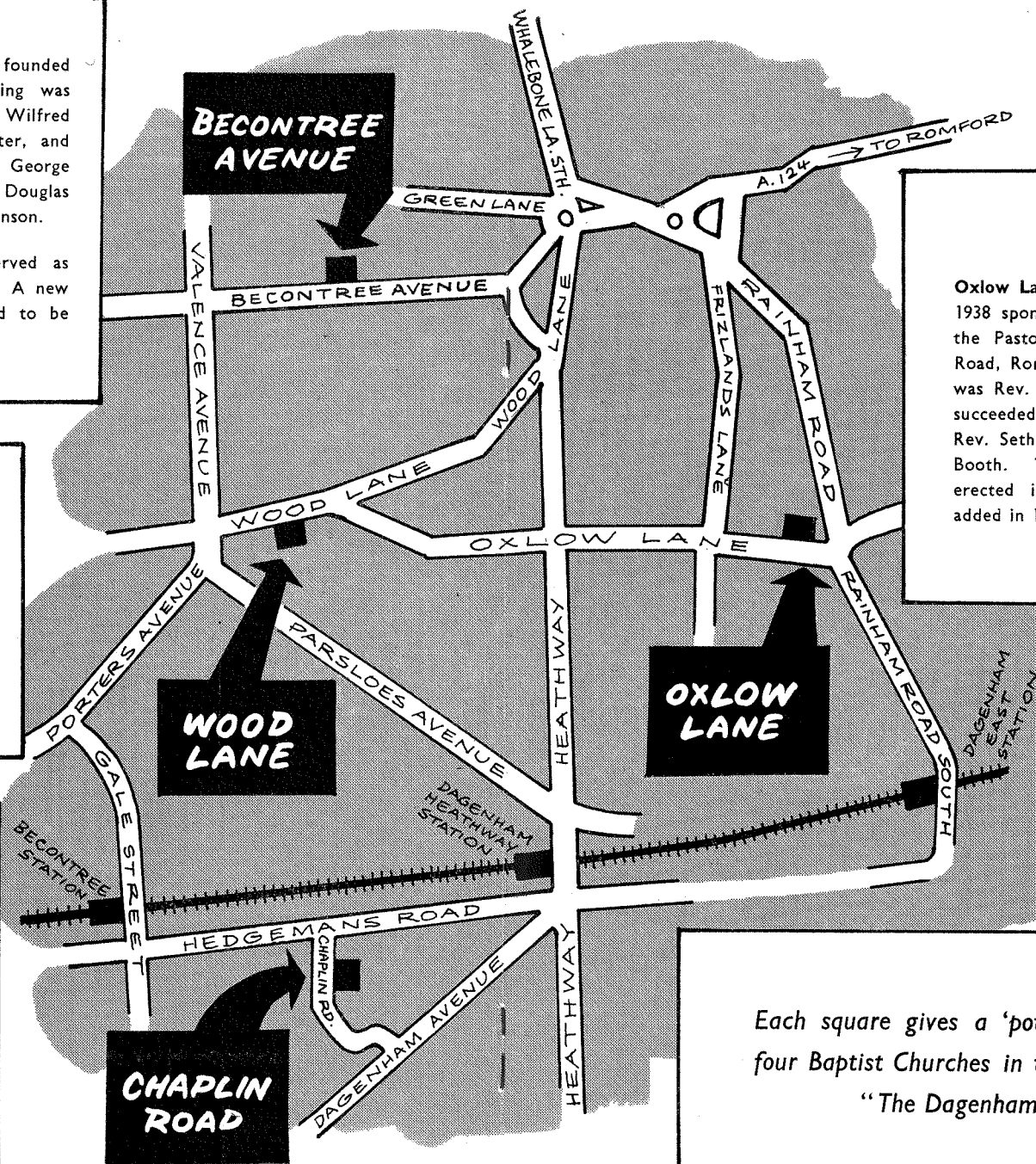
Wood Lane church began in 1932. From the beginning the work was led by Sister Margaret Evans, who has served the church as Deaconess for thirty-two years. She was assisted by Sister Kathleen Simmons from 1934 to 1953.

Chaplin Road church was the first of the four to be constituted.

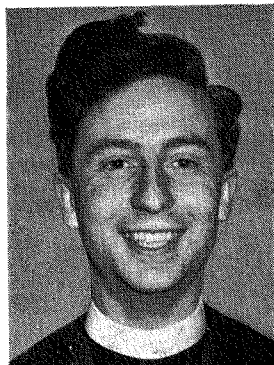
The first building was opened in 1927. Two halls were added later. Rev. Hugh C. C. McCullough was the first minister. He began his work in 1929. His successors in the ministry were Rev. T. D. Robinson, Rev. A. J. Hallworth, Rev. W. H. Wills, Rev. C. S. Lower, Rev. Dennis Bidwell.

Oxlow Lane church was started in 1938 sponsored and encouraged by the Pastor and members of Main Road, Romford. The first minister was Rev. T. D. Robinson. He was succeeded by Dr. Bendor-Samuel, Rev. Seth Stephens and Mr. Frank Booth. The first building was erected in 1939 and a hall was added in 1958.

Each square gives a 'potted' history of the four Baptist Churches in the area covered by "The Dagenham Scheme"



establishing mutual confidence. This was done in four ways: (1) pastoral visitation; (2) mutual prayer and thought helped by a booklet containing the names and addresses of all the members set out in alphabetical order irrespective of the congregation to which each belonged; (3) the publication of a magazine called *THE DAGENHAM BAPTIST* which provides a news service for church members and a message for the neighbourhood, published bi-monthly; (4) organised opportunities for worship, corporate prayer and training.



The Rev. W. H. Campbell.

second Associate Minister. He came from Spurgeon's College. It is a coincidence that all three members of the team took their theological training at Spurgeon's College. This is not meant to suggest that there is a Spurgeonic monopoly of the situation! Other memorable events in the first year were the Week of Prayer held at Becontree Avenue—the first corporate activity of the churches following the inauguration of the Scheme; the Communion Service on Maundy Thursday, and the first Bible Study Conference. Such occasions were repeated and extended during the second year and are likely to become permanent features of the Scheme.

Ready, Steady . . .

The second year was largely concerned with preparation for outreach. This consisted of intensive prayer guided and encouraged by specially produced prayer cards and a prayer letter. Bible study was based on the Acts of the Apostles. About twenty-five study groups

Inductions

Highlights of the first year were the three Induction services: On September 30th when the Rev. J. J. Brown was welcomed as the first Senior Minister. He came from Erith in Kent, where he had been Pastor of the Queen Street Baptist Church for twenty years. On February 3rd, 1962, when the Rev. W. H. Campbell was welcomed as the first Associate Minister. He came from Moss Side, Manchester—his first pastorate. On September 15th, 1963, when the Rev. Roy Cave was welcomed as the



The Rev. Roy Cave.

were formed. The ministerial team prepared a series of notes and questions which the groups used. Similar notes have been prepared on the First Epistle of John and the Epistle of James. The session of group Bible Study culminated in a Conference held on a Saturday afternoon and evening. Preparation for outreach included house-to-house visitation. Each church accepted responsibility for the area immediately surrounding it. Armed with a questionnaire the visitors made about six thousand calls and produced about two thousand "contacts". Information gathered by this means proved of great value during the actual campaign—eleven days of intensive effort in which the churches were ably assisted by the team from Spurgeon's College. Apart from Committee Meetings the preparation included two meetings with the college team en bloc. One was held in Dagenham on the occasion when the students visited Ford's factory then toured the neighbourhood and saw the churches. This was followed by a time of conference and prayer. At a later date a large contingent of our members journeyed to the college for a devotional service in the college chapel. In all these ways we endeavoured to be a people prepared for outreach. We appreciated the fact that such an enterprise is the responsibility of the local church. Outreach is its primary function. At a special gathering on Ascension Day a time of devotion preceded a session of training for visitation.

Other outstanding events in the second year included a residential week-end conference for young people. Thirty of them, representative of the three churches, studied the meaning of Christian Discipleship. Their spontaneous request for a United Youth Fellowship was met by the introduction of a monthly meeting-point for young people which has served a useful purpose, and is now moving on to a different programme. Another important conference was that which involved the deacons and their wives: it was held at Spurgeon's College on a Saturday afternoon in April. On Easter Monday a coach load of our people attended the Ter - Jubilee Rally at Cambridge. The major Easter activities were a united service of meditation on Good Friday, and a breakfast followed by Communion on Easter Sunday morning. At Christmas there was a memorable Communion Service on Christmas Eve. All such occasions served to make more blessed "the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love."

. . . Go

Meanwhile the second year saw the beginning of some ventures in outreach. Since September, 1962, a regular weekly visit has been paid to a well-known public house where the Gospel has been presented to numerous people in personal conversation, some of whom have shown more than a little interest. Although the discussion ranges

over a great many topics from the disadvantages of orange juice to the reason why men become parsons, there is always an opportunity to present the Faith. A weekly visit has been paid to one of the local factories where the chaplain has been free to meet employees and where facilities are provided for private counselling by arrangement. On Saturday mornings two of the children's cinema clubs are visited, and this gives us contact with about fifteen hundred children. Regular visits are paid to County Youth Clubs. We serve on the Borough's Youth Advisory Committee, the Personal Service Council, and provide a chaplaincy service to the Dagenham Unit of the Sea Cadet Corps and to the Rush Green Hospital. In 1962 we accepted responsibility for the organisation of Christian Aid Week, mobilising groups of helpers from all the Protestant denominations. A record sum of £706 was collected. We have had some share in the Freedom from Hunger Campaign. It has also been our privilege to initiate a series of conferences on the church's mission to Industry. We have endeavoured to make ourselves available to the neighbourhood in terms set out on the back cover of our magazine:

CAN WE HELP YOU?

Are you elderly, living alone, shut in most of the time?

Get someone to 'phone Dominion 5175 and you will be visited.

Are you middle-aged and carrying heavy responsibilities which create problems which get you down?

'Phone Dominion 0187.

Are you a young person with nothing much to do and nowhere much to go?

'Phone Dominion 7628 for news of activities for youth.

Are you wondering and worrying about the world, about life, about God?

'Phone Dominion 0187.

Are you an invalid who would welcome regular visitors?

Get someone to 'phone Dominion 7211 and someone will call on you at home or in hospital.

Are you in a quandary about something—about filling up a form, or a family problem?

'Phone Dominion 0737 and someone will come and help you.

These are some of the ways in which the Dagenham Baptist Church wants to be of service to the citizens of the Borough.

"I am among you as one that serveth"

—so said our Lord.

Although the telephone service has not been extensively used so far it is nevertheless an evidence of the churches' willingness to be of service at any time to anyone in any kind of need. For too long our thinking has been geared to "getting people in". It is now time that we returned to the New Testament emphasis on going to people where they are, not only to declare the Gospel but to demonstrate it. Our outreach is, we trust, actuated by love of Him who sends us to be among men as those who serve. "The love of Christ constraineth us."

In addition to the magazine which we supply without charge to those who are on our ever-increasing list of "contacts," we send greetings cards at Christmas and at Easter. The aim is to bring to the people a constant stream of reminders of God's care and of our interest.

Changes

Meanwhile the so-called normal activities of the churches proceeded, though not without some significant changes. At Chaplin Road, for example, the pattern of the morning service became that of a family hour of worship and teaching in which all age groups meet for worship at 11 o'clock and then separate into classes at 11.25 until 12. Lesson books are obtained from the American Southern Baptist Convention. At Oxlow Lane special youth services have become a feature of the church's programme. Becontree Avenue has introduced a regular Parade and Family Service once a month and a Midweek Fellowship for all age groups, and reports a steady increase in giving. In all our churches there are activities and organisations which cater for children, young people and adults.

We are glad to report that all our churches are using the new Baptist Hymn Book.

"KEY" TO THE PHOTOGRAPH on page 15

FRONT ROW (left to right):

Rev. J. J. Brown; Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Rev. J. H. G. Adam;
Rev. S. A. Turl;
The Mayor and Mayoress (the late Councillor and Mrs. W. A. Parish);
Rev. A. Stephens.

SECOND ROW (left to right):

Mr. H. Newby; Mr. J. Burman; Mr. E. Reynolds; Mr. L. Wilson;
Mr. S. Petts; Mr. F. Booth.

Operation Outreach

The Scheme is now in its third year, and the tempo of outreach has accelerated.

For eleven days in September a team composed of the Faculty and students from Spurgeon's College worked with members of the four Baptist Churches in an endeavour to communicate the Gospel to the people of the neighbourhood.

Results

A number of people, about fifty, gave some indication of faith in Jesus Christ for the first time. Believers were quickened to more devoted service. The churches took fresh heart. Interest was shown by a large number of people who have attended house groups, special meetings and services. An even larger number heard the Gospel in public houses, social clubs, schools, cinemas. Over a thousand children were present at the Saturday morning Cinema Club at which the Music Group played, sang and spoke. In the schools, when classes were over, many youngsters from the upper forms listened to music and stayed to ask questions about the Faith. In one instance a house group was arranged at the home of the church member so that the discussion could be continued. Two special meetings for young people brought over two hundred on each occasion to the Oxlow Lane church hall which was packed to overflowing. Youngsters were contacted also at County Youth Clubs, and at the local unit of the Sea Cadet Corps whose members needed little persuasion to parade to the Becontree Avenue Church on the second Sunday morning of the campaign. Opportunities in the factories were limited to Christian Fellowships.

Meetings for children were held at 5 o'clock on five evenings of the second week. The sum total of attendances was over three thousand. This had the effect of increasing the numbers in the Sunday Schools.

There were united gatherings on the Saturday evenings. The first was of a semi-social character designed to make friends with people. Various musical and vocal items were followed by a mock court scene

in which the church, in the person of the local ministers, was on trial accused of unwarranted intrusion into the lives of gullible people! It was a novel method of presenting the Gospel. The second Saturday saw a number of church members representing various walks of life (they included an ambulance driver, a school teacher, a shop steward, a secretary and a housewife) interviewed by the Principal, Dr. G. R. Beasley-Murray, with a view to drawing out their Christian experience.

An unplanned feature of the campaign was the establishment of two coffee clubs, one at Chaplin Road, the other at Wood Lane, where the premises lent themselves to the purpose. The rooms were suitably decorated with contemporary trimmings, a record player provided the appropriate music, tables were set out to accommodate small groups, and the "mods" and "rockers" came in good numbers.

One significant visit was paid by members of the campaign team to a well-known club for the blind, with which a permanent liaison has now been formed.

A great deal of visiting was done by the men from the College accompanied by church members. The preliminary survey had proved valuable in eliminating unnecessary calls and in preparing the way for further visits. A long list of promising contacts has been drawn up so that further visits can be made and invitations sent.

Films were used to good effect on several occasions. They included "The Shield of Faith," "Power of the Resurrection" and the Family of God series. Children enjoyed "The Candlemaker" and Jungle Doctor film strips.

Another special feature of the mission was the exhibition of valuable ancient Bibles and manuscripts which was presented at the Rectory Library. The material was kindly loaned by Mr. A. H. Philpot of Ingatestone, a member of Spurgeon's College Council. This caught the attention of the numerous visitors to the library.

On most mornings of the campaign period the college team assembled for corporate worship which was conducted by members of the Faculty, the Chairman of the College Council and the President of the Essex Baptist Association. Communion Services were held on the first and last mornings. These occasions proved to be of great spiritual value for the team and for those church members who were able to attend.

Devotions were followed by reports from each centre — these were always interesting, sometimes humorous, occasionally thrilling. The day's tasks were then assigned and discussed. This session gave a sense of unity to the whole venture and dissipated any disadvantages which might have been felt by the divisions of the team into four sections operating in different areas.

Publicity

Publicity consisted of three thousand leaflets in the form of a diary of events giving full details of all that was happening in each area. Three thousand copies of a special issue of THE DAGENHAM BAPTIST were available for use in visitation during the campaign.



Large and small hoardings carried the motif of a red slanted cross bearing the words "Focus on God". It was designed by one of the church members. Separate leaflets were used for features such as the Youth Rendezvous, and special invitations were prepared for house parties which were organised on the principle of the host inviting neighbours, relatives and other friends together with such suitable "contacts" as were provided by the visitation. It is a fact that some of the house groups were not very successful. In some

instances no "outsider" came. But several groups were useful in bringing a number of people together to listen and talk about the Gospel. The United Society for Christian Literature kindly supplied Lutterworth Leaflets for distribution.

Catering arrangements for this large team were carried out successfully. The ladies of the churches provided well-stocked larders, and they served excellent meals. On week-days the mid-day meal was served for the entire team at the Civic Restaurant, an arrangement in which we were greatly helped by the Borough Catering Manager and his staff, and at week-ends hospitality was given by church members in their homes.

Follow-up

Vital follow-up work continues. Those who professed faith in Christ are being personally visited. Enquirers are being counselled individually and in classes. Children's meetings were continued for a few weeks in two of the churches. The Coffee Club was continued at Chaplin Road, and this has led to the formation of a meeting-point for teenagers on two nights each week. A regular midweek meeting for young believers has been started in connection with Oxlow Lane, and a new weekly Bible Study meeting has commenced at Wood Lane. House groups with an evangelistic purpose have been arranged in several homes. The visitation programme continues.

Not the least important discovery of "Operation Outreach" is the fact that industrial man can be reached by a Christian fellowship that really cares and is prepared to go to him with the Good News.

Financially the Mission cost about £450, all of which was received from individual friends and churches who showed a practical interest in the work.

Footnote: The story of this campaign has been compiled, tape-recorded and illustrated with 35mm. coloured transparencies.

What of the Future?

Priorities

The church must be the church whether it is represented in Dagenham or anywhere else. We must therefore continue to be a company of people whose hearts are lifted up to God in worship and whose hands are stretched out to the neighbourhood in willing service. Worship, fellowship, outreach — these are our priorities. All our planning will be done with this in mind. Successful events, such as those associated with Easter and Christmas, will be repeated. New ideas will be introduced. We expect to see at least one new church building erected during 1964. This will be the responsibility of the members at Becontree Avenue where there is at present only one building in which to hold services, parades, meetings, classes, socials and clubs. A sanctuary is sorely needed, set apart for a quality of worship which will sustain the life of the church and in which children and young people can be trained to “give unto the Lord the glory which is due unto His Holy Name”. It is an immense task. The cost will be £17,500. But the measure of the enthusiasm and the giving can be seen from the fact that a static building fund rocketed from £1,500 in April, 1963, to £2,200 by the end of the same year. In view of rising costs and immediate needs it is imperative that this building should proceed forthwith. It is hoped that it will strengthen the witness of this church in the locality, and that it will contribute effectively to the Scheme. The new church will be erected on the plot of ground immediately adjacent to the existing building which will now be the church hall.

New Look

Chaplin Road premises have already begun to show a new look as the result of the external work on the church building, and the heating system is more efficient; but there is urgent need of interior decoration, and the Leaguers' Hall (so called because it was erected by the contribution of members of the Dagenham Helpers League founded by the late Hugh McCullough) clamours for a repaint. These works will stretch the financial resources of the membership to the limit.

Renovation

Voluntary workers at Oxlow Lane have panelled the walls of the church with skill and effectiveness, and they have also renovated and added to the equipment of the kitchen. But there is need for a minister's vestry, cloakroom accommodation and other extension and redecoration work. Meanwhile the membership is committed to raising £3,000 plus interest for the Manse which was purchased at the end of 1962. The fact that over £300 was raised in the first year speaks for itself.

Need

It is hardly possible for the local churches to meet all these commitments alone in addition to the usual running costs. The continued assistance of Grants and donations will be required in order that the Scheme may continue to operate in all its aspects and to extend its service. Nevertheless, the question of Christian Stewardship in relation to money, time and talents is to be given serious consideration. The next Saturday Conference for Deacons will have this as its theme, and will be led by one of the newly appointed Baptist Union Advisors on Christian Stewardship.

Ministers and churches believe that God has placed them in this industrial community “for such a time as this,” that He is revitalising us for His service and sending us out to make disciples, to baptise them and to teach them. It is ours to obey. But we dare not, and do not go alone. Of this we are reminded in the motto which has been accepted by all our churches for 1964.

THE MIGHTY GOD

BE STRONG AND OF A GOOD COURAGE; BE NOT AFRAID,
NEITHER BE THOU DISMAYED FOR THE LORD THY GOD IS
WITH THEE WHITHERSOEVER THOU GOEST.

Be not faithless but believing.

In this confidence we would launch out into the deep of the incoming tide.

We are debtors

Moderators

The formation of the ministerial team brought to an end the faithful work of two Moderators and a Lay Pastor. Our thanks are due to Mr. Norman W. Andrews for his leadership at Becontree Avenue; to Mr. Stanley Petts for his work at Chaplin Road; and to Mr. Frank Booth for his service to Oxlow Lane over a period of twenty years.

Money

Material blessings have come as an encouragement to the ministers and churches. For example, the restrictions which prevented the sale of the piece of land bought by the Chaplin Road church in 1936 were unaccountably but happily removed. The proceeds were used to clear a debt of six hundred pounds on the Goresbrook Road Manse (towards which a generous donor had already contributed two hundred pounds), and to replace the ancient heating system in the church and hall with modern electrical equipment, and to carry out some major reconstructions. A new garage was supplied after the old one had been damaged in a gale. As if this were not enough, a group of friends provided a new car for the Senior Minister.

Advisors

The Advisory Committee meets quarterly to receive reports and to discuss the work. It is ably chaired by Mr. Norman W. Andrews. Secretarial work is done by Mr. A. O. Edwards and Miss Constance Stevens. Mr. G. D. Whale has given excellent service as Treasurer following a worthy predecessor Mr. Sleeman White. We are grateful to them both as we are to Mrs. Dorothy Lawrence who succeeded to the treasurership in January, 1964. Our Area Superintendent, the Rev. J. H. G. Adam, has given unstinting support to the Scheme since its inception. The representatives of the Union, the Association and the churches have helped greatly by their fellowship and counsel. Grants from the Home Work Fund, without which the Scheme would be quite impossible at the present time, and from the Association, are

much appreciated. Our trustees, the London Baptist Property Board, have also been of help to us in connection with premises and loans.

Annual Meeting

The first annual meeting of the Dagenham Scheme owed much of its success to the organising work of Mrs. Pam Ruffhead. It was a memorable occasion at which the guest speaker was the Rev. Dr. Ernest A. Payne, M.A., General Secretary of the Baptist Union of Great Britain and Ireland. The chair was taken by Mr. A. H. Philpot of Ingatestone; vocal items were rendered effectively by the Emmaus Singers from Romford. A report of the work was given by the Senior Minister in which he paid tribute to the work of his colleagues, the Rev. W. H. Campbell and Rev. Roy Cave. The Area Superintendent underlined the growing needs of the Scheme, especially the need for more personnel.

Postscript

contributed by

MR. NORMAN W. ANDREWS

Chairman of the Advisory Committee.

Dagenham is "export" conscious. Products from its major factories are sent in great quantity all over the world. The distorted view showing Dagenham as a hot-bed of troublemakers is far from the truth for the great majority of folk who work and live here are genuine and hard working, and not ashamed to be known as "working class." A very large number are employed in factories where the noise of vast machines and the continuous movement of the conveyor belt appear frightening to the outsider. These conditions do not encourage the development of individual personality and it is not surprising that modern man is insensitive to spiritual values. Material possessions are of prime importance and "religion" is considered to be irrelevant to life or an extra for those who want it!

The Christian Church in this environment has made little impact. Our Baptist witness in four centres of Dagenham has been maintained against appalling local indifference. The bridgeheads made years ago have been steadfastly held by the faithful few whose resources have always been stretched to the limit. It would not have been surprising if they had become dispirited in such discouraging conditions.

On the 17th November, 1959, the new ideas envisaged in the Dagenham Scheme were first outlined to one of the churches. Later the challenge of working together was put to all the churches by the Area Superintendent. By using to the full all available resources it was possible to go forward with the task of making Christ known in Dagenham. This vision fired the imagination of three of the churches. "The Dagenham Scheme" came into being and it was not long before the word "experiment" was dropped in favour of "prototype," for this scheme was seen to have tremendous potential.

As time has gone by the original idea has grown, and now the strength of a united Baptist witness is being felt. Under the wise and able leadership of the Senior Minister and his colleagues notable progress has been made and plans for the future expansion of the work are being developed from sound foundations.

As you have read the account of the "Scheme" in the preceding pages it is hoped that you will have sensed something of the thrill and urgency of the situation. Here is a church that in faith is leaving behind the security of tradition and launching out into the deep of new ventures. The ready support and encouragement of Baptists throughout the country have made the whole idea possible. God has richly blessed this fresh approach and a good start has been made. The battle is on and progress is being made yard by yard. No longer is the church on the defensive, the initiative has been seized and week by week in the local newspaper, in cinemas, in county youth clubs, in local factories and in a public house the gospel is being proclaimed. Opportunities that in former years were let slide are now being seized whenever possible.

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.

APPENDIX

DAGENHAM BAPTIST CHURCH

Ministers

- Senior Minister:* REV. J. J. BROWN, B.D.,
The Manse, Goresbrook Road, Dagenham, Essex.
Telephone No.: DOMinion 0187.
- Associate Ministers:* REV. W. H. CAMPBELL, B.Sc., B.D.,
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Telephone No.: DOMinion 0737.
- REV. ROY CAVE,
807 Dagenham Road, Dagenham.
Telephone No.: DOMinion 7628.

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Telephone: Romford 47608.
- Treasurer:*
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- CHAPLIN ROAD:* *Secretary:*
Miss K. VAUGHAN, 19 Maxey Road, Dagenham.
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Mr. A. GIBBENS, 25 Review Road, Dagenham.
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ADVISORY COMMITTEE

- Chairman:** Mr. NORMAN W. ANDREWS.
- Secretary:** Mr. A. O. EDWARDS,
72 Whalebone Lane South, Dagenham, Essex.
- Treasurer:** Mrs. DOROTHY LAWRENCE,
515 Upper Brentwood Road, Gidea Park, Essex.
- Area Superintendent:** Rev. J. H. G. ADAM, M.A.
- Minute Secretary:** Miss C. STEVENS.
- Representatives:** *Baptist Union:* Sister MARGARET JARMAN,
Rev. MELFYN W. POWELL, B.A., Mr. A. R. BENT.
Essex Baptist Association: Rev. T. W. SHEPHERD,
Mrs. YATES.
Local Churches: Mr. G. J. BURMAN, Mr. A. GIBBENS,
Mr. T. PERRYMEANT, Miss K. VAUGHAN,
Mr. R. WEBB, Mr. L. WILSON.

FIVE WAYS in which you can help . . .

- ONE . . .** By enrolling as a Friend of Dagenham. A donation of one pound per year will enable us to send you a magazine and an annual report.
- TWO . . .** By ordering THE DAGENHAM BAPTIST. It is normally issued quarterly. This can be sent direct for 4/3d. for six issues.
- THREE . . .** By sending a donation, large or small, to the Treasurer: Mrs. Dorothy Lawrence, 515 Upper Brentwood Road, Gidea Park, Essex.
- FOUR . . .** By supporting our annual meeting.
- FIVE . . .** By remembering our work constantly in your prayers.

"THE DAGENHAM STORY"

—an illustrated account of "Operation Outreach"
is available on application to

Rev. W. H. CAMPBELL, B.Sc., B.D.,
42 Winifred Road, Dagenham, Essex.

Please give alternative dates.
Contributions to cover the production and postage
will be appreciated.