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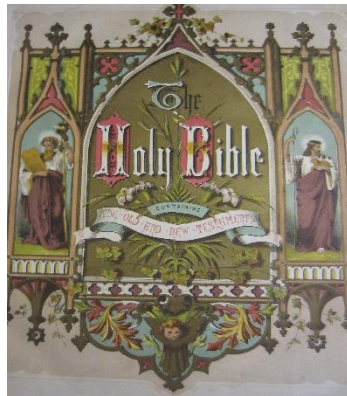
Short History

of

HILLCLIFFE

BAPTIST

CHURCH



It is a privilege to be part of a community of Christian believers which has such a long and interesting history as Hillcliffe Baptist Church. This congregation has praised, worshipped and followed Jesus Christ for nearly four hundred years. When one starts to think about the lives of the earliest Baptists at Hillcliffe, it is tempting to imagine the romance around those first people who met in each other's houses and in a barn on the site of the present chapel. But in reality, life for everyone in the early seventeenth century could be very harsh. The persecution of Baptists at that time was intense, and led to many imprisonments and deaths. The great conviction that the church members must have had, to risk these punishments for their faith, is truly inspiring.

EARLY BAPTIST HISTORY

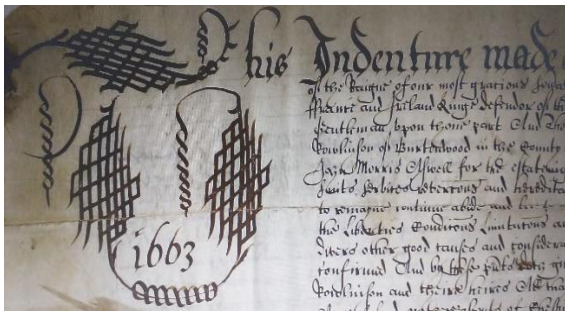
The origins of the Baptist Movement have been debated by many historians. Adult believers' baptism was the normal practice in the early church of Christ. However, tracing the Baptist movement back through groups of Christians such as Lollards, Waldensians and Mennonites, who practiced adult believers' baptism, does not allow us to claim a direct continuity between the early church of 1st century AD and the 21st century Baptist Church.

The Anabaptists

During the early sixteenth century Reformation, there was a public debate about infant baptism in Zurich, Switzerland, after which the city council decreed that all parents who had not had their children baptised must do so within a week or face banishment from the city. As a reaction to this Konrad Grebel and a few like-minded people re-baptised each other and founded a new church. In this way the Anabaptist movement was born. In a sense, the spiritual origin of the Baptist community can be traced to these events. The name 'Anabaptist' was attached to the church at Hillcliffe in their earliest legal documents.

However, the theological origin of the Baptist church at Warrington came from Congregationalist churches founded in London in the early seventeenth century. Some of these churches did not separate completely from the Church of England but declared themselves, in the Confession of 1644, to be ‘Particular Baptists’. They were deeply influenced by the teachings of John Calvin and believed that Christ died to save a particular group, ‘the elect’.

EARLY HILLCLIFFE HISTORY



Indenture 1663



Worship in a barn

There is considerable debate about the date when Hillcliffe church was founded. It is probable that the first congregation of Baptists worshipped together in Warrington in the mid seventeenth century, and there is evidence of their existence from a letter written to the Baptist church in Hexham in 1654. Some writers trace the founding of Hillcliffe to John Wigan, a soldier in Cromwell’s army, who was prominent in the Baptist church in Manchester. Two of his daughters married men associated with the Warrington Baptists and his name appears as a witness on early Hillcliffe documents. In 1661, William Morris, Wigan’s son-in-law, granted a lease of land at Hillcliffe and in 1663 his son John granted that the ground was to be ‘used and imployed and shall continue remayne and bee for the use of a Buriall place for all such person and persons and those people which are commonly called Anabaptists’.

Myths and Traditions

Some of the early Hillcliffe myths quoted by historians are very questionable. There was some romance about the church meeting at a secluded spot which was ‘removed from all public roads, enclosed by a dense wood, admirably suited for an illegal conventicle’. Another tradition is that the church was situated near the county boundary so that worshippers could cross the Mersey to avoid persecution by the county authorities, ‘as a Lancashire writ could not be served in Cheshire, nor a Cheshire writ in Lancashire, the Cheshire Baptists often worshipped at Warrington (Roe Buck Yard Meeting House in Bridge

Street) and the Lancashire Baptists at Hill Cliffe'. There is a myth that the early worshippers hid from the authorities in the cellar under Chapel House and even that there was a trap door in the floor of the pulpit for the preacher to escape. However, these myths have no historical basis.

There are some traditions associated with the history of Hillcliffe which are interesting but also questionable. Some nineteenth century historians attempted to date the origin of the church to the fourteenth century based on a gravestone dated 1357. Other gravestones claiming to show the dates of 1522 and 1622 are clearly forgeries.

There is also a tradition that Oliver Cromwell worshipped at Hillcliffe after the Battle of Winwick in 1648. Historical evidence makes this very unlikely, but it is probable that the Baptist soldiers garrisoned in Warrington supported the local church and one can even identify a Baptist army chaplain from Cheshire, Thomas Smallwood, who may have preached at Hillcliffe after the battle and hence been the origin of the tradition.

Some traditions do have more credibility. The early church probably baptised believers in Dipping Brook; the stream at Lower Walton and even in the River Mersey, late at night. Members certainly travelled long distances in the seventeenth century, to worship at Hillcliffe and the pastors travelled to Liverpool, Nantwich and (Great) Warford, near Alderley Edge, to take services.

EARLY EVANGELISM and CHURCH PLANTING



Warford



Nantwich



Little Leigh



Milton

Members of Hillcliffe supported many local Baptist churches. For example, Daniel Fabius moved to Everton and established the first Baptist church in Liverpool in 1700, and a letter written in 1757, shows that two members at Hillcliffe were transferred to Warford church, one of whom, Mr John Taylor, was ordained pastor. The early Baptist churches in Nantwich and Little Leigh were supported by Hillcliffe. In the nineteen century the Hough family established Milton Baptist Church. These churches continue to worship today.

SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

The start of the Baptist Church in Warrington and Hillcliffe is likely to have been around 1650 at the time of the end of the Civil War. The Warrington church was certainly visited by a very charismatic preacher at that time, called Thomas Tillam and there is a claim that his wife, Jane, was a member at Hillcliffe. Another evangelist from Hexham, called Hugh Heslop, may also have joined the Warrington Church, as his name is mentioned frequently amongst those arrested as illegal Baptists in 1664 to 1666, and Maria Heslop's grave of 1664 is the first authenticated gravestone in the burial ground.

The first recorded pastor at Hillcliffe is Thomas Lowe. His gravestone is dated 1695. There is evidence in Rev. Henry Maurice's diary that Lowe was preaching in the area in 1672 and he is said to have attended the General Assemblies of Baptists in London in 1689 and 1692.

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

The members at Hillcliffe in the eighteenth century were mainly small-holders, blacksmiths, tailors and weavers. Imagine their suspicions, during a time of persecution, when a well-dressed London business man and his family attended one Sunday in 1683. This man was Rowland Hall and his generosity to those in need, singled him out for special mention in the church archives.

We are very fortunate to have the church accounts from 1703 to 1772 and these provide a fascinating insight into eighteenth century church life. In 1705 Rev. Francis Turner became pastor and he worked very hard to provide services for Baptist communities throughout Cheshire and Lancashire. In return these small churches paid 'quarters' to Hillcliffe. Expenditure at that time included 'paid Rich^d Yeates (the sexton) his half year's wages 6s. 0d.' (30p today) and 'paid Mary Dunbabin for washing the baptising garments 6d.' (2¹/₂p).

Early Hillcliffe pastors often served without receiving a salary. One pastor, in 1750, named John Macgowan, became famous as a writer under the pseudonym 'The Shaver'. It is recorded that he was a baker in Bridge Street as well as being pastor, and that he was 'a caustic, controversial man'.

In 1780 Alexander Harper was called to be pastor. He was in post for two years or so, when the church 'endeavoured to dismiss him'. The cause of his dismissal, according to one writer was owing to his misconduct, but others, accused him of having 'embraced erroneous doctrine'. However, Mr Harper refused to hand over the chapel keys and the church had to commence legal proceedings against him. The expenses were so heavy, that to meet them, they sold the furniture belonging to the Warrington Meeting House; and sometime

after, the Hillcliffe Chapel was closed for about ten years. This was romanticised into a vision that ‘during this time of gloom, the old chapel was never forsaken. A band of ... women met each Sunday in the old vestry to weep and to pray, amid the ruins of former glory’. The continuation, or rebirth, of the church was due to a godly man from Latchford, Mr John Thompson. He was a schoolmaster and from the age of thirty he began preaching at Methodist meetings. He became convinced of the importance of believers’ baptism and having been baptised himself, he baptised those who professed a belief in the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the trustees at Hillcliffe offered to rent the meeting-house to him for fifteen guineas, with interest. This offer, he gladly accepted and took possession in 1792. He worked very hard, preaching three times on Sundays, and every week day evening at Hillcliffe and the numerous village meetings around and about, until at his death in 1825, when there were 170-180 members of the church.

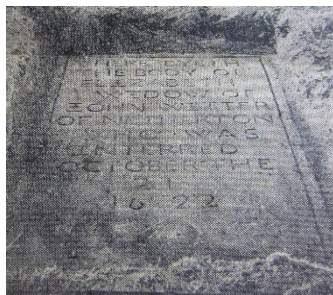
NINETEENTH CENTURY

James Bradford took over as pastor when Mr Thompson died in 1825. Mr Bradford was ‘a man eminently distinguished for holiness of life’. Sadly, at the age of forty-four he ‘caught a (fatal) cold’ travelling back from Liverpool, where he had been collecting donations for a new chapel at Little Leigh.

Resurrectionists attack Hillcliffe’s Burial-ground

On the night of 2nd-3rd October 1827 the quiet of Hillcliffe burial-ground was violated by resurrectionists who opened the grave of Jane Fairclough and took away her body. In March 1828, two medical men, were found guilty of unlawful possession of the corpse. The presiding judge's comment, ‘that the disinterment of bodies for dissection was an offence liable to punishment’, prompted Parliament to establish the 1828 Select Committee on Anatomy, which led to the Anatomy Act of 1832.

Gravestone Forgeries



Gravestone dates altered 1692 to 1622; 1714 to 1522

During the nineteenth century a number of the gravestones were altered to make the graveyard appear older than it really was. The first alteration was the gravestone of Elizabeth Pycroft. The inscription originally read 'dyd Decemb^r 22 1714' and this can be verified by the date of her will. However, it was made to read 'dyd Dec 1522 age 14'. The alterations were probably made during the pastorates of Mr. Enoch Lloyd or Mr. William Jones (1831-1837).

The Rev. Abraham Kenworthy became pastor in May 1839 and so began a long association with the Kenworthy family. Other family names are also found repeatedly over the centuries, particularly Dunbabin, Bradford and Hough.

TWENTIETH CENTURY

In the twentieth century, minutes from church meetings hint at the celebrations of Christ's church. For example, In September 1929 the minutes include a eulogy to Thomas Grounds, an Honorary Deacon, who worshipped at Hillcliffe for 51 years 'having rendered loyal and faithful service in the cause of Christ & the Church... his cheerful personality and self-sacrificing labour could always be in evidence as an inspiration to all & there will always remain in this corner of God's vineyard, memorials of unstinted devotion to the future wellbeing of all who may become his successors in labour within and without the sanctuary'.

Six men who gave their lives in World War One are buried at Hillcliffe. They deserve our undying gratitude for their sacrifice. After the war, Hillcliffe purchased land to the west of the burial ground and a donation was received for the upkeep of the graveyard and the installation of a new pipe organ. The church also enjoyed sports, and in 1930 a Recreation Club and tennis courts are mentioned in the church minutes. There was a football pitch on the site and; 'because of the slope, Hillcliffe rarely lost at home!'

There are five graves at Hillcliffe of soldiers and airmen killed during the Second World War. At this time local people lived through the stress of bombing raids, as an entry in the minutes of Oct 29th 1940 shows. Mr Dennett of Hillcliffe asked 'for the Council to supply an Air Raid [Shelter] & to offer land for that purpose'. There is no evidence that the council took up the offer. Food production was vital and in July 1943 'it was decided to grant a small portion of ground next to the Caretaker's Fence to the Church as a vegetable plot, all the work to be done by the Young people under instructions by the officers of the Church & school'.



Tom Marriott



Brian Payne



John & Marjorie Newton

The Twentieth century in general, and the second half in particular, was a time of numerous committee meetings in the church. From May 1952 to July 1958 there was even a committee producing minutes of choir meetings, with a President and Vice-Presidents elected. This is a period within the memory of current Hillcliffe members and many anecdotes are told. For example, in 1955 Tom Marriott was appointed pastor. Mr. Marriott was from Australia, where he had left his fiancée. She subsequently came over to Warrington and was not impressed (with the weather apparently) and so the relationship ended. Mr. Marriott caused some upset by marrying a girl who had been engaged to the senior deacon's grandson.

On January 9th 1969 a tragedy struck when Brian Payne, pastor since 1965, was killed in a road traffic accident. He was driving a three wheeled Robin Reliant car, coming back from a pastoral visit to Risley Prison when the car skidded on the ice and crashed into an Oil Tanker. The whole community was devastated and, at a special memorial service, 'a congregation of about 300 of all denominations attended'.

In 1969, the church secretary wrote to 'a young man who had served overseas, inviting him to speak'. This young man (of 61 years of age) was John Newton, who was subsequently appointed as pastor. He was in post for six years and remained a prominent member at Hillcliffe until his death at the age of 100. As missionaries in China, John and his wife Marjorie were held at the Lunghwa camp for over three years after the Japanese invasion in 1941. In 1948 he had a terrible accident after transporting people to safety following the outbreak of the Chinese civil war. Thankfully he was saved by a Mennonite community. Subsequently he worked as a teacher and missionary in Malaysia for a further fourteen years.

Other members of Hillcliffe who have worked in the mission field are Harry and Phyllis Aspinall who spent ten years in northern India; Doug and Joy Wood who ministered for twelve years to pilgrims at the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem and Paul and Ruth Roach who worked for a Christian charity providing Eye

Care in Afghanistan between 2007 and 2016, followed by two years working in Delhi, India.

BUILDINGS



17th Century



18th Century



19th Century



20th Century

Since the earliest evidence of the Warrington Baptist congregation meeting in William Morris' barn at Hillcliffe in the 1650s, there have been many changes to the building over the centuries. In 1663, when land was granted for a Baptist burial ground, the building was converted for use as a chapel. The first chapel probably had a thatched roof until 1723, when the purchase of slates was recorded in the church accounts. In 1730 a new minister's house was built.

The chapel was enlarged and modernised in 1841 and a plaque with this date is still over the old entrance on the north side of the building. Many further extensions have been added since then. A pipe organ, with accompanying extension, was built in 1923 but retuning this regularly was expensive, and with the latest enlargement of the sanctuary in 2004, the organ was removed and apparently was last heard of in a Japanese wedding venue.

From 1715 until 1945 the church had stables, and there was only a small area against Red Lane for parking cars. A major change in 1982 was a new access road to an off-road car park, with the opening two years later of the 'Link' which joined the schoolroom to the sanctuary and placed the entrance on the opposite side of the building.



Entrance before 1984



Outdoor service 1995



Stables

GRAVEYARD



Peter Stirrup 1766 Rev James Hemsley Wilkinsons James Kenworthy

The Baptist burial-ground at Hillcliffe dates from 1663. The oldest gravestone, not visible today, accepted by historians, is to Maria Heslop dated February 1664. Today the oldest visible grave is in memory of Peter Stirrup in 1766. The gravestone of Rev. Hemsley, his wife Ann and their children reveals the tragedy of infant mortality. Also visible today is the grave of John and Mary Wilkinson who left Hillcliffe during a dispute in 1848 and went on to found Latchford Baptist Church. Of note is a large tomb to James Kenworthy who wrote the first 'History of the Baptist Church at Hillcliffe' at the end of the nineteenth century.

SUNDAY SCHOOL



1953

1964

Hillcliffe has always had a strong mission to teach the Gospel to the children. In the nineteenth century about one hundred children attended Sunday school regularly and this number increased to 126 by 1910. At that time there was one teacher to fifteen children.

The Sunday School at Hillcliffe was very active in the twentieth century and minutes of the meetings give a good idea of the industry, not just through the numbers of teachers and scholars, but through all their activities, which are not traditionally associated with Sunday School. These activities included The Cradle Roll, The Sunday School Female Benevolent Society and numerous charity collections such as door-to-door collections for Dr Barnardo's

Campaign in the 1930s. At the end of the twentieth century the very popular 'Day Camp' was started. This week of activities for primary school children introduced them to the Good News of Jesus. Today the vital work of the Sunday School continues.

SIGNS OF THE TIMES

Researching through the Hillcliffe Baptist Church archives one unearths some startling facts which emphasise how different life was for our predecessors.

Health and Welfare

The burial ground records show that in 1802 there were 22 burials -7 adults and 15 children! If one was ever inclined to think that life was better 200 years ago, this fact reminds us of the high child mortality rate in those days. There are gravestones which tell of frequent early death such as that of Rev. James Hemsley 'who departed this life July 19th 1831 aged 43 years' and his wife Ann 'and their infant twins who departed this life April 28th 1818 in the 36th year of her age'. There are also records of destitution such as when Hillcliffe's pastor, James Bradford died in 1830, and his wife was left with nine children and no income. Problems of ageing and infirmity are highlighted in the reminiscences of Rev. John Thompson who restored the church after it was closed at the end of the eighteenth century and was the pastor for thirty-three years. At the end of his life, it is recorded that 'his mind is failing... but though he was too feeble to talk, it would greatly rejoice him to hear speak of Jesus and His great salvation'

Social Conscience

Hillcliffe has a long history of supporting church members and other individuals during times of sickness and need. In the early eighteenth century church accounts, there are numerous entries such as 'gave to a poor man 2s 0d' or 'given Bro. Wm. in his sickness 1s 0d'. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the church organised benevolent funds to support members at times of sickness or bereavement. The giving spirit of Hillcliffe has come down to the twenty-first century when over 15% of its income is given to various charities.

An inscription in a nineteenth century Bible at Hillcliffe reads:- **It's not what we gain, but what we give, That measures the worth of the life we live.**

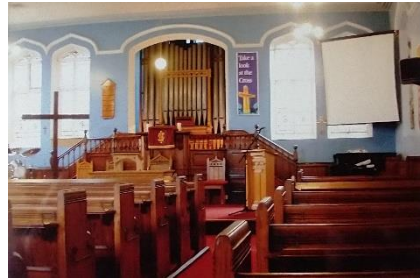
Comforts

Snippets from the old church accounts give some insight into how people's material comforts have improved. In 1707 the cash book records 6s. for straw.

This was more likely to have been to carpet the chapel floor than litter the stables. In the nineteenth century there was obvious joy at the new heating system being installed. In 1889 cushions were purchased from Messr Fletcher and Lee at a cost of £25. In the early twentieth century the box pews were replaced by pitch-pine pews which in turn were replaced by comfortable chairs in 2004.



Box Pews (19th)



Pitch Pine pews (20th)



Chairs (21st century)

Baptisms

In the nineteenth century a permit costing one shilling was required for drawing water and the cost of carrying water for baptism was 2s 6d. A current member vividly remembers being baptised on a winter's evening in the unheated baptistry. But this was better than the seventeenth century, when adults undergoing baptism might well have had a very cold dip in the local river at night. Some historians maintain that 'members of Hillcliffe were baptised in Rhual baptistry' near Mold, thirty miles away.

Services

Baptist services lasted a long time in the seventeenth century. Sometimes there were several sermons, without any music or singing. Even more recently there were sometimes mutterings about the length of the services, such as the criticism recorded in the Church meeting minutes in 1971. If the services could be long, spare a thought for the trustees, deacons and church members who had to sit through long debates about church issues. Those of us that have been there, can sympathise with Mr. J Lomas when he proposed that 'the meeting be arranged to terminate at 1000 p.m. and not carry on any later. Mr Hodges (the pastor) seconded the motion and it was agreed to unanimously!'

Theology

One theological issue which caused great fervour in the seventeenth century but is not appreciated today, was the question of whether Baptists should be 'particular'. The Calvinistic concept of the 'elect' is anathema to almost all Baptists today. Hillcliffe circumvented the Trust Deeds statement that all

members must have undergone adult believer's baptism by creating an 'associate members' category in 1996, whereby non-baptised members have all the rights and responsibilities of full members, except voting for a new pastor and constitutional changes. However, in the eighteenth century a commentator could write that 'the good people of Hill Cliffe were very particular, and would, I doubt not, carefully eschew everything associated with general redemption, even singing, if so associated'. Other local congregations were not so strict. Another commentator in the nineteenth century wrote that 'the Lancashire Baptists were neither very general or very particular. Sights may be seen and sounds heard in some of their sanctuaries, which would have sorely grieved their ancestors who came down from the Hill Cliffe of Cheshire or the fells of Yorkshire to baptise in the streams of the county'.

Finances

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, wealthy new members of the church, such as Rowland Hall, were written into the church's history because of their rarity. But in times when people's income was very low, in a congregation without any rich benefactor, charges had to be made, such as the Pew Rent of 1841-1873. This was set at 1s 6d per person, at a time when the church's income for the year was just below £13. The nineteenth century revival almost doubled this income in the next thirty years. There were ways of increasing income which would seem odd to us today. For example, new members were charged an 'entrance fee' and required to purchase a Church Rule Book for 5s 6d. In 1838 to 1842, ten ladies were fined 2s 6d each for 'not serving steward'.

Church Life

One surprising fact that comes out in the early church history is how far apart the members lived. The earliest church members who wrote the letter to Hexham church in 1654, are said to have lived at Reddish; Warrington; Whitley Green; Chester; Liverpool and Weaverham. Many of them would have had to travel considerable distances of up to twenty-five miles to have met and worshipped together. There are reminiscences of a family in the early nineteenth century, travelling to church by boat over the Mersey from Bold; a great commitment to fellowship.

Another feature in the early eighteenth century was how far the pastor travelled to conduct services in outlying daughter churches. One of the main expenses when Rev. Turner was pastor was the cost of hiring a horse for his peripatetic ministry. There are frequent entries in the church accounts such as 'pd for Bro. Turnor's horse to Liverpoole 2s. 0d.'

During the period 1834 to 1841 a record of the conduct of church members was kept which shows that church discipline was very important. The records show:-

A man excluded for profligate conduct

Another, who died at the age of 25 years, was described as 'being a backslider in his last days'

One, for evil language and another for drunkenness.

One woman was said to have kept a disorderly house and to have encouraged sinful practices.

It is true to say that Hillcliffe tries very hard to live peaceably with everyone, especially its immediate neighbours. One can imagine the anguished discussion in the Diaconate meeting on Oct 25th 1930 when they received a 'petition signed by 49 grave owners that games played on the field adjoining, was causing annoyance. After lengthy discussion it was proposed that the secretary should acknowledge receipt of same but no action be taken other than to ask the officers of the Church to see that all games be played as quietly & reverently as possible'.

Youth

Then there is the attitude of the church leadership to the children and youth of the day. In 1930 there were 'heated discussions' about the conduct of participants of the Recreation Club especially on the tennis courts. The conditions were as follows- That only such games shall be played as are approved by the Deacons; that children are only allowed on the courts when accompanied by a parent or guardian; that on the conclusion of a set, should there be players waiting, the players finishing must vacate the court.

The 'swinging sixties' was a time of assertiveness by the youth throughout the country and Hillcliffe was not exempt. In May 1964, 'A letter [was] received from the [Youth Club] committee asking permission to raise the number allowed membership and to be allowed to hear a Beat Group once a month'.

Two weeks later, 'the matter of the Beat Group was discussed with consideration given to the noise involved- it was decided unanimously that permission would be withheld'.

Pastor

Hillcliffe church has had many extraordinary men (no women yet) appointed as pastor. The pastor, of course, was a man of some standing in the community, and it is no surprise that Rev. Jones' wife had a maid-servant in 1920. However, the fact that they had to use an outside toilet across the yard until 1925 puts life in those times into perspective. Even in the early twentieth century a pastor's

position was not beyond criticism. There is an entry in the minutes in 1925, reprimanding Rev. Humphrey Chalmers for taking holiday without due notice.

Sexton

Then the pastor moved into a manse and a caretaker and his wife lived in Chapel house. They were employed not only to tend the church buildings and graveyard, but also to dig the graves. This was not without problems, as in 1983, when the sexton was accused of ‘two serious errors in digging the wrong graves’ and ‘disrespect shown to mourners by appearing at the church porch in his working clothes’.

The problem of dealing with inflation at 50% per year in 1975, caused a lot of discussion in the Diaconate with the conclusion that there ‘might come a time when we should have to do without sexton or caretaker’.

TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

And now as we move into our own time, we find the strands of Hillcliffe history connecting with us today. Not only do we see the path behind us, but hopefully we see where our present time lies on God’s timeline and where our hope will take us in the future. It is well to realise, as we look back at the path laid down by the Baptists community at Hillcliffe, that the present-day church is laying the path for those in the future, towards the New Jerusalem.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century Hillcliffe had an enviable problem. Too many people were attending services especially from the aspect of fire safety.

In 2002 the church received a substantial donation and therefore discussions began at the church meetings about enlarging the sanctuary and school room and/or increasing the ministry personnel. The church appointed a part-time assistant pastor and a youth co-ordinator in 2003/4 and enlarged the sanctuary from 132 to 255 seating capacity.

In 2012 Mr Stuart McPhail was appointed and in partnership with his wife Katharine, they have ministered over the last eight years. Since 2013 the church has benefited from an Annual 40 Days of Prayer and Fasting; weekly Hillcliffe café and a monthly Seniors’ Lunch, in addition to many Christian activities for children, youth and adults. The youth work is led by John Harper. A deep pastoral commitment runs through the numerous house-groups that meet regularly. The church has supported Stockton Heath Festival and Walking Day and established an annual Primary School Gospel Choir Concert.



Stuart & Katharine

McPhail



John Harper



Stephanie Darling



Nick Byles

Current Overseas Mission

Stephanie Darling went out to Africa in 2008 with 'Serving in Mission' (SIM) to work in the Bible College of Malawi, which trains pastors for the Africa Evangelical Church, the Zambezi Evangelical Church and the Brethren in Christ Church. As a lecturer, Stephanie has taught a variety of different Bible Book Studies, some Doctrinal Courses, Christian Counselling and World Religions. In over ten years of service, Stephanie has seen the Lord working behind the scenes, answering prayers, building His church and sending the first Malawian Missionaries out to work in Mozambique.

Nick and Liz Byles are currently in Phnom Penn, Cambodia where Nick is Project Manager for an Information Technology company.

The church also supports mission partners in Lebanon and Albania.

Lockdown 2020

The church has had to function differently during the 'lockdown' caused by the Covid 19 pandemic. Normal fellowship and worship have been suspended but Stuart and Katharine have organised services online and an outdoor service was held at Hillcliffe again in early September. A limited number of people can now worship in the sanctuary.

https://www.hillcliffe.info/Groups/348673/Sunday_9_August.aspx



Outdoor Service Sept. 2020



Hillcliffe today



At the foot of the cross

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TndMsometAU>

We have now experienced six months of living through the Covid 19 pandemic and we pray that the Lord will support us and lead us safely through this difficult time.

A 'History' is only a snapshot taken from one particular point in time, but the history of Hillcliffe Baptist Church over the last three hundred and seventy years deserves attention. Consider how many people have given their lives to the Lord in this place, over all those years. From the first small group meeting to worship in William Morris' barn, to the powerful witness of Hillcliffe church today. One of the features of twenty-first century Hillcliffe is that it is exciting and full of spiritual energy. But it also has a long and rich history to look back on, which should be an inspiration for the future. As long as the church follows God's Word, there is no need to worry about what is to come.