

Christ Church Institute

The idea of purchasing a building to use as a second church hall was first raised in 1914 and was dropped when war broke out. It was not until March 1919 that 15 Balls Road was bought for £1,025 when it was put up for auction. The hall was bought by the congregation in memory of the sixty men from the parish who died in the war.

The opening ceremony was performed on Friday 25th July 1919 at a Garden Party. It was also a welcome home from active service for the curate, Rev W.I. Hopkins. The house and garden at the back was inspected by a large number of parishioners. There were eight rooms available for activities and these were in constant use. During the week a Young Men's Club for over seventeen year olds, the Scouts, Rovers, Cubs, Guides and Brownies all met in the evenings.

There were also a Band of Hope and Mothers Union meetings. On Sundays the large room at the back of the house was in use all day:

11am - Children's Service

3pm - Sunday School and Bible Classes for Boys and Girls

6.30pm - Children's Evening Service

8.15pm - October to May, a Mission Service run by young men

The Institute continued to be well used between the two World Wars and until about 1960, when church activities declined, the Institute was sold to the Boys Brigade who used it until 1991 when it was sold to the Scouts.

Overseas Missionaries

The Worthington Sisters

It is not clear when Christ Church started to support missionary work abroad but by 1898 there is mention of an annual Sale of Work to raise funds for C.M.S.

The sale lasted two days, November 24th and 25th. On the first day, His Worship the Mayor was the Opener and Rev G. Hartford- Battersby opened the second day. The sale was a great success and realised £237, of which £202 went to C.M.S. and £35 to the Zenaana Society.

In 1899, C.M.S. celebrated its centenary and there were special rallies in London at the Albert Hall and Exeter Hall.

In Birkenhead, the week of April 23rd - 30th was observed as Centenary Week. Special sermons were preached on Sunday 23rd and the following day there was a

public meeting at the Association Hall in Grange Road when the Bishop of Chester and Canon Robson, delivered a course of sermons to awaken interest and give information. Children's meetings were also arranged.

On April 20th a great meeting was held in the Philharmonic Hall in Liverpool. The Hall was packed. The Bishop of Liverpool was in the Chair and the chief speaker was the Bishop of Hereford.

As a result of these meetings two members of Christ Church offered to go abroad. They were Non and Eleanor Worthington, daughters of John Worthington, who played an important part in church life and was both a deanery and diocesan representative.

Nora was born on October 12th 1868, baptized by the Rev Dr Blakeney and confirmed by Bishop Stubbs. She was a member of the Young ladies Bible Class and later a teacher in the Sunday School. After some training in management she was put in charge of the YWCA Home at Great Malvern. She was accepted by C.M.S. on May 16th 1899 and sailed for Osaka, Japan on November 6th 1899.

She worked in Ashiya and then in Kune for many years. She finally retired and returned to England in April 1931 and died in London on February 7th, 1944. Christ Church congregation pledged to support her financially in addition to their annual subscriptions to C.M.S.

The cost was reckoned to be £80~£100 a year and a new organisation was started to collect this amount, run by the Misses Wolstenholmes. Her sister Eleanor, who was nine years older, was superintendent of Liverpool Y.W.C.A when she was accepted as a C.M.S. missionary on 4th July 1899. She sailed to Muttra in India on October 19th of that year. Later she worked in Meerut, India until her resignation in June 1920. She died in Dartford in January 1932.

Both sisters wrote regularly to keep the congregation informed of their work. Copies of their letters are kept at the C.M.S. Headquarters in London.

Henry Morgan - The Chemist

In 1902 Henry Morgan, a Liverpool-born chemist who was worshipping at Christ Church, heard that a chemist was needed in China. He was well qualified and a demonstrator in Chemistry at the Liverpool School of Pharmacy. He was accepted by C.M.S. and after missionary training sailed on November 4th 1902 to Hangchow. He was 34 years of age at the time and was placed in a large hospital where he had oversight of the Dispensary and Laboratory. He returned to England in March 1910 and resigned from C.M.S. the following year. He died in 1955.

Miss E.F. Grimwood

Miss Grimwood was a teacher and her family worshipped at St Paul's Church in Argyle Street until it closed. Then they moved to Christ Church and Fanny Grimwood became well known to many of our congregation as our missionary in Nigeria. Miss Grimwood taught in Ibadan College and later became Headmistress of Lagos High School. When she retired she returned to Birkenhead and worshipped at Christ

Church with her sisters. After her death in 1968 her past pupils and friends in Nigeria sent us a large crucifix Ma token of their love and appreciation of all she had done for them. This is now hung in the choir vestry. Some older members of our congregation may remember the Nigerian students who lodged with Miss Grimwood's sister in Gorsefield Road. They worshipped with us while they were studying either nursing at Liverpool Royal Hospital or teaching at St Katherine's College in Liverpool.

Eva 'Tommy' Smythe

In 1931 another member of Christ Church went abroad on missionary service. Eva went to China with the China Inland Mission. First she was sent to Glasgow to study evangelism, basic medicine and pharmacy. She needed a knowledge of medicine because an important way of gaining a hearing for the Christian Gospel was through healing the sick.

Eva carried medicines as well as tracts around with her. Often she was called out to a Chinese woman who was ill. She had to diagnose the illness and supply the medicine. Only when the patient began to recover were the Chinese ready to listen to the Christian Gospel.

'Tommy' was sent to work in Shamsi and stayed there until 1937. The Communist army was moving south and she hastily packed up her belongings and caught the last train to Shanghai. There she carried on her work for another two years. The refugees poured into the town and the University was taken over to house them. In 1939 the Japanese army invaded China and 'Tommy' Smythe had to come home. She still lives in our parish.

Gwynneth Darbyshire

Gwynneth, an active member of our congregation today, worked for fifteen years in Sierra Leone, West Africa teaching Domestic Science, first at Harford School for Girls and then at a co-educational school. Her interest in overseas missions began when she was attending Christ Church Day School where the Headmistress, Miss Ellidge, was a great supporter of the C.M.S. Later, when Gwynneth began worshipping at Christ Church, she came under the influence of Rev Panter, Rev Savage and Rev Sheith, curates at Christ Church who themselves went abroad with missionary societies.

Gwynneth trained as a Domestic Science teacher and spent several years in schools in Lancashire and North Wales. Then, during a visit to the Keswick Convention, she met a native of West Africa and as a result she had an invitation from the Headmistress in Sierra Leone to come out and teach Domestic Science. It was a school run by an American Missionary Society and at first Gwynneth found it difficult coping with the American-style teaching as well as the African language and culture. Gwynneth fulfilled her calling to be a missionary and taught in Sierra Leone until 1967, when she returned home and became Head of Religious Studies at a school in Wallasey.

Other Missionaries

Other members of the Christ Church congregation and clergy who have served abroad over the last century include Rev John Savage and Rev Ernest Panter, curates who went to South America under the South American Missionary Society. Some members of our congregation can still remember many of our church gathering on the docks in Liverpool to sing a farewell hymn as the ship sailed down the Mersey. Rev Sidney Baggot, another curate, went to Africa and then on to Switzerland. Rev Laurie Sheith served abroad with the Inter-Continental Society. John Tait, a lay reader, went to Africa with C.M.S. for a number of years. Frank Snedger, another lay reader and our parish clerk went out to South America with the Mission to Seamen and may still be working there.

St Aidan's College

Christ Church had close links with St Aidan's Theological College throughout its life. The college opened in 1847 in Cambridge Terrace, Slatey Road. William Potter was one of the men who financially supported the venture. Later, a purpose-built college was erected at the end of Shrewsbury Road in what was then a semi-rural part of town. The college closed in 1969.

One of our Vicars, F.J. Taylor, lectured for a time at the college.

Christ Church was one of several churches used by the college in the training of ordinands. A number of students were attached to our church each term. They preached from time to time at the evening service, when their tutor and fellow students were in the congregation, and they assisted in the Youth work and weekday activities, and helped with house-to-house visiting.

When the church was struck by lightning and badly damaged in 1924, St Aidan's allowed us to use the college chapel for worship on Sundays.

St Aidan's annual Garden Party was a popular venue for members of Christ Church congregation.