



Remember the Way

An account of the beginnings and the history of Union Hall Mission, Hulme, Manchester, written to mark the completion of 60 years of witness: 1894 – 1954.

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In humble acknowledgement of the Lord's goodness and mercy that has followed those, who in obedience to an undoubted call, 'went out, not knowing whither (they) went', and 'endured as seeing Him Who is invisible'.

A great book is measured not by its length but by its breadth; not by the amount of thought it embodies; but by the amount it begets. It need not give reader much new information; its function is, rather, to give him a new point of view and thus to show him the significance of what he knows already. If it makes him grapple with the problems it raises and rewards him as he does so; if it opens new perspectives which bring sense and order out of jumbles of loose facts; if it helps him to see woods he never could see for trees; - if in short, it turns mere knowledge into wisdom - then, it is a great book.

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While there are no aspirations to greatness on the part of those who sponsor this booklet, there is a desire behind its production that something of the ways of the Lord shall be seen as they have been demonstrated in the history of Union Hall Mission.

The events that have crowded into sixty years of Union Hall Mission history may of themselves be insignificant; the people who have worshipped and served there may be ordinary and average; the buildings and equipment may be unpretentious but there can be no doubt that the blessing of God has been seen to a unique extent, and the influence of the little Mission Church has been far greater than that of many with the advantages of fine buildings, learned ministry and generous support.

At present, in 1954, the Mission is the centre of evangelistic witness and ministry of far-reaching value. First of all mention must be made of the great district in which the Mission is situated. This is 'Jerusalem', and it would not be right to concern oneself about foreign missions without being aware of the needs on the doorstep. Union Hall is a Mission and has a mission, to take the Gospel to the people of Hulme. Many hundreds of children have been taught, faithfully taught, in the Sunday Schools; thousands have attended the Gospel Services; scores of streets have rung to the sound of the Gospel being proclaimed in the open air; countless visits have been made in the homes where the Word has been spoken; tracts without number have been passed on.

For all this labour there has been the joy of seeing many scores converted God. These are spread out now over the City, the Country, and even the World. While many still work steadily away in the fellowship of the Mission in Hulme

in Sunday School, youth work, open air work and preaching. This is fruit, and surely fruit is the evidence of Divine blessing.

But the pebble dropped into the pond gives rise to ever increasing circles. So must the blessing of God, and the influence of the Mission has by no means been restricted to the neighbourhood of Hulme. Members of the Mission have heard the call of God to overseas service, and the Church has faithfully backed up those who have responded, maintaining constant support by prayer, with gifts of money and other material necessities. Others have been linked with Christian service in our own City, and in country-wide activities.

Shortly after the First World War Mr. R. A. (Alfred) Bosshardt went to China in fellowship with the China Inland Mission, and has laboured in the Far East ever since. Owing to the closure of the China Field he has taken up work amongst the Chinese in Indo-China where, along with his wife, he is seeking to lead them to the Lord.

The same year (1922) Mrs. Giesner, then Miss Doris Morrell, went to Egypt in response to the Lord's call, shortly followed by Mr. G. W. Giesner. They laboured in that land for many years, but since their last return to this country in 1945 they have been responsible for much of the home end of the Egypt General Mission, in particular as Deputation Secretaries. Our link with that needy Moslem field has been strengthened recently by another of the Church members, Dr. Paul Shepherd, going to Egypt to assist in medical work there.

About the same time as Mr. and Mrs. Giesner went to Egypt another member of the Church, Miss Ethel Jennison, went to North Africa as a missionary, although to her great sorrow she was not allowed to remain on the field for health reasons. Interest in the spread of the Gospel in this needy part of the world has been maintained to the present time.

More recently the Lord has been challenging others about overseas service, and there are several who are seeking admission to missionary training homes.

For many years - over twenty - the Mission has had a direct relationship with the Manchester City Mission. The Superintendent of Union Hall, Mr. F.J. (Francis) Thompson, has been a member of the Board of Management of the Manchester City Mission for that time, and since 1944 has been the Chairman of the Board. The Union Hall Mission, however, increased its contribution to the City Mission in 1947 when, on return from Royal Air Force Service abroad, Mr. Deryck Thompson was invited to assist the Secretary and General Superintendent, Mr. Robert Lee. On the retirement of the latter in 1951 Mr. Thompson was appointed his successor as eleventh secretary of this old-established Home Missionary Society. It is a great privilege, and also a seal of the Lord's favour, that the witness of the Mission Hall in Hulme should be linked with evangelistic enterprise on so large a scale as that carried out by the Manchester City Mission.

Union Hall also makes its contribution to a piece of service of national importance and significance. In 1902 the chairman of the committee then responsible for the work became interested in the Prison Gate Mission, and several from among the Mission members joined him in meeting prisoners on their release from gaol and helped in ministering to their needs (1905). Eventually (1924) Mr. F.J. Thompson, for it was he, was appointed by the Home Office as a Prison Visitor, which he remains to this day. Always a champion for the need to recognise spiritual issues in dealing with prisoners, he has for several years been chairman of the Manchester Branch of the National Association of Prison Visitors, and for the past two years has been National Chairman of the Association, as well as Chairman of the Lancashire and Cheshire Association of Prisoners' Aid Societies. These posts have given him the opportunity of much Christian witness, and of making a most vital contribution to the alleviation of one of our greatest national social problems

Something will be said in another place of the Young People's uniformed movement, The Campaigners, and what a blessing it has been to individuals, and to the work as a whole over the last ten years. But beyond receiving such help through the movement and under God, the Mission has been able to make no small contribution to its welfare and development both in Lancashire and in the country as a whole. Mr. Roy Wilson has been Area Chief for Lancashire and Cheshire for a number of years, serving on the Staff Council of the movement. The effects of his skill and efficiency have been obvious to the onlooker.

These are but some of the ways in which the Lord has honoured and blessed the work of Union Hall Mission, and has brought to fruition seed sown there. It would be difficult to enumerate all the other ways by which contributions have been made to missionary enterprise, evangelistic work in the City, the Manchester 'Keswick' Convention, ministry in other churches, and so on. This book is being written to review and evaluate the ministry of Union Hall that the Lord

shall be glorified, and it be seen clearly that He takes up weak things, and things that 'are not', to accomplish His own purposes. This should prove an inspiration to those who are labouring in the corners of vineyards under great difficulties, and at the same time be a challenge to all the Lord's people to be faithful to Him in personal life, faithful to His word in teaching, and faithful to Him in witnessing to those who are yet strangers to His redeeming grace.

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' 1 Corinthians 15 v 58.

HISTORY

VISION . . .

How did all this begin? Where, and to whom was this first vision granted? What gave rise to the venture into Hulme that has developed over these sixty years into a work of such substance?

We must go back to the Eighteen Eighties when the world-renowned preacher Dr. Alexander McLaren was drawing great crowds of listeners to Union Chapel, Oxford Road, Manchester. This Church had been built for him and was scarcely large enough even to contain all who would sit under his ministry.

Amongst the activities of this Church was a Christian Endeavour Society. One of their committees was called "The Home Missionary Committee" and this gave the lead in various forms of Christian service in those fields nearest to the Church itself.

Already the nineteenth century had seen the development of missions on a large scale, by which churches had made an attempt to reach those in poorer, thickly-populated districts, and to whom the general respectability and oftentimes, the coldness of the churches and chapels was a discouragement. In a mission hall, shawl and clogs might be seen without arousing curiosity, and without the creation of an awkward social barrier. Alas that this should be said of the Christian Church but it was all too true to a greater or lesser extent in many places.

Two missions had already been established by Union Chapel, one in Rusholme and the other on the City side of Hulme. Nevertheless, the young people of the Home Missionary committee were looking for an outlet for their youthful energies in a way that would honour the Lord and meet the needs of others.

The old sage of the Scriptures has said: "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Proverbs 29 v 18). This is true in a double sense. The Christian man with no vision is lifeless. Like the unused arm of the fakir, the man with no vision is dead and useless. It is true also of the people without Christ, they are dead in their sins and the only hope of life is in Christ. While Christians lack the vision, the unbelieving lack the message of life and therefore perish.

The young folks referred to, under the effective Ministry of that great Dr. McLaren, were given the vision of a great need, and were shown that they could and should do something about it.

BEGINNINGS

The Hulme district of Manchester is one of the most thickly populated, lies almost adjacent to the site of Union Chapel as it stood in McLaren's day. It was at once one of the neediest and nearest of the poorer areas. Although of the two mission churches already established in relationship to Union Chapel one was in Hulme, yet the Lord laid the burden of this district on the hearts of those of whom this story speaks, and there was certainly room for both causes without any fear of overlapping or rivals.

After much waiting upon God the first workers were led to a house in Sheffield Streets Hulme, where a godly woman, Mrs. Hooley, opened the door of her home for Sunday evening Gospel services. Here, after the church services about a mile away, carefully selected speakers addressed meetings, and members of the Committee attended in rota.

The little parlour where the meetings were held could accommodate about ten people, but the register soon contained forty-five names, and an average number of twenty-five or thirty somehow or other crowded into the cottage. The kitchen, parlour, stairs and, on occasions, a bedroom also, were crammed with those who were eager to hear the Gospel.

In these cramped conditions the Word of God was regularly and faithfully preached and, as blessings were experienced, the little company multiplied. Success can be embarrassing, and very soon it was necessary to look for

other accommodation, and a disused public house, and later a laundry were used. But neither place proved satisfactory, and so the weekly meetings were resumed at No. 20 Sheffield Street where they continued 1902.

Before this, however, a children's work had begun, and for the purpose an old public house at the corner of Bylock (then Byrom) Street was used. There are some present in the work to-day who recall the scrubbing out of that very dirty place in preparation. What a change to hear the sweet singing Lord's praises after the ribaldry of this bar parlour!

Once again success brought its difficulties and larger premises were sought. An approach was made to the tenants of a room over Mr. Walker's Smithy in Canning Street, then being used as the meeting place of a temperance society. These negotiations were successful, and the children's work continued there until, at the end of 1902, the opportunity of taking the tenancy of the hall was granted.

The Mission minute Book, evidently the first one kept, relates in intimate and fascinating detail the delicate negotiations for the purchase of the first real possessions for the then formidable sum of fifteen guineas. It is quite obvious that those responsible had a very high sense of their responsibility in the stewardship of money.

The adult work was transferred from the cottage on the 1st February 1903, and Rev. Dr. J. E. Roberts, Dr. McLaren's assistant and successor, conducted the opening service, this having been preceded by a children's service.

Fearful of meeting with financial difficulties it was decided to advertise the room for hire for approved purposes, but the rooms were never let because such a number of activities came into being that they were required all the time. Drill classes for lads and girls, a debating society, a library and a gymnasium helped to fill up the evenings. Saturday evenings for a time were taken up with popular concerts, a mild kind of effort designed by the youthful workers to contend with the public houses which were then so numerous.

The faithful ministry of the Word, and the prompting of the Holy Spirit, produced very deep desires on the part of those who were in the fellowship. A regular prayer meeting was called for, and soon this completely replaced the concerts. The year 1904 also witnessed another development consequent upon the teaching of god's Word - the consolidation and proper organization of open-air witness. Open-air meetings had been held since 1902, but now they were to be more systematic, and a leader for the work was appointed. Thus the workers were retaining their awareness of the needs of the district to which they have been called, this awareness being further evidenced by the commencement of systematic visitation by a group of young people, later to be supplemented by deaconesses. Nor were the workers unmindful of material things, for the group was given a relief fund to administer.

The growth of the work was continual, and in 1905 the hall became recognised as a place of worship. A Sunday morning service for children was commenced which later (in 1911) became known as 'The Bee Hive' - a name retained up to this day. The Women's Guild was begun, although it was not so named for some years to come.

The following weekly programme of the Mission suggests a full-time piece of work:-

Monday	Girl's gymnasium
Tuesday	Sewing class and Sick Nursing
Wednesday	Boy's Gymnasium
Thursday	Club
Friday	Christian Endeavour Meeting
Saturday	Prayer and Fellowship Meetings
Sunday	Children's service, Sunday School, Gospel Service, Prayer Meeting

DEVELOPMENT

Up to this time the Christian Endeavour Society of the Mother church had been responsible for the conduct of the mission work. A committee had been appointed and clear record of all their transactions was maintained from which a full account of their stewardship can be obtained.

It was now wise to ask the Mother Church for recognition as a mission branch. This was granted in 1906, and a resolution the Minutes of the Union Chapel tells of the appointment of a joint committee to control the future of the Mission (then known as the Canning Street Mission). This arrangement worked well for some time and until more developments dictated a further change.

The Sunday school was growing. Attendances made grading a necessity, but expense was a problem. However, no barrier was recognised by those whom the Lord had called, and the first primary department was commenced with staff and scholars sitting on the floor! But this was the beginning of a grand work, and some years after this was the largest Sunday school in the area.

The following year saw the commencement of the Junior Christian Endeavour and a troop of Boy scouts and, seeing this troop was registered as the '3rd Manchesters', it is obvious that the Mission was well in the beginnings of that remarkable youth movement, and therefore, also abreast of the times. Some months later Girl Guides were inaugurated at the Mission.

The year 1909 was a critical one. Hitherto the finances of the Mission had been largely supplied from without, but this support was rapidly diminishing, and time and again the workers were behind in their income. Many of them felt that this was not honouring to the Lord. They had often been stirred by hearing the experiences of the great faith missions. It was therefore resolved that collections and appeals be abolished, and that the needs of the work would be laid before the Lord in prayer. What holy boldness! Subscribers and workers were lost, but a knowledge of God and His ways gained that has stamped the Mission's financial life ever since. This resolution has never been rescinded for the Lord has always supplied the needs. His Name is Jehovah-Jireh.

Christmas Eve

1909 brought another crisis - notice from the owner to the hall in Canning Street. This was a blow indeed and placed the workers in a situation like that of the Israelites facing the Red Sea. As then, the only thing was to cry to the Lord. No one knew of any suitable rooms. But as the notice was about to expire a way out was opened. This way led to the basement of the Welsh Baptist Chapel in Upper Medlock Street, and services were commenced there on the 10th April 1910, Canning Street having been vacated the week previous.

Several names were suggested for the new room - Endeavour Hall, Victoria Hall, Hulme Hall, booth Hall and Osborne Hall. Eventually the obvious name was chosen, Union Hall, thus perpetuating the relationship with Union Chapel and, of course, the name has remained even though there have been one or two changes of location.

Soon after moving to Union Hall a branch of the Scripture Union was formed at the Mission (December, 1910) with a membership of 24 adults and 6 children. This branch continues to the present day.

Further developments were undertaken in 1911 when a Men's Own Fellowship was commenced, temperance work undertaken, a "Penny Bank" opened. Recreation classes with craft work were also inaugurated, so that the activities of the Mission encouraged both thrift and industry. It was also in this period that the teachers' Training Class was started, a feature that has had a profound influence upon the Mission as a whole ever since. It would be impossible to gauge what that class has meant to the Mission workers, those whom they have taught, and to the many friends from other causes who from time to time have joined in it. How precious a heritage is the Word of God! What a privilege to be able to communicate it to others! This is just where the Teachers' Training class has fitted in.

The Junior department of the Sunday School was born in 1912 and it is here that so much of the sowing in the Sunday School has come to fruition. Many of the present staff found the Lord Jesus for themselves in this School, and today it thrives under able leadership.

Naturally, with these additional services accommodation again became a problem and first the room now known as the Lesser Hall, and then the hall forming the major portion of the present Union Hall (then called Unity Hall) were made available, and the work extended to both places. The story of the move to Unity Hall is a remarkable one.

The Vine street Congregational Mission had some premises across way from the Lesser hall, and a desire was expressed to use the hall there for young people's work on certain nights of the week. The Lord, however, had gone before, and the approach was received very graciously by the officers of the Vine Street mission. Not only was there a response to the request, but something beyond expectation.

There was complete ignorance of course about the internal affairs of Vine Street Mission, but it was learned that their officers had been considering for some time the offering of this Mission to the Manchester City Mission, and so, not only did Union Hall Mission become the tenants of these valuable premises, but there were received into fellowship some most valuable workers, and a small congregation and Sunday School. The intervening fears have proved the worth of these friends whose service and devotion to the Lord have been so inspiring, and many have cause for

gratitude to God for the union then established. Thus, long before the Hall was licensed for weddings, a “marriage” had taken place there, and the two have in very deed become one. It is also significant that those premises form the central premises of the present work.

Just prior to the Great War a set of brass instruments came into the possession of the mission, providing the young folk with a good deal of excitement. A gentleman, then recently removed from Liverpool, was passing the Lesser Hall one evening in company with a Mission worker when, hearing the noise from the Hall made enquiry as to its origin. He was taken inside and picking up an instrument, revealed his skill. He was an experienced bandmaster. He then made a generous offer to train the young men, and for some years following, the Mission had a band which did excellent service in the open-air work.

Another interesting addition was made early in the 1914 - 18 war when “Union Hall Park” was established. A lease of some land in Wilbraham Road, Fallowfield was obtained and there was room for a cricket pitch, two tennis courts, and a good hut for the provision of teas. Wonderful times were enjoyed there. Games were organised for the younger children and there was no need to hurry home after the afternoon as tea was provided. Best of all there was the donkey, with free rides for the youngsters. The story of the donkey is worth telling for surely it was a gift from the Lord.

Some felt it would be a jolly thing to have a donkey for the children and there were those who prayed for the money to purchase one if this was Lord's will. One of the mission workers was speaking at the Y.M.C.A. Hut in Heaton Park one evening, and at the supper table at the close of the soldiers' meeting an official of the Hut said “Do you know anyone who wants a donkey?” Nothing had been said about the desire for a donkey at ‘the Park.’ It made the question all the more remarkable. The answer was obvious and next morning the donkey was collected, complete with harness and cart.

But a donkey requires feeding and riding equipment would be necessary. A lady hearing the story said “Have you got a saddle for the donkey? If not I will buy you one.’ She was as good as her word and very soon the equipment was sent down to the field. A little later the farmer saw the donkey and made an offer to keep and feed it if he could use it for light work during the week, and this he did until the tenancy of the Park expired.

Of course it is only natural that in a developing work, service of less value and importance should give place to that of greater importance, so that from time to time one activity gave place to another. Those responsible for the decisions were constantly seeking to do the Lord's will, and whilst mistakes were made, the Lord certainly led out and blessed this faithful company and those who laboured with them.

The Great War years of 1914 - 1918 brought peculiar difficulties. Members of the staff were taken for military service, and many at home were engaged on vital work. It is generally recognised by those who went through those years that the Mission's spiritual life was constantly being intensified, every experience of testing and leading making its contribution.

CONSOLIDATION

From the inception of the work in 1894 down to the time of the history reached, the mission had been going through a period of establishment. Lessons in management, in prayer life, in financing had all to be faced; and the regular disturbance of the work by change of premises had not allowed any definite settlement. The work was now to be put on a sound basis embodying all the experience of the early years.

The most important factor in this consolidation was the establishment of a Church membership and in 1915 this was decided upon in order to provide for closer fellowship amongst those actively engaged in the work. A Constitution was drawn up declaring the basis of belief which had to be signed by those becoming members. The first Communion Service was held on Monday, 23rd February 1915, and was conducted by Dr. J. E. Roberts.

This was a vital move forward as it meant the acceptance by a wider circle of the responsibilities of Church life. It also heralded a period which be considered as a period of consolidation. This period was to see the Mission purchase premises and gradually settle into the pattern which the work follows to-day.

An important factor in the work of consolidation was the establishment of regular and systematic Bible study. After seeking the Lord in prayer a Bible Class was commenced, although for some time a suitable leader was not

forthcoming. Presently, however, two members of the Trinitarian Bible Society came to the Mission, and for some years continued to come week by week. This Monday Bible class was a great blessing. Just what that ministry has meant to the Mission would be difficult to estimate, but this is certain - the most important work the Mission was ever to accomplish was fostered in these Bible studies, and the propagation of the Word would be the task to the end. The workers had always had real faith in God and His Word, but now they were confirmed in it and with some intelligence could give a reason for the hope that was in them.

Two other factors of supreme importance contributed to this period of consolidation. First was the reception of missionary deputation speakers. Men of God from China and Egypt and other lands came, and the Lord mightily used them to the spiritual enrichment of His people in the Mission, and to the formation of a clear missionary vision, a vision which has affected the whole tenor and outlook of the work ever since. The challenges and heart-searching's under the ministry of Mr. Douglas Green of the Mission to Lepers, of the Rev. T. Gear Willett of the China Inland Mission, and of many others, are remembered to this day by those who were so deeply moved. The seed sown by these faithful servants of God grew to fruition producing more seed eventually to be sown in many fields. Truly the Word of God through them became both "bread to the eater" and "seed to the sower" (Is. 55. 10).

The second important factor was the formation of the Prayer Circle. This was a group of workers representative of each department who met together for prayer. Requests were received from each department, and prayer was made until the answer was received. One of the most prized records of the Mission must surely be the book kept by this Circle showing the requests and the answers to prayer. An attempt to assess the value of the Mission's prayer life will be made in a later chapter.

Thus it was natural that the teaching of the Word of God, the systematic prayer of the workers, and the crystallisation of a clear vision of the needs of those without Christ, should combine together to produce the desire for a properly organized church membership bringing as it does a sharing of responsibility.

The work of the Mission proceeded steadily, but the difficulties were multiplying, caused largely by a lack of sympathy and understanding of the Welsh Chapel officers who were not partial to the youthful enthusiasm of the Mission Church still meeting in their basement. There loomed on the horizon the threat of notice. This issue was forced by the opening of the "Building Fund" a step of faith that was confirmed by the receipt of some remarkable gifts.

Before tracing the history of the period any further, mention should be made of two more features of the work at these times which, of themselves, tell that there was always a conscience about the needs of the folk round about. Union Hall might be a church, but it was a mission church, and this was never lost sight of through all the years of change and development.

In 1918 the deaconess work was born. The scheme was for a staff of consecrated women to visit the whole of the district systematically. For a time a good number engaged in this visitation, at one period there were as many as twenty. The scheme in this form was abandoned after some years owing to various difficulties.

Open-air work, as already mentioned, was always considered important, and had been conducted since the early days of the Mission. Early in 1920 it was felt that a new approach to the district should be attempted and a Gospel Van was obtained. This was attractively painted and lettered with Gospel texts and was drawn by the young people to the various streets, where many spoke from its platform and its witness was greatly used of the Lord.

The Great War had robbed the ranks of the mission workers of eleven promising young men, some of whom were hoping to go to the mission field. The immediate after-war years also brought the problems of resettlement for those who returned and the mission made a very practical contribution in guiding and advising many a soldier, and many widows were helped.

29th September, 1921, was a day of both test and triumph. First, notice to leave the Baptist Church basement was received. This was a blow indeed, although not unexpected, but news was given at a Church meeting held that same day that Miss Doris Morrell (now Mrs. Giesner), Mr. George Giesner and Miss Jennison had all been accepted for missionary service. How wonderful is the timetable of God! With so evident a seal upon the work, and yet with a door closing, the workers could nevertheless face the black future believing the Lord would lead.

Meetings were still possible in Union Hall until June, when the Sunday evening services were transferred to St. Andrew's Hall in Boothby Street (then Booth Street). It was here, the record goes, that some of the Mission's most outstanding blessings were received.

The necessary consequent re-organisation of the Sunday School involved a tremendous strain on the workers. The Primary School met in two sessions in the Lesser Hall, the same teachers in the main doing double duty; the other departments had to use Unity Hall in relays. But the Lord gave all needed grace, and great victories were won.

During 1922, Mr. and Mrs. Giesner, Mr. Bosshardt, and Miss Jennison all went to their appointed places in the Mission Field, and the three countries - Egypt, China and North Africa - all became increasingly dear to the little mission church. The interest was stimulated and guided by a missionary committee, one of whose activities was the Missionary Working Circle, which continued for many years under the leadership of a saintly woman who had accepted this as God's call in place of the actual mission field to which as a young Christian, she had dedicated her life.

Much love and devotion was put into each article made and prepared for missionary use. At intervals they were gathered together and packed by another mission worker who was skilled in this trade, and many have been the testimonies from missionaries of the value of these bales which always arrived safely and unbroken.

INDEPENDENCE

All the changes in location had, of course, an effect on the work. The members of the Mission felt they were a wandering people, and settled conditions were hardly possible. Meetings were being held in three halls, a situation which continued for some more years. St. Andrew's Hall gave place to Greenhill Street Congregational Church Schoolroom in Carey Street (1924) where many blessings were experienced. Then, once again, a test came with the receipt of notice to leave Unity Hall. This was to turn into wondered blessing for, shortly afterwards, the landlord having withdrawn his notice, both the properties - Unity Hall and Lesser Hall - came into market. 1928 will be remembered as the year which saw the Mission established in its own premises. This was the climax to a number of incidents which led up to the present era of independence.

Since 1906 the Mission had operated as a mission church under the surveillance of Union Chapel, although the management had been largely in the hands of those who worked at the Mission.

On the 29th January 1927, the Mission was granted "home rule" by the friends at Union Chapel to whom application for release had been made. A resolution passed by their diaconate handed over the whole of the work to the members and workers as an undenominational mission. There will ever be gratitude for the sympathy and love shown to the Mission enterprise members of the old home church.

When in the following year the two properties in Vine Street were purchased - a wonderful story in itself - there was a very definite feeling that the Mission was now an established work. All the changes, developments and moves had led to the place where more settled conditions prevailed.

From that time until the present day, alterations, adaptations and improvements to the Mission properties have constantly been necessary. The condition of the fabric and the needs of the work have both dictated the course of these building operations, but there is the satisfaction of knowing that the money has been well spent, and conditions for carrying on the various departments are now a great improvement on those encountered in the earlier struggling years. It is thus possible today for the five Sunday School departments, the youth work, the various Bible classes and prayer meetings to meet under proper conditions, at least under as good conditions as are possible with the present halls.

In 1929 the mission was licensed for the solemnisation of marriages, the first wedding being held on the 31st August of that year. In 1932 the Prayer Circle was enlarged into a Prayer Union so that the blessings enjoyed by the representative company might be enjoyed by a larger number. All the staff and church members were invited to join. A Prayer Reminder Card was issued, and to this day the needs of the work are laid before the Lord systematically. Each day has its special subjects, mission departments and mission fields for remembrance at the Throne of Grace.

Children's meetings were always a feature of the Mission's programme and for some time during the 1930's the 'Lighthouse', a Sunday evening service for boys and girls, was held.

After the beginnings of the war had denuded the schools of children owing to the large-scale evacuation, the various departments had to be rebuilt, and gradually the numbers have increased until today they are about seventy-five per cent of the total in the peak years of the 1930's.

At the same time a children's meeting had grown up in the week under the title "Wanted All to Serve" - the WATS, and in this meeting the ground was prepared for more definite youth work.

1942 brought to a head growing concern for the young people. The Sunday Schools were doing a grand job, but the war was producing all sorts of activities for youth in preparation for national service. The various arms had their cadet forces. It was felt necessary to find some way in which the young people of the Mission and district could be harnessed, and given constructive activities, as well as being led to knowledge of Christ.

In a very remarkable way, and in answer to prayer for the guidance of the Lord, the uniformed evangelical youth movement known as 'The Campaigners' was brought to notice. Although well established, in the South of England principally, it was unknown to the Mission. One of their representatives was called to meet Mission workers after they had held several conferences, and there was a general feeling that here was the answer to the need. Thus in 1943 chiefs were trained, Campaigner Clans were commenced, and a good number of boys and girls joined.

Demanding, as it does, a very high standard of leadership, those who felt a call to this work put in time and energy to a remarkable degree. Nearly all were already fully occupied but gladly added this further responsibility to their service.

What 'The Campaigners' has contributed to the general life of the Mission would be hard to assess. Sufficient be it to say that many of the young people who today share a good proportion of the work, have been prepared and helped in the Campaigner Clans.

As during the great War of 1914-18 many were called up for service, so in the 1939-45 war most of the young men and several of the young women were called into the Armed Services or on to the land. Only a few were lost in action, but one or two others did not later return to the fellowship of the Mission, much to the sorrow of all who had their spiritual welfare at heart. To many, however, service days were days of deep enriching, and on return to the Mission they have made an invaluable contribution to the work of the Mission.

These post-war years have, of necessity, involved re-settlement problems. Numbers of the young people have been married, many finding their partners from the fellowship of the Church, and a new generation is growing up, in many cases the third generation in the history of the work.

Two Christian Endeavour Societies have been re-commenced after some years of lapse, and both are proving profitable.

Perhaps one final feature ought to be observed in considering the settlement of the Church. For many years Sunday morning was given over the Men's Fellowship which commenced in 1912. About 1930, the meeting was opened to all who desired to worship in the mornings. This was not possible for many who had to come from a distance, owing to their commitments in the Sunday School. This fellowship continued week by week under the ministry of various friends, along with the superintendent.

Five or six years ago there was given to the Council of the Church a real burden for this meeting. It was felt that more could gather for worship and meditation on the Word of God; that the Sunday morning should be the time for the Church to meet as a worshipping family.

Accordingly, the small company moved into the larger hall, and in response to believing prayer the numbers have increased over a hundred per cent. A systematic Bible ministry is maintained, several Mission members, occasional outside speakers, and missionaries all combining to provide this ministry. This is now generally acknowledged to be one of the most fruitful of mission services. It is a joy to have friends joining from outside including the University and Theological college students who come in from time to time.

The remaining meetings of the Mission programme are still maintained, all making their contribution to the life and witness of the Church. The Sunday Schools, Gospel service, the various after-meetings for fellowship, instruction or open-air witness; the weekly meetings for Bible study, prayers, Sunday School teachers; the C.E. Societies; the Council and Church meetings to deal with governmental matters; the various Campaigner Clans; the Women's Guild. In addition there are many activities which reach out into the district - visitation of Sunday School scholars, by the Cradle Roll workers who feed the Sunday School; the work of the Band of Kindness who minister to the spiritual and physical needs of cripples visiting them in their homes and entertaining them in special ways at the Mission.

So has the vision of the early eighteen-nineties been brought to fruition through the venture of 1894; and from those humble beginnings has developed the Union Hall Mission Church. The vision granted to the early pioneers is being given to others and, as Union Chapel made its contribution to Hulme, so Hulme is now making its contribution to many parts of the world. Nor is the work static. Every day witnesses the quickening of somebody's conscience with regard to those who are still in ignorance of the Gospel and strangers to God's grace. The Church still is and still has a 'mission' in a needy district, a needy city, a needy world.

SIDELIGHTS

It is one thing to record a series of events, but another to discover those influences which have governed the course of events. In doing the one we increase our knowledge; in doing the other we should increase our wisdom.

The intention behind this little book has already been indicated. In order to fulfil it, some aspects of the Mission's life and experience are now reviewed. Taking a look behind the exterior of happenings, the factors that have controlled and the forces that have shaped will become evident, and it will be discovered that the blessings which the Mission enjoys today, and the useful life it leads, are a fulfilment of that Scripture which informs us that those who honour the Lord will themselves be honoured. And what greater honour is there than that of receiving blessing and passing it on in His name?

MINISTRY...

It is quite obvious from the emphasis of the New Testament that the most important task of the Church of Christ is "the ministry of the Word of God." (Acts 6.4). Although practical service such as relieving material need was by no means overlooked (in fact, spiritually qualified men were set apart for it), the spread of God's Word had prior place. So we read that consequent upon the persecution of the early believers in Jerusalem there was a scattering abroad, and those so scattered 'went everywhere preaching the Word.' (Acts 8.4). Paul later urged Timothy to pass on the Word of God to faithful men 'who shall be able to teach others also' (2 Timothy 2.2) and, in face of the spiritual decline of coming days, and in view of the impending judgment of the world by the Lord Jesus Christ, his solemn charge to Timothy was again: 'Preach the Word.' (2 Timothy 4.2)

The early pioneers at the Mission had had the inestimable privilege of sitting at the feet of that great preacher of the Victorian era, Dr. Alexander McLaren. What a great minister he was, and how far his influence has spread, have become apparent only during the last forty or fifty years. But though his fame is world-wide, yet we are only now concerned with his influence upon the beginnings of Union Hall Mission.

It must be due in large part to his influence that those responsible during the early days of Union Hall were so careful in the selection of speakers for their services. They set a standard that has been faithfully followed ever since.

The Mission has never had an ordained ministry except, of course, the 'ordination of the pierced hand.' The Chairman of the Committee was naturally looked upon as the "pastor," although for many years his title in the Mission has been 'Superintendent'.

Very shortly after moving into Canning Street the Superintendent began to take the evening service once a month, other speakers being invited for the remaining Sundays. The principle is followed today.

A very great debt is owed by many to Mr. F.J. Thompson for his effective Bible teaching ministry for over fifty years. With a gift for putting over profound truth in simple language he has unfolded the Word of God to the enrichment of many.

Mr. F. J. Thompson has also been responsible for the teachers' training class, giving a weekly Bible study and a lesson outline for the benefit of the staff in preparation for the following Sunday. This class has had a very wide influence, friends coming from many other places to reap the benefit of these talks. The Sunday Schools in the Mission, thriving as they are today, owe much to the training of teachers in both what and how to teach.

For the rest of the ministry the Mission has been privileged to have many men of God who, faithful to the Word of God, have come and opened the Book. The fearless, heart-searching Gospel ministry, the deeper teaching of the Word, have together produced believers who have grown in grace. Men from every walk of life, ordained ministers and laymen, educated and unlettered, men from near and far, young and old, men of God from this land and abroad,

missionaries and teachers, have all been found amongst those speaking from the Mission platform. But they have all been men of one book, who have fulfilled the Commission 'Preach the Word'.

It has frequently been recognised that the ministry of missionaries has had, perhaps, some of the most far reaching effects upon the work and witness of the Mission. names such as Mr. Percy Mather, Rev. Tom Darlington (of China); Rev. Poole-Connor and Dr. Harvey Farmer in connection with North Africa; Mr. Martin Cleaver, one of the founders of the Egypt General Mission; all come to mind as men of God who have been greatly used. Along with these, of course, have been scores of other missionaries from all parts of the world who, with a testimony of Divine leading and blessings, have been the means of bringing many nearer to the Lord, and to a place of more effective service.

in the realm of Bible teaching the coming of Mr. G. W. Taylor, and later Mr. C. H. Welch, has surely been of the Lord. Under God they were the means of inspiring a greater love for the Word of God, and they were used to demonstrate something of the great riches that lie in the Bible for those who are prepared to dig for "great spoil".

Following out the requirement of the Word of God already referred to, younger men have been taught the Word that they in turn may be able to teach others. So those who show aptitude are encouraged in ministry both to the saints and those who still need the Gospel. It has always been the desire of those responsible that every gift of the Lord's people shall be used for the furtherance of the work of God.

It is because of this that Christian Endeavour, with its help towards service, has found a place in the Mission's life for most of its history. Many of the active workers of today owe their start on the pathway of service to simple activity in the C.E., many who have now become useful speakers began first with the writing of a paper.

Remaining true to the Word of God has honoured the Lord, and He honoured His own Word in that many have been converted through its faithful proclamation, and He has honoured those who have proclaimed the same Word faithfully down the years.

PRAYER...

From the moment when the Home Missionary Committee of Union Chapel prayed for guidance with regard to a sphere of service, prayer has played a most prominent part in the history of the Mission. Problems drove members to their knees in prayer, a place where guidance was given, and a knowledge of God vouchsafed.

Mention was made earlier of the gradual development of the Mission's programme. Very early in this course of development came the desire for a prayer meeting. Here the needs of the work were laid before the Lord.

It has been recognised that the prayer life of a Church is a true indication of its spiritual health. If, in the case of Union Hall, the prayer meeting was not prominent in the early days, there are numerous evidences from personal recollections, and from the minute books that individuals were exercised in this matter. Gradually regular prayer meetings were established during the week and after the Sunday evening service once a month; also between tea and the evening service by those who remained during this period. The Mission council meetings were often preceded by a season of prayer, and the work carried out in the light of guidance given in the secret place.

One of the earliest records of practical prayer concerns the Mission harmonium. The one in use was very inferior and required replacement. It was not too small a thing to pray for, and very shortly a splendid instrument was found housed in Canning Street. The fund for its purchase was opened by a gift of £5, the first substantial gift to be given to the Mission. An answer to prayer.

Finances were often a subject for the prayer chamber, and it was a consequence of waiting upon God with regard to Mission support that the decision was reached to abolish collections and appeals. So financial needs were to be made known in the prayer chamber. This committed the workers to a vital ministry.

Everything needful was prayed for - money for the rent, a hall to meet in when notice was received, guidance in negotiating tenancy agreements, additional premises when space was necessary, and, of course, the spiritual implications of the work, and the support of missionaries on the mission field.

This prayer ministry was taken most seriously, and when the Prayer Circle was formed a "Prayer Ledger" was kept. As subjects for prayer were brought forward a record was made of the requests. When the answers were given they were recorded.

It is an inspiration to read this treasured volume. The hand that wrote fly-leaf of that ledger added: 'A testimony of God's gracious dealing with His people.' That was in faith because it was written before any records were made in the book. But such it has proved to be and, although records are not now kept in this way, were every request and every answer recorded, the same testimony would have to be given down to the present time. The entries however cover a period of ten years and a few extracts are given to show the goodness of the Lord in honouring the faith of His servants in things both great and small.

1917		
2 September	That all accounts might be paid at the end of our financial year.	Treasurer reported at Anniversary Meeting, 23 October 1917, Balance in hand after payment of all accounts £1 18s. 10d. — "He faileth not."
7 September	Blessing on Anniversary Meetings.	All the meetings greatly owned of God. 20 —23 October 1917.
26 September	Blessing on "Day of Prayer," 9 October.	Wonderful spirit of testimony, 15 friends taking part. Much personal blessing.
7 November	Interest in "extension fund."	Remarkable interest has been created by God in this fund. Gifts and promises to date amount to £70. We desire to know His will re future.
17 November	For increased interest in Monday evening Bible Class.	Prayer answered. Praise for increased attendance and interest.
2 December	Increased interest in the work among cripples.	Prayer answered. Record collection for hampers, £8 0s. 0d.
1918		
7 February	Night of praise and prayer on Saturday, 30 March.	A night of refreshing, many testimonies being given to God's wonderful goodness and leading.
11 July	Definite prayer for blessing on Evening Service.	14 July. Eight young people offered themselves to the Lord for service.
4 August	Prayer for Mission Campaign, 29 September — 5 October.	In Luke 14:21-23 we read these words "Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the City and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." Praying for guidance and help, we went out in His strength and our labours were abundantly blessed and rewarded by the joy of receiving over 50 decision cards filled up, mostly by young people who were brought to Jesus by our meetings. Surely God answered our prayers. Our own workers were also greatly helped and strengthened by the experience of these meetings. It was God with us all the time.
1919		
9 January	Definite prayer for guidance re our Extension Fund, and that God would reveal clearly to us His Will concerning a building of our own to celebrate our Jubilee in October 1919.	Nothing revealed to us concerning God's purpose in this matter.
13 April	Special prayer for Whitsuntide arrangements.	Prayer answered. The scholars were taken to Knutsford on Whit Friday and spent a very happy day. All needs were supplied.
June	Prayer for motor run for cripples, 26 July.	Prayer answered. A glorious day and a happy time was spent at Huff Farm. Alderley Edge. Forty cripples being taken in nine cars kindly lent by friends.
September	Special prayer for a Gospel Van for open-air work, also offers of 12 cottages for cottage meetings.	Prayer answered. Gospel Van purchased February 1920. Mrs. Scott, Dorrington Street offered use of her cottage.
1920		
5 February	Prayer for three teachers and one Cradle Roll worker.	Prayer answered. Additions to staff five teachers, four assistants, two Cradle Roll workers.

1 April	Prayer for Parents' Sun-day 2 May.	Prayer answered. Through the earnest and prayerful visitation of our teachers many parents attended the Gospel service at which Mr. Thompson gave a suitable address for the occasion, followed by much blessing.
5 August	Prayer for Missionary Day, 12 September.	Prayer answered. A delightful day with the children and a great show of loving gifts for the Chinese children and missionaries. All honour and glory to God. Mr. Toone's little girl was present and a loving welcome given to her. £10 in the Missionary Box. Gifts from the children.
5 August	Prayer for Day of Prayer, 27 October.	"Above all that we can ask or think." God again poured out His rich blessing on our Day of Prayer and to all it was a rich experience.
1921		
2 June	Prayer for £100 for missionary work for 1921.	£67 13s. 10d. was raised during 1921.
3 November	Prayer for equipment of Miss E. Jennison and Miss Doris Morrell, shortly leaving for Africa and Egypt.	Prayer answered. Complete equipments were provided for Miss E. Jennison and Miss Doris Morrell.
1922		
6 July	Prayer for Open-Air Campaign.	Prayer answered. A series of remarkable gatherings in Council Street.
6th Oct.	Prayer for Christmas needs in S.S. Departments. £45 (approximate) and accommodation.	Prayer answered. Gifts amounting to £42 4s. 7d. which more than covered the needs. Greenhill Congregational friends kindly offered the use of their rooms.
1923		
6 February	Very special prayer for Executive meeting 19 February re definite forward movement concerning future accommodation.	Prayer answered. God led us to a definite forward movement in the forming of a Building and Extension Fund, subject to the Churches approval.
6 February	Very special prayer for meeting of Church, 26 February, re Executive's proposal of forward movement.	Prayer answered. The proposal by the Executive Committee to form Building and Extension Fund being accepted by the Church, this Fund is now open for the Lord's people to give as He leads them.
1924		
January	Prayer for Intercession Service 3 February for the future of the Mission.	Prayer answered. A wonderful time of blessing experienced and a definite assurance of God's leading being experienced by His people.
1925		
6 March	Prayer for new piano.	Prayer answered. Piano supplied.

The last entry in this prayer record reads as follows. It is written in an unknown hand and again speaks of the guidance of the Lord in dark days: -

January/February 1928

"For a very long time now our accommodation has been giving us cause for anxiety, and this great need has been on our prayer list for a long period. The various meeting rooms we have occupied from time to time, being claimed by their owners for other purposes, have had to be vacated at great inconvenience/we laid our great need before the Lord, and sought His guidance in the purchase of a suitable building for His work/this has seemed impossible hitherto, but the Lord has at last opened up the way to us in a marvellous manner."

Though keeping of such a journal came to an end, the prayer meetings certainly did not. It is true to say that since the prayer gathering was inaugurated in 1903 there has not been a prayer meeting lacking in all the history of the Mission.

Sometimes large, sometimes small; occasionally for special purposes, generally for ordinary day by day work. Prayer for material needs, prayer for guidance, prayer for blessing, prayer for conversions, and prayer for power. The Lord has always answered, and those who prayed were quick to give Him the glory due to his name.

FINANCE...

Money is one of the necessities of life, and the stewardship of money quickly the concern of the early Church. In the Scriptures many things are said about money, and the use of money, things that are all too often unknown to Christian people today. Complications are introduced into the work of God when and where the principles indicated in the Word of God are not practised, and all too many causes have had their spiritual work strangled by the efforts and devices brought in to raise money to keep that cause going. What a sad thing!

The workers at Union Hall have had to be concerned with money as in every other work. There have been times when the merely material has assumed great proportions, but the Lord has taught lessons which, by His grace, have been largely heeded.

In the early days those who pioneered were not blessed with many possessions, and money for the establishment of the cause was hard to obtain. It appears that outside friends, particularly members of Union Chapel, were solicited to assist in financing the developing work.

Those early men and women had a very high sense of their responsibility in material things. For instance, the records that have been preserved of the purchase of the equipment in Canning Street Hall speak of the great care taken in spending what was so hardly gained. The earliest Minutes of the youthful committee which have been preserved contain, in a record of the very first meeting held, a resolution appointing a small sub-committee 'to discuss terms with the owners of the harmonium, piano, forms, table, tea-urns, crockery etc.,' which it was proposed to take over on moving into Canning Street.

In a subsequent Minute there is a complete list of items with the price asked by the earlier tenants, and the price the young and careful committee felt was reasonable. The two prices did not always agree; but presently agreement was reached, and the workers became possessors of their first real equipment.

The raising of money for the maintenance of the Mission figures largely in the early records, and soon after the move into Canning Street with rent, poor rate, caretaking, and other expenses to meet, we find a Minute:

'As to finance, suggestions were made that each member of the committee should be held responsible for raising £1 per annum; also that a letter of appeal be inserted in a newspaper... The question of taking a collection at the adult services was dealt with. After considerable discussion it was resolved to try the plan of passing a bag round on the first Sunday in each month. Should this not prove satisfactory either a box held at the door, or a fixed box, should be tried.'

These were occasions of discouragement and sometimes even members of the committee suggested caution in moving forward. Here is a further entry:

'A letter was received from Mr. --- in which he stated difficulties and obstacles which would face the committee in extending their operations in Canning Street.'

It was not, however, in any foolhardy spirit that the committee kept going forward. The vision given was still clear before them, and they had a consciousness that the Lord was with them. So time went on, and the workers struggled to make ends meet. A jumble sale, a concert, a subscription list, were all arranged to help meet the needs. But most monthly reports showed a deficit and, in the September report of 1905, a debt of 14 pound 10s. 10½d was noted for the year. This was a large sum, but proceeds from a concert held shortly afterwards substantially reduced this figure.

A year later, at the time the mission work was taken over by Union Chapel diaconate from the Christian Endeavour, there was a deficit of 15 pound. An appeal was made by means of a circular to the chapel members, but met with a meagre response. At the meeting of the Mission's Committee where this was reported there was a very significant remark by the chairman which recorded in the Minutes:-

'Mr. Thompson said he believed in asking God for the money required for carrying on the work, and trusting Him to supply it, as in the case of some institutions and missionary societies which were worked solely by faith.'

Although, judging by the resolution passed that very meeting, the whole committee was not yet prepared to commit itself to this principle, the seed was sown which was eventually to bear fruit.

At the following meeting, August 1907, we read:

'A long discussion followed with regard to the finances of the Mission. Mr. Thompson again explained that from the beginning of the year he had been trusting God to send all the money which was required to carry on the work in answer to prayer; and he reported many striking incidents of how money had come in when required. He reported that the debt was considerably reduced, and asked the committee to join in prayer that all the debt would be cleared off before the Anniversary.'

A year later the methods to be adopted for the raising of money were again before the committee. It is obvious from the records that the Lord was gradually bringing the little company to the place of complete dependence upon Him. One member of the committee at this time resigned because of disagreement with this attitude, but the majority were now prepared to follow the lead which had been given.

So it was that from 1909 the Mission's finances were based on the principle of asking the Lord for all things needful. This involved the abolition of collections and subscription lists. Boxes were placed at the door for the Lord's people to give as He directed, a method continued to the present day.

There are many stories to be told of the way in which the Lord both tested and honoured the faith of His servants.

On one occasion a lady client, coming into a bank, noticed the C.E. badge in the coat of the cashier which led to the telling of the story of the Mission to which the cashier belonged.

Some time later a quarter's rent was due, and there was no money to it. One day the same lady stepped into the bank and handed over a tin money box. It had been in her house some months. She had told her friends of the mission in Hulme. They made loving contributions through the medium of the box, and when it was opened, and its contents passed along to the cashiers, it proved just sufficient for the rent!

Some time later again, when the rent was due, a letter was received on a matter, the writer adding a postscript: 'I don't know why I am sending you this now, but I feel you have need of it.' The cheque just covered the need.

In these and countless other ways, the Lord showed His care for His people who were desirous of honouring Him. Of course, it was one thing to pass a resolution to trust the Lord, but quite another when a real wall of opposition was confronted. But the tests were survived, and the people involved were enriched.

One of these tests, the difficulty of which can only be understood by those placed in similar circumstances, arose over the various funds in the Mission. Each department had hitherto its own fund. It was felt that there should be a common purse. After much prayer the further step of faith was taken, and all the departments subsequently agreed to the principle for the first time in the mission's history, and there was the assurance that every member of the staff was prepared to go "all out" for their Lord.

Many years later, but in the light of the experiences that the intervening years had brought, the strengthened faith of the Mission leaders was confronted with paying for the purchase of Unity Hall and Lesser Hall. A building fund had been started when threat of notice to quit Union Hall was received. In 1923 this fund was put on to a serious basis and Blessing Boxes had been issued. But by this time 1,900 pound was needed for the purchase, plus some more for necessary alterations, and there was only 435 pound in hand. The 190 pound deposit was put down in the assurance that the Lord would undertake. And, of course, He did! Friends gave, loaned and one good Christian man granted a mortgage for 1,000 pound and as a fair proportion of the property could be let this appeared to be a good business proposition.

Another enriching experience was granted when, towards the end of 1931, the Mission was confronted with a debt of 20 pound. The trade depression had had an effect and the work was feeling the strain. Twenty pounds was not a large sum, but some felt that the principle of faith was being challenged, and so there was a call to prayer. These feelings were so deep, and it was felt that spiritual issues were so much involved, that it was decided to hold a night of intercession.

A very good number of workers gathered to wait upon the Lord. He was asked to reveal the cause of the need, and to clear the burden. The meeting continued with a great spirit of freedom in prayer, and the seal was added when, on

opening the box which had been placed at the back of the hall there was 20 pound 2s. 0d. in it! What an inspiration! What a lesson!

It has always been the desire of the Church to send as much as possible to the mission field and, from their earliest years, the children in the Sunday Schools and also the members, have contributed sums of money towards Missionary work in many parts of the world. Children have been supported in India, North Africa and China. Some of today's workers will recall giving towards Daisy and Mercy in China, Radhika in India and Fatima in North Africa in years past.

Today the pattern of giving is still the same. Alterations to the property repairs and additions have been financed, as well as the heavy running expenses involved in such an extensive work but always the missionary cause has been kept to the fore which, we believe, is as it should be.

One incident from recent times will serve to indicate the spirit of giving prevailing now. A few years ago the need of extra accommodation for the Young People's Department of the Sunday School became acute. Structural alterations at both halls were also required in the interests of safety. A building scheme was drawn up, and the work put in hand, involving a large sum of money. This was raised by interest free loans, and the help of many friends, the Lord's people in the Mission giving regularly to reduce the outstanding figure needed.

While this outstanding figure was still large, accommodation in the Beginner's Department was quite inadequate. What an embarrassment when there is not room enough to receive all who desire to come to Sunday School! It was felt that the Building fund should not be further burdened adding to its outstanding balance, and it was agreed to proceed on the principle that when sufficient money had been given to meet the cost of extension (about 60 pound) the work would be put in hand. A box was put out in the Sunday Schools involved, and, while the main building Fund kept being steadily supplied, this supplementary fund also grew! A short while ago the required total was reached and the room was enlarged and adequate space given for the reception of the new scholars into the Beginner's department. Such is the spirit that prevails in a time when economic stress is not unknown.

There is no doubt that a work for God can be gauged by an enquiry into its finances and the attitude of its members to the stewardship of money. There is constant need of watchfulness on the part of those who lead to ensure that, with all the teaching on Christian living, there is included teaching on Christian giving. There is likewise a need for individual believers to "honour the Lord with their substance" so that His work never lacks. The Lord honours faith, but also requires obedience.

GOVERNMENT...

It has been thought helpful to say something about the government of the work of the mission over the years. It is quite obvious that the methods by which decisions are made and carried out, and the principles on which the administration is based, will have played a large part in shaping the work. It will also be plain from a reading of the history that there have been numerous crises when decisions of great importance have had to be reached on fundamental issues.

In the beginning the Mission was pioneered by the Home Missionary Committee of the Union Chapel Christian Endeavour. What a wonderful contribution has C.E. made to many churches in providing opportunity for service amongst its members! How many there must be who first learned art of expression in C.E. meetings, and also in the activities of the various committees learned the rudiments of organisation and administration.

By the time the first Minute Book in our possession today opens its record, there was a well-established committee of young people who shared the responsibilities of the youthful mission church. The care with which the details were managed is patent. Every matter that came before them was thoroughly discussed, and agreement was reached before a step forward or any change was introduced. No serious differences of opinion are discernible although naturally there are evidences of difference in points of view and emphasis.

The simple machinery of government was early linked with prayer, these young people seeking to be guided by the Lord in all their deliberations.

Another very apparent feature which is worth mentioning because it has characterised the work throughout its historic is the spirit of co-operation that existed. The Mission has never been anything else but a team effort, a fellowship. The early business is marked with the evidences of many hands playing a part, and a substantial part, in the development and progress of the enterprise.

Membership of the committee managing the Mission was later extended to the Christian Endeavour Society as a whole, and individuals were invited to join as the Lord gave guidance. From time to time members dropped out for various reasons but there was a nucleus of workers whom God was obviously retaining for more prolonged service.

Naturally the chairman and other officers of the committee would shoulder the major proportion of responsibility. The earliest chairman mentioned is Mr. C. L. Whyatt. He was the chairman of the Home Missionary Committee for a number of years until he resigned that position in June, 1903.

Mr. Whyatt had steered the young committee through the early years of development, and a testimonial given to him on his resignation is evidence that he had made a vital contribution to the work. Part of this testimonial reads as follows:

"We cannot allow you to resign the position of Chairman of the Home Missionary committee without expressing to you our heartiest appreciation of your work, and for the able manner in which you have presided over that Committee for the past few years. Only one with exceptional tact and business ability could have steered us so successfully through the negotiations in connection with work extension in Hulme, and we as a Committee desire to express heartfelt thanks for your services. It is a joy to know we shall be able to still have your counsel and opinion as a member of the Committee, and we trust that the work will continue to prosper, and be a means of great blessing to the people of Hulme."

The first list of names of members of the Committee is recorded in April, 1903, and consisted of five ladies - The Misses Hall, Taylor (later Mrs. F. J. Thompson), Tippet, Green and Smith; and five gentlemen - Messrs. J. W. Peacock, F. J. Thompson, C. K. Hay, T. Hay and C. L. Whyatt. Of these Mr. Thompson is in the work today, Mr. Peacock passed away only a few months ago having remained in the work ever since (apart from a break of a few years), Mr. C. K. Hay is in Canada. Most, if not all of the others have 'fallen on sleep.'

Following Mr. Whyatt's resignation as convenor of the Committee, Mr. F. J. Thompson was elected to that position. He has remained the chairman of each succeeding committee, and throughout the various developments, today is the leader of the Mission. He has thus, in the goodness of God, been leader for just over 51 years.

Incidentally last year (1953) there was a special service of thanksgiving rejoicing for Mr. Thompson's Jubilee as leader, when a very large gathering of workers and friends both old and new, met in Union Hall. It was a most memorable occasion, and one which was a means of much enrichment to work and workers alike. Several were present who had been associated with the Mission for that same period, and some for even longer.

At the meeting appointing Mr. Thompson as Chairman, Mr. J. W. Peacock was appointed vice-Chairman and Mr. C. K. Hay as Secretary. The latter also retained his office as Treasurer. Then there was a re-organisation of the way in which the committee would work, it being decided that the officers of the Committee should be re-elected every year at an annual meeting called for the purpose. Within the framework of certain other developments, and with occasional slight modifications, this principle of electing the officers of the Committee has remained to the present.

In May 1906, the Committee, feeling that the work had so developed, resolved to approach Union Chapel with a view to the Canning Street Mission being recognised as a mission of the Chapel. Responsibility for the Canning Street work was accepted by the Chapel diaconate, this being reported to the Mission Committee at their meeting on the 24th September 1906.

It was decided by the deacons of Union Chapel to appoint a general or advisory committee for the oversight of the work, consisting of three deacons, member of Union Chapel church membership, and two representatives from the Mission Committee. Mr. Thompson and Mr. Peacock were the latter two.

There was also to be a working or executive committee consisting of the officers of the mission and leaders of each section; viz: the Sunday School, Women's Meeting, Lads' Club, and the organist.

It was at the first meeting of this latter committee that Mr. Aubrey A. G. Toone was elected as Treasurer, a position he held for some years. Mr. David Allen was elected to succeed him in June 1910.

The business of the Mission was now carefully handled by the new committee and in the Minutes there are records of the various meetings held, of developments suggested and attempted, of failures and successes. Finances were frequently before the members, and of course, there were numerous items relating to the properties. Throughout

these transactions there is much evidence of the seriousness with which the business was undertaken, and of the spiritual character of those whom the Lord was using in the development of the Church.

In the minutes of the meeting of 7th June 1910, is the suggestion from a member of the Committee that there should be a Membership Roll, but the matter was left over, and it was not until 1915 that a Church Membership was formed. Later a Constitution was drawn up which, with minor modifications, is the basis of the work today.

The Mission council, under the Constitution, is elected by the Church Membership. The full Church Members in each department elect their own leaders who automatically take a place on the Council. The Superintendent, the Church Secretary, and two other members in addition are elected by the Church. The remaining principal officer, the Financial Secretary, is nominated by the Council and confirmed by the Church. Each department, of course, has its own officers elected by its own staff.

It is thus obvious that the Council carries the responsibility for the whole work with the confidence of the Church. The Council meets regularly and keeps a very close watch over every aspect of the Mission's life. The Church Membership meets rather less regularly, but often enough to also keep in detailed touch with the work.

This method has been most successful in the government and management of the many departments of the Mission, and has ensured a maximum of harmony and cooperation in the practical problems of carrying out the Lord's work. It has also ensured the use of individual gifts to the fullest extent.

In 1927 application was made to Union Chapel for release, and "home rule" was very graciously granted by the diaconate. Henceforth the Mission was to be completely "undenominational" and an indigenous fellowship, i.e. self governing, self supporting and self propagating.

The last major change introduced into the government of the Church was in 1937 when it was decided that the election of the Council and officers should be held every two years rather than annually. This has been a move for the better.

Finally, an important decision was reached in 1954 with regard to the vesting of the mission properties. Hitherto they had been held in the names of four individuals, but now were to be held by the Evangelical Trust Ltd. as custodian trustees. The management and day to day running of the work remain the responsibility of the Council. This arrangement, however, ensures a sound evangelical future, and none will be able to assume control on other than a conservative Biblical basis.

PERSONALITIES...

It was originally considered that this story should be written without bringing in names except the name of Him for Whom the work was begun, by Whom it was continued, and to Whose glory it must contribute. But it has been recognised that God uses one and another in special ways for His purpose, and it may not be inappropriate to speak of one or two individuals. Though mention is made of some by name, however, many others will not be so named simply because of time and space. The writer of the Hebrews had to make a similar selection under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and only refers to some by the exploits they undertook by faith.

Perhaps, humanly speaking, the Mission will always be principally associated with Mr. F. J. Thompson, the present Superintendent, who has occupied this place, or its equivalent under the original conditions, for now over 51 years.

With many opportunities to take other and attractive openings for Christian service he nevertheless has acknowledged that the Lord who called him into the work in a most critical period of its history has intended that he should remain in it. This has been confirmed by the fact that he has been re-elected to his position as leader through the years.

He has brought to his work administrative and spiritual gifts of a high order, with a most marked constancy, and has steered the work through many trying experiences. To him was granted the vision, and to him also the spiritual skill and grace to convey it to others, and to lead them on into an experience of the Lord so full and so enriching that it has inevitably flowed out to many in a very wide field.

Though our beloved Superintendent has had the heavy claims of business life to face, he has never avoided giving his whole available time and energy to his work for the Lord. He has shown exceptional readiness help those in need, to minister to the sick and dying, and to give counsel whenever it has been sought.

Mention has been made of his ministry. He has been greatly used in preaching and teaching the Word. But not the least of his contributions has been the understanding and far-seeing manner of conducting the business of the Mission. His tact as a chairman has greatly fascinated many a young church member when difficult situations have been faced and awkward decisions made. Also in a Mission with a large number of departments and activities he has succeeded to a remarkable degree in maintaining an intimate contact with all the workers, and coordinating them into a whole fellowship. No mean task over a half-century during which conditions have undergone so revolutionary a change.

Looking back to the beginning, the name of Mrs. Hooley springs to mind very readily. She has been called the "woman who opened the door", for it was in her cottage that the first meetings were held. An extract from 25th Anniversary report reads:-

"What we owe to her influence and generosity it would be difficult to estimate. Never gifted with many material possessions, she learned the value of the commonplace things about her. Her home was placed at our disposal for the first cottage meeting, and our services were continued there until the end of 1902... Numbers of sick people have been helped by her ministrations; many of the dying have had a brighter vision of the Glory land as a result of her witness for Christ."

"A visitor called upon her one day to accompany her to one of many homes of the needy. 'I would gladly come, but I have no shoes.' 'No shoes?' said the visitor in surprise, for she had never known her to be short of the necessities of life. 'I have lent mine to a woman down the street as she had to take a child to hospital, and her own shoes let water in.'"

"That's the kind of woman who opened the door, and who has been such an inspiration to so many of us. Her home is a beacon in a dark street and all because her trust is in Jesus."

No doubt, Mrs. Hooley made an effective contribution to the character of the work of Union Hall. A spirit of that nature is bound to have a profound influence. Mrs. Hooley died in 1925.

In the government of the Mission succeeding church secretaries have made very important contributions. There have been surprisingly few. The first, Mr. J. W. peacock, held office from 1903 until 1932. He was followed by Mr. A. A. G. Toone, who had lately returned from an important business post in Shanghai. Mr. Toone was succeeded in 1938 by Mr. Leslie Edwards, one of the faithful workers who had joined Union Hall with the merging of the Vine Street Congregational Mission. Mr. Edwards, who passed away in 1948, will be affectionately remembered by many for his consistent life, his faithful and thoughtful ministry in the Junior Sunday School and the morning Fellowship. Since 1948 Mr. Roy Wilson has been the Church Secretary.

Of all the above only Mr. Edwards was not from amongst workers from Union Chapel, so that down to this present time there are real links with the Church that gave birth to Union Hall.

Sunday School work has always been very prominent. At one time Union Hall had the largest Sunday School in the district, and even today there are very few with more scholars. Mention has already been made of the start of the Primary School on the floor of a bare room. Today the same leader is in charge of that School. Miss S. Parr, with her unique gift of leading children is most affectionately remembered by large numbers of those who have passed through her school. She has lived to see many a scholar return as a teacher, and, under the blessing of God, many boys and girls have found the Saviour. Miss R. Lassalle, similarly, began the Junior Sunday School and has remained its leader ever since. Here, she too has had the joy of seeing those who were once scholars grow up, accept Christ as Saviour, and, in many cases, return to teach others.

These two faithful women, along with others, have stood through trials, difficulties, disappointments, have faced two wars with their upheavals and the drastic after-changes, and still, today, are fresh with their children and young in heart, and their work was never more successful. This is a tribute to their loyalty and faithfulness to God and their fellow-workers.

In the prayer life of the Mission none have had a greater influence than the late Mrs. F. J. Thompson. Although handicapped in later years by physical weakness and pain she led the Prayer Circle and indeed the whole Mission in its prayer ministry. The fragrance of her life, her winsome and helpful personal work, have left their mark on many a life that outlived hers, which was cut off, it seems, at its greatest maturity. Her witness lives on till today.

Those who have visited the Mission have often commented upon the singing. The congregation there has always been a thoughtful and enthusiastic one in the singing of hymns of praise and worship. Much of this success has been due to Mr. Roy Wilson who has so ably led by voice and playing. Mr. Wilson's outstanding characteristic is enthusiasm, and he has inspired many in giving praise to God through the medium of music.

Mr. Wilson has also been one of the much used members of Union Hall for many years. He has been leader of various departments; the Bee Hive and the Intermediate Sunday school several years ago, and now the Young People's Department and Campaigners. He has also been in the forefront of any evangelistic effort. He has been a great enthusiast for open-air work, leading many a team out into the district to make the streets ring with the evangel.

Mr. Wilson has revelled in anything progressive and aggressive, always putting heart and soul into his work. He has undoubtedly infected many another with holy zeal.

A further name that comes to mind is that of Mr. W. R. Watkins. Brought to the Mission during the days in the Welsh Chapel basement through interest in crippled children, he was vitally and intimately connected with children's work until his Home-call in 1943. In the Primary School and in the Bee Hive he worked tirelessly for the salvation of boys and girls, but undoubtedly his greatest love was for those who were physically handicapped. He visited them, arranged outings for them, helped to distribute parcels to them at Christmas time, and in every way demonstrated the love of His Saviour. He is affectionately remembered by many who have grown well beyond the boy and girl stage.

Though some few names have been mentioned, there are many more who are worthy of inclusion amongst those who have faithfully and electively served the Lord. Sunday School teachers, leaders, secretaries, visitors, caretakers, and others who in perhaps the smallest ways have made their contribution to the fellowship and service of the Mission - all to the glory of God. 'Whose faith follow ...'

HORIZON

The point from which the past is viewed also has a view forward. The present is but a moment and is constantly giving way to the new, the unrealised and the unexpected.

Should there be concern for the future, unknown as it is? The answer is undoubtedly yes! The great heroes of faith in the Bible looked out into the unknown and they "saw" it, and endured through every experience of trial and test in the expectation of realisation.

What is the horizon upon which the gaze can be fixed? First and foremost, those who are the Lord's true servants look for "that blessed hope," the return of Christ. Those at Union Hall look for this hope as keenly as any, seeking to work together in the light of it, and thus not be taken unawares. This vision must continue to govern the outlook beyond anything else.

Having traced the history of the work at Union Hall, and indicated something of its present-day significance, what can be said of its future? Is the work so virile and progressive that changes in conditions can be faced with confidence and expectation of continued success? Is the younger generation growing up to accept with all seriousness the challenge of responsibility in a similar way to the young folk of fifty or sixty years ago?

Reference has already been made to those who are now being prepared for missionary service, and it is surely encouraging to see the missionary vision and sense of responsibility as keen as ever. Those at the home end in the church are certainly demonstrating in giving the intention to maintain Gospel work on the widest front, and there is a steady increase in the amounts set aside for this purpose.

In the mission itself young people of gift are taking an increasing share in government, leadership and ministry, with a spirit of humility, and a readiness to learn, that is most commendable. The older leaders too are playing their part in this vital development, by showing real grace in giving place where necessary. Never was there greater harmony in the work than today, and the Lord is commanding His blessing in a very marked degree. The older must continue to help the younger with the experience they have gained along the way.

There is a very great longing, as there is in many places, for a revival of spiritual blessing amongst the Lord's people, to be followed by the turning of many from the Sunday Schools and the district. Already there are signs of movement in a quickening of the believers, and in the open decisions made by quite a number of people, both children and adults. There is increasing intensity in prayer, a keener application to the study of God's Word, a greater readiness to visit the homes of the district, than has been seen for some years. All of this is very heartening, but though these are necessary preparations yet the blessing must come from the Lord Himself Who is Sovereign amongst His people.

Having been established in a slum district, the future of the property must also have some bearing on the future of the Mission. The development plan for the City involves the re-housing of the whole area in which the Mission is situated. The mission itself is old property and will not survive indefinitely. Furthermore a new highway into the City will eventually mean a change of situation. For when this circumstance comes there must be careful preparation, and a readiness to move in whatever direction the Lord will indicate.

The future's unknown but in greater hands than any man's, is challenging. The look back, and the remembrance of the way God has guided and provided hitherto, must be but a preparation for what is yet to be. The past is gone and irreclaimable, the future must be faced; and as, in its successive experiences it becomes the present, the opportunities must be seized that God's work may be done faithfully by His witnessing Church until He come and call His stewards to give account of their stewardship.

"Remember the way ..." (Deuteronomy 8:2).

*'Tis good to remember the way He hath led us,
to view, once again, both the track and the road;
to muse on the fact that, unfailingly He fed us,
our faithful, and loving, compassionate God.*

*'Tis good to review how He surely was leading,
though we saw Him not, nor knew all He had planned;
'tis good to recall that whate'er we were needing
was wondrously met by His bountiful hand.*

*'Tis good to remember that He Himself brought us
through all of life's journey, right until this day;
forgave all our sins, - and our blunders, - and taught us
to cleave unto Him, - and to make Him our stay.*

*'Tis good to remember! to pause! and to ponder!
it stirs us to worship, and tunes us to praise:
such retrospect helps us of Him to grow fonder,
whose goodness and mercy have followed our days.'*

J. DANSON SMITH