

A SHORT HISTORY OF

The Avenue Congregational Church

*(Now The Avenue United Reformed
Church)*

Very many thanks to everyone who has made this

Booklet possible - A SHORT HISTORY

of the Avenue Congregational Church

Southampton

OF

THE AVENUE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

SOUTHAMPTON

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Very sincere thanks to EVERYONE who has made this Booklet possible - to those who have "thought back" and contributed their own personal memories - to Secretaries and others for their short Histories of Church Societies - to the many friends for the loan of notes, old Newspaper cuttings, record books, Minute Books and Church Magazines, and also for time given for "reminiscences" which has proved so helpful. If any "vital" points have been omitted we apologise and can only suggest that they be sent to the Magazine Editor for inclusion in the 75th Anniversary Year editions so that when the 100 Years History is written nothing "in our time" has been overlooked.

The History of the Choir in greater detail can be obtained from Mr. Ray Lee.

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1893 KEY DATES 1968

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| 1892 - July | Site Purchased |
| 1892 - December | First Services held |
| 1894 - February | Induction of the <u>Rev. A. D. Martin</u> |
| 1897 - August | Laying of the Foundation Stone of Church Building |
| 1898 - January | First Edition of "The Avenue Freechurchman" |
| 1898 - December | Opening of Avenue Church |
| 1901 - January | Organ purchased |
| 1902 | Portswood Mission established |
| 1906 - March | Induction of the <u>Rev. G. E. Startup</u> |
| 1910 - June | Induction of the <u>Rev. Meredith Davies</u> |
| 1913 - June | Induction of the <u>Rev. H. T. Spencer</u> |
| 1914 - August | Avenue Soldiers' Hall opened |
| 1922 - 1925 | The Forward Movement of Congregationalism |
| 1928 - September | Valedictory Service for <u>Miss Gladys E. Parkhouse</u> proceeding to China |
| 1929 - June | Death of the Rev. H. T. Spencer |
| 1930 - November | Induction of the <u>Rev. Stanley Herbert</u> |
| 1930 | Women's Guild founded |
| 1933 - May | Old Halls demolished |
| 1934 - January | New Avenue Halls opened |

1939 - March	Choir Robed
1939 - September	Avenue Solders' Hall (the Second) opened
1940	Induction of <u>Dr. Marlais Davies</u>
1950 - 1952	Interim Guest Ministry - the <u>Rev. T. C. Brimley</u>
1950	Avenue Junior Church formed
1952 - February	Induction of the <u>Rev. Vine Russell</u>
1955 - December	Dedication of War Memorial Corner
1956	Organ Appeal Fund launched
1958 - July	Union of Junior Church and Sunday School
1959	Every Person Canvass - "Avenue Advancing"
1960 - October	Induction of the <u>Rev. Donald James</u>
1961 - January	Dedication of the re-built Organ
1961 - March	Dedication of the Children's Corner
1966 - January	First "exchange" service with St. Barnabas Church
1966	Children's Choir robed and joining Church Choir for Morning Worship
June/September 1967	Exchange ministry with the <u>Rev. Henry Green</u> of North Wilbraham, Mass. U.S.A.
1968 - March	Visit of the Council of the Congregational Church in England and Wales

FOREWORD

I hope you will enjoy reading this booklet and find it interesting. It is my first effort at "writing" and I trust experienced writers will bear with me in my endeavour to tell you something of the history of "Avenue". I have tried hard not to be personal in approach, but it has been difficult not to be, for I love my Church so much, and I want you to love it too.

When I joined the Church my Minister wrote to me "to be happy in your Church life, you must always be ready to GIVE just a little more to Jesus Christ than you expect or hope to receive from Him." That is good advice - I know. I leave it with YOU.

Dora M. Caton

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Chapter 1

When our Mother Church - Albion Congregational Church in St. Mary Street was born in the year 1842, Stage Coaches had only just ceased to run between Southampton and London and other places. The "London and Southampton Railroad" had just been completed and the Docks "were in process of making"; but by the time a new Congregational Church was being considered "on the outskirts of the town" great progress had been made. There were horse-drawn trams - the route extending as far as Stag Gates - yes, there were Gates there, with supporting pillars surmounted by Stags! Business people, members of Albion Church were becoming less inclined to live "over the shop" and were moving to private residences. Among them the Lankesters, Knights, Pinhorns, Aldridges and Barlings. The Bances, Durkins, Hamiltons, Robertsons and Rowlands all moved as far out of town as The Avenue, Alma Road, Hulse Road and Gordon Avenue. It was a long walk to Church in St. Mary Street and it wasn't everyone who thought it right to drive in the carriage on Sundays!

The time had come for a new Congregational Church to serve the growing population of Southampton. Bevois Mount was considered, also a site nearer to Portswood Village, and others.

Then - "a very desirable residence standing in considerable grounds" on the corner of The Avenue and Alma Road came into the market and "Avenue House" was purchased for £2000 in July 1892. The Committee of 15 moved swiftly - they heard of a moveable Church building known as St. John's Free Church in Clifford Street for sale, and purchased this on August 8th. It was re-erected in the garden of "Avenue House" (where our Spencer Hall now stands) and the Opening Service of The Avenue Congregational Church, conducted by the Reverend R. F. Horton, M.A. was held on Wednesday, December 21st, 1892, and the first Sunday Services were held on Christmas Day.

On February 4th, 1894 the Reverend A. D. Martin of Hackney College was ordained and inducted as the first Minister of our Church. The financial assets were "nil" but there must have been faith beyond bounds - by the end of 1894 there were 112 Church Members and with tremendous enthusiasm and energy these members embarked on plans for a permanent building. On 18th June 1895 the first marriage was solemnised in the 'tin' Church - Arthur E. Bance married Gertrude Lankester (parents of Enid and Margaret). At about this time a "powerful oxyhydrogen lantern" was purchased and "The Avenue Lectures" were launched. These

continued for many years (until about 1929) and became wellknown not only in the town of Southampton but in Hampshire and elsewhere.

Following the Fourth anniversary of the forming of the Church, on December 14th, 1896 a special meeting was held and plans were accepted for the building of our present Church - the estimated cost was £10,000 and the Builder instructed to under-take the work was Mr. John Smith (Grand-father of Mr. Ross Addis). The Pulpit cost £70 and this sum was raised entirely by the children of the Sunday School. The Foundation Stone was laid on August 4th, 1897 and the ceremony was followed by a Garden Party, in we understand "perfect weather"!

In December, 1897 it was decided to publish a Church Magazine and some of the early editions of "The Avenue Freechurchman" provide most interesting reading. Writing in one of the first editions of the Magazine, the then Editor, draws readers attention to the "Inset". "It includes Baptists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Wesleyan Methodists and one or two other less powerful denominations. In fact it draws into a real and practical UNITY the largest number of Christian people in this country." It is still possible to buy the "inset" as a separate Magazine, but one wonders if it was not

discontinued as a part of our Magazine at an inopportune time? These early Magazines appear far more informative both as to our own organisations and other Churches in the neighbourhood, than some published in more recent times. The publication soon made a profit and this was the trend until about 1919.

The Great Day for our forefathers and, indeed, for us who have inherited, was Wednesday, December 7th, 1898 - the Reverend R. F. Horton, who had conducted the first service, returned for the Opening Service of our Church Building. There was a good morning congregation; but the building was "crowded to the doors" in the evening and the day's offertories amounted to £350. During the following year 34 new members were received into the fellowship and many gave regularly to the Church by way of "Pew Rents". There were, of course, many fund raising efforts, but deserving mention was a "Bazaar and Industrial Exhibition" held in the Autumn of 1900.

In the year 1900 the members of Avenue felt they must expand in giving Christian service "away from home". Our Church, as already recorded, was in a select residential neighbourhood, but not far off, was acute poverty. In 1901 a room was acquired at a "small house on the Drummond Park Estate" - in fact Number 1 Somerset Road, Old

Portswood; and an afternoon Sunday School was opened. Very rapidly numbers reached 80 and additional accommodation was taken over. Before many months had elapsed, parents of the children were asking for an Evening Service. At first this was run by the Avenue Young Men's Bible Class, with a choir of girls from the Portswood Mission Sunday School. The Portswood Mothers' Meeting, (established in October 1902 under the supervision of Avenue ladies) were soon running Jumble Sales and the like to raise money towards larger and more suitable premises. An appropriate site was found near by, and a second-hand wood and corrugated iron hall purchased. The Portswood Mission Hall was opened on April 20th, 1904 and from then until the work was closed down in 1964 there were a succession of devoted "evangelists" in charge assisted, and the Sunday School staffed, very largely, by Avenue friends. In 1906 the Boys Brigade was instituted, and some time later, the Girls Brigade. In 1907 is reported the formation of "The Portswood Guild of Help" ... "for timely help to those in need to arrest the drift of so many into the poorhouse". Popular "Saturday Concerts" were arranged at Portswood to help with the cost of yet more accommodation urgently needed. The Sunday School had grown so large by Midsummer 1909 that the Education Committee of Southampton

was approached and agreed to the use of two classrooms at Portswood Council School on Sunday afternoons. The extension, so badly needed, was opened in 1910.

We hear now-a-days of projects being postponed because of political unrest and the like, but the Boer War does not appear to have deterred our ancestors, for in January, 1902 at a huge cost the Organ (re-built in 1960) was purchased. Horror stories about the organ and the difficulties and frustrations that arose would provide material for a separate Chapter! Suffice it to say that the organ was dedicated on November 12th, 1902 at a service from which people had to be turned away. It was the first, or one of the first, electric organs built. Indeed Avenue Church was the first public building in Southampton to have "the electricity".

In 1905 the Church went "all out" to clear a debt of £6000. A scheme was devised to cover five years but it was not cleared until twenty years had elapsed!

At the turn of the Century, quite obviously for Christian people, the Church was the "hub" of social life - there were the Cycling Club, Cricket Club, Band of Hope, Christian Endeavour, Literary Society, Avenue Lectures, London Missionary Society Committee and Ladies Working Party -

The faithfulness and devotion of members of the last mentioned has been continuous from the foundation of the Church, for it is on record that these ladies "furnished the Minister's Vestry" for the opening of the new building.

The first Avenue Missionaries left for China in 1899. Doctor Henry Fowler and his fiancée Miss Watts for many years kept in touch, and Avenue folk helped them in many practical ways as well as by their prayers - not only individual but at regularly held Prayer Meetings.

During the Summer of 1905 the Reverend A. D. Martin became very unwell, and after a period of "sick leave" was compelled by illness to leave Avenue. The "Farewell Services" were on October 15th of that year and Mr. and Mrs. Martin and their family moved to Buxton. It is good to have Mr. Bernard Martin and his wife worshipping with us when on visits to their Son who now lives in Southampton. Mr. Martin has "thought back" and sends us these reminiscences:- "Minister's children always behave badly in church" declared my mother; so we sat in the back pew. Sat? Well I suffered the indignity of being made to stand on the pew for the hymns and by the end of the sermon I might be under the pew examining the carpentry. That was 65 years ago. I have some memory of what the Church looked like inside and I think I remember

the engine which 'made' the wonderful electric lights; but my chief recollection of Sundays is of the sailor suits with scruffy serge collars which my brother and I wore and the walk to and from church and Furzedown Road (the house is still there!)

"But always, after we left Southampton Avenue was our ideal church. "The church your father built" my mother used to say, and we listened eagerly to the skilful stories she wove about the difficulties that arose during the building, and of the great 'Stonehenge' bazaar which cleared off the debt. Then she would explain to her children that fine buildings, successful bazaars and big congregations aren't enough; a church is really the people who worship in the building, it is their spiritual life that matters. My father had other ministries, but always we looked back with pride to Avenue as being especially connected with our family.

"My father respected tradition and was a keen historian (his book on Dr. Vanderkemp is still apposite to the South Africa race problem, his Congregational Principles relevant to unity) but he was an advanced thinker. What Oliver Cromwell called "a seeker", an eager student of new ideas in philosophy and theology. Indeed he was somewhat of a revolutionary. When Avenue was built it was very modern, a breakaway from Victorian church

architecture. He wanted public worship to have a fresh approach, a larger vision, to be a reality; but it must be always "in spirit and in truth" with the accent on "hallowed be Thy Name". In later years he wrote a number of books, a life of Jesus, Aspects of the Way and other theology as well as literary criticism and an historical novel.

"By chance I was not again in Southampton on a Sunday until last year. I came back to Avenue after 62 years. I do not quite know what I expected after such a long time, but of course, ghosts came down from the wall plaques - Lankester was an old lady who told me I must never forget that I was born in Southampton, and also a jolly old gentleman who gave the Minister's children the largest box of chocolates they had ever seen; Littlejohn was a very little lady who gave us wonderful teas and also a tall boy who let me shoot his airgun; Bance was a benevolent Colonel and also a young lady who taught me my ABC. But when the ghosts stopped crowding round me and worship began, I was astonished by the atmosphere of devotion coupled with up-to-dateness and a sense of reality. I felt as though something of my father's spirit hung about the place after all these years."

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Chapter 2

There followed two very short ministries - The Reverend E. Startup was inducted on March 25th, 1906 but owing to prolonged ill-health and other difficulties he was obliged to resign from the Pastorate in January, 1909. During this period when general support for the Debt Clearance Scheme was not good, an anonymous gift of £500 came as an encouragement and help.

In 1909 the Ladies Tea Committee was elected and also the first Finance Committee.

The Church was without a Minister for some sixteen months, but in June 1910 the Reverend Meredith Davies was ordained and inducted and at this period individual Communion Cups were first used. In a Magazine of the time there is printed an outstanding sermon of the Rev. Meredith Davies "Pageantry and Poverty", delivered at the time of the Coronation of King George V. This sermon is reported to have had a profound effect on all who heard it. There is evidence that the Reverend Meredith Davies was very much loved by his people and had a very promising ministry ahead of him at Avenue, but sadly he succumbed to serious illness diagnosed as 'T.B.' and was forced to resign in January, 1912. He subsequently accepted a "call" to a Church in Perth, Australia.

During the period referred to in this Chapter,

a remarkable work was being carried on at our Portswood Mission to which reference has already been made as endeavouring to meet the needs of Free-churchmen in the Portswood neighbourhood; which at the time was a very poor district indeed. The Country was passing through a period of terrible unemployment and living conditions generally for all but the aristocracy were appalling. Ladies of "Avenue" organised a "Soup Kitchen" in an effort to help the destitute hungry people of that particular area - they had 150 to 200 families on their list for "free soup" - any surplus was sold to those who could afford to buy a little more at one penny a quart. In a Magazine of this period one of the lady helpers writes of the dreadful conditions in which many of the people were living - in some homes virtually at starvation level. All this was at a time when the rich were called upon to pay little if any Income Tax, Purchase Tax was non-existent and yachts and Riviera cruises were very much "in". Small wonder that the Minister of "Avenue" was moved to preach his inspiring sermon on "Pageantry and Poverty".

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The old organ, subject to moaning and wailing at the most awkward times, was particularly quiet and docile one morning. The Organist had not had

to "give it a drink or a tasty morsel of newspaper or match-stick" - all was quiet as the congregation listened attentively to the preacher "And what did Samuel say?" he questioned the organ answered

Who Remembers:-

The Three Choir Festivals - three Churches packed to capacity - Avenue, Romsey and Winchester - later Avenue, Romsey and Above Bar.

Band of Hope in the old "tin" hall and the Concerts devised and produced by Miss Rose Hickley - "Avenue's Auntie Rose" - going the rounds of the other Churches to 'perform' - specially the combined effort of all the Churches at The Watts Hall (where Marks and Spencers is now) for the celebration of the tercentenary of the sailing of the Pilgrim Fathers. Happy memories!

REMARK! The Organ may have been bad tempered with many idiocyncracies but we have been amazingly well served by our Organists for three-quarters of a Century.

Chapter 3

June 15th, 1913 sees the beginning of a remarkable new era in the life of "Avenue" - Gone were the days of reputation as a select fashionable Church - Avenue was about to become the pivot of practical Christian service and a Church with "standing" in both the religious and educational life of the community. The Reverend H. T. Spencer came from Grimsby to begin his Ministry of 16 years. Once more the weather was perfect for a welcome Garden Party held at "Hollyholme" Hulse Road (now the Northlands Hotel) the home of Mr. and Mrs. J. T. Hamilton. Of 277 Church Members, 200 were present on that occasion.

Not much more than twelve months after this happy day, August 4th, 1914 to be precise War was declared. The late Mrs. Joseph Harrison, whose home was later next door to our present Manse, was walking in The Avenue with Mrs. Rowland and Miss Edith Lankester on the afternoon of Saturday, August 8th, when they saw soldiers trying to scribble a last note home before embarkation, using each others' backs as writing-desks. No time was lost; these ladies went home and immediately approached Mr. J. T. Hamilton and Mr. Ronald Shephard; Supported by the Minister and all the Deacons, they opened the doors of our Halls

(a smaller Hall having been acquired) to members of the Forces on the afternoon of Sunday, August 9th. In that short time the Halls had been equipped with tables and chairs, writing materials and books; and radiated with "welcome". The Avenue Halls Southampton became world famous during the five dreadful years of War that followed. Men and women literally wore themselves out in voluntary service to the troops and at the end of the War the Reverend H. T. Spencer and Mrs. Harrison and Mrs. Leach (in charge of catering) were awarded the O.B.E. in recognition of their work and leadership, and as a token of the Nation's gratitude to the people of our Church and Town. Everything was provided free until May 1917 when a charge was compulsory. At least £50 a week was expended in supplying cups of tea and food - at first borne solely by our own people, but as the need grew greater, money and supplies just "poured in" and helpers likewise. Men and women could be seen out on the pavement or walking along-side the men; handing food to the soldiers as they streamed by marching from the huge Camps at Winchester to the Docks. Cups of tea were handed out in the same way and further down The Avenue other helpers were at hand to receive back the empty cups, or tram drivers would bring them back hours afterward. At such times as many as 3500 bags of food would be

prepared overnight. One of the organisers of this service was Mrs. T. H. Smith (Betty's Mother) who for several years was Kitchen "Chief". Day and night this voluntary work went on and what it meant to the soldiers can never be fully known. One man wrote "no words of ours can sufficiently express our appreciation of the efforts of all those who so kindly co-operated in our interests. The memory of the people of Southampton will long live in our minds."

On the first day the Halls were opened 3,500 letters were stamped and posted: in a very short time, 70,000 had been handled by the helpers. For nearly three years the only item for which a charge was made was a stamp. Not only were our ladies and gentlemen looking after the soldiers but their wives and sweethearts too, as they came from long distances to say "goodbye". At one time on short notice 100 beds were found in Avenue homes alone.

Men in Southampton on Sundays flocked to our services and at their own request a Bible Class was held on Sunday afternoons, often attended by several hundred men, particularly of the Division later known as "the ill-fated Seventh". It was one thing to sleep on the Common in summertime, but a different story in rain and snow, so when winter came, hundreds of men slept on the floors of our Halls until a new Camp was constructed on the

Common. Arrangements were made for the men to wash and dry their clothes and have mending done by our ladies. A Mr. Rose had a "celebrated collection of 60 razors for their use". During the first summer Mr. Knight "provided the men with vast quantities of apples from his orchard". In the winter Miss Martin "came to the rescue with a constant supply of home-made cough mixture."

One great feature over the years, was the Christmas Party to which around 300 men came - some helpers spent five Christmas and Boxing Days "on duty". Christmas 1916 brought men with leave but no railway passes - Avenue folk provided them with bicycles!

At one time Chaplin's van called daily to send civilian clothes home for the men, and Lowmans the Bakers were ready at "any hour" to supply vast quantities of bread and cake. One local tobacconist provided two large boxes of cigarettes free every week from the opening of the Halls until after the Armistice.

At the end of 1917 the Americans and men from the Colonies came - so did the Avenue Cash Desk for the exchange of foreign money.

In 1918 and 1919 entertainments were arranged for the wounded from the local Military Hospitals and for numbers of Belgians on their way home from German Prisoner of War Camps. They had cake ... the first they had tasted for four years.

This work went on "quietly and usefully till August 1919". Over the whole period 300 or more people "helped", some for the whole period of the War. The Visitors' Book contained 40,000 signatures but more than ten times that number crossed our threshold, something like 360,000 letters were written and posted in our Hall - thousands more were written in the Hall but posted elsewhere.

Here are extracts from a letter written to Mr. Spencer, dated 14th September, 1919 and signed "Albert W. Swalm" (The American Consul in Southampton in the early war years) - "I have a very keen sense of remembrance of the first days of the opening of the Hall for the soldier purpose ... from the beginning it served actively a splendid purpose in which there was displayed on the part of the women, a devotion to hard work at all times that will for ever call for the highest praise and sincerest recognition. Nor will the service of the men be forgotten, for they were as instant and sure as the sainted women ... On behalf of the many men who wore uniform I beg to thus record the deepest appreciation. They were taken in as brethren in the common cause, and served so finely, so hospitably, that the act will not be forgotten, but it will go to add one more strand to the weaving of the unbreakable cords

that shall serve to hold our two great English-speaking peoples together in ties that shall serve for the world's betterment, unselfishly considered. Therefore the Hall should be considered as having served its place and time in a noble way, coupled as it is with that very great work that originated its purpose ... Save every record of that work and Hall - precious beyond all price they are, and as part of the life of the Avenue Church, so far as it lies there - and so much of it does, it will always be a crown unto it ... I shall treasure my remembrance of the Hall its workers and supporters, every phase of it - as one of the precious things of life, and as long as life may hold me in its embrace of wordly duty."

As the Soldiers' Hall closed its doors, so came the all out effort to clear the debt of 1905 and to raise money to redecorate the Halls - then came the Denominational "Forward Movement" of 1922-25 for which Avenue was asked to raise £1000. £1184.13s.2d was the sum realised. About this time the Church took possession of its first Manse - Number 6 Rose Road having been bequeathed by Mrs. Miriam Williams, our first lady Deacon, who also left the Church some £3000.

In the late 1920's there was a very strong Young People's Society and Dramatic Society and a flourishing Sunday School and Bible Class.

On September 20th, 1928 a large congregation gathered to bid Godspeed to Miss Gladys Parkhouse who was leaving to join her fiance the Reverend Martin Shepherd in the Mission Field of China, working with the China Inland Mission. For some of that generation this was the starting point of real practical interest in Missionary work, and with our own serving Missionaries, how the children sang "Whom oceans part O Lord unite"!

On 15th June, 1929 the Reverend Henry Thomas Spencer died - "he was the friend of all sorts and conditions of men and spent himself in their service". Mr. Spencer was greatly loved. "He was not what would be called a 'popular' preacher - he was too 'great' He was known and honoured as a Scholar, but he carried his weight of learning as lightly and modestly as a child. He was the friend and comrade of men of every walk of life, in the Church and beyond its walls. His ministry and influence reached far beyond those walls. The back pews of his church were in far and away places, and even in the ends of the earth. Henry Thomas Spencer was a great soul and is not dead - he lives!" So people wrote of him - so we remember him - "Yea saith the Spirit they may rest from their labours, but their works do follow them".

Mrs. Spencer lives in Southampton - as sweet, gracious and dear a soul as at the time of her

husband's ministry - in her hundredth year, she with her family send us greetings. Mr. Frank Spencer writes:-

"We rejoice to see how in 1968, under the dedicated leadership of our Minister, Avenue is helping forward the ecumenical movement in Southampton. The process started more than fifty years ago, when during the 1914-18 war so many friends, not directly connected with the Church, helped both by gifts and personal service the work carried on in Avenue Hall. Our own folk bore the brunt throughout but one remembers gratefully those others who worked with us, friendships formed which lasted and grew. Then after the war the close association with mutual regard between Canon Neville Lovett (then Rector of St. Mary's and later Bishop of Salisbury) the Roman Catholic Father O'Mahoney, G.M. and my father, were great gain, not only to the harmonious relationships between the denominations but also to the whole life of the town. As members of Southampton Education Committee and The Endowed Schools' Governors, working together for the good of Southampton's children, their joint achievements in these fields were outstanding.

"As a family we know that my father deserved all the things said and written of him in 1929. For youth and its problems he had understanding and a

wonderful capacity for encouragement. He gave himself unstintingly to any, young or old, who sought his help and spent his great gifts of heart and mind in their service. Very precious to us, forty years later, those who still remember him and have still a place in their hearts for him. We dare to hope that in the years ahead our church will continue to derive something from the fruits of the Spirit so manifest in him."

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The Reverend H. T. Spencer once announced as his Text - "Habakkuk stood on his watch". Mr. Harold Lankester was heard to whisper to his jeweller friend Mr. W. L. Parkhouse sitting next to him in the Choir - "There's a job for you in the morning Parkhouse!"

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1914/18 - A Schoolboy remembers - getting prep. finished by 8.00 p.m. - then "on duty" at the Soldiers' Hall from 8.00 to 10.00 p.m. collecting and washing cups - every evening!

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June 20th, 1914

Avenue well represented at the opening of the "New Hartley College" in University Road - now The University of Southampton.

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We are reminded that a member of our Church who was a Master at Taunton's School - Mr. Fred Camfield (brother-in-law of Mrs. H. Camfield) resigned from the teaching profession during the time of the Rev. A. D. Martin's ministry and trained and entered the Congregational Ministry.

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Someone remembers a delicious strawberry tea given to the children by Mr. John Smith after the opening of the Church building - they went "by Brake to Hursley".

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For many years the name of Chamberlain was wellknown and respected in Southampton and at Avenue Church; indeed, some of the "older generation" still recall members of the family with affection. Over all the years Mr. Bernard Martin has kept in touch with Miss Gertrude Chamberlain and one of his vivid memories is of being taken by Miss Chamberlain "to a Canteen for Soldiers in the Camp on the Common". We wrote to Miss Chamberlain about this and she tells us:- "This Canteen was started by my friend Lady Dane under the auspices of the St. John's Ambulance and after a time I carried on as Organiser in her place. We were in the Camp proper and after starting with two caravans and tents we built two huts, one for men and the other smaller one for officers. A group of

fir trees now marks the site. Our work after about $2\frac{1}{2}$ years was carried on by the Camp Authorities who by then had the feeding with emergency meals well organised. The Camp was always a Rest one and troops turned up at any time especially when submarine activity altered sailings to France."

Miss Chamberlain appears from her letter to be very pleased to be in touch with "Avenue" again.

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A certain Christening is recalled. A more appropriate Hymn could not have been chosen -

"See Israel's Gentle Shepherd stand" - ?

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If any readers have old photographs or other souvenirs of our history and would loan them, it has been suggested that an exhibition might be arranged during our 75th year.

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Chapter 4

November 20th, 1930. The Induction of the Reverend Stanley Herbert and the commencement of another epic chapter in our history. 26 members of the Young Peoples' Society were received into membership on Easter Day 1931 and the Y.P.S. membership increased so rapidly that it was necessary to hold a Senior and Junior Meeting. The Avenue Dramatic Society became quite famous not only in the town but further afield - The Choir was overflowing from its Stalls, and chairs were brought in for those serving a "probationary period". The Halls were showing signs of wear and tear and "old age" and also proving not large enough for our requirements. The 1932 Annual Meeting of the Church, preceded by a Supper, filled the large Hall to capacity there were such very important items on the agenda 1933 - the New Halls Scheme was launched at an estimated cost of £9,600. One of the "historic" meetings of the Church was held on March 1st that year, when we saw plans on a screen. In May 1933 the old Halls came down - Sunday School met in all available rooms around the Church, in the Church itself, and also accepted the hospitality of the Christian Scientists, who then owned the property in Alma Road opposite our back gate. All the "organisations" met where and how they could but everyone was gay and happy.

On the Sunday evening following the removal of the old "tin" Halls and immediately before the Builders "moved in" the Reverend Stanley Herbert conducted an open-air service on the site - quite an occasion, on a beautiful evening in May, for the strollers in The Avenue as well as for those privileged to be gathered round forming the congregation. The hearts of many were full of memories and gratitude for all the old Halls had meant in their lives and in the witness of the Church. All looked forward eagerly to the days ahead.

On 26th July, 1933 Mrs. G. M. Spencer laid the foundation stone of the smaller Hall to bear her Husband's name and Mr. Harold Lankester laid that of the Avenue Hall. Mr. Ronald Shepherd unveiled the tablet in the corridor between the two Halls. Many and varied were the efforts to raise all the money needed and Church social life reached a peak - Most memorable are the Pageants written and produced by Mrs. Stanley Herbert with a hundred or more children taking part and members of the Y.P.S. bringing several hundred parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts to see the production! The children of the Sunday School raised the money for the entire cost of the Avenue Hall vestibule.

On 3rd January, 1934 the "Echo" proclaimed "New Avenue Halls Opened". The opening service of

dedication was conducted by the Moderator of the Southern Province and the great Doctor J. D. Jones of Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, at that time Moderator of the International Congregational Church, was the Guest Preacher.

With fewer and fewer people living within easy distance of "Albion" and various other factors, very sadly, the remaining members found themselves compelled to come to the decision to discontinue the work and witness there, and add their support and strength to one of the other fellowships. In October 1935 Avenue was very happy to welcome quite a large contingent of friends from the "Mother" church and has been greatly blessed through their membership with us all through the years.

During the time of building "progress reports" appeared in the Magazine and also until all the money had been raised some years later, by way of the "Pyramid Scheme" devised by the late Mr. Harold Lankester. The "Pyramid Scheme" was a pyramid shaped collecting box incorporating a graph which attracted a regular stream of people to the vestibule to see the weekly progress towards the apex. The Church was very much "alive" - the young peoples' organisations went from strength to strength - Mrs. Herbert founded The Women's Guild - we had a small but enthusiastic Men's Club - our

girls and boys were marrying fast and furiously and the Minister was kept busy with Christenings!.

One Sunday evening in April 1938 "Avenue" was "on the air" for the first time. What excitement - what preparations and rehearsals - what an honour - but alas a few weeks after, a deputation came one Sunday morning from Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead - vacant following the death of Doctor Horton The Reverend Stanley Herbert who had been appointed Mayor's Chaplain before leaving, came back from Lyndhurst Road on March 12th, 1939 to conduct a Civic Service at Avenue. On that day the Choir were first robed - 40 strong and "all present and correct".

Highly successful Film Services were held during this period, the young people undertaking the publicity side of the organisation. Sunday after Sunday the Church was full for Evening Worship.

A Junior Church on Sunday mornings was started by Miss Boswell as soon as we had the delightful Little Chapel for such use, and a strong afternoon Sunday School Senior Department of young people in their late 'teens also met in this Room. At this time the Sunday School really needed a Hall the size of the Avenue Hall for its Junior Department and the Spencer Hall was "just right" for the Primary. The Intermediate

Department used the Church Parlour. Eileen Bulow, Joy Ransome and Wendy Fryer - the "Herbert girls" write - "We are very grateful to have this opportunity of sending greetings to the Avenue Church on the occasion of her 75th Birthday. We remember the Church with affection, not only because that period of our lives was a very happy one but especially because we knew that our father and mother so much enjoyed their ministry in Southampton. Looking back it seems to stand out as an extremely busy, lively and successful time for both of them, and for that we are most grateful to the people amongst whom they worked & whose lives touched theirs.

We wish the Church every success in the future."

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A Deacon's remarks on seeing the gowned Choir for the first time - "like a row of penguins!"

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Special mention has been requested of the "Burlesque Band" in which Primary Children excelled themselves in Concerts of by-gone days - our Printer was an efficient Conductor in his time!

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Chapter 5

New Year's Day 1939. The Reverend and Mrs. Stanley Herbert and their daughters had moved to Lyndhurst Road, Hampstead, but no one knew what lay ahead in that fateful year. 1939 was an interesting and exciting year in Church life, many Ministers coming to preach (and to see what we were like no doubt) and arrangements were made for the Reverend Doctor Marlais Davies to come from Greenock "with a view" on September 3rd, 1939. In spite of "an important announcement" expected on the radio at 11.00 a.m. there was a large congregation. Sir William Rowland had, by arrangement with the Church Secretary remained at home to hear the announcement - At about 11.15 a.m. he arrived at the Church - handed Mr. George Caton a slip of paper - he in turn took it to the pulpit - There was silence as Doctor Davies himself read the message. He made the announcement "Our Country is at War let us all pray." We sang the National Anthem - Again the door had opened for the people of Avenue - those left at home - to serve their country in the same way as in 1914 - by offering the hospitality of our Halls and premises to men and women of H.M. Forces stationed in, or passing through Southampton. If only bricks could talk - what a tale would again be told. On the Sunday when Doctor Davies commenced his ministry he

arrived for morning service to find great activity in the Halls. At midnight on the Saturday, the French survivors of Dunkirk had arrived in Southampton in very large numbers and made their way to the Avenue Hall. Every available space in both Halls was filled and also the corridors. All the men were in dire need of rest, food and clothing. Once again, as in 1914-1918, Messrs. Lowmans came to the rescue with bread and cake and the needs of these men were met to the best of our ability. Sadly, most of those given shelter and sustenance here, lost their lives soon after arriving back in France, through the destruction of the troop train in which they were travelling.

Immediately on the outbreak of War, a canteen staffed by Avenue ladies and many others, not of our fellowship until then, was opened. The late Mrs. Ings and Mrs. A. E. Gale were convenors for the catering. Mrs. Gale remembers having 100 ladies "of all denominations including Catholics" working on her rota in shifts from 4 - 7 p.m. and 7 - 10 p.m. and in the mornings as and when required. She herself was frequently "on duty" from 8.30 a.m. to 10.00 p.m. There was also a sweet and cigarette stall and facilities for buying postage stamps. Writing materials for that last letter home before crossing the Channel were provided free. Concerts and other entertainments were arranged and at one

time Italian prisoners of War interned on the Common, were admitted under guard to the Concerts. When the Americans and other overseas reinforcements arrived, the helpers added to their duties the task of explaining English money! Soldiers and others of the armed forces were always welcome at our Hall, irrespective of whether they had money to spend or not. Many just needed warmth and friendliness in a quiet homely atmosphere. Our Hall appealed to great numbers of men in that here was a place where no intoxicants were served and although various games were provided, there were no playing cards and thus no temptation for gambling. Another vivid memory is the day and night immediately before 'D' Day when again the Halls, stages, balcony and corridors were thick with men, lying down to sleep before the "alert" and the march to the Docks and the ships waiting for them "down the River". At this time all could not be given shelter at Avenue, hundreds more were getting what rest they could lying on the pavements outside, and Avenue helpers were in and out supplying them with tea and biscuits. All through the 1939-45 period copies of the "Echo" were supplied free through the courtesy of "The Echo Office". It is recalled that the Authorities required us to make a small charge for refreshments served and as there were no overhead expenses,

there was a resulting profit and at the end of the War this was used to clear the remaining debt on the New Halls.

There must be men and women of yet another generation, in all parts of the world who recall the warmth and comradeship they found with us in "The Avenue Soldiers' Hall the Second" and of the quiet moments spent alone with God in the Little Chapel which was an "ever open door". During 1939-45 the Avenue Soldiers' Hall was under the supervision of the late Mr. W. A. Steward, Doctor Davies being engaged in work among the troops as a Naval Chaplain - venue - Southampton Docks.

It was very fortunate that Doctor Davies came to us just when he did and Avenue is indebted to him for his leadership, guidance and sympathetic support in those sad and difficult days. Not only was there the sadness and tragedy of the loss of dear ones on active service overseas, but right on our own doorstep, were our people losing loved ones, and indeed their own lives, as the result of the prolonged enemy bombing of our land, and this our town. The effects of those years are still apparent - the flourishing Sunday School disbanded immediately after War was declared, and also the newly formed Junior Church. All the Southampton children were evacuated to safer areas; the Y.P.S., Badminton Club and other societies for young

people, gradually came to an end as members were "called up". Even those serving on "home ground" had no time for recreational pursuits. The members of the Women's organisations and the Men's Club transferred their activities to the Soldiers' Hall work, Sunday services were held at 11.00 a.m. and 3.00 p.m. as it proved quite impossible to black-out the Church building. Great numbers of people, who were in the position to do so, moved from Southampton - many never to return.

In 1944/5 things began to change - there seemed a gradual lightening of the skies and of our hearts, as the hope of an approaching end to the War seemed more real. There were some children's voices heard, and little feet as well as army boots in the halls and corridors. What joy and hopefulness that brought!

During this period Avenue was able twice to extend the hand of friendship and welcome to Churches of other denominations who had lost their premises by enemy action. St. Barnabas folk worshipped for a time in our Little Chapel and in the Spencer Hall; and for quite a long period the Unitarian congregation also met for worship in our Little Chapel.

Life gradually got back to normal, the Halls were cleaned up, essential repairs were carried out, congregations were increasing and the Sunday

School functioning again. Sadly, however, Doctor Davies was having increasing trouble with his sight, and because of this had, very reluctantly, to resign and retire from the ministry for a time. Ultimately Doctor and Mrs. Davies made their home in Jersey and Doctor Davies again "took up the reins" as Minister of the Congregational Church there. Doctor Davies died some two years ago, but Mrs. Davies writes:-

"My dear husband the late Dr. D. D. Marlais Davies held seven or eight Pastorates during his Ministry of nearly 60 years. I had the privilege of sharing with him in the work of several of these Churches, but none I think gave us such joy and real reward as our work in Avenue, partly because of the sorrows of the Second World War through which we were able to get really close to our people.

In my husband's name as well as my own I send warmest Greetings to Avenue Congregational Church in its 75th year, and may it long continue to be a witness for God's work in Southampton".

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Who Remembers:-

"Eager Heart" - the Dramatic Society's Christmas production for several years.

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Sunday School "Treats" - the year one of the young Teachers acquired a car - H.E.A. - the year the rowing boat at Ryde had been used so often by Rev. Stanley Herbert in previous years, that its name had been changed to "The Vicar's Pride".

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In the 1930's we had our own dance for Socials "The Avenue Glide" devised by Meredith Fuller so soon to be "missing - presumed drowned" in the service of his Country.

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In connection with the building of the new Halls and the Pyramid Scheme a member who was a Sunday School scholar at the time, remembers the children in long queues every Sunday for several years - making their weekly contribution and having a "pyramid" stamped on their card.

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Chapter 6

There was now to be a long interregnum, Doctor Marlais Davies had left us in April 1950 - The Reverend Vine Russell did not come until February 1952.

For most of this period an "interim guest Ministry" was arranged by the Deacons. This proved of very great benefit and blessing to the Church. The Reverend T. C. Brimley, who had commenced his long and notable ministry in Southampton at our Freemantle Church, had come back here to live and he and his wife had been worshipping with us for several months. By the unanimous invitation of the Diaconate and Church Meeting, Mr. Brimley was asked to preach on approximately 3 Sundays each month - he accepted, writing "my hope is that in consenting to this arrangement, I may help you to come more easily to a decision concerning the Pastorate".

On 3rd February, 1950 the Junior Church was formed. Eleven children attending under the leadership of the writer. It was soon proved that a very real need had been met. Congregations increased as parents became aware that their children were being looked after and catered for during worship on Sunday mornings - numbers of children too, very soon increased and it was a joy to the congregation, after all the War years with

hardly a child in sight, to see children "pouring" from all parts of the Church, some running in their eagerness to get to the Little Chapel and their own service. The exodus of children became referred to as the "up-to-date version of the Pied Piper"! Over the next seven to eight years numbers on the Junior Church register reached 100 and on most Sundays at least 60 children were packed into the Little Chapel.

At last, we had "called" our new Minister - the Rev. Vine Russel from Middlesborough and Mr. Brimley joined his wife in their usual seat, both with the assurance of the deep gratitude of "Avenue" "for every recollection of the graciousness of their ministry to us during the past fourteen months". Mr. Brimley now living in Dorset writes:-

"The request for a greeting for the 75th Anniversary of the Avenue reminds me that it is 50 years ago this year, that I, as a young Minister, recently out of college, ascended your pulpit for the first time. Throughout these years you have been good enough to invite me again and again to preach, and some years ago during an inter-regnum you asked me to take charge. How touched I was at the end of that time when you sent a deputation to enquire whether I could undertake the Pastorate. It grieved me to decline; for I became greatly

attached to the people. From all this you will understand that no one could desire better things for the Avenue on your Anniversary. I rejoice in the fine work the Church has done in bygone days, in the witness it is bearing now under the able leadership of my friend the Reverend Donald James, from so many of whose sermons I have derived inspiration. That your fellowship may be mightily reinforced by the Spirit of God as it seeks to win men for Christ in this critical, chaotic, challenging generation, is the prayer I offer for you in this significant year of your history.

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From across the Atlantic come greetings to us and a message that Laurie and Maimie (nee Leslie) Griffiths are still using in their home in Quebec, the two chairs, which were presented to Mr. Leslie when he resigned as Superintendent of Portswood Mission - "they are shabby but still sound and often admired."

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Someone recalls the Sunday School outing Strawberry Teas in the Forest provided by Mr. W. J. Collins and the races (the effort for a penny prize!)

Chapter 7

In February 1952 the Reverend Vine Russell was inducted as Minister and almost the first "event" in his ministry was putting into operation plans for a really big Bazaar to put the Church finances on a more sound footing. No sooner had someone had the idea than the ladies as always through all the years, went into action. Once again this was a period of wonderful fellowship - there were coffee mornings at each others homes - home and hall type whist-drives - concerts - outings and as soon as the Bazaar had been held and there was a better financial prospect, the Budgeting Scheme was devised and presented to the Church for consideration by the Finance Committee. There was quite a bit of controversy and not whole-hearted support, but the Scheme was launched and proved to be a great asset to the Church and lessened the headaches of the Treasurer to a large extent.

"Congregational Praise" made its debut in June 1953 and in the same month Mr. Percival Withers died. He had retired from the office of Organist in October 1952 having held it since June 1915. A most talented musician, he had served God so that "our Church has become recognised as one in which both choir and organ combine to render a most valuable and important contribution to the beauty of the Sunday service."

At about this time the Young Wives and Mothers' Fellowship was "born" and many older ladies of the Church and congregation associated themselves with the members by acting as "Aunties" looking after and playing with the little children and babies to enable the mothers to have an hour or two "off duty" and enjoy themselves in various ways on Tuesday afternoons. Allied to this organisation was a Sunday Morning Creche to cater for children too young to attend the Morning Junior Church - sometimes resulting in considerable competition vocally!

In November the death occurred of Mr. Ronald Shepherd, J.P., who had been a Deacon for more than 50 years. There was hardly a Sunday when he, with Mr. George Caton assisting, was not at the door of the Church. At Choir socials he would jocularly declare - "I would rather be a door-keeper in the House of the Lord than" In the same month the death occurred of Mr. Shepherd's business Partner Mr. Chris. Hedger. Mr. Hedger was not a member of Avenue, but for many years had given "his all" to the Post War Brotherhood Movement whose Sunday afternoon meetings were held in our Church for a considerable number of years. It was thus at Avenue that the memorial service to Mr. Hedger was held.

During 1954 a large number of new members were welcomed into our "family". Early in 1955 it became increasingly apparent that the Church must be re-roofed and the Minister sat in his Vestry on March 26th, the appointed "Gift Day". The total required was £1500 of which £600 had already been "saved up". Everyone came, from the youngest child in the Sunday School and Junior Church to the oldest member - the Minister received £1800. In December of the same year the War Memorial Corner, incorporating a Book of Remembrance of those who lost their lives in the 1939-45 War was dedicated, and at about the same time we were rejoicing that the new roof was on, and hoped for less cold and damp feelings during worship as the winter progressed!

At the Church Meeting in September 1956 the members heard with great joy that David Mills, who had grown-up at Avenue, had been accepted as a candidate for the Ministry by Lancashire College. At this same meeting a report was given on the mammoth task which had been undertaken during the summer of a "grand spring clean of the premises." 37 members helped and it was estimated that between them they had worked very hard for 250 hours.

During 1956 the Organ Appeal Fund was launched and once again everyone joined in the

effort to raise at least sufficient money for the work of re-building the organ to be put in hand. This effort was greatly helped by bequests to the Church under the Will of the late Mr. Edward Gilham. Quite apart from this "special effort" the ladies of the Working Party over several years, were working for, and organising sales of work, to clear the Mortgage on the Manse in Oakmount Avenue which had been purchased prior to the coming of the Reverend and Mrs. Vine Russell.

In the Spring of 1958, quite unknown to each other the Sunday School Staff and the Junior Church Committee, were feeling the necessity to join forces as a "Graded Morning Junior Church" and this happy union was realised in July of that year.

On Sunday, December 28th, 1959 our morning service was televised - what an experience that was, and what joy it brought to old and sick friends who had been unable to get to Church for months or even years!

At this time too, the "Every Person Canvas" was carried out under the slogan "Avenue Advancing". In January 1960 the "Ockenden Venture Committee" was appointed, whereby Avenue accepted the responsibility to educate and maintain two refugee children in England for a period until they became self-supporting. Over £3000 has been raised and the interest continues.

In March 1960 the Reverend Vine Russell announced his acceptance of a "call" to Dundee and thus was about to close Chapter 7 of our history.

Mr. Russell writes - "I have learned with interest that a brief History of Avenue Church is being prepared to mark the 75th Anniversary. As I treasure the happiest memories of our years in "Avenue", and our sojourn in Oakmount Avenue, I gladly comply with the request to send cordial greetings to the congregation."

How lovely the Spring - May Mornings in the 1930's - Service in Church at 7.30 a.m. followed by Breakfast and then on to work or school - remember?

Some friends especially remember the dreadful night of December 1st, 1940 - the second night of the great blitz on Southampton. Hearing of all the Churches in the Town "razed to the ground or burning furiously - and Avenue Cong. has had a direct hit". Oh, the endless time until the "All Clear" and the anxious journey to see - by a miracle a bomb had fallen in the garden of Number 2 Westwood Road and our beloved Church, though scarred and the Halls minus most of their roof tiles, still stood - yes the Doxology was sung on the pavement that morning.

INTERLUDE!

From the Y.P.S. "Limerick Book" of 1932

On Thursdays our ladies go sewing
The Church Parlour is full to o'er flowing;
They turn up at three
Take an hour off for tea
And then think they ought to be going.

The Miracle

Have you heard of the Avenue Guild?
Where prominent speakers are billed;
On Thursdays at four
When you open the door
All tongues save the speaker's are stilled!

Quoth the 'Sec.' at his usual 'rite'
'Twill be something instructive and bright
From the preacher adorning
The pulpit this morning...
Our parson as usual tonight.

Said friend B.....as he strode up the aisle,
"I'm glad I've collected a pile;
But this marching in step
Is the thing that gives pep
And makes the job really worth while."
(N.B. "Friend B" - Mrs. Fletcher's father)

But this discourse at last I forsake
And I have an announcement to make;
The Choir are to sing
An appropriate thing;
It is called "It's high time to awake!"

Chapter 8 and Forward to 1993!

In August 1960 we heard with great joy that the Reverend Donald James of Wolverhampton had accepted the invitation to become our Minister. Mr. James' Induction took place on October 26th and so commenced a period, still happily continuing of great achievements both within the Church family and in the wider witness of the Church in the world.

Looking through copies of the Magazines it is truly amazing the evidence there is of voluntary service given either individually or collectively in and around our City. By way of example many of our fellowship have been and are, actively concerned in the Hospital Car Service, Hospital 'Trolley' Service, work in Hospital Serving Rooms, Canteen work at the Old Peoples' All Day Club, activities connected with the Y.W.C.A. and Y.M.C.A. house-to-house collections for endless "good causes", shopping and other chores for old and house-bound people. There seems less demand or necessity in the 1960's for weeknight meetings on Church Premises - small wonder when our members are so much engaged in practical Christianity further afield than the corner of The Avenue and Alma Road. There must be, and we are sure there is, a great deal of time given and service rendered by individuals of which we have

no knowledge at all, but which stems from the love of Jesus Christ in the heart and the fact that we "belong" to Him.

As a Church too, we are much more inclined to join in with other fellowships both of our own denomination and others, than were Avenue people of a few years back.

Soon after Mr. James came there was instituted transport arrangements for people finding difficulty in getting to Church and we have an amplifying system which, it is hoped, helps some people to hear more clearly from their own "special place" in the Church.

On 15th January, 1961 the re-built Organ was dedicated and in subsequent months a number of recitals were much appreciated, given both by our own Organist Mr. Frank Boulton and visiting Organists of renown in the district. The beautiful Children's Corner devised by Mr. and Mrs. Straley was dedicated on March 26th, 1961. All the furniture had been made by Mr. Straley himself, and this sadly proved to be his memorial, for he died not many months after completing this labour of love.

For some years, a monthly Social evening had been held "The Avenue Social Fellowship" and this was later continued as "Thursday Church Nights", but more recently Home Church Groups have been

meeting for discussion and are proving very popular with those able to attend.

The annual Good Friday Three Hour Services at Highfield Parish Church as the joint Christian witness of Highfield, Avenue and another non-conformist fellowship inaugurated during Mr. Russell's Ministry, continued. Regular meetings are now held on our premises and services conducted by the University Congregational/Presbyterian Society, our Minister being Congregational Chaplain to Southampton University.

On 31st December, 1961 the popular Sunday evening T.V. Service "Songs of Praise" was televised from our Church, and among many appreciative letters received by our Minister was one, enclosing a donation for Church funds from someone who as a soldier had enjoyed the hospitality of our Soldiers' Hall in 1916.

1962 stands out as a year of many gifts to the Church - a number of which were anonymous - all made out of love for Avenue and the desire to help to beautify our already very lovely Church, and also to ease the worries of the Treasurer - for again his head was aching ... the Halls urgently needed re-decoration.

After having got used to the Magazine in duplicated rather than printed form it came as rather a shock when reading "back numbers" for the

purpose of compiling this History, to open the January 1963 edition. One wondered whether our ancestors would have been pleased with the change or not! At this time not only had our new-style Magazine arrived but also the "big freeze" - arctic conditions from December 1962 to March 1963 and vast damage through frost to the water and heating systems, and in spite of adequate Insurance arrangements, another unwelcome expense and the consequent launching of the "Boiler Fund". Enough time has now elapsed for us to appreciate that "it was not an ill wind" that blew that winter! No complaints since then of a cold Church.

An historic meeting was held in March 1963 - a combined "Church Night" of Highfield and Avenue friends and yet another Eastertide with the first service of Easter Music rendered by the combined Choirs of Bitterne Park and Avenue - one Sunday "away" and another "at home". The first Bookstall was established in April in the capable hands of the Misses Jones. About this time we had an American family - the Gowers worshipping with us for about a year.

Our Minister had the honour of being invited to represent Congregationalism on a preaching tour of the United States of America and Mr. and Mrs. James were away for about two months in the Summer.

In November the plaque, a memorial to the late Mr. A. E. Bance, for many years Church Treasurer, and recording the names of all Ministers of our Church, was dedicated and the "Christmas Present for Avenue" scheme was launched in December, which year by year now helps us to "balance our budget" on December 31st.

In March 1964 the "Young Wives and Mothers Fellowship" became translated to "The Phoenix Club for Ladies", something for which, with the Junior Badminton Club, Mrs. Donald James will long be remembered with gratitude. At about this time, the "Church Parlour" was, by voluntary labour and individual gifts, transformed from an old-fashioned dreary room into a modern, warm, bright and attractive Vestry for the use of the Choir and small Church gatherings and committee meetings.

It became necessary to close Portswood Mission in 1964. This was caused by a combination of circumstances, the most important being a Surveyor's report on the old timber frame and galvanized iron building which revealed dangerous deterioration and that it was beyond economic repair. The provision of a new building was far beyond the capacity of the Church, and in any event it was concluded that the site did not warrant considerable capital outlay, even if funds had been available.

It is appropriate that an appreciation be recorded of all the noble and devoted work carried out at Portswood over a period of some sixty years by members of Avenue.

In November 1964 a Caretaker's house was added to our assets.

Over all the years a vital service has been given which is often taken for granted. Deacon's wives and lady Deacons have prepared the Bread and Wine for the services of Holy Communion and washed up the dozens of tiny glasses after each service. For something in the region of 50 years this service was given on the first Sunday morning of every month by Mrs. Ronald Shepherd assisted by members of her family. At the end of 1965 Mrs. Shepherd felt the time had come to hand over to someone else, and Mrs. Durbin kindly offered to succeed Mrs. Shepherd. At this time Church Friends for babies baptised at Avenue were first appointed.

The first of the annual "exchange" services with St. Barnabas Church were held in 1966 at the beginning and end of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, and the united Service of the Southampton Council of Churches was also held at Avenue.

Our Choir Master Mr. Edward Cartmell, who had succeeded Mr. R. N. Nicholson on his removal from

Southampton to Highcliffe in 1960, invited the Junior Church Choir to join the Choir for the first part of Sunday morning services, and the children were accordingly robed and special seats provided for them.

The Vestibule of the Church was modernised and dedicated in May, to the memory of Mr. George Caton. Soon after various plans were afoot for redecorating and cleaning the interior of the Church, but prior to this work being put in hand new heating equipment for the Halls had to be installed.

September "saw" the Minister and Choir for a week in the I.T.V. Epilogue programme.

In January 1967 came preparations for the "attack" on the interior of the Church. On the 30th the Decorators moved in and the congregation moved out - into the Avenue Hall for worship until Palm Sunday. The idea of holding services in the Hall was not exactly welcomed, but it must be admitted that the Halls certainly had something to "give" and it was soon proved that it is the need of the people as well, or even more than the building that is needed for "worship". It was quite refreshing to sit somewhere different and meet someone else! The great work proceeded sometimes according to plan, sometimes not so, until, the scaffolding removed, Mr. James sat in

the vestibule (under the heater we suspect) on Maundy Thursday and received young and not so young, as gifts were brought to defray the cost of all the work done and still to be done. Personal gifts to a total of £795 were brought and the Ladies Working Party by means of several Sales of Work, raised another £625 - a grand total of £1420 - have there ever been such smiles on the Treasurer's face?! This wonderful response from everyone meant that it was possible to have other necessary work put in hand so that all the premises are in good order in time for Avenue to act as Host Church for the Spring 1968 Meetings of the Council of the Congregational Church of England and Wales.

Early in 1967 the Creche, which had not operated for some time was reorganised and babies made welcome on Sunday mornings at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Simmons in Alma Road. A Youth Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr. Hugh Dewing to co-ordinate all the Church Youth work was also appointed.

Another new experience was an exchange of pastorates between our own Minister and his family and the Reverend and Mrs. Henry Green of North Wilbraham, Mass. U.S.A., from July to September. A "good time was had by all" but to get back to normal was appreciated - which seems

the right moment to end this "history" and hand over to our Minister looking to the present and the future of our beloved "Avenue"

POSTSCRIPT

The history of Avenue, so well recorded in these pages by Miss Caton, makes good and interesting reading. It is a story of fine achievement from small beginnings. There is much to be proud of here. We are grateful for the tradition into which we have entered. We are happy to remember those who have served the Church so faithfully in days gone by.

What of the future? Times have changed. Avenue, built on the outskirts of Southampton, is now almost a "central church"; motor transport and television have completely changed the habits of society; for many people, churches seem much less necessary than our forefathers of seventy-five years ago thought them to be; this is an age of doubt, uncertainty and cynicism. Avenue has always shown itself alive to the needs of the day and has never been afraid of change. There may well be great changes in our churches in the coming years. Shall we change the times of services to meet changing social habits? Shall we have fewer, but better staffed churches? Shall

we have Group Pastorates? Shall we become a serving church looking outward rather than a church which, as we have seen, once provided its people with their social life? Who can tell?

What is important is that, inspired by the past, we should move into the future ready to be led in the way God wants us to go. Avenue has been fortunate indeed in the people who have served her in the past, let us of today live in the faith that God's best for Avenue is yet to be.

E. T. Donald James.

In 1898 "Avenue" was considered to be a very modern and beautiful House of God - now no longer modern but "matured" it retains its beauty and the atmosphere of worship has increased and become more real with age - our ancestors gave of their best for us - we hope the seeds they sowed are bearing the fruit for which they prayed. So much is the same - just as they would remember it, but improvements have been made - the old curtain to "keep the draught off the Choir" has long since been replaced by an oak panel to the memory of Mr. Lewis Parkhouse, for many years Church Secretary and Choir member. The old original electric lighting has been replaced as a memorial to Mrs. Parkhouse. The plain glass in the chancel is no longer there, but stained glass windows to the memory of Mrs. Anne Ackerley, Mr. Ronald Shepherd and the Misses Barling. A stairway to lead to the gallery has never materialised, although on one occasion in living memory the Church was so crowded for a service that people gladly climbed the ladder and took their places in the gallery - the preacher - Doctor Maude Royden - perhaps significant of the fact that so much in the way of practical service for 75 years has been accomplished by the ladies!

Looking back through these pages and reflecting all that these words in their humble

way represent - God has been good. The Church has had leadership of which it is rightfully and gratefully proud both spiritually and in so many other ways, from the pulpit. It has been abundantly blessed in its Officers and those over the years called "to the high office of Deacon". We gratefully acknowledge the faithfulness and friendliness of Sidesmen (how very important their service), the sincerity and devotion of Superintendents, Leaders and Teachers in all our Youth Departments and at Portswood Mission. Those who have given of their special gifts and talents through the ministry of music and of song. The Editors, Business Managers and Distributors of our Magazine - personnel of the Visiting Committee. Those closely associated in the ministry of flowers, both arranging them for worship and taking them to sick and aged friends Sunday by Sunday. Leaders of Women's organisations and those who arrange Church Social gatherings (especially the Ladies' Tea Committee). The members of the Missionary Committees and those responsible for the Book Stall; the I.B.R.A. and Prayer Fellowship Secretaries - all Delegates who link us with the wider Church of Jesus Christ and the devotion to duty of our Caretakers over all the years.

We thank God for every remembrance of all the PEOPLE - the lifeblood of the Church. "Thy hand O God has guided Thy flock....."

We pray for the CHILDREN - the Avenue Church of tomorrow - keeping us ever young at heart and forward looking "Into Thy hand we commit ourselves."

SUPPLEMENT HISTORY OF CHURCH SOCIETIES

Question - What is the oldest of our Church Societies?

Answer - The Ladies Working Party

We find mention of the Ladies Working Party in the earliest records of our Church. It was founded mainly for the purpose of making garments to be given as Christmas Presents to the poor associated with our Portswood Mission, but also for making articles for Church Bazaars, which labour of love has continued throughout the whole of our history. This has always been a "Social" as well as a "working" gathering, but from records it seems that shorter hours are worked, at least on Thursdays in the 1960's than in the early 1900's. Meetings were always held in what is now the Choir Vestry and for those puzzled by the "contraption" in one corner - that was the lift whereby the cups of tea were elevated from the cellar, the one and only kitchen - now the Scouts "glory hole" - in the Church basement.

In recent years the meetings have been held in the Spencer Hall fortnightly and are still of a "social" nature with tea. Work is planned and distributed, not only to the 20 or so ladies able to attend on alternate Thursdays, but others who enjoy working for the Church (including one in

her hundredth year) by doing knitting, crochet and needlework at home.

Question - Who are the Treasurer's best friends?

Answer - The Ladies Working Party!

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THE CHOIR

From the Church records it is fairly clear that there has always been a Choir, but the first "minute" of a Meeting of the Choir is dated 5th March, 1897. The Choir has always received a Church "grant" towards music and from its inception it is obvious that Avenue Choir has been an ambitious Choir. In 1900 our Choir 39 strong rendered Stainer's "Crucifixion" and that was the start of many "never to be forgotten" sacred concerts and services of worship through the ministry of song. During the period when Dr. Rigby was Organist, the Choir grew in numbers and more and more ambitious works were rendered with great success. This trend continued and the next Organist, not entirely with the approval of Minister and Deacons it seems, introduced a new method of chanting, new anthems (some of his own composition) and the new hymn tunes.

Avenue Choir was becoming known in the District not only for the part it was playing in the life

and witness of our Church, but by its "concerts and performances" rendered at other "churches and centres". The records show that they must have achieved a reputation that could only have been equalled by some of the more famous choirs of our land. At this time the Choir was 60 strong.

The Great War does not appear to have seriously disrupted the Choir - at this time Mr. 'Percy' Withers came to be our organist. There can be few older members of both Choir and congregation who cannot remember Mr. Withers with affection and his unfailing ability to produce the "right" music for any occasion. One recalls a visit of the Mayor and Corporation when for the Processional Voluntary he played "Donkey Serenade".....When asked "why?" he characteristically replied that it was the first tune that came into his head that morning!

Over the years a comprehensive Music Library has been built up but it is on record concerning the Organ - Many of the visiting Organists were embarrassed or unable to cope with its idiosyncracies, and it would appear that only one man was capable of handling the beast!

From the earliest records and until around the "half-century" milestone, the names of Louise and Rose Hickley, Harold Lankester, Alf Jeanes and May McLachlan to mention just those as

representative of all 'voices' were "house-hold names" in our Church and from 1925 - 1943 the Minute Book meticulously written in green ink reminds us that Mrs. S. Fuller was Secretary. Many remember her with love and affection although she was so strict - her word was law - but she disciplined us with a most disarming smile!

The Choir was gowned in April 1939 and soon after suffered, with all other organisations, through the ravages of World War 2. There were Sundays - many of them, when we were almost too tired and sad to sing, but there was never a Sunday when the Choir was not there supporting the Minister and leading the people in worship.

On 15th January, 1961 the organ had been rebuilt and our Minister dedicated it. The original Organ had been constructed in 1902 by Ingram Hope Jones to the design of Robert Hope Jones and the work of re-design was carried out by Messrs. Henry Willis and Sons, and the organ recitals and voluntaries rendered by our Organist Mr. Frank Boult, prove to us the beauty and quality of our Organ and are much appreciated.

In spite of change in times, music and song are a vital part of our worship and so long as there is the desire in the human heart for "worship" we are confident there will be a Choir.

THE BROWNIE PACK & GUIDE COMPANY

In about the year 1919 Miss Enid Bance went to a Bazaar in the Church Hall "in aid of Guides" and was inspired to become a Guide herself. As soon as she was able she started the 1st Avenue Brownie Pack, becoming the first Brown Owl. In due time four of the Brownies attained "Guide" age but there being no Guide Captain, Miss Bance, as she says "was more or less forced to take it on". She remained Guide Captain of the Avenue Company for 10 years. Resulting from those ten years there are many Captains, Camp Advisors and Commissioners now working in the Guide Movement, and indeed some of our present Guides are daughters of Miss Bance's Guides.

In 1937 the local Guide Authorities decided that Miss Bance's high standard of work for the Movement should be shared by other Companies and so Avenue was deprived of their founder Captain. Miss E. Sleep succeeded Miss Bance and maintained a similar high standard until 1939 when the War came and all Companies were temporarily closed, as the vast majority of children were evacuated from the town.

When things had settled down after the War Miss I. Wenham re-opened the Company in 1948 and gave faithful service until January 1957 when she handed over to Miss B. Cox, who was to be the

Captain for some 10 years. In 1960 "Guide Jubilee Year" - Guides all over Great Britain were asked to help brighten up the Country by giving flowers or plants (in appropriate places). The Avenue Company donated two cotoneaster shrubs to the Church, so that they would eventually grow and cover the ugly stack pipe on the North Wall of the Church. A plaque was placed by them when they were planted to commemorate the occasion. The shrubs have grown and have thrived and the plaque is still there.

Upon the retirement of Miss Cox, the then Brown Owl, Mrs. F. Eves took over - in January 1967. How fortunate Avenue Church was to be able to find a Church Member to carry on the Company. During Mrs. Eves' first year in office, the title "Captain" was officially dropped and replaced by "Guide Leader". The Guides however, still preferred to use the title of "Captain" and no doubt will do so for some time.

As this "History of The Avenue Church" goes to print, the Guide Movement is about to undergo very great changes in its structure to bring it up-to-date. Good Luck to the Guides present and future and may they go from strength to strength.

AVENUE SUNDAY SCHOOL/JUNIOR CHURCH

The afternoon Sunday School was established very soon after the first services of Avenue Church were held, including a "Minister's Class for Boys". From the very beginning our children excelled themselves at the Sunday School Union Scripture Examinations and there was friendly rivalry between Avenue and Portswood Schools. Toy Services have been held without exception at Christmastime; until fairly recently, for the benefit of poor children connected with Portswood Mission. Eggs for the Children's Hospital were also collected at the Children's Easter Service for many years. It is interesting to note that at the Sunday School Anniversary in 1898 there was a Guest Preacher from America!

Endless devoted service has been given through all the years by Superintendents, Officers and Teachers, some working among and for the children "for a lifetime" outstanding among them - Miss Rose Hickley and Mr. John Stephens.

During the years when Mr. R. N. Nicholson and Mrs. Straley were Superintendents, there was a "first class" Choir - so first class that other Sunday Schools came to feel that "if Avenue enters the Musical Festival we've no hope of getting the Shield" - indeed the S.S. Union Shield became part of our "furnishings"! Mention has been made

elsewhere of the present Junior Church Choir and it is good to know (and see) that the children of the 1960's are given a place and a share in leading the Church worship as well as leading the singing in their own departments of Junior Church.

The modern trend for "Family Church" is a good one, when all the family come to worship together on Sunday mornings rather than the adults coming in the morning and the children in the afternoon. Those who have however, worked in both afternoon Sunday School and morning Junior Church look back with some nostalgia on Teachers' Teas to discuss problems socially rather than in committee, and going back to the days before the New Halls were built, it was delightful for both Teachers and children to have classes on Summer Sunday afternoons, in the remaining small areas of the former garden of "Avenue House". Times then seem to have been generally more leisurely - now-a-days there is so little time to "get together" and Sunday mornings are a rush for staff, especially those with dinners to "see to" as soon as they get home.

Before the 1939/45 War the annual "Treat" was something looked forward to from year to year - by train to the New Forest - picnic Lunch - games - scrambles for sweets and tea - everyone covered before leaving for the outing with insect

repellant "cintronella" - did Miss Hickley have Shares in the Company that manufactured it??? In the 1930's something further afield was attempted and for several years the selected spot was Ryde, I.O.W. There are some in the Church who will recall that certain people got left behind - whether by accident may to others still be a mystery!

Time was, when not only the children would not have missed the Christmas Party for anything, but neither would the Staff have missed Teachers' Meetings, especially the A.G.M. with usually a supper following. Can the somewhat indifferent attitude today be accounted for? Sunday School Teachers were expected to attend Church Worship regularly, at least once a Sunday as well as to be with their class every Sunday afternoon - the motto would seem to have been "you can't give out unless you take in" - maybe we should stop and think seriously on that - Christian education such as can only be given by the Church and people within the Church with deep concern for the young is a vital necessity TODAY and for TOMORROW - perhaps it might be suggested; as never before. Are YOU sure you are doing your share?

MISSIONARY WORK

Mrs. G. M. Spence founded the Girls Missionary Working Party - a monthly meeting open to "Girls of all ages" to help provide for needs of Missionaries. The girls cut up sheets and rolled the strips into bandages and dressed dolls by the dozen (rag and sawdust bodies and china heads). These were packed in 7 lb. biscuit tins and posted direct to Mission Stations in China and elsewhere. "Excitement" was provided by the Monthly Missionary Letter from H.Q. read at the tea-table by Mrs. Spence. Once a year the older girls produced a Missionary Play. This Meeting later became the Girls Auxiliary under the leadership of Miss Gladys McCowen but did not function for very long. It was however, revived in the early 1930's by Mrs. Stanley Herbert as the "Girls Missionary Circle" following on in the same tradition as the original G.M.W.P.

In March 1923 all Churches of Southampton joined in a colossal Missionary Exhibition at the Coliseum (where the new 'Echo' building is now going up) in Portland Terrace - such was missionary interest in those days. It lasted for several days and included visits from day school children as being of educational value. A member recalls quite plainly being taken not by her Sunday School teacher, but her teacher at Bevois Town School.

During the ministry of the Reverend Stanley Herbert enthusiasm for missionary work reached a peak at "Avenue" - Mr. Herbert was Secretary of the Town Auxiliary and also represented Southampton on the L.M.S. Board of Directors. Among visiting Missionaries on deputation we recall Reginald Bartlett (1928), Mabel Shaw (1930) Dr. T. H. Somervell (of Everest fame 1935).

Avenue still has the reputation for being a missionary minded Church, although in more recent times it is in money raised for the cause, rather than practical missionary 'ties'; but certainly, in the good cause of overseas missionary work our Missionary Committee do a great deal as "home missionaries" by way of social gatherings, notably the annual Summer Outing, initially to raise money for the cause but fundamentally vital to the life of our own Church, giving social contacts and opportunities to make new friends within our own "circle".

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Some will recall an Autumn Day in 1928 at the Docks - waving "au revoir" to Gladys Parkhouse - OUR MISSIONARY.

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At the turn of the Century, the G.M.W.P. kept Dr. and Mrs. Fowler supplied with knitted eye shields for their patients in China.

PORTSWOOD MISSION

The early years of "Portswood" have been referred to in Chapter 1 - Pages 9 and 10 and Chapter 2 - Page 16.

It would seem that Sunday Evening Services whether conducted by the "Evangelist" in charge of the Mission or visitors was never very successful. The truly "great" mission at Portswood was the work among the children and the women of the neighbourhood. There was always a flourishing Sunday School with membership at times in the region of 200 with its associate weeknight activities - Band of Hope - concerts - plays - Girls' Guild. One remembering those days speaks affectionately of the simple happy social life at the Mission - "Many grown-ups may now recall the Mission fondly, not so much for its Good Works, but for the FUN they had - the comradeship and mutual help". Also recalled are Harvest Festival Services when "usually absent members would show up - many of the men had allotments nearby and competition for the biggest marrow was keen."

The Women's Guild mainly run by Avenue ladies was very popular and ran its own Christmas Thrift Club for years. Not quite so well attended was a weekly Men's Club and in the 1920's and 30's a keen Y.P.S. functioned at Portswood on similar lines to

the Avenue Y.P.S. One who worked and worshipped at Portswood for many years says "I remember it as a warm, friendly place for those who loved it - my memories are full of socials and Rotary Parcels to be distributed at Christmas to the needy folk of the neighbourhood and it was not difficult to find people who were greatly in need - many of the people had been moved to Portswood from "down-town slums" and I like to think that perhaps, in some small way, the Mission had a part in their rehabilitation."

One of the "great" names recalled in connection with Portswood Mission is that of Mr. A. E. Trim who made Portswood the main Christian work of his life. He was very much loved by the Portswood people. There must be many people today, who look back and give Portswood Mission the credit for their Christian training. In common with other Sunday Schools, Portswood was closed during the War years of 1939-45 but as soon as five children returned the School was opened and in a few weeks 50 had gathered on Sunday afternoons.

There was always close co-operation between Ministers and people of "Avenue" in the running of Portswood Mission and many Southamptonians must look at the modern maisonettes in Bowden Lane today and recall fond and grateful memories of the Mission Hall which stood there and witnessed for Jesus Christ, enriching the lives of so many people.

THE WOMEN'S GUILD

Although the Guild was not affiliated to the Federation of Congregational Women until February 1942, when Rules were drawn up, it actually commenced in 1930 under the Leadership of Mrs. Stanley Herbert wife of our Minister during that creative period.

It is interesting to note that at the Annual General Meeting in 1933 held in the old Hall, 12 members were present. By 1936 the membership had risen to 73 and the Treasurer is recorded as Mrs. Trim (still a member - Mrs. C. R. Jones). Several "founder" members are still enjoying the fellowship of the Guild.

Meetings have always been held fortnightly and continue so, now under the Presidency of Mrs. Donald James, offering members a period of worship, service and sociability.

SCOUTS & CUBS

There has been an Avenue Scout Troup and Cub Pack since 1934 but no records appear to have been kept from which their "history" can be written.

YOUNG WIVES FELLOWSHIP

This group was started in 1952 and is referred to on Page 45. The idea came from Mrs. Griffiths (now in Quebec) and the first Chairman was the late Mrs. Graham Ackerley. The Meeting took the form of a devotional opening with talk or demonstration either by an "expert" or one of the members, and always a "cuppa".

When Mrs. Abel became Chairman she aimed at encouraging "mums" in the neighbourhood to come - some strangers to the City and unable to attend Church on Sundays. This helped many young women to make friends in their new environment.

An annual summer outing was arranged and occasional Theatre parties when Fathers were left in charge for an evening - one wonders what the results were on the occasion of the Salisbury Playhouse visit, when the mums got home at midnight!

After a time numbers fell off for one reason or another, and it was felt that a monthly meeting for all women held in the evening might meet a greater need, so the "Young Wives" became "The Phoenix Club" now known and flourishing as "The 1960 Club".

What a lovely memory - S.S. Anniversaries with all the children "massed" in the Chancel and the "babies" special piece!

THE YOUNG PEOPLES' SOCIETY

Until 1923 there appears to have been no organised Youth Organisation but Mr. Abel recalls that in the Autumn of that year about a dozen young people "gathered round the Tortoise Stove in the old small Hall and formed one". The first Secretary was Miss Dorothy Smith and Mr. Abel followed and by the time the Rev. Stanley Herbert came membership was 80 strong. It was a weekly meeting divided into sections for socials, religious discussions, literary evenings etc. It was from the Y.P.S. that the Avenue Dramatic Society "blossomed out" and was able to fill the large Hall and later the present Avenue Hall for three nights or more in a week with great financial success. Mr. Kenneth Wootton (Mr. Howard Wootton's brother) was another Secretary and also Miss Joan Addis (sister of Mr. Ross Addis) and the Society went from strength to strength until the 1939-45 War. During the latter part of this period Mr. Frank Young gathered young people together and formed a Youth Group meeting in the Little Chapel on Sunday afternoons and on Tuesday evenings. This "Group" was run on somewhat different lines and attracted young people from "outside", many of whom, before long became Church members. Mr. Leslie Jones was another leader of what had grown into a very keen and lively Group.

The Youth Group often made themselves responsible for Evening Services at Portswood Mission and at various village Churches.

Following this came a period of less "organised" youth activity, but in the summer of 1965 the present society of Young Congregationalists was formed under the leadership of our Minister and Doctor Keith Kilburn. This "Club" is a "social" one but developing from it is a Discussion Group led by Mr. Hugh Dewing which it is hoped will meet a real need in the Church for our young people. Social gatherings are indoors in the winter but continue without a break, outdoors in spring and summer.

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THE BADMINTON CLUB

From quite early days there has been a Badminton Club but the present Club originates from October 1931 starting with equipment "bequeathed" to it by the original Club members. The Club met on Fridays until it was forced to close down on the outbreak of the 1939-45 War. As soon as the Avenue Hall was freed from its wartime activities the Badminton Club was reformed and the Club night changed to Monday. New members came and went bringing new styles and new ideas, but the season 1959-60 saw a fundamental change, the Club joining the newly formed Southampton and District Churches

Badminton League. This introduced a new element of competition to the game and made what had been a tight community within the Church into an outward-looking society with responsibilities outside itself. This side of the Club's life was carried a step further in 1964 when the Club joined the Southampton Badminton League with the aim of demonstrating the Church's attitude in a non-Church activity. This "double" life of the Club continues, socially on Mondays and competitively on various other evenings throughout the winter months.

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From time to time during the life of the Church there has been a Tennis Club and at one time it is recalled Bowls matches were played as between Bowlers of "Albion" and "Avenue" Churches.

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In the 1920's and 1930's Sunday School classes were held in curtained cubicles around the Hall and the most coveted honour for the girls was to be in the "top class" which sat on the stage, the senior boys are recalled "in a huddle" as far to the back of the Hall as possible!

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