

# Baptist Church

## The Early Days

It was during the 1950s that Mr A.O. Criddle, Gabalfa Baptist Church, was first burdened to go on the new Gabalfa estate with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

With this in mind, a Sunday School started in 1955 at Gabalfa School. As the meetings grew and more children attended, a Thursday evening children's group was also established at the school, with Mrs Lillian Criddle leading the group. Others involved were Mr John Criddle (later became Church Secretary) and Mr Arthur Criddle.

It was some five years after the children's work had started that the first Sunday evening service was being held. Mr Criddle's initial vision and earnest prayerful work in the area was finally starting to take shape. The purposes for His gospel on the estate were fulfilled.

## A permanent home

When the Sunday School had been established for some time, Gabalfa Baptist Church instituted a 'New Cause' and a new church might be built on the estate.

A plot of land on Gabalfa Avenue had already been reserved by the council for a place of worship, and with the speculation of Jehovah's Witnesses planning to build a church on the land, application was swiftly made for a permanent home for the new church.



# The first 50 years

The builder in charge of the project was Mr Don Bussett and the two smaller halls would be known, with along with his men, brick by brick, the new home! Over time they would be known as Emmanuel was established. and 'red room', or during recent years, as the 'Sunday School room'.

In the early part of this task, on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1965, a service was held at the site for the laying of dedication stones. Two gifts were given by friends and groups of 1 laid – one by Rev. D.M. Russell-Jones, the then minister of Gabalfa Baptist Church, and the other, most fittingly, by Emmanuel. The Young People provided the A.O. Criddle, on behalf of the Sunday School. These stones, and The Boys' Brigade and Life Boys still be read today on the wall outside the entrance between them. The Communion service was in building. from Gabalfa Baptist, with it being brought down on a Sunday afternoon on the third Sunday of

Several months later, after much hard labour, the 'New Church' to Gabalfa Baptist on the first Sunday the Gabalfa Estate' bulletin could state: 'It is a real joy to already for their evening Communion Service announce that the building will be completed, God willing, by the middle of March, and will then be handed over to the first Sunday in March in 1966 – 6<sup>th</sup> March Trustees by the builder. There will still be much to do, thank Offering Day, when those who had course, - paths to be laid, car park to be prepared, grounds to work on the estate were invited to join be dug over, grass seed to be sown, scrubbing, polishing, promises and loans for the 'New Church I curtain hanging, etc.... we trust that there will be no shortage of volunteers!'

The original intention was that the main hall should have been the Trustees are confident that as the day dual purpose nature, but the Trustees later felt that the hall had been waiting for over such a long period should solely be used as a place of worship as far as possible. Wonderful Lord will provide for the view of the close proximity of Gabalfa School, some of the work of His faithful servants.' night activities would continue to be held there.

### The new building opens

At the time of completion of the church hall, it was estimated that a further £1,000 was still required to complete the finishing of the church building was made

dedicated, so the opening service was certainly the beginning of a new era in the history of Emmanuel. and a Missionary Challenge led by Rev. David the evening.

At 3.00pm on that Saturday in late April 1966, a person On Wednesday there was a further Evangelistic home for God's people on the Gabalfa Estate was established. Iris Davies and Thursday was 'Young People The service was led by Rev Leonard Evans, past President of the Proclaimers will be taking part'. the F.I.E.C. (he would later become Pastor of the church in the late 1970s). Rev. Mervyn Morgan (Emmanuel's first Minister) and Rev. Vernon Higham were also amongst those taking part. The actual opening ceremony was performed by Mr Bill Adams and Young Peoples' Get-together. The actual opening ceremony was performed by Mr Bill Adams and a 'Film Rally - 'The Unfinished Task of the Church' Criddle. the evening.

Following this afternoon service, Emmanuel's first church service took place. At 4.30pm, members and friends of the church gathered for fellowship and refreshments. The idea of a church service at 4.30pm would become a fixed tradition right through the church's dedication stones: 50 years to the present day!

A further preaching service was held that evening at 6.30pm, conducted by Rev. Leonard Evans. He was accompanied to Emmanuel by a choir from his home town, Swindon, with one of the choristers being a young Stephen Baston! (Later he would come to Cardiff as a student and be appointed deacon and then elder at the church.)

'CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS.'

1 TIMOTHY 1: 15

### Early church life

On Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> April, the first Sunday services in the new Church Hall took place. The morning service at 11.00am was in the form of 'Morning Worship and Holy Communion' and the 6.30pm was a 'Gospel Service'. Both these, as with all the meetings throughout that opening week, were preceded by Mr

Rev. Mervyn Morgan began his ministry at Emmanuel Baptist Church in 1966. It was two years later that the new church was officially formed but when it was first opened the following people were chosen: Mr Ray Dando, Mr John A 'Court, Mr Billy Johns, Mr Dan Liddell and Mr Wilfred Selway. Of these, besides Mr (now in his 90s) was

then Mr Dave Cox and Mr Glyn Ellis added in the past 50 years. The other church officers are the deacons – currently Mr Andrew Bowden from Swansea took over Jonathan Baston, Mr Gareth Davies, Mr Roy Edwards, Mr Paul Johns (son of the original Trustee, Billy Johns), Mr Benton, Mr Alan Lansdown and Mr Dave Rees.

Once more the church was left without a pastor, but God graciously answered the church's prayers and the Lord was lead His work on the estate: Rev. John Clew was the first to come to a saving knowledge of Christ Jesus. Another conversion early on was that of Mr Clifford Parry who with his wife, Phyllis, became faithful members of the church for many years.

Being a Baptist Church, the first baptismal service in the building was of significance and Mrs Enid Allen, who passed away into the presence of her Lord and Saviour only 70 in 2015, was one of the first to pass through the waters of baptism in the current baptistery.

### Workers for the harvest fields

Many weddings have taken place in Emmanuel over the past 50 years but one of the first was that of early members, Mrs Bannister and Jean Evans. The second wedding was that of Cliff and Pat Harvey, Pat having come to faith in Christ at the Colwill Road Sunday School.

### The passing years

As the years went by, members came and went, as did church officers and pastors. Rev. Mervyn Morgan remained

Most dear to those in Emmanuel from the early days was Hazel Hicks, an original member who lived on until 2015. She was a married Irishman, Mr Billy Glover, and then ministered in Spain with WEC International.

Kelland. She began her ministry in Gambia in 1971. Gillian Phillips eventually became the field leader. After some time working at the international office at Bulstrode, she has returned to Africa.

Young men have also been called to train for the ministry of a group, which continued until some 30 years ago. Emmanuel. Alan Davey, a deacon in the church, later became Pastor at Deeside Evangelical Church, before embarking on AECW churches in Cardiff in holding mission work in Bordeaux in France.

Similarly, Ian Parry, who was a member, was supported by the church to train in London Theological Seminary. After a period of pastoring in Pontardawe, Swansea, he returned to Cardiff several years ago to establish a gospel work in Cardiff Bay. Paul Levy, a past member of Emmanuel, was also called to minister God's Word and now serves as Pastor in the International Presbyterian Church in London.

More recent examples of individuals called into service for the Lord have been Siân Leaves who is now in the Netherlands and Miska Wilhelmsson who at the Seminary in Los Angeles preparing to return to home church in Finland.

## Various meetings

Throughout the 50 years, various meetings for different groups in the church have come and gone. In the early years, Emmanuel had both a Girls and Boys Brigade, from that point onwards, various meetings for different groups will lead us to a man to minister His Word in the church.

MI West Dando, one of the Trustees and deacons, arrange monthly Bible fellowship meetings. Another meeting that lasted for several years was the Bible Fellowship. Recently, we have been seeking to have closer links with other AECW churches in Cardiff in holding meetings and also joint youth activities (UNI) which have been extremely beneficial.

## Looking forward

As we gaze back over these past 50 years through joys and triumphs, trials and tribulations, we draw a veil of gratitude to bring our thanks to God for His unfailing faithfulness toward us throughout the years.

What then should our response be for the future? In the words of the hymn, "The Church of the Future": "The church of the future will be a church that will bring the Good News of Salvation to all who will hear it." Our vision should be to have faith that God will bless the church at Emmanuel and as a result the world will hear the Good News of Salvation and praise His name. May He also help us to be faithful to the work of the church. If we fulfil this vision, it is our prayer that God will bless the church.

Through the 50 years, various meetings for different groups will lead us to a man to minister His Word in the church. In the early years, Emmanuel had both a Girls and Boys Brigade, from that point onwards, various meetings for different groups will lead us to a man to minister His Word in the church.

As we face the future, then, it is appropriate that Emmanuel's text for 2016 should be from Psalm 127 verse 1: 'Unless the Lord build the House, they labour in vain who build it.' We pray this may be so as we look solely to Him to add to His Church such as should be saved. We also remember our great responsibility that

'We bear the torch that flaming  
Fell from the hands of those  
Who gave their lives proclaiming  
That Jesus died and rose.  
Ours is the same commission,  
The same glad message ours,  
Fired by the same ambition,  
To Thee we yield our powers.'

Perhaps it is appropriate to end by quoting words from those early men who had the 'same glad message' and were 'fired by the same ambition' many years ago, the Trustees of Emmanuel. They end an early newsletter with these important words that still speak to us today:

'FINALLY BRETHREN.....Pray.....For prayer  
STILL changes things.....'

But of course, the final word must be to our great God and Saviour who deserves all the praise as we look back over the past 50 years. And so we unite to say: