

PAISLEY METHODIST CENTRAL HALL

A History



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Early Days

'The most glorious work of modern days in the Methodism of Scotland.'

These were the words of the Reverend J. Williams Butcher, Chairman of the Scotland District of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, describing the events leading up to the opening of the Methodist Central Hall in Paisley in 1908. These words cannot be considered in any way an exaggeration when the marvellous story of the early years of the twentieth century is studied along with the difficulties which a small determined band of Methodists faced in the town throughout the nineteenth century. The wonderful conversion of John Slack - 'Paisley's Lazarus' - the enthusiasm of Paisley's Methodists, the enormity of the task they had set themselves, the large sum of money they raised in a short time, the tremendous work of the Reverends W.H. Rolls and Josiah Nix are some of the ingredients of this remarkable achievement, which brought to an end Paisley's unfortunate distinction of being the largest town in Great Britain without a Wesleyan building. It was also the largest Church in the country, with almost 400 members, without a proper home.

The lack of a Wesleyan building, till 1908, should not be taken to mean, however, that Paisley had been unusually slow in embracing the doctrine of Methodism because the roots of Methodism in the town go back much further than the beginnings of the twentieth century. Although John Wesley came to Scotland on 22 occasions, the last time when he was 87, paying visits to Glasgow and Renfrew, there is curiously little evidence that he ever visited Paisley. However that other great Methodist preacher, George Whitefield, did visit the town as early as September 1741, when he was given the freedom of the burgh. The record of this event is still preserved in the Town Council Minutes. Whitefield preached at least four sermons in Paisley at this time, which was the period of the famous Cambuslang Revival. John Wesley was in Glasgow preaching on Easter Sunday, 19th April, 1772 and he travelled to Greenock on the following day. Daniel White of Dover, in the 'Recent Deaths' in the Wesleyan Methodist Magazine for 1837, was said to have been 'awakened under a sermon preached by Mr. Wesley at Paisley in 1772.' It is feasible that Wesley may have passed through Paisley on his journey but this seems to be the only evidence that the great man ever visited the town.

Methodism may have begun to flourish in Paisley from 1807, when English workmen came to build the canal, but the story is very complicated. There appear to have been 40 Methodists in Paisley as early as 1806, a number which steadily increased to reach 176 by about 1814/15. This was a period of rapid population growth in the town. From just under 7,000 in 1755 the population increased to over 31,000 in 1801 and to 47,000 in 1821. The first regular meeting-place was not built until 1810 when the Methodists in the town, now numbering about 125, were wealthy enough to have a chapel erected in George Street at a cost of £2,400. This served the early Paisley Methodists until 1844 when a continuing decrease in numbers led to financial problems so they moved to 77 New Sneddon Street.

Numbers at George Street had been decreasing over the years which resulted in the chapel being altered in 1821. Only the Galleries were retained for worship, still with accommodation for 600 people, and the ground floor was converted into shops and houses. A secession, probably over the Voluntary Controversy in 1834, had halved the membership. Those who withdrew at this time called themselves 'Dissenting Wesleyan Methodists' then in 1838 they changed this to 'United Methodists' and in 1844 to 'Congregational Methodists'. They met in various places, namely 5 Sir Michael Place, 7 Oakshaw Street and 2 New Street, each change of name coinciding with a change of location but always with the Reverend C.J. Kennedy as minister.

The Reverend Citizen John Kennedy (he was actually christened 'Citizen' because his father sympathised with the French Revolution whose supporters customarily addressed each other as 'Citizen') was one of the most interesting characters in nineteenth century Paisley. Born in Edinburgh in 1794 he was a weaver before he became a minister. He involved himself in various reforming movements of the period, such as Chartism and the Anti-Corn Law League, so that his church was often the scene of exciting political meetings, setting the tradition, still continued at Central Hall, of involvement with the local community. He was a local Town Councillor and he ran a small school which was well supported by the handloom weavers in their prosperous times. Kennedy was a bit of a maverick who was probably not accepted by the Methodist establishment. Eventually he and his flock returned to the Chapel at George Street and they remained there until Kennedy's death in 1851. The chapel, by now his private property, was sold to the Swedenborgians or New Jerusalem Church, who still occupy the building to this day. It was spared in 1954 when reconstruction of the area took place.

Some of the difficulties which local Methodists faced in the mid-nineteenth century are illustrated by a letter to the great nineteenth century Methodist leader, the Reverend Jabez Bunting, from Thomas R. Jones in Glasgow on 11th July, 1848. The minutes at this time referred to the Glasgow and Paisley Circuit but speaking of Paisley, Jones said 'Without a resident minister, with a church of only 30 members very poor, and with an income of not more than £5 per annum, it surely ought not to be published to the Scottish world, as a sample of the Methodism of Circuit Towns in Scotland.' However, as W.H. Rollis was to do at a later date on a more famous occasion, Jones went on to speak up for Paisley when he opposed a proposal from Roger Moore, Superintendent of the Circuit, that the town should be removed altogether from the Minutes, 'with a lingering hope that something might yet be done for Paisley worthy of the town and of Methodism.' For a long time it seemed unlikely that Jones' 'lingering hope' would be realised because in 1862 the Society appears to have died out completely in the town. Other Methodist organisations such as the Wesleyan Methodist Association also had work in Paisley so that in some years there were three different Methodist bodies worshipping in the town. They, too, had died out by the late 1850's so that for 34 years the only Methodist witness in the town was maintained by the Primitive Methodists.

Primitive Methodism in Paisley

At this point, although this is principally a history of Central Hall and Wesleyan Methodism in Paisley, it is perhaps appropriate to say a few words about the work of Primitive Methodism. From its early beginnings in 1828 Primitive Methodism had a continuous history in the town. James Johnson of Carlisle, a man of leadership and force of character, brought Primitive Methodism to Glasgow and he it was who called for volunteers to mission Paisley. These volunteers marched from the Broomielaw to Paisley where they sang in Jail Square, thus beginning Primitive Methodism in the town. Their first meeting place was a school in Hunter Street but three years later in 1831 they moved to "Lady House", Star Inn Close, 14 High Street. A further three years, and after having had three applications refused, they were meeting in the Philosophical Hall, Abbey Close at a hire of £10 a year which was reduced to £7 in 1835. They worshipped there for forty years, during which time it acquired the name of the 'Ranters Kirk'. In 1874 they purchased a Tabernacle in Canal Street for £200, which was bought by the Railway Authorities ten years later for £2,250 for the new rail line to Greenock. They worshipped for a few months in the Old Templar Hall until the church premises they had bought in St. James Street were ready and this remained their home until the union with Central Hall in 1960. By that time they were part of the Methodist Church, union between the Primitive Methodists and Wesleyan Methodists having been accomplished in 1932.

Primitive Methodism had quickly taken hold in the town, which became a separate Circuit in less than four years with 110 members. Some very fine people were associated with this Church. One of the most famous ministers was William Eckersall who started a Church library and a Magazine to advocate Temperance, in which cause he was an enthusiastic and untiring worker. One of his disciples was Colin Campbell McKechnie, perhaps the greatest personality which the denomination produced. He was Circuit Minister, Editor of the Review, Connexional Editor, and the most influential person in the movement for a generation. In appearance he had a lofty, bulging forehead, a piercing eye (he only had one), aquiline features, and he was said to be a born gentleman who always wore gloves and was an effective speaker. A Highlander who had come to live in Paisley, McKechnie preached his trial sermon from a stairhead window in Broomlands Street. He had been invited to services of the Primitive Methodists by the family's maid servant, Bella McNair, who had impressed him with her fine singing of Methodism's lively hymns, but it was Eckersall who recognised his potential, sending him into the ministry at the age of sixteen and a half.

Others of note were the Reverend Robert Ferguson, minister for nine years, and his successor the Reverend Arthur Wilkes, who wrote a history of Primitive Methodism. Another minister was Robert Hind, who rendered magnificent service, redeemed the finances from confusion, wiped off a debt of over £1,000, built up the congregation, and promoted the general prosperity of the Church before he moved to Middlesborough. The Reverend

Joseph Ritson, historian of Primitive Methodism in the Glasgow area, was minister from 1898 until 1901. Worthy of mention, too, are Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Robinson. She was the lady who presented the pipe organ and the manse while her husband, who twice refused to be knighted, was described as the 'most widely famous Primitive Methodist in Scotland.' A Vice-President of Conference he was still attending church at the age of 87. John Cashmore, an Englishman, Superintendent of the Sunday School for over 25 years, was one of many local worthies, unfortunately too numerous to mention in this short work, connected with Primitive Methodism in the town.

Outdoor evangelism played a major part in the work but only the Mission founded at Pollokshaws survived, becoming a separate mission in 1897 with a membership of 102. The Annual Synod of the Scottish District of the Primitive Methodist Church was held in Paisley in April 1928, the centenary of the beginnings of Primitive Methodism in the town. Four years later the Union was effected but the Church at St. James Street continued its separate existence, though with much closer contact now with Central Hall. Although not officially part of Paisley Circuit, the minister of St. James Street attended meetings at Central Hall until the two Churches joined in 1960.

The 'Lively Corpse'

Returning to the Wesleyans, the next great year in the history of Paisley Methodism was 1896 because a meeting was held in the Clark Hall on the first of October that year 'of those in Paisley favourable to the formation of a Wesleyan church here.' The Reverend T.H. Mawson presided, the Reverend Brian Castle was there too, and there were about twenty people present. The first service was taken by the Reverend T.H. Mawson on the 5th of November, a Thursday, in the Town Hall with some 40 people present. Negotiations were begun to make use of the Baptist Church in Storie Street, known as 'Dale's Kirk' through its association with David Dale, the New Lanark industrialist. The first Sunday service was actually preached there by the Reverend H.J. Sugden of Greenock on 14th February, 1897 before a congregation of 75. Hopes to meet there regularly were disappointed, however, when the premises were let to Lylesland United Presbyterian Congregation for morning and afternoon services while their church was being enlarged. This meant that the Methodists could only use the building on Sunday and Thursday evenings. Obviously the position was unsatisfactory and on 16th May, 1897 a move was made to Good Templar Lesser Hall for Sunday services at 11 a.m. and 6.30 p.m. The Sunday School was also inaugurated on this day at 2.30 p.m. By November, 1897, however, they were back at Storie Street once more for all day services and Wednesday evening meetings. The Leaders Meetings were held at this time in the house of one of the Leaders.

Paisley was not on the list of Stations in 1897 so that the ministerial supply was provided from the Presidents List. This meant that Paisley had a succession of ministers who stayed for very short periods. The Reverend Edward Grainger came in February 1897, followed in September by the Reverend Charles Hutcheon, who was in turn succeeded by the Reverend Sydney Baker the following February. The Reverend J. Colliver Williams became minister in September 1898 until 1900, when he was succeeded by the Reverend Breenes Miller, who was followed in 1901 by the Reverend J. Webster till 1902.

Little progress was made during these years. In early 1898 the membership numbered only 43 and the little Society was still having a very difficult time. That year the District Home Mission Committee made arrangements with the Glasgow Paisley Road Circuit for Paisley to be attached to it with the position to be reviewed in 4 years. It was not all gloom, however, because a number of activities were taking place. In addition to the Sunday School, Cottage Prayer Meetings and Mothers Meetings were inaugurated in September 1899, there were Leaders Meetings and Class Meetings, a Watch Night Service on Hogmanay, choir practices, and indeed activities on most evenings of the week. In May 1898 two dozen hymn books were ordered, one dozen for visitors and one dozen for sale, but in November 1898, 50 were ordered as there was often a deficiency at services. By July 1901 membership had risen to 77 with 2 on trial, but the cause still seemed doomed to failure.

The next critical year was 1902, one of the most important in the history of Methodism in the town. This was the year in which the Society's position was to be reviewed and in Spring 1902 the Paisley Road Circuit Quarterly Meeting informed the District Home Mission Committee that it was no longer prepared to accept responsibility for Paisley. Some members of the Committee were sent to Paisley in April 1902 to convey the decision that the work of Methodism in the town was to be brought to an end because no progress was being made, but they found it difficult to kill. In their own words they came 'to conduct a burial service but the corpse was too lively to be buried.' When they reported back to the Scotland Synod in May, however, the Reverend W.H. Rolls, then stationed at Coatbridge, was a lone voice protesting against a Resolution that Methodism should close down its work in Paisley. One observer present considered the plea of Mr. Rolls on behalf of Paisley as the most dramatic episode he had ever witnessed in over 30 years of attendance at Synods. Several voices challenged Mr. Rolls to go to Paisley himself, including eventually the Chairman who asked him directly if he would go. After lunch, Mr. Rolls gave his answer that he would go to Paisley if he could be released from his commitment to go to Chester. As a result Paisley Mission was set up, a Forward Movement was instituted, the work of Methodism continued and Mr. Rolls began a notable ministry which lasted until 1910, the longest in the history of Paisley Mission. It was a difficult task that the little minister undertook in September 1902 with a membership of only 62 and the first year was heartbreaking. The reward for his efforts came with the Reverend Josiah Nix's Gospel Temperance Mission in Paisley from 23rd January to 1st February, 1904 and the conversion of John Slack.

Mr. Nix had been engaged as a Gospel Temperance Evangelist by the Home Mission Committee of the Twentieth Century Fund with the costs paid by Mr. Joseph Rank. This work met with considerable success in many Methodist Missions and Circuits but nowhere did it achieve as much success as it did in Paisley because at this point John Slack, who had a notorious reputation as a gambler, racehorse owner, entertainer and heavy drinker, enters the story. Slack had already met Josiah Nix, who was known as the Racecourse Preacher, at a race meeting at Epsom where he had been given one of Mr. Nix's cards. Slack had mentioned this to his sister in Leeds who had been earnestly praying for her brother's conversion for many years. Later, when she heard that Josiah Nix was to visit Paisley she wrote to him on behalf of her brother while her husband wrote to John Slack begging him to go to Mr. Nix. John Slack had not entered a place of worship since his sister's marriage in the autumn of 1884, a period of almost 20 years, but at Paisley his sister's prayers were answered when he went to the Good Templar Halls on 31st January, 1904, thanks to the persistence of both Mr. Rolls and Mr. Nix, signed the Pledge and was converted to Christianity. For the next $5\frac{1}{2}$ years he worked unceasingly for the cause of Methodism in Paisley until his death.

Other remarkable stories are related at this period of wonderful conversions taking place. There is the story of the husband and wife, both drunk, who entered the Church, were persuaded by Mr. Rolls to sign

the Pledge and became Christians, which helped to give them strength some time later when the woman fell seriously ill. There is the story of the open air meeting held by Mr. Rolls in Dunn Square. At the conclusion of the service a man who had been sitting nearby approached Mr. Rolls. He had been deeply affected by the hymn singing and he related how he had left home a week before, travelling from place to place since then getting drunk and he had just been contemplating throwing himself into the river. Mr. Rolls' service had given him the strength to carry on if he, Mr. Rolls, would write a letter to this man's wife for him. Mr. Rolls would not do this but he talked to the man telling him to go back to his wife and children and he gave him his rail fare back to Glasgow. It is pleasing to record that Mr. Rolls later received a letter from this individual to the effect that he had been warmly welcomed home by his family, he had given up drink, straightened himself out, and enclosed in the letter was the money for his rail fare.

Reference is made in the Mission Minutes of 27th June, 1904 to the phenomenal growth of the Church during the previous year when there had been a decided progression numerically and financially. In February 1905, 100 converts from Mr. Henry's mission applied to join the church. In September 1906, 250 hymn books were ordered but in January 1907 there was still a shortage of hymn books on Sunday evenings. By this time membership had increased to over 300, while the Good Templar Halls, which were supposed to seat 1,200 people, were full every Sabbath evening. In May 1907 it was resolved to form a brass band for open air work. Clearly there were many souls being won for Christ in these exciting times but the greatest capture was still John Slack because of his notorious reputation and the great work he was now doing in winning others. For a month after his conversion he earned his living by selling fruit then he began his great work for the Church. He started by conducting cottage services then he became the lay-agent of Mr. Rolls and he paid 1,800 visits to people's homes in 1906. Friends of drunkards or gamblers felt that they could be led to a better life by seeing John Slack while the former Bandmaster at the Theatre, who had now succumbed to drink said, 'If John Slack has got converted I can' and he was that night. John Slack was ideally suited for this type of work proving to be a very fine speaker. He has been well described as Mr. Rolls' 'Man Friday.' Mr. Rolls has himself been described as the 'master builder.'

So wonderful was the work being done by Mr. Rolls and John Slack that the need to have a proper church was being made all the greater. The Templar Hall was only available on Sundays so that week-day meetings were held in a room at the foot of Dunn Square but other accommodation had to be found when these premises were acquired by Paisley Co-operative Manufacturing Society, who occupied them until September 1981. The hall of St. George's Church, down Hope Hall Close, was used for a time. Mr. Rolls desired new premises for his growing Church and a site was purchased at a cost of £2,000 by the Connexional Home Mission Committee in 1904. It is one of the most interesting aspects of this story that the new church was to be built at the corner of Smithhills Street, on the site of a tenement owned by John Slack where he had operated his wheel of fortune.

Part of this building was occupied by the Museum Bar and the corner had long been regarded in the town as an 'unsavoury spot.' Among the stuffed animals one of the least pleasant exhibits in this 'Museum' was a morning roll, part of the last breakfast enjoyed(?) by a murderer, the last man to be hanged at County Square.

Having secured the site the next problem was finding the money to go ahead with the work and naturally John Slack entered wholeheartedly into the fund-raising activities. He must have been very happy on 10th September, 1907 when he was one of the people who laid a stone at the stone-laying ceremony. H.B. Law, a Glasgow Justice of the Peace and a great friend to all Methodist Circuits, described this day as 'the greatest day in the history of Methodism in Scotland.' This important event, which was chaired and addressed by Provost Eadie, great-grandfather of Labour politician Anthony Wedgwood Benn, took place on one of the hottest days of that year, a beautiful sunny day when the temperature reached 75 degrees. It should more properly be called a stones-laying ceremony because no fewer than twelve stones were laid. Beneath the first stone a sealed bottle was placed in a cavity, which contained copies of the Methodist Recorder, the Methodist Times, the Paisley Daily Express, Paisley Gazette, Glasgow Herald, the autograph of the Reverend W.H. Rolls, and the menu of that day's luncheon. The twelfth and last stone was laid by John Slack who had hoped beforehand to be able to place £100 on the stone as a contribution to the fund raising effort but in the event was able to place there £164. This happy occasion unfortunately marked the last appearance in Scotland of the Reverend J.W. Butcher, Chairman of the Scotland District, who was being transferred to England.

Exactly one year later at 3.30 on Thursday 10th September, 1908 a 'considerable crowd' gathered outside the building where they sang the Hundredth Psalm. Mr. Watson, the architect of Messrs. Watson and Salmond, Glasgow, gave a silver key to the Reverend Dr. H.J. Pope who turned it in the lock, opening Central Hall. In the style of the English Renaissance, the building had cost £16,000 to build, of which £11,000 had already been raised. The Dedicatory Services were conducted by the Reverend J. Scott Lidgett, President of the Conference. At a public meeting in the evening Joseph Rank, of the cinematographic family occupied the chair and said that if £4,000 of the debt could be raised by Christmas, he would give the remaining £1,000. An address by the Reverend Dr. Pope, a musical selection from a splendid orchestra, and a vote of thanks by the Reverend S.W. Stocker brought to an end this most memorable day in the history of Paisley Methodism.

Less than a year after the opening of Central Hall in which he had played such a leading part, John Slack died in May 1909. The impression he had made, not just in Methodist circles but in the whole town, can be judged from his funeral when the Hall was packed. The provost, ex-provost and several members of the Town Council were present and thousands gathered outside, while nearly all the shops in Glasgow Road closed their doors or drew their blinds in tokens of respect as the funeral procession made its way to Hawkhead Cemetery. The significance of his conversion

cannot be emphasised too strongly because it gained a hearing for Methodism in the town. Later that year Pastor Wood was appointed to continue the work which had been done by John Slack.

The exceptional nature, for a Scottish town, of this Methodist awakening in Paisley in the early years of the twentieth century is illustrated in a letter from Josiah Nix to W.H. Rolls in October 1908. Mr. Nix said,

'The heartiness of the singing, the glow of enthusiasm, is quite equal to anything I have discovered in England, and when I think this is Scotland I am amazed and thankful.'

Methodism, after many disappointments, had at last taken root and had a home in Paisley, but what did the future hold for the new Mission in the twentieth century?

Central Hall in the War Years and the Depression

The departure of the Reverend W.H. Rolls in 1910, following the death of John Slack in the previous year, left a gap not easy to fill for the in-coming minister but the Reverend Walter Spencer was to prove equal to the task. He and his wife were welcomed at a Recognition Meeting on Tuesday, 6th September, 1910. During his ministry in Paisley Mr. Spencer and his family lived at Mar Villa in Glasgow Road. Mr. Rolls had lived in Hawkhead Road.

The first problem for Mr. Spencer was the repayment of a loan of £3,500 borrowed in connection with the building of the Central Hall. In December, 1911 a three day bazaar was held in the Town Hall at which the crowds were so large that police were required to control the queues. £1,600 was raised from this event, which was an incredible amount in those days. A further £1,000 was received from Joseph Rank and £1,000 from the Connexion, thus enabling the loan to be redeemed. Membership, which had been increasing every year since 1902 when it numbered 62, stood at 395 in 1911. In 1912 an emigration movement swept the town, with whole families leaving the church week after week.

At this time the important decision was taken by the Trustees to let the Halls for suitable functions. This meant that the premises would become liable for the payment of rates for the first time and it was recognised that the extra income from lets might not cover the rating liability. However, it was felt that it was right that the premises should be made available for the use of the general public and this view has continued to be endorsed throughout the years.

In these years of considerable social unrest before the outbreak of the First World War, one of the first organisations to take advantage of the Trustees' decision was the Suffragette Movement in the town, which was very active at this time. A number of young women in the Church were among the local leaders of this movement and they made Central Hall their headquarters. Their support was given to the less militant Women's Freedom League. Visits were made to the Paisley Mission by prominent national figures, such as Mrs. Despard, sister of Lord John French. The Superintendent Mr. Spencer lent his support to the campaign for Votes for Women.

A particularly successful feature of Mr. Spencer's ministry was the work of open-air evangelism. The mid-week meetings were frequently the scene of verbal clashes with Willie Gallacher, who was at that time comparatively unknown but was later to become famous as the Communist Member of Parliament for Fife from 1935 until 1950. In due course Mr. Spencer and Mr. Gallacher struck up a friendship so that an agreement was reached to leave the Methodist meetings undisturbed. For a time the Mission was responsible for evangelistic services at the Town Hall which were supported by Sir Thomas Glen-Coats, Bart., but after a while it was felt that better results could be achieved by concentrating on the work

at Central Hall.

In these early days after Central Hall opened visits were paid by minstrels and by Madame Strathearn, who was a well-known singer. A Girls' Life Brigade was started during this time and the first of a succession of Wesley Deaconesses arrived at Central Hall. The first, Sister Constance Bassett, was an Irishwoman who later went to serve in Belfast Mission. She was very popular for her sympathetic nature and for her unconventional ways.

The annual May Synod of the Methodist Church in Scotland was held in Paisley in 1915. This was the last year of Mr. Spencer's very successful ministry in the town and it was also during the first year of the First World War. Sadly, Mr. Spencer's son Roderick, who had been born in Paisley in 1913, was to lay down his life during the Second World War. Mr. Spencer later served in South London Mission, Bermondsey, where many of London's poor lived in the riverside slums. Whilst Mr. Spencer's five-year ministry had helped to establish the new Mission in the town, the world situation obviously meant that a very difficult time would lie ahead for the new Superintendent who was to take over.

The Reverend Thomas Proudlove succeeded Mr. Spencer in 1915 and he was minister at Central Hall during the dark, terrible days of the First World War. Remembered as a big man, who had previously been a farmer, he was apparently very good in dealing with obstreperous crowds at open-air services in Abbey Close.

Mr. Proudlove received faithful help from the Deaconesses, Sister Minnie Ensor and Sister Louie Lee. Meetings were held at the Mission on Saturday evenings but sometimes visits were made to the Female Refuge in Lady Lane where delinquent girls did laundry work. Mr. Proudlove was the first Superintendent to live at 13 Mansionhouse Road, which had previously been the home of Mr. Havelock who was the Choirmaster at the Mission.

The work of the Church was necessarily affected by the Great War but it continued nevertheless despite the absence of many young people in the Forces. In 1916 Mr. Proudlove reported that congregations were holding up and that new members were joining. The Sunday School had been reorganised, Senior Bible Classes had been started, while good work was being done in the Girls' Life Brigade and the Women's Guild was well attended. Saturday evening open-air services had been held throughout the summer and Saturday entertainments in the Hall were often crowded to the door. Visits to sick and wounded soldiers in hospitals were being undertaken.

However, Mr. Proudlove admitted that attendances at Fellowship Meetings had been affected, as had work with the young. Because of the occupation of the Lower Halls by military authorities the Junior Classes and Band of Hope were unable to meet. In early 1916 a Company of the Newfoundland Regiment had attended the Mission, holding Parade Services of 80 on Sunday mornings. The Regiment had since gone into action and

some of the men had fallen in battle. Later their place was taken at the morning services by a Workers' Battalion.

Naturally, members of Central Hall had played their part in the war effort, with the loss of 32 young lives in action. Twenty two members of the Primitive Methodist Church at St. James' Street were also killed. All their names, along with the names of those who perished in the Second World War and more recently in the Northern Ireland conflict, are read out to the congregation by the Superintendent at every annual Remembrance Sunday Service in November.

At such a time much of Mr. Proudlove's work was necessarily concerned with the young people of the Church. With so many young lives being lost it must have been an especially difficult ministry for Mr. Proudlove, who was supported throughout by his family, especially his sympathetic wife. His daughter, Mary, became a doctor and later undertook missionary work in India. Mr. Proudlove stayed on at Paisley to see the end of the War and to welcome the soldiers home from the Front.

In 1920 Mr. Proudlove left Paisley and he was succeeded by the Reverend Noel F. Hutchcroft, whose ministry was to prove one of the most memorable in the history of Central Hall. Older members still speak of the crowded services he conducted, with the evening service being most distinctive and crowded to overflowing. Extra chairs had to be placed in the passageways and then removed during the last hymn, with a whispered admonition to the occupants to remain standing, whilst many people often sat on the steps in the gallery. Such scenes will never be repeated, fire regulations, if nothing else, ensure that there will be no recurrence. At Mr. Hutchcroft's suggestion a second collection was frequently taken at these services. Mr. Hutchcroft preached on popular subjects so that Central Hall became a topic of conversation throughout the town.

Through his involvement in the community the Superintendent must have been a well-known local figure as he travelled around the town on his motor cycle. He became a member of the Renfrewshire Education Authority and Convener of the Anti-Betting and Anti-Gambling Committee. He was closely involved in the campaigns for Prohibition and against foul language. The "No Licence Campaign" occurred about 1920 and the Central Hall Temperance Committee worked hard to support the cause at the Polls.

Mr. Hutchcroft was supported in the early part of his ministry by the Deaconesses, who sat beside him during the services. Sister Louie Lee, who had come to Paisley during Mr. Proudlove's ministry, was still there and lived in a room in the church. When she left to go to the Mother and Babies Home in Manchester she was succeeded at Paisley Mission by Sister Emily Briggs then Sister Jean and Sister Annie Webster. All of these women gave excellent service to the Mission but after Sister Annie Webster the appointment of a Deaconess was discontinued. Assistance to Mr. Hutchcroft was then rendered by the Reverend F.J. Briscoe and by

Pastor Thomas H. Gregson, who subsequently entered the ministry.

Another innovation of Mr. Hutchcroft's time was the Institute on Sunday afternoons in place of the Bible Class. All ages, from 15 to 90, were welcomed. Singing was accompanied by an American organ and piano and there was always a soloist.

It is perhaps in the field of music that Mr. Hutchcroft made his greatest, most lasting contribution to Paisley Mission. He himself was noted as a magnificent baritone and he was a Licentiate of the Royal Academy of Music (L.R.A.M.). He won a gold medal at the Glasgow Music Festival in 1923. In 1925 he oversaw the installation, at a cost of £884, of the 3 manual organ which is still in use today. Space for an organ had been provided when the Mission had been erected in 1908, another tribute to the foresight of the Methodist pioneers in the early years of the century. Two years later, in 1927, after Mr. Hutchcroft had left Paisley, Mr. Thomas Boyd was appointed Organist and Choirmaster, a position which he continued to hold until 1957. For the 17 years since the Central Hall had been opened the music at services had been provided by a string orchestra. Mr. Hutchcroft also organised simple performances of operettas by the Junior Choir, an outstanding success being "H.M.S. Pinafore". He went on later to become Precentor of the Methodist Conference.

Mr. Hutchcroft left Paisley in 1926 to go to Hull, then he served at Blackburn and Birmingham before he became Secretary of the Methodist Temperance and Social Welfare Department in 1948. He made a number of return visits to Paisley to preach at the Anniversary. He died suddenly at Southport on 9th November, 1949, around the time of the Anniversary Week-End at Paisley. One of his last actions had been to send a telegram of congratulations to Mr. Hoyles, who was then Superintendent. This telegram is still preserved at the Mission in memory of a great minister, one of the best remembered ever to come to Paisley Mission. He is remembered not only by Methodists but by members of other Churches who were drawn to Central Hall during his ministry. They were drawn in such numbers that people often had to be turned away on Sunday evenings. Thus within 20 years of acquiring suitable premises the Methodist Mission was really making a tremendous impact on the life of the community.

Such a ministry was clearly hard to follow, but followed it was to be by an equally famous name in local Methodist history, the Reverend Cecil D. Eades. His was to be a ministry of significant achievements, important and happy events but also times of terrible sadness.

The saving of souls firstly and then the establishment of the church on a sound financial basis were regarded as the two most important tasks of the Superintendent. With regard to the first task, the Institute begun by Mr. Hutchcroft, was kept functioning for the first year then it was changed back to Junior and Senior Bible Classes. Preparation for the Senior Classes took place at the Fellowship meetings on Thursday evenings. Mr. Eades gave a talk then presented the leaders with about

half a dozen questions to put to their groups which formed after the Superintendent's talk on Sunday afternoons.

The membership grew from 610 in 1928 to 645 in 1932 when Mr. Eades left Paisley. One Sunday morning during Mr. Eades' ministry the Connexional Guild Secretary, the Reverend George A. Allen, who was taking the service that day, said that he had never seen a larger congregation anywhere in Methodism. An important Anniversary was celebrated in 1929 when the Paisley Mission "came of age".

With regard to the second task, the financial consideration, Mr. Eades inherited a large overdraft, although the financial situation had improved under Mr. Hutchcroft's ministry. When Mr. Eades left Paisley there was a balance to credit which was unheard of amongst the churches. It was the first time since it had opened that the Paisley Mission had been free from financial worries. This balance had been achieved despite the carrying out of a number of important physical improvements within the church, such as the improvement of choir accommodation by the installation of proper seating and the painting of the Trinity and Lesser Halls. Extensive work was also carried out to set the electric lighting in order.

Two important historical events, one of local and the other of national significance, took place at this time too. On 16th March, 1928 the Leaders Meeting of Barrhead unanimously agreed to be transferred from St. James' Street to the Paisley Mission. This was later approved by the District Synod. On 4th June, 1929 the first Leaders Meeting was held at Barrhead and was described as "another milestone in the history of the Wesleyan Mission". It had been made possible for Paisley Mission to help Barrhead in this way because of the improved financial situation which rendered Paisley self supporting.

In Mr. Eades' last year in Paisley, 1932, union between the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodists was effected. A conference was organised at St. Andrews Halls in Glasgow on 20th-24th September. As already indicated this union resulted in closer contact between St. James' Street and Central Hall, although the two congregations did not finally unite for worship at Central Hall until 1960. Such events were occasions for rejoicing and thanksgiving.

However, there were times of great sadness too. In 1927 news reached Central Hall of the death of one of the founders, the Reverend W.H. Rolls, as the result of a street accident. Then there was the terrible Hogmanay of 1929 when the Glen Cinema disaster took the lives of 70 children. Situated only a few hundred yards from Central Hall, the Glen Cinema had previously been the Good Templar Halls. It was there that Paisley's Methodists had worshipped at the beginning of the century and where John Slack had been converted and signed the Pledge almost exactly a quarter of a century earlier. After conducting three weddings that day (Hogmanay was then a popular time to marry) Mr. Eades sat down and wrote an entirely new sermon for the Watchnight Service. That

evening, before a large congregation, he preached from the text "When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I". This was the saddest New Year in Paisley's history.

Mr. Eades left Paisley in September, 1932 to accept a call from Maryhill Central Hall, thus ending an eventful ministry in the history of Paisley Mission. His farewell was happily to prove only temporary because in 1947 Mr. Eades became Chairman of the Scotland District, in which capacity he chaired a number of meetings in Paisley where he was a regular and very welcome visitor.

The Reverend Ernest H. Wright, M.A. succeeded Mr. Eades in 1932. A Yorkshireman from Bradford he had enjoyed a distinguished academic career. His ministry at Paisley during the difficult years of the Depression during the 1930's was to prove fruitful and enriching. He had a genial personality, his preaching was scholarly and thoughtful and he showed particular concern for work with the young. The devotional life of the Church was greatly enhanced during his ministry. He went on to hold a number of important appointments after he left Paisley.

A number of memorable events in the life of the Church took place during these years. The first live broadcast on the radio from Central Hall took place one evening. This was in celebration of the Union of the Wesleyan and Primitive Methodist Churches. 1933 was an important anniversary as it was 25 years since the opening of Central Hall. One of the guest speakers at this special Anniversary was the Reverend James Bonnar Russell of Canal Street Church, who was to die tragically during the Second World War. He was killed with his wife, daughter and many others, when a German bomb fell on Woodside First Aid Post in 1941.

Also in 1933 the 18th Company of the Boys' Brigade was started at Central Hall on 20th January, with Mr. John J. Johnston as the first Captain and the Reverend Ernest Wright as Chaplain. The Company quickly established itself, gaining its first King's Badge in 1937. The Queen's Badge has been regularly gained since and the Peter Coats Shield for First Aid has also been won regularly since 1942. The Camp, Annual Display and Inspection have always been prominent features of the work of the Boys' Brigade. Three of the original nine boys who formed the Company in 1933 were amongst those from Central Hall who fell in action during the Second World War. Work with the young was specially important in these difficult years of the Depression when it was hard to maintain their attachment to the Church. The work of the Sunday School, which was one of the first to become graded, was very successful at this time when Mr. John McGarvie's Bible Class was started.

There had once been Methodist churches in the towns of Ayr and Kilmarnock but these were now no more so that in 1938 Girvan Methodist Church became part of the Paisley Mission Circuit. Although it was the most isolated Methodist Church in Great Britain Girvan had a long history of Methodism, dating back to the visit of John Wesley to the town in 1765. The church there continued, with the exception of one or two years, to

show steady growth after joining Paisley Circuit. This meant that in 30 years Paisley had grown from a single Mission to a circuit with three Churches.

Another feature of Mr. Wright's ministry was the Sunday Service at Gockston Sanatorium held regularly by a group from the Church. One other happy event was recorded during this time. Mr. and Mrs. Wright were delivered of a son, Ian, the first baby to be born at the manse for 20 years.

The next Superintendent was the Reverend S. Jones Jackson who came to Paisley in 1938 at a critical period in world history. The Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, was back from Munich waving aloft a piece of paper, proclaiming "peace in our time" but Hitler's Nazis were on the march and the Second World War was only a year away. It fell to Mr. Jackson to minister to local Methodists throughout the entire war period because he stayed at Paisley until 1945, a slightly longer ministry than was customary. This was due to a desire that he should be present to welcome returning soldiers, but this did not prove possible as demobbing took longer than expected.

Despite the War Mr. Jackson was able to report at the 1940 Anniversary that the period 1939-40 had been a wonderful year for Central Hall with an increase in membership and record collections for the period June to August. The combination of a severe winter and the black-out seemed to have made no difference to attendances.

As the war progressed the black-out did affect attendances on Sunday evenings, but this appears to have been adequately compensated by the attendances at the morning services. These large attendances were attained although 150 young men and women from Central Hall were absent on active service in His Majesty's Forces. Of these 7 men and 2 women were killed. One of them was Sister Jean McNair. Originally employed in Paisley Mills she had wished to work for the Church and was nominated by Mr. Eades as a candidate for the Deaconess Order. Her first appointment was at Maryhill Central Hall with Mr. Eades but she was later appointed to the London Mission. She met an untimely death during the terrible bombing raids on the East End of the capital.

A major task of Mr. Jackson's period of service was to minister to Methodist soldiers stationed in the Paisley area. As well as being Chaplain to the Grammar School he was also Chaplain to the Army lads stationed at Abercorn School. One soldier expressed the joy it gave him to meet a Methodist minister. Another soldier billeted at Abercorn School told the Superintendent that most of all he missed his Methodist Sunday School class in a small Yorkshire town. More compassion was required when the terrible tragedy of the Clydebank Blitz occurred in 1941. Sixty people who had been bombed out of their homes were sheltered in the Lesser Hall. They were looked after by the caretaker, who made breakfast for them, and by the women of the Church, who devoted a long day to cooking and cleaning for them. As in the First World War Central Hall was used

in other ways in the war effort - such as the writing out of ration books.

The work of renovation and redecoration of the church was necessarily held in abeyance during the war years. Some advance was possible, however. Six years and two months after the formation of the Boys' Brigade a Life Boy Team was formed on 20th March, 1939 with Mr. James Watson as Leader-in-Charge. This body remained numerically strong throughout the 1940's. A Girls' Guildry proved to be unsuccessful but in October, 1943 a Girls' Life Brigade Company was formed with Miss May Brennan (later Mrs. Abraham) as the first Captain.

There was thanksgiving when the war ended in 1945. There was relief too that the church had escaped damage in a conflict which had resulted in more civilian casualties and greater damage to property in cities and large towns than in any previous war in history. Warm tributes were paid to Mr. Jackson's leadership during what had been a very difficult ministry. Having a very sympathetic nature, he is remembered by many people for the comfort he brought to them during these years of war and blitz.

Post War Years

The ending of the War brought its own problems, with several years of continued rationing and austerity to follow. There was none of the sense of hope that there had been at the end of the First World War, with boasts of a "land fit for heroes", but rather a sense of depression. The dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 ensured that a new and terrible weapon now existed to trouble people's minds. Much rebuilding had to be done, even in Paisley which had escaped more lightly than places like Clydebank and Coventry. The post-war years saw the building of large housing schemes on the outskirts of the town, such as Glenburn and Foxbar, and the town began to change as people started to drift away from the centre which became less densely populated.

The last year of the war, 1945, saw the departure of the Reverend S. Jones Jackson and the arrival of the young Reverend J. Arthur Hoyles from Swansea. He immediately threw himself into the work with tremendous enthusiasm. He was deeply interested in social questions and psychology, with a special interest in delinquency, on which subjects he has written a number of books.

Outdoor evangelism played an important part during this ministry. Open-air meetings in Dunn Square were started up again to such an extent that Mr. Hoyles became known by the people of Paisley as Scotland's Donald Soper. In 1948 Mr. Hoyles was largely instrumental in the instigation of the Paisley Council of Churches of which he had the honour to be the first President. Then followed the Mid-Century Campaign of 1950-51, a venture with which Mr. Hoyles was enthusiastically associated.

It was a time too of important development within Central Hall. At the 40th Anniversary in 1948 membership stood at 800 compared with 400 in 1908. Extensive renovations, held over during the war, were carried out and the Lesser Hall was redecorated and new lighting was installed. Redecoration of the Large Hall also took place and some outside painting was undertaken. This, allied to the introduction of fluorescent lighting, resulted in a transformation to the fabric of the building.

In 1949-50 a memorial to the dead of the Second World War was erected over the main entrance. A plaque bearing their names was situated in the Crush Hall. This was unveiled by Mr. John McGarvie, who had corresponded with all the young men from the Church who were in the Forces throughout the war.

A happy event occurred at the Manse in 1946 when a daughter, Margaret, was born to Mr. & Mrs. Hoyles - the first girl to be born at the Manse.

In 1948 a Boys' Brigade Pipe Band was formed and the following year saw the commencement of the Men's Club, which is still going strong. A long standing association with Central Hall was ended during this ministry when the hall-keeper, Mr. McKay, resigned due to ill health after 21 years

service.

During this time a number of famous visitors, including Reverend Tom Allen of the Church of Scotland and Dr. W.E. Sangster, came to Paisley and preached at Central Hall.

The building of far flung housing schemes created problems for a Methodist Church based in the centre of the town and visits to Hunterhill and Glenburn were organised. There was also a lot of visiting undertaken amongst non-churchgoers in Ferguslie Park and Mossvale. Other activities included services conducted in Wards 5 and 6 (Tuberculosis) at Hawkhead Hospital.

Mr. Hoyles left Paisley in 1951, at the end of a very busy ministry, to go to Stoke-on-Trent. Like all Superintendents before and since Mr. Hoyles makes frequent return visits to Paisley, particularly at Anniversaries, and is still a very welcome visitor to Central Hall.

The Reverend Dr. Arthur Skevington Wood came to Paisley in 1951 from Airdrie. At his welcome meeting the Reverend Cecil D. Eades, by now Chairman of the District, said that he was proud of the part that he had played in Dr. Wood's appointment, because only the best was good enough for Paisley, which was one of the most desirable charges in Scotland. A scholar and a historian, Dr. Wood had been awarded the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Edinburgh University shortly before his arrival at Paisley. He has made a number of valuable contributions to historical knowledge through his book "The Inextinguishable Blaze", which was published in 1960, and also by articles in scholarly periodicals.

The early years of Dr. Wood's ministry saw some important gifts being made to the Church, including the Pulpit, Baptismal Font and Communion Table.

The emphasis during this time was placed firmly on evangelism. 1953 was the Methodist Year of Evangelism, which was supported in Paisley by a delegation from Cliff College. This Campaign was highly successful and a regular Cliff Fellowship was formed. Members went with Dr. Wood to other churches to take part in their services. Seven new Local Preachers were also accepted during this time. Evangelistic endeavour was maintained with participation in the Tell Scotland Movement and the All Scotland Crusade of 1954.

The 51st Annual Convention of the Scottish Christian Endeavour Union was held in Paisley in 1952, with Central Hall the headquarters. The Superintendent played a prominent part in these efforts and he was installed as National President of the Union a few years later at its 54th Annual Convention in Leven. This was a great honour both for Dr. Wood and Paisley Mission as he was only the third Methodist to hold this position. He was also appointed Evangelistic Convener for Christian Endeavour work in Great Britain and Ireland.

Other evangelistic efforts undertaken included the resumption of Friday and Saturday evening open-air services.

An example of the loyalty and dedication of Paisley's Methodists was illustrated in 1952 when Miss Bain retired from Sunday School work after 48 years of service, which dated back to the days before the opening of Central Hall.

There were moments of sadness too. In September 1952 the death was announced of a former Superintendent, the Reverend S. Jones Jackson.

The President of the Methodist Conference, the Reverend Colin A. Roberts, paid a visit to Paisley in 1952. At this meeting the Reverend Cecil D. Eades reiterated that Paisley was one of the brightest spots in Scottish Methodism. New records were being set in Christian giving for the work of the Church.

1953 was the year of the Coronation. In those days there were still very few people with television so six sets were temporarily installed in the Central Hall for members who wished to view this historic event.

When Dr. Wood left Paisley in 1957 to go to Sunderland he could look back on an eventful ministry in which he had ably maintained the high standards set by his predecessors. Like Mr. Hoyles, Dr. Wood has been a very welcome visitor to Central Hall over the years.

Dr. Wood's successor was the Reverend Joseph Henderson, who came to Paisley in 1957 from Hull. Mr. Henderson was a man of unbounded energy whose enthusiasm for the work of the Mission inspired all those around him.

The most memorable event of this ministry was the union of St. James' Street and Central Hall. During this time the two Churches worked more closely together, first holding a combined Easter Service then forming one Church. The united fellowship in Central Hall has been the happy consequence, although at first some members found worship in the large auditorium very different from that in the small building at St. James' Street. The success of this venture was in no small way attributable to the many skills exercised by Mr. Henderson.

Work with youth was again an important feature of Mr. Henderson's ministry, with the development of a Saturday Night Youth Club, which attracted over 120 teenagers every week. A new company of the Girls' Life Brigade was formed at Foxbar in 1963. The Scottish Western Battalion had felt the need for a new company to be formed in a housing area and the Methodist Church agreed to be responsible for the spiritual guidance and welfare of such a company.

While open-air services have perhaps become a less prominent aspect of Church work in recent years, it was still a feature of Methodist work in Paisley during this time. Children's meetings, with regular attendances

of over 60, were held weekly at Gallowhill.

Much necessary work of improvement within the Hall was also carried out. There were repairs to the organ in 1960 at a cost of £880, the money being raised through an Organ Fund Appeal. Redecoration and cleaning of the premises were carried out by Church members with Mr. Henderson himself taking a leading role. This resulted in a considerable saving of costs, at a time when Church members' giving was increasing but expenses were increasing even more. The costs of heating, lighting and rates were rising and additional expenditure arose because the Hall was being used much more, which was welcomed.

In 1964 Mr. Henderson left to take up an appointment at Wednesbury. His subsequent illness and his death a few years ago caused great sadness at Central Hall. Mrs. Henderson, who helped start the Sunday morning creche during her husband's ministry, maintains a close interest in the growing-up of her young charges in her frequent welcome visits to Paisley.

There had been discussions during Mr. Henderson's ministry about a Christian Stewardship Campaign and this came to fruition under his successor, the Reverend Archie Bradford, who came to Paisley from Yorkshire in 1964.

The Campaign, which was the first fully directed in Scotland by the Methodist Stewardship Organisation, was a major event in the life of the Mission. Members were called upon to give of their time, talents and treasure to the work of the Church. The Campaign began on 6th March, 1966 and about two weeks later, on 21st March, there was a large family meal in the Town Hall, which 630 people attended. During the Campaign some members went out visiting homes each evening while others held a Prayer Meeting at the Mission until the visitors returned with their reports at about 9.30 p.m. Almost 1,000 homes were visited. As a result of this Campaign giving and attendances at morning services increased significantly. The beneficial effects of the Campaign are still apparent in the life of the Church today.

Although the church had been described as the "best appointed" in the town when it had been built, there was one disadvantage felt by elderly members, in that they had to climb a flight of 25 stairs to attend services. This problem was rectified in 1966 by the installation of a six-passenger electric lift, which served three floors. This was made possible by the gifts of the Joseph Rank Benevolent Trust, the St. James' Street Trustees and the Methodist Department for Chapel Affairs and has been described as a boon by senior members. At the same time as this was happening the church interior was decorated in Wedgwood shades so that it regained the pristine beauty of its opening in 1908. Power point wiring was installed throughout the building, the Lower Hall was re-floored and Room No. 2 was refurbished.

As the pace of life in general quickened so the life of the Church seemed to have become busier over the years. In order to complete a

reasonable length of service at his next appointment, which was to be his last before retirement, Mr. Bradford left Paisley in 1969 after only 5 years. Paisley Methodists accepted his decision, even if they felt his time amongst them had been too short. His death a few years ago caused great sorrow at Paisley, where he will always be remembered with affection. Mrs. Bradford receives a warm welcome on her visits to the Mission.

Mr. Bradford was a small man in stature but he was pleased to find that his successor, the Reverend Norman Sloan, who came to the Mission from Rotherham, was even smaller. It was quickly apparent that while he lacked inches Mr. Sloan did not lack energy. He worked tirelessly from the day of his appointment, although, a newcomer to Scotland, he sometimes found ways of doing things north of the Border very different from what he was used to. He had a wonderful sense of humour, which was much appreciated by his congregation and endeared him to the young people among whom he exercised great influence.

What he might have achieved at Paisley Mission had he been spared to serve a full ministry can only be conjecture, but it seems certain that his work would have been crowned with great success. However, Mr. Sloan died suddenly from a heart attack on 3rd March, 1972 while returning from a meeting of ministers at Renfrew. His death came after only 2½ years in Paisley, in which short time he had won the affection of everyone at the Mission, where his passing caused great sorrow. Sympathy was extended to his widow, Beth, whose courage at this time was much admired. She always receives a warm welcome when she returns to Paisley.

The death of the Superintendent was a serious setback but the work had to continue. The Circuit ministers and local preachers helped out for the rest of the year until a new Superintendent was appointed in the autumn. Much of the workload necessarily fell on the young Barrhead minister, the Reverend Derek Sutcliffe, who, along with the Reverend David Twiddy of Girvan, worked exceptionally hard throughout this period attending to the needs of all members in the circuit.

The Reverend George Waddington came to Paisley in the autumn of 1972 from St. Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. He had been Life Boat Chaplain there, an appointment which had given him immense satisfaction and fulfilment particularly as he had been able to pray with the lifeboatmen before they set sail. When Mr. Waddington left Paisley in 1977 it was to return to a seaside charge at Morecambe in Lancashire, where once again he was able to take up the responsibility of being Chaplain to the men of the R.N.L.I.

He is a man of warmth and compassion who is able to encourage and uplift people in times of stress or sorrow. During his ministry at Paisley he showed a particular empathy with those in need and this was reflected in the continuing personal support which he found time to give.

A distinctive feature of Mr. Waddington's morning service was the children's address. He never failed to bring a mystery package, the

contents of which the children were asked to guess after receiving a number of clues. Other features which he introduced were the Family Services and the special Mother's Day Services where the children, young and old, came out to the front of the church to collect a posy for their mums. These particular services have been continued at Central Hall and indeed extended under Mr. Waddington's successor.

During this period the long felt desire of Superintendents and members of the Mission for major renovation of the building reached the stage where it was felt that a considerable positive commitment should be made. Although the outcome of the Connexional Commission held in Paisley did not produce an immediate start to the Renovation Scheme, the foundation had been laid for the work to commence at a later date. The enthusiasm engendered was, however, translated into considerable do-it-yourself work, particularly in the church kitchen.

It was now recognised that running a large church in the centre of a busy town, with all the complexities of modern life, imposed a severe strain on the Superintendent. Consequently, a somewhat different set up was established at Paisley Mission Circuit after Mr. Waddington's departure in 1977.

The newly appointed Circuit Superintendent, the Reverend James Mack, was stationed at Barrhead while the younger minister, the Reverend Dan Paterson, came to Paisley. Mr. Paterson is unique in that he is the Mission's first Scots born minister.

Under his leadership the work has continued to prosper. There is a tremendous "feeling" in the church. Anyone who visits Central Hall is bound to be impressed by the buzz of excitement, the feeling of a Church which is very much alive. The formation of a Youth Fellowship, the annual Family Weekend at Kirm, the Anniversary and Christmas Family Parties, the Family Services, followed by tea or coffee downstairs, have become established features which have promoted closer fellowship.

In addition to the 75th Anniversary of the Mission, 1983 is the 50th Anniversary of our Boys' Brigade Company and the Centenary of the founding of the Movement by William Smith. On 22nd January, 1983 a Jubilee Dinner, attended by 200 people, was held in the Town Hall to mark the event.

One of the outstanding achievements of Mr. Paterson's ministry will be the completion of the extensive renovation work which is presently being carried out. There was drama at the Annual Church Meeting a few years ago when it was announced that the sum required was £80,000. At that time this seemed an impossible target, but it was attained in just over two years.

Inevitably costs have risen, through inflation and the discovery of extensive dry rot, raising the target to £130,000. That the renovation scheme will be carried through successfully is a tribute to Mr. Paterson, who has maintained the demanding work rate achieved by his predecessors,

and to all who have helped in any way, particularly the Renovation Committee. The physical appearance of the church has changed radically but the Christian ideals of a spiritual, caring Church, involved in the community around it, are still the same as when W.H. Rolls, John Slack and the other pioneers opened the Central Hall 75 years ago.

The Reverend Dan Paterson has achieved much in his six years at Paisley Mission and his extension for a further two years, to equal the record of W.H. Rolls, is good news for Paisley's Methodists.

It is hoped that this brief survey of 75 years in the life of the Methodist Mission in Paisley has not concentrated too much on the Superintendents who have served here. With its itinerant ministry, where the Superintendents have normally stayed for six years, the continuity of the work of Paisley Mission has depended greatly on the committed service of the members themselves. This is in no way to detract from the Superintendent for, irrespective of the conditions prevailing both locally and nationally throughout a span of 75 years from the beginning of the century, each, in his own way has been found to bring exactly the right qualities necessary to help the members of the Church to deal with the current situation.

Nor should the Superintendents' wives be forgotten because they have proved wonderful supports to their husbands as they too have all entered wholeheartedly into the work of the Church.

Paisley Mission has been extremely fortunate in the quality of members who have served as Stewards, Sunday School Staff, leaders of organisations and committee members. They have all helped to ensure the survival of the Mission in the turmoil of the twentieth century. It would be invidious to mention particular individuals, although some have been mentioned as the story has unfolded. Had John Wesley met them, had he witnessed what has happened and is still happening in Methodism in Paisley since the arrival of W.H. Rolls in 1902, he would surely have been led to reconsider his complaints in his Journal about the cold insensibility of the people of Scotland.

This is not the end of the story, this is only the story of some of the events of the first 75 years. But if it were the end, if it had to be the end, it would surely be a very happy ending. After the despair and hopelessness of the 19th and early 20th century the Methodist Central Hall Paisley is now a healthy Church, with many talented people and ambitious plans for the future. Indeed the town where Methodism was more than once almost abandoned as a hopeless, lost cause now has the largest Methodist Church in Scotland.

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