

"The Story of Methodism in Anerley" written by Mr. H. E. Waites, published in 1928, told of the 'earnest work' of the Officers and Teachers of the Sunday School, stating that every successive report had shown an increase in attendance.

Before the School-Church was built in 1865, Methodists in Penge and Anerley used to meet at a house in Maple Road, and there is reason to believe that a Sunday School was held there too. Written records start in 1865 by describing the first Teachers Meeting held on April 11th and stating that the door first opened for Sunday School, on April 29th at 9.30 a.m. This was followed by an afternoon session at 3.30.p.m. Also, records show that a branch of the School met at the east end of Penge in Station Road. The 1881 Census records the family of Mr. & Mrs. Verrinder living in Station Road with their family. They were church members at Anerley, or Penge Methodist Church as it was then known, so there is a strong possibility that the Branch Sunday School met at their home. This too had a morning and afternoon session and ran from the early 1870's to 1881. It only closed when another Sunday School opened in the area, which may have been at the Mission Hall, at the junction of Mosslea Road and Trinity Road, (now Station Rd). The Mission Hall opened in 1885, also the Primitive Methodists met at Mosslea Roads junction with High Street, so the Sunday School movement was being well catered for. The Sunday School at Anerley continued to meet and prosper until the events of the 2nd World War. Even the tragic events of the 1st. World War seemed to have little effect, as demonstrated by the number of children attending.

By 1935 the 'earnest work' of the Sunday School staff continued, with pupils numbering 240, and 24 teachers under the Superintendent Mr. Bryant. Mr. C. Hodgson accompanied the children's hymn singing on the piano and continued to do so for many years. (He retired in 1959 as pianist but continued as auditor to the Sunday School Council until 1969.) The Sunday School Hymn Book introduced pupils to the joys of singing so essential to the Methodist forms of worship. Such hymns tended to become lifetime favourites and never forgotten, e.g. "All things bright and beautiful", "What a friend we have in Jesus", "Fight the good fight with all thy might" and "When mothers of Salem their children brought to Jesus".

Sunday School was divided with a Primary and a Junior Dept. The

children in the Primary Dept. left to become juniors between the ages of 7 and 8yrs. They left feeling a sense of achievement, but also a fear of the unknown, although this was quickly dispelled as the weeks went by, and they became familiar with the new environment. Miss and Mrs. Vallence led the Primary Dept. (which was held in the Vestibule) and Mr. Bryant was Superintendent of the Juniors Dept during the 1930's.



*Miss Alice Kelsey*

The children were separated with boys one side and girls the other. They sat on benches with backs that could be adjusted to allow them to sit facing either way. This became very useful when the school split up for class teaching, as only the minimum of movement was required. After the teaching session was over, pupils would all face the front again for the final hymn and prayer. Almost all the school benches were destroyed when the Church and Schoolroom were bombed in 1940 during the war.

War with Germany actually started the year before, on 2nd September 1939, and had an immediate effect when people in Penge and Anerley, whose circumstances allowed, moved away to the countryside to relative safety. This resulted in the loss of pupils and teachers. Others who had jobs that were considered to be indispensable (i.e. Civil Servants) were ordered by the Government to move out of the London area. Mr. George Vale replaced Mr. Bryant as Junior Superintendent, and Miss. Alice Kelsey took over the Primary section of the Sunday school from Miss Vallence. Miss. Alice Kelsey, a qualified teacher, led the Primary Dept. until well into 1952 when it was taken over by Miss Joyce Horton for a short time and then Mrs. Sadie Douglass who started the Beginners Class as part of the Primary Department. So many of the pupils brought their younger siblings with them, that it was felt that special provision should be made for them, rather than turn them away.



*Sadie Douglass*

Government policy during the war was to safeguard children in high-risk areas, where it was predicted incendiaries were most likely to fall. Although this did not, at first, include the south London districts of Penge and Anerley, it became increasingly clear from enemy action that the area was indeed in the high-risk category. Consequently, by December 1940 a well-planned and organised evacuation of children to safe areas in the country took place. Combined with the number of children who had already been sent away by their parents, attendance at day schools in the District dropped dramatically. The drop in Sunday School attendance was even more dramatic.

During 'The Blitz' in the last months of 1940, our Church buildings became so badly damaged it was impossible to use them. Following the first bombing, all meetings were held in the Church vestibule, but after a direct hit, nowhere on the premises was safe to use. As a result the Sunday School closed for 5 months. Written records show that the Trustees gladly took up the Local Education Authority's offer of the use of the Oakfield Road School premises. All things considered, it is surprising that 45 pupils attended the Sunday School regularly plus a number of dedicated Staff, Miss. Minnie Munday, Miss. Dinnes Mr. Hodgson and Mr. H Banks, also those mentioned above. By February 1942, the old ex-army hut at the back of the Church premises that had been used for Boys Brigade and Girls Life Brigade meetings pre-war, was made safe by a group of volunteers, and the Sunday School was pleased to move in. For the few children and staff remaining, to be back on site was a 'coming home'. Unfortunately the Sunday School had to close again in late 1944 for five months, when the V1's (Doodlebugs, Buzz Bombs, or Flying Bombs as they were commonly called) followed by V2's (Rockets) made life so dangerous.



*Miss Minnie Munday*

There had always been a system to encourage weekly attendance at Sunday School. Mr Waites, in his early work on the story of Methodism in Anerley, describes how Pupils received tickets for regular attendance. A prize of a Hymn Book or a Bible was given to any pupil who collected enough. During the 1930's this system was augmented. Each pupil received a book, into which a picture of a biblical scene was

stuck to illustrate a printed text from the Bible. These were highly valued by the children, proving to be a good incentive for attending each week. One of the casualties during the war was Prize Giving, probably due to lack of funds and it was not until 1960 that the idea of using a reward system for good attendance was once more accepted in principle "as long as there were enough funds".

Missionary work overseas needed financing; a project that was enthusiastically adopted by Anerley Methodist Sunday School Leaders. If a Missionary was on furlough (on leave), he or she was expected to give talks of their experiences in their particular field of work to church groups, including children. Sometimes they would illustrate their address with slides or tactile objects such as traditional costume from the region and country where they worked. All of which was exciting stuff for children whose concept of what people were like outside of their own country was limited or non-existent. Interest generated was reinforced when each Sunday School from The Circuit met to perform a play as part of a competition, with the winning performance earning a shield on which the name of the Sunday School would be engraved. To win was the ambition of all who took part, a reward for all the hard work put into the production. High standards were expected. Every child taking part had to attend rehearsals and become word perfect. If anyone did not do so there was always another pupil ready to take that persons place. (This was true up until the 1960's, when it became difficult sometimes to motivate enthusiasm for the same things.) Apart from the aim of coming first, there was the joy of "dressing up" in exotic costumes of brightly coloured materials. Turbans, saris, grass skirts, baubles, bangles and beads added even more to the colour and excitement of the occasion. During the drab pre- and post-war years, when children were deprived of visual stimulation and few toys were available, the annual J.M.A. event was one to be enjoyed by all.

Pupils were encouraged to become a member of the Junior Missionary Association (J.M.A.) by finding people such as relatives and friends to give a penny, or whatever small sum they could afford, on a weekly basis. To confirm this commitment the donor's name was entered in the official J.M.A. collectors' book, where a record of the money collected was entered every week against the name of the contributor. The total amount was paid in to the very patient J.M.A. secretary who sat at the back of the room every Sunday after School was over. Miss E. Kelsey

and Miss M. Munday performed this task for many years. Every year the pupils taking part were rewarded with a certificate showing how much they had collected, and for those whose total was above a set amount there was the added reward of a medal. The medal could be added to by a bar attachment to the ribbon, if the collector continued to earn it in subsequent years. It was a well-earned reward that showed a lot of dedication. Mr. Andrew Tredinnick took over as J.M.A. secretary when Miss E. Kelsey retired about 1963 and after several years Mrs. Sadie Douglass replaced Andrew, until her retirement due to ill health. Today, Mrs. Dinah Anaman ensures that the pupils' efforts are recorded. Unfortunately, as Pupils attending Sunday School/Junior Church dropped, so did the numbers of J.M.A. collectors. In 2002/3, just 3 children were collectors. Many congratulations therefore considering that they won the shield for the year 2002/3, an award given for the greatest increase in the Circuit over the previous year. 50 years had elapsed since Anerley Methodist J.M.A collectors last won it.

Pupils, teachers and parents alike looked forward to the Annual Sunday School Outing.. In the days when ordinary people on average incomes did not possess a car, outings to such places as the coast and the zoo were a real treat. Littlehampton was a favourite venue, also Chessington Zoo. A coach on the train was reserved and everyone would meet outside the

railway station in good time to catch the train, with their sandwiches clutched tightly in their hands. Eventually the sandwiches gave way to a tea provided at the destination. The Outing was paid for by parents of pupils on a weekly basis, and collected from



*Sunday School outing to Littlehampton*

the children by their teachers every Sunday. The number of families who went year after year could be an indication of its success. However with the advent of the family motorcar and its means of easy transport, support for the Annual Outing became less enthusiastic. Indeed the new era of car transport had a dramatic effect on the Sunday School/Junior Church, just as it did on life in general.

Eventually the Sunday School/J.C. Outing developed into a Church Outing by coach, usually to a resort on the south, or south east coast. Other churches in the District and Circuit were also invited in the last years. Sadly in 2001, through lack of support, no outing took place and nothing is planned for the foreseeable future. What was a valuable resource for personal contact with the families of the children who attended the Sunday School/J.C. was lost.



*Mrs Gibby with the  
Misses Alice and Elsie Kelsey*

Christmas was special for Sunday School/J.C. pupils, as it is to Christian children all over the world. At Anerley the decorated Christmas tree, shining, gleaming and twinkling brought a bit of magic into the lives of the children, as it still does. On Toy Sunday, each pupil has the opportunity to bring a toy to put under the Christmas tree, which are later distributed to children less fortunate. During the 1920's the children of Coal Miners and the Greenwich Mission must have been pleased to receive them as well as local families. There was a lot of unemployment right across the country following the end of the Great War in 1918, and the 'depression' years of the 1930's. For local people the misery caused must have been exacerbated when the Crystal Palace burnt down in 1936, as many jobs disappeared overnight. Miss. Sherman's Children's Home in Newlands Park, on the border of Penge and Sydenham, also benefited from gifts of toys donated by pupils of the Sunday School, which must have given pleasure to other, less fortunate, children at Christmas. When Miss Sherman's home closed, the gifts went to Fegan Children's Home. A mark of the change in times and attitudes is that now, all donations of gifts have to be new. At Christmas in 2000 the Junior Church responded to an international appeal to send boxes to the suffering children of the former country of Yugoslavia, left devastated by years of national and racial conflict. Shoeboxes were filled with toys, given not just by pupils (of whom there are now very few), but also by any person wishing to contribute.

Scripture Exams (organised by The National Sunday School Union) were held every year until 1983 for any pupil who wanted to take part. For several weeks before the paper was sat, lessons had to be attended. The exam was conducted under national exam criteria, which was nerve-wracking for the participants, but an excellent experience for later life. Six weeks later, a certificate showing the result was awarded to each successful participant. For those who had worked hard, it was wonderful day. Teachers must have been very good because most children got good results. I wonder how many pupils hung on to their certificates and were able to show them to their own children in later life. Quite recently, in August 2002, Mrs. Kathleen Brickwood (nee Bishop), came to church



Kathleen Brickwood

to celebrate 60 years of church membership. She still has the certificates that she had won when she was a girl in the Sunday School.

Bromley District Festival has and does provide for people of the Church to display their skills and talent. Sunday School/J.C. children have always been encouraged to take part in the tremendous variety of activities, from needlework, to story writing and theatrical performance. Over the years many talented youngsters have won high marks and been entered at the next level of competition. The end of the day always concludes with a Concert in which prizewinners in the performance classes take part, an enjoyable and satisfactory conclusion to all the hard work by competitors and judges. Not forgetting all the 'back up' given by many others. Methodist Sunday School/J.C. provides an excellent training for the development of the voice, because pupils learn to enjoy singing the wonderful hymns of Charles Wesley and Isaac Watts among others. During the 1930's the Sunday School had its own choir, which entertained at Church Functions. Perhaps that is why over the years there was never a shortage of those willing to try their singing skills in competition.

In late summer, the church at Anerley thanks God for the harvest in a Harvest Festival Service in which the Sunday School/J.C. takes part. It



*Harvest Festival 1956*

is a time of joy, and the church is decorated to reflect it. Vines brought from the garden (which used to be at the back of the buildings), are twisted round pipes and beams, and flowers are on every available ledge. Fresh fruit and harvest loaves, especially those baked in the shapes of corn sheaves, knots and twists are a feast to the eye. Hymns of joyful praise ring out from the throats of young and old. Everyone is surrounded by the most wonderful of scents, rising

from the produce brought by the congregation gathered at the Festival, be they child or adult. With the close of the day older Sunday School/J.C. children help with packing and distribution. In earlier years, local hospitals had benefited from the harvest gifts. Later on, Oak Lodge Nursing Home was the beneficiary. And in other years the produce was distributed to local elderly people. Sometimes a Harvest Supper was held, when pupils attended with their parents. Money donated being given to charity.

In spite of disruption to the community of Penge and Anerley during the war years, by 1948 eighty-nine pupils were enrolled for the Junior Dept of Sunday School and thirty-seven for the Primary Dept. In fact numbers went on increasing until 1959 when there was a dramatic drop with an average of just 13 children attending. At this date the terraced housing in the Groves (roads adjacent to the Church) were demolished and replaced by three tower blocks of flats. The resulting movement of people and families must have had an effect of disruption to the community in a massive way, and may help to explain the disappearance of pupils from the Sunday School at this time. Also just a year later comments appear in the records about how difficult it had become to actually run the Sunday School because the children had become increasingly disruptive and difficult to control. From this time until the Sunday School merged with the Junior Church in 1967, the average number of pupils was 30.

The economically difficult post-war years were gone by the middle of the 1950's, with 'rationing' well and truly a thing of the past (sweets being the last item to be rationed.) From this time on in spite of occasional years of economic depression society in general became more affluent, as witnessed by the increasing number of ordinary families who owned a car, something only the rich had been able to afford pre-war. Consequently children who might previously have attended Sunday School were being taken out for the day by their parents. Also, the new attitude to Sunday meant that Day Schools expected their sports teams to play on Sundays as well as in the week. Today of course, Sunday is little different to any other day.

Sunday School/Junior Church Anniversaries have always been a very special time until recently, with the morning and evening services dominated by the pupils. Every pupil was given a buttonhole of Lily of the Valley flowers, as they took pride of place seated at the front of the church. On a convenient evening following the Sunday celebration, parents and friends were invited to watch a performance by the children of a tableau, or song, or poem, or a play with every child taking part. All birthdays should be celebrated with a tea party, and in later years the Junior Church Anniversary proved no exception, with party games and delicious food enjoyed by pupils and staff. Sadly, these traditions have now dropped due to lack of enthusiasm. The most recent one to go was the Anniversary Party.

Sunday School Centenary celebrations took place in May 1963. Staff and pupils had worked hard to produce a model of the original Church buildings. To add to the occasion all dressed as closely as possible to Victorian times of 1863. Joyful as the occasion was, a sad note was struck with the announcement of the retirement of Mr. George Vale as Sunday School Superintendent. He had been in the position during the dark days of the war and the difficulties since that time. Many people have fond memories of the 'quiet man.' Consciously or unconsciously all the children who have come under his influence owe something of



*Sunday School Anniversary  
100 years 1863-1963*



*Ron Smith*

their Christian values to him. Mr. Ron Smith a teacher in the Sunday School and previous Youth Club leader was to replace him. He too had a great influence for good on the youth of the Church, but that will be described in another chapter.

In 1967 it was decided to amalgamate the Sunday School with the Junior Church, which met on Sunday during morning worship. In fact the change was in line with most of the other churches in the district, a recognition that times had changed with regard to society's attitude to the use of leisure time. Miss Goss was leader of the Junior Church. She had organised it as a mirror of adult worship with the children taking prayers, announcing hymns and having visiting speakers. The title of Junior Church was retained but the structure of the organisation was that of the Sunday School, including Beginners with Primary, Junior and Senior departments. In the few years in which it ran prior to amalgamation, a steady number of children had taken part. Some were the children of those who worshipped next door in the church,

including the black families who were comparatively new to the District, and who were to play an increasingly large part in the life and future of the church. Initially the amalgamation was successful as shown by the increasing number of children attending. However in



*Youth Group with leader Audrey Bobb, including Steven and Clarence Hunt, and Martha, Sarah and Georgina*

1972 there was a dramatic drop to less than one third. This set the pattern for the next decade with an average attendance of 18, including all departments.

Other organisations had their own classes in the Sunday School, including the G.L.B. (Girls Life Brigade), and while they existed, the B.B. (Boys Brigade), also, the Inters Group (11-14year old boys and

girls) and a Bible Class for Young People. I think it can be seen that the Sunday School/Junior Church was never a static organisation: far from it, it has a major role in responding to changing needs.

The Sunday School/Junior Church has a Council whose members are composed of the leaders and teachers. The Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary are also members of the staff. They meet variously but at least once a year, usually twice, and sometimes more often. The recording of meetings of the Council is by the Secretary, enabling those who read them a unique glimpse into the life and times of the Sunday School/Junior Church movement.

Other Bodies associated with the school are W.K.S.S.U. (West Kent Sunday School Union) who organised conferences and teacher training; also Circuit Sunday School Union and a District Sunday School Union.

How was the Sunday School/Junior Church financed? Hymn Books and Bibles had to be paid for, as did all other teaching aids. During the very early years of the 1860's there are no records to refer to, but in the 1870's there are references in the Minute books about the 'unpaid fee' of the Sunday School. This implies that the Society is charging for use of the premises, which in retrospect seems odd. However that is looking at it from the 21st century. In fact 'the fee' was not cancelled until 1962, when the church started to make an annual grant of £40 to Sunday School funds. Around the same time a new ruling that Sunday School weekly collections need no longer go to Overseas Missions, meant that staff no longer had to pay for materials out of their own pockets. Teachers could now plan in advance for the needs of the pupils. They also continued to receive all Collections from church services on Sunday School/J.C. Anniversaries. A bank account was opened specifically for the Sunday School/J.C. which 30 years later on, in 1992, was changed following a decision that all money should pass through the Church accounts. Further financial help came in 1972 when a defunct Youth Club account closed, and its funds were transferred.



*Mr George Vale*

Around the same time Junior Church became the beneficiary of a considerable bequest from their old Superintendent, Mr. George Vale. The money was a wonderful gift from a man who had given so generously of his time and effort during his life. If good will alone could bring pupils into the Junior Church, it would be full to overflowing

During the 1980's the Minute Book states that "it has become difficult to enlist permanent help to run the Beginners Class on a regular basis," so a compromise situation developed. A rota of helpers was drawn up to teach and lead the class. At first it was in combination with those who were still willing and able to commit themselves to every Sunday, but by 1995 a rota was approved and formalised which included all departments. The young adults who worship at the Church nowadays say that they enjoyed Junior Church. Therefore it can be safely stated that the staff rota is a compromise that works well.

The Sunday School/Junior Church cannot be seen in isolation from the Church, no more than it can be seen in isolation from the community in which the Church functions. The community reflects what is happening within society in general, and increasingly national and international events are making their mark, largely because communication across the planet is so accessible. However for the purpose of this history, it is the local districts of Anerley and Penge that are important, and even more directly the community living around the Church buildings.

Although I have referred to the very early history of the Sunday School, I have mainly concentrated on the years from 1928, which was where the earlier book by Mr. Waites finished. Many changes have taken place in our district during this time; changes so profound and all embracing that 'keeping up' requires superhuman effort. Unfortunately the majority of human beings are not in that category so our community has suffered as a result. The sort of shared values that held people together no longer seem to exist. The tangible changes are the obvious ones, such as the loss of the large Church building that stood as a constant symbol of our Christian faith. A generation later, the loss of the land on which it stood, and which had been used for the sort of functions e.g. Summer Fete's that attracted people who lived in the neighbourhood of the Church. Those people would have seen the development of the Community Centre that provided for the social needs and leisure activities of young people of the area. A few years

later the same people would have seen the arson attack of 1979 almost destroy the buildings that had housed the Community Project, the Church, and of course, the Junior Church.

In the same context, a short distance from the Church buildings, as previously mentioned, high-rise flats replaced terraced housing, and four decades later most of them have been replaced by another form of terraced housing. District schools have disappeared, and for most children of secondary school age, a considerable journey of several miles is involved. Neighbourhood shops have gone too.

Our Church buildings have disappeared from view behind houses that stand where the large Church stood, so unless people hear by word of mouth, or have seen the sign on the lamp-post stating "Methodist Church" with its pointer, they would not know of its existence.

The Christian message is the same today as it was 60 years ago, and the Anerley Methodist Church believes in the same God. My experience of the people of the Church is that they are as warm and welcoming to anyone who enters the door, whether adult or child, as they always have been, so why do the children of the neighbourhood stay away from Junior Church? Perhaps this small history of the Sunday School/Junior Church suggests some of the answers.



## SUNDAY SCHOOL LEADERS

### BEGINNERS DEPT.

Mrs. Sadie Douglass 1953  
Miss. Joan Loring 1954-1984  
Miss. M. Barber 1955-1960



*Joan Loring*

### PRIMARY DEPT.

Mrs. Vallence -1940  
Miss. A Kelsey 1940-1952  
Miss J. Horton 1952-1953  
Mrs. S. Douglass 1953-1960  
Miss. J. Loring 1960-1984  
Mrs. M. Young 1955-1960  
nee Barber



*Marion Young, nee Barber  
taught in the Sunday School  
for over 40 years*

### JUNIOR DEPT.

Mr. Bryant -1940  
Mr. G. Vale 1940-1963  
Mr. R. Smith 1963-1970  
Miss. A. Goss 1963-1970  
Mr. J. Douglass 1963-1990  
Mr. A. Tredinnick 1970-1994  
Mrs. V. Tredinnick 1970-1984  
Mrs. M. Young 1960-1984

### SENIOR DEPT.

Mr A Thompson 1950-  
Mrs. H. Smith  
Mr. M. Young 1967-  
Mr A. Tredinnick 1972-  
Mrs. V. Tredinnick 1984-

### ROTA OF TEACHERS from 1995

Anita Yusuf , Audrey Bobb,  
Sandra Hynes, Janice Friend,  
Valerie Tredinnick .



*John Douglass*

Mr. Ron Smith took over in 1963 (according to the Minutes) from Mr. Vale as Superintendent of the Sunday School. However, I am assured that all teaching staff became equally involved in its organisation, and was re-enforced when John Douglass replaced Ron Smith.



*Valerie Tredinnick*

#### PIANISTS

Mr. Hodgson

Mrs. Payne

Mrs. Moon

Mrs. Douglass

Miss. Goss

Mrs. Quintrell



*Sandra Hynes*

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Thank you Kathleen. Others have been 'badgered' with questions and thanks go to them for their patience, particularly Marian Young, Anne Goss, Valerie Tredinnick, and the late John Douglass. Many people have supplied me with photographs, in particular Joan Loring, who takes much better photos than me!

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Researched and written by Rose Bateman  
2003



