

Purley Congregation Church  
*(Purley United Reformed Church)*

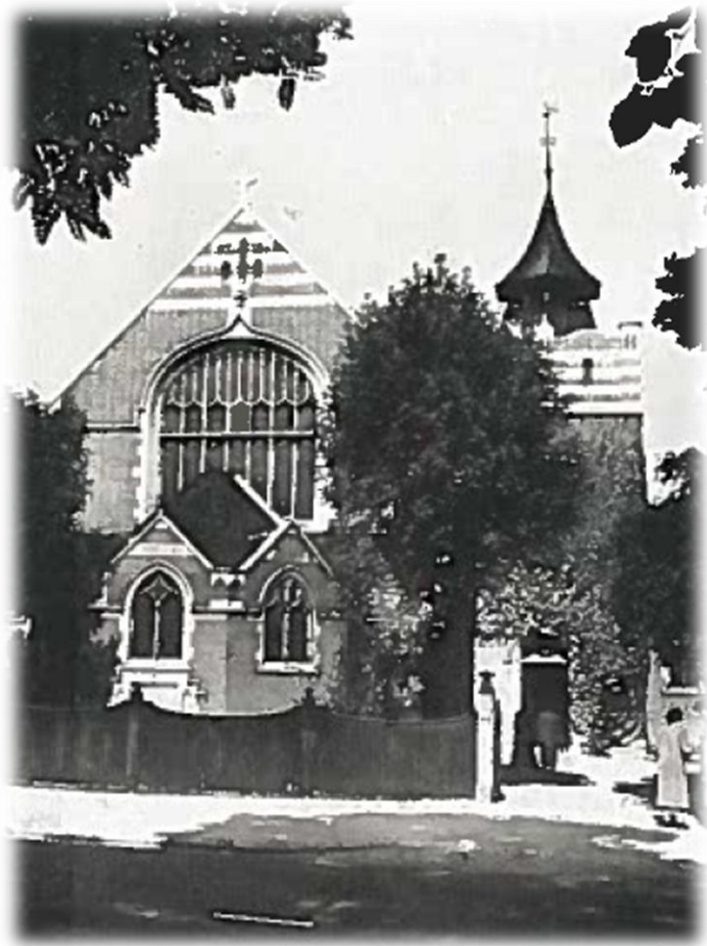
1895 - 1954

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*This booklet was prepared in connection  
with the Church's Jubilee Celebrations and  
records the formation of the Church  
and its development*

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SEPTEMBER 1954



*Figure 1 Purley Congregational Church. 1953*

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## Founding the Church

The year was 1892 When Richard Cooper, son of a well-known Croydon doctor, procured a piece of land in Purley High Street on which to build a village hall. A few cottages and shops surrounding it, but the land on either side of the Brighton Road was for the most part agricultural, with a few large estates in the surrounding area.

The railway station was then known as Caterham Junction and there was a limited service of trains to London and Brighton. Trains drawn by two horses ran only as far as the Red Deer.

Neither the Pumping Station nor the Fountain had been erected and Purley was just one of England's peaceful, rural villages. Christchurch was the only Anglican Church, serving a population of little more than 1,200; and Watney's Chapel, near the Red Deer, was the first non-conformist meeting place built in the district.

That was Purley when Richard Cooper brought the piece of land



*Figure 2 - The Village Hall*

between 42 and 44 High Street on which Purley Village Hall was built. It was an iron hall costing £263. 3s. 6d, including the fencing, fittings, furniture and stove, and it had a seating capacity of a hundred and sixty. The money to build this hall was collected in small amounts

from the community. 'The hall was intended for 'Evangelistic, Gospel, Temperance, Missionary and other Christian work,' but little did the founders, or the young men and women who attended the Bible Classes led by Richard Cooper and his wife, realise what a vigorous fellowship was to grow from such small beginnings.

No details are available of the opening ceremony, which was helped on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1893, but the records show that at first only evening services were held, at which Moody and Sankey's hymn books were used. Subsequently morning services were arranged, men's and women's Bible Classes were formed, a Sunday school met in the afternoons, and a strong Christian Endeavour Society developed.

There were also a Temperance Society, Mutual Improvement Society, Mothers' Meeting and a Band of Hope. But it was not until Henry Sell arrived in Purley that a church was formed.

Mrs Henry Sell first become interested in the services held at the Village Hall, through the attendance of one of maids. The story is told that one evening, when the maid was departing for service her mistress asked the denomination of those attending the meetings at the hall, to which the maid replied – 'Please madam, it's nothing.'

Mrs Sell decided to go and see for herself and when she returned home she interested her husband in the work. From that time Henry Sell's name figures largely in the records and

he quickly proved himself a keen and generous leader of those gathering for worship.



Figure 3 - Henry Sell

Twenty members founded the church on March 18<sup>th</sup> 1895, and the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was first observed on April 21<sup>st</sup>.

The following October it was agreed to become affiliated to the Surrey Congregational Union. By a unanimous vote at the same meeting Mr. Henry Sell and Mr. Cooper were appointed as first deacons.

In November 1896 the Rev. H. J. Hayward was invited to take charge of the church for a period, but from November 1898 until February 1901, in order to ease the financial problem, the pulpit was supplied by friends and students.

February 1901 saw the advent of the second minister, the Rev. F.W. Turner, of South Norwood, but after only two years' ministry he left for British Guiana, where he died seven years later.

At the turn of the century, the modern development of Purley begun. The railway station was rebuilt and the line doubled. The tram lines were extended to Purley and electrified. The first house was built in Foxley Lane and larger shops were erected in the High Street. Large numbers of houses were built in Plough Lane and the Brighton Road and Purley begun to thrive.

With the increased population the church which was meeting in the Village Hall began to grow and, as a hall was being used for all purposes, the need for further premises was apparent. The Ecclesiastical Commissioners, who owned most of the land on the west side of [the] Brighton Road, were approached; and Henry Sell opened negotiations with them on behalf of the church for the leasehold of a piece of land between Brighton Road and Woodmansterne Road (now Pampisford Road). This is the land on which the church now stands.

A period of ten years was allowed by the vendors for the purchase of the freehold and a time limit of two years for the building of the church was imposed. At the time the church had a membership of only 44.

Plans were immediately prepared and a subscription list was open. By September of the same year £1,700 had been subscribed towards the estimated cost of £6,000 for the church.

Further promises and donations were received and the Foundation Stone of the new church was laid on October 15<sup>th</sup> 1903, by Alderman Evan Spicer, J.P., of the London County Council, supported by the Mayor of Croydon, Sir Frederick Edridge, J.P.

The poster announcing this ceremony is still in the church archives and states that Dr. Mark Jackson (one of the earliest officers and trustees of the church) would preside, 'supported by Gentlemen and Ministers of the County'

Only the central section of the present church was included in the original plans, but before the building was completed applications for sittings made if perfectly clear that the church would be too small. Therefore the plans were redrawn and two transepts were added, providing an additional 94 seats so that, when the church was opened there was seating accommodation for 123, including the choir.

On January 31<sup>st</sup>, 1904, the Rev. Arthur Pringle preached at the Village Hall. Mr Pringle had been minister of Caterham Congregational Church, but had resigned that position to become Assistant Editor of 'The Christian World.'

After the service that evening Mr. Henry Sell discussed with him the possibility of him taking the services regularly at Purley. Exactly four months after the Foundation Stone of the new church was laid, the Rev. Arthur Pringle was officially invited, of February 15<sup>th</sup> 1904, to take charge of the Purley Congregational Church for a year. His duties included preaching every Sunday and visiting the church members on afternoon each week.

Mr. Pringle commenced his ministry on April 10<sup>th</sup>, 1904, and his preaching resulting in so great an increase in the congregation that, within two months, the Village Hall had to be doubled in size to give the sitting capacity of 300.

The enlarged hall was filled every Sunday and those who could not be accommodated stood outside to hear what they could of the service.

The new church was completed and formally opened by Mr. Gaius Idiens on Thursday, September 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1904, the preacher at the Dedication Service which followed being the Rev. C. Silvester Horne, M.A. The cost of the building, organ and furniture was £5,155, most of which was subscribed by the opening date. Notable at the time was the electric lighting installation and also the sloping floor raising to the rear of the church.

On December 14<sup>th</sup>, 1904, Mr. Pringle accepted the invitation of the church to become its permanent minister.

### Expanding the Church

Within three years all sittings had been allocated and were filled every Sunday. It was therefore decided to provide an additional 150 sittings by enlarging each transept at a cost of £1,225. Only 41 of these additional places remained unappropriated by the time the work was completed in 1908.

Two years later the freehold of the ground was purchased for the sum of £1,110, the whole of this amount being raised by means of a bazaar.

Within another year plans had been prepared and the erection of a hall, three classrooms, a deacon's vestry and kitchens and cloakrooms were nearing completion. It is of interest to note that the kitchen was originally where the existing crush lobby is situated and there is no entrance into the hall from the church except through the choir door. The total cost of these extensions was £3,904, including the furniture and the piano.



The new premises were opened on January 17<sup>th</sup>, 1912, and the first church meeting was held on February 8<sup>th</sup> of the same year.

During the following year the chancel was beautified by the addition of oak panelling on the west wall and around the pulpit.

With the membership of the church steadily raising, from 95 in 1907 to 317 in 1913, and with nearly as many regular seat holders who were actually not members, it was decided that the church building was to be further enlarged. It should be noted the original building only extended as far back as the existing cross aisle, with the entrance annexe abutting on to the south wall of the tower. This annexe was therefore extended by 16 feet and the whole of this area was allocated to seating. A new south porch was built, and an entrance made from the tower into the north aisle. The total cost of this work was £1,295.

By means of this alternation 120 additional seats were provided making the total seating capacity of the church 693. The new pews were used for the first time on October 2<sup>nd</sup> 1914.

Even during the war years of 1914 to 1918 the membership steadily increased with a corresponding waiting for sittings. Late in 1921 it was decided that the time had come once more to enlarge the church building, this time by extending the two transepts so as to form two complete side aisles, thus proving an additional 125 sittings. Before this extension was completed, however, there was again a waiting list of 90 applicants for sitting, many of whom had applied the previous year.

This work, together with the provision of two small porches built around the doors of each transept, and the enlargement of the south porch, was completed for the sum of £2,287, and the extension was opened free of debt on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 1922.

At the same time a memorial window, representing Faith, Fortitude, Victory and Hope, was erected in the west wall of the chancel in memory of those killed in the 1914 – 1918 war; and an oak plaque bearing their names was placed beneath the window. This plaque was removed to its present position on the wall of the north aisle in 1947, when a similar plaque was placed on the wall of the south aisle to commemorate those who fell in the 1939 – 1945 war.

On May 8<sup>th</sup>, 1924, the present organ was dedicated and a recital was given by Mr. Reginald Gross-Custard, F.R.C.O. This organ, then considered one of the finest church organs in the country, cost £4,047 and was built by Messrs. Henry Willis and Sons and Lewis & Co., Ltd.

Despite the fact that the recent church enlargements had been completed less than two years previously, and that £2,425 had been contributed at the same time to the Congregational Union Forward Movement, there was only £1,200 owing on the organ at the time of its dedication.

November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1929, saw what were then thought to be the final alternations to the church. These consisted of raising the roof over the annex to the same height as that of the remainder of the building; constructing a semi-octagonal lobby on the east end of the church; and a crush lobby between the church and the hall; the building of a corridor extending down the south side of the hall to facilitate entrance to the classrooms; the provision of a new kitchen in its present position; improving clock room accommodation, and a new vestibule with an entrance into the north transept of the church as well as into the lobby of the hall.

The total cost of this work was approximately £4,000 and it greatly added to the beauty of the church buildings and also to their usefulness.

It is small wonder that a newspaper reported, writing under the heading 'Pringle of Purley', said:-

“At Purley, in Surrey, they have had to invent a new type of architecture – a concertina church which will stretch a little more each year.’

By the time Mr. Pringle died in January 1933, there was only £880 outstanding on the extension fund; and in order that his successor should find the church free of debt, a memorial fund was opened which realised £1,287.

After paying the outstanding debt on the church buildings it was decided to complete the panelling of the chancel and to provide new carved oak choir stalls as a special memorial to Arthur Pringle.

These were dedicated at a special service conducted by the Rev. F. H. Wheeler, D.S.O., Moderator of the Southern Province, on Saturday, January 27<sup>th</sup> 1935.

In 1938 classrooms numbers 1 and 2, at the rear of the hall, were enlarged at a cost of approximately £900.

The latest addition to the church buildings is the Memorial Hall, dedicated to the memory of those members who lost their lives during the 1939-1945 war. This hall, at once cheerful and dignified, is intended especially for use of the Junior Church. It has been erected on the south side of the church hall and was first used on Promotion Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>, 1953, being formally dedicated three weeks later. Over £2,700 was subscribed in covenants and donations to defray its costs.

The original church buildings were designed by Mr. Hampden R Pratt, F.R.I.B.A.; who is a present member.

In November 1944 a house in Plough lane was purchased by the church for use as a manse, at a cost of £2,400.

As far as can be ascertained the only extension plan which did not come to fruition was the proposal, made on July 26<sup>th</sup> 1932, to be a church lodge on the land fronting Woodmansterne Road (now Pampisford Road), at a cost not exceeding £500.

The question of parking cars has occupied attention at different times, At the church meeting held on July 12<sup>th</sup>, 1928, it was recommended that 'the present system of parking cars on the northern boundary only should continue under supervision and that, as soon as the allocated space was occupied, succeeding cars should be parked in Woodmansterne Road (now Pampisford Road).'

It is stated that the police authorities had approved the latter and would provide, on request, 'a constable for their supervision at a cost of 9s. 0d. per term of four consecutive hours.'

There is an interesting record in the Minutes of a church meeting held on May 29<sup>th</sup>, 1907, when it was agreed that any church member could give permission to small children to play on the land at the back of the church provided they did no damage and behaved themselves.' Permission was also given to a man to tether his horse there 'as it would not hurt to crop the grass'.

During the First World War the Village Hall was extensively used on Sundays and throughout the week for the varied church activities. With the coming of peace and the handing back of the church building by the War Office, the need for continued use of the hall ceased and in July 1919 it was disposed of to the local urban District Council for £800.

A perusal of the Minutes reveals the fact that, with the extension of the fabric of the church, there was a continual rise in membership from 44 in 1904, when the church was opened to 800 in 1938.

During the war it dropped to 671, since when it has remained fairly constant, the present membership being around 700.



*Figure 4 - Interior of the Memorial Hall (Photo by Cosser Photographic Service)*

## Responsibilities of the Church

By the time all the extensions had been made the total cost to the church and the building associated with it amounted to nearly £30,000. It is an amazing fact that the cost of each extension was nearly always met by the time of, or shortly after, its completion.

It might be expected that a church which raised so much money for its own use would have little to spare for causes outside its immediate sphere. In actual fact, however, records show that equally large sums were raised for other purposes. Whenever an appeal for the extension of the church or its premises were made, it was generally associated with another for some worthy cause, such as the building of new churches or the Reconstruction Fund.

Keen interest has always been shown in the work of the London Missionary Society and this has been evidenced by contributions amounting to several hundreds of pounds each year.

In the early days of the church's history two hundred working girls from Canning Town were entertained by various members for a day each year. Reedham Orphanage and Crossway Mission are among other causes for which funds have frequently been raised; and more recent links have been strengthened with Trinity Church, Poplar.

The church has also fostered the cause of specific churches. In 1927 £300 was promised towards the Building Fund of the Wallington Church; £1,000 was raised for the new church at Ewell between 1937 and 1939; and more recently the cause at Old Coulsdon, started by two members of the Purley church, has claimed interest and support of the members. Throughout the years the church has sought to take its full part in the life of the local Christian community and more particularly in recent years through the Coulsdon and Purley Council of Churches.

Of the many and varied societies meeting on the church premises, the Literacy Society is one of the oldest and trace its history back through all the Year Books and Manuals to the very first, published in 1908. In this year the Society had a membership of 95 and was already well established. The latest Year Book shows a membership of 324.

The Women's Working Guild similarly can trace its antecedents back to 1908 when it was known as the Women's Meeting. The Flower Fund was also started in the same year.

On February 7<sup>th</sup>, 1918, the Children's Church was founded by Miss May Silcock and held its first service in the Deacons' Vestry with 19 members. It was organised on the lines of the Mother Church, with its own officers and deacons, and worked as an independent organisation from Sunday school which met in the afternoons, except on certain special occasions when the services were combined.

The attendance rapidly increased until there were a 100 young members meeting for worship with the Mother church before walking in procession up the centre aisle to join their own service in the hall. As the first Children's church of its kind it was visited by interested people from all over the country, with the result that, by 1939, more than 30 churches had adopted the idea.

During 1922 the Children's Church Choir was formed, the children being robed in cassocks and surplices, and a special dedication service held. When the new choir stalls were built as a memorial to Mr. Pringle extra seats were provided for the Children's Choir.

In 1939 the 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday celebrations were held, when greetings were received from 33 other Children's Churches throughout the country. By this time about 150 members of the Children's church had joined the Mother church.

From 1925 until the beginning of the war, the afternoon Sunday school (renamed Junior Church) was steadily growing in strength and attracting more and more of the children of the church, but when the war started it was merged in the Children's Church and met only in the mornings.

From 1945 the structure of Family Church was built up with departments covering all ages and there is now a membership of approximately 250 children and young people.

In 1921 the Lay Preachers' Association was founded and in 1924 Mr. Pringle started his Young People's Class which exercised a notable influence and continued until 1939.

The Boys Scouts, Girl Guides and the Camp Fire Girls ceased to function during the 1939-45 war and a Youth Club was started in 1942 to cater for the needs of young people during the week. Three years later a Young People's Club was formed as an off shoot of the Group, for those over 17 years of age.

The Men's Forum was founded in 1935 under the ministry of the Rev. C. Leslie Atkins, and the Women's Forum was organised by Mrs, Atkins in the same year.

The Contact Council and the '24' Club were formed in 1945, the World Church Committee in 1948 and the Young Wives' Group in 1951. The World Church Committee was set up during the ministry of the Rev. W. Andrew James with the express purpose of co-ordinating the church's support for the one world-wide Christian community at home and overseas.

The '24' Club was founded and built up largely by Mrs. James; the Young Wives' Group found an enthusiastic first President in Mrs. Weller, wife of the present minister.

One responsibility of the church which has been notably discharged through the years and must not go unmentioned is the ministry of music.



The church has been greatly blessed in its able succession of organists and choir-masters and in the devotion and quality of its choir. The whole worship of the congregation has been thereby been enriched.

## Personalities in the Church

So far as can be ascertained, only two of the present members of the church, Mr. and Mrs. H.T. Morgan, can remember when Henry Sell first became interested in the group of people worshipping in the Village Hall. From 1895 to the end of 1908, with short breaks, Henry Sell held joint offices of Church Secretary and Treasurer and when he resigned it was decided that this position should be filled by two members, as the duties were too much for one man. In the following year he was appointed a life deacon, but he did not live long enough to enjoy this honour for he died on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1910, at the age of 59.

The esteem in which he was held is shown in the Resolution passed by the church on 'the occasion of the death of our beloved Mr. Henry Sell' which reads:-

'We place on record our profound grief at the passing from us of our brother Henry Sell, who was largely instrumental in the founding of this church, in the erection of the present building, and in the successful development of the work, and who, by his faith, hope and love, endeared himself to all who were associated with him in the enterprise.'

A memorial Tablet bearing the following inscription was placed on the west wall, where it can be seen today above the organ console:-

'This Tablet is placed here to perpetuate the memory of Henry Sell, born in 1851, died 1910, to whose foresight and devotion the founding of this church and the erection of this building are mainly due.'

It was Henry Sell's foresight which led him to recommend to the church in 1904 that the Rev. Arthur Pringle be invited to take temporary charge of the church; and just as Henry Sell was mainly responsible for the founding of the church, so to the Rev. Arthur Pringle belongs the honour of building on that foundation a strong and enduring fellowship.

There began not only one year of inspired Christian leadership, but twenty-eight full and fruitful years, during which the church grew and flourished until it speedily became one of the leading churches in the denomination, and 'Pringle of Purley' was known and honoured far and wide.

Throughout the church minutes there are many references to the value of Mr. Pringle's ministry and the esteem in which he was held.

A signal honour was accorded to Mr. Pringle, and incidentally to the church, when he was appointed Chairman of the Congregational Union of England and Wales for the year 1924-1925. The church celebrated the occasion, and also Mr. Pringle's twenty-one years' ministry at Purley, by presenting him with a cheque and an engraved silver salver. This was also the 21<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the opening of the new building and the Rev. R.J. Campbell, D.D., preached to a very large congregation.

Other famous people who preached at Purley during Mr. Pringle's ministry included Sir Oliver Lodge, the Rev. Maude Royden, C.H., D.D., and Sir Wilfred Grenfell. Dr. Campbell and Dr. Maude Royden preached on several occasions and in January 1914 Dr. Orchard conducted a very successful 'Mission on the Modern Mind.'

In the latter part of 1927, Mr. Pringle visited the United States of America under the auspices of the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches. Writing to Mrs. Pringle from Christ Church Cathedral, Saint Louis, the Bishop Coadjutor of Missouri said:-

'We shall never forget Mr. Pringle's visit here. It really was one of the great occasions in the life of the Cathedral. He made a profound impression on all who heard him and he gave our friendship for England a new impulse. We shall never forget him.'



*Figure 5 - Rev. Arthur Pringle*

'All who remember the church under Mr. Pringle's ministry speak of his passion for order and reverence in the Sunday services. The Order of Service paper was inaugurated during the latter half of 1910, and in 1920 the choir was robed. In March 1830, it was agreed that Baptismal services should be embodied in the morning service, the baptism to take the place of the children's address not more than once a month.

Many were the tributes in the Press to Mr. Pringle's ministry at Purley. The following report in the 'South Wales Argus' during 1928 is quoted for the general picture it gives of the church services at that time:-

'As an illustration of the freedom of Congregationalism and the use that a great soul like Pringle can make of it, one has only to visit the church at Purley and study its methods and its congregation. Both congregation and mode of worship are obviously of Catholic sympathies.

The congregation contains men and women who, migrating from inner London, have brought with them traditions of every school of Christian thought and practice. The public worship, which is dignified and beautiful, without being formal, enshrines the best to be found in the Church of England and in the Free Churches.

'The Prayer Book and extemporaneous prayer are both used in worship at Pringle's church and full use is made of music as "a handmaid to religion." In his preaching there is a passion for men's souls and for Divine truth. With Pringle there are no reservations. He is afraid of no new discovery in the scientific or other realms of research. His church, a large one, and three times enlarged, is full to the doors and he preaches to a far greater congregation by his books and through the Press.'

That the ministry of the church was consistently maintained at such a high level was due in no small measure to the help and inspiration of Mrs. Pringle. Although for the greater part of her husband's ministry at Purley she was physically incapacitated as the result of an accident, her influence in the church is still appreciatively spoken of by those who knew her in those days. The church minutes record many expressions of regret at her enforced absence from special occasions in the church life, and refer to the fact that the members of the Women's Guild presented her with a bouquet of red carnations as 'an expression of their appreciation of all that she does unsparingly for all who need help, advice or sympathy.'

Mr. Pringle's sudden death, early on Sunday morning, January 22nd, 1933, came as a grievous shock when it was announced to a crowded church.

The Bishop of Croydon, the Right Rev. E. S. Woods, D.D., at his own request attended the morning service the following Sunday, said, in a moving tribute to Mr. Pringle:—

‘..... I glad to come, not merely for personal reasons, though like many hundreds, nay, thousands of others, I appreciated more than I can say, any personal contact which I had with Arthur Pringle. I am glad also to come because when such a Christian leader is taken away, whose influence extended far beyond the confines of his own congregation, it is right and fitting that someone representing another and wider section of Christ's Catholic Church, should bear witness to the blessing that such a life and ministry brings to all the blessed company of Christ's faithful people.



Figure 6 - Rev. C. Leslie Atkins, B.A.

'Arthur Pringle was very richly endowed with gifts of mind, character and personality and all his powers were gladly devoted to the service of God's kingdom. And I suppose that with him, as with other Christian saints and leaders, his power was due to the combination in him of the mystic with the man of broad human interests and sympathies, He was gloriously, splendidly, human; he loved life and lived it with zest and happiness; he enjoyed sport and games of all kinds and this must have been part of the reason why young people were always so immensely attracted to him.

But at the same time, as you to whom he ministered have good cause to know, he was a true man of God, forever unveiling to you, as a congregation, and through personal contacts, the heart of the Gospel; the very secret of the power of the living Christ.

'It was, in a sense, inevitable that such a man should do a considerable work for the unity of the Church, for a great Christian like Arthur Pringle belongs in a true sense to the whole Church, and not to any section of it. Put him along with a group of other big Christian leaders, men genuinely out first and last for Christ and His Kingdom, and denominational differences at once lose their sharp edges and tend to slip away. He saw and worked for a great ideal of a reunited Church, marked by that which distinguishes all life, namely "unity with variety" . . .

During the seventeen months which followed Mr. Pringle's death the diaconate, under the able leadership of Mr. F. H. Elliott, searched for a suitable successor and on June 22nd, 1934, it was reported that the Rev. C. Leslie Atkins, B.A., or Newcastle, had accepted the unanimous invitation of the church to become its minister, and he was duly elected.

Mr. Atkins commenced his ministry on Sunday, July 1st, 1934, and quickly proved himself worthy of the task to which he had been appointed. The induction service was held on July 12th, 1934, when Rev. F. H. Wheeler, D.S.O., Moderator of the Southern Province, presided and the address was given by the Rev. Sidney M. Berry, M.A., D.D., Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales. Once more the Bishop of Croydon showed his interest by taking part in the ceremony.

Until the war years Mr. Atkins preached to a crowded church. In its issue of March 3rd, 1938, 'The Christian World' stated—

'The minister of Purley Congregational Church lacks one experience of the average minister. He has never known what it is to preach to half empty pews. He possesses the precious gift of being always interesting. Mr. Atkins is interesting as a preacher because he is intensely interested in preaching—and in the people he preaches to.'

Not only did Mr. Atkins maintain the congregation by his preaching, but he exhibited a warm humanity which did much to enhance the fellowship which had always been apparent among the members.

In 1938 Mr. Atkins visited the United States and in 1943 he was elected to the Chair of the Surrey Congregational Union, thus bringing further honour to the church which had also provided a Chairman, Mr. F. C. Whitaker, from the diaconate in 1936.

Half of Mr. Atkins's ten years' ministry at Purley was during the war and this naturally affected the size of the congregations. At the end of 1940 it was recorded that the maximum morning attendance was 150.

In November 1942 about 160 members were in the Forces and 130 were evacuated for business and other reasons. In spite of this, however, the various organisations continued to flourish and do useful work.

In September 1944, Mr. Atkins accepted the invitation of the Congregational Union to become Moderator of the North Eastern Province. The church received Mr. Atkins's resignation with great regret; for in the ten years of his ministry he had spent himself ungrudgingly in the service of the church; and Mrs. Atkins had proved herself an excellent organiser and leader of its woman's activities.



In a letter to the fellowship at this time Mr. Atkins wrote:—

'It was only at the call of some such opportunity as this that I could have left Purley..... Purley will always have a special place in our lives.'

That Mr. and Mrs. Atkins have a special place in the lives of the people who were members during their ministry is proved by the fact that when Mr. Atkins was recently inducted to the ministry of the church at Bognor Regis. a large number from Purley travelled south to share in the services.

On April 5th. 1945, the Rev. Andrew James, M.A., of Shenfield and Hutton, was invited to succeed the Rev. C. Leslie Atkins and he was inducted as minister on June 20th, 1945, by the Moderator of the Southern Province, the Rev. F. H. Wheeler, D.S.O., the charge being given by Dr. Sidney M. Berry.

To Mr. James fell the arduous task of reassembling the congregation after the war. His personal visitation, and the close contacts he made with the members, contributed largely to the successful accomplishment of this work.

It was during the first year of his ministry that the rules of the church were altered so that one-third (now one-fifth) of the deacons retire annually in rotation, and are not eligible for re-election for one year.



Figure 7 - -Rev. W. Andrew James

At the same time, the rules were altered so that instead of appointing the officers of the church—two secretaries and two treasurers—from the elected diaconate, they are appointed annually at the church meeting and are ex officio members of the diaconate,

In October 1947, at Mr. James's proposal, the rules were amended so that deacons and others who had 'rendered conspicuous service to the church' might on retirement be appointed 'Counsellors of the Church.

Between April and July 1948, Mr. James visited churches of the United States, and later in the same year the church acted as host to the Surrey Congregational Union when the Annual Assembly was held in Purley.

In December 1949, Mr. James resigned to become Moderator of the Southern Province, concluding his ministry on March 5th, 1950. This was the second time that the church had been asked to release its minister for the office of Moderator. It was a great tribute and an indication of the confidence of the Congregational Union of England and Wales in the church's vitality.

Mr. and Mrs. James left with the good wishes of the church, Mrs. James having been a great strength and help to all the women's organisations.

On January 4th 1951, the church invited the Rev. John Weller, B.A., of Colchester, to become its minister. Mr. Weller was inducted to the pastorate on March 29th, 1951, by the Moderator, the Rev. W. Andrew James, M.A, the charge being delivered by the Rev. Leslie E. Cooke, B.A., D.D., Secretary of the Congregational Union of England and Wales.



*Figure 8 - Rev. John G. Weller, B.A.*

On September 2nd, 1951, the Securement of Holy Communion was broadcast from the church, Mr. Weller officiating. This was the first time one of such services to be broadcast from any church.

On February 18th of the present year, plans were put forward for the celebration of the Golden Jubilee of the building and the Diamond Jubilee of the formation of the church itself. A Jubilee Fund was opened with three main objectives: -

1. To clear the debt on the Memorial Hall.
2. To raise a reserve fund for the maintenance of the fabric of the church buildings.
3. To contribute a substantial sum towards the cost of the building of Old Coulsdon church.

During the three years of Mr. Weller's ministry steady progress has been maintained in the life and work of the church, and his very thorough and patient preparation of young people for church membership promises well for the church of the future.

.....and so the story continues. The brief record is a call to look back with deep thankfulness to God and forward with renewed confidence in Him.

*"Now God be thanked, Who has matched us with His hour"*

## CHURCH COUNSELLORS

Mr. J. A. Carruthers	Mr. W. J Young (Deceased)
Mr. F. H. Elliott	Mrs. Clifford Hall
Mr. G. Pascall	Mrs. NV. G. Pascall
Mr. F. C. Whitaker	Miss E. B. Walker

## CHURCH OFFICERS

Secretaries	Years Of Office	Treasurers	Years Of Offi ce
Mr. Henry Sell	6	Mr. Henry Sell	6
Mr. Sidney Kiek	12	Mr. J. Watson	5
Mr. P. H. Silcock	4	Mr. J. Young	4
Mr. Laurence Clay	7	Mr. J. Gillanders	16
Mr. Wilfrid G. Pascall	21	Mr. Albert Price	4
Mr. Harry A. Allison	12	Mr. J. A. Carruthers	12
Mr. F. C Whitaker	6	Mr. W.A. Godfrey	3
Mr. R. H. Youdale	4	Mr R. H. Youdale	7
* Mr. C. E. Peers	8	Mr. L. B. Birrell Gray	1
* Mr. C. W. Bond	4	* Mr. E. A. Taylor	8
		* Mr. R. J. S. Green	7

## ORGANISTS and CHOIR MASTERS

Mr. W. A. Godfrey	3	Mr. D.E. Sharp	12
Mr. H. C. J. Churchill	24	* Mr. R. Aldridge	10
A.G.S.M.		F.R.C.O, L.R.A.M.	

\* In office at the present time.

## ORIGINAL TRUSTEES

The original trustees of the church were:

Mr. John Douglas

Mr. G. H. Fisher

Dr. Mark Jackson

Mr. A. E. Jones

Mr. Henry Sell

Mr. W. Thresher

Mr. J Watson

Mr. W. J. Young

Of these Mr. John Douglas, Dr. Mark Jackson and Mr. W. J. Young were still holding office when, on October 27th, 1937, it was decided to transfer the Trust to the Congregational Union of England and Wales.

# PURC – (Purley Congregational Church) – 100 Years of Development

