

The History of Leominster Baptist Church



350th Anniversary Edition

THE HISTORY OF
LEOMINSTER BAPTIST CHURCH

Founded 1656

350th Anniversary Edition



Compiled by David Welford

October 2006

INTRODUCTION

To set the scene for the founding of Leominster Baptist Church we have to visit the England of Oliver Cromwell, the country's self-styled Lord Protector. These were turbulent days, especially for religious dissenters. In 1654 Cromwell had pressed the First Protectorate Parliament to agree to greater religious freedom, but failed. The First Protectorate Parliament was dissolved by Cromwell in January 1655.

Jews were officially allowed to return to England in 1656. Some say that this gesture was a measure of the compassion of Oliver Cromwell. Others believe it was a commercial consideration made for the purposes of trade. Another possibility is that Jews were allowed to return because of the Protestant doctrine held by Cromwell. This included a belief that the conversion of Jews to Christianity was a precursor to the second coming of Jesus Christ. There was a belief among some Christians that Jesus would return in 1656.

In 1656 Cromwell established a Second Protectorate Parliament. He dissolved this Parliament in February 1658 owing to criticism of his role as Lord Protector. Cromwell died in September 1658. His son Richard assumed the role of Lord Protector, but was deposed by the army a year later. This brought a Third Protectorate Parliament to an end. This was followed by a recalled 'Rump Parliament' before finally the pro-Royalist Convention Parliament was assembled on 25 April 1660. The monarchy was restored, albeit with limited powers. It would be another twenty-nine years before religious freedom was enshrined in statute.

LEOMINSTER, HEREFORDSHIRE – 1656

The Vicar of Leominster in 1656 was the Reverend John Tombes. He believed that the established church needed to be reformed. A graduate of Oxford University, John Tombes had been persecuted and hounded from his home in a former appointment. Why? Simply because he had published a sermon in support of reformation and

expressed doubt concerning infant baptism. Mr Tombes later wrote extensively in support of believers' baptism.

During Mr Tombes' time in Leominster, between forty and fifty members of his church formed a separate church. It appears that they held stronger views than their vicar. The new church was constituted on 28 July 1656. Its first meeting was held in the Leominster home of Mr Joseph Patshall.

The declaration of the first members of Leominster Baptist Church was recorded in the original church book and stated:

'The 28th day of the 7th month, 1656, was the church of Christ meeting at brother Joseph Patshall's house constituted and the persons undernamed did, [there is a list of names] after a solemn seeking of God give up themselves to the Lord and to one another to walk together in all ordinances of Jesus according to His appointments, which was done in the presence of, and with the assistance of our brother Daniell King and other brethren.'

Mr Patshall's house was located on a site in Bridge Street, adjacent to the Kenwater (originally Canniter) Bridge. A house known as the Lighthouse was built on this site in 1694 and is still standing. Joseph Patshall's house was subsequently occupied by Mr Powell, a tanner. The house was apparently a great shelter for distressed Baptists in the persecution that took place during the reign of Charles II (1660-1685). The church subsequently met in a house described as being located 'by the Popeland Turnpike.'

THE EARLY DAYS – 1656-1689

Many details of the early history of Leominster Baptist Church were recorded by Rev Joshua Thomas. Joshua Thomas was pastor of Leominster Baptist Church for forty-three years, from 1754 until 1797. He was also a renowned Welsh historian. Copies of several manuscripts, which were hand-written by Joshua Thomas, are stored in the church. The originals are on loan to the National Library of Wales in Aberystwyth.

The early years of Leominster Baptist Church would have been characterised by many difficulties and persecution. Members may have faced fines and imprisonment, but little is known about the problems suffered by Leominster Baptist Church at this time. The only story recorded concerns the arrest of a preacher named Pardoe who was taken to Hereford jail at the end of a service.

There was also a Baptist Church in Hereford in the mid-seventeenth century. There appears to have been a close association between the Baptist churches in Hereford and Leominster during these days. Earlier histories of Leominster Baptist Church state that the pastor of Hereford Baptist Church, Mr Edward Price, often preached at Leominster between 1656-1660 and was eventually recognised as joint pastor of both churches. There was another gathering of Baptists in Leominster at this time. This was led by Mr Rowland Stead. After 1660, ministry at Leominster Baptist Church appears to have been maintained by local leaders with the assistance of itinerant preachers.

Political turbulence and religious persecution continued until Parliament passed the 'Bill of Rights' in 1689. William III and Mary II (Prince and Princess of Orange) were crowned King and Queen. Their coronation depended on their agreement to a 'Declaration of Rights.' This was issued by Parliament in February 1689 confirming its power over the monarchy and excluding Catholics from succession to the throne.

The political changes of 1689 were to result in greater religious freedom. The 'Toleration Act' of 1689 repealed the penalties previously used against 'Protestant dissenters', removing many constraints against religious conscience.

FREEDOM TO WORSHIP – 1689-1753

After liberty of conscience was granted in 1689 a Baptist Assembly was convened in London. Representatives from more than 100 churches attended, including Mr Edward Price, pastor of Hereford Baptist Church. The assembly confirmed a 'Baptist Confession of

Faith.' This extended to twenty-nine chapters based upon earlier confessions of faith published by Baptists in 1644 and 1677.

The minutes of Leominster Baptist Church for 1689 listed seventy members and recorded the name of the pastor as Mr Edward Price, pastor of Hereford Baptist Church. A fresh affirmation of faith was written in the minute book stating:

'We, whose names are hereunto added, being baptised after believing, do solemnly and in the name of the Holy and ever Blessed Trinity, give up ourselves to the Lord, and to each other, by the will of God, to walk in the appointments and ordinances of Christ Jesus, according to His own institution; owning Him to be our Head and Ruler, and the Holy Scriptures the one rule in life; utterly renouncing all invocations of men in the worship of God, and sincerely agreeing to watch over one another and be watched over by one another, and as we have opportunity to continue in the Apostles' doctrine in fellowship, breaking of bread and in prayers, endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.'

Apparently only seven of the members listed in the minute book of 1689 were recorded in the original declaration of 1656.

In 1694 certain members of the established church who had experienced the ministry of Mr Tombes, and members of the fellowship led by Mr Rowland Stead, requested membership of Leominster Baptist Church. This increased the membership to 130 people and united those holding Baptist beliefs into a single church under the continuing leadership of Edward Price.

Church officers were elected in 1695. This process involved consultation with the local association, which was based at Pershore. Rev John Eckolls is said to have visited Leominster to assist and he subsequently carried out the ordination of the following officers:

- John Price and Thomas Holder – ministry.
- John Edwards and Rowland Stead – ruling elders.
- John Evans and Richard Kinnersley – deacons.

Mr Holder served as pastor until 1729.

In 1696 Mr John Davies of Eardisland made a gift to the church

of property in Etnam Street. Thomas Holder made the following statement concerning Mr Davies:

'He lived a plain, mean and self denying life but it was his great desire and design to promote the interest of Christ as much as lay in his power and he was very kind to pious souls that were in necessitous circumstances in the world, which he usually called God's poor.'

The gift made by Mr Davies included two houses, a garden and land for a graveyard. One house was converted into a meeting house for the church. The other was retained for use by the minister. Worship continued under this arrangement until the present chapel was built in 1771 on the same site.

Rev Edward Price died in 1702. The church book records that he was *'beloved by the people throughout his ministry of many years for his soundness of doctrine, humility and heavenliness of his conversation and faithful discharge of his pastoral duties.'*

Edward Price was buried in the graveyard at Leominster. After his death Mr Thomas Holder, who was first given responsibility for ministry in 1696, was chosen to assume the role of pastor. He married a daughter of Mr Rowland Stead and they all lived together in a house in the Lower Marsh (now called Bridge Street) near the Tan House. Because his home was close to the river, baptismal services were conducted there for many years, even during the ministry of Joshua Thomas (1754-1797). Mr Holder served the church as pastor until he died in 1729 at the age of seventy-two.

Mr Holder was succeeded by Mr John Oulton in 1731. Mr Oulton was apparently engaged on a trial basis a year earlier. He remained in Leominster until 1749, when he moved to Liverpool. It was approximately eighteen months before the vacancy for a pastor was filled.

Rev Rees Evans, who was previously a student at the academy in Bristol, was invited to the pastorate in 1750. Rees Evans was an acquaintance of Rev Joshua Thomas. Mr Evans moved to Salop in 1753, but is said to have persuaded Joshua Thomas to preach at Leominster, although this cannot be confirmed.

REVEREND JOSHUA THOMAS

Joshua Thomas was born to a farming family in Caio, Carmarthenshire, in 1719. Three years before Joshua's birth there was a revival in this area that affected the faith of his parents and ultimately resulted in the baptism of Joshua's father. Joshua's parents took care to ensure that their son gained from the example of godly parents.

When he was twenty years old Joshua Thomas moved to Hereford. In his memoirs Joshua described Hereford as *'a soil unfavourable to the precious seed of the gospel.'* Apparently there was no longer a Baptist Church in Hereford at this time. Joshua Thomas initially worshipped with a Presbyterian congregation, but recalled that the minister was *'a dull, heavy preacher.'*

After ten or eleven months in England Joshua Thomas returned home to visit his family. What he found surprised him greatly. He observed that many of his former school friends, his younger brother and sister, and other young people were *'conversing freely about the things of God, of the Kingdom of Christ, and the fate of their own souls.'* Until then Joshua had considered himself superior in religious knowledge to these younger family members and friends.

The way that his family and friends *'engaged with each other in prayer and other religious exercises'* filled Joshua with *'such shame and confusion that he could scarce open his mouth in conversation with them.'* It also made him take a close look at his relationship with God and imbibed him with *'a thirst after divine knowledge.'* Joshua Thomas *'now read and prayed, and thought differently from what he had ever done before.'*

Joshua returned to Hereford. Unable to face the dull, heavy preaching of the Presbyterian minister he recalled past discussions with a local lady concerning the Baptist Church in Leominster. He visited this lady and her husband to learn more about this church. Although Leominster was thirteen miles distant, he decided to visit and in December 1739 walked the thirteen miles. He found the church (in ministry of the Gospel) *'more suited to the state of his mind than what he had at Hereford.'* Although he noted that the people

'were not harmonious among themselves' Joshua resolved to worship in Leominster again.

In May 1740 Joshua Thomas was baptised and accepted into membership of Leominster Baptist Church. He worshipped in Leominster regularly until the end of 1743 when he returned home to Wales. It appears that at this time Joshua did not regard himself as eloquent, yet he found that his Christian friends believed him to possess ministerial gifts and he was encouraged to begin preaching. It was in private houses that the first sermons of Joshua Thomas were preached, but he preached only occasionally for several years.

Joshua Thomas married in 1746 and moved with his wife to Hay, where he transferred his membership to another Baptist church. In the period since he stopped worshipping at Leominster the congregation had apparently declined significantly. The Memoirs of Joshua Thomas record that by 1753 Leominster Baptist Church had been without a settled minister for five years. This conflicts with other records that refer to the ministry of Rev Rees Evans between 1750-1753.

The Ministry of Rev Joshua Thomas in Leominster, 1754-1797

The invitation to preach at Leominster Baptist Church in 1753 was received by Joshua Thomas with some reluctance. Joshua had little experience of preaching in the English language. He preached on 7 October 1753. His text was taken from Isaiah 8 verse 17: *And I will wait upon the LORD, that hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him (KJV).*

Further invitations to preach followed and in the spring of 1754 the fourteen church members were unanimous in their decision to ask Joshua Thomas to become their pastor. Despite a desire to remain in Wales, Joshua accepted the call to Leominster and moved to the town with his family in November 1754. His ministry commenced the following month and continued for forty-three years.

During his time in Leominster Joshua Thomas opened a day-school, partly to supplement the small income he received from the church. It is said that neither this nor his writing distracted from his pastoral duties. Perhaps this was because he rose at five every morning, summer and winter, for fifty years and planned each day with care. Joshua Thomas also travelled regularly to other churches and participated in meetings of the local association of Baptist Churches. He journeyed on horseback, often on dark nights over poor roads and through all kinds of weather, travelling as far afield as Cirencester and Hook Norton.

At the age of seventy-eight it was still usual for Joshua Thomas to preach three times every Sunday. He was still travelling to other churches on horseback at this time. It is understood that the last such journey before Joshua's death took place in either July or August 1797 when he attended the opening of a new Baptist meeting house in Worcester. The last time Joshua preached was five days before he passed away on Friday 25 August 1797, apparently in prayer despite pain, which had begun just six days earlier.

When Joshua Thomas died the church had over 100 members. His son Timothy Thomas also entered the ministry and eventually became the pastor of Devonshire Square Baptist Church in London.

MRS MARY MARLOW

Mrs Mary Marlow was a member of Leominster Baptist Church during the ministry of Joshua Thomas. She was a spinster and her title was apparently one of courtesy. Mary was the daughter of Isaac Marlow, a jeweller from London. Isaac had been persecuted because of his faith in the seventeenth century to such an extent that he took refuge in Holland for a while.

Isaac Marlow attended the Baptist Assembly in London in 1689, but moved to Leominster in 1700, eventually settling in Dilwyn. His daughter was known for her generosity to the poor. Mary's cousin, Jeremiah Marlow died in 1765 leaving her a significant legacy. It was this legacy that made it possible for Mary Marlow to finance an

extension to the graveyard and the construction of the present church building, the Manse, a stable and two almshouses. The almshouses were specifically built for use by the poor of the congregation.

The previous Manse was demolished to provide space for the new buildings and construction began in 1771. The final service in the former meeting house was conducted on 26 July 1772. This was restored to its previous use as a house, but was later dismantled and reportedly reconstructed in the grounds of Lingen Hall.

The official opening of the new church building took place on 28 July 1772 exactly 116 years after the church was founded. The interior was equipped with pews and had two galleries, one of which was later removed. Mary Marlow also made other gifts to the trustees for the support of the ministry in Leominster. These were said to include her father's estate at Dilwyn and certain other properties. Other legacies included:

- The sum of £2 1s 8d (£2.08) yearly for the Baptist Sunday School.
- 13s 10d (sixty-nine pence) to be distributed to the poor of Leominster Baptist Church.
- 13s 10d (sixty-nine pence) to be the distributed to the poor of the town.

Mrs Mary Marlow died in 1778 at the age of eighty-six. She was buried in the church graveyard.

1798-1913

A new pastor was appointed in 1799. Rev Samuel Gilpin came to Leominster fresh from studies at Bristol Academy and stayed at Leominster until 1812 when he moved to Exeter. 1799 also saw the opening of two Sunday school classes. Boys and girls met in separate vestries and thirty children attended each class.

Rev T K Edmonds of Bridgnorth was called to the pastorate in 1813. He served Leominster Baptist Church until his death in 1834. Rev Maurice Jones from Boxmoor in Hertfordshire was the next pastor. He was appointed in 1835 and served until 1846, leaving

Leominster for Tenby. Rev Harris Crasweller was pastor from 1847 until 1855.

The church was served by Rev Thomas Nash from 1856-1877. A previous history states that while Mr Nash served faithfully, he suffered on occasions through misunderstandings. When Thomas Nash retired after twenty-one years' service the church granted him a retirement endowment of £40 per annum, which was paid until he died in 1885.

The church was without a pastor from 1877-1879. During this time pastoral oversight was exercised by Rev J Williams of Hereford. Rev James Smalley of Littleborough was pastor from 1879-1880. Rev John Griffiths from Pontypool served from 1881-1883.

Rev W H Purchase was appointed in 1883. An article by Rev D A Brown originally published in the Leominster News in 1886 stated that *'under the ministry of Rev W H Purchase a great revival took place and along with it the promise of large prosperity.'* This may have been a factor in the refurbishment of the inside of the church soon after the arrival of Mr Purchase. A new school room was built to the rear of the church in 1885. This replaced the existing vestry and cost £200. The service to dedicate the extended church building apparently aroused much interest locally. During 1885 thirty new members were received into membership and the Sunday School was reported to be thriving.

It was also during the ministry of Mr Purchase that a church was planted in the village of Kingsland. It is said that the fellowship in Kingsland developed through the work and preaching of Mr Purchase in the area. Support for the work in Kingsland continued after Mr Purchase left Leominster in 1887. A chapel was built in Shirlheath in 1903. Kingsland was now considered a 'branch church' to Leominster. This relationship continued until 1989 when the Kingsland congregation decided to merge with that of the local Methodist chapel.



The pastor from 1888-1890 was Rev Virgil Edwards. He was followed by Rev Stephen Baker from 1890-91. Mr Baker's two-year old daughter Emma drowned in a cistern believed to be near the present Manse kitchen. She was interred in the burial ground behind the church. Another daughter was born to Mr Baker and his wife just two months later. The tragedy may have contributed to the decision of Mr and Mrs Baker to leave Leominster so soon after their arrival.

The church celebrated its 250th anniversary during the ministry of Rev John Cole which began in 1892 and ended when he retired in 1908. Details of the anniversary celebrations are not known, although it is understood that Mr Cole prepared a short history of the church to mark this occasion.

Rev W Turpitt was appointed in 1908 and served the church until 1910. He was succeeded by Rev C H Watkins who tragically passed away in 1913. There was a further programme of refurbishment in 1911. This involved updating the interior of the church and installing a new baptistry and organ. The cost of the organ was £80. This organ was refurbished in 1961 and sold in 2006 to a church in Cork, Ireland for £1,500 as part of the redevelopment of the church buildings.

1914-1954

1914 was the year that Rev J C Elder of Oswestry settled in the pastorate. It was also the year that Great Britain went to war. For at least part of the war Mr Elder was involved with the YMCA and worked among British troops in France. Mr Elder moved to Birmingham in 1928. It is said that he *'exercised a gracious ministry through which he was highly esteemed throughout the town.'*

Rev A C Durman pastored the church from 1929 until 1936. He was succeeded by Rev A W Smith, who was inducted in 1937 and remained in Leominster until 1944. Service personnel stationed at the Barons Cross Camp added to the congregation during the war years. Rev R J Harper was the next pastor. He arrived in 1944 and spent three years at Leominster Baptist Church.

It is understood that the youth work thrived during the ministry of Mr Harper. Work carried out at the church was supplemented by a 'Young Warriors' group. This was led by Mr and Mrs Fred and Daisy Gurney who gave freely of their time and their home, which was apparently crowded out with young people every Friday. The impact their ministry made is evident in the lives of at least ten members who are still part of Leominster Baptist Church in 2006. At least six members of the Young Warriors entered full time ministry in the 1950s.

Particular mention was made in the previous church history concerning a move of the Holy Spirit in the county of Herefordshire during the ministry of Rev John Eaton. Mr Eaton came to Leominster in 1948 fresh from Manchester Baptist College, having served in the army during the war. John Eaton continued the work with young people that was started by his predecessor. Several present members recall the faithful work of Mr Eaton and the large group of young people that met with him at Leominster Baptist Church for Bible teaching. Others believe that Mr Eaton's work laid the foundations for those who followed and perhaps until the present day.

Rev John Eaton moved from Leominster to Oaklands Baptist Church in Surbiton in 1954. He and his wife last visited Leominster Baptist Church in September 1988. They were serving a church in Essex at this time. John Eaton died in August 1997.

THE LAST FIFTY YEARS – 1956-2006

The 300th anniversary was celebrated in 1956 through a week of special meetings and the dedication of an extension to the school room, which included building a new kitchen. The former garden at the front of the church was converted into a parking area around this time.

The 300th anniversary year was also the year that Rev Frank Lawes became pastor. The previous edition of the church history records that Mr Lawes brought considerable gifts as a *pastor, teacher and*

evangelist, which resulted in outreach to the surrounding villages. He has also been described as *'the complete pastor.'* Mr Lawes was known for using visual aids during his services. He organised evangelistic meetings locally and had a particular heart for the villages close to Leominster.

An evangelistic campaign was organised by Mr Lawes during 1957. An American evangelist contributed to this campaign, which was followed by seventeen baptisms at Leominster Baptist Church in March 1957. Mr and Mrs Lawes left Leominster in 1961 for a pastorate in Scotland. Rev Frank Lawes was still preaching in 1991, the year that he and his wife celebrated their diamond wedding anniversary. Mr and Mrs Lawes both passed away in 1994. One of their sons became a Baptist minister.

Rev Dr Eric Hayden was a 'Bevan boy' who spent the war years working in the mines. He came to Leominster in 1962 having previously ministered in Shrewsbury and at Spurgeon's Tabernacle. Dr Hayden was a prolific writer. An internet search in 2006 revealed almost twenty titles by Dr Hayden including several works on Rev C H Spurgeon, some of which are still available to purchase.

Dr Hayden is remembered as an excellent Bible teacher and a man with a gift for communicating with children, especially during the Sunday morning services. He left Leominster in 1973. Dr Hayden's son Philip followed his father into full-time ministry and was pastor at Ludlow Baptist Church during the 1980s. Sadly, Philip died from cancer.

The church was without a pastor for three years after the departure of Dr Hayden. Rev John Cook then accepted the invitation of the church in 1976. Mr Cook stayed five years and left for Surbiton in 1981. He subsequently returned to Herefordshire and was pastor of Kington Baptist Church for several years, moving there in 1988. Mr Cook then moved back to Leominster and was still preaching around the county in 2006. He celebrated fifty years in ministry during 2001. An anniversary service was held at Putson Baptist Church.

In January 1980 a decision was taken at the church meeting to build new toilets. The cost was estimated at between £5,000 and £9,000. Although the toilets served the church well, they were located

outside the main church building and desperately needed upgrading by the time members agreed to extend the buildings in 2003.

There was a three-year interregnum following John Cook's departure. This ended on 8 December 1984 with the induction of Rev John Dart. The induction service was attended by more than 400 people and was relayed through a television link to the school room, which was used to seat those who could not find space in the church sanctuary.

Other events in 1984 included the internal refurbishment of the church and the appointment of Mr Gordon Lloyd as church secretary. Gordon Lloyd was replaced as church secretary in 1994 by Mr Aubrey Roberts, who was still secretary in 2006. Mr Lloyd continued to serve on the diaconate, serving a total of forty-five years as a deacon, finally retiring in 2002.

The 1984 refurbishment involved the redecoration of the church. Seating in the gallery was altered. New carpeting was fitted in the gallery and to the stairs. Shelving was installed in the vestibule and a text added in bold letters above the pulpit proclaiming 'JESUS CHRIST IS LORD' (Philippians 2:11).

Mr Dart and his wife Margot left Leominster in 1989 to join the Sudan Interior Mission (SIM) where they served together for ten years before retiring to Cardiff. The church was then three years without a pastor. Pulpit ministry during this time was provided by visiting preachers and those from the fellowship with a gift for preaching.

In September 1989 the Sunday School became affiliated with Covenanters. This involved restructuring of groups within the children's work and a commitment to games' evenings, award schemes, rallies, sports' competitions and summer camps. These changes helped numbers to grow and annual returns to the Covenanters' head office showed more than 100 children regularly attending the church during the time that Covenanters remained in existence (the Covenanter organisation is now a department of Youth for Christ). Most significant in the lives of the children and young people were the annual Covenanter camps. For many years more than thirty Covenanters from Leominster Baptist Church attended the summer

camps. Reports given by campers and published in the bi-monthly church magazine showed the impact of these camps on their faith.

Membership fell after the departure of John and Margot Dart and by 1991 there were only eighty-one members. This did not prevent the church from meeting a challenge to give £33,000 required to carry out remedial work to the school room roof, while also extending the kitchen and vestry. This work was completed in time for the church anniversary in October 1990.

On 10 May 1992 Rev Gordon Hill preached at Leominster Baptist Church for the first time. He did not come to preach with a view, but left such an impression on the church that he was asked to return. He was duly invited to the pastorate, accepted God's call, and was inducted on 17 October 1992. Gordon and his wife Jill remained at Leominster Baptist Church until they retired in 1999. A farewell tea was held at Eyton Hall on 29 May 1999. This was followed by a service. The attendance at this service provided clear evidence of the high regard in which Gordon and Jill were held by the church.



Gordon Hill resumes his customary position after the service on a return visit. Note the two poplar trees behind the chapel which have since been removed.

THE HISTORY OF LEOMINSTER BAPTIST CHURCH

It was in 1992 that the church was burgled and the clock stolen. The clock is unique. It bears the name of the clockmaker, John Rogers of Leominster. John Rogers made clocks in the town between 1767-1778 so it is assumed that the clock was installed when the current church building was built in 1772. The clock was known as an 'Act of Parliament Clock' because of the five shillings' tax imposed on all clocks in 1795. The clock was apparently stolen to order, but was recovered by the police in Crewe several years later, shortly before it could be shipped to the USA with other stolen antiques.

Five months after Gordon Hill retired Derek Simpson visited to lead the Harvest services at the church. While preaching Derek heard a clear call from God to become the church's next pastor. At this time Derek was involved in a long-term evangelistic ministry based in Lancashire. Derek remained in contact with the church secretary and was subsequently invited to preach with a view. Soon after this Derek accepted an invitation to join Leominster Baptist Church as pastor and relinquished his previous responsibilities. Derek Simpson's induction took place on 2 September 2000 and is the last chapter in the history of the church to date. During the induction service the vice-principal of Capernwray College conducted Derek's ordination.

The church has much to praise God for in 2006. Membership has increased as new families and individuals have joined the church. Some have given their lives to God in Leominster Baptist Church and been baptised. The church is reaching out with the Gospel in many ways and seeking God's will and guidance in finding new opportunities



The old organ comes out.

to take the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of Leominster and the surrounding villages.

The 350th anniversary sees the completion of the first phase of a major building programme. This has resulted in the addition of three rooms to the side of the church, a new and spacious lobby and, for the first time in the history of Leominster Baptist Church, inside toilets. The main sanctuary of the church has been refurbished and now provides a much more comfortable environment for worship. A new organ has been installed. Although the church is different in appearance both externally and internally to the building constructed in 1771 the message remains the same, **'JESUS CHRIST IS LORD.'**



The new organ sits unobtrusively in the corner of the refurbished interior.

THE HISTORY OF LEOMINSTER BAPTIST CHURCH



Photographs taken in September 2006 after the refurbishment.

APPENDICES

MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH 1656-2006

1656-1660	No settled minister. Mr. Edward Price pastor of Baptist Church, Hereford, often preached.	1879-1880	Rev James Smalley
		1881-1883	Rev John Griffiths
		1883-1887	Rev W H Purchase
		1888-1890	Rev Virgil Edwards
1660-1689	Period of persecution. Local leaders maintained the ministry assisted by itinerant preachers including Mr S Pardoe.	1890-1891	Rev Stephen Baker
		1892-1908	Rev J Cole
		1908-1910	Rev W Turpitt
		1911-1913	Rev C H Watkins
		1914-1928	Rev J C Elder
1690-1702	Mr Edward Price (co-pastor with Hereford).	1929-1936	Rev A C Durman
		1937-1944	Rev A W Smith
1695-1729	Mr Thomas Holder	1944-1947	Rev J R Harper
1731-1749	Mr John Oulton	1948-1954	Rev John Eaton
1750-1753	Rev Rees Evans	1956-1961	Rev Frank Lawes
1754-1797	Rev Joshua Thomas	1962-1973	Rev Eric Hayden
1799-1812	Rev Samuel Kilpin	1976-1981	Rev John Cook
1813-1834	Rev T K Edmonds	1984-1989	Rev John Dart
1835-1854	Rev Maurice Jones	1992-1999	Rev Gordon Hill
1854-1855	Rev Harris Crasweller	2000-	Pastor Derek Simpson
1856-1877	Rev Thomas Nash		
1877-1879	Rev J Williams of Hereford took oversight while the church was without a pastor.		

CALLED TO MINISTRY
FROM LEOMINSTER BAPTIST CHURCH

The Early Years

Very little is known of members called to ministry in the early life of the church. The previous edition of the church history mentions Mr William Steadman of Eardisland. Encouraged by Rev Joshua Thomas, Mr Steadman began his studies at Bristol Academy in 1789. He was ordained at Broughton in Hampshire. He subsequently held a co-pastorate in Plymouth and eventually became a tutor at Bradford College.

1900-1956

The following members of Leominster Baptist Church are known to have entered different ministries:

- Harry Morgan.
- Ivan Waite.
- Dr Evelyn Jones, who joined the Sudan United Mission.
- Rev Geoffrey Morris, who attended Spurgeon's College then served as pastor of several Baptist churches.
- Rev Antoni Kosciecha, who established a radio ministry to Poland.
- Mervyn Bufton.

The Last Fifty Years

A special booklet has been prepared providing detail of members called into ministry between 1956-2006. Their names are:

- Neil Brinkley.
- Rev Bill Kimbery.

- Rev Ralph Davies.
- Rev Ken Newman, now living in Australia.
- Robert Pryce. Service with Mission Aviation Fellowship.
- Steve Pryce. Steve is the son of Gordon and Marion Pryce. Gordon was a deacon of Leominster Baptist Church for many years and also served as treasurer.
- Rev Adrian and Mrs Cath Lloyd. Currently serving at Sandbach Baptist Church. Adrian is the son of Gordon and Peggy Lloyd. Gordon served as deacon of Leominster Baptist Church for forty-five years and as secretary for ten years.
- Nick Welford. Currently youth coordinator at Ebenezer Baptist Church, Scarborough.
- Anna Roberts. Served with the Church Mission Society in Kisiizi, Uganda 2002-2006.
- Paul Kosciecha. Grandson of Antoni Kosciecha. Trained as student pastor at Leominster Baptist Church. Currently pastor of Wellington Chapel, Herefordshire.
- Heather Lloyd. Still serving in Mozambique.
- Richard Mansell. Current student pastor of Leominster Baptist Church.

Many members, but especially young people, have been involved in short term ministry in different parts of the world. In recent years many have joined gap year schemes prior to attending university or starting work. Other members of the church have provided extensive prayer and financial support for these young people.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

Leominster Baptist Church – A Brief History.

Compiled by D J W Lewis with revisions in 1988 and 1996.

The History of Non Conformist Religions in Leominster.

From an article by Rev D A Brown originally published in the Leominster News, 1886 and republished by Leominster Folk Museum in 1997. Available at: www.smr.herefordshire.gov.uk/post-medieval/chapels/history_nonconformists_leo.htm

American History of Wales:

www.annomundi.com/history/american_history_of_wales.htm

The Baptist Confession of Faith:

www.grace.org.uk/faith/bc1689/1689bc00.html

Memoirs of Joshua Thomas.

The Evangelical Magazine, 1798.

