

## **EARLSDON METHODIST CHURCH 1982-89**

A MEMOIR OF THOSE YEARS - Ann Waterhouse  
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Superintendent Minister Coventry Circuit & Minister of Earlsdon Methodist Church

*"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us."  
Heb.12. NIV*

### **EARLSDON: The Church, the People, and a Village Community.**

Whilst this Church building is now 100 years old, Methodism in Earlsdon goes back to around 1880, meeting first in an old weaving shed but always working towards having a purpose-built church in Berkeley Road. According to Mary Montes' splendid book 'Earlsdon Heritage Trail' that was their home for the next 39 years until in 1923, 100 years ago, this church was opened.

There were Clays, Mills and Roberts (and probably others I can't recall) in that old church and those families have continued to be part of Earlsdon into the second and third generation. Today those roots continue with Ros (Roberts) Light, David Mills and Gill (Mills) Weller.

The healthy membership has always been refreshed and invigorated by a steady trickle of people from other parts of the country, and leadership within the church has come from both the old Coventrians and those who came into the area in more recent years.

Earlsdon (EMC) has also been rich in drawing on the gifts and commitment of able and committed leaders from many professions, businesses and crafts, but there never seemed to us to be 'too many Chiefs and not enough Indians' as, at every level, there were able people toiling away including in the less up-front and week-by-week jobs that are part of a large active church.

In the years 1982-89, those faithful leaders were drawn from the world of Medicine, Healing, Social Services including Gillian & Michael Spokes, Judith Cule, Stan Duncombe and Julie Kemp; from Law - David Cule & David Mills; from Education - Judith Bridgeman, Jeannie Goode, David Kershaw, Will & Ros Light, Irene Lomas, David Newcombe; from other professions and the world of business people like David Hindley, Walter & Victor Keene, the Clifford Holt family, plus others from the Civil Service and Local Government, Industry and practical artisans. The church attracted and benefitted from having people with leadership qualities who were willing to serve.

### **EARLSDON LOCAL PREACHERS**

I remember the more senior ones - Walter Keene MBE (accredited 1926), Kathleen Woodward (1954), Nellie Carter (1955) and following on were Celia Evans, David Kershaw and David Newcombe.

An old plan of 1987 also lists Valerie Scott Bennett, Jane Smith and Geoff Donnison joining Earlsdon from another circuit, and thankfully the preaching baton continues to be taken on by members of the church here today.

These LPs were nourished in the worshipping fellowship of Earlsdon but in turn they were able to feed the spiritual life of the circuit.

### **THE WELCOMING FACE OF THE CHURCH**

Earlsdon has been well served by stewards welcoming the worshippers to the service every Sunday. There are too many to recall them all but Jim Mills was one who fulfilled this important role in the life of the church. And even before a worshipper got into the building they were met by Rhodarick King, the first face they got to know at Earlsdon. More than one new family to the church in the 1980s told us that they wanted to become part of

Earlsdon from the moment they met and were welcomed by Rhod. He was there in position every week and in every weather, and his presence blessed the church.

### **THOSE WHO MADE MUSIC TO THE GLORY OF GOD.**

**THE CHOIR AND ORGANISTS.** The Choir had a good balance of voices including, of course, Hilary Hindley, and they led the singing of the hymns every week and were kept in good voice by Irene Lomas. The organ seat was occupied by two very able organists of very different styles - Will Light and Ella Wright who loved syncopation!

**OTHERS** who offered their musical talents were Ros Light and Heather Mills with their distinctly different beautiful solo voices.

And a brief mention of **DAYSRING STEEL BAND** which started in 1981 when Dr John Sampson was the minister and Brian Scott had the vision and enthusiasm.

In our time Brian and Valerie, David and Heather, and a sizeable team of workers including Bessie and Julia Price and some band members parents, were all a necessary part as the instruments, the bus, the costumes and the fund raising, needed a lot of people in supporting roles. Together with the youngsters, from small beginnings, Dayspring quickly became a loved part of this church and well-known in the Steel Band community.

Steve Fox was a member from the earliest days.

### **THE PEOPLE:**

This piece started off gently but it became unruly and got out of hand.

Initially I wanted to mention a few of our **OLDER** members who blessed John's ministry with their wisdom, vitality and support, but, like Topsy, this list kept growing and I had to break free in the end! Now in my mid-80s I appreciate them even more and they have become to me part of that 'Great Cloud of Witnesses' urging us on.

People like **NELLIE CARTER**, Mayfield Road, and **EDITH SMITH**, Aston Road and St Andrews, two Earlsdon **CENTENARIANS**, although there may have been more.

**NELLIE CARTER** was very active in the 1980s - preaching regularly, and I think was the Church Treasurer, and had a real interest and commitment to the youth work in the church. She was a person willing to take responsibility and run with it.

After our time Nellie and Eric Roberts, both long-standing members, unlocked the church doors when the redevelopment work had been completed, and later again the church honoured her with a surprise party on her 100th birthday.

**MRS EDITH SMITH** was living in St Andrew's on her 100th birthday but when John first visited her in Aston Road he found the 97-year old gently gardening. Her great delight and love was in singing and in her younger days she had been known as Madame Radford, as was customary in musical circle in those days. Forty years on, she liked to remember that she had been singing a solo in the old Cathedral only a month before it was bombed.

We arrived at St. Andrew's on her birthday when the residents were still having breakfast, and the telegram from the Queen arrived shortly afterwards, which meant all the residents shared in the joy of the telegram. Shortly after she took us down to her room wanting to escape being with all 'those old people with their walking frames and sticks'.

People like **JEANNIE GOODE**, **SUSIE & TOM TOPPS**, and their friend **DAVID**.

If I wrote a book about them it would be called 'Four Octogenarians have another Adventure' as one of the delights of Earlsdon was sharing the joy of the friendship of Jeanne Goode and her sister Susie, Susie's husband Tom and their friend David. It seemed to me that, at the drop of the hat, they would pile into David's car and set off on another holiday or simply a day out.

When Lorraine Wills died in Wales, Jeannie was one of those who went to her funeral.

After we had moved on we heard of Jeannie's death and sent our sympathy to Susie and Tom Topps, and I still have Susie's delightful reply in which she wrote of her special relationship with her sister throughout her long life and the great loss she felt, and spoke of Tom's wonderful understanding of the love the sisters had for each other.

Many at Earlsdon will remember Jeannie as the indubitable leader of the Wednesday Fellowship who treated us like her children and her pupils, firmly and lovingly.

People like ELSIE TOMLINSON

Elsie was a choir member and a member of one of the Women's meetings.

On a visit to her lovely home in Lincroft Crescent, she once told us how they had bought the house. Fred had been invited to become a Church Trustee and realised that the Trustees were personally responsible for any debt the church could not meet. A very serious undertaking for a family man. They talked and prayed about it before he accepted and, from then on, regularly banked money to meet such a calamity.

The money was never required for that purpose and, when Trustees' responsibilities were redefined, they had money to buy a house, which she was still enjoying.

Well before our time, Elsie and Fred had been the life and soul of the Carol Singing Party which set out each Christmas to travel around the local community, before ending up in their house. It was still remembered warmly many years later.

Elsie's son Robin wrote to us after her death. He recalled her stamina and zest for life, and her benign and positive influence. He said she had a merry heart and a generous one, and that her heart invariably ruled her head. And even when she was very poorly and sometimes confused she retained her faith in human nature and continued to value people as individuals with their own histories and qualities.

People like CELIA EVANS

Celia, whose terrace house on the busy Berkeley Road had the atmosphere of a quiet country cottage. When an American Methodist minister on holiday in England died suddenly in the Cathedral, John became involved in helping his widow Bonnie, and Celia was the person he turned to for help. She cared for Bonnie whilst all the necessary business of a death was conducted and eventually Bonnie was able to fly home with the tour party.

Celia was the perfect hostess for Bonnie as she had had two experiences within her family of a similar proportions. Celia and Bonnie were both quiet gifted people, teachers I think, music-lovers, pianists, and Celia's care for her was wonderful and perfect for the situation.

People like JOAN and ERIC ROBERTS,

with their very interesting lives and lively personalities. In retirement Eric continued his love affair with Coventry City whilst Joan enjoyed her painting. They were very hospitable and an invitation to play croquet on their lawn was a delightful treat.

Eric's roots went back to the old church, and Joan first came to the area to visit her grandfather when he was minister at Earlsdon.

Eric was very busily involved with the weekly Day Centre.

People like LORRAINE WILLS,

who was a very active part of the life of the church for decades. Lorraine lost her husband around the time of his retirement and then some years later became rather poorly herself and eventually, with no family locally, returned to live near her siblings in Wales.

Below is an extract from her last meeting with the Wednesday Fellowship;

"We have all been conscious that this is the last time Lorraine will be sharing with us as a Member of this meeting. One of my favourite incidents from Children's Fiction tells of Pollyanna, the daughter of a minister, who longed for a new doll for Christmas but when it

came to it the only thing her parents had left after they had distributed gifts to the Parish children was a pair of crutches. Crutches! Not the longed for doll.

Earlier her father had taught her to find gladness in everything - this was a tough one but he had taught her well and she expressed her gladness that 'she didn't need them'!

So tonight on this occasion let us like Pollyanna find reasons to BE GLAD even as we say goodbye to Lorraine as she moves back to Wales:

GLAD - she came here forty-three years ago, and became very much part of our church;

GLAD - she joined this meeting at its very beginning and with Winifred [Holt] is the sole remnant of those beginnings;

GLAD - that she, along with Winifred, was able to take up a position of leadership within the meeting in due course;

GLAD - for the services she has poured into our church, in the name and strength of her Lord, with her ministry of caring and her professional skills of floral art;

GLAD - she is returning to her home area and family because we know that this move is making all of them very glad."

AND THERE ARE EVEN MORE OF OUR OLDER PEOPLE I REMEMBER AND RESPECTED:

JESSIE AND STANLEY ALLCOCK, transferred to EMC when Ryton chapel closed, but a monthly Methodist service continued to be held in the ancient parish church. John enjoyed the services and the hospitality from both the Vicar and his wife and the Allcocks. Earlsdon shared in their joy when their son Keith became a Professor of Cybernetics.

DORA APPLETON, a faithful church member who was blessed by the love and support of her granddaughter Heather Mills and David. Dora enjoyed her afternoon cup of tea from a Minton teacup, saucer and plate, gifts from Heather's step-mother, with the instruction that they were 'for use, not for the china cupboard'.

EDITH and TOM BROMWICH, loyal members. When we left Coventry they gave us a cutting of a large geranium and, thirty-four years later, it continues to thrive and measures about 5 x 4 feet and completely fills our bathroom window sill; (*If anyone is passing and would like a cutting please pop in! We have two healthy specimens ready to go!*)

HUBERT CLAY and his wife. Hubert's roots went back to the old Methodist church and both he and his wife died during the 1980s after a lifetime of service. I seem to remember they were part of the old Earlsdon Methodist Tennis Club, or do I?;

HILDA and BILL EYRES were very loyal church members related to the Clays;

MARIE HAVARD who eventually, with good grace and hopefulness, moved into a residential home on Leamington Road, was supported by Hilary and David Hindley with great affection for many years;

LILY JAMES, who came to Coventry from the Isle of Wight, met her husband when they were both young prison visitors on the IoW, and they continued to serve the community and church throughout their lives. Their daughter married Susie and Tom Topps' son and I used to take Lily to the Railway station when she visited them. On one occasion, the usual means of reaching the far platform was not available and we found ourselves going there by train in the goods compartment of a diesel coach, going out from one platform, down-line before coming up into the other platform. It was a happy memory we loved to recall.

MARY and WALTER KEENE were gently enjoying a rich and gracious retirement in the 1980s after a busy and thoroughly interesting family, church, business and travelling life, and their contribution to the leadership of our church was exemplary;

ERIC and IRENE LOMAS. Irene was still very busy teaching and involved in many aspects of church life but Eric had had to stand down. John loved meeting this fellow Yorkshireman who loved to share his musical knowledge and revelled in vigorous conversation.

GWEN, ALAN and DAVID NEWCOMBE. David was a popular headteacher and a well-received local preacher, and the community struggled with news of his early death.

DOUG SMITH cared beautifully and lovingly for his housebound wife, including looking after her cosmetic needs, face and nails. They delighted in their son Fraser's ministry;

And I remember many other older friends like Winifred Cousins, Maggie Cross, Winifred & Vincent Edwards of Mayfield Road, Ellen Llewellyn, Alice Marfleet, Jim Mills, Winnie Moore, Jean Naismyth a real treasure, Chris Parnell's mother, Elizabeth Reed, Doris Wood, Kathleen Woodward, Emily Young.

### **THE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP AND FAMILY COMMUNITY.**

I was planning to briefly name here those had not been mentioned already, but that plan also went awry. So here alphabetically are some of those that are remembered with affection and thankfulness.

EDDIE and MARGARET BIRTLES came from the Lake District and Eddie was Church Treasurer. Their daughter Ruth Winters and her family also became part of EMC.

JOHN and CONNIE CAREY were very active and John followed Eddie Birtles as Treasurer.

JUDITH and DAVID CULE, Susannah and Christopher. David the most English of Welshmen, and Judith from north of Birmingham came and served EMC with full commitment and were very busy and active in our years. Who can forget the famous Board Game Party one Christmas which burst the seams of their home?

VALERIE and STAN DUNCOMBE, Victoria, Christopher and Robert. I think Valerie gave admin help at St Andrew's House at one time and Stan was a great help to John when John's back gave way one Christmas Day and he generously continued to treat John in his clinic on Rochester Road him until we moved on. Valerie and Stan came with us on Pilgrimage to Turkey in 1997 but Valerie already coping with her cancer condition.

MAISIE FILDES, and daughter Carol Webb, and granddaughter Amanda quietly loyal and regular in their attendance.

HILARY and CHRIS FISHER and their two delightful daughters, Julie and Vivienne, were a lovely part of EMC life.

JOYCE KIRKALDIE and her husband who had been a professional footballer. It was encouraging to visit them when Joyce's mother was living and blooming in old age despite poor health because Joyce made sure her room and appearance were always impeccable. A very loved lady.

THE GALLARD CLAN. Len & Iris, Robert & Lyn, Barry & Carol. How splendidly they contributed to the church in the 1980s. As a vestry steward, in Scouting, and so much more. Carol & Barry, resident caretakers, lived next door, an unheard luxury these days.

FREDA and LEN HANSON. Regular in worship. Freda held office in a women's meeting.

DR WILF and ANN HAWES and family.

THE HOLT FAMILY. Sadly in the seven years we were at EMC Winifred developed a very debilitating condition and Herbert Clifford died suddenly one Sunday having been at church in the morning. They had served so well when they were able and their great contribution to the church was always recognised and appreciated. Their only daughter Mary and Peter, one of their sons, and his family were also part of the church at that time.

MARGARET HORROCKS, a regular attendee and respected headteacher.

MARJORIE LEWIN was a loyal member and secretary of one of the women's groups. John met Marjorie and her husband before he had been officially welcomed into the circuit, because of the death of their married daughter who lived nearby.

MURIEL and BILL MILLS. Gave unlimited service to this church and the circuit. When John needed feet to wash in a Maundy Thursday service, the feet which starred belonged to stewards Muriel and Len (Gallard), who found it an unbelievably moving experience.

Muriel and Bill also hosted a Bible Study group and it was high-powered as it included their near-neighbours, Rev Morrill & Dr Olive Mayall of Woodside Avenue Church.

KAY and ERNIE O'NEIL Kay held a key office which she carried out with great efficiency, but I'm not sure what and can only think it might have been bookings clerk.

DRS GILLIAN and MICHAEL SPOKES, Elizabeth, David and Helen, probably the busiest household John ever visited. Three bright children of school ages with numerous hobbies and sports interests who needed an in-house taxi service, yet somehow Mike still had the energy and creativity to rally the troops to put on the annual Bazaar, and when Andrew Vidamour set an Easter poetry competition, Mike wrote the winning poem, with 10-year old Helen writing the only, but excellent, poem in the Junior section.

DIANE (nee CLAY) and GORDON THOMAS, Diane's artistic talents were enjoyed by the congregation down the years.

JILL and TIM WELLER, Katie and Louise. Yet another of our fully-committed younger families who quietly got on with it and continue to do so.

WENDY and NICK WINCH, Michelle and Martin, the most modest and able of people who were (and are) a real asset to EMC.

TOM WRIGHT, husband of Ella one of the church organists, was circuit steward during the 1980s. Ella's housebound mother lived with them for many years.

I was privileged to be one of their dog-walkers when Tom had his major heart surgery.

I could speak of others but space and time does not permit.

Alice Hodgkinson, Mary Johnson, Rhod King's wife Doreen, the Moore family including mother Winnie, son Noel and daughter Kay O'Neil, Bertha & Samuel McLure, Joan & Maurice Nurser, Ivy Ramsey and family, Eunice Smith and Rachel Smith, Valerie Spencer, Maud Spicer, Peter Stidworthy, Gwyneth Stott and family, Gladys Swann, Edna Tolley, Sheila Tuckwell and family, Marjorie Wilson, Emily Young.

### **THOSE WHO CARED FOR THE CHILDREN**

Throughout the 1980s the **Sunday School** and the uniformed organisations were there to look after the needs of some of the children in the church and community. My memory suggests that some of those who served in this way may have been Victor Keene, Bill Mills, Chris Parnell, Bob Timms. Judith Bridgeman, Judith Keene, Wendy Winch with the younger children and, possibly, Heather Mills and Wilf Hawes with the older ones. Apologies for my omissions!

I have even fewer memories of the **Scouts & Cubs, and Brownies** but Len, Robert and Barry Gallard (Cubs) were heavily involved in Scouting (43rd Coventry Air Scouts), with Margaret Deeley, Allison McGuinness and Lyn Gallard leading the Beavers.

### **THE GRAPEVINE magazine**

A circuit magazine was launched in 1987 and I was happy to help the editor, Andrew Vidamour, the Circuit lay worker, in the production of the seven issues published before we left the circuit in 1989, when Mary Montes and Celia Evans took on the task.

ISSUE 1 included:

A welcome for the David family from Sri Lanka.

Carole and Barry Gallard becoming members.

Nick Winch, Ernie and Edna Hawthorne winning the Guild Car Treasure Hunt. again.

The marriage of Diana and Gordon Thomas.

Will Keene graduating with an Honours Degree.

Victor Keene reporting on attending Conference.

ISSUE 7 Easter 1989 included:

news that six loyal members had died since the previous newsletter: Vincent Edwards, Ernie Hawthorn, Eric Lomas, Muriel Mills, and Grace and Ernest Redfern, who lived in St Andrews Home, died within months of each other after 66 years of marriage,.

## **METHODIST MINISTERS WITH EMC CONNECTIONS**

I have limited knowledge of members of Earlsdon becoming ministers but Fraser Smith, the son of Doug Smith of Dorney Close, has now retired after a full service of ministry. Down the years quite a few have known of clergy life through family members: Ros Light's mother Joan Roberts first came to the area to visit her grandfather, the Rev Samuel Goodyer, who was the minister at Earlsdon 1916-21, and Joan met Eric Roberts; the Rev Eardley B Stringer, grandfather of Jill Weller, was the minister for most of WWII, and his daughter Muriel met Bill Mills during that time; and Clifford Holt was proud to be the son of a highly regarded Methodist minister. Finally, Anni Louth's father had been a German Lutheran Pastor, and Mrs Anna Moravek's annual visits were a special delight not least for her granddaughter Evelyn. One such visit followed Mrs Moravek's attendance at a Conference in Stuttgart for Clergy Wives and she graciously wrote two pieces about it for The Grapevine. All those named above brought some of their personal experience of the life of a minister with them when they became part of EMC. Jill and Anni are still part of the church.

## **WARWICK UNIVERSITY STUDENTS at EMC**

From time to time the congregation has welcomed and enjoyed students from the University being part of the church family and there were several in the 1980s. The only one we kept in touch with was HELEN RHEA from Darlington who began her training as a Local Preacher in the Circuit before becoming a Methodist Minister. She is now serving as a Mental Health Chaplain in the Sheffield Circuit.

## **CHURCH FAMILY MEMBERS FROM BEYOND THESE ISLANDS.**

1. From Nigeria, JULIE KEMP. Relying on my memory, I think Julie was a nurse from Nigeria, and I seem to remember that she regularly went back to Africa when the very-British Julia became a very-African Julie as she once again took up her position as a benevolent village elder.

2. From Sri Lanka to New Zealand, via Coventry.

SHARMALA and MICHAEL DAVID and Rahila, came from Sri Lanka before moving to New Zealand when their application for work permits in the UK was not granted.

This lovely family was part of our congregation in the late 1980s when Michael was studying for his MBA at the University of Warwick. They are now citizens of New Zealand, have had highly successful careers often in Law and Government circles, and Rahila, who was about four when they left Coventry, is similarly engaged and has an executive role in Australia.

They visited us several times after John's stroke, including a memorable visit to King's College, Cambridge.

Around Easter time I told them of the Centenary and, In an email, Sharmala, who continues to be a church organist, wrote:

*Yes we have fond memories of our time at Earlsdon. The friendship and the generosity of the members made us very comfortable during those 2 years in Coventry. It felt like family. We remember some families. The Cules have visited us here in NZ and vice versa. We have stayed in contact with you, David and Judith.*

*The picture of the church brings back lots of memories. Morning Coffees, The Steel Band and the Sunday School with lots of activities, wonderful teachers. Rahila had to be dragged out at the end of the services as she was having such a great time!*

*Living in a new country, it was wonderful to visit your homes and enjoy such great hospitality and friendship.*

*Thank you for including us in your Recollections of the Earlsdon Church  
With Warmest Wishes as Earlsdon Celebrates.*

*Sharmala and Michael. Wellington, New Zealand.*

## **OTHER WORK BASED AT EMC.**

**1. CROSSROADS.** In the 1980s this valuable work had its office on our premises and, to this day, owes much to the hard work and inspiration of Joan Sampson.

It was our introduction to this wonderful caring agency and later we benefitted from it when John, after his stroke, had a regular weekly carer which gave Ann and Penny two hours off-duty every week for nine years.

We loved the breather but not half as much as John loved his two hours every Thursday morning and she was the perfect carer for John and, over the years, they were able to help and bless each other. We had no idea when she first came in January 2004 that she was returning back to work after an equally devastating family death which had happened around the same time as John's stroke and even when conversation was almost impossible for him, he could listen, and she was glad to talk about her family heartache. At first hand we came to know of the value of the caring work of Crossroads and the great sensitivity of pairing carers with clients.

When Joan Sampson moved on to new pastures in 1982, Vivienne Kershaw carried on with the same caring professionalism.

## **2. EARLSDON DAY CENTRE FOR PHYSICALLY HANDICAPPED PEOPLE**

This excellent piece of social service was based at our church and many of our people were involved in it week-by-week. My memory tells me that Eric Roberts was very involved with this Day Centre.

## **CHURCHES TOGETHER**

In the 1980s, St Barbara's was cared for splendidly by the Rev Martin Lofts who, with his wife Valerie, ministered to the parish and parishioners with great love. John never had a better Anglican colleague. The ecumenical activities, especially during Lent with both Lunches and Classes, were very good, and the local Council of Churches joined together in Holy Week with a Procession of Witness linking Hearsall Common and Earlsdon churches.

## **ST ANDREW'S HOUSE Residential home for older people**

From the earliest days, Earlsdon members were involved in this special place of caring. And in our time, that meant regular visiting by some of the members, sharing in the Sunday afternoon worship each month, and being involved in the committee work and in practical support. Down the years, many of our members have been comforted by the care they received there when they could no longer maintain their independence at home.

The home was opened in 1956 and I think it was at the initiative of the Women's section of the Free Church federal Council shortly after WWII.

It seems to me it is in good hands as the Chair of Trustees is Kenneth Holmes, well-known and regarded at Earlsdon, and David Mills is also a Trustee.

EMC 1982-89 EMC >> << EMC 1982-89 EMC >> << EMC 1982-89 EMC

*It is forty years since we moved to Coventry and I apologise for the things I have misremembered, the things I have totally forgotten, and sincerely hope there is nothing included which should not have been mentioned. Please be assured I did not keep written notes on you all when we were there! I have relied on my very good memory, an old copy of a Community Roll and miscellaneous bits and pieces.*

*It has been written with great affection and respect and is sent with love.*

*Ann Waterhouse, Norfolk, June 2023*

## **A BRIEF CHRONOLOGICAL HISTORY OF THE YEARS 1982-89**

**1982** The Waterhouses came from t'North with great expectations.

**1983** The church celebrated its DIAMOND JUBILEE.  
HYMNS & PSALMS was launched, the second new book since Methodist Union.

**1984** Unlike George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four, ours was a thoroughly interesting and fulfilling year at Earlsdon!

**1985** The annual METHODIST CONFERENCE was held in Birmingham District with the Chairman of the District, Rev Chris Hughes Smith, becoming President. This year, 2023, Conference will once again be in the Birmingham District and the Ordination services will be in Coventry Central Hall and the Cathedral.

**1986.** A METHODIST PASTORAL EXCHANGE took place when the Rev Lowen Kruse came to Earlsdon from America, and a church with 2,700 members, to Earlsdon, with approx.150 members which was big in British terms. We spent an interesting and enjoyable six weeks sharing life with folk at First United Methodist Church, Omaha, Nebraska.

Thankfully Lowen and John included their wives in the Exchange but left their pets in residence - Beth at 3 Beechwood Avenue and Rascal, a terrier, in Omaha.  
Fourteen years later Lowen was elected a State Senator in Nebraska [2000-08].

**1987** CHURCH RETREAT at Offchurch was a most worthwhile time of discovery and fellowship, but it had an unusual recreational moment when some of those at the Retreat gathered together to watch something important on TV! We shouted together and urged Coventry on to win the FA Cup.  
A happy memory of a shared activity from our Coventry days.

**1988** October. HOLY LAND PILGRIMAGE. Iris and Len Gallard joined us on Pilgrimage and Len read the Scriptures at our Sunday service, standing in front of a large window. Beyond him we could see the expanse of the Sea of Galilee. I know he found it a very moving experience.

November/December. The church suffered a big loss with the deaths of Clifford Holt and Muriel Mills, both children of ministers and their funerals were just a month apart. They had served the church faithfully to the end and they left a large gap.

**1989** It was time to move on but our time with you had stretched, challenged and enriched us, and gave us many friends and good memories.