

CHAPTER 14

A lively ministry, Rev. David Buckle (1963 - 1966)

Although their periods of service had been well received, recent ministers had notably been quite elderly and members began to feel deeply that the next appointment should be for a much younger person. It was thought that this would invigorate the church life.

The pendulum of opinion swung so much that a college student (Mr. David Buckle) was considered and then called to the pastorate.

The arrangement agreed was somewhat unusual. Mr. Buckle, described as a 'student pastor', was inducted to the pastorate on 3rd August 1963 and ordained on 27th November 1964, but he continued studying at Cheshunt College until June 1965.

During this period he married a young lady whom he had met as a student, but who had hardly any church background. They lived in the manse and early in their married life adopted a little boy.

The period of ministry proved very invigorating and a number of new developments began to take place. The churches at Fowlmere and Thriplow had experienced a very weakening period from 1960 onwards, during which they had relied upon a succession of brief student pastorates. Their relationship to each other was similar to that between Great Chishill and Barley.

Mr. Buckle indicated his willingness to serve as their minister also, the pastorate becoming a pair of twin-churches (or four congregations). This proposal was accepted by all members in April 1964. Mr. Buckle's Ordination Service reflected this extended scope.

A pattern of Services was evolved such that with Morning and Evening Services, over two Sundays

Mr. Buckle would conduct a Service in each church once a fortnight. A Communion Service would be held in one of the churches each Sunday.

Mr. Buckle was tall, likeable and lively. He had great appeal to young people, being of such a different age from previous ministers, and it was 'open house' at the manse for young people after each Evening Service. He enjoyed visiting his congregations, and was equally at ease with and liked by elderly members. Many were pleased to offer him hospitality, and it was noted that he had an overwhelming fondness for cauliflower cheese.

In a nation-wide context, intense discussion had centred upon the nature of the Congregational Union of England and Wales, of which Great Chishill and Barley were member churches.

It was increasingly felt that a Union of independent churches, each responsible for its own affairs, did not properly describe the growing interdependence, and that a more cohesive term was required. On the other hand, there was jealous regard for the freedom of each local church to order its own life.

A solution which attracted growing support was that member churches should willingly sign a 'covenant' with each other, and this would be the basis of a new 'Congregational Church in England and Wales'. At the same time, the members of each local church were encouraged to enter into a covenant with each other. Great Chishill and Barley followed the lead of the great majority of churches and signed the nation-wide covenant on 6th January 1966.

Mr. Buckle moved to a new pastorate in Cheshunt in September 1966, and with his wife Joan and son went as missionaries to Papua from August 1972 until 1977, when they moved to a church in Australia.