

Pontefract Congregational
Church
Church Handbook

(revised November 2019)

A vision for the life and mission of the church

The church's vision for life and mission is broadly set-out in scripture and we are committed to that. How we work that out in practice can and will change according to our context.

To help focus our thinking and praying as a church we have expressed our vision and mission in this way:

- Our vision is to be a growing church - growing in numbers through conversions and growing as disciples of Jesus Christ.
- Our mission is to 'let them see Jesus' - in the gospel we speak, in the lives we share and in good deeds that savour of Jesus; witnessing to Jesus in the power of the Spirit to the glory of God the Father.

What kind of church are we?

That's a very good question! Churches 'come in all shapes and sizes', which in many ways is a lovely testimony to the God who has filled his creation with beautiful diversity. But each church will naturally have a number of distinctives; what are ours?

A gospel-declaring church We believe it is vital that men, women and children hear the good news about Jesus, that they might believe in him and be saved. We want to take every opportunity to make him known.

A gospel-defined church We also believe that it is the gospel of Jesus that equips and grows us for Christian life and service. Above all else, we want to be a church that loves God with heart, soul, mind and strength and that loves our neighbours as ourselves, in the power of his Spirit and for the glory of our Lord Jesus.

Our emphases Acts 2:42 speaks about the early church devoting themselves to the apostles doctrine, to their common life together, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. We want to allow their example to instruct and shape our own life as a church. Within that, the following sections are broadly descriptive of our life and practice as a church.

How is the church governed?

We are a congregational church, which means that final authority in all matters rests with the church members, as together we look to the Lord to give us

wisdom and to guide us by his Spirit, through his Word.

However, the church members set aside elders (including full-time ministers) and delegate authority to them to lead the church in its life and ministry. The church also sets aside deacons to oversee many of the practical aspects of church life.

As trustees, the elders have legal responsibility for the life and ministries of the church.

Some matters will always be brought to the church meeting for decision, such as the calling of elders; in other matters, the elders may choose to ask the church for their views and insights, in order to better lead the church. Other matters will simply be dealt with by those the church has authorised to handle them.

Worship in the church

The worship of God is at the heart of the Christian life and the life of the church. It is a wonderful privilege and can be a compelling testimony to those who do not yet know the Lord Jesus.

We are blessed to have a small group of musicians who help us to express our worship to God in song. The songs we sing are a mixture of old and new; generally, the musical accompaniment has a contemporary flavour but without style being a dominating factor.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Baptism As a church, we practice both believers' baptism and paedo-baptism (the baptism of infants of Christian parents). This recognises the variety of views that may be held in good conscience by members of the church. Believers' baptism is usually by full immersion; however, other modes may be used depending on circumstances.

Baptism is not a requirement for church membership but we would strongly encourage all to seriously consider the Bible's teaching on baptism.

Lord's Supper Regarding the Lord's Supper, we have what is often referred to as an 'open' table - that is, all who profess faith in Jesus are welcome to share the meal with us, whether or not they have been baptised and whether they are church members or not. Visitors who are believers in Jesus are also

very welcome to share the meal with us.

We see the Lord's table as a memorial meal, where we remember that the Lord Jesus gave his body and shed his blood for us. It is a precious time of fellowship with him in his presence. We don't believe that there is any material change in the bread and wine. Our general practice is to share in this meal on a weekly basis, in the latter part of most Sunday morning services and monthly in the evening.

Serving the Lord in his church

Service in the church is open to all Christians who are in committed fellowship with the church, whether members or not, and whose lifestyle and conduct commend the Lord Jesus to others. For some ministries it is necessary for safeguarding checks to be carried-out.

We encourage every member to pray about how they might serve the Lord in and through the ministries of the church. We would love to talk to you about how we could best support and encourage you in doing so.

The church and prayer

One of the ways we can engage in the life of the church and its mission is through prayer. There are several opportunities in every week for members to do that but we would especially encourage you, where possible, to make a priority of the church prayer meetings and housegroups.

These are precious times where we can grow in fellowship as we express our delight in the Lord and our dependence upon him.

The Lord Jesus encourages us to pray by teaching that we come to God as our Father in heaven, dearly-loved and fully accepted in his Son. It is a huge blessing to call upon such a loving, gracious Father. We want to help one another to make the most of that privilege.

Supporting the church through financial giving

The church and its ministries are financed through the faithful and generous giving of its members. These are the only funds we receive, along with reclaimed income tax via gift aid. To be able to support the Lord's work in this way is a privilege and a joy.

2 Corinthians 8:9 speaks of giving as part of our response to the lavish grace of Jesus that we have received. That same passage teaches that our giving is:

- a privilege (8:4)
- a gift to the Lord (8:5)
- an expression of overflowing joy in the Lord (8:2; 9:7)
- a response to the grace of Jesus (8:9)
- to be generous (8:2; 9:6)
- entirely voluntary (8:8; 9:7)
- according to what a person has (8:12)
- in faith that God will supply our needs (9:8-11)

You can give to the work of the church in several ways: by monthly standing order or bank transfer, by cheque or cash donations via the offering boxes in the church, or online at give.net (there is also a mobile app for this service). Where it is possible to gift aid your donation, that is a great help.

We are so thankful for the generous way that members and friends support the life of the church through the grace of giving.

Caring for each other

The expression of care for one another within the church is a clear and consistent emphasis of the New Testament.

We want to encourage mutual care within the church in a host of ways, believing that this is a great blessing to the church and a clear and compelling testimony to the world about the love of Jesus.

Spiritual gifts

The Lord Jesus gifts his people through his Spirit for the good of his church and we rejoice in that. We are conscious that there are a variety of views within the church more broadly over the continuation and expression of certain gifts mentioned in the New Testament. That breadth of opinion is reflected in this church, too.

It would be both distressing and ironic if those differing views led to contention within the church. As such, we aim to focus our attention on those gifts that

most build up the church and that are recognised by all as being of vital importance.

Sexuality and marriage

As a church, our approach to issues of marriage and sexuality is to try to be both clear and compassionate - clear in what the Bible teaches, compassionate in how we pastor people. We welcome and extend love to all people.

Marriage The Bible teaches us that marriage is a gift of God in creation, a holy mystery in which man and woman become one flesh. It is God's purpose that, as husband and wife give themselves to each other in love throughout their lives, they should be united in that love as Christ is united with his Church.

Marriage is given, that husband and wife may comfort and help each other, living faithfully together in need and in plenty, in sorrow and in joy. It is given, that with delight and tenderness they may know each other in love, and, through the joy of their bodily union, may strengthen the union of their hearts and lives. It is given as the foundation of family life in accordance with God's will, to his praise and glory.

Divorce It is our conviction that the Bible teaches that marriage is between a man and a woman and is a commitment that is made until death. We recognise, with great sadness, that marriages at times end through divorce, for a variety of reasons. We will do all we can to support and encourage appropriate reconciliation where marriages are struggling and to provide ongoing pastoral support in the event of divorce.

Sexuality Regarding sexuality, we believe the Bible teaches that all sexual relations outside marriage are wrong and fall short of God's intention for humanity. We acknowledge the need to pastor people with wisdom and sensitivity who are struggling with issues of sexual and gender identity and sexual practice. Our great desire is for all people to know the love and acceptance of God in Jesus Christ, evidenced in and through the church.

Experiencing same-sex attraction is not, in itself, a bar to church membership nor to service within the church, where the person in question is seeking to live a celibate life.

Why membership? Is it a biblical requirement?

No, there is nothing in the Bible that mandates a system of church membership. We are made full members of the one family of God only and solely through faith in Jesus Christ. Nothing can add to that and nothing is to be allowed to take away from it. Church membership does not signify greater acceptance within the family of God. If church membership ever gives that impression then it has taken away from the work of Jesus and is to be opposed (as Paul opposed Peter in Galatians 2).

We are committed to the full pastoral care of all who are regularly part of the worshipping family of God at Finkle Street, whether they are formally members or not. We will not treat them as lesser members of God's family and will not withhold from them opportunities to serve the Lord and his people, as appropriate.

So what is membership of a local church for? It is primarily a help in the ordering of church life and government. It helps us administratively but, more importantly, it allows each member to share in the responsibility for the direction and mission of the church, through decisions made at members meetings, where together we seek to know the mind of Christ. Such decisions will include (from time to time) the calling of ministers, elders and deacons, the use of the church's funds and many other practical matters.

A system of membership is also important in the sad but occasionally-necessary matter of church discipline, whereby a person might be suspended or expelled from membership in accordance with biblical principles of discipline.

What is expected of church members?

Those who become church members are committing themselves to:

- live in such a way as to honour God;
- to support the church financially, as able to do so;
- to pray for its life and ministries;
- to attend church services and other meetings, as able to do so;
- to love and care for others in the church.

When membership ends

Usually, a person's membership will end when they move away and become part of another church. It may also be that membership is ended when a

person chooses to no longer be in regular fellowship with the church. Membership may also cease as a consequence of church discipline.

So how do I become a church member?

We're delighted that you're thinking and praying about church membership. We value that additional expression of commitment to the life of the church. Membership is open to all who are clear in their commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour and who are seeking to live so as to please and honour him.

The next step is to mention to one of the elders that you'd like to talk about church membership. We'll then arrange for a couple of elders to meet with you. The purpose of that discussion is to allow you to ask any questions you have and for us to make sure you feel comfortable with the character and direction of the church and how it is being led.

After that, those elders who met with you will talk with the other elders and make a recommendation regarding your request for church membership. If that is agreed, it will then be reported to the next full meeting of the church members, following which you would be welcomed into membership at the next convenient Sunday morning service.

Appendix 1: What we believe

About the Bible :

The Bible, both Old Testament and New Testament, is God breathed even in its details. Consequently all of it is to be believed, obeyed, defended and respected. These scriptures are the only infallible writings on earth and therefore must be our only rule of faith. The teachings of men are only true where they agree with the whole teaching of the Scriptures.

God who inspired the Bible has revealed Himself in it so that He may be known.
See: 2 Tim. 3:15,16; Mt. 5:17-19; Prov.30:5-6

About God :

God is one God, but mysteriously three persons who are perfectly equal in nature, power and glory – namely the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit who are eternal, having not been created.

The infinite, eternal and almighty God is holy, wise, just, merciful, compassionate and gracious in all His being and actions.

God is The Sovereign over all things in revealing Himself to men and in their salvation. He has created all things, is controlling and sustaining all things and one day will judge all things.

See: Deut.6:4; Mt.28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14; Ps.139; Rev.4:8,11; Col.1:16,17; Rev.20:12,13

About Man :

The highest of God's created beings was Man who was made in the image of God, was sinless and lived in constant fellowship with God.

Adam and Eve being tempted by Satan sinned of their own free will bringing death and condemnation upon the whole human race.

Since this "fall" every person born into this sinful world has been born in sin, separated from God, corrupted by sin and doomed for Hell. However, God in His infinite love and wisdom, planned from all eternity, the only way of salvation for man.

See: Gen.1:26-28; Gen.3; Rom.5:12-21

About Jesus Christ :

The second Person in the Holy Trinity, the eternal Son of God, became total man while remaining perfectly God. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and was born of the Virgin Mary and thus was perfectly sinless.

Jesus Christ lived among men, as man, obeyed the law of God perfectly and then offered Himself to God the Father as the perfect and final sacrifice for sin. He died on

Calvary and bore the sin of mankind and the wrath of God, making a full atonement in His blood, redeeming men from the guilt, penalty and the power of sin.

Jesus rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven and is praying on behalf of His people at the right hand of God.

See: Jn:1:1,2,14; Lk.1:34,35; Heb.4:15; Gal.4:4-5; Rom.3:21-26; Mt.28:1-10; Lk.24; Acts 1:9-11

About Salvation :

A person becomes a Christian when he believes savingly in the Lord Jesus Christ as his divine Lord and Saviour. This faith goes hand in hand with repentance.

On believing in Jesus Christ, the sinner has all his sins forgiven. The perfect righteousness of Christ is reckoned to Him, making him perfect and acceptable in the sight of God, although still a sinner in his own experience while on Earth. The Christian should enjoy the assurance of salvation and Heaven.

Having been born again, the individual's life is changed by the power of the Holy Spirit living in him. The change begins at conversion and is continued throughout life, making the person more and more like Jesus Christ. Holiness is the work of the Holy Spirit, but the Christian must also be involved in striving after it. Therefore it is important that the believer should spend time daily in prayer and in studying the Bible. He should make sure that he attends the preaching of the Word as regularly as he can, and must continually be fighting against sin, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In this life the Christian will face conflicts with the sinful environment he lives in, with his internal corruption and with the forces of Satan and his demons raging against him.

See: Acts 16:31; Mt. 21:32; Eph.1:7; 2 Cor.5:21; 1 Jn.5:13; 1 Pet.1:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; Rom. 8:13; 1 Thess. 5:17; Heb. 10:25; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Tim. 3:12; Rom. 8:13; Eph. 6:10-12; 1 Jn. 2:15-17

About the Holy Spirit :

The Holy Spirit came from Heaven as another Comforter on the day of Pentecost. He brings Jesus Christ near to mankind, glorifies Christ and applies His death savingly to mankind.

The Holy Spirit – the third Person in the Holy Trinity – dwells in believers, sanctifying them and guiding them. He lives in the Church making its worship and ministry real. Sometimes in His sovereign grace He falls upon people bringing Revival to them.

The Holy Spirit affects the world by bringing man a conviction of his sin and convincing him of God's righteousness and of the judgement to come.

See: Acts. 2:1-21; Jn. 16:7-14; Rom. 8:9-17; 1 Pet. 1:2; Rom. 8:14; 1 Cor. 3:16; Acts 10:44-48; Jn. 16:7-11

About the Church :

The Church is the whole community of believers, both those in Heaven and on Earth, and is the Body of Christ. For the proper functioning of His people, God has by the Holy Spirit given gifts to men for the guiding and strengthening of His people, to bring them to maturity and enable them to serve Him correctly.

The prime work of the Church is to glorify God in all things. To do this the Gospel must be preached so that sinners may be saved and brought into the church; and the whole of the Scriptures must be expounded so that the people of God might live in submission to God's Word and respond suitably.

The leaders of the local church (elders and deacons) must lead the Church by ensuring that the Word of God is faithfully preached, that the Ordinances of God are employed and that the people of God are disciplined according to the teachings of the Bible. However, they must not lord it over the Church of God.

See: Eph. 4:11-13; Mt. 28:19-20; 1 Tim. 4:9-16; Mt. 18:15-20

About the Ordinances :

The only ordinances which God has commanded to the Church by Jesus Christ as visible signs of its faith are Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These have no power in and of themselves to do good, Christ himself having made the only sacrifice necessary for the forgiveness of sin and that having risen again from the dead is alive for ever more. But, being tangible, they do help a Christian's faith.

Baptism. When a person is baptised with water he is declaring that he is united with Christ in His death and resurrection witnessing to God's saving grace in Christ and so has finished with his old life and is now living a new life by the power of God.

The Lord's Supper, or communion service is when the Church together remembers the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ. The bread eaten is simply a picture of Christ's body which was broken on Calvary and the wine is a picture of His blood which was shed, making salvation for mankind. The communion is not a sacrifice for sin in itself nor is there any change in the substance of the bread and the wine.

When a person partakes of these ordinances (Baptism only once, the Lord's Supper regularly) he is showing that he believes in the things these represent, that he enjoys the results of them and that he is united to everyone else who is a believer.

See: Mt. 28:19; 1 Cor. 11:24; Col. 2:12; 1 Cor. 11:17-26; 1 Cor. 11:27-34

About the Devil :

Satan, the chief of the fallen angels is powerful, but his power is limited by Almighty God. He, with all his hordes, will be finally condemned to the lake of fire for eternity. However, now he attacks God by trying to destroy God's image in Christians by tempting them to sin.

See: Ezekiel 28:12-19; Mt. 25:41; 1 Thess. 3:5

About the Second Coming :

When Jesus Christ returns in bodily form from Heaven (the Second Coming) the dead in Christ shall rise to meet Him in the sky, then the believers still living will be caught up to be with Him. After this the Day of Judgement will begin.

See: 1 Thess. 4:13-18

About the Resurrection and Final Judgement :

At this time believers will be clothed with perfect eternal bodies and will be welcomed into Heaven to dwell with God in the new Heaven and Earth, and to experience the joy and bliss of salvation.

Unbelievers will be judged by Jesus and be cast out of the presence of God with Satan and his angels to eternal punishment and torment in the second death – the lake of fire also called Hell, from which there is no escape.

On this day the justice and mercy of God will be revealed and all creation will glorify Him, both in Heaven and Hell, and affirm that the Judge of all the earth has done right. Our God will be worshipped, praised and glorified for all eternity which is His right.

See: 1 Cor. 15:51-53; Rev. 21:1-8; 1 Cor. 6:14; Jn. 20; Rev. 20:11-15

Appendix 2: The EFCC Statement of Faith

God There is only one God, who exists as three distinct and equal persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. God is the living God who is almighty, eternal, unchanging and knows all things past, present and future. He is just and holy, gracious and merciful. He is sovereign Creator and Ruler of all things and exercises his sovereignty in Creation, Providence and Redemption. As the Maker and Ruler of all things he is deserving of all praise and glory forever.

The Bible God's greatness and holiness are such that, without his aid, man can neither understand him nor find the way to a right relationship with him. In his mercy however, God has made himself known. He has revealed himself through creation, but human sinfulness blinds us to the glory of God, and because of this such revelation is inadequate to bring anyone to salvation. God has therefore revealed himself definitively for our salvation through the Old and New Testaments of the Bible as they witness to Christ. We therefore accept all that is written in the Bible, as originally given, as not merely containing, but being, the inspired and infallible Word of God, which is without error and the final and sufficient authority in all matter of Christian faith and life.

Humanity God created human beings perfect and in his image, but after being tempted by the devil, they, by their own free choice, disobeyed God and became sinners. Humanity is now corrupted in every part, by sin, and so fellowship with God is broken and all humanity is deserving of eternal punishment.

Salvation God alone can deal with human sin and bring about reconciliation to himself. To achieve this, God the Son became man in Christ Jesus. Jesus was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless, human life and taught entirely without error. He suffered and died in the place of sinners, experiencing on their behalf the just punishment of God for their sins. God, in his grace, forgives and reconciles to himself all who turn to him in true repentance and who trust in Christ's atoning death. God imputes to them the righteousness of Christ and adopts them as his own children. He thus sets all believers free from the domination of the devil and the corruption of their own sinful nature, and removes from them forever sin's eternal consequences. Salvation can only be found through faith in Christ.

The Gospel The gospel is given to us entirely through God's free and sovereign grace. It is the church's calling and privilege to proclaim the gospel to all people and to defend it against error. All who hear the gospel and respond in obedient faith receive the full salvation promised to us in Jesus Christ. To reject the gospel is to reject God and his grace and so leaves the one who does so without hope.

The Risen Lord The Lord Jesus Christ was shown to be the Son of God by his sinless life, teaching, miracles and his bodily resurrection from the dead, in fulfilment of the Scriptures. He has ascended in power and glory to the presence of God, where he now reigns and intercedes on behalf of those who call upon him in truth.

The Holy Spirit The Holy Spirit must work in us before we can enter into salvation. Through the gospel he leads us into an awareness of our sinfulness, and brings us to repentance and trust in Christ. He causes us to be born again, and by his continuing work enables us to understand and respond to God speaking through the Bible and so develops in us the fruits of love and holiness along with the spiritual gifts necessary to build the church.

The Second Coming God is bringing all human history to a climax which will be marked by the visible return to earth of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory at the Father's appointed time.

Jesus the Judge God has appointed Jesus as Judge and there will be a final judgement. Those who believe in Christ will be raised in a glorified body and enjoy eternally and to the full the presence of their Lord in the new heavens and new earth. Those who do not believe in Christ will be banished from God's presence forever into eternal punishment in hell.

The One Church All who have been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and upon whom God has bestowed his righteousness as a free gift, belong to Christ. They alone may rightly be called Christians. They alone are members of the one universal and eternal Church of Christ. The unity they enjoy in Christ is to be reflected in their love for one another and in seeking to serve one another in love.

The Gathered Church Each local church is a fellowship of believers gathered by Christ and committed to each other for the worship of God, the preaching of the Word, the administering of baptism and the Lord's Supper, pastoral care and discipline, and for evangelism. The church has no need of, nor should acknowledge any other authority over it than his. Through him, the church has direct access to God and enjoys fellowship with other assemblies of his people in a unity which transcends all barriers.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper These have been commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ as an obligation to the churches until his return. Baptism is a symbol of union with Christ and entry into his church but does not impart spiritual life. The Lord's Supper is a commemoration of Christ's sacrifice which was offered once for all, and involves no change in the bread or wine. Neither baptism nor the Lord's Supper of themselves convey grace to the receiver, but rightly received by faith are a means of grace.

Church Polity

- We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church Universal, which is his Body, and of each local church.
- We believe that each local church is in itself a complete church, therefore autonomous, possessing all the rights and responsibilities of the Church by the Holy Spirit as set forth in the Scriptures.
- We believe that Jesus Christ exercises his authority in each local church by the Holy Spirit and through the Scriptures.

- We believe that each local church, through its Church Meeting, is answerable only to Jesus Christ, and not to any association, conference, council, synod, or any other ecclesiastical body.
- We believe it is proper and beneficial for each local church to seek fellowship and counsel of other churches that are like-minded in the Lord.
- We believe that local churches have a responsibility to love and respect one another in the Lord and to show concern for one another's welfare.
- We believe that the membership of a local church should be open to any who have made a credible profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, who are living godly and obedient lives and who are willing to submit themselves to the discipline of the local church, irrespective of their beliefs about matters such as baptism and ecclesiology, which are not essential to being evangelical Christians.
- Congregational Churches have generally held to the Paedobaptist position, that baptism is for converts to Christianity and their children. However, there have always been those in membership of Congregational Churches who have held to Believers' Baptism only. We therefore believe it is right that every church should determine its own practice, provided always that those who conscientiously hold the other position are not excluded from membership of and fellowship within the church.

Appendix 3: The history of the church

The Pontefract Congregational Church was founded on 24th August 1662, when Rev. Joseph Farrett, along with about two thousand other clergymen felt compelled to leave the Church of England because they were unable, as a matter of conscience, to make declarations required of them by the Act of Uniformity.

This Act required ministers to submit to a system of church government, which included bishops governing all the churches in a diocese, and a formal order of worship based upon the Book of Common Prayer.

In Pontefract, Rev. Farrett, who had been a minister at St. Giles, lost his livelihood as a result of his decision, but was able to enjoy the hospitality of a Mr. Ward who owned a mansion called 'the Court' in Tanshelf. It was there that he led in worship those Christians who shared his independency and so formed what became known as the Independent or Dissenting Church, which was, in its regard for Scripture as the only source of authority for the Church and its emphasis on the preaching of the Word, the evangelical church of its day.

Rev. Farrett died the next year, 1663, at the age of 63, and was succeeded by the Rev. J. Noble, who had left the parish church at Smeaton in 1662. The Dissenters, as the Independents were sometimes known, had to endure persecution, but continued to meet and eventually grew in numbers under a succession of ministers until 1746, when the Rev. Stamford died. At some time during this period, a building known as the Dissenting Meeting House was erected somewhere in Newgate.

For a while there was no minister and the Rev. Coppock who came next was very much a product of the times. Although the Methodist Revival had begun by then, Rev. Coppock had been educated and had entered the ministry in an age of liberalism and rationalism. He was a follower of Socinus, a Swiss theologian of the 16th Century who denied the Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. These views were gaining ground in England at the time and became known as Unitarianism. As a result of having these unscriptural views, 'this gentleman', to quote Dr. Boothroyd's History of Pontefract, 'found a respectable congregation and preached it away'. When he died in 1782, only two or three families attended. Here then is a lesson from history of what will happen when a church does not guard its pulpit and allows unbiblical preaching.

Following his death, a number of evangelicals, probably influenced by the Methodist Revival, called an evangelical minister, Rev. N. Tapp, who served until 1791 when he was succeeded by Rev. Dr. Boothroyd. The Trust Deed made in 1794 contained very specific requirements of any minister who should be elected. He would have to adhere to the doctrines contained in the Westminster Confession of Faith and specific mention was made of the preaching and maintenance of 'the doctrines of a Trinity of Persons in the Godhead of equal power and glory'. It was intended that no Unitarian would ever occupy the pulpit again.

The original Ebenezer Chapel was built in Finkle Street in 1795-96, and the church removed there from the Dissenting Meeting House in Newgate. Dr. Boothroyd's

ministry at Pontefract continued until 1818, during which time a Sunday School was begun at Pontefract and, under Dr. Boothroyd's guidance, the Congregational Church at Knottingley began to meet.

Between 1818 and 1868 there were six ministers. Nothing is recorded about the spiritual life of the church during this period but 'achievements' are recorded for three of the ministers. Between 1837 and 1847, the original Ebenezer Chapel was rebuilt and enlarged; between 1852 and 1857 an organ was installed in the Chapel; and between 1862 and 1868 the large Sunday School building, which stood where Stuart Road now runs, was built. During the ministry of Rev. J. Inness (1857-61) a member from Pontefract who moved to Castleford was instrumental in the formation of Carlton Street Congregational Church under the presidency of Rev. J. Inness.

Church Minute books exist from 1867, but the quality of the record keeping has varied as the spiritual life of the church has ebbed and flowed. We do know, however, that in the 1800's there was a strong spiritual life from the evidence of 'cottage meetings' – house groups are not so new! – and the exercise of biblical church discipline.

In 1881 the porch was added to the front of the Chapel: the date is above the door. In 1911 a breach which had been developing between the church and the Sunday School (which apparently had begun to act independently of the church) was healed. This emphasises the importance of the church, acting through its appointed leaders, maintaining a close involvement with everything which is done in the name of the church and ensuring that all organisations and meetings are under the leaders' spiritual authority.

For most of the twentieth century, until 1968, the church was in a state of spiritual, followed by numerical, decline in common with most churches in the established denominations. This began with the advance of liberal theology, 'the downgrade' which C. H. Spurgeon fought against, at the end of the nineteenth century. Minutes of church meetings during this period show a changing emphasis from discussion of spiritual matters to a greater concern with social events, finance and property maintenance.

Active membership ranged between 15 and 20 during the 1950's and early 1960's but, despite the numerical decline from the nineteenth century, there remained a small nucleus of members who gave spiritual activity in the church priority.

The turning point for the church came in 1968 when the Rev. Bill Dyer was called as pastor. The spiritual development and numerical growth of the church since then has been the result of faithfulness to the Bible as the inspired Word of God and the emphasis on expository preaching for Christians and the preaching of the gospel to non-Christians at every opportunity.