

The Bible Christian Methodists of Gloucester

The early years of St Luke's Church, Stroud Road

by Simon Carpenter

The church now known as St Luke's was opened in 1904, but its story really began in 1894 when a 26 year old draper from West Dean in the Forest of Dean called George Johnson started spending long periods in Gloucester where he was trying to establish a new business.¹

He was an enthusiastic member of the Bible Christian Connexion (denomination), one of a number of Methodist groupings in existence at that time, having first come into contact with them on bonfire night (5th November) in 1882. On that fateful evening, he and three other youths had decided to make trouble at Yorkley Slade Bible Christian Chapel in the Forest. They had not reckoned on the mettle of the Bible Christians though, and in particular that of Rev George Holmes. George Johnson's life changed direction that night, and within two years he was on the local Bible Christian circuit plan as a travelling preacher at the age of sixteen.



St Luke's Church, Stroud Road in 2009

While in Gloucester George initially attended the Primitive Methodist church in Lower Barton Street. He eventually moved into the city, to premises in Wellington Street. But as his Gloucester minister was later

to say of him, he was ‘a real Bible Christian’² and in 1901, with the help of a Mr Williams he set up a congregation in the city. He was later to become the new church’s treasurer and also a circuit steward. At the same time as George was attending the Barton Street church, at a national level, union talks were proceeding between the Primitive Methodists and Bible Christians. These broke down in 1900.³

The Bible Christians

The Bible Christian Connexion was founded by William O’Bryan, a Wesleyan Methodist local preacher, in 1815 in North Cornwall, with the first society (church) having just 22 members, meeting at Lake Farm in Shebbear, Devon. From there they spread rapidly, particularly among the rural working class communities owing to their revivalist style of preaching, their fervent praying and their passionate worshipping style. Like other revivalist movements they also made extensive use of female preachers. Primarily concentrated in Cornwall and Devon, the church also sent missionaries all over England. By 1820, missions had been established in the Channel Islands and in Kent. They had reached the Forest of Dean, at Drybrook, from Monmouth in 1823. They were also strong in the Isle of Wight particularly amongst the farm labourers.

By 1831, ministers were being sent to Prince Edward Island and Ontario, and a mission was established in Canada in 1845. Many of the emigrants from Devon and Cornwall to Canada and the United States in the 1830s were Bible Christians, further encouraging the spread of the church in those countries. Other missions were later established in other countries: Australia (1850), in New Zealand (1878), and in China in 1885.

As with other revivalist movements, the chapel held an importance place in the Bible Christian psyche. It is estimated that between 1817 and 1905, including replacements and some that didn’t last the course, they built over 1,000 in their various strongholds across the world at an average of more than one a month. Many of the early ones were given names which showed their owners hopes for them. Names like Siloam (a place to receive spiritual sight), Bethesda (house of mercy), Zion (city of God) or Providence or Deliverance. As the Connexion’s historian wrote in 1905, ‘In all of them the pure Word of God is faithfully preached, the sacraments duly administered, Sunday School, Temperance and Evangelistic work vigorously carried on; they have all been the centre of a holy influence which in many instances has radiated far and near; every one it is believed has been like Zion of old, the birthplace of souls, most of them many souls, and every square foot of some has been hallowed by the tears of penitents, by victorious wrestlings with the Angel of the Covenant, and the glad songs and shouts of newly saved men and women.’⁴

Gloucester at the turn of the twentieth century

Gloucester at the turn of the century was a city of some 48,000 souls. These were spiritually served by the cathedral and just over 30 churches about half of which were nonconformist. Among the Anglican clergy in the city was the widely loved and respected vicar of St Nicholas in Westgate Street, Rev. John Luce. A regular visitor and occasional speaker at the influential Keswick Convention in the Lake District,⁵ locally he did much for the poor in the city and the promotion of church unity.⁶ The nonconformist ministers were organised in a local Free Church Council, and among the leading lights around this time were Rev. William Rice of Brunswick Baptist Church which was then in Brunswick Road, Rev. William Porter of Tyndale Congregational Church in Barton Street and Edwin Spring of the East End Tabernacle in Derby Road.

The different Methodist groupings were represented in Gloucester by two Primitive Methodist churches (Lower Barton Street and Melbourne Street) and two Wesleyan churches (Northgate and Ryecroft Street). The Wesleyans also had a mission chapel in the Bristol Road.

The Gloucester Mission

It was to this situation that the new Bible Christian Mission started meeting in 1901. They began by gathering in Wellington Hall above the dairy in Longsmith Street, which was then owned by a George Kingscote. He helped the young church by charging only a nominal rent and he also assisted them by playing the organ for their services.⁷ They were also assisted greatly in these early days by Rev. Herbert Pollard a young and recently qualified Bible Christian minister then serving on the Somerton circuit who appears to have been 'seconded' to Gloucester for a lengthy period. When he died in 1956 at the end of fifty seven years of ministry Herbert received a warm tribute⁸: 'From the first he impressed all who came to know him, by qualities of heart and mind. Quiet in his bearing, he had nevertheless, such strong fidelity to principle, and such sound judgement, that his counsel had unusual weight. He was admired by all who knew him and greatly loved by his people. In the pulpit he revealed the riches which had been gathered by unceasing study. He had always a good book on hand. He was faithful to the evangel, and was aware of what the profoundest theologians were saying. He had no selfish ambitions: it was his joy to serve the churches to which he was appointedIt was always with deep regret that his people bid him farewell, for all came to know him as a sympathetic pastor ...' And the embryonic church was further encouraged by a preaching visit from Rev. F.W. Bourne, one of the key figures in the Connexion, and its historian, on November 3 1901⁹. During this time they had a pattern of meeting twice on a Sunday at 11am and 6.30pm.

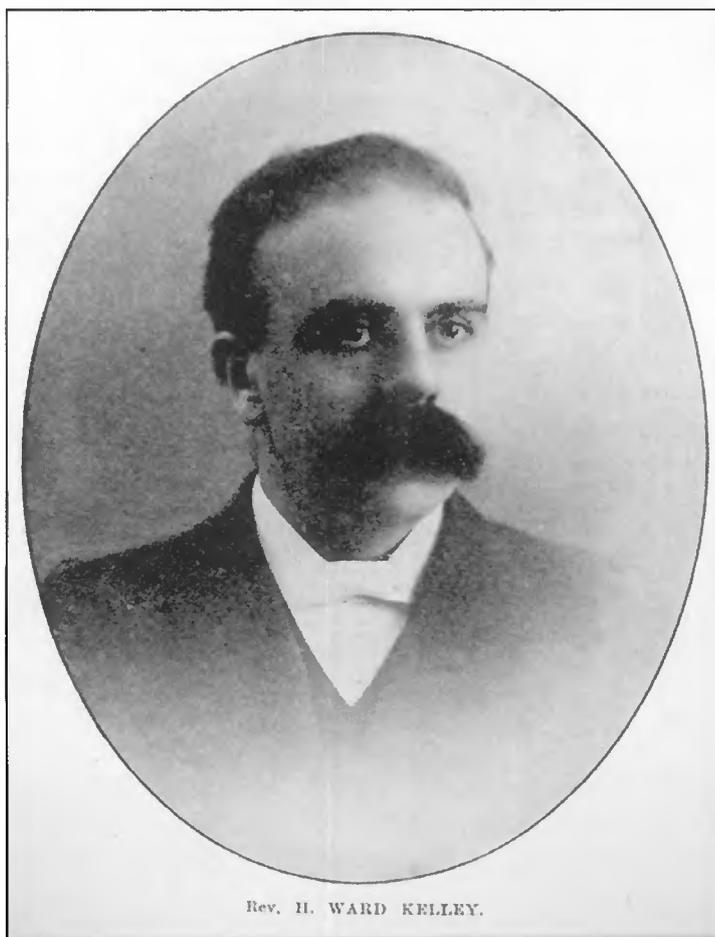
Twenty years earlier Wellington Hall had been the base camp for another Christian church new to the city, the Salvation Army. However, overall it was not a happy experience for the Bible Christians. The first full time minister of the church later called it a period of 'apparently hopeless pegging away' and where 'God had been disciplining our souls' and more concerningly he also said of that it was only the people of the church at that time that had 'kept my faith from failing and my hope fresh during a trying time.'¹⁰ The church was also referred to elsewhere during this period as a 'small but enthusiastic band of Christian workers.'¹¹

Henry Ward Kelley

Born in 1873 in Fladina Gorton to Bible Christian missionary parents, Rev. and Mrs Richard Kelley, in what was then British Australia, Rev Henry Ward Kelley was the first full time minister of the church. He arrived in 1902 aged 29.¹²

After spending the first eleven years of his life on the mission field in South Australia, where the Bible Christians had quite a strong presence, Henry returned to England and to school at Shebbear College, the Connexional school in Devon. He then followed his father into the Bible Christian ministry in 1896. Prior to arriving at Gloucester he had served a church in Birmingham for two years. He stayed at Gloucester until 1907, living at 11, St Paul's Road and then served a further four churches before retiring in 1932 and dying in 1940.

His obituary talked of his being 'Genial, warm-hearted and friendly, he was ever welcome in the homes of the people. He was a faithful pastor, and inspired confidence in those to whom he ministered. His preaching was marked with evangelical fervour and deep human sympathy.

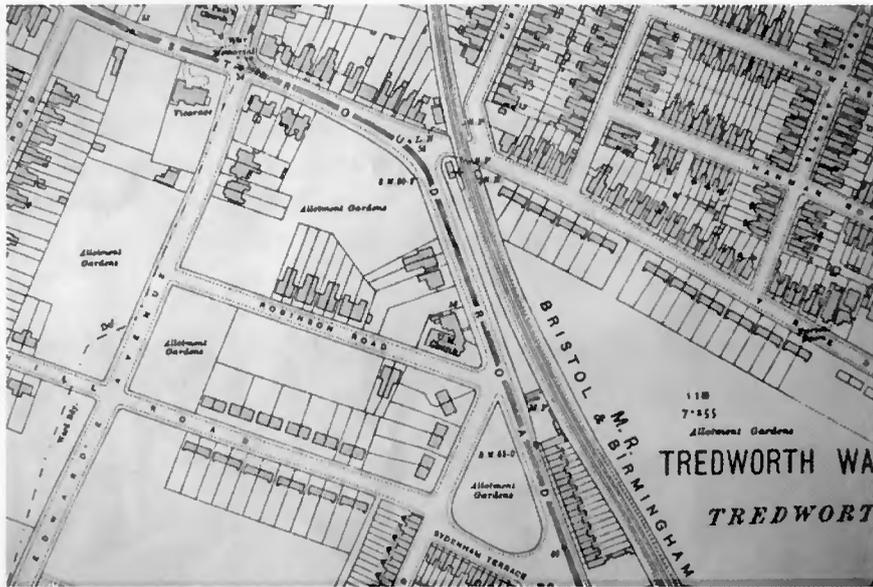


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Children and young people were attracted by his sincerity and infectious good humour. He gave valuable help on the Young People's Committee of the United Methodist Church. Though compelled by impaired health to retire, he maintained a remarkable cheerfulness of spirit and unfailing interest in the work of the Church. On September 10 1940 he passed to his eternal reward in the forty-fourth year of his ministry at the age of sixty seven.¹³

The site of the chapel

The Bible Christians started looking for a place to build a chapel at the same time as Gloucester Corporation was encouraging speculative building on land it had acquired in the Stroud Road area by laying out new roads such as Linden Road and Seymour Road.¹⁴



Location of St Luke's Church OS 25" to 1 mile. Courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives

The spot they settled on was 1,076 square yards (just under 900 square metres) of a field alongside the Stroud Road and opposite the Midland Railway line to Bristol, formerly known as Eleven Acre Piece and in the historic parish of Barton St. Mary. The plot was bought using the Chapel Model Deed by the Connexion, represented by John Luke and William Baulkwill, on behalf of the Gloucester church for £269 on 12th September 1903. John Luke was at that time the Bible Christian minister of Southsea and an ex-president and secretary of the Connexion. William Baulkwill was minister of Newport, Isle of Wight and the Connexional treasurer.

The conditions of the sale and purchase included that the church had to erect 'proper and suitable' fences within twelve months on the boundaries of a design and character to be approved by the Corporation, and they had to submit the plans of any proposed buildings to be built on the site. The Corporation also stipulated that no building could be erected within 15 feet of the Stroud Road or within 10 feet of the proposed new road (now Robinson Road) on the other boundary.¹⁵

The architect, design and finances

The church commissioned Rev. Vincent Culliford, at that time the District Superintendent and a keen amateur architect to design them a chapel.¹⁶ In a denomination which in its early days at least was always looking to the next revival, it seems fitting that Vincent was himself brought to faith during such an occurrence. He was born in High Ham in Somerset to Bible Christian parents, and in 1873 he was 'brought to a knowledge of the truth' during a revival which occurred in the Somerton Circuit. Almost immediately he began to preach to others, and was successful in conducting a mission at Okehampton, at which over one hundred persons professed conversion. Thus encouraged, he entered the Bible Christian ministry in 1875.

At the same time he continued to develop an interest in architecture, and as well as the chapel for Gloucester, he designed many other chapels for the Connexion including Portloe, Tavistock, Stoke and Guernsey. It was suggested at the Bible Christian conference of 1904 that he should be appointed the official Connexional architect, but in view of the Methodist union discussions then going on it was thought wise not to proceed at that time, so it never happened.¹⁷

For the Gloucester church, Vincent produced a design in 14th century gothic style which would provide accommodation for 350 in the chapel with an adjoining schoolroom and classrooms which would hold 150 children. At that time the heart of Methodist worship was the Preaching Service – ‘the service of public worship.’ This was reflected in the chapel architecture. As R E Davies, the denominational historian later put it ‘The pulpit (which is often a vast rostrum) stands in the central place, often with the choir seats behind, always with the holy table below’¹⁸

When it came to financing a chapel, ‘only small grants were available from central funds and local people had to provide or raise most of the funds needed for building, repairing their chapel. It was usual for debt to be incurred when major building or restoration work was put in hand. A strong cause often cleared a debt quickly, but a small chapel in a poor area could carry a crushing burden for years ...’¹⁹

The foundation stones

The foundation stones were laid on Thursday December 10th 1903 to the accompaniment of ‘a steady downpour of rain’ as the *Citizen* put it in the following day’s edition. To continue with the report: ‘The Rev. A. Hancock, Plymouth (President of the Conference) presided over the gathering, and prayer was offered by the Rev. B. I. K. Cowling, an appropriate portion of scripture being read by the Rev. C.J. Horton.

The Rev. H. Ward Kelley (pastor of the new church) afterwards announced letters of apology from, among others, Mr. Russell Rea M.P., who sent a donation of five guineas, Mr. George Lambert M.P., the City High Sheriff (Councillor W. Langley-Smith), Ald. David Jones, Councillor J. Rice, the Revs H. Smith and J. Williams.



One of the foundation stones photographed in 2009

The President expressed the pleasure they felt at seeing so many representatives of other Free Churches in Gloucester present, despite the unpropitious weather. They did not enter upon that work in Stroud-road in any spirit of unhealthy rivalry with the other churches in the city. They believed there was a work for them to do in that new suburb of Gloucester, in which a large population was being gathered, and there was room there for another church.

Foundation stones were afterwards laid by Mr A.T. Gaze, Cardiff, who contributed £50 to the building fund; Rev. V.H. Culliford (Chairman of the District), £10 10s; Rev. W.R. Baulkwill (Connexional Treasurer). £10 10s; Mrs George Johnson £10; Messrs A.C. and W.J.Moore, £5; Mr R.R.Parsons £5 5s; and Mr George James, Cardiff £5. About £455 had already been collected toward the cost of the building, the site valued at £300 being purchased by the Connexion. Following the stone-laying ceremony a service was held at the Southgate Congregational Church at which Rev. A.Hancock preached, followed by a public tea.

Over 100 sat down to the tea in the Southgate Lecture Hall, whilst there was a satisfactory attendance at the public meeting. After prayer by the Rev. T. Dinnick, Ald. Baker spoke welcoming the Bible Christians to the city, saying there was ample room for a spiritual church, and wishing them success. The Rev. H.

Ward Kelley reported that the sum of £475 had been raised already towards the expenses of the new church. The Rev. C.G.Hawken (Cardiff) gave a well-reasoned address after which the President of the Connexion (the Rev. Hancock, of Plymouth) spoke recalling the origin and early experiences of the founders of the denomination. The Rev. T. Dinnick also spoke reminiscently, and the meeting closed with a hearty vote of thanks to the pastor and deacons of the Southgate Congregational Church for the loan of the building.'

Mr A. T. Gaze, named in the report as laying one of the foundation stones, still visible to this day, was later described by Henry Ward Kelley as being 'our good friend' and 'an old Gloucester boy (who) prayed years ago not far from the position of the chapel.'²⁰

Moving into the classrooms

Five months later, in May 1904, building work was sufficiently far advanced for the church to start using the school rooms. This event too was recorded in the *Citizen*, of Monday May 23 1904.

'The opening of the Bible Christian Methodist new school premises in Stroud-road (at the corner of Stanley Road) Gloucester, was celebrated on Sunday and Monday. Adjoining the school is a chapel now in the course of erection and rapidly nearing completion. The foundation stones, it will be remembered, were laid last December. The architect was one of the ministers of the Connexion (the Rev. V. H. Culliford). The school is of brick with stone facings, and Gothic windows and doors; and with the suite of class rooms, etc. it provides accommodation for 200 children. It is a compact and well designed building and well lighted, the tinted lead-light windows producing a pretty effect. The chapel, which harmonises with the school, will seat 350 people. The approximate cost of the whole scheme – the carrying out of which will, it is considered, supply a long felt want to that part of the city – is £2,500, towards which about £500 has been already raised, and a sum of money loaned for the purpose. The movement has been set on foot by the small but enthusiastic band of Christian workers who originally worshipped in the Wellington Hall, Longsmith-street, and they are making strenuous efforts towards raising the sum required by the time of the opening of the chapel, which is expected to take place three months hence. The Connexion, which was founded as far back as the year 1815, is evangelistic and missionary in character, and its branches have spread and produced great results in Australasia (the present minister in Gloucester, the Rev. H. Ward Kelley is the son of an Australian missionary), Canada, China, and other parts of the world.

Sunday's services were of a bright and encouraging character, and there were large congregations. The Rev. W. Rodda (Birmingham) preached in the morning and evening, and the Rev. W.J. Porter (Tyndale Congregational Church) gave an address in the afternoon.

On Monday afternoon the Mayoress (Mrs T. Blinkhorn) performed the ceremony of unveiling a Robert Raikes memorial tablet in the schoolroom. The Rev. H. Ward Kelley opened the proceedings by referring to the loyal response which had been made by a large number of Sunday schools in the Connexion to the appeal for funds to provide the Raikes tablet – the idea of which originated with Mr. George Johnson, one of the Gloucester circuit stewards – and expressed the hope that the £30 already collected for the purpose would be increased to £50 by the time the church was opened. Mr Ward Kelley proceeded to speak of the importance of the forward movement which members of the Connexion had made in Gloucester, and appealed for support to enable the buildings to be carried on free from debt. The Rev. W. Rodda followed with an address on the Sunday school work, with special reference to Robert Raikes.

The Mayoress, who was most cordially greeted, then unveiled the tablet, and in the course of a few graceful remarks, expressed her appreciation of the great compliment and high honour paid her by asking her to undertake the ceremony. The Mayor next gave a short address, in the course of which he spoke of the great success which had attended the noble work which Robert Raikes set on foot, and expressed his gratification that the memory of the founder of Sunday schools – of whom all Gloucester people were justly proud – was to be perpetuated in the schoolroom by means of the tablet which the Mayoress was so pleased to have unveiled. The Mayor took advantage of the opportunity to publicly apologise for his absence from the recent Sunday School Union exhibition at the Corn Exchange, and said he greatly

regretted that, owing to an inadvertence on his own part, he disappointed the promoters of that most praiseworthy movement.

A hearty vote of thanks to the Mayor and Mayoress was passed on the motion of Councillor G. Packer, seconded by Mr G. Johnson. A public tea followed, and the day's proceedings were to conclude with a public meeting at 7 o'clock under the chairmanship of Councillor Packer.'

As Henry Ward Kelley later reported, 'Bro. Wm. Rodda was the preacher on Whit Sunday when we opened the Schoolroom as a first instalment. My former colleague in Birmingham did us splendid service. The congregations were good, and the preacher and people realised the presence of the Lord of the House. From the beginning we *knew* that God was with us. Rev. W. Porter (Congregationalist) preached in the afternoon of Whit Sunday, and amongst other things he said he was certain that from that pulpit the true gospel would be preached.'²¹

Celebrating harvest

A few months later, on Sunday 11th September and the Monday following, the church held a Harvest Festival. They had still not yet moved into the main church so all the celebrations were held in the schoolroom. According to the *Citizen* report published in the Tuesday edition, 'The schoolroom was beautifully decorated for the occasion and the supply of fruit and vegetables was quite profuse. On Sunday morning to a good congregation an able sermon was preached by Mr R Bass. In the afternoon a public service was presided over by Mr Parsons and an address delivered by Mr F Beor. The Rev H. Ward Kelley preached in the evening to an audience packed in the main schoolroom and overflowed into the vestries and lobby. In the matter of collections a record day was experienced. Solos were sung during the day by Miss Harris and Rev Ward Kelley. On Monday a public tea and meeting were held, the latter of which was presided over by Mr Frampton and addressed by Mr F J Brooke.'

Just prior to moving into the chapel a few weeks after this, Henry Ward Kelley reported that 'our congregations on Sunday evenings have generally filled the Schoolroom, and occasionally we have had unwillingly to allow people to go away as we have had no room to accommodate them. The fervour of the worship and the heartiness of the singing has almost become a proverb. Pray God it may continue.' A week after the opening of the Schoolroom, a Sunday School had been started and by the September it had about 130 children on its books. A Band of Hope (youth temperance organisation) was started in the September and soon after already had around 80 members.

Opening the chapel

Finally on Thursday 27 October 1904 the church was able to move into the chapel. Immediately prior to this, in the words of Henry Ward Kelley, 'to ensure the atmosphere was right' ten days of prayer were held. Also 'a little band of eight women voluntarily scrubbed the chairs and floors of the whole premises, and then decorated the Lord's House with flowers...'²²

And then the chapel was ready. One person who was invited but who was not there was the City High Sheriff. He was due to take the chair for the lecture that Henry Ward Kelly had organised to be given on the Monday evening by the President of the Bible Christian Conference. He did however write a letter of apology in which he said that 'if I am Mayor next year I will do what I can to assist you and all your friends in the splendid Christian work you are undertaking in that part of the City which undoubtedly requires attention'²³

The *Citizen* reported the celebrations in the following terms in its edition of October 28th: 'The new Bible Christian Methodist Chapel, Stroud Road, Gloucester, was formally opened for public worship on Thursday afternoon by Mr Russell Rea, M.P. in the presence of a large number of the Methodist community and other friends. Among those present were the Revs. J.O. Keen, D.D. (London), H. Ward Kelley (Pastor), G.M. Smith, W.E. Rice, B.I.K. Cowling, C.G. Hawken (Cardiff), James, Rowse

(Drybrook), Randall, Middleton, Dinnick, the Mayoress (Mrs Blinkhorn), the City High Sheriff (Councillor W. Langley-Smith) and Mrs Langley-Smith, Aldermen Baker and Jones, Councillors Poe, Colwell, Goddard, Simmonds, Mr and Mrs Gaze (Cardiff), Mr G. Johnson, Mr James Parsons, Mr Truscott, Dr Bell, and others.

The new chapel stands in a commanding position at a corner of Stanley Road and Stroud Road, and presents a very pretty block of buildings. The seating accommodation is for nearly 400, and the schoolroom for 175, and the building is provided with five classrooms and two vestries. The first portion of the ceremony was performed outside the chapel, and consisted of the singing of a hymn and the offering of prayer, after which Mr Russell Rea was presented with a silver key with which he opened the door of the new building. Mr Russell Rea said the day was one of rejoicing and of thanksgiving. 'Bible Christians' was one of the oldest children of the Wesleyan Methodist Connexion, and it was in many respects a modest child. It had worked among the people, and had not many of the wealthy or prominent of the community among its church workers, though it had some distinguished men, but its main work had chiefly been among the people. He could not say they had not been an aggressive church; they had shown they were in the best sense of the word an aggressive church. But they had never been a controversial church; their name indicated that. They called themselves simply 'Bible Christians,' and they had chosen a beautiful designation for their community. But it had no dogmatic significance for it did not mean because they were 'Bible Christians' other Christians were not. Proceeding, Mr Russell Rea said that he had always found that men who gave a good deal of time to their church, were just those who always found time to devote to civic and political duties, and that made that public life part of their religion, and he thought in the various branches of the Methodist Churches in the City they showed an example to other citizens of public activity and public conscience.

A sermon was afterwards preached by the Rev J.O. Keen, and a tea followed at five o'clock, to which about 300 sat down. A public meeting was held in the evening presided over by Mr A.T. Gaze of Cardiff

In that year's *Bible Christian Magazine*, Henry Ward Kelley added the following thoughts. 'Dr Keen did us splendid service as did also Bro. Hawken. On the Sunday we had a splendid day with the President, the Rev. W.E. Rice (Baptist) occupying the pulpit in the afternoon, and in the evening the chapel was practically full. It was a grand time and in the prayer meeting two youths came into the enquiry room seeking salvation.

Our good friend Mr Gaze stayed in the neighbourhood and helped us with presence and purse on Sunday morning and again on Monday evening ... The President lectured to about 150 people on Monday evening, under the presidency of Mr Geo. Johnson on 'Peter Mackenzie.'

[A British 19th century Wesleyan Methodist revivalist preacher] 'On the second Sunday my own father preached twice to congregations about equal to the preceding Sunday. Rev A.T.S. James B.A. (Congregationalist) preached a most suggestive sermon in the afternoon. On Monday my father lectured on 'South Australia' to an audience numbering at least 130. The chairman, Mr J.W. Hopkins, spoke in a very appreciative manner of the beautiful premises, which he said were a credit to the Connexion and to the



St Luke's Church soon after opening. Courtesy of Gloucestershire Archives ref N6.11

City, and thought it a fitting thing that the father should take some part in the opening services of a Church of which his son was pastor.

The receipts to date are about £576 (including the gift of site by the Connexion approximately £300), and we anticipate the total cost to come well within £2,400²⁴

Revival

While the Bible Christians were getting their new church established, over the border in Wales an evangelical revival was in full swing. This transformed the atmosphere of many of the towns and villages as many thousands were added to the churches. In Gloucester, as in many other places prayer meetings for a revival to also happen in the city are reported to have multiplied as news from Wales spread. The Rev. William Rice, on behalf of the Free Church Council, including Henry Ward Kelley, then invited a couple of young Welsh evangelists to the city to lead revival meetings.²⁵

Initially a week of meetings in the larger nonconformist churches was organised, starting on Monday 30 January 1905 in William Rice's own church of Brunswick Baptist Church. He may have been at others as well, but Henry Ward Kelley was definitely at the one held later on in the week at the Whitefield Memorial Church (now known as James Forbes United Reformed Church) in Park Road because his name appears on the platform party. As with the others, the *Citizen* reported on this meeting so we know that 'every available inch of space' was used in the 600 seater church, and the schoolroom attached to the church was also crowded. The church had been full from an hour before the meeting was due to begin. The meeting progressed with enthusiastic singing, fervent praying and appeals from the evangelist. Between 50 and 60 were reported to have responded and the meeting closed well after 10 o'clock.²⁶

Not everything went according to plan during this revival mission. There was a public disagreement about baptism and also some disturbances in the streets some evenings when the revivalists coming out of their meetings met the people coming out of the pubs. But overall around 450 over the course of two weeks of meetings (it was decided to push on into a second week) probably responded to the evangelists' appeals and discovered a new faith.

1907: Methodist Union and the departure of Henry Ward Kelley

Over the next couple of years the church settled into a new pattern. Called Tuffley Bible Christian Chapel, in a 1906 directory its weekly programme was given as: Sunday, Sunday School 10am and 2.45pm. Preaching services at 11am and 6.30pm; Week-night, Preaching service Thursday 7.45pm. Senior Christian Endeavor Wednesday 8pm. Band of Hope Thursday 6.45pm.²⁷

And then in 1907, things changed again. Henry Ward Kelley left after five years service to join a church in Cardiff, and the Bible Christian name itself disappeared as the Connexion joined with two other Methodist groups to form the United Methodist Church. Then the church was renamed Stroud Road United Methodist church. After the completion of Methodist union in 1932 to form today's Methodist Church it was included in the Gloucester circuit. In 1955 the members of the Ryecroft society, and the war memorials from their building were transferred to the church, which from 1st September that year was dedicated to St. Luke.²⁸ With the addition of the members of the Wesley Hall society in 1965 (now 66 Star) St. Luke's church became the centre of Methodism in the south part of the city and in 1967 a new wing of ancillary buildings was opened on 2nd September by a Mrs Tull (the wife of a former minister) having cost £14,000 to construct.²⁹ In 2008 it was sold by the Methodist Church and bought by its present owners, Gloucester Community Church.

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