Places of Worship in Dulwich

Lordship Lane Baptist Church

Active
Baptist
287 Lordship Lane SE22 9JT

Lordship Lane Baptist Church exterior

Historical summary
Iron chapel erected in December 1869, congregation formed 1870 from Walworth Road Chapel. Church designed by church member and built by R. G. Battley of Old Kent Road: memorial stone laid on 5 August 1872 by Dr E. Steane, minister of Baptist Chapel at Denmark Place Camberwell and a founder of Evangelical Alliance. Opened for public worship 1 January 1873, in presence of Revd Charles Spurgeon. First minister (unpaid) was H. J. Tresidder. It seated nearly 400 people and there were schoolrooms and classrooms underneath. Extensions were built increasing capacity to 550. The church was damaged in 1944.

Historical background
On 16 December 1869, the church's first pastor, H. J. Tresidder, who lived at Stanley Villa, 305 Lordship Lane, opened a temporary iron chapel. He later wrote that due to delays in building and the stormy weather forecast: 'within five days of the time of opening it appeared to be an impossibility that it should take place'. Seven people attended the first service which was held just before the official opening. The storm was said to have rendered the preacher's sermon particularly vivid. Within a year, there was a good-sized congregation, a Sunday School, a Tract Society, and a working group 'for the poor' staffed by the ladies of the church. Tresidder conducted baptisms at Rye Lane Chapel until a tank could be installed in the iron chapel.

The memorial stone for the new church was laid by Dr Steane, minister of a church in Camberwell and one of the founders of the Evangelical Alliance. A marquee was erected in Goodrich Road but heavy rain flooded the ground and there was much mirth about Baptists needing plenty of water. Once built, the church seated nearly 400 and had a schoolroom, five classrooms and two vestries. It cost £2,000, including the freehold of the land. At the same time, a Home Mission was formed using a converted stable in Half Moon Lane which held 60-70 people.

In 1882 the outstanding debt was £845 and the deacons were empowered to sell part of the land behind the chapel for £180. But C. H. Spurgeon intervened and instead of a land sale, the congregation was asked to make up the shortfall and also to increase the pastor's salary to £100 p.a. Spurgeon donated £20. By 1885 the debt was £585 and it was decided to extend the church further. The debt was cleared in 1903.

In 1894 the church bought a sliver of land 25ft wide in Lordship Lane next to the church for £147. This was for another extension which cost £700 and was finished in 1908. The church now seated 550 and there were 217 members on the roll. In 1920 a new organ was installed at a cost of £422 and the following year the Revd T. G. Black was installed as pastor. In 1923 there were 251 members, 351 scholars in Sunday School and 43 teachers and officers. Revd Black made 550 pastoral visits to 332 addresses. He lived at 9 Crawthew Grove but a decision was made to build him a manse. A fund soon reached £270 and 9 Beauval Road was purchased in 1930.

In 1937, Revd William A. Ashby, a local man who was educated at Alleyn's School, was appointed minister. He rented 20 Woodwarde Road and the manse in Beauval Road was let. He started a bible school which met on Wednesdays and in 1938 he organised an exhibition called 'Palestine in Dulwich' which attracted hundreds of visitors.

In April 1939 Revd Ashby exchanged pulpits with Revd Arnott in South Africa for six months, returning to England three weeks after war was declared. In 1940 his home in Woodwarde Road was damaged by a bomb that landed on Dulwich Library, causing his family to move into the church. He said it was almost worth being bombed out due to the kindness he received. As part of the war effort, the church was asked to donate its railings and gates for scrap metal. They appealed on the basis that the gates stopped children running wild in the church, that there was a drop of 7ft to the lower halls, and the railings were helping people walking along Goodrich Road in the black-out as they knew by the feel that they had reached Lordship Lane. These arguments were accepted and only the gates and railings at the front of the church were taken. In 1944 a flying bomb landed opposite the church demolishing nine houses on the west side and ten houses on the east side of Lordship Lane. The church was seriously damaged but repairable.

After the war the church was repaired with funds from the War Damages Committee in 1948. The organ was replaced in 1950. In 1966 a new kitchen and toilets were installed which allowed the church to rent the hall out to Heber Primary School for school meals.

Lordship Lane Baptist Church ministers

1870-79 H. J. Tresidder
1879 T. G. Church
1880-82 J. A. Soper
1883-90 T. Perry
1891-98 E. T. Mateer
1898-1914 E. A. Tydeman (lived at 189 Barry Rd)
1924-20 F. M. Price
1921-30 T. G. Black
1930-36 G. Burrett
1937-41 W. A. Ashby
1944-47 J. G. Patrick
1948-54 D. R. Banfield
1955-61 C. E. Baylis
1962 A. C. Tunstell

Sources: South London Press, 1 April 1873: Baptist Magazine December 1873: The first 100 years, a short history of Lordship Lane Baptist Church 1870-1970.