

Peter Price, *A Story Worth Telling: Cheddar Baptist Church 1831-2006*, 2006, pp.36, £3.00 from the author, Charis, 70 Ashbury Drive, Weston-Super-Mare, Somerset, BS22 9QL.

The beginning of the work that led to the foundation of Cheddar Baptist Church can be traced back to the 1780s when Hannah Moore opened a Sunday School in the village. A boy named Clark was one of the earliest scholars and was deeply influenced by the teaching he received. So when the Sunday School declined because of Hannah Moore's advancing age, he wrote to his son, William, then living in Bristol, expressing a wish to see the School revived. As a result in August 1829 William Clark and two young men walked on Saturday night the eighteen miles from Bristol to Cheddar. They left the city at 10 o'clock after a hard day's work, arriving at Cheddar on the Sunday morning. They collected a few children together and opened a Sunday School in a private room not far from the present Baptist chapel.

To give some shape to the story Peter Price has divided it into seven 'generations' of twenty-five years and indicated important developments in the village, such as the discovery of the famous caves and the coming of the railway. There have been twenty-two ministers and pastors. During the ministry of the Revd A.E. Anderson (1943-49), the church joined the Fellowship of Evangelical Churches (FIEC). In 1962 the Sunday School won the FIEC banner for the best Sunday School in the country. However, by 1984 the church had returned to mainstream Baptist life and adopted the model trusts of Baptist Union, the Fairbairn Trusts. At the same time they appointed the Bristol and District Baptist Association as trustees of the church premises. These trusts require that the minister must be an accredited Baptist Union minister. So when in 1988 the church called a non-accredited minister, the Revd Ben Tannett, to the pastorate, there were discussions with the officers of the Baptist Union, who granted a temporary waiver from this requirement. The new pastor, who was a former Anglican and previously minister of an independent evangelical church, had strong views. He sought to take the church out of the Baptist Union. The church was not willing to do this and he resigned the pastorate in 2003. The two deacons resigned at the same time. The remaining church members were very discouraged. They had no minister, an empty manse, no deacons and no church officers as the two deacons who had resigned had served as secretary and treasurer. However, the church appointed as its moderator Mr. Peter Price, a member of Weston-super-Mare Baptist Church, who had recently retired from the staff of the Baptist Union. New deacons were appointed and in 2004 Paul Spranring became pastor while studying at Bristol Baptist College. He became the full-time minister on completion of his studies.

Reviewed by Michael J. Collis, Minister, Sarn Baptist Church, Newtown, Powys