

THE GENESIS OF HAVENHILL BAPTIST CHURCH

It all began in the early 1960s when a man and his wife journeyed to the tiny island of Jamaica. His name was Reverend James Green, a Canadian, who was working under the auspices of the Baptist Mid-Missions in the USA. He and his wife Edna began working in the Kingston Gardens area of Jamaica after previously working in St. Elizabeth. Mrs. Green, an accomplished missionary teacher of children, was instrumental in starting a Sunday school ministry.

From Kingston Gardens, inspired and led by God, the Sunday school class soon was taken to their home at 5 Swansea Avenue in Constant Spring Gardens. At this time, there was also a weekly Thursday afternoon children's Happy Hour being held on the carport of the Green's home. Mr. Green would transport the children in his car weekly for this club. These children came from many denominational backgrounds, but the parents seemed pleased that their children were learning Bible stories as well as lively songs. These children were all invited to the Sunday Service.

The first Sunday, the three Green boys, David, Teddy and Peter, put out benches on the verandah. At that time, there were approximately 12 children in attendance. Many families in the surrounding area began hearing about the Sunday school and soon the numbers grew rapidly, as the parents sent out their young ones to hear the powerful words being taught. No longer was it possible to host all the children on the benches on the verandah, partly because of the numbers but also partly because those in the back row were sitting in the hot sun. As such, the children had to be split into three classes. The younger children were hosted inside around the dining table while accommodation for the older children was moved to the very large fowl coop (unused) that was in the Green's backyard.

The work started by the Greens at Swansea Avenue soon took on a new dimension. The Greens had taken on a new missionary focus in Windsor Castle Portland, where Mr. Green was the pastor. It was during this time, that Hyacinth "Blossom" Smith (now Bennett) entered the scene. She was very instrumental with her gifted, no nonsense teaching, which was a real help in rooting and grounding the young converts in the faith. For several years, a Vacation Bible School was held.

Great was the joy when it was learned that the Baptist Mid-Missions had a new family ready to work in Jamaica, preferably in Kingston. July 13, 1968 saw the coming of this missionary couple, the Reverend Dale Loftis and his wife JoAnn along with their five children. They joined forces with the Greens on July 15, 1968 to conduct a Vacation Bible School at the home of the Greens. Many young persons were saved during this week.

The Loftis' were later asked to take over the work that had been started in Kingston by the Greens. Following the week of **VBS**, they began seeking the will of God in finding a place to start His church. In September of that year God led them to a large house located at 16 Fairfax Drive. On Sunday, October 6, 1968, the Havendale Baptist Mission began with morning service and Sunday school. The adults God gave the church at the time were: Mrs. E'clia Green, Bill Cummings, Mr & Mrs. George Bennett and Enda Smith.

Other services were added within a few weeks and by November 3rd, they were able to begin evening services and a full week of activities which included, prayer meetings, choir and youth meeting.

The first financial obligation undertaken was the purchase of 100 metal chairs at a cost of 500 pounds. Chairs had previously been rented, so they were eager to channel the funds into purchasing chairs of their own.

Providing a ministry that would interest the young people and at the same time meet their spiritual needs also was no easy task. Many creative methods were employed, among them were gospel films and music. Because of the age group involved, the Loftis' provided a bus to transport the children to and from the church, a tradition which began with the Greens. With continued numerical growth, an outstanding feature of those early days was the spirit of unity which prevailed.

Havendale Baptist Mission was later formally organized into a church and on April 27, 1969, at 3:00 pm, a long awaited church service was held at the Rehoboth Gospel Assembly, on Constant Spring Road, to mark the event. Four candidates were baptized and a total of seven persons signed the church roll and became charter members. This constituted the membership of what became the Havendale Baptist Church. Reverend Roland Smith was appointed chairman of the business meeting. Articles of Faith were read by Rev. Rob Clubine, followed by the reading of the church covenant by Rev. James Green. The chairman then asked the members to call a pastor, at which time a nomination and vote was taken. Rev. Dale Loftis became the first official Pastor of Havendale Baptist Church. Messrs. George Bennett and Bill Cummings were appointed as deacons. In the early days, Fay Stewart (now Smith), wife of Rev. Dr. Winston Smith, served as secretary and treasurer of the church. A building fund was also started to purchase property for the permanent location of the church.

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