

# **LITTLE STAUGHTON**

## **BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **A Brief History**

On 14<sup>th</sup> June 1757, a group of people from Little Staughton and Hail Weston met together under the leadership of William Joyce, a Little Staughton carpenter. In 1759, the Little Staughton congregation appears to have built a meeting house at Hail Weston, and for three years it met on alternate Sundays at Little Staughton and Hail Weston. In 1762, it was decided to meet in future only at Hail Weston, and the Little Staughton members of the congregation were left without an overseer.

On 21<sup>st</sup> April 1766, the dwelling house of William Pearson was 'certified' as a place to meet. Eight persons joined together on 10<sup>th</sup> June 1766, and established the Baptist Church at Little Staughton.

The following Statement is from the Old Church Book:-

"We, whose names are hereto subscribed, having been called by divine grace, and have been baptized in His name, do, in the awful presence of God, Angels, and men, solemnly covenant to walk together as a distinct Church of Christ of the Baptist Denomination in all Gospel Ordinances and in all relative duties as the Lord, Spirit and Providence shall enable us.

Witness our hand this Tenth day of June 1766.

William Lugsdin

Mary Lugsdin

Ann Lugsdin

George Freshwater

Ann Emery

Hannah Emery

William Grant

On 14<sup>th</sup> September 1768, John Emery became a member, and on 18<sup>th</sup> October, in the same year, he was ordained as its Pastor, a position he held until his death in 1799.

In the Religious Census of 1676, the village was reported to have 15 nonconformists over the age of 16 years. During the years 1768-1780, no less than 158 persons joined the Church.

The Meeting House at Little Staughton appears to have been built at some time between 1766-1776, for in April of 1776, William Lugsden, a yeoman of the village and a member of the Church, sold to Mr. Emery and ten other Members of the congregation, for £35., "all that building now used as a Meeting House in Little Staughton, and the ground whereon it stands, and a Cottage divided into two tenements near the Meeting House."

Sometime later, another building was erected and then enlarged in 1793, and on 22<sup>nd</sup> April 1799, William Lugsden, James Lugsden and James Peppercorn applied to the Archdeacon of Bedford for a Meeting House to be registered as a "Place of Religious Worship for Protestant Dissenters." It was solemnized for marriages in August 1843.

The Chapel continued in use until 1944, when during the Second World War, it was hit and badly damaged by an aircraft taking off from the nearby airfield, and it was decided to demolish it, and rebuild on another site. The entry in the Church book, written by the Pastor, Alfred Barnabus Hall, reads: "Our honoured Chapel was demolished and taken down by the Air Ministry to our sorrow and regret in the month of June, 1944."

The congregation and the Pastor did not despair; the Sunday School was fitted up for the Church to meet in, and the services were held there until the new Chapel was built further north in the centre of the village, at a cost of £10,619, with £10,500 having been paid by the Air Ministry as compensation.

The Church continues to meet for worship and prayer at 10.30am and 6.00pm on the Lord's Day. On Wednesdays, people from surrounding villages meet with us for a short worship service at 10.00am, followed by a cup of tea/coffee and a chat. There is a weekly childrens' work "Live Wires", which meets on Thursday evening at 6.15pm in the Chapel Schoolroom.