

The Minute book records the following:

Copy of letter sent to Mr Irving inviting him to accept the office of Pastor.

Melton Mowbray
December 31st 1867

To Mr J J Irving,
Dear Sir,

We have great pleasure in giving to you the very hearty and unanimous invitation of the church and congregation for you to remain with us and become our Pastor. You know you have the sincere attachment of the people, and that your ministry is appreciated is best proved in the increasing congregations, and most sincerely do we pray that he who is the disposer of all hearts will lead you to accept this invitation.

The promises for the weekly offering box at present amount to £80 but we will guarantee £100 for the first year and feel assured this will go on increasing and that you will not make the amount a reason for declining to remain with us knowing that having been so recently formed into a church we are at present in an infant state. You may depend upon the sympathy and prayerful co-operation of every member of the church.

On behalf of the church

Robert Widdowson, Deacon
H H Tebbutt, Deacon
J T Crosher, Treasurer
C Thompson, Secretary

(The following accompanied the above) (90 Signatures)

Baptist Church Melton Mowbray

To Mr J J Irving

We the members of the above church and congregation invite you to be our Pastor and we promise to give according to our ability for your support.

(List of names)

(Copy of Mr Irvings reply to the above.)

Metropolitan Tabernacle College
January 3rd 1868

To the Baptist Church and Congregation worshipping in the Corn Exchange, Melton Mowbray.

My dear friends,

In answer to your letter which came to hand on Tuesday in which you invite me to accept the Pastorate of the church, I must first of all thank you for the kind feeling which it expresses which is all the more welcome from the fact that it is but a repetition of the kindness I have experienced during the past three months.

Having prayerfully considered your invitation and having consulted with my dear President, Mr Spurgeon, on the subject the only conclusion I can arrive at is that it is the Lords will that I should stay with you. Believing this I accept your invitation with all the heartiness you have expressed in giving it and I unite my prayers with yours that the union thus formed may prove a lasting and blessed one. God willing I will commence my stated labours amongst you on Tuesday the 12th inst.

I would have said a few words to you on what I believe to be needful to secure success in our work, had you not rendered that unnecessary by one sentence in your invitation, it is this – “you may depend upon the sympathy and the prayerful co-operation of every member of the church” – without this success is impossible, with it, together with the blessing of God, anything may be achieved. Individual responsibility is the lesson which the church of the present day needs to learn, May God give us all Grace to realise our responsibility!

Let our aim be first, personal holiness; second, the in gathering of precious souls. Allow me to say one word more. Don't expect too much of me, I am but a man, with all the infirmities of a sinful nature about me. I love my master and I will try to speak to you of him.

Believe me to remain yours affectionately in Jesus,
J J Irving.

*Letter from Spurgeon dated January 25th
Addressed to Rev J J Irving, Cornhill, Melton Mowbray*

I trust our friends of Melton Mowbray will have the best assistance of all lovers of the gospel in their effort to erect a Baptist chapel. If their plans and arrangements appear to me to be judicious, I hope to find them £100 if providence spares me and enables me to do so.

C H Spurgeon

Jan 25

It appears that Mr J J Irvine remained as Pastor of the church for about 3¾ years after which he resigned due to a disagreement with at least one Deacon of the church. From the Church Meeting minutes and various letters it appears it was a matter of either the Deacons standing down or the Pastor resigning. Although the reasons and details remain a little confused (the exact details may not have been fully recorded due to the sensitive nature of the subject), it may well have been over the finance of the new chapel.

In the end the Mr J J Irvine wrote to the church on July 10th 1871 detailing his intention to resign and although there were efforts towards a reconciliation, it was not to be and Mr Irvines final letter to the church is dated August 19th 1871. On October 26th a letter of invitation was sent by the church to a Mr J Tansley to be their new Pastor.

Of interest is a letter from Rev Willmot, Secretary of Spurgens College dated March 12th 1968. It is a response to a query into the history of the first two pastors appointed to the church. It gives the following information on J J Irvine.

J.J. Irvine: Came from George Street, Congregational Church, Oxford. Entered college in 1865 and begun his ministry at Melton Mowbray in 1868. The list of his pastorates, including Melton, is as follows: Melton Mowbray 1868-73; Gt Portland Street, Glasgow 1873-74; Kingston, Glasgow 1874-75; Western Av, Chicago 1875-77; Swadlingcote 1877-79; Maidenhead 1880-87; Morris, Illinois 1887-91; Belsidere, Illinois 1891-93; Sparland, Illinois 1893-94 and Appleton, Wisconsin 1894-99. According to our records, he died on 9.4.1899 – presumably still in harness.