

SPREADING THE WORD:

Free Churches Overseas



CANADA

In October 1973 Let the Bible Speak began broadcasting over CFGM radio, just north of Toronto, and for the next three years prepared the way for the first Free Presbyterian church to be established outside Ulster. In 1975 I was asked to consider moving to Toronto to take over a small Bible Presbyterian church, whose pastor was retiring. I accepted and in June 1976 I arrived in Toronto to pioneer the Free Presbyterian church there.

A maelstrom of opposition swirled around this move. Every newspaper and most radio and TV stations were involved in maligning

our small congregation of about fifteen people in a city of over two million. The upshot was that after I had been ministering a month, the church building, which we rented from the East York School Board, was suddenly slated for demolition on the pretense of making a much-needed tennis court. The building was demolished, the tennis court never made, and the site sits today, twenty-five years later, as a mute testimony to the bigotry and intolerance of the ecumenical movement.

Despite all the opposition, the Lord built His church. After two years in a rented school accommodation the congregation bought an attractive church on Warden Avenue, then

moved to the present beautiful new facilities in 1994. A Christian school, started in 1989 with sixteen pupils, has grown to almost three hundred and is housed in two excellent school buildings.

After "Let the Bible Speak" began to air in Calgary, Alberta, Jim Warnock and his family inquired about the possibility of a Free church in that city. In due course a church was established under the ministry of Rev. William Whiteside and continues to thrive under the ministry of Rev. David Fletcher. The radio ministry also prepared the way for the church in Cloverdale, near Vancouver, where Rev. Ian Goligher has pioneered the work



from the beginning. Two other men who emigrated from Ulster are pioneering churches in Canada: Rev. Reggie Cranston in Port Hope, Ontario, and Rev. Andrew Foster in Penticton, British Columbia. The Lord has also called a number of young Canadians to the ministry: Rev. Larry Saunders, who is the associate minister in Toronto, Rev. Kevin McLeod (Barrie, Ontario), and Rev. Tony D'Addurno (Fredericton, New Brunswick). David McClelland and Lee Sterritt have completed their theological training while Mike Jaatinen is currently studying in Greenville.

UNITED STATES

During a preaching tour in Japan, Dr. Bob Jones handed Dr. Paisley a letter from Faith Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina. The congregation

was exploring the possibility of joining the Free Presbyterian Church. In 1976 the Presbytery accepted its application and Faith Free Presbyterian Church commenced its witness. Until 1980 the pulpit was mostly supplied by visiting preachers from Ulster. Then Rev. Alan Cairns took up the ministry and has seen the church become the mother church of the American work. The church exercises an influential radio ministry and distributes over 6,500 tapes of its services annually across America and abroad. Recently the church's tapes have been carried even further afield over the Internet, through sermonaudio.com.

Just after the commencement of the work in Greenville another small church was established in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania. Bob McNeill and a few other Ulster émigrés had the vision for the work. It was a tough work for a long time, even after Rev. John Greer moved there in 1983. However, the Lord richly blessed Mr. Greer's ministry and established a strong congregation that has exercised a nationwide ministry by means of radio. After outgrowing its limited accommodations, the congregation moved into beautiful new facilities in nearby Malvern. Following Mr. Greer's return to Ulster in August 2000, Dr. Mark Allison assumed the pastorate and reports continued blessing on the work.

As a result of the witness in Malvern a strong new church has been established in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where Rev. Stephen Hamilton has ministered since 1998. In Boston, New York, Rev. Phil Owen petitioned the Presbytery to accept the Baptist church he had been pastoring. The Presbytery agreed and Mr. Owen continues to exercise a faithful ministry in this rural area near Buffalo. The newest Free Presbyterian work in the United States is in Arkansas, where Canadian David Keller is the licentiate minister.

In 1982, the Presbytery authorized the inauguration of the North American branch of the Whitefield College of the Bible in Greenville for the training of young men for the ministry. As a result, a number of young men have gone forth to establish new churches: Rev. David Brame in Manchester, New Hampshire; Rev. David Mook, in Phoenix, Arizona; Rev. John Wagner, in Orlando, Florida; Rev. Myron Mooney in Trinity, Alabama; and Rev. Reginald Kimbro in Winston Salem, North Carolina. Another graduate of the college who has since left the church pioneered the work in Indianapolis, where Rev. Paul Fitzsimons currently minis-

ters. For many years Dr. Allison assisted Dr. Cairns in the work of the college. On Dr. Allison's removal to Malvern, Dr. Michael Barrett, a long-time assistant minister in Greenville and a noted Old Testament scholar who had taught at Bob Jones University for almost thirty years, assumed the leadership of the college. Rev. David Brame has accepted a call from the Greenville church to become its associate pastor and to teach systematic theology in the college. At the moment there are ten students training for the Free Presbyterian ministry, men whose burden it is to go out to establish new Free churches across America and Canada.

AUSTRALIA

In 1974, during an extended preaching tour of Australia, Dr. John Douglas, the Clerk of Presbytery, met the members of Eyre Bible Fellowship in South Australia. Dr. Douglas visited Australia again in 1976 and at that time the fellowship requested that it be accepted by the Presbytery as a congregation of the church. The Presbytery agreed and so commenced the work in Port Lincoln, where Rev. Michael Patrick ministered for many years before going to Perth to seek to establish the work there. Out of the Port Lincoln church grew another work in Lock, and there is an open door to pioneer in the city of Adelaide.

It is with deep gratitude to God that we stand at this fiftieth anniversary and thank Him for all that He has done. We gratefully echo the Psalmist who said, "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23). ■

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