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## Chapter 1

### STEPPING STONES

Notre Dame cathedral in old Quebec city has seen many historic events. On this sunny afternoon in June 1979 I was witnessing another. I was just inside the main doorway looking into the gloomy interior of the church, where a young man stood in front of two rows of school children, accompanied by a male teacher. The young man held a Bible in his hand and, pointing in turn to each of the 'stations of the cross' upon the walls of the cathedral, he was teaching the students about the passion of Jesus. They listened with rapt attention. Though they were all sixteen or seventeen years old, and were very familiar with Canadian culture and the history of Quebec, this teaching was new to them. As one looked closer, it could be seen that all the young men were wearing 'kippas' on their heads - a sign that they were Jewish.

I looked on in wonder and with the special thrill of a participant, as these students had come from our school in Toronto, to spend an educational weekend in historic Quebec. Toronto Hebrew Academy is a noted, orthodox Jewish school and I had been privileged to teach there for the past two years. These forty students were our Grade 11 class and my colleague, Ari Barchi, and I had been asked to lead this special field trip. None of these students knew that I had recently given my notice that I would be leaving the school at the end of this current term, to take up a new 'calling' - that of the full-time pastorate. Since that decision had been made, God had led me into some remarkable experiences and this weekend was proving to be His continued blessing.

As I viewed the magnificent, ancient walls of the cathedral, with the fourteen stations before which the faithful would kneel in prayer as they remembered the path Jesus took from Gethsemene to Calvary, my mind was taken back to the stations in my life through which God had led me. I looked back over more than twenty years and saw the truth declared by the Psalmist.

*"The steps of a man are established by the Lord; and He delights in his way. When he falls he shall not be hurled headlong; because the Lord is the One who holds his hand."* Ps.37:23,24

I see so many stations or 'stepping stones' in my life that have led on to deeper experiences with the Lord, and, without which, I would not have the story I want to relate. Each stepping stone led on to the next, each one being a direct intervention of the Lord in my plans. It is only on looking back that I can see something of the purposes He had from the very beginning. I can now understand just why He 'closed that door', when I thought it should be open. I can now see how He has worked in other people's

lives, even non believers, to fulfill His plans for me. I can now say that I know that my disappointments are often His appointments. Now, I can trust him with every part of my future for He has proved Himself in my past. I know the stepping stones are there though I cannot see them yet. If the past has set a pattern for the future, I shall not see them before experiencing them.

I have come to understand that the 'walk of faith' does not depend upon my great 'believing' but rather on my yielding when He changes the course of my life by His direct intervention. Such 'faith' has more to do with obedience than it has with believing. Obedience born out of trust. If my faith were measured in terms used by some 'faith teachers' of today, I would fail miserably. To them, faith is something I can work up, so that if I have sufficient of it, I can persuade God to do what I desire. If I am sick, it is because I do not have enough 'faith'; if I am in need, it is because I do not have enough 'faith'. Yet, when I read the scriptures they teach me that I cannot produce faith or increase it in myself. That is a sovereign work of the Lord, and He does that work as I yield to His leading and make His Word the foundation of my life. As I read the great chapter on faith in Hebrews 11, I do not see extraordinary men and women commended as heroes because they believed, but rather, I see an account of God's intervention and leading in the lives of ordinary people in order to teach us great truths and principles of Christian living. But enough theology for now ! On with the story !

## Chapter 2

### THE JOURNEY BEGINS

The service was over in the little chapel, and a small group of teenagers gathered around the youthful preacher. We had gone that evening to encourage him as he was new to the work of lay preaching, so essential to the many small chapels of Wales. His message has long since been forgotten but the conversation that followed has not. We talked about my school, Cowbridge Grammar, where he had been a pupil just two years earlier, and then Aneurin asked the question that has changed my life.

"Tell me, Gareth," he said, "what will you do with the Lord Jesus Christ?"

It was just five weeks earlier that I had first entered the home of Vince and Betty Bishop. They held meetings for teenagers which my sister Barbara attended each Friday evening. There they sang lively choruses, played some Bible quizzes and, sometimes, had a visiting speaker. I had been to Sunday School until my mother died when I was fourteen but had little interest in spiritual things now. However, at Barbara's invitation, I found myself seated in the comfortable corner seat of the Bishops' living room and had to admit that I was enjoying myself. You will understand that that was quite easy, seeing I was the only boy there with fifteen girls ! I thought that might be the reason why Betty called me into the kitchen at the end of the evening while cold drinks and cookies were being prepared. Naturally, she would expect me to carry in the heavy tray of drinks. I did not expect her to say what she did as she turned to me.

"Tell me, Gareth," she said. "what will you do with the Lord Jesus Christ?"

In the busyness of that kitchen, evading the question was easy, but it was impossible to shake from my mind until the young preacher challenged me again. In the meantime, I had come to realise that Christianity proclaims not only the death of Jesus upon a cross, but also His resurrection from the dead. I began to reason that if He is indeed risen from the dead, He is alive, and therefore it is possible to know Him personally. Each week I had managed to avoid being alone with Betty as I knew she would again ask the question to which I had no answer, but now that question had caught up with me. As the others walked with Aneurin to the bus terminal, I climbed the hill toward home. Entering my bedroom, I knelt beside the bed and prayed a simple prayer.

"Lord Jesus, if you are real, please come into my life, take away my sin and make me yours." I did not know what else to say, so I continued with the words of a simple chorus recently learned.

"Into my heart, into my heart, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Come in today, come in to stay, come into my heart, Lord Jesus. Amen"

Little did I realise the exciting journey of faith I had just begun.

Some may say that it was just a coincidence that Aneurin would ask the same question that I had been avoiding, but I have come to see so many examples of God's intervening in my life in similar 'coincidental' ways, that I now recognise them as God's appointments - stepping stones in my walk of faith. My purpose in this book is to introduce you to the God who is concerned in leading each one of us into an intimate walk with Himself. He opens doors and closes them; He leads through valleys and over mountain tops; He takes our disappointments and makes them His appointments.

'When God wants to drill a man...  
and thrill a man ...  
and skill a man;  
When God wants to mold a man to play the noblest part;  
When He yearns with all His heart to create so great and bold a man  
that all the world shall be amazed,  
Watch His methods ! Watch His ways !  
How He ruthlessly perfects - those He royally elects;  
How He hammers him and hurts him and with mighty blows converts him  
into trial lumps of clay which only God can understand !  
While his tortured heart is crying and he lifts beseeching hands !  
How He bends, but never breaks those whose good He undertakes;  
How He uses those He chooses, and with loving purpose fuses,  
by burdened soul induces him to try God's riches out.  
God knows what He's about !'

(Author unknown - but appreciated)

In the months following my simple prayer, I had grown a lot in my understanding of basic Bible truths. I was blessed by having some good teachers who loved the Lord and His Word. I had joined a church and was active in their young people's group, the "Crusaders". I was beginning to discover the 'riches of our inheritance in Christ' - the fruit of His Spirit. Truly, *"Heaven above is softer blue, Earth around is sweeter green. Something lives in every hue that Christless eyes have never seen."* (G Wade Robinson). Those were the days when we showed our allegiances by wearing lapel 'badges'. Some advertised support for the local soccer club, others for the latest entertainment 'star'. Mine simply said "Elim Crusader". Hardly inspiring, but very significant.

The following Summer, I stood watching our school cricket team playing one of their strongest rivals, a Swansea grammar school. The visitors were batting and struggling against our bowlers, and I was intensely involved in the game.

"I see you belong to Elim Crusaders" said a voice at my ear. "I assume you know the Lord".

I turned to see that the speaker was a player from the visiting team. He looked a fine athlete in his cricket 'whites' and his engaging smile invited friendship.

"Ye-es" I stammered, as I had not yet met anyone who was so open in revealing his faith. "Yes, I do".

Soon we began a stroll around the edge of the cricket ground as we warmed to one another and our newfound friendship in Christ. Just as we arrived at the gate leading into the school playing fields, my former Latin teacher, a hard task master who also happened to be a selector for the Welsh Schoolboys cricket team, entered. My new friend was being considered for a position on the Welsh team, so he was known to my teacher. I was also known, not for my skills on the cricket field, but for my ignorance in the Latin class ! He also knew that our surnames were the same - Evans.

"Hello Don! Hello Gareth!" he said, and then added "Are you two brothers ?"

How foolish the question was, considering we lived over thirty miles apart! I was startled to hear Don reply, "Yes sir! Brothers in the Lord!"

That was the first time I had ever heard someone speak out his faith with boldness, and I was highly embarrassed.

An interesting sidenote here. Many years later I would be visiting a church in Cardiff when representing the Anastasis (see Ch ). When an elder in that church knew that I had been educated at Cowbridge Grammar School, he asked if I had known Sid Harris, the Latin teacher. I then discovered that Sid had recently died, having been a faithful elder at that church for many years. I wonder, did Don's testimony that day have any impact on Sid later becoming a believer?

## Chapter 3

### "I WILL GO BEFORE YOU"

I enjoyed that day with Don Evans and often thought about him in the following months, little dreaming how our paths would cross again.

I continued my studies in Mathematics and Physics with the hope of going on to university the following year. The requirements for entering university were that you had to choose four colleges, rank them in order of preference and submit that list to a central agency. They would then inform you of the academic standard you needed to attain in each subject, for each of those university colleges to accept you as a student. Birmingham was considered to have the best faculty for Mathematics, my forte, so it topped my list, followed by Cardiff, Swansea and Aberystwyth, colleges of the University of Wales.

Many hours of 'swotting' preceded the dreaded two weeks of Advanced Level examinations in my three subjects, Pure Mathematics, Applied Mathematics and Physics. It was with great joy, and a little surprise, that I heard some weeks later, that I had passed in all subjects and with sufficient grades to meet all the required standards. Until that time I had had no doubt that Birmingham was my goal, but now other thoughts began to surface. A new destination was coming to the fore in my thinking. Birmingham was "too industrial", Cardiff was "too near" and Swansea was becoming "the #1".

So it was that I wrote to the pastor of the Elim Church in Swansea asking his assistance in finding 'digs' for a new university student. I was rather naive in thinking that a pastor has time for such house-hunting so I was still without an address when a letter arrived which shook me into action.

*'We regret that we shall not be able to send you a grant towards the cost of tuition, books and accommodation for the coming year, if you are unable to provide us with your address in Swansea. The deadline for such information is ....'*

The date was the following Wednesday, five days away !

Though Swansea was only thirty miles from my home, I had been there but once in my life - an afternoon visit with an uncle to watch a cricket match. The day the letter arrived I was on my way again, hoping to find the Elim Church and its pastor. I left the bus at the city centre and entered a telephone kiosk, hoping to find an address and telephone number for the Elim Church office. Though searching thoroughly through all possible avenues, I found no Elim church listed in the directory. Two young ladies standing outside the kiosk, saw my concern and offered their help. I doubted they could assist me as I told them my dilemma. However, much to my surprise, not only did they know the location of the

pastor's home and the bus I would need to take to get there, but they were able to encourage me, both of them being believers also! I remembered that the Bible spoke about the possibility of our 'entertaining angels unaware'.

When the pastor realised the purpose of my visit he was very apologetic as he had forgotten to follow up my request. A cup of tea did little to calm the anxiety I was beginning to feel as he rummaged through his desk looking for a list of potential landlords. He had prepared this list when my letter had arrived some weeks earlier, but the busyness of the pastoral office had taken over and my request had slipped from his mind. A few minutes later, with the list in his hand, we got in his car and started toward the eight homes where he thought digs might be arranged. As we passed Singleton Park where the university is located, he suddenly braked and turned into a narrow lane alongside the park.

"There's a lady here who has twin boys" he said. "One of them is going to Bible College and the other will be starting university with you. I haven't got her name on my list but we might as well start our search by asking her, seeing we are passing so close to her home."

I thought, "How foolish! No mother is going to let a stranger take the place of one of her twin sons."

Despondently, I sat in the car while the pastor talked with the lady in the house. He didn't look very hopeful as he returned. I felt even less hope.

"Come in. She wants to meet you." he said with little enthusiasm.

I entered the home and listened as the lady of the house expressed her doubt that her sons would approve her giving lodging to a stranger. However, she would ask them and let me know. Of course, that was of little value to me as I was already at the deadline date in determining my university home. In reply to the pastor's question as to the whereabouts of her sons, she said, "Russell is at the university and Don is up the street at the local store."

"Don?" I said, my memory flashing back to the cricket game almost a year before. "Did you say Don? Did he captain the Swansea Grammar School cricket team last year?"

"Yes!" came the reply as a familiar figure walked in through the front doorway. He wasn't in cricket whites but his face bore the same pleasant grin that I remembered. "Mum, this is Gareth. He's the boy I met at Cowbridge. The one I told you about. The new Christian!" I told him I was looking for digs for my time at Swansea university as he hugged me at which he eagerly said, "Mum, he can have my room!"

Over Don's shoulder I saw his mother hold out her arms to me, welcoming me into that wonderful household. I had found a new home and a family that would soon become as close to me as any natural family could ever be.

I began to wonder. "Was God at that cricket match? Was He already planning this accommodation?"

I am convinced He was! While I was planning an education at Birmingham, He was preparing a home at Swansea. And now He had led me to the only person I knew in the entire city of Swansea, a city of over 100,00 persons!

## Chapter 4

### GO FORTH, YOUNG MAN!

The four years I spent at the beautiful campus in Brynmill, Swansea were very rewarding. Though I had entered university to study mathematics, a switch was made to the physics department during the second year as I found a growing interest in the latter subject. In retrospect, this also can be seen as the leading of the Lord. I had first thought to go to Birmingham as that university was noted for its mathematics department. Now I was studying physics at Swansea, a college noted for its physics department! I achieved a better degree in physics than anyone expected and, in my final year, a diploma in education. On leaving the university I took up my first employment teaching Physics as Head of Department at a new secondary school.

The Evans' home became a special place where I was treated as one of the family. Indeed, to this day they are still family to me. We attended the same church together and I joined the Swansea Gospel Male Voice Choir, of which Mary Evans was the pianist and Aubrey Evans the librarian. Mary used to make sure I ate really well while her husband, Aubrey, though an uneducated man, gave me some of those gems of insight that have stayed with me throughout the years. Once, when I was a little frustrated at the apparent lack of zeal among the youth of the church, he took me aside, and said,

*“Remember son, that those who follow afar off, can still see the Lord, but those who go one step ahead of the Light of the World, can no longer see Him and find themselves walking in their own shadow.”*

Russell studied Metallurgy at University and later became Senior Professor at that same college. He was a fine student and a great help to me as I struggled through my honours courses in nuclear Physics.

Don Evans went to Bible College, pastored for a few years and then entered Swansea University College to study Philosophy. He now lives in Dunedin, New Zealand as a professor there, and one of the world's leading academics in the field of Medical Ethics. He has traveled widely, both in academic circles and as a speaker in the charismatic renewal movement.

It was during those wonderful years in Swansea, I met Anne, a secretary who was attending the same church as myself. Her father was Norwegian and had been a faithful minister of the Gospel even though his health had been poor for many years. He provided me with many insights into the deeper things of God, and I still treasure devotional books he gave me. Mum had been brought up in the church where Evan Roberts was the leader of the youth at the time of the outbreak of the Welsh revival in 1904. She knew many of the 'saints' of that time and was, later, a member of Rees Howells' prayer band. With

such a godly heritage, it is little wonder that Anne has displayed the deep Christian character I have learned to appreciate in her.

We were engaged on the day of my graduation and married one year later at the completion of my teaching diploma course. We moved into our first home in time for the start of my teaching at Cynffig Comprehensive School. I never understood how I obtained that position. It must have been another of the Lord's appointments for I never sought it. One of my professors approached me at University one day, asking if I had found work yet. I answered in the negative but without concern as there was still some time before University would end. He then suggested I write to an address, which he had written down for me, and enquire about any positions available. Shortly afterwards I was invited for an interview for the position at Cynffig. As far as I can ascertain I was the only one interviewed and was then offered the job teaching physics up to Advanced level.

It was in my third year at that first school that I was invited to teach with the British Forces in Germany. The British Army of the Rhine had several schools where the children of military personnel were educated and I was to teach at the Windsor Boys School which, like its sister Girls School, was home to over five hundred secondary school students. I was the youngest teacher ever employed by the Ministry of Defense at that time, having done neither 'National Service' nor the five years of teaching experience normally required.

I had not realised those requirements when I first, tentatively, applied to teach with the B.O.A.R. so was a little disappointed when I received their first refusal. I had given up all thought of such a teaching post when, a few months later, another letter arrived telling me that there was a vacancy to teach in Hamm, West Germany. Apparently the physics teacher at that school had been promoted to the position of deputy headmaster and mine was the only name of a physics teacher with suitable qualifications that they had on their books. God can even override army regulations!

Those were good years for Anne and me. God had already blessed us with one daughter Corinne, born in Wales, and now He gave us two more, Andrea and Lynette to complete our family. We made many German friends and enjoyed living cross culturally. On Sundays we traveled to a neighbouring Canadian army base where the Salvation Army held an evening service. As we fellowship together, my heart warmed to these hospitable people from the land of Indians and Inuit, 'mounties' and trappers, bears and eagles, pizza and salmon. Thus it was, at their encouragement, that we began to pursue the possibility of teaching in Canada.

I soon received a letter informing me that I had been accepted to teach Physics at a noted technical college in Toronto, Canada. I was to send them photocopies of my degree and diploma certificates to verify my qualifications, and they would inform me of flight arrangements to the great land of the North.

Our documents were mailed off to Bloor Street, Toronto, and soon a reply informed me that I would probably be eligible for a "Type A Specialists Diploma". Thorough medical examinations followed, visas were obtained, my resignation was given at the school and we waited....

A second letter was not so pleasing! A mistake had been made! The local Director of Education had appointed a teacher to fill my position not knowing that the College Principal had already approved me! Three teachers had been appointed for two vacancies and, as I was from outside the country, I was the one to be disappointed. The embarrassment was great as we told our friends the latest news. We had given such glowing testimony of God's goodness to us and now it proved but vain words. We had no job for the new school year and would have to return to Wales to find some other work for at least a term. Our prayers were full of questioning, little realising that the Lord knew exactly what He was doing !

Three days later another letter came. This was from the British army saying how they regretted my resignation and inviting me to reconsider. They wrote,

*"We have another post available as Physics teacher in Hong Kong. Would you please consider that post and let us know your decision a.s.a.p?"*

As our closest friends were also going to Hong Kong, the decision was easy to make. We were to discover again, that the Lord was a few steps ahead of us.

## Chapter 5

### THE PEARL OF THE ORIENT

Hong Kong, the "pearl of the Orient" lived up to its name. From the moment we arrived at KaiTak airport, we fell in love with its colours and smells, noise and people. Anne shopped in its street markets, often late at night, with no fear, and I enjoyed its sporting facilities with tennis twice a week and swimming at the Forces Club.

We soon found ourselves involved in the Christian life of the community. I had the privilege of friendship with Jackie Pullinger at the time when she was just beginning the work that had such an impact among the drug addicts of Hong Kong. It was with her that I went into the 'walled city' of Kowloon and experienced a Bible class in 'the dragon's den'.

Each month Anne and I would trek across the countryside to an orphanage where we would tell stories about Jesus, followed by chicken's foot soup and boiled rice. I sang in a Chinese choir, even daring to take solo parts in an Easter cantata ... in Cantonese !

John Bechtel had been a missionary in Hong Kong since before the 2nd WW. He had developed a printing office and had pastored the Waterloo Road Alliance Church. He was now retired and his son John Jr. was overseeing the work plus several rooftop schools. The senior Bechtel was not retired from serving the Lord, however, as each week the living room of his home would hold up to thirty British military personnel for a Bible study. Among these would be a dozen or so Nepalese soldiers, Gurkhas, known for their bravery and held in high esteem by their comrades. It was my privilege each week to teach this study, sometimes alternating with a dear old lady who had served the Lord in China before the Japanese invasion.

Little did I realise that our being in Hong Kong, and being part of this Bible Study group, would have a profound impact on our future! Another one of God's divine appointments!

During this time we again applied for visas to enter Canada though teaching posts were not being advertised outside the country any more. Instead, I received a letter from the Superintendent of Schools for San Francisco. His nephew had visited our home in Hong Kong while on 'rest & recreation' leave from the battlefield in VietNam and, on returning home, had asked his uncle to invite me to teach in California. He wrote that, should we ever arrive in San Francisco, he would do his best to find me a position. Therefore, in the summer of 1969 we were set to fly to the west coast of the United States, but a government change of policy in the corridors of Westminster changed all that. It had been policy that all British service personnel could be funded for the total costs of finding their own ways 'home' from any foreign field. That meant that we could travel to any place and be funded the given costs of returning to the United Kingdom. In this way our total costs to San Francisco or Canada would be met.

In May of 1969, due to escalating military costs, the policy was changed so that all personnel had to be repatriated by military plane, with no cash payments. As we could not afford a speculative visit to California or western Canada, having no job guaranteed, our plans came to another halt. Another door closed! Another disappointment!

I hurriedly applied for teaching posts in Great Britain, knowing that, if I obtained evidence of three 'refusals' the British Army would cover my salary for one term, ie; up to the new year. The refusals came in and we flew back to Wales and family.

When the new school term started we were staying at Anne's parents' home while our own home was being vacated by the tenants who had lived in it while we were overseas.

The lady in the offices of the Glamorgan Education Board answered my questions simply.

"Yes, it will be all right for your daughters to remain out of school for the two weeks it would take to move back to your home."

"No, they do not have to register there and then have to transfer in two weeks time."

I was just about to put the phone down when she asked me a surprising question.

"Excuse me, sir. Is it possible that your name is Mr Evans, Gareth Evans from Hong Kong?"

When I answered her, still wondering how she knew my name, she told me that if I went to Ogmore Grammar School, a job would be waiting for me.

Ogmore Grammar was a highly regarded school at the head of one of the valleys running north from our home. Its most famous son was Lynn 'the leap' Davies, world record holder in the long jump until Bob Beamer flew through the sky in the rarified air of Mexico City in the Olympics of 1968. The sidewalks in Nantymoel, Lynn's home village, were painted in different colours, each measuring the exact length of his record jump.

It would take just fifteen minutes for me to drive there every day, once we were back 'home' in the little bungalow we had bought just after our wedding.

When I met the headmaster on my first day, I asked how long he wanted me to teach there as I was guaranteed a salary for four months without work! I asked if the incumbent teacher was sick or on leave for some other reason, as I had applied for this post while in Hong Kong, and assumed it had been filled as I had heard nothing back. He told me that the Board of Governors had wanted to appoint me but could not as they had a policy not to appoint from overseas. Instead, they had told all the other applicants that the post was filled and hoped, somehow, that I would contact them on my return to Wales – just as I had done!

## Chapter 6

### BUSY! BUSY! BUSY!

Soon, all thoughts of Canada left us as I settled into my new work as Head of the Physics dept. I also printed the school newspaper, ran the Christian Union and conducted school assembly. We started a teenagers' Fellowship group at our home and watched as God blossomed it into a large work covering seven churches and a wide area around our town. I produced a youth 'newspaper' linking local youth works and formed a fifty-voice choir performing Easter and Christmas cantatas in local halls, chapels and prison. We ran summer camps and weekend youth nights. One evening I had a telephone call from the local YMCA, a very active and large sporting club. The caller said that they were looking for young blood on their Board and wondered if I might be available, having been recommended to them for my work among local youth. I said I would and shortly afterwards attended my first Board Meeting at which I was made to feel very welcome. As I sat there I looked around at these extensive premises which were never used on Sundays, these being the days before Sunday sports were all the in-thing. I asked how much it would cost me to rent these facilities. "Nothing!" I was told, "You are now a Board Member so you are entitled to a key. Just tell the secretary that you want one and what you want it for, and that will be no problem. Thus, on Sunday evenings I had free access to the local YMCA, its snack bar and recreation hall, and soon, many young people from local churches came for 8 o'clock Fellowship. Those were special days of the Lord's blessing when many came to the Lord. The elders of my church gave me 'carte blanche' to run the youth/young adults work of the church and many other churches saw me as their own youth worker. In truth I was a pastor-overseer to the youth, having many fine people working with me running the camps, barbeques, outreaches, YMCA programs, etc. – and leading their friends to the Lord.

I was busy ! busy ! busy ! In fact, too busy!

I was beginning to run ahead of the Light!

Eventually, my frenetic pace caught up with me and I began a long spell of sleeplessness. I would walk for hours trying to tire myself enough to sleep but would then lie awake all night reliving all the events of that day. On one occasion, I seemed to recall every move of the ball in an International Rugby game I had watched that day on television. My doctor had prescribed medicine and one of my friends would come around often, in the evenings, to chuckle at me as I staggered across the room on my way to bed. Who wants friends like that?! In school, my students were told not to disturb me if I did not come out of the dark room, attached to my Physics lab, at the end of a break. They knew I was lying down to rest and were to call the headmaster who would fill in for me! After six months my sleeping returned to normal but I had discontinued all of my activities except overseeing the youth work.

After five years in Ogmores Grammar school I was enjoying my work and the friendship of my colleagues. I was not, however, prepared for the next turn of events. New Government policy decreed that our school had to join with Nantymoel Secondary School to form a new Comprehensive School, which would have a custom built facility at the foot of the valley, near our new home in Bridgend. As the youth work had grown we had sold our little bungalow and moved into this country town, in the centre of the beautiful Vale of Glamorgan. Combining schools meant forming a new Staff Association and then electing a representative to serve them on the Board of Governors.

At that time, no teacher was allowed to serve as a governor of a school, so the choosing of a representative was to be done with care. I attended the combined staff meeting with some idea of whom I would support. I certainly had no thought that I might be considered. I was not one who socialised frequently with other staff, nor was I as long-standing in those valley schools as many of my colleagues. Two hours later, I left that meeting shaking my head in some amazement. I had been unanimously elected both as first President of the new Staff Association and also as its representative on the Board of Governors!

I turned to Alan, our Geography teacher, who was walking at my side. "I don't believe this" I said. "Why not?" he replied, "we all know you're the only one who would always speak the truth." I whispered a quiet prayer. "Thank You, Lord, to You be all the Glory!" Then turning back to Alan, I added, "Wait till I get home to tell Anne ! She wont believe it either!"

## Chapter 7

### OPPORTUNITIES ABOUND

The next year was a very interesting one. Plans for the new school were under way and we all watched with interest to see that the architects took our suggestions seriously as they made their drawings. Those of us in the Grammar School were concerned that we would not lose some of the more academic activities we had, in favour of activities geared more to a general school population. I'm sure the teachers from the other original school were equally concerned that they and their students would not be treated as 'second class'. My responsibility was to represent both groups.

I was invited to join a small group of Physics teachers from other South Wales' schools in a task force, to develop a new curriculum for Advanced level students - those preparing to enter University. We met each week at the University College in Cardiff and would make and test electronic equipment, discuss curriculum and enjoy stimulating conversation. When one realises that 1960, the year I graduated from University, was the year that the transistor was patented, you can understand that we were all electronic 'novices' playing with new toys. It was only fifteen years after my graduation but the science of electronics was already having a major influence, not least in education. Towards the end of the school year I was invited to apply to attend a full-time electronics course at the University, at the end of which I would be granted a Master of Science degree. This was very tempting as I found the subject fascinating and considered that such a course would only augment my teaching skills. I already had the goal of making our school a recognised leader in the teaching of Physics. Further, I had always carried a little regret that I had not accepted one of the two opportunities given me for study towards a doctorate in Physics. At my graduation I had been invited to stay on at Swansea University to do research and, secondly, I had been invited to join a British Geographical Society research team in Antarctica for three years with a 'guaranteed' doctorate afterwards at Oxford University. However, I was a typical Welshman, with the national characteristic of low self esteem, not believing that I was really capable of reaching the doctorate goal. And, I had met Anne - and was in love!

I considered this new opportunity carefully, arranged for another teacher to be available to my school and then applied for a sabbatical leave to further my own education. Mr Price, my headmaster was supportive of my application and it was submitted to the Board of Governors. Our next Board meeting was still two weeks away so I was surprised just a few days later, when I was told by the headmaster that the Board had rejected my application. On further enquiry, I found it was just the chairman who had made the decision without consultation, and so expressed my dissatisfaction to Mr Price. Such actions had been quite common with School Boards who were noted for their lack of empathy with the teachers they employed. This was one of the reasons why the Ministry of Education was insisting that an active teacher be appointed to each Board of Governors. I suspect that the chairman did not realise that the teacher who had applied for sabbatical leave was the same one who sat at the Board meeting!

The headmaster told me not to be too dismayed as he had an even better suggestion. "Gareth, I am looking for a Principal for Middle School, and I think you would be the man for that position. It is possible that going away to University now might jeopardize that possibility." Things were getting very interesting ! Decisions were having to be made and I was unsure just what my decisions should be. Should I pressure the Board of Governors to release me for a Masters' degree course ? Should I withdraw that request and trust that the headmaster would follow up on his suggestion ? Did I really want to leave teaching Physics for an administrative position? Coupled with all this was the extra work of developing the Staff Association, its constitution and its relationship with the Board of Governors.

Anne and I talked over the possibilities and prayed without seeing any clear guidelines. Little did we understand that the Lord was already very actively involved in all that was happening. Again, my disappointment at being refused a leave of absence was later to be seen as His appointment to something bigger and better.

## Chapter 8

### “GIVE US A SHOVE, LORD!”

It was a beautiful , sunny Sunday morning. I was on a 'spiritual high' as I had been for the past three weeks. Though decisions had to be made, my walk with the Lord was very special. The Youth work was really prospering and many lives were being changed. New people were coming each week and other churches were beginning to identify with us. But this day was to be different!

Early in the morning service, I had a deep sense of the Lord's presence and His small inner voice spoke to my spirit.

"It's time to go home " He said.

"I can't get up and leave now" I thought. "What will the congregation think? They'll assume I'm not enjoying the service!"

The inner voice persisted until, after half an hour or so, I quietly rose from my seat and walked out of the church. It was about a mile to our home and as I walked slowly in that direction I talked to the Lord. Anyone passing would have thought I was muttering to myself, but the Spirit's presence was so real as I poured out my frustrations to Him.

As I walked past Brewery Field, home of Bridgend Rugby club, the pride of all local sports fans, I came upon a small boy struggling with his tricycle. The front wheel and rear left wheel were on the sidewalk but the other rear wheel was still at road level. He was trying with all his little strength, to get the tricycle onto the sidewalk. As he saw me approach, he lifted his tear-stained face and said,

"Give us a shove, mister."

I reached down my hand, took hold of the back of the tricycle and with little effort, sent the toddler happily on his way. As he turned the corner, he looked back and waved just as I was saying to my unseen companion,

"Please, give me a shove, Lord."

I felt much as that little one must have felt. A wide open pathway ahead of him but struggling to know how to go on. As I continued that walk, a prayer born of the Spirit began to come from my lips. Since that day I have repeated this prayer so often that I know it almost word for word as spoken that first time so long ago. I no longer speak out this prayer as it has become so much a part of me that it is now truly, the prayer of the heart.

Some time after this I read about the 'Desert Fathers'. These men (and women) lived in the 4th century after Christianity had been made respectable by Rome. Believers were no longer being put to death for the Faith. How then, were they to 'carry their cross' and 'die to self'?

The Desert Fathers decided that a life in the solitude of the Egyptian desert, away from all the attractions of this world's vanity, would amount to such 'martyrdom'. They meditated on many things, especially prayer, and how one could "pray without ceasing".

Among the teachings that caught my attention was this; that if one repeated a prayer often enough, it left the lips and became a 'prayer of the heart'. Thus, although the person is no longer speaking, his heart continues to cry out to God in 'ceaseless prayer'. This prayer has become such a one to me.

*"Lord, I long to walk in Your will. I ask nothing else but that, when I come to the end of my journey, I will hear You say, 'Well done, good and faithful servant'. I know I am foolish and even stupid at times, and that I will step out of Your will, but I give You 100% permission (I actually said 110% but a Physics teacher should know better!) to whip me back into line. I do not ask to know what Your will is nor to see the path ahead but simply, that You keep me in Your will".*

God's way of answering that prayer has molded my understanding of the "walk of faith" and helped me to understand some of the difficulties of Hebrews 11 - that great chapter on "the heroes of the faith" - as some would call them. I will explain myself later as it becomes evident how the Lord has led me in His will.

## Chapter 9

### CANADA CALLING

The next morning I asked Anne to purchase the "Times Educational Supplement". This came out each Monday and listed all teaching opportunities throughout Britain as well as printing articles relating to educational practice. I had thought it might be good to get an overall view of developments in education, so that I could see the localised picture more clearly. That evening I opened to the first page to read, to my astonishment,

*"Physics Teacher wanted for school in Toronto, Canada."*

This was the first such advertisement for many years found in any British journal, as schools in Canada were still not allowed to advertise outside their country. However, the owner of this private school had offices in New York and, as I later found out, no Canadian would work for the low wages being offered!

The article went on to say that the founder, a Mr. Giles, would be in London the next week, to interview prospective teachers for this post, and others similarly advertised. This was most convenient as The National Association of Schoolmasters - my union - had called for a one-day strike, the first ever, for the following Wednesday.

Thus it was that, after a brief interview, I was offered the position of Head of Physics Dept. at Toronto French School, Canada. The salary would be \$11,000 plus costs of emigration. This was at least \$2,000 more than my current salary, the maximum paid in Wales. It would not be until we arrived in Canada that I would discover how impossible it was to raise three children with that salary in Toronto!

I made no decision at the meeting with Mr Giles but returned to Wales with the contract to sign. On arriving home I discovered we had visitors. Martin and Sharon Loyley were missionary friends we had known in Hong Kong. They were on furlough, visiting his family in England, and had taken time out to visit us. They were excited to hear of my interview, and eagerly encouraged us, as Sharon was from Toronto (coincidence?) and knew the school quite well!

"You must stay with my mother" she said. "She lives alone and will be delighted to have you all there with her."

God was already preparing the way before us.

After some discussion and prayer, Anne and I decided to accept the position offered, and the contract was duly signed and returned to Mr. Giles.

The next day I went to see the headmaster with my resignation in hand. On my entering his office, Mr. Price greeted me warmly with the 'good news' that the Board of Governors had changed their minds and I was free to attend the university course. Of course, my news surprised him greatly but he graciously accepted my reasons.

We had three months to get ready. Medical reports and visas were obtained, the house was sold, the youth work was 'handed on' and many 'fare-wells' were made. We were not going alone, however. A good friend had been interested in my decision and had taken the opportunity to visit Mr. Giles, himself. Keith had been appointed as Head of Mathematics in the same school as I. So, in August 1975 we packed all our belongings in a 24ft sea freight container and flew to Toronto in Canada, the land of promise and wide open spaces.

## Chapter 10

### JEHOVAH JIREH -OUR PROVIDER

Our welcome to Canada was less than auspicious. First, our plane had to turn back over Iceland with suspected engine trouble. After a further wait of four hours in a stuffy departure lounge at Heathrow, we left again at midnight in the same plane - different crew!

Our delay caused us to arrive in Toronto at 1 am local time, and it was soon evident that some of the customs officials took exception to being made to work at such an unearthly hour. Ours was so unpleasant that we began to wish we had stayed home in Wales. When we finally got through, an immigration officer welcomed us and assured us that "not all Canadians are like her". We looked around for a welcoming face as we had sent a telegram to Hazel Weech, Sharon's mother, a week earlier, informing her of our flight details. There was no such face and soon we found ourselves alone in a deserted arrivals lounge. We were all very tired and the children were able to sleep on the lounge seats but Anne and I stayed awake, guarding the luggage and waiting for Hazel. At 6.30am I decided to telephone her, only to discover that she had never received our telegram and was just about to leave for work.

"Take a taxi" she said, giving me the address to which the driver should take us. So, thirty hours after leaving Heathrow the first time, we were tucked up in nice warm beds, fast asleep.

Our first month in Toronto was very exciting. We explored the shopping malls, attended People's church to hear Dr Oswald Smith and a visiting Nicki Cruz (of "Cross and the Switchblade" fame), enjoyed listening to Dr John Wesley White speaking at a local United Church of Canada, and bought a house!

This was a small, dingy bungalow in a suburb of Toronto, which had been empty for two years. The colour scheme was simple - brown and dark green throughout, walls, floors and ceilings! My first task after moving in was to hammer down a mound as large as 'molehill', in the centre of the living room floor. To keep it down I had to use a 4 inch spike! Then we painted some window frames white. That was enough for the first day so I climbed in the bath for a shower. Turning on the water, I was startled by a clattering as several tiles fell off the shower walls into the bath. They had been held together with Scotch tape! You're probably wondering why we bought such a house - believe me, it was the only one we could afford as the prices in Toronto were almost three times their equivalent in Wales, and renting would soon have done away with our limited savings. Now we discovered just how little my salary was compared with the cost of living in Canada. Our first year was a great struggle financially but we found the Lord to be rightly named, Jehovah Jireh, our provider (Gen 22:14). Three times in that school year we were without any money or provisions by the middle of the month. We told no one but were amazed at how the Lord supplied our need. On one occasion, a lady at our church gave us a small gift

though she was unaware of our need. "I hope you are not offended" she said, "but the Lord told me to give you this". At another time, a belated Christmas gift, from the parents at the school, arrived at exactly the right time. However, the most striking provision came early in our year. Things were tight when a letter arrived by hand from the Ministry of Immigration inviting me to visit their office. I was concerned. Was there something wrong with our papers? Would we be sent back home? At the office I was given an envelope, inside which was a letter welcoming us to Canada and a cheque for \$1,000. This was, apparently, a gift from the Canadian Government to everyone purchasing a first home in Canada. Two other cheques of \$250 were to follow. It was not until a year later that it was discovered that an error had been made and that we were not entitled to this grant as we had owned homes in Wales. The Government wanted their money back but as the mistake had been theirs, they agreed that we should pay it back, interest free, over three years. Who else can boast of receiving such a sum from the Government, interest free! Evidently, Jehovah Jireh controls even the financial departments of government!

For the summer months I received no salary but we had a promise to keep. John and Eileen Weibe had been good friends of ours in Germany where he served with the Canadian Forces. They were now working in Northern Manitoba with the Church Army and, hearing of our arrival in Canada, had begged us to come visit them. We had initially agreed, but, seeing our limited income, Anne had twice written to tell them that we would have to delay our coming. Each time she was stopped from sending her letter as we received letters from Eileen telling how much they were looking forward to seeing us again. So, in July, Anne took the girls on a long journey to Dauphin, Manitoba, while I stayed in Toronto studying for a specialist teachers' certificate - but that's another story.

The visit was wonderful but the journey there, by bus, and the return by train, are events that Anne would rather forget. The amazing thing is, that when Anne worked on our finances, our end-of-month balance was exactly what it should have been if no such trip had been taken! Again the Lord must have provided.

## Chapter 11

### THE LETTER OF STANDING

It was during that first year in Toronto that the most amazing events in our lives began to come together, though it became evident that the Lord had planned it all many years before, and had a purpose even beyond that time.

I soon realised that there was little future for me at the French School where prospects of a livable salary were low. However, to teach in the Canadian system I would need to have my British credentials recognised so that I could apply for a "type B" teaching certificate. I needed to obtain a Letter of Standing - but how was I to do that ?

No one at the school seemed to know, but I remembered that ten years earlier, when applying for the position at Danforth Technical College, I had sent photocopies of my degree and teaching certificates to an office on Bloor Street, Toronto.

"Does anyone know of an education office on Bloor St.?" I asked my colleagues.

"Well, the education department of the University is there" suggested one.

So it was that, at the end of afternoon school, I drove downtown to Bloor St., found a short-time parking space and entered the building which housed the University Education Department.

The ground floor was deserted and dark, except for a single room at the end of a long corridor. A young man was standing at the door, talking to an older man who was rising from his chair as I reached the doorway. I soon realised that the office belonged to the younger man and the senior was an honoured visitor.

When I explained my reasons for being there, the younger man told me that I should have been at the Mowat Building on Bay Street, several blocks away. I thanked him and was about to leave when the older man stopped me with a question.

"Why did you come here?"

I explained that ten years earlier, while applying for another position, I had needed to send my credentials to an office on Bloor Street - and I thought this might be it.

"Maybe you wrote to my office" he said, and, taking my arm in his, he began to lead me back along the dark corridor toward the entrance.

I wanted to get away to go to the Mowat Building, but could not pull away as he seemed so fragile he might fall without my support! He led me out of the building, across the four-lane, busy Bloor Street and up several steps into the building opposite. I wondered who this man was as we were saluted by the doorman and acknowledged by everyone else before we entered the 'inner sanctum' of that building.

"Sit down here" he said, indicating a plush armchair at the desk, "while I go and look for your letter"!

He was gone less than a minute before he returned in triumph with my original letter of ten years earlier pinned to a copy of his reply. I was dumbfounded! I had been in the wrong building, led to the wrong office, in order to meet the 'divine appointment' God had planned ten years before.

He then repeated to me the directions which the younger man had already given, writing on a note pad as he spoke.

"Ask for Don Anderson when you get there, and give him this" he said, passing the note paper to me.

I thanked him and left the room, aware that the time was passing and offices would soon be closed. As I raced to my car - already parked overtime, I tried to read what he had written to Don Anderson.

"Dear Don" it read, "please look after Mr Evans for me. It appears he is eligible for a Type A Specialist Teachers' Certificate".

The notepaper was headed, "Prof. Carlisle, Chief Education Officer, Ministry of Education, Toronto". This was the Director of Education who had cancelled my appointment eight years earlier!

Just think! I had arrived at the 'wrong' building at the right time to meet the one man who could do something special for me – and that in a city of over four million people!

My surprises for this day were not yet over. I arrived at the Mowat Block on Bay St. just as they were closing the doors. I rushed up to the floor where, according to the doorman, applications for letters of standing were processed. Entering, I quickly stopped with dismay. There was a counter about fifty feet long with people lined up in front of it, three deep. I was beginning to think that it would be midnight before I left there, when I was suddenly bumped into by a man leaving a washroom on my right. He apologised and then added,

"Can I do anything for you?"

I told him I wanted to see Mr Don Anderson.

"I'm Don Anderson" he replied!

I gave him the note and was led into his own office. He introduced me to his secretary, a Welsh girl, with instructions that she was to "look after Mr Evans".

I was home in time for early supper rejoicing in the marvelous ways God had led me that day.

## Chapter 12

### “TYPE A - SPECIALIST”

A few days later, before my letter of standing had arrived, I had a visitor to my classroom. He came in unannounced and sat at the back. As the French School was a private school and most teachers were inexperienced young people from France, many of them seeking to avoid military service at home by working in Canada, some parents considered it their right, or duty, to check up on what was being taught to their sons and daughters. The teachers would not object for fear of being returned to France. However, I had no such fear, so assuming this was an uninvited parent, I stopped the lesson I was teaching, gave the students work to continue and approached the visitor. He apologised for entering without invitation but had assumed I was aware of his coming. He was not a parent, he said with a chuckle, but an inspector from the Ministry of Education. Again I told him that as I had not been informed of his coming, I was not prepared to teach for him. He laughed and said, "Mr. Evans, I have not come to examine you, but to see that the Ontario curriculum is being faithfully taught in this school". I relaxed and we were soon chatting amicably as he looked over a student's notebook. We talked about 'home' as he had emigrated some years before from Scotland. "Have you applied for a letter of standing, yet?" he asked. I informed him that I had. "When it arrives", he said, "give me a call and I will come and assess you so that you can receive a Type B teachers' certificate". He hesitated. "Better still, when your letter of standing arrives, send a copy to my office and I'll forward your certificate to you." It's obvious by the way you handle this class that you're a competent teacher"!

So it was that, as the school year came to an end and as Anne prepared to take our girls on the trip to Manitoba to see the Wiebes, I was considering another option for myself. I had seen advertised, a summer course of six weeks for those interested and qualified to receive a Type A Specialist teaching certificate.

All those who desire to be Head of Dept. in an Ontario Secondary School should have such a certificate - though very many do not. I had a friend at that time who had done summer courses for several years just to qualify for this course. Prof Carlisle had indicated that I would be eligible for this certificate so I wrote for an application. I filled out the required details, and gathered together all the necessary papers - with one exception. My Type B certificate had not yet arrived though the inspector assured me it was "in the computer". On the deadline day for applications I telephoned the University. Explaining that my Type B certificate was due to arrive "any day now", I asked if my application could be delayed a little while.

The secretary listened sympathetically but said she was sorry but "deadlines are deadlines". As I was about to put the phone down, saddened at being so near to obtaining the Type A within one year of arriving in Canada, she spoke again. "Excuse me, sir. Is it possible that your name is Mr. Evans?" I remembered hearing that before from another secretary! Deja Vue? She then told me my name was already down to attend the course! I said that that could not be as I had not yet applied. She told me that Prof. Carlisle had entered my name! (Was he a little embarrassed as having caused my disappointment so many years before?) I was now really beginning to understand just why the Lord had closed that door in Germany, so many years before.

I enjoyed that summer of work very much, graduating as a Type A Specialist in Physics. That was when Anne returned home from four wonderful weeks in Dauphin, Manitoba with the Wiebes. She and the three girls had travelled over 2000 miles, had bought their fair share of the groceries and yet we found that our bank account at month's end was no different than if they had never gone!

## Chapter 13

### THE APPLICATION

The second year at Toronto French School was a good one. My salary was raised to \$17,000, enough to live on now that the major expenses of the first year in a new country were past. For this, however, I was expected to stay at school until 7pm, two nights a week, being available to students needing extra 'coaching' in Maths and Physics. Also, I was responsible to arrange all 'extra-curricula' activities for the students. This included music and dance competitions, chess tournaments, car rallies and the like. Keith, my friend from Wales, had been appointed as Principal of the school, and I represented the teachers in meeting some of the parents to seek better working conditions.

As the school year was coming to an end, I began to study the newspapers to see what teaching posts were being advertised in the Canadian public school system. There were two that caught my attention. Upper Canada College is a historic private school in the centre of Toronto, with an excellent record of achievement, both scholastic and in sport. They were looking for a senior Physics teacher. The other post advertised also looked interesting but was obviously not for me. There is a large Jewish community in Toronto and they support several junior schools and one large secondary school. This school, Toronto Hebrew Academy, was seeking someone to be Head of the Science Dept. "Specialist, Type A required" said the advertisement. When one is applying for new positions, it is important to apply for all those advertised. In this way, your name becomes known and, often, the names and qualities of unsuccessful candidates are passed on to other schools. So I sent off my application to both schools.

I was short-listed for the position at Upper Canada College - which pleased me - but was also invited for interview at the Hebrew Academy. This surprised me as it was evident from my application that I was not a Jew.

The interview was on a Monday, before the Principal of the school and the senior Rabbi. They questioned me for an hour and then asked if I had any questions. At the time I had none to ask but did say to them,

"You do realise I am not a Jew ? I am, in fact, a 'born-again' Christian. Of course, I will only teach Physics in my lab, but, if I am asked by a student, why I do or do not believe something, I will find it difficult not to answer."

I thought it would do no harm saying this as I had no hope of getting the post anyway, even though the men had seemed interested in my application! The Principal, Gary Diamond, replied, "Yes, we understand. We think it might be good for our students to be challenged by someone of another faith"!!

I drove the twenty miles home across the city in a state of wonderment. Was it possible that I should teach at an orthodox Jewish Academy? I had always loved the Jewish people from the time Anne's father had introduced me to the "Shepherd of Israel", a magazine he received regularly from America. I used to say that 'if I were not Welsh, I would like to have been born a Jew'!

The following Friday at noon, Keith called me into his office to tell me that the Hebrew Academy were very interested in my application and had called to check if my credentials were authentic. I think it noteworthy that, the only person in Toronto who really knew - especially concerning the last two entries on my curriculum vitae – "President of Staff Association; Member of Board of Governors", was Keith himself! That evening I received a telephone call. It was from Mr. Diamond inviting me to take the position of Head of the Science Dept. at Toronto Hebrew Academy, starting in September with a salary of \$33 000! I mumbled my acceptance and, after a few minutes of general talk, replaced the receiver and began to tell Anne.

We were overwhelmed. As we regained our senses, we began to praise the Lord for His wonderful ways. Was this to be the reason why He had closed the door in Germany so long ago so that He might prove Himself to me in bringing us to Canada, providing a 'Type A' diploma in the unheard-of time of one year, and now, opening a door to His chosen people? What had I done to deserve this - except pray alongside the Brewery Field in Bridgend?

I later discovered that seven others had applied for the same post, all with specialist diplomas and all Jewish. Indeed, two of them were already at the school, both with Type A in two subjects. It is to their credit that both Andy and Marty became good friends with me as I settled into life in a Hebrew community. There were 50 teachers at the school, only two of us being non Jews, but they went out of their way to make sure I knew I belonged.

## Chapter 14

### TORONTO HEBREW ACADEMY

The two years I spent at the Hebrew Academy were very enjoyable as the students there were highly motivated and worked hard at their studies. Besides my departmental work I also coached the school soccer team to its first winning season in the local 'separate schools' league. For the first time in my teaching experience I was receiving a good salary - probably the best in all of Toronto as the Hebrew Academy was committed to paying its teachers 'at least' what the public schools were paying. Our daughters were talking about the new home we were going to buy - with a swimming pool, of course! There was only one thing wrong! In all my other schools, I had been free to take the initiative in speaking to my students of my faith. In each of them I had been able to start a Christian Union or similar meeting for the students, to which noted speakers would come, or at which I would lead discussion. Of course, this was not a possibility at the Academy.

Thus it was that I approached the District Superintendent of the church we attended, to seek opportunity for lay preaching. He told me that it was not common in Canada for lay men to preach but, hearing of my preaching experience in Wales, asked me why I did not consider entering 'the ministry'. I told him that I would like nothing better than to be a pastor but I could not afford taking three years out to attend a seminary. Further, I would really need to know a clear 'call' from the Lord before leaving teaching for a full-time pastorate. There are far too many men in the pastorate who display no evidence of an anointing from God – good men but not 'called' to be pastors. His reply was that he would not require me to attend a seminary as he was aware of my work as an elder in the local church. Regarding the 'call' he said that all he would seek was 'the Witness of the Brethren'. A few weeks later, our pastor resigned his position to take on an itinerant singing ministry and, as the only elder with preaching experience, I was invited to speak at his 'fare-well'. After the service, two men of the congregation, both former pastors, approached me, not knowing of my meeting with the District Superintendent, with the words "You shouldn't be teaching – you should be in the ministry!" Was this the "Witness of the Brethren"? That opened up a whole new direction in my life. The outcome was that after two years teaching at Toronto Hebrew Academy, I gave my notice to leave the school, as I was to become a pastor with the Christian & Missionary Alliance - but that's another story ... and I must relate the highlight of this present story before I tell you that!

It was four weeks from the end of Spring term - the last weeks for our Grade 13 students who would spend their final school term at a kibbutz in Israel. I was in the staff room when Ari Barchi approached me. Ari, a graduate of the University of Jerusalem, was in Toronto to teach Hebrew studies. This included some teaching on comparative religions.

"Gareth" he said, "I'm about to teach a lesson on Christianity and I thought it rather foolish for me to do that, when you know so much more about Christianity than I do. I wonder, would you be willing to come into my lesson with me?"

Naturally I said that I'd be delighted, so next morning I went with him to a Grade 13 "religions" class. The twenty five students, ages 17 to 19, showed little interest as we entered. After all, they knew who I was. Didn't they see me every day as they came to the Science labs? Ari spoke in Hebrew and then said,

"Mr. Evans will now tell you what Christianity is all about"!

I gulped! I thought I was to be there simply as a resource person to answer any questions. I was not expecting to teach the lesson.

"Maybe I should tell you what Christianity isn't all about." I started, trying desperately to think of what to say. "It isn't Northern Ireland with its sectarian war; it isn't the Crusades with its bloodshed; it isn't the politics of much of the western world. It's acknowledging that Jesus is the Messiah of God, come to take away the sins of men. Let me tell you how I became a Christian. Then I'll tell you how I became a Jew"! Everybody woke up! "Then I'll answer any questions".

I gave my testimony briefly, as in Chapter 2 of this book. Then I told how this made me a child of God - by faith, just as Abraham's faith made him righteous before God (Gen.15) and the 'father of the faithful'. I now worshipped the Jewish God, having been 'adopted' into His family. I spoke for about ten minutes and then asked, "Any Questions?"

Every hand in the room went up. I remember starting at the boy in the back, right hand corner of the room. He asked how it was possible for Jesus to be the Messiah when everyone knew the Messiah would bring peace on Earth, and only wars had followed the advent of Jesus. I answered by pointing out the Old Testament prophecies of a suffering Messiah as well as a victorious one. Wars are a result of man's refusal to accept the efficacy of the sacrifice He made at Calvary. However, He will return, this time as King, to establish His "peace on Earth." Many questions followed, the students waving and shouting to get their question heard.

"Please sir! Please sir! I'm next, sir!"

One young lady asked, "Do you believe the Messiah will come in our lifetime?" I answered in the affirmative, adding that I hoped we would be together when He came. When she asked me 'why?' I said, "Because I'll be able to point out to you the marks of nails in His hands and feet!"

The lesson continued like this for forty minutes before the school bell signaled that it was time to leave for the next class, a Grade 11 lesson in Physics. However, these students were not willing to let me go as they had so many unanswered questions they were eager to ask. Soon I noticed that too much time had passed and that it would be pointless for me to leave for the Grade 11 class. By now, they had left the Physics lab and would be settling down to study in the library. This was normal procedure if a teacher did not turn up on time for a lesson, for whatever reason. So I continued answering the

questions until another period had passed. This time, I had to leave, but only after promising that I would come again, if their teacher wished it.

As I drove home that evening, I was so excited at the privilege I had had, being able to speak of my faith with these special young people. I had never dreamed that this would be possible and could only marvel at God's wonderful ways. I prayed that the words I had spoken would bear some fruit in the lives of those students, being confident that the Lord never sows His seeds in vain. The next morning a note was waiting for me in my school letterbox. It read,

"Mr. Evans, please come and see me in my office at 10 am this morning. - Rabbi S "

My heart sank. Evidently the senior Rabbi had heard about my time with Grade 13 and I was about to be reprimanded. Maybe, I'd even be asked to leave the school! I felt very vulnerable but comforted myself by remembering that I had warned them at my interview, that this might happen. As I approached the glass-walled office, I could see Ari Barchi sitting inside, talking with the Rabbi.

"Ah, Gareth, come in" said Rabbi S. "Ari and I have been discussing the lesson you had with Grade 13 yesterday". He continued, "As you know, this school was founded to give our Jewish children an excellent education. A very important part of that is to instill in them a love for all things Jewish, so we teach them our history, our poetry, our culture and our religion. I have taught here for several years, and must admit that, one of the biggest disappointments I have, is that so few come to real faith in God. However, when I entered my class this morning, I found them all wanting to talk about faith and God. Gareth, I have never seen them so excited! The only problem is, its all in their heads and not in their hearts. We were wondering if you could help us get such faith into their hearts!"

"The only way I know is by acknowledging that Jesus is the Messiah" I said, my head beginning to swim.

"I understand that," said the Rabbi," but you realise we will have to agree to differ. But ... we were wondering if you would be willing to come into some more classes to teach our students. They are amazed to find a man of science who is also a man of faith - and one who knows their scriptures as you do. Please will you come?"

I quickly expressed my willingness and arrangements were made for me to attend a Grade 13 lesson the next day. I guess I could have sounded 'spiritual' and said, "Let me pray about this" but I suspect the Lord forgave me my impetuosity!!

## Chapter 15

### "SO THAT'S WHAT IT MEANS!"

The next morning the three of us entered the classroom. It was buzzing with excitement as Ari took his seat in the corner and Rabbi S. began to speak in Hebrew. I looked around the room and realised these were not the same students as previously. There were fifty students in Grade 13 and these were 'the other half' of that group. The Rabbi spoke to them for a few minutes in Hebrew and then turned to me and invited me to speak. He took a seat right in front of me ... in 'spitting distance' if I should lisp!

"Seeing you are a different group to those I spoke to last time, let me tell you what I told them," I began. A student interrupted me.

"Please sir, we have all heard what a Christian isn't, how you became one and how you became a Jew. That's all we've been talking about for the last two days. Will you please let us ask you questions?"

The students were just as eager as those of the other class - though better prepared. A few questions were designed to trap me but most showed genuine interest. A young lady asked how I, a scientist, could possibly believe in a virgin birth. When I mentioned in answering, that one of their prophets had foretold such an event, she demanded to know where. It was the Rabbi who turned to her and suggested she should read the book of Isaiah, chapter 7.

Then Rabbi S. said, "May I ask you a question?" I felt the hair rising on the back of my neck. This was it! This was to be the big expose! Every student in the room leaned forward to catch every word that was to be spoken as their 'champion' showed the Gentile how foolish he was in believing that Christian myth. One could be sure that every word was going to be repeated over 25 home dinner tables that evening.

"Mr. Evans," he began, "I have read your New Testament many times, and I, with many other Jews, believe that the greatest man who ever walked upon this earth was Jesus of Nazareth. I am proud that he was a Jew. He and his followers were righteous men, calling the people to holiness and orthodoxy. They were faithful in their worship and celebrated all the feasts and holy days. In fact, your Bible tells me that he 'fulfilled the Law in all its demands'. What I do not understand is this. If you claim to be a follower of his, why don't you also become a Jew?"

I was amazed at his confession in front of these students, as I began my reply.

"I also have read your scriptures, our Old Testament, and seen how God told Moses that for every form of uncleanness among the people, there was one remedy - the offering of a blood sacrifice. It might be the blood of a goat or a lamb or a bird but, in all cases, the blood was required. I also read that, once a

year on the day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, a male lamb, one year old and without any blemish, was to be taken and slain. Its blood was to be taken by the High Priest into the Holy of Holies in the temple, and there, be sprinkled upon the Mercy Seat where God dwelt".

The Rabbi nodded.

I continued, "On that day, no one worked in all of Israel as they waited, with bated breath, to see if God would accept this offering as a covering for their sins for another year. Everyone celebrated when the High Priest returned from the presence of God. The sacrifice was accepted!" Their sins were covered for another year! It could be said in truth that 'without the shedding of blood there was no covering for sin'."

Again the Rabbi nodded. "Both our ancient Rabbis, Hillel and Shime'i, agreed the whole Law may be summed up in that statement."

It was my turn to nod in agreement. "Sir, there was another Jew who came before Jesus, calling people to repentance. His name was John. When the people repented of their sins and waywardness, he baptized them in the Jordan River. He told the people that a far greater than he was coming, one whose shoes he was unworthy to unbuckle. I do not find it strange that, seeing Jesus approaching, he should say to the crowds, 'Behold the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the World'. He recognised that all the sacrifices of the Law were only foreshadowing the day when the perfect lamb would be found to take away all sin for all time. You yourself said that Jesus was the most perfect man who ever lived. He was the lamb who, alone, could satisfy the requirements of the Law. He fulfilled the Law in all its demands. By His death He covered all our sins for all time. That is why, one day, this little Gentile lad could kneel by his bed and, looking towards a cross in Jerusalem, ask the Jewish God to accept that sacrifice for my sins also."

Rabbi S. had his head bowed at this time. All was quiet as I had no more to say. Then I heard his voice as one speaking to himself.

"So that's what it means! So that's what it means!" Then looking up at me, "I see it now. I see it now."

I do not know if I have ever experienced a more thrilling moment than that. I have often wondered why the Lord should grant that taste of Heaven to me when others have laboured so long for Him among His Chosen People without seeing anything like it. Furthermore, He had evidently planned all this many years before when I questioned His reasons for closing the door for our coming to Canada. Our disappointment was proving to be His appointment! There had been a clear trail of 'stepping stones' from our disappointment in Germany, through Ogmoo Grammar School, Toronto French School, Professor Carlisle and the Letter of Standing, to the "Type A' diploma to my appointment at the Hebrew Academy to this very day!

I do not believe the Lord ever does anything without purpose and, knowing that His 'word will not return to Him void', I am assured that some in that classroom and, I trust the Rabbi, will be with me in Heaven.

## Chapter 16

### "MY WORD SHALL NOT RETURN VOID"

During the next four weeks, I took six more classes with the Grade 13 students. There was no barrier against my speaking of the Lord and my faith. I cannot report that any of the students came to saving faith in Him but, believing that God never sows seeds in vain, I am sure He had an eternal purpose in allowing me such a privilege - and in planning it so many years before.

I am of the conviction that the Lord will return again soon according to His promise given to the apostles. At that time there will be great tribulation and sorrow upon the Earth. However, God has ordained that 144,000 of the Jews will be protected during that time, being His witnesses, responsible for the proclamation of the Glory of God throughout the world. As a result of their testimony, many will believe, even unto death - tribulation saints. (For a fuller account of this, the reader is directed to Rev.7 and 14). I believe some of those students might well be among the 144,000 and, if not, will be among those acknowledging the Saviour at that time. I pray that Rabbi S. will be among them.

The Spring term ended with Canada day weekend. It was customary that, for this long weekend, all the students went on 'field trips'. Some Grade 11 students approached me and asked if I would go with them to Quebec City. I said I would be pleased to do so but doubted if I would be released to go as I was not fully aware of Kashrut - the Jewish laws regarding customs, eating and prayers. When Mr. Diamond repeated the invitation the next morning, I expressed the same fears to him. I would enjoy leading the trip, but knowing how all students like to take advantage of ignorant teachers, I could not accept responsibility for enforcing Jewish distinctives. He assured me that another Jewish teacher would also go to relieve me of that concern. I accepted the invitation and was pleased when Ari Barchi later asked if he could be my companion.

We left Toronto just after sundown on Saturday evening (after the Sabbath) and journeyed through the night across Ontario and into Quebec. Ari and I sat just behind the driver. As the initial excitement of our forty students gradually dimmed to a sleepy quietness, we talked about our different faiths. In Montreal, we stopped to take on kosher food for the next day, and finally arrived in beautiful Quebec City early Sunday morning. I was very tired as we sat in the park before the Chateau de Frontenac hotel, eating delicious fresh sandwiches.

A young man approached. "Are you the party from Toronto?" he asked. "I'm to be your tour guide for these days."

I welcomed him and offered him a sandwich saying, "They are kosher sandwiches - very tasty. You probably know we are from a Jewish school" and then added, without thinking, " I myself am not a Jew.

I'm a born-again Christian." You can imagine my delight when he eagerly responded that he was also a believer. I turned to Ari.

"You see how good the Lord is. He knows how tired I am and how many questions you have, so He has sent someone else to answer them for you!"

We had a wonderful weekend together. Jean Mark Deneau, our guide, proved himself an admirable companion and was well liked by all. He had a special moment with the students when we entered Notre Dame cathedral. The students were quiet but shocked by the statues at the stations of the cross, so he invited them to sit down in the front pews while he, with open Bible, walked them through the Passion of Jesus.

It was well past midnight on Tuesday morning when we arrived back on the outskirts of Toronto. We were to pass quite near my home so the thought crossed my mind that, if I left the bus then, I could telephone Anne and would be home in twenty more minutes. However, that would leave Ari alone at our destination, and, though not expected, some problems might arise before all the students were safe again with their parents. I decided to stay on the bus. Soon we were back at the school where all the baggage was stored away, the students were collected and I was left alone with the bus and its driver. I had another hour's journey before I could get to my bed. I did not look forward to the two busses and two subway trains I would need.

"Going my way?" asked Al our driver. He was to take the bus to down-town which would save me half of my journey. As we journeyed together he added an amazing postscript to our weekend.

"I have been listening to Ari and you" he said. "Did you know that I am half Jewish and half Catholic? I have been searching for the truth for the last few weeks, watching Christian TV programs and wondering if what they say is true. Is it really true that I can know my sins forgiven and that Jesus can be my personal Saviour also?"

I could not believe my ears though I should have been used to the ways of the Lord by now. In the next ten minutes I encouraged him to trust the work of Calvary, and as I left him, he assured me that he was now starting a new walk of faith with the Saviour.

As I sat in the subway train, I praised our Lord for His goodness and was so glad that I had obeyed His prompting not to leave the bus too early.

## Chapter 17

### FAITH - A SOVEREIGN GIFT

One should never build their doctrine on experience. So many have been led astray from the Faith because they have believed some teaching, not found in Scripture but based on another's experience interpreted by various 'proof' verses. However, I do believe that scripture will be supported by experience, though it does not need such to be authenticated.

As I have wondered why the Lord has blessed me so much with the experiences I have related, I have come to a deeper understanding of the Walk of Faith, which interprets Hebrews 11 with more satisfaction than I have from other explanations. It is evident that He has led me from 'stepping stone' to 'stepping stone', having prepared them before me. This has not been because of my great 'belief', nor in answer to a deep prayer life, for I cannot boast of either. In fact, I find little in my Christian character that separates me from most other believers, unless it be my total commitment to wanting God's will in my life, and the assurance that He will lead me in that will. The prayer, spoken first beside Bridgend rugby ground, has become my unspoken cry.

I have heard FAITH described in many ways. It is believing; it is trusting; it is relying; it is proclaiming. Preachers have exhorted us to "have more faith!". Some even say that the reason many are sick, or poor, or unsuccessful is because they do not have enough faith. Indeed, some even equate this with sin! It is true that "without faith it is impossible to please God" but let us understand what faith is. In many people's theology, there is a very thin line between faith and presumption.

According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance, the Greek word, *pistis* is translated as 'faith' over 225 times. *Oligopistos* - 'little faith' - is found 4 times with the meaning of 'lacking confidence' (in Christ). It is interesting that *elpis*, which is usually translated 'hope' (literally 'eager expectation') is translated as 'faith' in Hebrews 10:23. (KJV)

As I study the scriptures, I find three facets of Faith:

1. There is what may be called **SAVING FAITH**. Key verse: Ephesians 2:8 *"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God"*.

God in His great mercy has reached out to man through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit reveals Him to us and gives to us the gift of FAITH, enabling us to respond in acknowledging and knowing God. There was nothing we could do to deserve or obtain this revelation. He acts sovereignly (in response to our searching - or the prayers of others?) in making Himself known. On Mount Hermon, when Jesus asked His disciples, "Whom do men say that I am?" Peter could answer,

"Thou art the Christ - the Son of the Living God." Jesus answered him, "Blessed art thou, Simon, son of Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in Heaven." (Matt. 16:13-17).

This is the faith that recognises and receives the gift of salvation that is in Christ Jesus. By this we come to know our sins forgiven and have union with the Father. We are the 'little children' of 1 John 2: 12 & 13. It is my sad conviction that too many Christians I have met have never progressed beyond this level of FAITH.

2. Secondly, there is the **FRUIT of FAITH**. Key verse: Ephesians 5:22. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith..."*

Like all fruit, faith takes time to grow. It is a developing fruit found only in the lives of those who are maturing in their Christian walk. Psalm 1:3 declares that the righteous man is 'like a tree, firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season'. We draw our strength from the streams of the Holy Spirit and it is only as we abide in Him that such fruit will grow in our lives. As I consider the fruit of Galatians 5: 22,23 I am struck by their progression. It would appear that they become more exotic or rare in our experience. Almost all new believers give testimony of a new love and joy and peace that they found at conversion. This would seem to be a foretaste of what the Lord has for all of us. After a while, the initial thrill wears off and the discipling stage of growth of lasting fruit begins. At the other end of the scale, faith, meekness and self control are rare - even Paul himself, giving testimony of the struggle he knew in bearing the last one. (Romans 7:15 - 25).

3. There is the **GIFT of FAITH**. Key verse: 1 Corinthians 12:9 *"... to another faith by the same Spirit ..."*

As with all the spiritual gifts (charismata) of this chapter and Romans 12: 6 - 9, FAITH is given for the building up of the whole congregation. The Holy Spirit exercises this gift through whomever and whenever He wishes. One does not possess this gift; one exercises it at the time it is given. It is not a prerogative of leadership or maturity - any believer may be used in this way to encourage the others. It is exercised when the Lord wants to encourage us as a people, to step forward against the odds.

All three facets of faith find their source in God. He acts sovereignly in placing faith in the hearts of people, and in nurturing it to growth. All I can do is yield to His working in my life, acting in obedience to His word and promptings, principally the written word of scripture. This obedience is in response to trusting that His word is true.

Thus, to me, the 'walk of faith' is that journey where the Lord leads and I follow, sometimes knowing but usually unknowing. At times He changes my direction by circumstances or 'divine appointments'. It does not require of me that I search to know His leading or His will for my life outside of what He has already declared in the Bible. My Father loves me too much to play games with my emotions. He does not call me to do His will and then hide that will from me, in some complicated 'blue-print' kept hidden in Heaven. He does not tease me by challenging me to discover His will through hours of pleading prayer, fearful that I might make a mistake causing me to fall from His will and grace. He expects me to

walk in His will as far as the Bible reveals it. Then He will lead me in His particular will for me by circumstances or 'doorways' He places before me. All I must do is hold onto His hand.

I long for God's will in my life. "As the deer pants for the water, so my soul longeth after thee" (Psalm 42:1). God longs for God's will in my life! So who or what can hinder that? Do I really believe that Satan has the power to thwart God in fulfilling His will? I know that he is constantly seeking a way to destroy any of God's children, to keep them out of God's will, but it is my Father's work to keep me, not mine.

I have a picture that I am walking along a sidewalk holding onto my Father's hand. He and I are talking and fellowshiping together. I do not know where He may take me today - maybe to the delights of life's sweet-shop. Tomorrow, He may take another turn - to the dentist! I have walked this road long enough to know that, if I want to spend too much time in the sweetshops of life, my Father will certainly have to take me to the dentist at some time! That is why He permits difficulties and sorrows to come into our lives for He knows that is the only way we are going to mature. I remember that our Saviour was 'made perfect through suffering' (Heb.2:10). He may take me down into some deep valley experience, but I have also learned that every valley only leads to mountains and the deeper the valley, the higher the mountain. If you want to experience the mountain top with the Lord, you will have to walk the walk of faith through the valley. Sometimes, like every child, I am attracted away to something across the road and, taking my eyes off my Father, I step out into the roadway. This is the moment Satan has been waiting for. He revs up the engine of his 'ten-ton truck' and starts to bear down on me to crush me! Long before he comes, however, my wise and caring Father has pulled me back onto the sidewalk with Him. It is not His will that I should perish. It is not my great belief that has saved me, nor any measure of self-induced faith, but His faithfulness. All I had was a deep desire to hold onto His hand - walk in His will - and a yielding in obedience to His leading.

That, to me, is faith.

Addenda: [Some brief thoughts on Hebrews 11](#)

Hebrews 11:1 defines faith as "the substance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen." The first phrase speaks to me of a GIFT, the latter phrase, a FRUIT.

All of us have known what it is to hope for a gift on a birthday or at Christmas. We have such an eager expectation of receiving it until, finally, the gift is ours to experience. We had hope, now we have the substance.

The second phrase, "evidence of things not seen", speaks of FRUIT. One cannot see its source, the flowing sap, but the evidence of life is seen in the fruit.

Verse 2 says that "because of faith, men were able to give a good testimony". I trust my story has been a good testimony of God's faithful leading. Without His moving me from experience to experience, I would have little to say about my life, that could honour Him.

Verse 3 - Because of faith, we can understand the incomprehensible. Not with the knowing of science, but with the conviction of the soul that comes from divine revelation.

There follows a list of examples to show us how God put His finger into the lives of men and women of the past to enable them to walk according to his will for them - and for us. These people included murderers, liars, doubters, as well as believers and martyrs. They were not all overcomers or heroes because they had great faith but their stories are recorded for us so that we might grasp lessons, God wants us to learn, regarding our own walk of faith.

To my understanding, Biblical HOPE (Gr.*elpis* = "eager expectation") has to do with believing and trusting; FAITH (Gr.*pistis*) has more to do with obeying.

Indeed, I would describe FAITH as an ***attribute of the heart, evidenced in obedience***. HOPE is an ***attribute of the mind, evidenced in confidence***.

## Chapter 18

### HAZELGLEN FELLOWSHIP

Hazelglen Fellowship was located in Kitchener, one hundred kilometers west of Toronto. It had been in existence for over twenty years but had seldom seem more than thirty people in its congregation. During the past year an energetic pastor had seen several young people come into the church, mostly with little Christian background. The three elders were just in their thirties and only two 'professionals' were in the congregation, both nursing instructors. Most were unemployed.

Though there had been some difficulties in the previous year, the congregation received us warmly. During that first year there were many times we questioned why God had brought us here. There were no mature families with teenagers for our girls, and us, to fellowship with. Anne went through a deep struggle until she accepted that, if God had called me there, which she never doubted, He also had a purpose in her and the girls being there. And yet, the Fellowship was ideal for me as a new pastor, in that it really was a 'Youth Group' that met on Sundays, youth of the same age range that I had led in Wales. Anne was once asked what changes were in our life now that I was a pastor. She replied,

"None whatever. He is now doing full-time what he was always doing in his spare time before!"

I have many good memories of our four years in Kitchener but, as this story is regarding stepping stones toward our present situation, they will have be told at some other time. However, when I think of God's leading, I must tell of my first-year experience. Each Wednesday morning I would start seeking what I believed God would have me preach during my one hour slot on Sundays. At that time the fellowship was from 2 to 6 pm each Sunday, one hour each of worship, teaching, eating a 'pot-providence' meal together and communion (the 'Lord's table'). During the worship time, members of the congregation might lead out in a worship song or read a scripture. Whenever Charlie, one of the elders, would get up to read a scripture, I would get excited. Several times during that first year he would read out the scriptures surrounding the text I had chosen, even though there was no way he could have known before hand unless the Lord had led him - and therefore led me in my preparation! You can imagine how that gave me confidence to preach what was evidently the Lord's word for that morning.

It was during that first year that I heard about "Wham!" - or that's what I thought it was! Rob and Tim were two fine young men who had just returned to the church after spending several months at 'The Ark' in Amsterdam. They had been working among the prostitutes and 'gay' community of that city. They told me that The Ark was a ministry of YWAM (pronounced Y-Wam) - Youth With A Mission. When I expressed further interest I was given the location of the Canadian headquarters, just six miles away in Cambridge, Ontario. Thus it was that, a week later, I was sitting in the office of Uli Korsch, Canadian director of YWAM, enjoying the beginnings of what would be a good friendship. He told me of

the early days of the movement, of its founder Loren Cunningham and of its purposes and experiences. (The reader would enjoy reading this history in the book "Is That Really You, God?" by Loren Cunningham.)

After that first year we changed the format of our services to two hours on Sunday mornings, still emphasising worship and the preached word. Our numbers began to grow and mature families joined the church. Several times we had ministry from YWAM teams. Their outstanding musical "Toymaker & Son" was presented on our church lawn before a large audience. On another occasion fifteen YWAMers from Arkansas spent four weeks living in and working out of our church..... and we continued to grow. I cannot take credit for the growth other than that I allowed 'an eagle to fly'. Ron Smith had a burden for prayer and it was he who taught us to 'hear the voice of God' and to pray into reality what was on His heart. You can read more about Ron and his impact on the church in my other book on-line, ***Soar Like the Eagle***.

It was while we were at Hazelglenn Fellowship that I was invited to a special ministry. Vincent Cheah was a Malaysian student at the local university and overseer of a large group of Malaysian Christians attending different colleges and universities in Ontario. He invited me to become their chaplain, a very delightful ministry among those precious young people. I would conduct seminars for them in Toronto, lead summer camps and join tyhem for special occasions – such as fellowship meals. At times they would gather in Kitchener and sleep-over in our basement. Little did we realize how much they would take us to their hearts for our hospitality and how influential these students would become later in their own country.

After three years we all knew it was time to build a larger sanctuary. It was a very warm, humid Ontario summer's day and I was standing on the small veranda at the front door of the church talking to one of our newest attendees, Bill Williams. I knew that Bill had recently had a heart attack and, as a result, had withdrawn from some of his other activities to start going to church again. As we began to talk about the need for another building, I told him of the research I had been making into the costs such a venture would entail. "There's no way we can afford it" I said. Bill replied, "In that case, we'll have to build it ourselves!" I began to laugh until I realised he was speaking sincerely. "How can we possibly build it?" I asked. "None of us know anything about building." I was amazed when he told me that, for many years, he had been the overseer for construction workers in that area of Ontario, within a circle of over 100 miles!! Is this why the Lord had brought him to our church? If so, it was only the first of many miracles we saw over the next few months as we built. The young people amazed us as they dug deep to finance this new building and we watched in awe as God performed miracle after miracle.

The plans were donated free and a large hole was dug for our basement by a christian brother owning a backhoe. We bought cement blocks at less than half price from a company going out of business, each one of which Bill and I handled as we transported them from the store to our site! We were ready to roll up our sleeves to start laying the footings. A telephone call came that week from a neighbour, asking me what we intended to build. He and I had sat together in local council meetings discussing the needs of the community. When I told him of our plans to build a church with a gymnasium that the local youth could use, he asked me who was going to be our builder. I almost heard his laugh when I told him

we would be building the church ourselves. The following Saturday, he arrived on site with fifteen colleagues - all masons. He was the secretary of the local masons' union, and he had persuaded these men to lay our foundations and build our basement walls for us!!

They worked with us for two weekends at no charge - though, of course, we were delighted to give them small gifts for their kindness and lots of chilli con carne, coca cola and ice cream!

By the end of 1982 we had completed a fine sanctuary to seat 250 people, with a large recreation hall and fully-fitted kitchen underneath. The building was beautifully finished and contained chandeliers, comfortable chairs and a grand piano! Almost all the work was done by ourselves, overseen by Bill, , and would be completely paid for within three more years. But I would not be there to witness that!

In early March, 1983 I received a telephone call from Victoria, British Columbia, asking if I would consider a 'call' to pastor the Sidney Alliance Church on beautiful Vancouver Island. After much prayer and consideration of the future of Hazelglen Fellowship, we said our 'farewells' to our loving friends in Kitchener and prepared to journey further west.

## Chapter 20

### SIDNEY, B.C.

Two days before leaving Kitchener, I was sitting enjoying a cold drink with Uli, at the Cambridge base of YWAM. We were talking about the many good things the Lord had been doing in both of our lives. As we began to talk of future plans, I said,

"Uli, if you ever need a contact for YWAM on the west coast, don't hesitate to call me." Little did I realise how that simple invitation would impact our future.

They say that to be a true Canadian you must do two things; you must build your own home and you must travel across the country. I had not build my own home but had seen a church built. I think I must have handled every cement block and piece of lumber in that building, at one time or another! Now it was time to drive across most of Canada.

A large hire truck was filled with all our belongings, our car was attached by tow -bar, and we began the long journey. Driving more than five hundred miles each day, we arrived at Sidney on Vancouver Island, six days later.

We were warmly greeted by the small congregation and soon settled into the new work. Sidney Alliance Church was an offshoot of the church in Victoria, the capitol city of 'beautiful British Columbia'. The congregation was very caring, desiring to move in the freshness of what the Holy Spirit was doing in that area. They had taken a 'step of faith' in inviting a salaried pastor to oversee them, but it soon became evident that the financial base of the church would need to be enlarged if they were to meet their commitments. We all worked and prayed toward that end but, after three months I could see that we would soon be moving into a deficit situation. I considered applying for part-time teaching work so that my salary, though small, would not be a drain on the church.

It was a drizzling Sunday evening and I had a slight headache. Anne took the girls out to another church as we did not have an evening service of our own. I took a walk to spend some more time in prayer concerning our situation at the church. After twenty minutes I had arrived at the summit of Bear Hill, a favorite lookout spot. There was no one else within earshot as I cried out to the Lord for His guidance.

I am a cynic when people say "The Lord told me ...". I always want to ask them just how He spoke to them. It is particularly frustrating when they come to you for counsel only to preface their need by saying "The Lord told me ..." How dare I ever give counsel which might be contrary to what the Lord said? Of course, I do believe that the Lord does speak to us. The sheep are supposed to know His voice. However, many of the evidences of God's voice that people have responded to, give me much concern -

and sometimes they are directly contrary to scripture. He does speak in many different ways. Bear Hill was one of the rare times when I heard Him speak in a clear, audible voice!

*"Do not fear! I have brought you here and I will continue to do My will in you. You shall stay at the Sidney church until I call you on. You shall then pastor the Victoria Alliance church."*

I was amazed! The voice was very clear and there could be no doubt of what was said. However, the immediate prospect of it coming about was very small. There were three pastors currently at the mother church in Victoria, and the senior man had only been there one year. Further, this was the capitol city church and I had only just been ordained and had never attended seminary. It would obviously be many years before I would be acceptable as pastor of that church. However, the voice had been very clear so I came down from that hilltop with both excitement at having heard God's voice, and peace knowing I was to remain at Sidney Alliance Church while He would provide for our needs.

I told no one except Anne what had happened that evening on Bear Hill, but was not too surprised one month later, when news flashed around the city that the pastor of the Victoria Church had suddenly announced his resignation. His associate pastors had also resigned their positions and the District Superintendent was called in to assist the elders' board in finding another pastor. I am unaware of all that transpired over the next months but did wrestle with the temptation to shout out for all to hear that I was the man they were seeking! Instead, Anne and I stayed away from the church downtown so that we could never be tempted to manipulate the situation so that the elders might feel obligated to invite me to be their pastor.

Four months went by before I received the telephone call from our District Superintendent.

"Gareth, Victoria Alliance Church has asked me to invite you to become their pastor. Would you be interested in that position?"

He was surprised at the immediacy of my reply and even more so when I told him that I knew of this happening, several months earlier. I had heard the Lord speak but had not acted to try to bring it about. When He speaks, He is totally able to fulfill His words!

In September 1984 I was installed as pastor at Victoria Alliance Church, just one year after coming to their daughter church at Sidney. One must add here a warm commendation to the people at Sidney who became our biggest supporters over those years. Their disappointment was overcome by their love for us and the knowledge that the Lord was in this move. They are still among our closest friends and supporters these many years later.

## Chapter 21

### M/V ANASTASIS

We spent eight years at Victoria Alliance Church - good years in which we made many good friends and saw the Lord's hand at work in several lives. I became active in the pastors' ministerium and, a year later, was appointed secretary of that group. Each month we would meet for lunch and mutual encouragement.

It was in the spring of 1985 that I received a telephone call from San Pedro, California. The caller asked me if I had heard of the ship, the M/V Anastasis. I said I had not, so he proceeded to tell me of this ocean going liner which had been purchased by Youth With A Mission. Their dream was to travel to needy parts of the world carrying medical and construction workers and evangelistic teams. It was necessary to do considerable work on the vessel before it would pass the safety requirements of the USA coastguards, so they were going to bring it into the dry docks at Victoria.

"Our chief engineer, John Brignall, will be in Victoria on Tuesday," the caller said. "Could you assist us by arranging for someone to pick him up at the airport and to drive him to the graving docks?"

I said that I would be happy to do that myself so, on Tuesday of the following week, I began my long friendship with John Brignall and the Anastasis.

When the ship finally arrived in Victoria in September of 1985, I was the first one on board. John quickly introduced me to his family, several friends and finally, Don Stephens, the founder and President of Mercy Ships. Don was very gracious in welcoming me on board and then began to tell me his dreams for the time the Anastasis would be in Victoria, a time he anticipated to be three or four months.

"We will need office space with telephones" he said, "and a gymnasium where our drama teams can rehearse."

"You have them" I said, "our church is open to you."

When he asked if there was a directory of the local pastors' telephone numbers, I told him of my position as secretary of the ministerium, having in my office, all that he required. Naturally he was delighted!

The churches welcomed Don and his crew warmly, our friendship grew and I became known as their 'man of peace' (Luke 10:6). All of the crew were involved in local churches, not skipping around looking for a favorite, but remaining committed to one assembly. Our own church was greatly blessed by having the Brignall family and about ten others in regular attendance. As the time stretched from an

anticipated few months into a full fourteen months, the crew began to feel that Victoria was their home - and we all felt that way also.

In November 1986, a newly licensed, Lloyds registered Anastasis sailed out of Victoria to begin its ministry. It was a bitterly cold day but our hearts were warm as we sang our farewells. Anne and I had been invited to sail with the ship to its first port of call. This was a courtesy visit to Olympia, the capitol city of the neighbouring state of Washington, USA. A week later it was our turn to give hugs and kisses to the many friends we had made, as they 'set sail' southwards to Mexico and the needy of that nation.

Little did we think that the M/V Anastasis was to become a major part of the future that the Lord was preparing for us.

Before that could happen, however, there were a couple more stepping stones that He had to place before us. Without these, we would not have been able to follow His leading when He later called us.

When we arrived in Canada in 1975 it was as 'landed immigrants' with almost the same rights as any citizen of the country. We could vote but we could not stand for parliamentary office. We enjoyed being in this fine country and were proud to be called 'Canadians'. (Welsh Canadians!!)

However, one of the problems with being a landed immigrant is that you can only be out of the country at any one time, for a maximum of six months. Should you be away for longer than that, it is necessary to reapply for immigrant status - and that is not a foregone certainty. When I had first entered Canada, I had a secure job to go to and a sponsor at Toronto French School. The time would come when I had no income and no security to offer the immigrancy office. At such a time, it might have been very difficult to re-enter Canada even though I owned a home in Victoria and our daughters were living there.

Of course, I was not thinking of this in 1989 when our youngest daughter, Lynette, was planning her wedding to Phillip, an Aussie, and intending to leave Canada to live 'down under'. She wanted to become a Canadian citizen before her wedding so that, should she ever want to return to Canada, she could do so. Anne and I gave little serious thought to it, but decided that it would be good for us to do the same thing. We foresaw no time when we might need to use our citizenship, nor did we see any reason not to become such. We have changed our thinking since and are aware how that, even in this, the Lord was preparing us. Thus it was, that in June 1989 Anne and I were received as citizens of Canada.

The second stepping stone was concerning our home. In 1986 we owned a nice home in the suburbs of Victoria but it had two major drawbacks. As a pastor I often received people in our home for counseling purposes, requiring some measure of confidence. This was difficult as our home was 'open plan' with few doors dividing the living area. Secondly, there were three lawns needing regular maintenance and I am not one who enjoys gardening. When my doctor diagnosed that I had a slight prolapse of the heart, we knew it was time to move to another home, more suitable to our lifestyle. We advertised our home for sale and were amazed when we had a buyer within one week. The lady would pay what we wanted in cash, on one condition - that we vacate the house by the end of the month, just three weeks later. In fact, that meant only ten days for us as we were to leave to go on holiday at that time, having planned a

visit to my sister in Australia and, thence, to Kuala Lumpur to visit Vincent Cheah, his wife Shirley and some other students who had been part of our Malaysian chaplaincy ministry while in Kitchener.

We agreed terms and began packing. Our furniture was placed in the homes of church members while all the smaller boxes were stored in offices in the church. We anticipated moving into rented accommodation when we returned, giving us time to find another home. That was not to be, however, as Lynette had seen 'the perfect home' on her journeys to and from work. We were not surprised to find it out of our price range with \$50 000 more equity than the house we had sold, but were very surprised when our realtor explained that it would be possible to obtain a mortgage with similar payments to those we were already paying. Further, the house had a basement apartment, rent from which would offset some of the mortgage. Then the vendor lowered her price and we were hooked.

The new mortgage was an 'equity access' mortgage, meaning that we could pay off the principal at any time without penalty. Also, we could draw out from it whenever we might need extra cash - even when I was not earning any income!

We left for holiday, giving our youngest daughter, Lynette 'power of attorney' for the purchasing of the house, while we soaked up the sun on the beaches of Malasia. Returning five weeks later on the last ferry boat from Vancouver, we were overcome to find that our church friends had moved all our furniture into the new house, even making the beds and putting the cutlery in the drawers!

That house has become a great blessing to us since its purchase. When we were away after 1991 - story yet to come - we let it out to university students who, not only kept it in good condition but also paid off all our mortgage - something I had never expected when we first purchased the home. Now it has become the sole means of income for us as we host students from the colleges of Victoria, and has more than doubled its equity in the past eight years.

We are convinced that the Lord led us, both in obtaining our citizenship and in purchasing this house. Without either, we could never have done what has been done - and we give Him thanks.

## Chapter 22

### GOD'S BROKEN HEART

Little did we realise as we enjoyed the fellowship of so many friends on board the M/V Anastasis, that the Lord was again going before us preparing the next step of our growing experience of His leading in our lives. We certainly were happy to be associated with the ship's crew but we had no anticipation or hope that one day, we would be part of that family. Indeed, even though Anne had often said how much she would like a 'house by the sea', I little dreamed that, one day, she would have a 'home on the sea'! I'm sure that if I had even suggested such a thing to her when the ship was in Victoria, I would have heard a very loud "No way!" First however, God had to do something more in my heart to wean me away from the security of a salaried position as a 'full-time' pastor. I had already left a position with a 'good salary and a good pension' as a schoolteacher, to become a pastor on 'half salary and half pension'. He wanted to bring me even further to a position as a missionary with 'no salary and no pension'!

As pastor of a Christian & Missionary Alliance church I would encourage my people to be aware of the missionary mandate we were given by the Lord to *go into all the world and preach the gospel*. We would make major efforts each year to raise money to support our missionaries on the field, believing that the work they do is very important. I would preach missionary messages and encourage prayer. However, it was not until 1988 that I first became aware of how God weeps for the lost and hurting of the world.

I had established a ***Mission Bridge*** school in the church, meeting twice a week to hear teaching on tape and from local pastors, regarding Christian discipleship. There were fifteen students in the class from several churches. Their commitment was for six months of schooling including a three-week 'outreach' to work at orphanages in Mexico. It was while we were at such an orphanage that the Lord revealed His heart to me. My Mexican friend, Francisco, was taking photographs of the little children so that they could be sent back to Canada, USA and Great Britain in order to encourage sponsors whose monthly financial support would enable the work of the orphanages to continue. One of my students was sitting on a low wall in the orphanage with both her arms wrapped around a little Mexican girl. Cindy was crying and her tears were collecting on her chin before falling on to her lap. Looking round at her, Francisco quietly said, "Cindy, our hearts break every day!"

I had preached consistently on the faithfulness of God. He had become my Saviour, my Strength, my Supply, my Healer, my Sanctifier and so much more. I gave testimony gladly of all His goodness to me. He existed to bless me! As Francisco spoke to Cindy, I could have given testimony that I am seated in heavenly places in Jesus, enjoying the security of His lap. (Eph 2:6). However, at that moment I felt, as it were for the first time, His warm tears falling upon my head. I felt His broken heart - not just for the little orphans of Mexico but for all the hurt, wounded poor of this world. How He longed for me to bless Him! He wanted me to be His hands reaching out.

It was on that first trip to Mexico that a special joy was given to me. For several years Anne and I had sponsored children with Compassion – and our present child, Vicky was in Mexico, somewhere. Imagine my delight to find that she lived just 15 minutes from where we were working and that it would be possible to meet her and her family. She was not an orphan but her family was extremely poor and my sponsorship enabled them to have basic food and clothes provided through Compassion. When I met Vicky I fell in love! She has visited us in Canada and I have been to her home several times. Her family became my family and even now, many years later, when Vicky has four daughters, we still correspond and often end our conversations with “*Te quiero mucho*” – I love you very much.

I lost something of my heart during those two trips to Mexico. Like many of the Outreach team, I would never be the same. God was about to take me to another high mountain - but I was to walk through a long, dark valley to get there!

After returning from Mexico in January 1990, I became involved with local Indian believers. A number of their young people had come to trust in the Lord and were now facing persecution on the reserve. One of them was ‘kidnapped’ to the long house, where she would undergo an initiation ceremony to receive demonic spirits. This was against her will, but the Canadian police would do little to stop it as to cross reserve boundaries was a very delicate political matter.

In February 1990 several native people fled from the reserve and hid in the basement of our church. I was in constant contact with both the federal and provincial politicians at this time and leaning heavily on the support of fellow pastors. The two of us who were most closely involved with this situation, both became quite ill. Many believers from all over the north-west of the USA and Canada would write to me or call me with words of encouragement, knowing that I was undergoing a difficult time, possibly as many said, due to an Indian *curse*. I’m not sure what my theology is concerning such curses, though I know that many believers, church leaders among them, thought that that was the case. From the first night that the persecuted natives were in the church, I stopped sleeping. I asked pastor friends to pray for me, one of them saying that she sensed an ‘*awful spirit of abandonment*’ upon me. I had no idea what she meant.

In May, Anne and I attended a week-long retreat for pastors conducted by the Anglican Church. It was there I was told that I had been under a curse but it was now broken. The leader added, “There is a major part of your emotions missing and it’s to do with your mother’s death.” Again, I had no understanding of what he meant.

In June I resigned from the church as I continued with insomnia. My mind was ‘addled’; I could not think clearly to study or counsel. I would lie on the floor in my study, crying to the Lord, asking why I was going through this experience. I never doubted His presence but I was insensitive to Him. I was taking several prescription tablets each evening to help me relax but was still unable to sleep. The church rejected my resignation and the District Superintendent asked me to remain. In September, I finally entered a sleep clinic at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. There it was diagnosed that there had been a complete breakdown of the *sleep trigger* mechanism in the pineal gland and I was

strongly advised to stop my work. The following Sunday I told the church of the specialist's advice and tendered my resignation, effective immediately.

I began, what my doctor expected to be, a two-year leave from ministry. I walked a lot, read many books and considered all that I had learned about myself and stress that causes insomnia. On Tuesday, following my resignation, I attended a breakfast with some pastor friends. As they chatted about my situation, one of them, new to the group, said, "Gareth, I sense an awful spirit of abandonment about you!" Exactly the same expression that had been said to me seven months earlier! When I returned home, Anne and I sat down and considered my life. We were amazed as we saw the many times that *the little boy inside me* would have felt the pain of abandonment, not least of them being when my mother died, leaving me, a thirteen year old. I had not cried at her death - after all, boys are not supposed to cry! However, I had grieved inwardly, and for many years afterwards.

That same evening, I picked up a book to read. It was a novel about the crusades of the eleventh century. There two knights came face to face in the battle. However, the crusader knight had been wounded and he was slumped over in the saddle with his sword hanging uselessly by his side. His enemy came in for the kill, raising his own mighty sword to slay the crusader. He was clad in strong armour and the arrows of the crusaders had been useless against him. When he raised his arm, however, nine arrows quickly found the mark in his unprotected armpit, and he fell from his horse, mortally wounded. I sensed the Spirit of God speaking to me. "Gareth, you can put on the whole armour of God for the daily battle. However, the enemy knows your weak places and he is ready to wound you as you raise your arm against him. Your weak place, your wounds, are in the area of abandonment." I now began to understand the tactics Satan had used to hinder my ministry.

During my sickness, as people began to drift away from the church, I regularly felt the pain of a divorce - abandonment. I saw how this had effected me, even before the Indian situation had arisen. Finally, the 'pain' had caused insomnia and I was weak in the battle.

I learned a great deal in that valley that God has enabled me to use in counselling many who carry wounds of the soul. In my other book ***The Key In My Hand***, I tell some of those stories. However, God never takes us through a valley unless He wants to lead us to a mountain top, and mine was on the horizon.

## Chapter 23

### A CALL TO AFRICA

What should I do now that I had time on my hands? My medication was working and I was sleeping a few hours each night. Physically, I felt well but my mind was still weary. Gradually four desires began to form.

I would like to do some volunteer work on board the Anastasis. It was now in West Africa but it would be good to take time out 'scraping rust' - or whatever else was needed. Maybe I should go to Hawaii. YWAM had opened the University of the Nations there and I could go to a Crossroads School for five months. It would be nice to 'take in' instead of 'giving out' all the time. I could go to Latin America to come alongside the missionaries there. I had already been to Mexico and had seen first hand the need for a pastor to the missionaries. Maybe I should start a school in Victoria to teach the fundamentals of the Word and to train disciples for missions.

Two years before, I had been asked to serve on the Canadian Board of Mercy Ships, the maritime arm of YWAM responsible for the M/V Anastasis. This was simply a legal requirement to enable Canadian donors to receive tax deductible receipts. We were to hold annual meetings which could be conducted by 'conference call' telephone. Thus it was, in mid-October, that Don Stephens, president of Mercy Ships, conducted a one-hour conference call meeting, at the end of which I asked him to call me on a private matter. I intended to ask him for his thoughts on the first two ideas I have recorded. Could I be of any use on board the ship? Was there any value in my attending a Crossroads School? He said he'd call back. Don left shortly afterwards to visit S.E.Asia and my request was forgotten.

It was not until a month later that he finally called, by which time other circumstances made it impossible for me to either travel to West Africa or Hawaii - at least for three months. He apologised for his forgetfulness and then listened as I explained why I had requested his call. Then Don said, "I have another reason for calling. Last evening, our Council met and the present chaplain asked for a leave of absence. Would you and Anne be willing to come on board as our chaplains? Here is my fax number. Get back to me as soon as you and Anne make your decision"!

I called Anne at work, fully expecting a negative answer. There was no way she would be willing to leave our home, our daughters and grandchildren to live in community on board a ship in the heat of West Africa. I could not believe my ears when she said, "When do we leave?" I was sure I had the wrong number! She was as surprised as I was by her reply but we have found that the Lord always gives grace just when it is needed. Arrangements were made for us to join the ship in Rotterdam in May of 1991, just as it returned from its first trip to minister in Ghana, West Africa.

While waiting for the ship, we took the opportunity to attend a Crossroads School in Lindale, Texas, home of Mercy Ships. We had a wonderful, relaxing three months enjoying the teaching and fellowship. Later, during our first week on board ship, I was invited to teach at the Discipleship Training School (DTS) and then I realised that within four months I was doing all four things I had desired. However, here I was alongside not one missionary but over three hundred! I know how privileged I was to serve on board this ship but can only look back in amazement at the way the Lord led me in every step to bring me there. I know the valley of 1990 was very deep but He had brought me now to a mountain top that was very high. It is always true that deep valleys precede high mountains.

I have watched people come on board with grotesque facial deformities, having little self esteem and being considered a curse within their own society. I have watched the same people walk off with their heads held high after our surgeons had given them dignity. I have been to the medical and dental clinics and watched hopelessness turned into hope as the dedicated volunteers served the needs of a people with no access to the medical care we take for granted. I can anticipate the blessings we have left in countries where we built a school or hospital wing or clinic; where fresh water and hygienic latrines help stop the killer diseases. My highest delight, however, was in the opportunity I had to minister to the missionaries and pastors in weekly seminars and conferences. As I watched unity grow between them and heard their expressions of appreciation for the teaching, I knew I have been truly blessed by the Lord. In Sierra Leone, for example, I was able to teach over 150 church leaders, three hours each week, for a total of eleven weeks! Even though I had never been to Theological College, I taught all the leaders of the main denominations of that country - 23 men - for two days.

Change a pastor and you change a church; change 100 pastors and you change a nation!! What a mountain-top privilege!

## Chapter 24

### TOUCHING OUR ROOTS

The highlights of the four years we spent on board the Anastasis are many. It was a special time for both Anne and myself. However, as I think of 'stepping stones' I can see not only how God was preparing me for a future ministry, but also how He was enabling us to 'touch our roots'. I shall relate some of the wonderful 'coincidences' that continued through that time.

We joined the ship in Amsterdam and were warmly welcomed by several whom we remembered from Victoria days. Among them was Odd Neilson who attended my church for the fourteen months that the ship was in dry dock, 1986. He told me that he was to be married in six weeks time when the ship arrived in Oslo, Norway, and asked if I would perform the ceremony. Naturally, I was delighted.

The wedding was to be held in Salem Pentecostal Church so, on the ship's arrival, we attended the Sunday service a week before the scheduled wedding. The pastor invited me to bring greetings to his congregation and to bring information about the Anastasis. This I did and then added, "I also bring you greetings from my mother-in-law who attended this church more than fifty years ago with her husband and two children." The pastor asked for Anne's father's name in the off-chance that someone there might remember them.

At the end of the service a lady approached Anne with the words, "I remember your mother and father, and your sister Betty and brother David. Your father has a sister Paula who presently lives in Karlskoga, Sweden, and she is my best friend. Furthermore, she is right now visiting me and is at my home just a block from this church!" Naturally, Anne was thrilled to accompany the lady after the service to meet Aunt Paula and through her, all the other relatives living in Oslo. In the next three weeks we met more than twenty-five of Anne's relatives, eating out at a different home every evening.

Before the ship left Europe for its six months in Africa, we had opportunity to visit many other friends we had known during our years in Hamm with the British Forces. It seemed that the only ones we would miss would be Lars and Marion Friedner, family friends in Stockholm. It was therefore with delight that we received an invitation to teach at a YWAM camp for their youth ministry KING'S KIDS, at Laxo, four hours south west of Stockholm. We immediately wrote to Lars and Marion telling them of our plans to drive up to see them on one of the off days during the camp, but did not receive a reply before we left the ship. We did not know that they were away on holiday the same week as our camp, and that their vacation home was just a short journey from Laxo. On the Thursday, their daughter Ingemo and her husband traveled down to visit her parents bringing with them all their recent mail, including our letter. Stopping for lunch on their journey, Ingemo recognized our names on the back of the envelope so opened it and read that we would be in Laxo at that time. She sat with open mouth for they had stopped in the center of Laxo for their break. That afternoon, Lars called us and we arranged to meet them all the next day.

Our last ministry with the Anastasis was to lead the Advance Team prior to its visit to Cardiff, Wales in September 1994. I led a team of five wonderful young people as we contacted the media, churches, businesses, schools, etc., informing and preparing them for the ship's coming. Naturally, as a local boy, I had many contacts in the churches and my schedule was full of speaking engagements. I was invited to speak at an afternoon Harvest Festival in Zoar, the Presbyterian church of my youth and Sunday School, and where my mother played the piano and is buried. As I visited her grave an elderly man approached with the words, "How on earth did a rascal like you become a pastor?" Over cucumber sandwiches and hot tea later, I was introduced to a young man, home from Madagascar where he serves as a missionary. I discovered he was the son of my first sweetheart when I was just ten years old. Oh, I received many canings from my headmaster in those days for writing love letters to Barbara! Later, when the ship was in dock and many ladies came on board for a women's meetings, I looked in vain to see if Barbara was among the visitors. However, a couple of days later I was passed a note from our reception desk which read, "Dear Chaplain, Just to let you know that your first girlfriend's present boyfriend came on board today!"

A week after Zoar I was to speak at a seniors' meeting at its sister church, five miles away. As I sat in the front pew preparing my material the pastor came with an elderly lady and asked if she could sit by me as "Dolly is our oldest member and needs to sit in the front to hear". I asked if she was comfortable and then she asked me who I was. When I told her, she remarked, "O, you and I are related!" I discovered that Dolly Hallett was my mother's cousin and used to live next door in Railway Terrace, Peterston-super-Ely, the place of my mother's childhood. In fact I had turned my car around in her driveway that very afternoon as I drove around the haunts of my youth and had been to see my grandparent's old home. I promised to visit her next noonday, bringing Anne with me. We were met by Dolly and her two daughters Dorothy and Thelma who, upon seeing me, exclaimed "Oh, you're a Lovelock all right!" They then told me such wonderful stories of my mother as a young girl, stories I had never known before. They remembered their sorrow at her dying when "such a lovely young woman". I told them of the ship coming in two weeks time and added that George Thomas, Lord Tonypany, former speaker of the House of Commons and one of the most renowned men in Welsh history, would be our guest one day on board ship. "Oh, we know George well," said the sisters, "He used to come to Railway Terrace to visit his sister who lived here. We've been to his home many times."

On the day appointed, Lord Tonypany came and spent two hours or so with some of our leadership, sharing of his own faith in the Lord and encouraging us in our work. Later, as I led him down the gangplank back to his car, I asked what he remembered of Dolly Hallett and her daughters. His memories were rich but then he asked how I knew them. I told him that Dolly was my mother's cousin and that they had lived next door in Peterston. When he heard that my mother was Ethel, he shouted out, "Ethel! Are you Ethel's boy?" Evidently, he too had a very warm memory of the youngest girl in 'that large family'. (My mother was the youngest of thirteen). On the way back up the gangplank I realized that he would have been the same age as my mum - maybe she was his first sweetheart! I wonder if he received many canings for writing love letters?

It was so good to touch these roots and to receive such warm comments about mum.

## Chapter 25

### OPENING DOORS

Anne and I left the M/V Anastasis at the end of 1994. It had been four very fulfilling years since my valley of insomnia and we had been blessed with many wonderful experiences and new friends. We intended to return to beautiful British Columbia to, once again, take up the pastorate of a church with the Christian & Missionary Alliance. They had honoured me greatly by keeping my registration with them, even though I was no longer officially engaged in the work of that denomination. I was given the designation of *special ministry*, as the District Superintendent recognised the value of the work done by the crew of the Anastasis in the missions field of West Africa, an area where the C&MA had a prominent role.

First, however, we would take the opportunity to visit our daughter Lynette and her family in Australia. We were enabled to do this through the generosity of a visiting doctor on the Anastasis. One evening, while chatting, I mentioned that I had three grandchildren in Australia whom I had never seen. That afternoon he went to our cabin and told Anne, “Whenever you want to go to Australia, your tickets are paid for!” This would be a once-in-a-lifetime trip so we planned for a six month visit. Imagine our added delight when Anne was informed, almost apologetically, by the British travel agent, that the most economic way was for us to travel via Canada with a stop in Vancouver. “Yes, we could stop off en route if we wished.” Thus it was that spent one month in Victoria, seeing our other daughters’ families and friends, before continuing our journey to Lynette and her family in Canberra.

The first month would be very difficult for me, adjusting to a life of inactivity and uncertainty about the future. Then I went to teach the summer school of Capernwray Bible School at Moss Vale, near Sydney. This was the first week of January 1995, the students coming for one week from all over eastern Australia.

My invitation to speak at this school had come as a great surprise and is worthy of telling. Two years before, while in Africa, I had received a letter from a young couple who had attended Capernwray in Australia for a 6-month school. They told me that the principal had said that if I ever came to Australia, I would be welcome to teach at the school. (I read this as the normal comment of a leader responding to a student’s request to ‘please invite my pastor to come teach at the school’ – knowing that few of them would ever make it ‘downunder’.) When we knew we were going to Australia Oct 1995 – March 1996 – I wrote to the school principal telling him of our visit and wondering if there might be opportunity to teach at the school for a week or so. His reply was more than I had anticipated as he invited me to teach at this two-week ‘summer school’ to which people from all over the eastern seaboard of Australia would be coming. I was invited to give ten one-hour lectures on a topic of my choosing.

About seventy of us gathered at Wongabri, the beautiful home of Capernwray, on New Years' Eve 1995. Peter McDonough, the principal welcomed us and then invited each to stand and introduce him/herself. Many had come large distances to attend this week, from Adelaide, Melbourne and Brisbane, besides those more near. I was the last to stand and began my introduction by saying, "Peter McDonough, you are either a very brave man, a very foolish man or a very spiritual man!" I went on to tell how he had invited me to be their speaker, unseen and unheard. " I might be the most boring speaker you have ever heard and you have paid good money to travel here and attend this school." Sufficient to say that the week went very well and I was constantly aware of the Lord's leading as my teachings from the Book of Ephesians dovetailed so well with the other lectures given by Peter and one of his colleagues. (The theme of my teaching became the source of the first book I wrote "The Key in My Hand" )

As we gathered to say our farewells, Peter told how he had come to invite me to be their teacher. He had come into his office one day with a list of names he was to pray over to see whom he should invite. He asked his secretary not to disturb him as he would spend this morning in prayer. He was surprised to hear there was only one letter that had arrived that day instead of the usual many, so he decided he would read it before he began his prayer. It was from a stranger in Africa saying he would be honoured to teach at the (ordinary) school if there was opportunity. Peter was struck by the fact that only one letter had arrived that day and began to wonder if this was the Lord's intervention. He had no peace about whom to invite when he went home to lunch with his wife, Pam. They prayed together and felt that the Lord had indeed directed them by this sole letter – "so I invited Gareth with much apprehension."

As a result of that week, I received invitations to speak at many churches. In February, Anne and I drove to Melbourne where we attended the annual conference of the C&MA in Australia. More invitations followed so that, soon we were finding each weekend taken up with speaking engagements. There were two weekend conferences in Adelaide, separated by ten days in Perth, western Australia. Then a visit to Brisbane where we had the opportunity to spend time with my sister and her family.

Before leaving Australia, I received a visit from the Australian President of the C&MA who invited me to return two years later to conduct a retreat for his pastors, elders and their wives in Melbourne.

"This is what you should be doing." said Anne. "Your heart is not in the politicking of a local church, but in coming alongside pastors and missionaries to encourage them and minister to them. Take time out to see if this is where the Lord will lead you next. We can live on the income from students in our home and you can travel to teach."

Sufficient to say that, in these subsequent years, we have been amazed as we have seen the leading of the Lord in opening doors for me to travel and minister in so many countries, none of which I have ever sought by letter or phone. He has provided every penny I have needed for the travel, without any soliciting or informing anyone of the need. I have traveled to Mexico, Peru and Brazil, India and Nepal, Australia and New Zealand, Holland and Great Britain. Each time I get on a plane I express my

amazement to the Lord with a prayer that He keep me from a tourist attitude and pride, and that He leads me to the hurting worker to whom He wants me to speak.

## Chapter 26

### MANY INVITATIONS TO ITINERANT MINISTRY

After our wonderful time in Australia, followed by three more months back in Wales, I began to receive invitations to travel to other countries, usually from YWAM leaders who wanted me to teach at their DTS schools.

My first trip in February 1996, was a return to **Mexico City** where I had ‘lost my heart’ and heard the missionary call in 1988/9. There I made many new friends and renewed contact with our ‘daughter’ Vicky whom we had sponsored through Compassion many years earlier. It was a thrill to meet Francisco and his family once again and to make a new friendship with Maritza Sierra, daughter of Mexico’s most famous operatic son, Paco Sierra. He was a friend of the parents of Placido Domingo and it was to him that Placido dedicated his first performance of Othello at the New York Metropolitan Opera House, because “you are the finest Othello I have ever heard”.

Besides teaching at the DTS I was invited to speak at local churches, conduct a two-day conference for pastors and teach a morning Marriage Seminar. Maritza, and her sister Martha, were new believers who asked me out to lunch at the restaurant of the large inner-city Chapultapek Park. We arrived at lunch time and did not leave until well past 7pm as they asked so many questions about their new faith. What a thrill to teach such eager young women – and what a thrill to know that both are still going on well with their Lord.

In August 1996 I was invited to YWAM Fortaleza in north-eastern **Brazil**. Tony Lima, one of the most anointed young men I had ever met, had begun a wonderful YWAM work in this city, designated by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation as ‘the vice capital of the world for child prostitution’! My arrival came at an awkward time, as Tony had had to travel to the city of Brazilia, in company with the body of a young man who had died at the YWAM base when a gas cylinder had exploded. He had been trying to shield some others from its danger after it became detached from a gas stove it had been fuelling. I committed myself to grief counseling the other students, especially the young man’s sister who had witnessed the explosion. However, I found them to be very resilient young people, grieving for just two days and then getting on with life as they committed themselves afresh to serve the Lord in whom their trust had not been diminished.

For three weeks I taught at the school each morning and spoke at local churches each evening. This had been set up so I had three evenings and Sunday morning at one church followed by Sunday evening and the next three evenings at another. I had wonderful favour everywhere I went, due I am sure to the high esteem in which the local pastors held Tony and his wife Christine.

Back home in BC I was invited to conduct a Men's Retreat with ~70 men from a Baptist Church in Kelowna. This was very rewarding time as I taught on Release – (see my book *The Key in My Hand*)

**Mexico** was again on the schedule three months later, but this time a two week trip to **Peru** was added. I taught at a DTS school in a lush valley east of Lima the capital city, and then was the guest of Betty Mariaca and her family in Lima. Her dad was a retired police chief - yes, the big, strong type one associates with Latin American police chiefs. It was on the last morning when he invited me to share a coffee with him. I sat at the small table with two demitasse cups in front of us as he took from his cupboard a large tin of Tim Horton's coffee – a popular brand known to all Canadians. He had received it as a gift from a relative in Ottawa, Canada, and wanted to share it with his Canadian guest.

There followed invitations to India and Nepal before we would return to Australia to answer to the invitation of the C&MA president in 1995. Evidently the Lord was opening doors before us and confirming my future ministry, as I had not sought any of the invitations that were now coming to me. I had written no letters, made no telephone calls and asked for no monies to support my ventures now I had no regular income from a church board. God had to prove Himself my *Jehovah Jireh* – and He has certainly done that!

## Chapter 27

### ON THE ROAD TO VARANASI

In 1996 I received a letter from a seminary in northern India asking if I would be willing to come there to teach at a "Spiritual Emphasis" week. There would be an Indian man speaking in the large tent every evening and I was to teach for an hour each morning to all the students, staff and local believers who might come. The writer added that he had been given my name by a brother in UK who had mentioned that I would probably come even though they could offer no financial assistance. I agreed to go as I had already committed myself to the Lord that I would accept any invitation so long as there were sufficient funds in my 'ministry account' where all honoraria, gifts, etc., had been placed. The trip was planned for February, 1997.

Anne mentioned this trip in our Christmas letter that year's end, so we were not too surprised when another letter arrived early in the New Year asking if I would extend my journey to Asia to take a further month for ministry with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Nepal. This I was eager to do as we have such warm memories of our fellowship with Nepalese believers among the Ghurka soldiers of Hong Kong. So the trip was planned – two weeks in Allahabad, India, followed by a month in Nepal, from where I would journey on to Australia and Capernwray School where Anne would be waiting for me. My ticket for the entire five month trip cost almost exactly what I had in the 'ministry account'.

I spoke at five small seminary classes in New Dehli before taking the overnight train to Allahabad and the seminary. As the main speaker did not arrive on the Sunday, I was asked to speak in the large tent meeting to several hundred believers. Then, each morning I addressed the hundred students plus staff and visitors, including many from a local women's seminary – approximately two hundred in all. It went very well and all were gracious in the acceptance of my teaching.

On Saturday, my work was finished but I had a dilemma. The following Monday I was due to fly on to Kathmandu. However, the Air India agents told me that my flight ticket (booked by computer several weeks earlier in Canada) could not be found, and that the earliest date they could put me on a plane was Friday, a week later. The only alternative was to take a fifteen hour bus ride over a second class road, and to carry my two heavy travel bags a considerable distance over the border. The nearest airport was at Varanasi, 150km away so I could not easily go to the airport to check out the problem.

During the past year, the president of the seminary had left and an interim leader, a former missionary from the USA, was directing the work. Rudy Raby and his wife Eleanor were well into their 70s but their love for the Lord and His work was undiminished.

"Gareth, I must go to the airport on Saturday, to pick up a visitor from Australia," said Rudy. "Why don't you come with me to see if you can find what happened to your ticket? Maybe they have your name mixed up in their records there." As I woke that Saturday morning I assured the Lord that I was willing

to travel by bus but I'd much prefer to travel by plane! So it was that, a short while later, Rudy, Eleanor and I began the five hour journey from Allahabad to Varanasi, the airport.

The journey was slow as the winding, narrow road was full of potholes, people and cows. About three hours into our journey, Eleanor felt a desperate need for a toilet break. In India that often means 'behind the nearest bush' so Rudy was instructed to stop at the first convenient place. That was not suitable to Eleanor so Rudy was told to drive a little further. This was repeated three times until we pulled up behind a stationary car. As Eleanor went off into the nearby shrubbery, the driver of the car, who would have seen our stop-go motion of the last few minutes, left his car and approached us.

"Anything wrong?" he enquired. "No, just a toilet break" replied Rudy, and then, taking a closer look, "I say, aren't you Simon Job?"

"Yes," replied the stranger. "Who are you?" "I'm Rudy Rabi!" shouted Rudy as he leapt out of the car and the two of them embraced. Evidently, fifteen years earlier, Simon and Rudy's son had been closest of friends in school together while their fathers had taught at the seminary.

I was introduced and, when he heard of my ticket dilemma, Simon asked me for my itinerary, saying "Leave this to me." "Are you an angel?" I asked, looking to see if there were any wings evident.

Later that evening, as we relaxed in a Varanasi hotel, Simon called to tell me his agent would take me to the airport in the morning. He had not been able to arrange a ticket but assured me that his agent would try his best.

On the 25km journey to the airport next morning, his 'agent', my hotel manager, told me that, in that Hindu city, Simon Job was one of the most respected of all men, whose Christian ethics were seen in all his business actions. He also told me that he had been in contact with the Air India office that morning and they had made me #10 on their 'business class' waiting list. Number 10! My heart sank as I realised what little hope I had of a seat, knowing there are only about ten seats in total in business class.

The airport lounge was crowded with travelers, mostly pilgrims and sightseers to this most Hindu of Indian cities. I sat on my luggage in one corner while the agent went off in search of my ticket. Ten minutes later he returned. "Mr Evans, I have found your name!" he exclaimed, "but they have knocked you off the manifesto for Monday because they have a large tour party coming through!" Seeing my disappointment, he hastened to add, "I told them nobody knocks a friend of Simon Job off the manifesto!"

An hour passed. The large party of travelers had left for the departure lounge, and I was patiently waiting for the agent and his chauffeur to return so we could go back to the city. Just then, a young man rushed up with a ticket in his hand. "Come on, sir," he shouted, "you're on this plane today." He took both my travel bags and ran toward the departure gate. As I caught up with him, I asked, "How many from the waiting list got on the plane?" When he told me that only two had obtained tickets, I expressed surprise, knowing that I was #10.

He replied, "Oh no, sir, anyone who is a friend of Simon Job is #1 up here!"

I ran up the gangway onto the plane only to discover I was the only one on board! As the stewardess seated me in the first seat, I feared that I was on the wrong plane, until I saw the terminal doors open and all the other passengers walk toward us. Each one of them bowed their heads to me as they entered assuming I was some dignitary! And, of course I am – the Son of the King - and a friend of Simon Job's!

Could it be that God, knowing His child was having travel problems, caused a young businessman to take a roadside break at exactly the same place where, a few minutes later, an elderly lady would need to stop for a toilet break? Coincidence? I don't think so!

There was a wonderful month of ministry in Nepal, during which I found two of the Ghurka soldiers I had had the privilege of teaching in Hong Kong, I spoke to many YWAM groups and at several churches. I had the great privilege of meeting a man who had pastored a church during times of great persecution before the nation allowed Christian ministries early in the 90s. My figures following are probably wrong but not by much. He had been arrested twenty times, had been put in prison eight times serving as many as twelve years behind bars. Each time he was released, he would return to his burnt-out church and begin to preach again. Threats, beatings and arrest followed yet again. As I had never experienced persecution, I asked him how he managed to be so brave throughout it all. His answer was illuminating. He said, "Gareth, why should I be afraid when I know the lion has already roared its loudest?" His humility was also revealed when, at a break in my teaching for which he was the interpreter, we were both brought pewter goblets of Coca Cola for refreshment. He commented, "What a privilege it is to stand alongside the prophet – for even the donkey gets to drink!"

On the plane out of Kathmandu I was blessed to have a window seat on the port side, from where I had a wonderful view of the Himalayas, as we traveled due east before turning south to Singapore and Sydney. The sky was brilliant blue, the mountains glistening white and crystal clear, all except one small black triangle – Everest, the south face of which is too steep to hold any snow! I flew on to Sydney, and thence to Capernwray Bible School where Anne was waiting for me. Here I taught for a week, young people from Australia, Europe and Canada.

This would be the first honorarium I had received for two months as neither works in India or Nepal could afford to assist in any of my travel costs. Sufficient to say that after three months in Australia, my total honoraria there came to almost exactly the cost of my five-month ticket for this combined trip! Added to that, Lynette's church had decided to surprise and bless us with a 'love offering' which again matched the cost of a ticket to Brazil, my destination one month later. God is faithful!

## Chapter 28

### MINISTRY IN BRAZIL

In the fall of 1997 I made my second trip to Fortaleza, the beautiful coastal city of Ceara in the North-east of Brazil. This again was for one month and I was accompanied this time by Anne. I had made many friends on my first visit so it was my delight to introduce her to them all and to enjoy again the taste of fresh fruit drinks and my favorite drink, Guarana. I had a lot of ministry, both with YWAM and in local churches. We stayed at the YWAM base, a short distance from the city, but were able to travel to many locations for ministry, shopping, beaches, etc. Anne was showered with love by my friends and she soon felt at home, though not all could communicate in English and she certainly could not communicate in Portuguese. I at least had some Spanish to fall back on as several could understand Spanish if not English.

We returned to Canada via Rio as a young couple from my first visit had married and moved there. Claudia and JudeClair were working in a favella – a crowded slum area of the city - so we stayed two nights with them. They took us in a downpour of rain, to a two-roomed apartment half way up the mountain that contained the favella. There we had mattresses on the floor and were warned that if we heard some shooting or shouting in the night, NOT to get up and look out as we would probably be the next shooting victims! Then they showed us a photo taken the previous night of a body that had been thrown down from above, landing on their doorstep. This area was full of gangs and drug barons. The next morning I asked JudeClair if I might climb to the top of the mountain so that I could take a photo of the nearby mountain where the famous statue Christo Rey (Christ the King) was prominently erected. “Do you have any identification?” he asked me and then, taking my proffered Canadian ID card, he walked out of the door, both arms raised above his head, holding aloft his and my cards. “Around here, they shoot first and ask questions afterwards” was his cryptic remark. On arriving at the top of the mountain I found another YWAM base that catered to the children of the favella. It was next to a small gravel football pitch about 50m x 30m, surrounded by a wire fence. At one end there were, what I assumed used to be, dressing rooms made of cinder blocks. They had now collapsed and were good for nothing. JudeClair told me that shortly before, some men from the favella were playing here when a group of policemen had come up the mountain another way, had suddenly appeared over the top and started shooting, killing all the men. Their ‘reason’ was that these men included some who were well known as criminals and drug runners! We really appreciated the work these young people do for the Lord in the most dangerous of places

The international leadership of YWAM were to meet the following year in Brazil as their current president was a Brazilian missionary. Tony’s base at Fortaleza was chosen by all the other Brazilian bases to be the location for this gathering of YWAM leaders from around the world, so it was with excitement he began to plan for this event. He decided to call all the local pastors together to discuss the possibility of hosting a missions conference to coincide with these YWAM missionaries descending on their city,

and anticipated hosting them at the base – which could accommodate a hundred or so in its small chapel – until a local hotel (5\*) offered to host a luncheon at an economic cost. Imagine our surprise and delight when over 250 men came together and enthusiastically endorsed Tony’s idea to host not only a missions conference but also a city-wide evangelistic campaign. Such was the favour this young man had with local church leaders!

As Tony would be very busy with all the work needed to pull these two events together, as well as arrange for the International YWAM leaders own conference, he invited me to return the following year, for three months, to oversee all the YWAMers as they coordinated the meetings. Anne and I agreed to return and so it was that in the fall of 1998 we returned to Fortaleza for three months. Our hosts were Marcello and Aline Ramos, a godly young couple who could not do enough to bless us. Their apartment was on the fifth floor of an apartment building near the beach and a delightful walk took us to the large office downtown which became the nerve center for all the arrangements. The weather is always warm in Fortaleza but, every evening, a cooling breeze would whistle through the apartment shaking all the pictures off the wall if we were foolish enough to leave all the windows open! I learned to communicate in Portuguese and to trouble-shoot some of the conflicts arising at the office, especially due to culture differences between the local workers and overseas YWAMers who had come to participate in the evangelistic outreach, working in the streets and schools prior to the three days we would be in the local football stadium to conclude the campaign. One example would seem humorous in afterthought. A group of young people from USA had made coloured tee-shirts bearing the logo “No compromiso” , believing this meant “No compromise”. My Brazilian friends were non-plussed by this as the words in Portuguese really mean “no commitment” – opposite to what was intended!

The excitement in the city was tangible as everywhere one went, there was evidence of the ‘invasion of the Gospel’. The YWAM Leadership Conference was excellent and gave me opportunity to meet again with several whom I had known during my time on the Anastasis. Missionaries from many countries came to speak at the Missions Conference, attended by many hundreds of Brazilians – a great success that would introduce many new missionaries to the world. My friend Marcello is an excellent translator so it was he who would translate for most of the evangelistic campaign. This was also a great success in its impact and in the number of enquirers’ cards that we were to present to local pastors afterwards for them to follow up. When I asked Jon, responsible for these cards, how many we had received, his words will never be forgotten. “Gareth” he said, “we stopped counting at 45,000!”

I was very impressed by the music team that led the worship at each of the three evenings in the football stadium. They were a brother and sister team, with back-up musicians from a large church in Belo Horizonte. It was noticeable that, whenever the young people would be enthusiastic in their response to the music, either the brother or sister would immediately turn them back to solemnity by quietly kneeling at the microphone and praying. I met the brother while walking with Marcello at the beach on the following day, and commented on this to him. His reply was very encouraging as he said they were aware how ‘soulful’ such times could be so he and his sister were determined to focus all enthusiasm back on the Saviour who alone deserves the adulation. No wonder they see the Lord do such wonderful things through their ministry!

I would return to Fortaleza in 2002, four years later, and was pleased to see that every church I visited had at least doubled in number since my last visit. Again I spoke at many churches and ministered to many people touched by my teaching on 'Release' (see my book *The Key in My Hand*). Among the highlights, were speaking to the Assembly of God pastors' conference for North-East Brazil. This was a three-day event and had about 150 pastors in attendance. Another highlight was ministering to a young couple who had been married just six months but were now in a poor relationship with no intimacy. Petite Maria came to me with great sorrow saying that Alfonse had withdrawn from her (*not their real names*). As her story unfolded I was pained to hear yet again of the abuse so many receive from their fathers. I will not go into all the confidences that Maria shared with me but suffice to say there was much verbal abuse from her father. When in her late teens she came to Christ, met a young man (Alfonse) and was married. As the pastor believed rumours that she was a whore, rumours that she denied, he refused to marry them in the church, opting instead for a small ceremony at the groom's home, attended only by his parents. Shortly afterwards they came to Fortaleza to work with YWAM. I taught Maria that her father and pastor had sinned against her and that she needed to 'release' them so that God could begin the process of healing in her. She should write a letter outlining all her grievances against her father so that she would have a record of all she was willing to release him from. The next night she stayed up late to write the letter (which would never be sent) and had just finished it when Alfonse woke from sleep, came into the room and angrily snatched the letter from her. He re-entered the room a few minutes later weeping and saying, "I did not know! I did not know!" They embraced and the night ended in intimacy. In the morning they came together to see me, having decided to 'release' her dad and to pray blessings on him.

The next day Christine, Tony's wife came to me saying, "Gareth, every month the couples from the base meet together for an evening of fellowship and fun, after which we take an offering so that one couple can have a romantic evening at a local hotel away from the base." "This month the money was offered to Maria and Alfonse but they turned it down." I knew why. "Now they have come and asked for it so they will be going off-base at the end of this week. Are you aware that they never had a proper wedding, have no wedding photographs and never had a reception? I was wondering what you think about this idea. I have my wedding dress here and I'm the same build as Maria. Do you think they would be offended if I offered my dress to them so they can have a nice photograph before they go the hotel?" Though Christine had no idea of my counseling involvement with the couple I assured her that would be a good idea, so we went together to tell them, also giving me the opportunity to assure them that I still held their confidence.

The next day I was leaving for Canada so, as Tony drove me to the airport, I suggested to him that he might call all the base together on the weekend and have a 'celebration of love' ceremony for Alfonse and Maria, at which they could dress in their 'wedding attire', have vows and photos for remembrance. He thought that a good idea. He then added his own. As he was scheduled to drive them to the hotel, he would 'get lost' *en route* ending up at a beach house, which had its own swimming pool, owned by Romeo a friend who had given it freely for the weekend. All the others from the base would be there with a 'wedding cake' and a reception for the couple. Thus, within two days of having 'released' her

father, Maria would enjoy all the blessings of a wedding, a reception with friends and photographs. I flew home rejoicing at the goodness of our God!

## Chapter 29

### CIRCUIT TEACHING INTERNATIONAL

1998 was a very busy year for me with ministry in Baja California, Mexico, UK, Brazil (my third trip for the missions conference and evangelistic campaign – see Ch 28), UK again and Mexico City and surrounds.

In February I was invited to teach pastors in Baja California with Circuit Teaching International – a program developed in Africa to teach pastors who could not afford to go to seminary. We drove down to San Diego where dear friends of ours from Anastasis days, Randy and Barbara Sizemore now had their home. Anne spent much of her time with them but also joined me for some of the time in Tecate at the home of Dave and Beth Goff. What precious friends they turned out to be as they took us around much of Baja California for ministry opportunities to eager pastors in all those places. I would spend many times subsequently in various cities of Baja, learning to improve my Spanish and delighting in Mexican culture, its humour and its food, and enjoying such wonderful fellowship. Many new friends were made in Valle de Trinidad, San Filipe and San Matias on the coast, and Mexicali and Tijuana on the USA border.

In May I left for six weeks in Britain at the invitation of the Christian employees of the National Westminster Bank (NatWest). There are many ‘chapters’ of believers in the greater London area and, especially in ‘the city’, who meet weekly for fellowship. It was my privilege to speak to all these chapters over the six weeks and to be their guest at the NatWest country mansion, Haythorp Hall in Oxfordshire, for a day’s seminar attended by about seventy ‘bankers’ and titled “Releasing your spiritual gifts in the secular marketplace”. This is the major theme of my book *Soar Like the Eagle*. How this came about is an interesting story. Martin Edwards, Anne’s cousin, who held a senior position in the bank, was approached by Peter during a break from the usual busyness. “I’m really frustrated,” he said. “I feel a call into the pastoral ministry but my church won’t let me function in this way.” “See that lady over there?” Martin replied. “She has just lost her teenage daughter in an accident.” “That man over there has just been made redundant after twenty-five years.” The young man on your left has just had his engagement broken off.” “Don’t you think they need a pastor?” Peter immediately took up the challenge of ministering to these hurting people and, one year later, had become known as the pastor to all the bank employees on that floor – and was greatly fulfilled in carrying out his ministry in this secular marketplace.

From Britain I traveled to Fortaleza, Brazil where Anne would meet me and we would begin our three-months, ministering to young leaders of YWAM as they planned the missions conference and evangelistic campaign, the success of which I have told in the last chapter.

In September, as Anne returned to Canada after Fortaleza, I returned to UK as my ticket was via my home land. Again I ministered in many churches before my return home, most especial of which was a return visit to an Assembly of God church in Nottingham. An old friend of mine, Yorrie Richards

attended that church and had arranged for me to speak there. It was a particularly wonderful time with much fruit for my efforts, particularly in the lives of four people – I slept well that night!

In November, it was off again to Mexico, this time to the regions around Mexico City. Francisco had arranged many meetings for me with CTI and I traveled many miles on excellent busses, even into remote and dangerous places. We spoke to very large groups of pastors and several small groups, as far apart as Ciudad Victoria and Tampico in the north to Oaxaca and Matias Romero in the south, with an extended stay in Vera Cruz.

1999 would be spent mainly at home in Victoria with lots of speaking engagements in many churches. I was especially pleased to speak several times at my old church, now known as Pacific Rim Alliance Church, and also at Oaklands Chapel, a Brethren assembly pastored by a good friend, Denis Scott.

However, at the end of the year I traveled again to Baja California to teach further pastors' conferences with CTI, this time visiting new groups at Rosarito, Sonora and Carranza, both in the Valle de Mexico. Again Dave and Beth consolidated our friendship which lasts to this day.

The year ended with us taking, what has become a regular part of our lives, a trip to see our daughter and grandchildren in Australia. For six months I would minister at churches all along the eastern seaboard of that great land, sometimes for whole weekends. My contacts were those made at Capernwray five years earlier, still eager to hear the Word and to grow in the Lord.

## Chapter 30

### INTO A NEW MILLENIUM

We entered the year 2000 at our daughter's home in Canberra, Australia. As the international date-line is just to the west of Australia, that country was among the first to welcome in the new millennium. The apprehension felt by many, that great tragedies would sweep over the world due to computers crashing and the unreadiness of businesses, never materialized and great celebrations from all around the world were witnessed on television. Australia did itself proud as being the first great nation to broadcast its welcome. Sydney harbour was featured as the hour of midnight approached. Suddenly, all went dark before wonderful fireworks lit up the night sky, ending with a dazzling display across the whole expanse of the famous Sydney harbour bridge. One word stood out – *ETERNITY*. Most Australians would know the significance of that word though most others would not. For many years, as one would walk through the streets of Sydney, you might find written on the pavements in chalk, this one word. It was the work of an old man, once an alcoholic street dweller, who had wandered into a Mission Hall and heard the speaker declare, "If there was only one word I could write in the heavens for all to consider, it would be the word 'eternity' – where will you spend it?" His life was changed as a result of considering that question, so he committed himself to writing 'eternity' wherever he went as a witness to others. It was amazing that the Australian government should use the same word to welcome the new millenium, knowing its significance to so many of their people!

As I look back over four decades of my Christian walk, I am always thrilled at God's faithfulness to me. He has taken me to many high mountains with Him, and used me in ministries I could never have dreamed of when a young believer. Every decade has had its special ministry, so I wondered just what the 21<sup>st</sup> century would have for me. In the '60s I had the privilege of ministering to Ghurka soldiers in Hong Kong; in the '70s the Lord used us in what many came to call, 'a revival' among the young adults of Bridgend, Wales; in the '80s I taught at the Jewish Academy in Toronto with its wonderful opportunity to share the Gospel with the students and Rabbi Saknovich; in the '90s I was on board the M/V Anastasis with the special joy of conducting pastors' conferences in West Africa, especially Sierra Leone. These were all 'mountain peaks' in a high mountain range. What would the '00s of the new millennium bring?

In 2000 I was involved in a new ministry started by Ade Ajala, a dear friend from Nigeria who now pastored a church in Denver, Colorado, USA. It was named "Hands On" and had as its intention, the planting of churches in Nigeria. I was to develop the teaching program for this ministry, so I spent some weeks in Denver working through some of this. On my second visit in 2001, I was also invited to come on the staff of the YWAM base in Colorado Springs as the base pastor. This seemed a wonderful opportunity but, as I considered all the ramifications, I realized that the dreams of those leaders were unrealistic and, having a check in my spirit, I declined the invitation. In no way was I able to manage both these ministries at the same time. Sadly, the dreams of "Hands On" also never came to fruition though Ade still has a vibrant church in Denver.

Further visits to Baja California and Brazil came in the next two years, each as encouraging as my previous visits. The highlight of 2001, however, was a second trip to India, this time to Chennai in the south, to minister at another YWAM base. Imagine my surprise on finding that five of the students in the school came from Vancouver Island, and they did not know one another before coming! I was impressed by the Indian students, some from high caste and some from low caste families, who sat and fellowshiped together. One young lady had a price on her head for converting to Christ from her Hindu family background. The cross of Jesus always challenges such evil cultural barriers. I was even more impressed by the harmonic singing of some young Indian men, so asked them where they had learned to sing like that – it almost sounded as though they were Welsh! They told me they were from Nagaland in the north, and that the believers there had been taught to sing this way, by the Welsh Presbyterian missionaries that brought them the Gospel after the Welsh revival of 1904/5.

I ministered at two different YWAM schools during my three-week visit, spoke to the YWAM leadership at a seminary on St Thomas' Hill, site of the martyrdom of the apostle Thomas, visited slum areas where they do much work, and took the opportunity to visit and have a short stay at Ebenezer Home. This orphanage is one that Anne's cousin Martin proudly sponsors and is led by a fine man Pastor VeeJay. About 100 young children gathered around me trying out their limited English and giving me great joy. I played cricket with them but failed to impress. One thing that didn't bring me much joy was the daily diet of rice and curry sauce. I like curry but this was 'very' hot – and, as I was warned not to drink the local water, it was always served with Coca Cola, not the best accompaniment for curry!

Among the churches at which I spoke was Maranatha, a church for the Tamil people. The pastor here was a fine man but a man with a history. He had tried twice to commit suicide as first his wife and then his eldest son had contracted cancer and were both given a short time to live. Each time he was unsuccessful, being found by neighbours before he could complete his task. As a result of his narrow escape, he turned to Christ from his Hindu background, crying out to see if the Lord could help him. Not only did the Lord deliver him but both his wife and son recovered from their cancers. He began to open churches wherever he could, among those people he was leading to the Lord, and by the time I was there, he had started over ten churches. His eldest son was now an evangelist in southern India while his younger son was my translator. At the end of my message on *The Upper Room*, I made an invitation to which some people responded. Then the pastor stood to speak to his people. About eight women and ten men stood to their feet and came forward. I asked my translator just what had his father said and why these people had come forward, to which he replied, "My father said that it was time they got off the fence, wavering between their Hindu gods and the Christ. Now was the day they must decide whom they would serve." "All these have come forward to make a commitment to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour." My heart leapt for joy at the privilege of speaking in such a church.

In November of 2001 I received an invitation to speak at the University of Victoria Intersity Christian Fellowship (IVCF) on a Friday evening. I turned up on time but my host, the staff worker, greeted me with embarrassment as the students had invited another student from another college to minister that evening. "I've asked him to limit himself to twenty minutes" the staff worker said, "so that you will have

plenty of time for your message.” I assured him that I’d rather him allow the student speaker to share what he wanted to say, and that it would not matter in the least to me that I was not to speak that evening. I would delight to listen to the young man. Naturally, as a result, I was invited to come again shortly afterwards, the first of many such invitations to speak to that wonderful group of students. There followed invitations to speak at IVCF Christmas banquets, four out of the next six years. I wonder if I would have had such favour among those students if I had insisted on speaking that first Friday evening! Little did I realize that such favour would play a major part in my coming to the mountaintop God had planned for this decade!

## Chapter 31

### THE LORD CONTINUES TO LEAD

I had much ministry in 2002, both at home and abroad, with visits to Haiti, Manitoba, UK, Portland, Fortaleza and back to Australia.

In Haiti, my good friend Dave Knippel of Portland USA and I, were the guests of Kevin and Karen Hull who were developing a children's work in the west of that island. I was to teach the material of Circuit Teaching International at several pastoral meetings but there were also many other preaching opportunities. One in particular stands out as it was at the largest English-speaking congregation in Haiti, Quisqueya Chapel in Port au Prince, the capitol. We arrived a little late as Kevin had problems with his car, so I had little opportunity to meet Pastor Olsen before the service. There were several hundreds crowding the sanctuary as I was led to sit by him and his wife a few rows from the front. After the opening worship songs, he arose to welcome visitors to the service, inviting them to stand to be recognized. As I listened to the names and ministries of the many people who were visitors, especially from the USA, I began to wonder how on earth I had been favoured to be their speaker this morning. I spoke on *Offenses* and sensed such anointing that I knew the Lord was speaking through me to many present that day. At the end of the service I thanked Pastor Olsen for this opportunity and presented him with one of my books, *The Key in My Hand*, which he evidently found to be a blessing, as later he wrote to me in Victoria, asking for a dozen more copies, as he wanted to give them to all his board members of this International Church, they being in Atlanta, Ga.

On the journey back to our base in the west Kevin, Dave and I stopped off to have lunch and fellowship at a small mission station. There we heard a remarkable story. One of the missionaries had a program of bringing three doctors each week from the USA. They would be taken to a remote village to treat the people there, write up their reports for the resident missionary doctor and then return home. He would do this each week, having a circuit of thirteen villages where they would minister. On this day he had just been to the airport to exchange the doctors for this program, when he told us of the remarkable thing that had just happened. The three men had completed their work and were writing up their reports, when they noticed a fire up in the hill above them. They realized this was back in the village they had just left so, climbing into their four-wheel vehicle, they returned to discover the village voodoo doctor standing beside the burning ruins of his home. They began to commiserate with him until he said, "No! I have just given my life to Christ, so I decided to gather all my voodoo paraphernalia into my house and to burn the lot down. It shall no longer have any control over me!" What a wonderful example of repentance!

My visit to Manitoba, Canada, was to speak at the annual dinner of the Manitoba Bible Society. There we had renewed fellowship with John and Eileen Wiebe whom we had known in Hamm, when I taught in Germany in 1967-67. John was then in the Canadian Forces but was now a vicar with the Anglican Church of Canada. Also at the dinner as guests, were two ladies who had recently been involved in the

Spiritual Awakening taking place in the new Canadian territory of Nunavut. What a story they could tell – one can obtain a video documentary about this visitation of God, called *Transformations #2*. Other speaking opportunities were given to me, as we enjoyed such warm fellowship with believers there, even though the temperature was so cold for April!

Trips to UK and many other speaking engagements in BC took up most of the year, but in October we journeyed to Portland to visit Dave and his wife Ellen. This was also a time to teach at the small house group they hosted. In 1982 they had been members of our church in Kitchener while students at the local YWAM base in Cambridge, Ontario. There Ellen had been much involved in dance, but a tragic accident had left her with physical and brain damage, so now she was confined to home and could only move about slowly with the aid of a 'walker'. It was a joy to spend time with them, to see the joy our visit brought to Ellen and to hear her pray for us.

In November I journeyed again to Fortaleza in Brazil, for what would be my last visit to Tony and Christine, Marcello and Aline, and to the many friends I had made on my previous visits. As I have written earlier, this was also a time of blessing to see that every church at which I ministered, had many more adherents than before the evangelistic campaign of 1998.

The year ended with our three-yearly visit to Australia to see Lynette, Philip and their three children, Michael, Chloe and Emma. As was becoming our norm, we would stay for six months through our Canadian winter, with lots of speaking engagements. Among the highlights were two retreats at Jindabyne in the Snowy Mountains, with The Christian & Missionary Alliance seminary staff and students and with the family camp of the Woden (Canberra) C&MA church. Also very special, were my weekly meetings to pray with Ron Williams an Aboriginal pastor, at the shrine he had planted to honour all the Aboriginal men who had died in the wars, men unrecognized by the Australian government though numbering over a thousand! As we parted, Ron said to me, "Next time you come, I will take you to meet my people!" Little did we know that he would die of cancer before I could return, and that he would receive great recognition from the government, by having his memorial service in the hall of the legislature at Canberra. What an honour it was to be called his friend. He had also honoured me by incorporating into his teaching aid, a key representing my book *The Key in My Hand*. This teaching aid was a board picturing 'the path of the emu', very symbolic to Aboriginal peoples, showing their journey from ancient past, through the coming of the white man, up to the present day. It had many stories of 'shed blood' before Ron pointed out the shed blood of the cross being the only remedy for man's sin, and the necessity of reconciliation between the white man and the aboriginee. In the middle of the board was a key, carved from some exotic wood, symbolizing that reconciliation.

We returned home to Canada in 2003 with a stopover in New Zealand to see our good friends, John and Marion Brignall, formerly the engineer on the M/V Anastasis. We flew to Wellington, where Dave Knipell met us, and then drove on to Masterton where his sister lived. Nancy was the widow of a Wycliffe Bible Translator so I asked her if she also understood Greek. I had recently produced my digest of the excellent book *Christ's Paralyzed Church X-rayed*, a book long out of print, by the Greek scholar McCrossan, and I wished to present her with a copy. I ministered at her church that Good Friday and Easter Sunday before she drove us several miles north to Lake Taupo where we would meet the

Brignalls who had driven south from Tauranga. En route, Nancy visited a friend who now had a small gift shop, including a few shelves of used books. Imagine my surprise when she found a copy of the original book almost in mint condition! The Lord continues to surprise me with His 'coincidences'!

## Chapter 32

### THE LONG VALLEY OF WEAKNESS

I have always had good health though not of a strong constitution. September of 2003 however, was to be the start of a long period of weakness brought about by my having a simple operation for a hiatus hernia. My doctor had recommended this as a solution to the pained throat I would experience after singing. I entered Victoria Royal Jubilee Hospital for the straightforward arthroscopic operation, was released after two days and anticipated a full and quick recovery. However, Anne had recently fallen and fractured her ankle, so I prepared my own lunch the first day home. I was told to eat only soft food for a while so I made a meal of Chinese noodles, 'the worst thing possible' according to my surgeon later. Apparently, noodles expand in the oesophagus, as these did, causing me to have a blockage in swallowing, something I would experience many times in the next few months. I became quite anxious so called the surgeon later that evening. He told me to go back to emergency where he would meet me to remove the blockage. This he did, using an endoscopy tube to push the food to my stomach from where it could be pumped out. That was quite an ordeal and it was with relief that I finally got to sleep that night in the hospital. Whether some damage was done to my oesophagus at that time I do not know, but for the next several weeks I had much difficulty in swallowing at almost every meal, though the surgeon kept telling me that it would soon pass.

In December I went to see my doctor again as I was feeling so weak. He took one look at me, put me on the weighing scales and then told me to go immediately to the hospital emergency department, where a bed would be waiting for me. I had lost over twenty pound in weight, from 160 to 139 lb., so was put on an intravenous drip of a saline solution for three days. Now the surgeon was concerned, so he arranged for me to have further tests. Over the next few months I regularly visited the hospital to have blood tests, barium tests, X-rays, CT scans and MRIs, even being anaesthetized for endoscopy tests, but with no solution being found for my blockages and weakness.

I was having yet another barium test in April of 2004 when I took a teaspoonful of liquid in which were two small marshmallows. As I swallowed it, I blocked. At last the technicians had found the problem. Evidently, the oesophagus was twisted as it entered the stomach, something an endoscopy tube could not see, and my food was catching in this kink. Further surgery was decided upon so in May I re-entered the Royal Jubilee hospital. The surgery was deemed a success, though 'it was very difficult as there was so much scar tissue from the previous surgery', according to the surgeon's assistant.

Now further complications began as I developed blood clots in my lungs, necessitating a course of blood thinners for the rest of the year. I was at the hospital daily for a few weeks while they worked out my Coumadin (blood thinner) requirements, taking and assessing my blood samples. Then I had to attend every week for a few months, and then just once a month until December when I was allowed to stop

the treatment. At the same time I was complaining of pain in my lungs and side, thinking this was the effect of the blood clots, only to be told by my doctor that I had developed pleurisy and gall stones!

I have always believed that the atoning work of the cross includes health for our mortal (living) bodies as well as salvation for the soul. However, I also believe that the Lord's "stepping stones" may lead into valleys where He can discipline and teach us even more of His own wonderful nature. It would be amiss of me to tell about my prolonged sickness if I did not also tell of a thrilling event at the time of the surgery. The doctor was giving me a pre-operation examination, taking my blood pressure and pulse and using his stethoscope extensively over my chest and back. As he was taking quite a long time I said "You are probably hearing my prolapse gurgling," to which he replied, "No! That's just the problem. I cannot hear any prolapse though your chart says I should!" When I was pastor at Victoria Alliance Church it had been my custom to play racketball each week with the youth worker. One evening, while playing, I was suddenly overtaken with extreme weakness and lack of breath. The next morning my doctor sent me to a cardiac specialist at whose office I watched an ultra-sonic monitor, upon which my prolapse could be clearly seen. My mother had died in 1952 after a prolonged sickness brought on by her prolapsed heart valve, so I became very sensitive about my own condition, taking care not to strain my heart through excessive sports or activities. Now, over twenty years later, apparently the prolapse had been healed! I remembered going forward for prayer for my condition at a Pastor's District Conference several years before, but had never realised I been healed until now.

During 2004 I had to cancel some meetings, especially those requiring much travel, though we did take the opportunity of cheap airfares to visit our friends in Ontario in Toronto and Kitchener. I knew I was ill but that I would recover if I took care of myself, so I spent much time in my study, reading and writing poetry. My prayer life became more meaningful and I felt no guilt about not doing anything else!

I was past all these complications as 2005 started, but still had not regained my weight and was therefore still quite weak. At the end of August a friend built a small veranda for us outside our bedroom and leading down to the garden. I sat and held the screws and tools for him as he completed the job, and then he said words that really set me back. "It's going to rain on Saturday so you must stain this deck tomorrow to give it a water seal." Such a task was surely beyond me. The next day I bought a gallon of stain and, sitting on the floor, began to stain the deck. It took me several hours but finally I could sit back and say, "I've done it! I've done it!" This was the first major thing I had achieved in two years!

It would be September of 2005, two years since my initial surgery, that I began to see an improvement in my general feeling of well being. A good friend recommended I take BioK, a potent yogurt product which would replace the healthy bacteria I had lost due to the anesthesia of my surgeries and endoscopy tests. I will not say that is what cured me, but the correlation between taking it daily and my improvement was quite remarkable.

At the end of the year, we took our regular trip to Australia. There I relaxed in the sun, traveled across the Great Western Desert, cycled almost every day and swam in my daughter's swimming pool. My energy was returning, and I was regaining my sense of well-being.

The three-week journey across the Great Western Desert was a very refreshing time. I was in the company of a Canberra schoolteacher friend, John Coman, and several of his colleagues and students, who were going to spend a week at an Aboriginal community with a program for the children there. This included dirt motorbike riding, many games and Bible teaching. We tented out under the brilliant night sky where the 'emu' – a section of dark sky extending over a large area in the shape of an emu, could clearly be seen. I went for long walks in the sun. On the journey we stopped at several Aboriginal villages where I was introduced as 'guda Ron' indicating I was a friend of Ron Williams, the Aboriginal pastor from Canberra. This made me an immediate friend. Our friends took us on a safari to find the many waterholes upon which they used to depend, and looking for kangaroo and emu for our dinner. Unfortunately they were not to be found but we did find, cook and eat an iguana, a large lizard. It tasted like chicken but was more 'chewy'. This was at a site 'probably never before seen by a white man' as it contained cave paintings made by our guides' ancestors many years ago. I knew how privileged we were to be so accepted by these wonderful people. Our journey ended at Ayers Rock in the centre of this vast land, from where I caught a plane back to Brisbane and my daughter's new home.

On returning to Canada in the spring of 2006 I knew that my health was once again good, as I felt a renewed energy and was eating well.

## Chapter 33

### MINISTRY IN THE VALLEY

During my two years of weakness, I did have some meaningful times of ministry.

I was invited to teach at the weekly school at Lambrick Park, a large Brethren church in my home city of Victoria. I always take delight in such invitations as my doctrinal position and emphasis is known to be at variance with their leadership. They are of a dispensational persuasion while I am known as a 'conservative Charismatic', believing that the gifts and operation of the Holy Spirit are the same today as they ever were – and just as necessary. A W Tozer is reputed to have said, "Dispensationalism is more dangerous than liberalism: liberalism robs us of our message, dispensationalism robs us of our power". I believe in a 'second blessing' – the baptism of the Spirit, and that we do not receive 'everything' at the moment of conversion – any more than the disciples did when Jesus first 'breathed upon them' in the room where He first appeared after His resurrection, saying "receive the Holy Spirit". (John 20). It would be seven more weeks before they received Him in power at Pentecost. It is always a source of joy to me to have as my closest friends in Victoria, men whose spiritual background is in the Brethren tradition, whereas mine is in a Pentecostal tradition. They, as I hope I am, are men of bigger vision than that of our traditions.

I taught for ten weeks at Lambrick Park, 90 minutes each week, on the subject of 'release', the theme of my book *The Key in My Hand*. I would be asked to return the following year to teach the same material, with the added subject of the 'gifts of the Spirit'. As many people in that congregation were asking questions which the leadership could not competently answer, and as I was already accepted as a teacher, they invited me to teach that course, which, of course, I was delighted to do.

I was also invited to spend a weekend with men from the Reformed Episcopal Church, at Parksville on Vancouver Island. Again many new friends were made and contacts for future ministry.

In October we were able to take advantage of cheap plane fares to journey to see our many friends in Ontario. We visited Toronto and were hosted at Lorne and Sandy LeGrow's. They invited so many of our old friends from the late 70s and a wonderful evening was spent in reminiscing, laughing and eating. Then on to Guelph to see Hugo and Jacqui Jiminez, my dear friends from Anastasis days, whom I had married in Mexico City in 1995. That evening we were in Kitchener at the home of and Ruth Setacci. They had called together many of our congregation – and friends – from Hazelglen Fellowship for another wonderful evening. One highlight was a telephone call from Ron Smith who was unable to attend as he was out of town. When I told him how I considered him the reason for the establishment of that church, as he had taught us how to pray, he was choked with tears. Maybe I had never made that known to him before. The next day it was my privilege to preach again in my old church and to see, with delight, that the congregation remains strong.

In early fall of 2004 I received a telephone call from a young man in Lorrane, Oregon. He had been the youth pastor at Quisqueya Chapel in Haiti and had heard me preach on *Offenses*. He asked if I would come there for a weekend to teach this and other material. As this would give us an opportunity to visit Dave and Ellen Knippel in Portland again, we agreed to drive down to Oregon, taking two good friends with us. It was a wonderful weekend with lots of ministry in this rural setting. Shane and his wife Christie, would become a precious young couple to us, and we would have many times of good fellowship in future. They had a great love for Haiti and had adopted two little girls while living there. Two years after our visit and a subsequent trip to Oregon, Shane would begin a work on the same island of Dominica where Haiti has half and the Dominican Republic the other half. His work is called 'Mercy League' and seeks to provide a safe, self-sustaining home for Haitian orphans just across the border in Dominican Republic.

In the summer of 2005 I took responsibility for the preaching at a small First Nations Church on the Tsawout reserve. Their pastor had recently retired and they were wanting someone to take them on. The church was led by a young couple of Salish Indians, Peter and Stephanie and their families. We so much enjoyed their worship and spirit, so it was with great delight we attended the services each week to teach the small congregation. Shortly afterwards, a young Dutch man and his family felt the call of God to travel across the Atlantic to minister to these precious people. Marco and his wife were from the same church in Rotterdam where our very good friends, Henk and Marta Hempenius are serving on staff. What a small world!

In October I was invited to teach each Wednesday evening, a series at New Life Baptist Church, Duncan, on the subject of *The Trinity*. This is the church where my son-in-law Rob would become the Assistant Pastor a year later. I always enjoyed these times at the church where the noted author Mark Buchanan is the pastor, and to get to know him personally as a friend.

One evening I received an interesting telephone call. It was from a lady in Courtney, three hours drive north of Victoria. Adele said she was from St George's United Church, they were planning to have some teaching on 'prayer' and she had been given my name as a prospective teacher. I must admit that when I heard the words 'United church' I immediately judged them as being liberal in theology, as much of the United Church in Canada has become. One wonders what John Wesley would make of the Methodist Church now, as it is a major part of the United Church! After a little discussion, I agreed to drive north the following Saturday to meet her and two colleagues who needed to interview me before they could make a representation before the church 'synod'! At this meeting I asked the three of them just what it was they were planning, but it was obvious they didn't really have any plans, as this was a new venture for them. I then asked them what they thought was the purpose of prayer, to which they were again uncertain, so I said, "I believe prayer is God's gift to us so that we can learn to develop intimacy with Him." At this, the man present, Gary, became very animated. "That's what I want" he said, "intimacy with God!" My heart responded to this man and his desire to know the Lord more, so it was with eagerness I agreed to travel each weekend to Courtney, to teach however many they could persuade to come out each Saturday morning for three weeks. For the intervening few weeks Adele would email me telling of the progress – "I've got 8 – 9 - 10 signed up for the course" she would write with a growing excitement. To go to Courtney for a Saturday morning course, one needs to leave Victoria on Friday and

as it is such a long journey by car, I decided to travel up on the one train a day. This meant leaving Victoria early morning on Friday, returning by late evening Saturday or Sunday, dependent on whether I was to speak at the church service Sunday morning. This latter I ended up doing on two of the Sundays! I arrived at St George's on the first Saturday morning to be greeted by over 40 people, pens and note pads ready, for what turned out to be a very wonderful time together. We made some very wonderful friends over those three weeks, especially Gary and his wife Debbie, who entertained us the last weekend by inviting several others including my close friends Ron and Eunice Freeman (my youth pastor in Victoria Alliance Church) and Rev Bill and Joan Hodges (the Episcopal vicar for whose church I had conducted a men's retreat) for a wonderful meal preceded by a foot-washing refreshing as we arrived. What a special treat!

Shortly after completing those three weekends of teaching we left for our visit to Australia. It was the end of 2005 and I was still feeling very weak but managing to serve the Lord in whatever opportunities He afforded me.

## Chapter 34 - (2006/7)

### HE SHALL RENEW YOUR YOUTH LIKE THE EAGLE

On our return from Australia in May 2006, I found that the sun and exercise I had enjoyed there had given me a new energy. I considered a project that, even in my better years I would have been hesitant to attack. Our back garden had been a bugbear for a long time. I had dug it all up, had sown lots of grass seed but all to no avail – it was still a mess! I decided to build a patio so we could enjoy the access we now had through our bedroom balcony and steps. A cement slab 12' x 12', stenciled with a decorative pattern, would be built where we could place our garden furniture and sit to enjoy summer evenings and outdoor meals. It would be surrounded by a nice seat on two sides, backed with trellis work where flowers could grow. I would then develop a garden bed on two sides, containing many perennial plants and decorated with cedar mulch. Further a nice wide path would be built to replace the old stones that presently formed the narrow way to the rotating clothes line and the back door. This would also have the same stenciled pattern as the patio surface. Finally, I would repair our garden shed with a new plywood roof covered with shingles.

The work began slowly with the purchase of several bags of cement and two cubic yards of gravel - stone & sand mix. In all, I ended up carrying over six yards of gravel from where it was dumped to the working site, in dozens of barrow loads. A neighbour loaned me his cement mixer and, each day, I would spend a couple of hours working on my project. To my amazement, my energy did not seem to wane, and soon I was working several hours each day, taking care not to overdo it at any one time. Slowly the patio was taking shape and by the end of summer we were able to enjoy our garden. Though it would be a couple more years before we saw the garden fully in bloom, I experienced a great fulfillment in doing this work. For one whose life work has mainly been academic or social, there is always immense pleasure when he completes something more practical.

In August of 2006 I received an interesting phone call. The caller started by saying, "Pastor Gareth, we are looking for a new pastor" to which I was quick to reply, "No, thank you!" He then went on to say that Departure Bay Baptist Church of Nanaimo, BC, about 100 km north of Victoria, was seeking a new pastor and wondered if I would be interested in looking after them as interim pastor in the meantime. After some consideration and meeting with the deacons, I agreed to do so on a part time basis. This would involve being in Nanaimo, staying at our daughter's home from Thursday evening until Sunday afternoon, preaching and visiting congregation members. This was to be for four months until the end of December, but then I was persuaded to stay longer until the end of March when we were scheduled to visit friends and family in Wales.

As I had not received regular income since leaving Victoria Alliance Church at the end of 1990, it was a pleasant feeling to be the recipient of a pay cheque each month. One must add that the Lord was always faithful during those times and we were never left without knowing His abundant provisions.

One of the special things we did during those months was to form a small choir to present a Christmas cantata. We worked on John Peterson's *Night of Miracle*, one that I had sung with Louise Griesen and her Chinese choir in Hong Kong so many years before. Everyone was pleasantly surprised at the wonderful evening presentation just before Christmas.

At the beginning of my involvement with DBBC, as it was known, I made it clear I did not want to be involved with any internal politicking, but by the end of December it became apparent that there were major log jams in the church that needed to be addressed if the church was to go forward. Therefore in January I began to attend the board meetings to advise them how to work with integrity through their difficulties.

The seven months in Nanaimo were a great blessing to us – and, I hope, to the members of that church. We were able to spend good time with Corinne and Terry each week and made some wonderful life-long friendships. When we left in April, the church appointed a former pastor to become their senior pastor once more – and I had the privilege of inducting him to the work of that church.

At the beginning of March I received a letter from the local Welsh Society in Victoria. They wanted me to be the guest speaker at their St David's Day dinner. St David is the patron saint of Wales and we celebrate his day each March 1<sup>st</sup>. Many there knew me and I had many friends in that society as, upon my arrival in Victoria in 1984, I had started a St David's day service in my church, to which Welsh people came, some from as far away as Seattle and Vancouver. This idea had come to me, as I had been invited to speak at the St David's day service in the Alliance church of Windsor, Ontario, each of the previous three years. Then the society had held their business meetings in my church for a number of years before my leaving in 1990. I knew the dinner would be a secular event but I decided to speak about the Lord's amazing leading in my life, from being a schoolboy in Cowbridge to traveling and speaking in many countries of the world. I was amazed as the men who led the evening, all brought something about the Lord and spoke highly of the godly heritage we have as Welshmen. They spoke of hymnwriters and quoted the wonderful hymns that have helped to mould the people of the country, hymns still sung at major events, especially rugby games! After my speech several of the ladies came up to me to tell of times when they were young girls attending the various chapels of our homeland.

In April we left for the UK. It had been five years since last we had seen our many friends in Britain, but there was a special reason for this trip, kept secret from Anne's sister Betty who would be celebrating her eightieth birthday while we there. We spent the first week with Anne's cousins in Essex and Hampshire, making covert telephone calls to Betty's daughter Karys who was planning a very special time for her mother. Betty's birthday was on a beautiful Sunday, nice enough for her to be entertaining some friends in the back garden when we arrived about 4pm. Karys had left her cell phone in the front hallway, so having retrieved it, Anne made a telephone call to Betty right on 4 o' clock. It was Anne's custom to call Betty from Canada at 8am Pacific Time, 4pm GMT, so Betty was expecting a call from Canada on this her birthday. After the initial comments about how nice the weather was (in both

places!), imagine Betty's surprise as her sister walked around the corner of the house. "How did you get here?" she queried, still holding the phone to her ear!

We had a wonderful time that day and during the following week. On the Saturday, we were all taken in a limousine to a secret destination for dinner. What a thrill to find over eighty of Betty's family and friends gathered to honour her at a local golf club where we enjoyed a dinner of Welsh lamb and were entertained by a Welsh male voice choir. Just four weeks later, after our return to Canada, Betty suddenly passed into the presence of her Lord, having just completed a telephone call to a friend and without any pain. She had suffered for many years with a major hole in the heart so had enjoyed an extended lease on life until the Lord said it was time to go.

I only had a few opportunities for ministry while in UK but we enjoyed a wonderful time making use of the cheap air fares available over Europe. For 10 Euros we were able to fly to Stockholm to see Lars and Marion Friedner and their family, friends of ours since our days in Germany. Then on to Portugal where we visited our Brazilian 'daughter' Elzeny for a weekend before taking her for a week to the Algarve where we had a unit given for our pleasure by Keith Thompson, my anesthesiologist friend from the Anastasis. Then a flight to Brussels to visit Karen and Claude Agostini, and a bus to Dortmund for a week with the Beckers whom we first knew while I served with the British Forces back in the 60's. Oh, how I enjoyed the walks and talks with my friend Ulrich. I spoke at the little Brethren assembly in Neheim and reminisced over the bratwurst *mit curry* I still so much enjoyed. Little did we know forty years before, how much we would grow to love this family as if they were our own. Frau Becker had had a major stroke some time before so I wondered if she would recognize us when we visited her. I found her memory undimmed for, as we walked into her room, her eyes lit up and she could not stop kissing my hand as she held it to her mouth with her one good arm. We stayed there with her for two hours, the whole family singing the hymns that she loved so much. More meetings with other friends in England and Wales left us with a very satisfying feeling as we returned home to Canada two weeks later.

I often sit and reminisce about the wonderful paths along which the Lord has led us – and the many wonderful friends we have made along the way. To visit some of them as we did on this trip to Europe, is one of our greatest delights.

## Chapter 35 - (2006/7)

### SERMONINDEX.NET

We returned home to Canada at the end of June 2007 unaware of the new doors God was about to open for me.

This story would begin in 2004 when I had met with a dozen or so pastors from Washington and Oregon, who had come to Victoria for two days, to fellowship and pray with the local pastors. I was ashamed as much as they were probably dismayed with the few local men who came to meet them. However we spent quality time together, but the highlight for me was at the end of the second day, as they gathered to pray for us. Their leader was Rev John Roddam, rector of St Luke's Episcopal Church, Seattle and it was he who, during this prayer time, knelt before me and asked me to place my hands in his. "God has given you many sons and daughters" he said, adding "and He is about to use you in releasing them into His anointing!" I was thrilled and amazed, as I do indeed have many whom I call 'my sons and daughters' and for whom I pray most days. There is no way that John could have known this so I was eager to take this as 'a word from the Lord'. I remembered well what Floyd McClung had taught us about receiving 'a word from the Lord' when he once visited the Anastasis. "It is not given to you for direction, but to support your faith when you see it come to pass. Put the word in the bottom drawer and lock the drawer until the time that God reveals its fulfilment to you." I now knew what I should do with my 'word from the Lord'. I told no-one about it but prayed regularly that, if this was indeed from the Lord, He would prepare me, as I sought to be available, to bring this about. I believe God was about to bring this into fruition.

I had been 'turned-on' to a webpage by the passion of four young men with whom I had been privileged to pray each week for several weeks during my prolonged sickness. I had found [www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net) to be full of wonderful sermons, especially those that thrilled my heart on the subject of 'revival'. I had heard and read about the wonderful dealings of God with the people of Wales, my homeland, in the great revival of 1904/5 and I longed to experience the same. I had had my personal revival in my lodgings at Swansea University when God had graciously baptised me with His Spirit; had had the joy of being called 'a child of the revival' when preaching in the valleys of Wales; had always hungered after 'the deeper things of God', but now I could saturate myself on hearing sermons from leading men, with a like passion to mine, for God to break in upon His church, revive it and bring glory once again to Himself.

Each week I would spend time on that webpage until, one day while pastoring at Departure Bay Baptist Church I found myself being 'lost in the woods' as there was getting to be too much material on the web for me to easily find the speakers and topics that I wished to hear. I decided to write an email to the web page, asking if it would be possible to index the speakers and messages, so that if one had a passion for the deeper life and revival, he did not have to search through a lot of sermons with interesting titles but differing content, before he would find one to his liking. Without being disrespectful and naming

names, I really am not interested in listening to men who tell me that the day of miracles is past, or that we receive all there is at conversion with no such thing as a 'second blessing' where the Spirit of God comes on a man to empower him, as at Pentecost. Nor am I interested in a message with a denominational bias or a KJV only viewpoint. Many of these are godly men, deserving to be on sermonindex, but I am not particularly interested in some of their messages.

Of course, a web page may have its home anywhere in the world so you can imagine my surprise when, just a week later I received a reply from Kelowna, just a day's drive from my home in British Columbia, saying that the originator of the web page, Greg Gordon was moving to Victoria at the end of the month and asking if I would mentor him! What a privilege! I readily agreed. So it was that a few days later I answered the door bell to meet this giant of a man and welcomed him into my life and home. Greg was less than thirty years old but God had given him a passion for holiness and revival since his conversion just ten years earlier. What a privilege it was to fellowship daily over our Bibles, cups of tea and Welsh cakes.

In July of 2007 Greg had written on his web page that he longed to see a conference on revival that would be different to all the others. There would be no big music groups to lead worship, no books or music for sale, no charge for admissions and no offerings. The speakers would come at their own expense with no promise of remuneration. It was to be 'a solemn assembly' of speakers and attendees with one passion – to seek the Lord for revival, both personal and national. A small church in Canton, Ohio wrote saying they would be willing to host such a conference and would do all the advertising and arrangements. Greg agreed and started to contact men to speak, knowing them only through listening to them on his own web page. To my amazement – maybe not to his – everyone whom he approached to be a speaker, agreed to come on these terms! These were men of great honour in their own right and here they were, agreeing to come to a conference arranged by an unknown young man with few references. Unknown maybe to men but well known to God! This surely was the first signs of God's anointing. Thus the conference was arranged, with speakers from UK, South Africa, USA and Canada and attendees from as far afield as Australia and Europe.

As applications came in, the small host church realised it was getting too big for them, so they approached the largest church in town under the leadership of Pastor 'Dave', an elder of high standing in that area. He went on-line to examine sermonindex for himself and then proclaimed "This is of God – we will host it." Thus it was that we were given the wonderful facilities of his church, with full cooperation from all his staff, for the three days of the conference. What a blessing they were to us! There were television cameras to broadcast the meetings live over the web so that Anne could watch all the proceedings at home in Canada.

Anne had suggested I attend to support Greg but, when we arrived with so little planning for the meetings, it fell on Don Courville and myself to become the moderators, by default. We have become so blessed as we have seen these conferences grow, and how God has led Greg in favour with Himself and with godly men all over the world. I have been so privileged to sit in the company of men who have experienced the sovereign move of God in revival and to listen to them share of those times. It is a sure

thing that once a man has experienced revival, he is never the same again! One can listen to all the speakers from this and later conferences on Greg's webpage [www.sermonindex.net](http://www.sermonindex.net).

## Chapter 37 – (2008/9)

### THE BIG C

In April 2008 I had another invitation to look after a church while they were seeking a pastor. Bethel Baptist Church of Sidney, BC were in the midst of a building program and, at the retirement of their current pastor, had called me to help them. There we had a wonderful time making many new friends but I also had the dubious honour of reading through over 250 applications from would-be pastors! Sidney is a short drive from our home so I traveled out most days of the week my time there ending in October, just in time for the Atlanta Conference on *Revival*.

In the summer of 2008, before the Atlanta conference, Anne's cousin Bernard and his wife Pam, came to Canada on vacation. We travelled to meet them at Calgary from where we drove through the Canadian Rockies back to Victoria. We had a wonderful time together as they had hired a quality Recreation Vehicle (RV) for the journey. Shortly after arriving back home, Bernard and I hiked up a local mountain, Mount Finlayson. It was a strenuous climb but the adrenalin rush was wonderful when we reached the summit.

That night just before going to bed, I passed a lot of blood in my urine. Our concern was sufficient for Bernard to take me to the emergency department of our local hospital where the emergency doctor diagnosed I had 'ruptured a blood vessel' due to the strenuous climb that afternoon. However, as a precaution he arranged for me to see an urologist a couple of weeks later. His report was again very encouraging – no sign of any problem, but, seeing how I was passing an audio scanning place on my way home, he suggested I call in for another examination. This being done, I forgot all about the bleeding. Two weeks later my urologist called me to say that the audio examination had seen the suggestion of some lesions on my bladder so 'we'd better be safe than sorry'. He inserted his probe, looked around and then said matter-of-factly, "O yes, you've got cancer"! This was totally unexpected as I felt in such good health without any discomfort. "We must scrape this out as soon as possible" he added.

Two days later at home, I said to Anne, "Are we in denial or something? I have felt not one moment of anxiety since receiving this bad news." Again we had experienced the "peace that passeth understanding". A couple of weeks later I was the speaker at a seniors' camp and had occasion to comment upon this wonderful peace. Little did I realise that this was to be a matter of great concern to some of my listeners who raised an army of prayer supporters for my cause. I even read about myself in a local Christian newspaper where they had written that I was 'wrestling with cancer'. I contacted the editor to correct him that I was not 'wrestling' but resting in the Lord. My surgery was scheduled and then I was required to visit my urologist for the first of many three-monthly visits. It was between these visits that I travelled to Atlanta for the next conference. See here again, the great providence of God. If I had not climbed the mountain I might not have passed blood that evening. If I had not gone to the

emergency department I might have had this cancer in my bladder, not detected until much later when it might have progressed beyond the state in which we found it.

Following the conference in Atlanta, we had another conference planned for Greenock, Scotland in November 2008. I informed Greg that I would not be going to the UK just for the four days of the conference but would take the opportunity to visit my friends in Wales en route, arriving at least three weeks before the scheduled meetings. “Why not come with me?” I asked, adding that I would be glad to take him around the sites associated with the Welsh revival of 1904. Greg quickly agreed so arrangements were made to meet in London, together with another anointed young man, Eli Brayley ([www.timothyministry.com](http://www.timothyministry.com)). On arrival there we were greeted by a young man who gave us the keys of his car with the comment – “This is yours as long as you are in the UK”! What a blessing! However, as Greg and Eli looked at this gift, they blanched a little and said, “We cannot drive that car! It’s a stick change and we’ve never driven such – further, we have to drive on the wrong side of the road!” Needless to say, I had to become their chauffeur for the next three weeks.

I drove the three hours to Wales, taking them in the valleys where I taught and into the Rhondda Valley (Cwm Rhondda) where my Canadian ‘sons’ experienced real fish & chips with mushy peas. My dear friend Rob Ash and his family hosted us for two nights in Bridgend as we visited my old haunts, saw the home where I was born again and the castle where I played, and met some dear old saints of my young years as a believer. Oswald Penry, currently secretary of *Keswick in Wales*, had many stories of those revival days, as his grandfather was very prominent in ministry at that time. While he was telling some of these stories to my two wide-eyed friends, his brother-in-law, a retired Baptist pastor living next door, came into the room and joined in the listening. He then invited us to his garage, where he kept his large library of theological books. “Take your pick!” he told the boys. They were hesitant at first but when he urged them again they began to survey this treasure chest with interest. Fifteen minutes later they walked out with up to ten books each, Eli’s being mostly of the reformed doctrine and Greg’s being mainly the old puritans. They were already being blessed by the warm hospitality of my homeland.

From Bridgend we journeyed to Swansea and my brother-in-law’s home at Loughor. There we visited Moriah chapel where Evan Roberts began his ministry and God began the great influx of souls to the church. A local elder, Dyffrig was so hospitable to us, spending much time showing us the archives and telling many stories of that time. When we said we’d like to spend some time in prayer there, he was eager to join us, so a precious hour was spent in that special place where God so moved a century before.

Greg informed me that he had received an email from Dick Funnel, an American living in West Wales, who had been blessed by the sermonindex web page and desired that we visit his locality en route to Scotland. In fact West Wales is way off route to Scotland, but I was compelled to travel west as Greg had accepted the invitation, Dick having promised us ministry for the weekend we would be at his home near Cardigan. We arrived on Friday evening after our GPS navigation system had led us through miles of country lanes where we could almost touch the hedgerows on either side as we drove through, much to Greg and Eli’s delight and wonder. I was billeted with a local Baptist pastor, Steve Evans and his wife

Sulwen. On that weekend they stole my heart as they went out of their way to bless us with tours and ministry opportunities.

Sunday morning I was scheduled to preach at Cardigan New Life Church, led by pastors Doug & Janice Bell. At the time of announcements, Janice introduced Tony Nam who had a remarkable testimony of healing from, of all things, bladder cancer. Following that a man stood to declare that he had also been diagnosed with bladder cancer but the Lord had also healed him! Then a woman stood to say the same thing! Now Janice declared 'Evidently, the Lord is doing something here for bladder cancers. Has anyone else got bladder cancer?' I could not believe my ears as I slowly raised my hand. Needless to say, I was very encouraged when they gathered around me to pray with laying on of hands. I cannot recall ever before hearing anyone give testimony of healing from bladder cancer, but here I heard three in a matter of minutes – surely the Lord was again speaking to assure me of His closeness during my infirmity. Surely He had planned for me to be at that church for such a moment as this!

On the Monday we travelled to NewQuay where Florrie Evans had cried out (in Welsh) "I love Jesus with all my heart" – thought by many to be the 'trigger' that started the Welsh revival. Then on to Blaenannarch where Evan Roberts received his Baptism in the Spirit and cried in agony, "O Lord, bend me!" From there he returned to Loughor and the rest is history – over 100,000 new believers in a matter of a few weeks! While in the chapel at Blaenannarch, we were joined by three men from Swansea. Steve knew them quite well so invited one of them, the opera singer and passionate believer, Huw Priday, to sing for us. His magnificent voice filled the room as he sang a hymn that was written at that time of revival. "*Here is love vast as the ocean, Loving kindness as the flood...*" O how our hearts rejoiced as these wonderful words stirred us to a longing for the Lord to once again manifest His presence among us.

Before leaving West Wales a chance comment to Steve Evans triggered a response that was to lead to another of those blessed experiences the Lord has granted me. I told him how I would love to come back to this part of the country, never previously visited, in order to submerge myself in a Welsh-speaking community where I would have opportunity to learn the language of my fathers. It has always been one of my major regrets – that I do not speak Welsh, though I have tried to learn it from BBC broadcasts and on-line teaching. (My other regret is that I do not play the piano well – my mother was a noted pianist with several letters after her name, but she sadly died in the years of my youth.) On my return to Canada, Steve would write to invite me to return to Cardigan where a car would be made available to us, a home to live in for several weeks and ministry opportunities with him at Mt Zion Baptist church. More of that wonderful time in my next chapter.

Leaving West Wales we drove toward Scotland, stopping off for the first night at the home of Netta Rowland, great grand-daughter of David Morgan, used mightily of God in the Welsh revival of 1859. It is said of him that one night 'he went to bed as a lamb but woke as a lion; two years later he went to bed as a lion and woke as a lamb.' Netta and her husband Wynn, now raise shire cart horses – magnificent animals.

The conference in Greenock was different from the two in America, but also greatly blessed. One of the speakers was my old friend Yorrie Richards, a lay man with great anointing on his preaching. As a young man he was living a life of crime until the Lord arrested him. He had a terrible stammer and could read and write but little. However, I was present at the meeting where he first spoke without a stammer – a great miracle – and later heard him preach many times with great anointing. Greenock was to be no exception! What anointing rested on this dear old saint as he poured out his heart for revival, and what an impact when he quoted one of his old pastors – “It is God’s mercy that He does NOT send revival – upon an unprepared people!” I celebrated my 70<sup>th</sup> birthday at that conference with a cake and some good fellowship from my fellow planners.

Again, we were seeing God’s hand on this ministry and on Greg as he walked before the Lord in humility.

## Chapter 38 – (2008/9)

### TOUCHING MY ROOTS

On my return from Scotland in December of 2008, I went to visit my urologist as required, fully believing I had been healed of my cancer, so was very surprised when he found three tumours had appeared on the wall of my bladder. As the previous 'scraping' had revealed a high-grade cancer, he said, "we must get them out urgently". Apparently, his 'urgently' meant five weeks as, with Christmas approaching and his holidays scheduled, I would not be admitted to the hospital until the new year. The second surgery resulted in the most painful spasm I have ever had but evidently was successful, as I now have no signs of cancer in me. Through the next three months I had a weekly injection into my bladder of bovine TB, apparently the usual treatment for bladder cancer. Following such treatment it is normal to see one's urologist every three months for two years before it is extended to every six months, so this was the case when I made a special plea. Steve Evans of Cardigan, Wales had kept in touch with me to see how I was doing with the cancer, and had taken up the comment I had made while with him. He invited me to return to Wales to speak at his church in a 'revival conference' and to stay over to minister at his church for an extended time. I would be immersed in a Welsh-speaking culture as was my expressed dream. He added that a car was available to me and I could house-sit Dick's house while he was on a sabbatical for seven weeks in the USA. So it was that I asked my urologist if it would be possible to stay in Britain until the first week in August when Karys, Anne's niece would have her 50<sup>th</sup> birthday, three weeks beyond my next scheduled visit. He easily agreed saying, "Gareth, your attitude and lifestyle convinces me that the cancer will not return, but even if it does, we will have plenty of time to treat it. Go and enjoy yourselves.

Anne and I arrived in Cardigan the first week of May 2009, not knowing that later, we would both consider these three months as 'the most wonderful holiday we've ever had!' From the beginning we 'fell in love' with the people of Mt Zion Baptist Church, where my sense was that 'revival is imminent'. I spoke there many times but was most blessed when Steve Evans preached four messages on 'the valley of dry bones'. What anointing was on his preaching! (You can listen to these messages on my web page - 'links' [www.garethevansministries.org](http://www.garethevansministries.org)) The prayer meetings were very encouraging with over 25 people in attendance each week (from a congregation of ~ 100) while the singing was ... well, Welsh! - hearty, rousing, harmonious, passionate. I was in my element! Dick's home was a lovely cottage overlooking a ravine through which flowed the silent, deep, River Teifi on its way to the sea past the town of Cardigan. The ravine sides were covered with trees and the only other sign of habitation was the old Kilgerran castle high on the hill. Dick and his Guatemalan wife, Gladys, were a remarkable pair. They had come to give their lives in prayer for a land, neither of them had any roots in, but which the Lord has laid upon their hearts, until revival comes again. At the time of this writing you can follow all they do on their web page, [www.walesawakening.org](http://www.walesawakening.org).

Many are the highlights of that wonderful time – walking the cliffs along the rugged coast, visiting with blind Doreen, a praying saint, exploring the streets of the quaint market town – and speaking Welsh!

Yes, I was able to practice all I had learned through the Welsh lessons on BBC Wales, assisted by Steve and Sulwen and through attending a class for 'intermediate students'. There I even made a presentation before the class, speaking only in Welsh with, apparently, a very good accent according to the teacher. My topic was my current hobby – learning languages.

After Dick & Gladys returned from the USA we were hosted at a beautiful B&B further up the coast, for one week, at a fraction of the normal cost, before house-sitting the local 'mansion' for two weeks – a magnificent house belonging to a church member. We were so blessed by all these precious people!

One day, a couple were standing outside Mt Zion gazing at the notice board when, Arlene, one of the members, came out of the church and, seeing them show such interest, began to speak to them. They were passing through Cardigan on a trip up the coast with their son who lives in the UK. She added that they were from Canada so, when Arlene later met Anne she told her of their conversation and said that they had just gone into the local Christian book shop, across from the church. Anne entered the shop and began to speak to them. They were from Brentwood Bay, just a few miles from our home in Victoria! When they heard my name the woman exclaimed with some excitement, "We've been praying for him for the past four months!" Evidently they had heard of my cancer and had committed to pray for me though they did not know me personally. How blessed it is to belong to the family of God, knowing that there are no strangers in this family, only brethren we have never met.

Before returning to Loughor in time for Karys' birthday, we decided to take a trip across the UK to visit my cousin Christopher and his wife (Dame) Elsbeth Thomas. Elsbeth had been knighted by the queen for her services to the British Red Cross of which she had been President. She also knew Princess Diana quite well before her untimely death. Christopher and Elsbeth had invited Anne and me to stay over with them in Cambridgeshire for a few days, an invitation we were keen to accept. En route we visited Ivor and May Sherwood, retired Scripture Readers whom we had first met while in Germany in 1964, Marion (and John) Palmer, Anne's friend from schooldays and my other cousin Cynthia (and Bill Brown), together with Anne's cousin Gwilym (and Sue) Edwards. What a wonderful trip, full of memories and a fitting end to our Welsh holiday. There was only one thing left – to enjoy Karys' 50<sup>th</sup> which we celebrated with her many friends at a wonderful dinner.

We returned home to the good news that the cancer showed no signs of returning.

## Chapter 39

### LINKS WITH THE PAST

2009/2010 were mainly quiet years during which I had to have check-ups every three months – each proving negative for cancer, my urologist making the remark, “Mr Evans, the cancer will not return – your attitude and life-style are so positive.” I did have the privilege of speaking a few times in 2009 and much enjoyed Sidney Pentecostal Church where I presented a series of messages on ‘Revival’.

At the end of 2009 we returned to Brisbane, Australia to visit Lynette and her family – always such a joy to us. There I had some rich fellowship with an elderly retired Welsh pastor. We met each week to reminisce, share and sing together some of the old Welsh hymns. I also spoke several times at Wynnum-Manley Alliance Church.

In October 2010, I was invited to speak at a conference in Baltimore, USA. The conference, *Broken Before The Throne*, was a week long and included several other speakers on the topic of prayer. I presented the first teachings on Saturday evening and Sunday morning. At each session I was given three hours to use as I felt led, ending each time with a ‘concert of prayer’ at which I led the participants in corporate prayer. I was much impressed with Dan Biser, the organiser, and his passion to see churches back on their knees seeking God’s face. Two quite remarkable things came out of this trip to Baltimore, that have been a great source of blessing to me.

A few days afterwards, Deb Crum from Idaho wrote me an email. She had a radio ministry that was struggling financially so she and her board members were investigating how to proceed. After watching my Baltimore message ‘on-line’, she was challenged to change direction and to spend more time in prayer, seeking His direction for future ministry. Her board members balked at the suggestion of changing their board meeting into ‘a prayer meeting’ and some quit. She, however, was determined to seek God’s face and we developed a regular correspondence. Time has shown how faithful our Lord is as Deb now gives testimony to a wonderful intervention in her own life and a rich ministry to women in Idaho and neighbouring States. You can follow her blog at *Grace Tapestries*.

It was on my return journey from Baltimore that I met Rami and Nesibah. They, with their two young boys were at Toronto airport sitting near me. I offered to take a photograph for Nesibah so that all the family could be included. On boarding the plane to Victoria, I found myself sitting by Rami and one son, while his wife and other son, were in the row behind. We had such an interesting conversation for the next four hours. They were from Mecca, Saudi Arabia, and they were coming to Canada so Nesibah could attend university where Rami’s brother, Hani was already studying for his PhD. We talked about faith, Sunni and Shiite Islam, Mohammed and Jesus – without any argumentative walls between us. I told how Canada is not a Christian country but one where the main religion is secular humanism. Rami was very pleased to meet a genuine Christian as he had never done so before. Sufficient to say that at the time of writing this chapter, Rami and Nesibah, Hani and his wife, Zainab, have become like our own

children and we delight in the times we can be together with them, always talking about our passion to know (experience) God. They all have a hunger for genuine righteousness so our prayer is that the Lord might reveal Himself to them.

At the end of 2010 I received a telephone call from Boundary Community Church, Midway, BC. I had never before heard of Midway, BC, though I must have driven through it many years ago on my only trip to Alberta via the #3 highway. Their pastor needed a sabbatical leave but would not take one until the church found someone who, not only would look after the church for two months but would also take responsibility to mentor a young intern youth worker. They had tried their own denomination but no one would agree to come – maybe put off by the thought of spending a winter isolated in a very small community! Mike, the intern, and his wife Netta, knew me and had suggested I might be available. Upon expressing my willingness, I was invited to come to Midway ‘next weekend’ to speak (and for the church to give me the ‘once-over’). So it was that we agreed that I would be their pastor for two months starting in mid-February 2011. They wanted us a few weeks earlier but this was impossible as two other exciting opportunities suddenly emerged after several months of quietness.

In November I received an email from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I had been the chaplain to Malaysian students at Canadian Universities (mostly Ontario) in 1980/2 and had been privileged to visit some of them on three occasions since. Now they were to celebrate a 30 year reunion in January 2011 and wanted Anne and me to join them for two weeks – all expenses paid! How could we refuse such an invitation from such special young people who had given us such warm memories. We booked our flights with great excitement, not least because we were also to take a four-day stopover in Hong Kong, our home in 1967-69 (see Ch5). In Hong Kong we stayed at the YWAM base (for \$10 a night!!) and were able to visit so many of our old haunts, even though the former British colony now has twice as many people with multiplied more skyscrapers. We had the privilege of once again meeting with Jackie Pullinger and seeing the remarkable work she continues to lead among the addicts, gangs and prostitutes. Everyone should read her book *Chasing the Dragon* to understand Jackie’s passion for this city. She well deserves the recognition given her, exemplified by the stone raised to her honour at the site of the former ‘walled city’, the infamous place of her work. There is much written about her on the web.

From Hong Kong we flew on to Kuala Lumpur to be greeted by Vincent and Shirley Cheah, our hosts for the next two wonderful weeks. What a joy to meet again quite a number of our ‘Canadian’ students and to see how well they have prospered. It was also my privilege to speak at a local church and at a house fellowship in Penang. We visited the Alliance Missionary School in Penang and spent a weekend in Singapore at the Cheah’s condominium there, having opportunity also to spend some time with Prudence, Anne’s schooldays friend. Vincent owns two restaurants so we ate very well! Before we left he invited us to join him and Shirley in China, en route to our next visit to Australia. He would meet us in Hong Kong and take us on a brief tour of that great country. That was planned for the end of 2012 but the big C would again intervene to change those plans – not in me but in Anne.

From Malaysia we returned to Vancouver, from where Anne took a short flight to Victoria - but I would go on to Haiti, via Toronto and Montreal – a 42-hour journey! In December, I had received an invitation

to travel to Port au Prince to speak at the staff retreat of Quisqueya Christian School. The retreat, with about seventy participants, was held at a beautiful beach resort, some distance from the devastation of Port au Prince caused by the earthquake of a year earlier. The city still lay in ruins as there was so little heavy equipment available to lift the large slabs of concrete that had been homes, shops, apartments, etc. Many bodies were still buried beneath the rubble and the stories of the survivors were heart-wrenching. There were hundreds of blue tents everywhere to accommodate those who had lost their homes – or were too afraid to enter them again. I stayed at the home of Shane and Kristie Mattenley, missionaries we had come to know well during the times we visited them in Lorraine, Oregon. I have warm memories of their hospitality and the times I was able to speak in Haiti. After the retreat I was invited to speak to all the students at a morning assembly lasting about an hour each day. I was also invited to speak again at Quisqueya Chapel, the International church of Port au Prince – quite a privilege! At this morning service an unusual thing happened. As I rose to speak, the PA system cut out! One has to expect such power outages in underprivileged countries. There were over 400 people present in a large church, so I had to stand at the front steps of the platform and speak very loud and clearly. However, it was probably a blessing in disguise as everyone had strained to hear my every word, with apparent success according to their comments. As I finished the PA system came back on!

In the midst of all the devastation, one was thrilled to see God's hand moving in the lives of so many Haitian young people – people who will be the leaders of this country one day.

I arrived home mid-February and the next day, we left the coast for the long journey to Midway, BC. Crossing by ferry to the mainland, we met Mark, the pastor of Boundary Community Church, and his family. They were about to leave for a sabbatical which included time in New Zealand and then at our home in Victoria. However, their daughter Lena would join us on the trip to Midway and would help settle us into our new home.

Our ten weeks at Boundary Community Church were a great blessing. We enjoyed so much the quiet country life and the fellowship of these lovely people. We hiked the local mountain trails and visited many of the local, historical beauty spots. My ministry was well received and we left having made many new friends. I so much enjoy these times of looking after a new congregation, this being the third such extended time.

If 2009/2010 had been a quiet time, things had certainly turned around at the end of that time – and more was to come that made 2011 a most exciting year.

## Chapter 40

### OUR 50<sup>th</sup> YEAR CELEBRATION

Anne had been my faithful companion and support throughout all the journey recorded here. As we had spent much time in Wales in recent years, indulging my desires to immerse myself once again in the Welsh culture and language, I decided that for our golden wedding celebration, we would honour her desire to spend some time touching her roots in Norway. Thus it was that I suggested we spend a holiday in the land of her father.

We knew this would be expensive but I was determined that ‘no expense would be spared’ (from our limited resources) so that Anne would have a time to remember. We began to plan a month in Norway, staying with family if we could for most of that time, but also driving around to see some of her relatives and our friends. One day we had two visitors – Jon-Kore and Helene were old family friends, living in Stavanger. Their son was working in the oil fields of Alberta so they had come to visit him – and us. On hearing of our plans, they immediately offered us their summer cottage on the island of Flekkeroy, just off the coast of Kristiansand, Norway. We could have it free for as long as we liked after their summer use! We changed our plans to enable us to spend almost three months in Norway and a month in Wales.

In July we had a wonderful celebration for our Golden Anniversary, arranged by our daughters and hosted in my old church. Many nice things were said and many friends came to celebrate with us. I was able to write a poem for Anne in appreciation for all her love and support over 50 years – and to present her with her ‘medal’ (which said “No1 – the best!”). She had always said she deserves a medal for living with me for so long!! Three days later we packed our bags and left for UK and Norway with the intention of spending the first two weeks with Anne’s niece as she nursed her father through the latter stages of dementia. Sadly, he died a few days after we arrived in Norway so we needed to return to Wales for the funeral service and to comfort his daughter. We would return to Wales again after our three months in Norway, visiting friends throughout the south and, of course, our new church ‘home’ in Cardigan.

Ryan Air is one of several airlines in Europe which offer greatly reduced prices for travel between smaller airports. We arrived at such an airport near to Oslo, close to the home of Jon-Kore and Helene’s other son, with whom they were staying. We were met at the airport, taken to their home for a meal and then driven to Flekkeroy. What a beautiful place! A couple of days later we drove to Stavanger to enjoy a brief holiday in that lovely city, reminiscing about the time when the Anastasis had visited there in 1993. Then another great blessing – we were given a car and a cell phone to use during our time in Norway!! Truly, our Lord is correctly named Jehovah Jireh (the Lord our Provider). We soon settled into our new home with a wonderful view over the water to other homes on that island. Days were spent in hiking the many trails and clambering over the rocks to several of the secluded inlets. On other days we would take a trip in the car to more distant scenic places. For fellowship we attended a church

on the mainland where a congregation of ~150 would gather in a school, mostly young families with small children. We enjoyed those times so much even though we had little grasp of what was being said. Sometimes they would provide us with our own interpreter. Among the friends we met were Mike and Eve-Greta, he a Canadian, she Norwegian. They were building a special house near us so we were able to spend quite some time helping them in their project. All the while, Anne was honing up on her Norsk for the time at the end of our vacation when we would be in Oslo with relatives, some of whom speak no English.

One weekend we drove out to Jon-Kore and Helene's winter cottage, situated in the middle of a large area of marshland. Of course, in the winter it is all some metres under snow but, for our visit we needed to wear rubber boots to traverse the marshland. The houses are winterised with sod roofs, some with quite large plants and bushes growing on them! The land all around is ideal for growing blueberries and it was our joy to pick many litres and enjoy them with our meals. Waffles with whipped cream and blueberries cannot be easily beaten, especially when eaten in the company of good friends.

For our last week on Flekkeroy and our two weeks in Oslo at the home of Svein and Mae, Anne's cousin, our daughter Corinne flew in to join us. She has a great interest in geneology but had little information on Anne's father's family beyond two generations. She did know that Peder Olsen, Anne's grandfather had lived on a farm at Nordalen, a few miles north of Oslo, so one day, borrowing Mae's car we drove to that region. Corinne began to talk with a man at the local community centre and, within two hours, had Anne's family line all the way back to 1150AD – 17 generations!! Boy, was she excited!! I knew Anne had Viking blood in her!!

Svein and Mae were wonderful hosts with whom we were able to have much sweet fellowship. I cannot imagine our future trips to Europe not including a return visit to see them, especially as flights between UK and Norway are so reasonable, compared with Canadian/American airlines.

We returned to Wales at the beginning of November, not an ideal month to spend time on vacation, especially as our dear friend Jenna had asked if she might join us for that part of our time abroad. We assured her she would always be welcome with us but warned that the weather in UK in November is usually the worst of the year, with fog, drizzle and cold wind. She said that she was not so much interested in seeing the beaches or walking the trails but wanted to meet our friends, see our roots and enjoy our company. So it was agreed, recognising that we would need to hire a car for some of our time 'at home' so we could take Jenna around. Imagine our delight when the very next day, I received an email from Steve and Sulwen, Mt Zion Cardigan, saying how disappointed they were that they would not see us in November as they were spending that month with their son in Thailand. However, we were welcome to use their car and home for the whole month! Our fears about the weather were unfounded, as that November must have been the warmest and driest on record – we even sat outside for our morning coffee, were able to hike many of the wonderful coastal trails and show Jenna much of the beauties of our homeland – she will never forget that holiday, especially the fish & chips and cream slices!

We were able to see Steve and Sulwen within a few months as they did a house and car swap with a local pastor for four months early in 2012 but that's another story and I've reached the end of this one. Maybe I'll add some more chapters if the Lord gives me many more years, but I wanted to write this book, not just to tell a story but to honour the Lord who has led us on this most remarkable journey. We have come to know and love Him more and thank Him that our "lot has fallen to us in pleasant places".

I cannot but think that the only reason I have such a story to tell is because of three things:

- My heart longs to experience the Lord as response to Paul's prayer of Ephesians 1:17
- The Prayer of My Heart remains that I might be kept in His will
- He is pleased to give me more of His blessings because I am quick to tell others of them.

May my life always be 'to the praise of His glory' – Ephesians 1:14

*Gareth*

October 2012