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Irish Baptist Historical Society



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Editor

Dr Andrew Curry

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The Irish Baptist Historical Society

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to persons interested in the history
of the Baptist Churches in Ireland.

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EDITORIAL

The Historical Society saw significant change in 2023 as John Gault stepped down as Secretary and Editor of our Journal. Let me begin this editorial by expressing our thanks to John for his years of service and attention to detail. While John's retirement from office is significant, I am delighted to report our program continued with a varied and helpful series of lectures.

In March, Pastor Leslie Hutchinson delivered an address on "The Life of Pastor H. H. Orr (1904–1973)". The address was marked with personal insight derived from the use of unique primary sources such as Mrs Orr's scrap book, a "This is Your Life" script, and transcripts from Pastor Orr's sermons delivered at East End Church. Pastor Orr influenced the founding of Magherafelt Baptist. He served formally as an evangelist in the South Derry area; a pastor in Kilrea; an evangelist with the Home Mission; and as pastor of East End, Great Victoria Street and, lastly, Rathcoole. His ministry was marked with conversions, baptisms and numerical growth, but the presentation drew particular attention to his faithfulness, hard work and trust in God.

Our May meeting saw not one but two addresses. One from the countryside, and one from the town—yet both reflected God's work over the one-hundred-year history of each local church. Tom

Johnston presented research carried out by Margaret Fields on the history of Carndaisy Baptist Church, while Pastor Richard Donnan presented the history of Newtownards Baptist Church. It was interesting to be able to hear the histories side by side, to hear of the various issues faced in both locations, and yet to see the common earnest desire to see a gospel church maintained in each location. Both histories recorded the work of pastors but also drew attention to the significant sacrifice and faithfulness of many within each congregation.

Our last address was given by Dr David Luke on "Jonathan Edwards and the Lord's Supper". With care Dr Luke drew attention to the developing thinking of Edwards view of the Supper. Edwards viewed the Supper as a memorial designed for the purpose of a few things: 1) to stir hearts, not just minds; 2) as a covenant seal; 3) as a means of spiritual nourishment; and 4) as a means of communion both vertically and horizontally. The address was rich theologically, but also spurred all in attendance to practical thought. For example, when considering the call to examine oneself before taking the table, Dr Luke drew attention to Edwards' exhortation to use self-examination as a means to draw repentance and preparation to participate, rather than as means simply for exclusion. The last section of Dr Luke's address outlined how these four aspects of Edwards' thought on the Lord's Supper should cause Irish Baptists to reflect on their present practice.

Andrew Curry

CONTRIBUTORS

Leslie Hutchison BA BD MA PGCE

Leslie taught history at Belfast High School for ten years before studying for the ministry at the Irish Baptist College. He then served as the pastor of Strandtown Baptist Church (1986–2009) and Ballycrochan Baptist (2009–2015). He has also taught Christian Ethics at the Irish Baptist College. He is married to Heather and together have four adult children and eight grand-children.

Margaret Fields

Margaret Fields was brought up in Carndaisy (third generation). Her maternal grandfather and mother were members (her father joined on marriage). She became a Christian at a mission conducted by the late James McManus and became a member of the church in her early teens. Margaret was a Sunday School teacher for over 40 years until 2021 and still helps at the Children's Club. She is retired, having been employed in Human Resources in Health and Social Services for 37 years.

Richard Donnan BA BTh MBA

Richard is currently serving as full-time Pastor at Newtownards Baptist Church, taking up the role in May 2022 following his graduation from the Irish Baptist College. Prior to that Richard worked in Financial Services for 30 years with Ulster Bank. He also volunteers as a Sport Chaplain and in a Trustee capacity for a number of Christian Charitable organisations. He is married to Janet, and together they have three adult children Adam, Naomi, and Ryan

David Luke BA BD PhD FHEA

David joined the faculty of the Irish Baptist College in 2013 after serving as pastor in Gilnahirk Baptist Church for sixteen years. He

is the Director of Postgraduate Studies and teaches Historical Theology and Church History. He is married to Elizabeth and they have three adult children. He is the author of *Meeting Christ at His Table: Jonathan Edwards and the Lord's Supper* (JE Society Press, 2023).

THE LIFE OF PASTOR H. H. ORR (1904–1973)[1]

LESLIE HUTCHINSON

EARLY LIFE

The growth of the Christian church has largely been through the faithful labours of ordinary men and women that God has chosen to use and bless. Hugh Henry Orr was one of these humble servants. Through his ministry, during the middle years of the last century, God brought great blessing to many individuals and churches in our province. His life and ministry provides us with an example to encourage and inspire us today.

He was born on the 29th June 1904, the youngest of six children. He had a sister, Maisie, and four brothers, Alfred, William, Thomas and Robert. His parents were Robert and Lucinda (née

[1] I would like to express my thanks to Janet and Hugh Orr for the use of Mrs Orr's Scrap Book and other newspaper cuttings; to Robert Fitzpatrick for the 'This is your Life' script and to Bert Caldwell for his transcripts of Pastor Orr's sermons preached in the East End church.

McQuillan). His father had a small farm at Killyfaddy on the Ballyronan Road near Magherafelt in Co. Londonderry and this is where Hugh grew up. His father was a member of Woods Parish Church and a lay preacher there. Sadly he died when he was only forty six on the 10th December 1912. Hugh was only eight years old at the time. We can only imagine the sadness which this loss brought into young Hugh's life. His mother then seems to have taken the children to worship in the Methodist church where she had grown up. She was a woman of strong Christian character. In her obituary in the local paper in January 1949 she was described as being 'of a bright and cheerful disposition...most tolerant in her dealings with others' and it was stated that 'In early life she yielded to the claims of her Lord', and during a long life she 'adorned the doctrine of God her Saviour in all things'. By 'her transparent character and integrity of life she won and retained the respect of all classes in the community'. Hugh grew up with a strong Christian influence in the home.

He was educated at the Old Fair Hill National School which was attached to Magherafelt Presbyterian Church. Here he received a good grounding in the three R's, reading, 'riting and 'rithmetic and also in the Bible. Here the discipline was strict but again there was a strong Christian influence. The Principal was Master John Stewart, an elder in Magherafelt Presbyterian Church. He left school at fourteen and had no further formal education. Later, in the 1920s, when his preaching gift was being increasingly recognised, he considered going to the USA for Bible training. He thought that he would be able to find work and support himself through college. He applied to The Moody Bible Institute and then the next year to the Omaha Presbyterian Seminary but he was refused a visa on health grounds, so nothing came of these plans. However, both he and his brother Robert were avid readers and read books on history, current affairs and theology and discussed them together. There were no opportunities for night classes or correspondence courses so he educated himself.

After leaving school he worked on the small family farm. It

must have been a struggle to make ends meet. His sister, Maisie, and brothers, Alfred, Thomas and William all emigrated to North America as members of the previous generation had also done. He knew what it was like to labour physically, before he began his spiritual labours. His years on the farm taught him the value of early rising and hard work. He was an Ulster countryman by birth and upbringing and he always retained his strong south Derry accent. Years later when he was resident in Belfast his favourite form of relaxation was to escape to the country and go fishing.

HIS CONVERSION AND FIRST STEPS IN CHRISTIAN MINISTRY

Although Hugh was well versed in the Scriptures and had been brought up in a Christian home it was not until he was almost eighteen, in March 1922, that he was converted. He had gone with some friends for a holiday and discovered that they had recently trusted in Christ as their Saviour. When the time came to leave for home one of them, Kennedy Watters, went part of the way with Hugh and at a crossroads, near Coagh, spoke to Hugh about his need of the Saviour. In rural Ulster at that time the crossroads was the place to transact business whether settling a debt or pursuing a romance and it was here that Hugh repented of his sins and trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour. He was born again, adopted into God's family and became a new creation in Christ.

These were turbulent times politically. Northern Ireland had only just come into existence with the partition of Ireland. It remained part of the United Kingdom with its own devolved administration and Parliament to satisfy the wishes of the Unionist community. In the rest of the country the struggle was carried on by the Nationalists as they sought to achieve independence. This was accompanied by much violence and bloodshed and sectarian tensions. In Northern Ireland between 21 June 1920 and 18 June 1922 there were over 2,000 victims of violence, 1,800 injured and

over 200 killed.[2] (Buckland, P., A History of Northern Ireland, Gill and Macmillan, 1981, p.46).

He did not get involved in the politics of the time but threw himself wholeheartedly into Christian service. He first found fellowship with a group of young men who met in the home of Master John McIlwrath, another school principal in Magherafelt, for Bible study, prayer and fellowship. It was here that Hugh prayed publicly for the first time. He became actively involved in Christian service in his home church and also participated as a personal worker in some of W. P. Nicholson's campaigns. These were days of widespread spiritual wakening with Nicholson, the plain-speaking evangelist, conducting campaigns in Belfast and many provincial towns. Many hundreds of people professed faith in Christ and undoubtedly many, many lives were truly changed. Following one of these campaigns in First Magherafelt Presbyterian Church, a Christian Workers' Union was formed in which it appears that Hugh was a regular speaker. It was also at this time that Hugh came under the influence of George McKillen who had become the pastor of Tobermore Baptist Church in 1921. Hugh became convinced that the Scriptures taught believers' baptism and so, along with five other young men, he was baptised. This group began to pray about the possibility of starting a Baptist Church in Magherafelt. In April 1926 a mission was held in Magherafelt, initially conducted by Pastor McKillen and then by Pastors Carser and Burrows. On Monday night 8 April 1926 Pastor Burrows spoke on 'What is a Baptist Church?' He asked those interested to wait behind and thirteen did so, among them were four of the six who had been baptised in Tobermore. It seems more than likely that Hugh was one of them and so he became one of the founding members of Magherafelt Baptist Church.[3] (Stanley Barnes, All for Jesus: A Life of W. P. Nicholson, Ambassador, 1996, p. 100.)

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[2] P. Buckland, *A History of Northern Ireland.* Gill and Macmillan: Dublin, 1981: 46.

[3] S. Barnes, *All for Jesus: A Life of W. P. Nicholson.* Ambassador: Belfast, 1996: 100.

Hugh was convinced that Baptist principles were biblical principles. This led him in the early 1930s to join with some other young men to oppose a Baptist Union scheme for ministerial recognition. Hugh was not opposed to ministerial education nor to churches working together. But he believed that each local church should be able to call whoever they chose as pastor without any outside interference. He believed in the independence of the local church but he also fully supported the idea of churches working together and was later to serve for many years on the Baptist Union Council.

Pastor McKillen was instrumental in setting up the South Derry Evangelistic Association towards the end of 1928. He persuaded the members of the Baptist churches in the South Derry area to contribute one penny a week each. From these funds were purchased a horse drawn caravan to provide accommodation for an evangelist, a portable hall and later a tent. The evangelist was provided with a bicycle on which he could visit the homes in the district where the mission was being held. Hugh was appointed as the evangelist in the spring of 1931 at a salary of fifteen shillings a week. He served in this capacity for just over two years and then resigned in July 1933 but continued to conduct missions independently. Possibly he was being asked to conduct missions outside the South Derry area and wanted to take up these opportunities. The committee commended him for his work, recording in the minutes; 'The committee feel and know that during his two years under the Association he has been much used of God in bringing souls into the Kingdom, and also building up those who were of the household of faith, and it is their earnest prayer that God may continue to use him mightily in His great Name, and they also trust and pray that he may be kept in the place where it is only possible for God to bless and keep him.'[4]

[4] Quoted in R. A. Boggs, 'The South Derry Baptist Evangelistic Association', *Irish Baptist Historical Society Journal* 11 (1978/1979): 20.

KILREA 1935–1944

Hugh's preaching gifts were now being widely recognised and in November 1934 the church in Kilrea called him to be their pastor. After prayerful consideration Hugh accepted the call, but because he was committed to conducting several missions he did not take up the position until 12th April 1935. He proved to be a very capable pastor. He was faithful in teaching God's Word week by week and continued to hold missions in Orange Halls in winter and in tents in the summer. The church grew steadily from a membership of 33 to 53 by the time he left in 1944, despite some opposition within the town. Many of the American servicemen who were stationed in that part of the province during the war found fellowship and hospitality in the church. One of them, Karl Anderson, recalls how Hugh, finding him sitting on his door step reading his Bible one day, gave him a key and told him to let himself in anytime. They remained firm life-long friends.

On the 20th November 1935 Hugh married May Stitt. May was from Coolshinney on the other side of Magherafelt and was a qualified nurse and mid-wife in a Belfast hospital. They conducted their courtship very discreetly and took many of their friends by surprise when they announced their engagement. The wedding ceremony was held in Templemore Hall and conducted by Pastor W. E. Tocher. They had a honeymoon in London and Edinburgh. They then set up home at Sandown, their bungalow in Kilrea. It was a very happy marriage marred only by the disappointment of not having any children of their own. But they took a great interest in their nephews and nieces who recall happy visits to Belfast and trips to the zoo. One of them came back one day thrilled to have seen the biggest goose in the world only to be told that it was in fact an ostrich. I, myself, can remember having tea at the manse with my uncle Hugh and auntie May after which we would play games such as Old Maid and Donkey. Uncle Hugh would make up stories about us. They always took a great interest in the children in the churches where they served.

Mrs Orr proved to be a real help- meet in the work of the

church. Without a family to raise and no longer in employment she wholeheartedly supported her husband in the life of the church. She acted as his secretary and took all phone calls to the manse so that her husband was able to study without any interruptions throughout the morning. She was a great source of wisdom and practical help to the women in the congregation, often using her medical skills. When leaving Kilrea the church commended her especially for all the work she had done with the children in the Sunday school. She often accompanied her husband on door to door visitation when he was conducting missions. She also was a very capable speaker and was much sought after for women's meetings across the country. She loved visiting graveyards and reading the inscriptions on the headstones. In one talk having described her visits to Bunhill Fields in London where John Bunyan is buried and the war graves in Normandy she then went on to talk about Joseph and the preparations he made for his physical burial and the need to make spiritual preparation for death as well. Then she concluded with the empty tomb of Jesus and the hope the believer has in the face of death.

On their twenty-fifth wedding anniversary they made a return trip to London. On the Saturday evening they attended a praise service for the London City Mission in the Central Hall Westminster. On Sunday morning they went to Westminster Chapel to hear Dr. Martyn Lloyd–Jones preach. In the evening they went to the East London Tabernacle to hear Rev. Paul Tucker and then afterwards to a West End theatre where Tom Rees was having evangelistic services. Here Hugh was impressed by the practice of sending out 'fishers of men' to the surrounding streets in advance of the meeting to invite others to come in and he thought that the practice could be used in missions at home. On the Monday evening they attended the prayer meeting at the Metropolitan Tabernacle where Spurgeon had preached.

HOME MISSION EVANGELIST 1944–1946

At the Baptist Union of Ireland Assembly in 1943 concern was

expressed about the lack of conversions and baptisms and a committee was appointed to consider the appointment of an itinerant evangelist working under the auspices of the Home Mission. This led to an invitation to Hugh Orr to become that evangelist, which he accepted. He preached his farewell sermon in Kilrea on the 10th September 1944 and was formally commissioned as the Home Mission Evangelist on the 14th. He and Mrs Orr moved to Belfast to a house on the Ormeau Road which they shared with a young newly married couple, Bertie and Myra Hutchinson, (my father and mother), from Kilrea, who had also moved to Belfast for work and they became members of Gt. Victoria Street Church.

He began his work almost at once. On the 17th September he began a three week mission in the Portadown Church. An account of the mission was given in the local newspaper. The reporter gave the following description,

> His evident honesty and forceful presentation of truth make a powerful appeal to the hearer. His humour and wealth of illustration drawn mainly from the common things of life, captivate and hold the interest and attention of the congregation right through the address, and his passion to win people for Jesus Christ shines through his whole ministry. Mr. Orr has a style of preaching all his own, which gives freshness and new meaning to old truths. He does not indulge in pointless platitudes but 'gets over' a message which he feels everybody else ought to know. Scorning everything like mere professionalism in his methods he is desperately in earnest in delivering the message God has entrusted to him.

Over the next two years he was extremely energetic in the work of evangelism. He held missions in Banbridge, Dunseverick, Milltown, Lisburn, Limavady, Lurgan, Dungannon, Killyleagh, Gilford, Portstewart, Coleraine, Dromore, Ballynahinch, Poyntzpass, Grange, Great Victoria Street, and East End. He always sought to involve the local church wherever he went, motivating

them to pray and invite others. He was very clear in his proclamation of the Gospel and urgent in pleading with his hearers for decision. 'Presenting our Saviour in plain, forceful language' is how one report put it. Everywhere he went his ministry was marked by great fruitfulness. In June 1945 the Irish Baptist Magazine reported over a hundred professions of faith as a result of the previous three months missions.

In his mission in Gt. Victoria Street in March 1946 such was the interest that as well as the weeknight meetings they had to have two on Sunday evening at 6.30 and 8 pm. There were daily prayer meetings at 7.30 each morning when over 30 members gathered each morning to pray before work. There were also several lunch time meetings in the offices and factories nearby. Over 90 professions of faith were recorded during the three week mission.

In April 1946 he held a mission in the East End church which led the church there to call him as their pastor. Hugh accepted the call, left the Mission and returned to the settled pastorate, but continued his zeal for evangelism. In August 1947 he preached at an open air meeting in the Botanic Gardens in Belfast to a crowd of over 7,000. These meetings were held each summer under the auspices of the Irish Evangelistic Society which brought men from different denominations together in Gospel partnership. He continued throughout his pastorates to conduct missions not only in Ireland but in several other places throughout the British Isles.

EAST END 1946–1957

Pastor Orr was inducted into the pastorate of the East End church on the evening of the 13th May1946 and commenced what was to be a very fruitful ministry. He threw himself wholeheartedly into the work of pastoral ministry. He applied himself diligently to visiting the members of the church and also the homes in the vicinity of the church. He preached faithfully twice on a Sunday and again at the mid-week prayer meeting and later at a Friday evening Bible School. The church building had been badly damaged during the German air raid on Belfast on the night of the 4th/5th May 1941 and the

congregation joined with the church at Strandtown for their Sunday services for two years while extensive repairs were carried out. Within a few years of the commencement of Pastor Orr's ministry all the debt was paid off and a new manse purchased at Rochester Avenue. He also found time to conduct evangelistic missions in other churches. Under his ministry the church grew steadily. During his eleven years of ministry there were 168 baptisms and the church membership grew from 82 in 1946 to 228 in 1956.

Billy and Olga Green were teenagers in the church then and they recall with great affection the spiritual encouragement which they and the many other young people received from Pastor and Mrs. Orr. The young people would gather in the church manse at 50 Rochester Avenue after the evening service for a time of singing, fellowship and supper.

Paul Doherty was only a small boy at the time but he recalls how clear and understandable Pastor Orr's preaching was as the Gospel was made plain. He writes, 'I was saved in October 1956 when I had just turned eight. Pastor Orr preached at an evening service on Luke 19:10 and the truth dawned on me that I was lost and that I needed to do something about it. His preaching was absolutely clear and simple, I had no difficulty understanding him.' He also recalls how Pastor Orr also encouraged his father, Raymond, to start the work in Gilnahirk.

Bert Caldwell describes Pastor Orr's preaching as 'biblical, clear and authoritative'. Many others were encouraged to study the Bible more deeply for themselves and several entered the Christian ministry.

It was during their time in East End that Pastor and Mrs. Orr enjoyed a five month trip to the U.S.A. in 1951. They left Cork on the 16th July on the liner 'Washington'. They were able to rest and relax and do many of the tourist things. They visited Niagara Falls and crossed the continent on a Greyhound bus; a trip made possible by the gifts of their American friends. They were also able to meet up with family and friends. Hugh met his brother Alfie whom he had not seen for thirty years. As they crossed the continent they stopped

in Des Moines, Iowa, to meet up with Karl Anderson the American serviceman that they had known in Kilrea. In Los Angeles they spent time with John Dologhan who had grown up in the East End Church and then emigrated and had become a pastor. They also renewed fellowship with W.P. Nicholson, who was now teaching at Biola University in California. Hugh also found many opportunities to preach. He was invited to speak at the Chinese Young People's Conference in Harvey Cedars, New Jersey and conducted a fifteen day mission in the Roger Williams Baptist Church in L.A. They returned to the East Coast on the Greyhound bus by the southern route and sailed back to the U.K. on the Queen Elizabeth.

GREAT VICTORIA STREET 1957–1966

In June 1957 the Great Victoria Street Church called him to be their pastor. He was well known in the church, having conducted missions there in the past and having been a member there when he was a Home Mission evangelist between 1944 and 1946. He considered the matter prayerfully before accepting. In his letter of acceptance he said that he had been led by consideration of a number of passages of Scripture. He read in Acts 13:13 where John Mark turned back to Jerusalem and his ministry became barren. He felt that God was saying to him that he could not say no to the call. He could not turn back from it. The induction service was held on the 9th October. Pastor Ravey in his address to the church said, 'Mr. Orr is God's man in God's place; a man who has been tried and proved; one whose work has been greatly owned of God; a Christian gentleman of sterling character, a great Bible student; a gifted teacher; an able evangelist and a good pastor.' Pastor Orr in his reply said that he was convinced that he had neither natural nor acquired qualifications to fill such a high office, but feeling as he did that he was in the will of God he quoted 1 Corinthians 1:27 'God hath chosen the weak things of this world to confound the things that are mighty.' He appealed to the members not to depend on him for blessing but to look to God; it is from Him blessing will come.

The author of the history of Great Victoria Street

comments; 'In many respects he brought the warmth and friendliness of the Ulster countryman to his ministry and his strong accent reflected his background. He remarked that if he and Pastor Mullan, his great friend, were to be likened to David and Jonathan, he must be Jonathan because David was the sweet singer of Israel. Pastor Orr was always an enthusiastic but completely tuneless singer.'[5]

He followed the pattern that he had practised in his previous pastorates. He devoted himself to prayer and the ministry of the Word. His preaching Sunday by Sunday was always biblically based, clear and practical, often laced with humour. The Sunday evening service was always a Gospel address and no one was ever left in doubt that they needed to be saved. He commenced immediately a Friday evening Bible School, a practice which he had begun in East End and soon over two hundred would gather each week, many of them students and young people. He expounded Bible books, 1 Timothy, Exodus, Hebrews, Daniel and topics such as the Bible, the Cults, the Church of Rome, and Prophecy. He had a particular interest in the End Times and especially the place of the Jews in God's plan. He believed that the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 was a sign that the Lord's return was imminent. He fulfilled a lifetime ambition in 1964 when he and Mrs Orr were able to pay an eight day visit to the Holy Land. They were able to visit many of the well-known biblical places around Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Nazareth, Galilee and the Dead Sea. He took a great interest in Jewish evangelism and would regularly have Mr. Ernest Lloyd from Christian Witness to Israel as a visiting speaker.

He was also interested in the subject of Revival and preached on it in the centenary year of the great Ulster Revival of 1859. He and Pastor Mullan conducted a three week mission that year in the Ballymena Church. He was a member of the Baptist Revival Fellowship and in an address to the Fellowship in 1952 spoke of the need for renewed revival in our land. He stressed the

[5] R. Fitzpatrick, *History of Great Victoria Street Baptist Church*, 2011: 15.

sovereignty of God in revival. He said,

> Being a Calvinist I believe that God moves first in revival. He moved first in Eden. He moved first at Calvary. We must accept the sovereignty of God and the free will of man. They run in two parallel lines and so far as we can see do not merge. One historian said of the Calvinists in the 1859 revival that they prayed like Calvinists but worked like Arminians.

He emphasised the importance of prayer. 'Most revivals, if not all' he said, 'can be traced back to prayer.' He urged the need for cooperation among churches. During the time of W.P. Nicholson in the 1920s all the ministers in the towns united in the evangelistic campaigns. Then he went on to say, 'We Baptists are the most hopeless crowd when it comes to anything united. What was there to hinder all the Baptist churches uniting, taking a central hall in Belfast, inviting a special speaker, and thereby bringing a blessing that would move the city?'[6]

He was not afraid to speak out on controversial issues. When the Archbishop of Canterbury, Geoffrey Fisher, visited the Pope in Rome, in 1960, Pastor Orr preached against it. Interviewed by the *Belfast Telegraph*, he said, 'I think it is the most retrograde step that has taken place in Protestant history in four hundred years. I heartedly disagree with it.' He was opposed to any kind of false ecumenism and supported the Baptist Union in Ireland in severing all links with the Baptist Union in Great Britain and in publishing the booklet *Ecumenism Examined* in October 1965.

Under his leadership the church grew in many ways. The congregation grew so that there was a pressing need to increase the size of the building. In November 1961 the church approved a building scheme which increased the seating capacity of the main auditorium to 780. Work commenced in April 1962 and during this

[6] Quoted in 'The Annual Assembly: Reports of the Main Meetings', The Irish Baptist, Vol. LXXV, No. 6, June 1952, 5–6.

time of building work the Sunday Services were held in the Wellington Hall. The new church building was opened on 25th May 1963 by Mrs Henderson, the widow of the previous pastor the Rev. David Henderson. The special speaker was Mr. Lindsay Glegg from WEC. The enlarged building was soon filled, morning and evening, often with extra chairs needed in the aisles, as the Lord blessed Pastor Orr's ministry.

The church grew in other ways too. The League of Church Loyalty encouraged children to attend the morning service with their parents and it usually had about a hundred children on its roll. A crèche and children's church were also established. The Sunday School grew during these years to two hundred scholars and to over thirty teachers. The Youth Fellowship had a regular attendance of seventy five and in 1965 the decision was taken to begin the Campaigners, a young people's uniformed organisation with a strong evangelical ethos. Further building work was required to facilitate all this work and new halls were completed and opened on 15th February 1965.

The women already had two meetings when Pastor Orr came, the Women's Bright Hour and the Women's Missionary Auxiliary with different emphases but with increasing numbers attending it was felt necessary to set up a Young Women's Fellowship to cater for their needs.

The church always had a strong missionary interest and this was encouraged and increased under Pastor Orr. There were over twenty members of the church at this time in full time Christian service in different parts of the world. It was said that Pastor and Mrs Orr were always there when missionaries were heading off to their sphere of service and were always there to meet them when they returned home.

From 1955 the Great Victoria Street Church had been involved in church planting work in Finaghy under the leadership of Will Hibbert. In 1958 it was decided to purchase the Black's Road Methodist Church building for £5,500. A Sunday Morning Service was commenced and the work grew steadily. In February 1961 38

members were sent from Gt. Vic to become the new Finaghy Baptist Church.

During Pastor Orr's ministry there were many conversions, known and unknown. No records were kept. But there were 380 baptisms during these years and the membership grew to 527, by far the largest church in the Union. Something of the esteem in which Pastor and Mrs. Orr were held by the members of the church can be seen in two special events in 1960. On the 11th April the Young Peoples Fellowship surprised Pastor Orr with a 'This is Your Life' presentation. They succeeded in bringing together many family members and old friends in gratitude to Pastor Orr for his influence on their lives. Then, later in the year, on the 5th December over 300 gathered to celebrate Pastor and Mrs Orr's Silver Wedding Anniversary and present them with a silver tea service and Mrs. Orr was presented with a bouquet of flowers by Miss Alma Hutchinson (aged 6).

Pastor Orr's health had been a matter of concern since 1964 when he had suffered a heart attack and had been incapacitated for three months. He appeared to make a good recovery but again suffered serious heart problems in the early part of 1966. The office-bearers wrote in their annual report that 'following a warning from his doctor and heart specialist that he must curtail his activities or face serious consequences, Pastor Orr very reluctantly came to the conclusion that in fairness to the church the time had come when he should relinquish the pastorate.' He informed the church of his acceptance of a call to Rathcoole Baptist on the understanding that his ministry there was to be 'limited in scope and duration'.

RATHCOOLE 1966–1969

Pastor Orr's Induction Service to Rathcoole took place on 30th September 1966 when again his good friend Pastor Mullan was the preacher. Pastor Orr continued to preach faithfully as his health permitted and was a blessing to many. One member at the time, Mrs. De Courcy, recalled over fifty years later one of Pastor Orr's down to earth illustrations. Speaking about the need to keep growing in the

Christian life he said it was like riding a bicycle with no brakes uphill. If you didn't keep moving forward you would go back. This was typical of his homely and practical illustrations and clearly remembered by one member over fifty years later. But he had to reluctantly recognise his human frailty and conclude his ministry in October 1969.

RETIREMENT 1969–1973

In retirement Pastor and Mrs. Orr moved to a bungalow at Orangefield in East Belfast and returned to membership in Great Victoria Street.

These were the years when the 'Troubles' were beginning and Pastor Orr was greatly concerned for the well-being of the Province. At the Baptist Union Assembly in May 1970 he presented a paper to the Social Questions Conference on 'The State and the Subject'. He gave a very clear and thorough biblical exposition of the relationship between the State and the citizen. He concluded,

> The purpose of the devil in Job chapters 1 and 2 seems to be the destruction of life and property and I am convinced that what we see today is an all-out attack by the devil, not only on the Church but also on the State and on the forces of law and order. My prayer is that God will grant us in these days a spiritual Church and a strong Government.[7]

Pastor Orr passed into the presence of the Lord on Saturday 10th November 1973. As Pastor R. A. Boggs wrote, 'No doubt the trumpets sounded for him on the other side as he heard the Master's own tribute 'well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of the Lord'. At the funeral service in the Orangefield Church, before a crowded congregation, Pastor Joshua Thompson, the Secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland, paid the following tribute:

Hugh Orr, he said, was a plain man who wasted little time

[7] The Irish Baptist, Vol. 92, No. 7, July 1970, 6.

on unnecessary social and ecclesiastical conventions. That is not to say that he was rude or insensitive, for he was neither, his plainness was wholesome because it derived from a marked sincerity and honesty. He was direct as a preacher. His sermons were always spiced with humour, and frequently illuminated by homely illustrations and quotations from his favourite C. H. Spurgeon. They were concise, coherent and often memorable. Some of his outlines were strikingly original. One that was typical was related to Samson, the Old Testament character, it had three telling points – Long hair, no hair, short hair. Perhaps his greatest gift as a preacher was in the field of evangelism. He served the churches of our denomination in other ways- no less important. He shared in the administration of denominational affairs as a member of the Council of the Baptist Union of Ireland for many years, and particularly on the committee of the Home Mission. He fully concurred in the need for the work of the Lord to be effectively organised, and his advice and experience were invaluable assets to those of us who bear the main burden of administration. As a pastor Hugh Orr met his people on equal terms. His simplicity of nature and enjoyment of life made him quick to respond to the demands people made on his time and energies. He was always welcome in their homes. In the hospital and in the social life of the church people loved him just as he loved people. His delight in little children and their ready response to him opened many homes and hearts to his message. Hugh Orr was outstanding as a friend and colleague. He could differ profoundly with others on matters of importance (and he was never one to mute his views because they were different), he could and did dissent with sincerity, but his

whole hearted love for his brethren remained intact.[8]

Pastor Willie Mullan conducted the service at the graveside at Roselawn cemetery. In his autobiography, *Tramp for the Lord*, Pastor Mullan paid tribute to his friend,

> I first met Hugh Orr when he was pastor of the small Kilrea Church in the 1930's. I can see him now in my mind's eye as he was then. Tall and broad shouldered, with jet black hair surmounting a handsome finely chiselled face. He was a countryman through and through with all a countryman's ways and an uncomplicated manner of thinking. He was big hearted and lovable, totally incapable of any kind of deceit; the kind of man who if he brushed against evil it rolled away, an absolutely incompatible element. He had a natural gift as a preacher and in my opinion he was one of the finest preachers in Ireland... It is often said that the besetting sin of the Christian ministry is jealousy and I am afraid that is sometimes true. But such a bond of love existed between Hugh Orr and myself that jealousy was unthinkable. From a human standpoint we were at times competitors for the crowds that swarmed our meetings, but we rejoiced at the blessings which came to each other's efforts. When God blessed me and hundreds of people were unable to get into the crowded building the delight in Hugh's eyes could be seen by everyone. I still consider him to be the greater preacher and when his meetings had wonderful results, love and joy filled my heart. Cynics may laugh at our mutual admiration society. Well, let them. Earth holds no firmer virtue than Christian love'. At the graveside he preached on the text, 'For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain' Philippians 1v.21 and commented that, 'Looking back over the years it was simply wonderful for a tramp like me to have

[8] The Irish Baptist, Vol. 95, No. 12, December 1973, 9.

a prince like him for a friend.[9]

Hugh Orr came from a very humble background. He was brought up on a small farm in mid-Ulster. He lost his father when he was only a boy. He had only the most basic formal education. But as a young man he committed himself to serving his Lord and Saviour with his whole heart. He devoted himself to the ministry of the Word and prayer. He was greatly gifted and zealous in the work of evangelism and many came to faith in Christ as they heard him preach the gospel. He was a clear and faithful Bible teacher who made the Scriptures plain and understandable to all. He was a wise and loving pastor and leader, greatly respected by all who knew him. He, along with his wife, gave counsel, support and practical help to many. They faced difficulties and disappointments with courage and faithfulness. Society and church life and ministry have changed enormously in the almost fifty years since Pastor Orr's death but his life and ministry leaves us an example to inspire and encourage

[9] W. Mullan, *Tramp After God.* Lakeland, 1979: 72.

THE CENTENARY OF CARNDAISY BAPTIST CHURCH

MARGARET FIELDS

Carndaisy Baptist Church is located in a beautiful little building situated in the scenic surroundings of Carndaisy Glen at the foot of Slieve Gallion in the Sperrins, about two miles from the County Londonderry village of Moneymore.

Carndaisy Glen is one of nature's beauty spots and yet it is a place not much known to the outside world. A stranger coming along could pass the Glen Road without knowing he was near such a scene of beauty further up the single-track carriageway. (The recent erection of a signpost, however, now points to the fact that a church lies in a Glen up that track.) In the spring, the ground is literally carpeted with primroses and buttercups and later on the bluebells among the trees and over the Glen sides make a beautiful picture and draws sightseers to witness the spectacle.

THE EARLY DAYS

There is no clear record of when the original Baptist witness began in Carndaisy, but we do know that in the beginning of the 19th Century Baptists were found around Moneymore. An old map of the area dating back to about 1800, records the existence of a Baptist Meeting House in Carndaisy Glen. It is believed that unwanted Baptists were given sanctuary by the famous Draper's Company of London, large landowners in County Derry, to whom this beautiful spot belonged. There was strong opposition to the Baptists around that time and it was difficult, if not impossible, to acquire a place to worship.

In those early days, the Baptist beliefs, of a simple and logical interpretation of what Scripture teaches concerning the church of Christ as a society of believers baptised by immersion on profession of personal faith in Christ and their insistence on complete separation of church and state, was unacceptable to many. The Baptists of the Moneymore district, therefore, found themselves unwanted and discriminated against and were thankful to find a place where they could worship without offence.

A record of the opening of the new building in 1937 records that Pastor T. Carleton informed the congregation that on looking up an old directory of names of Baptist churches in Ireland he discovered that Carndaisy Church was founded in 1810 and the Pastor was William Latimer residing at Moneymore.

By the 1820s the fellowship in Carndaisy numbered about 40 members. They were then meeting further up the Glen in the old schoolhouse which was rapidly deteriorating. The building may have been in decline, but the church was living and active. Messrs. McCullough and Kennedy, local men, preached the gospel and the church prospered.

The link with Tobermore goes back to the days of Dr Alexander Carson (1776–1844). Pastor R. A. Boggs wrote that during his ministry in Tobermore, Dr Carson set up preaching stations in various places around the area. One was at Carndaisy around 1829. Dr Carson preached there on a regular basis and his

son, Robert Haldane Carson, who succeeded him to the pastorate also preached there.

Towards the end of the century, for some unknown reason, it seems that the work in Carndaisy virtually disappeared. The discontinuance of the church seems to have been punctuated with occasional services in the building which eventually fell into disuse. Baptists from Carndaisy worshipped with the church in Tobermore.

PASTOR GEORGE MCKILLEN (1923–1931)

Pastor George McKillen came to the pastorate of Tobermore and 1921 marked a new beginning, not only for Carndaisy but for Tobermore, Upperlands, Knockloughrim, Cookstown, Magherafelt and Coagh.

Pastor McKillen's initial mode of transport was a push bike, then a motorbike and sidecar and finally he had the luxury of an Austin 7 as he travelled round the roads preaching the gospel. He was a man of vision with an unquenchable thirst for evangelism and the spiritual awakening of those days resulted in a revival of the witness in Carndaisy in the early 1920s.

The building was but a shell when Pastor McKillen saw it. On his first visit, with a friend to Carndaisy on a motorbike and sidecar, to inspect the old meeting house with the idea of making it usable, we are told that soon the shutters were opened and through the window space clambered the adventurous preacher only to crash through the floor timbers below. His daring earned him, from his friend, the first £5 towards its repair. Soon the building was renovated and fit for use and the first meeting was held in June 1921. God was at work and people came from all around. There were many conversions and there was a real spirit of inquiry to know and fulfil the whole counsel of God which led to many people breaking from the traditions of a lifetime in order that they might follow the Lord in baptism and meet in fellowship around the Lord's Table. People were baptised in a stream not far from the building. The locals called it the 'dipping pool'. Many suffered great loss and persecution of various kinds to take their stand for Baptist principles and obey what

they felt to be right.

The present church was formed in July 1923 when these believers joined together to witness to the truths commonly held by Baptists. (Unfortunately, there is no record of the names of the foundation members.) Soon the building proved to be too small, and a much-needed extension was added by Thomas Boyce. Cantie's Pool further up the Glen was also used for baptisms especially on the 12th July—an important date in the calendar then. An obituary which appeared in the Mid-Ulster Mail, dated 16th June 1928, in respect of a Rt. Hon. R. G. Glendinning D.L., one of the leading linen manufacturers in Ulster, and originally from Brackagh, Moneymore, records that he was 'one of the first to be immersed in the little chapel in Carndaisy Glen'. In later years, until the new hall at Carndaisy was built, believers travelled to the church in Tobermore to be baptised.

The Service in the church at Carndaisy was held at 4.00 pm to allow Pastor McKillen to preach a morning and evening Service in Tobermore. This also accommodated people from other denominations to attend the afternoon Services in Carndaisy, many on a very regular basis, down through the years.

During the days of the spiritual awakening in the 1920s, Pastor McKillen instigated the setting up of the South Derry Baptist Evangelistic Association in 1928. The purpose of the Association was to engage in united evangelistic outreach in the district, in co-operation with the long-established church in Tobermore. The churches at Tobermore, Magherafelt, Carndaisy, Coagh and Kilrea were represented on the committee. Representing Carndaisy were James Mitchell and George Crooks.

Sadly, Pastor McKillen was suddenly called home in 1931 at the early age of 40. He was a very energetic man and a highly respected leader, and it was a great blow to the church that this good man had been called home so early, but he left behind him in Carndaisy a band of faithful Christians.

PASTOR WILLIAM WEIR (1932–1928)

Pastor William Weir BA BSc, a man of different temperament whose gifts were complementary to those of Pastor McKillen, came as Pastor to Tobermore in 1932. Pastor Weir's patient persistence did much to consolidate in Carndaisy the good work of his predecessor We are told that there was, however, much to discourage the pastor at that time. He found the old building in need of thorough reconstruction and after a great deal of persuasion led the church to embark on what seemed a risky enterprise. Financially, times were very hard, and the people were full of doubt, but the pastor encouraged them to erect a new church building despite all the difficulties.

The church was opened, in the presence of a large congregation, by Pastor T. M. Carelton, Banbridge, President of the Baptist Union of Ireland in 1937 and it was decided that the new building was the most fitting memorial to the late Pastor McKillen and should bear tribute to his work and, therefore, it is called the McKillen Memorial. The memorial stone was unveiled by Pastor J. Shields, Kilkeel.

A report of the opening of the new building shows that Pastor Carleton, spoke from Hebrews 11:4, "He being dead, yet speaketh", and thought these words very appropriate with regard to Mr McKillen as he was still speaking in the lives of those who were brought to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus. Rev. J. Reavy of Belfast, said that new church was a fitting monument to the memory of Pastor McKillen, who was untiring and faithful in his labours there, and that the building would perpetuate the memory of one who was dearly loved by his people. He, personally, would never forget his first visit, the beauty of the surroundings and the people flocking down the Glen on either side was a glorious sight.

Pastor Weir extended a hearty vote of thanks to all those who had come to the opening of their new church, and he intimated that a statement would be given at their annual conference on 12th July, when he hoped to be able to say that they were free of debt. He said they had realised their fondest dream by the completion of that

fine hall. The church, on a site cleared near the old building, cost £400.

The building was fitted with calor gas throughout and had seating accommodation for 200 people, but on this occasion the aisles and vestries were packed to overflowing, many having to remain standing, as well as a large number outside.

After seeing the church well established, Pastor Weir accepted a call to Cliftonpark Baptist Church, Belfast in 1938.

PASTOR ROBERT ANDREW BOGGS (1938–1978)

Pastor R. A. Boggs began his ministry in 1938. A native of Belfast, he was converted as a teenager under the preaching of the Rev. W. P. Nicholson. He was educated for the Baptist Ministry in the Irish Baptist College, at that time in Dublin. He served in the church at Grange near Ballymena for six years before coming to Tobermore and Carndaisy. It was the beginning of 40 years of faithful and fruitful service as well as 10 years as Pastor Emeritus. A man who loved to preach the Word of God, his commanding voice and presence in the pulpit and his love of Christ were so evident. He had an infectious sense of humour and his colourful anecdotes helped to convey the gospel truth. He came to the pastorate when the dark clouds of impending war were gathering.

The new pastor and members were distressed to hear that an accidental fire on 12th July 1939 left only the four walls of the new church standing. All the provisions left in the previous evening for the tea at the conference to be held that day, as well as the extra cooking utensils, hymn books and seating were destroyed. The seats from the old church had unfortunately been temporarily transferred to the new building and also perished in the flames. It was indeed a grievous setback for the church. The conference that day had to be held in the open air.

The Insurance Company offered to settle the claim for £365. This was accepted and at the beginning of September, McCullagh Brothers of Moneymore were instructed to proceed with the reconstruction. Despite the onset of World War II and the

consequent restrictions, the building was re-opened for public worship around Christmas the same year—some 5 months later! Pastor Boggs presided, and Alderman W. J. Chambers of Belfast led in prayer. Mr R. Clarke, who had been assisting in the services of the church for some time, read from the Scriptures. Pastor F. H. Forbes, secretary of the Baptist Union of Ireland gave the address and extended to the congregation the good wishes of the Baptist Union. Pastor W. Weir, the former pastor, said he was glad to join with the congregation for the re-opening ceremony of the new church.

The ministry of Pastor Boggs witnessed a changing scene with the disappearance of the small farm and a drift to the town and modern way of life. Despite this, Carndaisy still drew sizeable numbers both to church and Sunday School. Pastor Boggs was often heard to say, 'We produce for export'. Many moved away from the area on marriage or to seek employment. Former members of the little church are to be found in Canada, the USA and throughout Northern Ireland. Several members from the Carndaisy Church left to establish the work and join the newly formed Cookstown Church. During Pastor Boggs' ministry Mr Samuel McGarvey was both treasurer and caretaker and Mr James Weir continued as superintendent of a thriving Sunday School.

The work in the Glen grew steadily under the ministry of Pastor R. A. Boggs. The minute writer records:

> During the war years, the church made quiet but steady progress. Not long after the close of hostilities, the Aladdin oil heaters, which replaced a solid fuel heating stove set in the centre of the building, were dispensed with and a central heating plant of low-pressure type using a solid fuel boiler was installed.

Many gospel campaigns were held. As a result of a mission conducted by Pastor Jack Johnston in 1946 a number were saved, baptised and added to the church. The attendances greatly increased, and it was found necessary to remove permanently the partition of

portable shutters which closed off about one-third of the building. During a Mission held in 1964 conducted by Mr James McManus, Home Mission Evangelist, several young people were saved, later baptised and joined the church.

In 1972 great sorrow was felt in the church and throughout the community when the Pastor's wife, who had quietly supported him in his ministry, went to be with the Lord.

In 1973 a special service was held to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the formation of the church.

When Mr Samuel McGarvey stood down as treasurer and caretaker, Mr Maxwell Boyce offered his services and served the church in this dual capacity until his sad and unexpected home call just before Easter 1974. Mr Joe Mitchell served as a devoted Superintendent of the Sunday School.

In 1974 the minute writer recorded:

> An extension to the kitchen accommodation was added and an agreement has been made with the Electricity Board to give a connection. This we hope will be in the not too distant future and will enable the portable gas lighting system which has been in use since 1939 to be dispensed with.

Mr George and Mrs Emily Wilson were invited to carry out caretaking duties and continued to do so until George's sudden death in 1987. Emmie's talents in flower arranging were utilised for bridal bouquets and she supplied the flowers for the pulpit for many years. She loved children and served as a Sunday School teacher for many years. As a church we celebrated Emmie's 100th birthday on 17th September 2019 and were saddened to hear of her home call to glory on the 9th January 2022 at the grand old age of 102.

In 1974 the following brethren were set apart to serve as deacons: Mr Henry Allen, Mr William Fields, Mr William Johnston, Mr George Wilson and Mr Desmond Wright who was also appointed as Treasurer. Acknowledgement was made of Mr Joe

Mitchell who was the elder and Mr Alfred Johnston, deacon. Mrs Meta Allen looked after the correspondence of the church as her mother had before her. Mr Joseph Mitchell supported by Mr William Fields continued as Superintendent of the Sunday School.

Mr Henry Allen was appointed as Treasurer in April 1976 following the resignation of Mr Desmond Wright.

In 1977 an important note is recorded that the handover from personal Trustees was dealt with and the building was handed over to the Baptist Union of Ireland Corporation Ltd for looking after the building in terms of Trustees. The church property was transferred from the present Trustees (Joseph T.Mitchell, Samuel McGarvey, James C. Weir, James Love, Robert Patrick, Pastor William Weir) to the Baptist Union of Ireland Corporation.

Mr Joe Mitchell, a godly man, whose well-thumbed Bible was testament to the fact that he loved to study the Bible and often expounded it's truths during Thursday Prayer Meetings or around the Lord's Table, went to be with his Lord in 1977 following a period of ill health. Mr William Fields took over the full duties of Sunday School Superintendent.

Pastor Boggs retired in 1978 after more than 40 years as Pastor. He continued to live in the Magherafelt area with his second wife until his death on 5th November 1989. During the vacancy of two years, pulpit supply was provided by those speakers responsible for the services in Tobermore. The prayer meeting each Thursday night in the church continued.

PASTOR TREVOR BROCK (1980–1988)

Pastor Trevor Brock, a native of Cornwall, having come to Northern Ireland in 1969 to attend the Irish Baptist College, succeeded Pastor Boggs in 1980. He had previously served the Lord in Ballymena and the Antrim Road Church. He served the churches at Tobermore and Carndaisy faithfully for some eight years.

Pastor Brock played a great part in the Youth Work of the Church, attending the children's meetings each Saturday night having travelled around the village to collect children in his car. He

was also instrumental in commencing house meetings for the young people to meet on a Sunday night for Bible study and discussion.

A letter dated 13th November 1980 confirmed that a Declaration of Trust had been sealed and signed by the Corporation and that the church property was securely held for the benefit of the church. Pastor Brock had been able to secure the deeds of the church from a Magherafelt Solicitor and they are held by the Corporation Solicitor.

During Pastor Brock's ministry, the mains water supply was brought to the church from a neighbouring farm which obviated the need to continue carrying drinking water from the natural spring up the Glen. This venture involved digging a track up the side of the Glen and the pastor, unused to any manual labour, worked alongside others to do his share of the work.

In August 1985 the worst thunderstorm for many years occurred. The torrential rain and resultant floods coming off the hills cut a deep gully and washed large rocks and boulders down the Glen to lie scattered over the church car park. This happened a week before a wedding was due to be held in the church, much to Valerie Johnston's (the bride) consternation. The force of water fortunately flowed past the gate and did not enter the church building. At that time a children's mission was being held in a tent further down the road and the Sunday Service was able to be held there. A bulldozer had to be brought in and three loads of rubble used to cover the rough stones. After a lot of hard work, the wedding guests were able to once more drive up and park at the church.

The old church building, further up the Glen, remained unused for many years until it fell into such a state of disrepair that it became dangerous, and the decision was made during Pastor Brock's ministry that it should be demolished. As a result, all that remains as evidence of its existence are partial walls almost hidden in the undergrowth.

Pastor Brock left in February 1988 to go as Pastor to Great Victoria St. Baptist Church. There followed a period of vacancy of over three years when visiting speakers came to take the Sunday

Services and the mid-week prayer meeting. At this time the prayer meeting was being held in the home of Mrs Meta Allen to assist her incapacity.

It was with great sadness that a record was made in the minutes concerning the death of Pastor R. A. Boggs in 1989 and the church in Carndaisy decided that a Memorial Stone be erected in the church building in recognition of his long and faithful service. On 6th May 1990 a special Service was held in Carndaisy for the unveiling of a plaque. The meeting was led by Pastor J. Smyth, Mr William Fields gave a moving tribute to Pastor Boggs and the plaque was unveiled by Mrs Boggs. Pastor Jack Johnston gave an appropriate address.

PASTOR GRAHAM LOGAN (1991–199)

Pastor Graham Logan from Banbridge, came in 1991 to Pastor both Tobermore and Carndaisy. He had entered the Baptist College in 1982 after some years in hospital administration and had completed his studies at Queen's University three years later. He was previously Pastor of Poyntzpass Baptist Church. He had attended Sunday School in Carndaisy for a short time as a child, while living in Moneymore.

During Pastor Logan's ministry, an open-air Easter Sunday Morning Service was commenced at the church in 1998. It was not unknown to have to make a hasty retreat into the church mid-service when snow showers threatened, and the Service is now held inside. The first Church Barbecue was held in June 1998 and continues periodically, as a means of outreach. The date of the annual conference which had a long tradition of being held on 12th July was changed to the first Saturday in July. A new toilet block was added and the church roof was replaced in 1991.

At a church Business Meeting in February 1992 tribute was paid to the life and testimony of one of the Deacons, Mr William Johnston, who had recently passed away. Messrs Oliver Fields and Tom Johnston were elected as Deacons. Oliver had undertaken the duties of caretaker following the death of George Wilson and Tom

assumed responsibility as Sunday School Superintendent when William Fields stepped down due to ill-health.

In June 1994 Mrs Florrie Johnston was appointed to continue looking after the church correspondence following the home call in April 1994 of a faithful member Mrs Meta Allen. Meta was renowned for making notes during the service and was able to tell visiting speakers the topic of their previous sermon. The church also lost Mr William Fields, Deacon and Sunday School Superintendent, and his wife Florrie who were called home in March and May 1995 respectively.

In 1998 a special service was held to celebrate 75 years of the formation of Carndaisy Baptist Church.

In May 1999 following new regulations for the Deed of Covenant Scheme (later the Gift Aid Scheme) Mrs Wendy Fields was appointed Joint Treasurer to assist Henry Allen.

Pastor Logan resigned in August 1999 to take up secular employment.

PASTOR WINSTON JORDAN (2000–2007)

On 1st June 2000 there was a break in the tradition of sharing the pastor with the Tobermore Church when Carndaisy held an Induction Service for their own pastor, on a part-time basis. Pastor Winston Jordan, a local man who had been reared on a farm a stone's throw from the church came back to his roots.

Before entering the Faith Mission Bible College, Edinburgh in 1979, Winston was a well-known building contractor in Mid-Ulster and a member of Cookstown Baptist Church. On completing his two years in Bible College, he worked for the Faith Mission in Stranraer before joining the Irish Baptist Missions in 1983, participating in church planting work in Castlederg. After spending seven years in West Tyrone, he again moved to Stranraer encouraging believers in Southwest Scotland. He was called to Carndaisy on a part-time basis and continued with a part-time secular position locally.

During Pastor Jordan's ministry, the church at Carndaisy

experienced a time of blessing and growth. The Pastor's leadership and encouragement, and his refusal to take 'No' for an answer, saw many of the members participating in the ministry of the church, especially at the Lord's Table. The children were also encouraged to take part and the children's work continued.

During this time the annual Harvest Service was introduced, and praise services and barbeques continued periodically. Carol singing in the homes of the elderly and disabled connected to the church was also a new initiative and a New Year's Eve Watchnight Service was held for a few years but was discontinued due to lack of support.

Monthly women's meetings were commenced in October 2000 under the chairmanship of Mrs Jordan. These included Visitors Night, Christmas Dinners and attendance at the Annual Women's Rally. Prior to this the women of Carndaisy had joined with Tobermore for their Bible study groups and special events.

Soon after his induction, Pastor Jordan had a vision to see a hall added to the church for use by the Sunday School, young people and for special Services. His enthusiasm was catching and soon he was supported by the church members in obtaining the necessary piece of land, having plans drawn up and getting planning permission. For many months during 2002–2003 many willing hands were at work. The land was donated by a neighbouring farmer and many local tradesmen and workers helped voluntarily in the construction of the hall. The pastor's skill as a tradesman was very useful and he put in many hours of work alongside many of the church members and local people. Gifts and donations enabled the building to be opened debt free.

On 9th May 2003, the trees with their new spring leaves and the carpet of bluebells created a beautiful backdrop as members and friends of Carndaisy met to open the new church hall. The new building and existing church were filled with many members of the local community, friends from neighbouring churches and other visitors. Mrs Emily Wilson the oldest member of the church carried out the opening ceremony. Pastor Trevor Brock, the former pastor

led the congregation in a prayer of dedication.

A baptistry was also built in the new hall and the first baptismal service in Carndaisy was held on 1st June 2003. In earlier days those who wished to profess personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ by being baptised by immersion had to travel to the Tobermore Church or use the local stream.

The hall has been a great asset to the church with extra seating available for special services. It is now possible to have tables set up for catering purposes and the purchase of a pool table, table tennis table and other equipment has encouraged the young people during youth events. (A toilet block and store were added to the church hall in 2013).

Pastor Jordan reduced his speaking commitments in June 2006 and retired completely in June 2007. His leadership and mentorship resulted in many of the members becoming equipped and confident to lead the services and provide pulpit supply during the ensuing vacancy.

2007–TO DATE

Following Pastor Jordan's departure, the church was assisted in pulpit supply by Pastor Geoffrey Ward who also provided sound counsel to the Deacons, Henry Allen, Tom Johnston and Oliver Fields who were all appointed Elders in 2008. Other speakers also provided pulpit supply and, in more recent years, Mr William Logan along with Mr David Colvin have undertaken services on a more regular basis. Mr Logan has also officiated at weddings that have taken place in the church. To facilitate these speakers, the Prayer Meeting which for many years had been held on a Thursday evening, was in 2013 changed to Tuesday.

On 25th July 2013 the church suffered great shock and sorrow in the tragic loss, because of a farm accident, of Mr Henry Allen, our beloved Elder and Church Treasurer. The Holiday Bible Club was due to be held the following week and in the knowledge that it would have been Henry's wish it went ahead, albeit with heavy hearts. It resulted in a concerted team effort which turned out to be

a special time of blessing and fellowship for the leaders.

When a new Community Hall opened at the nearby townland of Tirgan, the church successfully arranged various events there as outreach and were supported by good attendance from the local community.

Neil Hutchinson and Nigel Dripps were appointed to serve as Deacons in 2019.

Unfortunately, the Women's work in the previous format lapsed and some of the women then attended Bible Study Groups held in Tobermore Baptist Church. In 2018 a new initiative began in the church when the women met together for Bible Study under the leadership of Mrs Debbie Colvin and this currently continues, having transferred to zoom for a period during lockdown.

A Men's Bible Study group commenced in 2020 under the leadership of Mr David Colvin and 10–12 men meet monthly in the church.

The church has introduced various policies and procedures such as Child Protection, Health & Safety, Data Protection and Privacy Policy to meet relevant legislation and recently registered with the Charity Commission. This necessitated the drafting of a new Church Constitution and nominating Trustees for the purposes of the charity. As it was necessary for the Secretary of the Church to be a Trustee for the purposes of the Charity Commission, Oliver Fields was appointed in this role. Tribute was paid to Mrs Florrie Johnston who had carried out Secretary duties for many years.

CORONAVIRUS AND LOCKDOWN

In March 2020 the world-wide coronavirus pandemic reached the United Kingdom and, in line with government regulations, a complete lockdown was introduced with the result that public church services were no longer permitted. The church congregation, however, was soon able to continue to enjoy Bible teaching, listening to the Word preached and having fellowship with each other during services on Sunday mornings and at weekly prayer meetings, through the medium of Zoom—a video conferencing internet programme.

Special acknowledgement must go to a member of the church and Sunday school teacher Robert Johnston, who used his expertise to ensure that all members of the congregation had access to this technology. He endeavoured to source devices and set up connections for those who had no previous computer experience and he continued to offer technical support for the next two years. He also livestreamed the Sunday services and prayer meetings and many isolated both at home and abroad were able to connect and listen to the services. He enlisted the help of Jason and David Dripps and was soon able to delegate control to them. Sunday School was also held on zoom at 3.00 pm each week and the children were able to enjoy an interactive programme.

During the Covid pandemic, the on-line speakers continued to be William Logan and David Colvin with former Baptist College students Richard Alhadeff and William Kidd also being introduced as regular speakers.

When restrictions were relaxed in July 2020 Communion Services (with masks, hand sanitation and social distancing in place) were held occasionally in the church building. A Harvest Service (without the usual decorations) was held on 8th November 2020. Sunday School continued on zoom until June 2021 and recommenced in September in the building at the new time of 10.00 am with the service following at 11.00 am. Weekly prayer meetings still continue on zoom to allow those who are no longer able or who are hesitant about coming into the building to have fellowship.

THE TWELFTH OF JULY CONFERENCES

The twelfth of July Conferences were started by Pastor McKillen. To avoid the temptations that would face converts during the 12th July celebrations, Pastor McKillen decided to hold Conference meetings annually on that day. In his own persuasive manner, he challenged people to show their love and loyalty to the Saviour by attending the preaching of the Word and so escape the snares and pitfalls into which they might otherwise fall. Down through the years, first in a tent, then in the new church building, and at times,

in warm sunny weather out of-doors, with the trees and bushes as a back-ground, the Word has gone forth to strengthen and encourage.

A report on the first Conference appeared in the Mid-Ulster Mail in 1923, describing how, "during favourable weather, both the afternoon and evening services were attended by a large and devout congregation. The speakers were Rev G McKillen, Tobermore, Rev J McKinney, Magherafelt, Mr J Shields, Magherafelt, Mr McIlrath, Coolshiney and Mr S Lees, Magherafelt. Praise was led by the choir from Tobermore accompanied by Miss McKean at the harmonium."

Another report in the Mid-Ulster Mail on 20th July 1929 describes "the 4th Annual Conference which was held in a tent erected for the occasion. It was the largest gathering that has yet been held at the Glen House. The tent, which accommodates three hundred people was filled to overflowing, a great many having to remain outside ... visitors being present from long distances." The speakers on that occasion were Mr W. Brown, evangelist, Belfast, Rev T. Bell, Tanragee and Rev A. Jardine, Belfast.

A further report in the edition 18th July 1931 again highlights the fact that the tent belonging to the Baptist Home Mission proved quite inadequate to accommodate the large congregation. The speakers at those meeting were Pastor J. Weir, Dungannon, Pastor F.H. Forbes, Ballykeel and Pastor A. Jardine. Pastor G. McKillen presided at both.

Many of those who came regularly for so many years are now in glory. What a meeting place this conference has been for friends from far and near. Two speakers preached at the first meeting then there was a break for tea and people had the opportunity of fellowship or a stroll up the Glen, weather permitting, before coming back for the concluding meeting. Children came with their parents and played among the trees during the time of worship.

Over the years, unfortunately, Christians got wider interests at holiday times and generally the younger generation no longer attended. The Conference continued to be held on 12th July until a decision was made in 1992 to hold it on the Saturday nearest the 12th. Eventually because of further falling attendance the conference

in that format was discontinued in 2010.

During 2011 and 2012 Ministry Weekends were held. These proved to be times of blessing and Bible teaching. The Services commenced on Friday evening, with a new venture of a breakfast being held on the Saturday morning prior to the ministry and the concluding Service on the Sunday afternoon.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

No part of the Lord's work in Carndaisy has such a place in the heart of its people as its Sunday School. Children belonging to practically every denomination in the area have passed through the classes. By this means a very worthwhile and fruitful witness has been carried on for years.

Sunday School work had been established in the Glen during Pastor McKillen's ministry and after his death it was left in the very capable hands of James Weir. In the 1920s the teachers were Mrs Wilson, Miss Ritchie and George Crooks. A Bible Class for adults was held during Sunday School. The old church building continued to be used as a Sunday School until it was no longer safe. There were big families in all the houses around the Glen and the children and parents walked down the Glens to the church. There was no need for cars in those days. Many of the children attending belonged to other than Baptist families as an afternoon time facilitated this.

Mr James Weir continued as Sunday School Superintendent under the ministry of R. A. Boggs until his death. Mrs Weir served the church as Secretary and her gift of composing verse was often used in the interests of both church and Sunday School. During the war years teachers were James Weir, Meta Allen (nee Weir) and Florrie Fields (nee Love).

There are no Sunday School Records other than the Roll Book dating back to 1946. The first name on that roll—Dorothy Johnston—later became a Sunday School Teacher and was a member of the church until her death in 2016. Prior to 1946 each Sunday School Teacher kept individual records which unfortunately

no longer exist.

On 2nd March 1947, the Roll Book shows that there were only seven pupils in attendance. History would declare that this was during the "Big Snow" when it would have been impossible for many to get down the Glens.

In the 1950–60s there was a regular attendance of 30–50 children.

In 1963 there were 40–50 children attending Sunday School. The teachers were Mrs Emmie Wilson, Miss Dorothy Johnston, Mrs Sophie Simpson, Mr William Fields and Mr Joe Mitchell, Superintendent. When Joe Mitchell was no longer able to carry on as Superintendent, Mr William Fields undertook the role. When lessons were over, it was the custom of Joe Mitchell to knock the door at the back of the church to summon Pastor Boggs from the kitchen which also served as a vestry to come in and close the Sunday School in prayer.

During the 1960s/70s some pupils had 10 years' unbroken attendance (and those were the days when there was no break during July and August) and were awarded a watch in recognition of this achievement.

In the 1970s, numbers declined—there were 30 on the roll. From then numbers continued to decline and in 2012 there were only seven pupils on the roll. In 2022 there were 10 pupils all belonging to Baptist families. Tom Johnston took on the role of Superintendent when William Fields resigned due to ill health. At that time, the other Sunday School teachers were Robert Johnston and Margaret Fields. Margaret retired in June 2021 after over 40 years. Down through the years, it has been appreciated that many members of the church have stepped in to carry out the teaching role for various periods of time.

In the 1920–40s there were no excursion to the seaside. Games and sports were held in the field beside the church, or the children were taken on picnics to Lough Fea. An article in the Mid-Ulster Mail in 1923 reports "on a very pleasant evening when the children attending the Glen House Sunday School, accompanied by

their parents and friends, met in an adjoining field where games of all sorts had been got up for the occasion. The delightful weather added very much to the evening's enjoyment ...tea, cake and fruit were dispensed by the Committee – Mrs Ritchie, Mrs Dale, Miss Mitchell, Messrs Thomas Boyce and Samuel McGarvey and prizes were given out to the successful competitors. The Rev G. McKillen, Tobermore and Rev J. K. Paisley, Armagh, were present. The latter has been conducting a very successful mission in the Glen Hall for the past two weeks. This has been Mr Paisley's first visit to the locality and the desire was unanimously expressed that he should come back again in the near future."

Excursions began in the 1950s, mostly to Portrush, first by train and then by bus. On some occasions Carndaisy joined with the Tobermore Church in Castlerock where games were played on the beach or in a nearby hall in inclement weather. On a few occasions a visit to the Zoo or to Bangor made a change. The excursion to Portrush continues, with an interruption by covid regulations, with many coming along in their cars to meet for bowling in the Jet Centre followed by McDonalds and then games on the beach in the afternoon.

The highlight of the Sunday School year used to be the "Social" normally held on the Thursday night nearest to Christmas. This gave the children the opportunity to perform in front of parents with singing, recitations and sketches being practised for weeks until word perfect. It was also the night for prizes for attendance at both Sunday School and church to be presented and a supper rounded off the night.

A hamper of gifts donated by the congregation was given to Pastor Boggs and he used to describe how his children had great fun unpacking it all when he got home. In recent years, a special speaker has been invited to come on the Sunday before Christmas and the children take part during the Service. Prizes are also presented and tea enjoyed.

HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB

A new venture began in 2012 when the church held a Holiday Bible Club. It was well attended and all the young people (and some not so young) of the church volunteered as leaders for the week-long club in early August. The Club has continued to be held each year since and in 2020, during the Coronavirus Pandemic, a very successful virtual Holiday Bible Club was held thanks to the technological expertise of Robert Johnston. He was ably assisted by the Dripps boys, by presenters Ruth Booth and Ellen Johnston and by other leaders who volunteered to do video stories, quizzes and memory verses. In 2021 a restricted Holiday Bible Club (without crafts and with leaders wearing masks) was held in the church hall which attracted an attendance of over 40 children.

YOUTH WORK

During a Mission held in 1964 conducted by Mr James McManus, Home Mission Evangelist, several young people were saved and the BYF was formed under the leadership of William Fields. Meetings were held each Saturday night in various homes in the area (Des Wright's, Tony Allen's, William Johnston's, William Fields' and Miss Bell's) and continued for some years until numbers declined when young people left on marriage. Meetings were also held periodically in the Manor House, Moneymore to accommodate visiting speakers and encourage others to attend.

During Pastor Brock's ministry a weekly Children's Meeting—the Saturday Club—commenced in November 1983. Over 40 children attended on a regular basis, transported in cars—often packed in—by Pastor Brock and other church members from the village of Moneymore and all around the area The under-11s were accommodated in the little back kitchen and the teenagers held their meeting in the church.

In the 1984 a tent mission was held by Winston Jordan during which a BYE Team also held a week's Holiday Bible Club. Following that successful venture another Children's Bible Club was held in a tent in August 1985 and despite very unfavourable weather

over 60 children attended each night.

The Saturday Club continued into the 1990s for junior children. Sometime after 1993 it was changed to a Friday night and became the Friday Club. This continues in 2022 for primary age children. It became necessary, because of the number of children, and to meet Health and Safety Regulations, to hire a minibus to transport the children to the Club. Meetings were suspended during the Coronavirus Pandemic but resumed in October 2021.

It was not possible to continue with weekly meetings for senior children and in 1992 monthly discussion groups were begun. Many efforts were made to continue this work in various formats and a Youth Group—GPS—held meetings on a regular basis. The Glen Cycle run organised for charity by this group was one of the popular events as well as visits to other Youth Groups and Activity Centres. When the new church hall became available games equipment was purchased and the Youth Group was reconvened and now meet each week for games and an epilogue while the children of the Friday Club have their meeting in the church building.

WEDDINGS

Down through the years, the church in Carndaisy has been a picturesque venue for weddings and many happy couples have taken their vows before God and their relatives in the quietness of the Glen.

A notice in the local Mid-Ulster Mail shows that on 15th August 1923 the separate building known as Carndaisy Baptist Chapel, situated in Carndaisy, in the Parish of Desertlyn, County of Londonderry and District of Magherafelt was duly registered for the Solemnisation of Marriages.

The church's marriage records show that the first wedding was held on 12th October 1926. The names of the couple on that day are William Phillips and Nellie Chambers.

A later Certificate of Registration shows that the McKillen Memorial Baptist Church situated in the Townland of Carndaisy in

the Parish of Desertlyn and County Londonderry was registered for solemnizing marriages under the Marriages (Ireland) Act of 1844 on 19th September 1938.

FINANCE

The earliest financial record found shows that in the year ending 31st December 1943 the weekly collections amounted to £19. 4s. 0d; quarterly subscriptions were £42. 2s. 0d and Special Collections for Missions were £18. 15s. 0d. After expenses paid there was a balance of £4. 10s 6d.

As we celebrate the centenary of Carndaisy Baptist Church, we give grateful thanks to God for his blessing and goodness during the past 100 years. We honour those who came before us for their dedication and faithful service in the Lord's work in "The Glen" and pray that we, the current members, will continue to faithfully carry on the work. There have been enormous changes in our fellowship over this period but our trust is in the One who never changes—Jesus Christ, the same, yesterday, and today and forever. (Heb. 13:8).

Many of these details have been taken from an article written by Pastor R.A. Boggs; from other articles found during research; from the Church's Minute Book; newspaper reports and recollections from current and past members to whom I give grateful thanks; as well as from my own knowledge and recollection.

THE CENTENARY OF NEWTOWNARDS BAPTIST CHURCH

RICHARD DONNAN

INTRODUCTION

The Psalmist David wrote, "For the Lord is good; his steadfast love endures forever and his faithfulness to all generations" (Ps. 100:5) and that has indeed been our experience in Newtownards Baptist Church over these past 100 years.

In light of this truth, I believe there are at least two very good reasons why we should mark occasions such as this. First, it gives us an opportunity to pause and reflect on the past. Not in a "romantic" or "nostalgic" way nor wanting everything to go back "to the way things used to be." Rather, to reflect on how good and faithful God has been to us throughout that period, through the good times and the bad, through the ups and the downs which then provides us with assurance and confidence that this same steadfast & unchanging God is leading us into the future. Second, to apply the lessons of the past to the present and the future. As we commit

ourselves to faithfully serve the Lord wherever he has placed us until the Lord returns, or he calls us home.

I firmly believe that is the biblical model of remembrance where remembrance of the past ought to positively influence and impact how we walk with the Lord in the present. In the apostle John's vision on the island of Patmos Jesus reminded the church in Sardis: "Remember then what you received and heard, Keep it and repent" (Rev. 3:3). As one writer helpfully commented, "remembrance is a way of inspiring God's people to new possibilities or a better future all grounded in God's unchanging and bountiful grace." And so, it is through that lens that I would like us to approach this reflection. By his bountiful grace Christ has established and sustained his local church in Newtownards for the purpose of sharing the Word of God and reaching the lost with the love of Jesus.

THE TOWN OF NEWTOWNARDS

With its initial roots back to the 6th century the town took on the name of Newtown in the early 17th century when the Montgomery family were given the land. They set about rebuilding the town after it had been destroyed, the name later expanded to Newtownards.

Situated in County Down, at the Northern tip of Strangford Lough and the Ards Peninsula on the East Coast of Northern Ireland, its most famous landmark is Scrabo Tower. At over 40 metres tall (incorporating 122 steps if anyone has the energy for it!!) and nearly 200 meters above sea level, Scrabo Tower provides a great vantage point—not only over Newtownards town itself—but also the wider Strangford Lough and North Down area.

Symbolised by its Market House or Townhall as its now known, built in the late 18th century, Newtownards is now a bustling market town and commuter town for Belfast—some 13 miles away. Newtownards has a population of approximately 28,000 people and it is certainly not under churched, with there being at least 25 different churches in and around the town. Yet like many towns and villages across in Ireland there is a deep and growing spiritual need.

THE CHURCH IN NEWTOWNARDS

Interestingly, the foundation of Newtownards Baptist Church arose out of the fruit of the ministry of the renowned Presbyterian evangelist W. P. Nicholson—the tornado in the pulpit as he become known. As part of his wider evangelism ministry Nicholson preached in Newtownards in the Autumn of 1921, and was followed by the Scottish evangelist James McKendrick.

Their ministry resulted in many people coming to faith in Christ and as the new believers studied the Scriptures together many became convinced of their need to follow the biblical pattern of believer's baptism. These people were subsequently baptised in Bangor Baptist Church by Pastor David Burrows.

Those same believers were greatly encouraged by two local men. The first was a highly respected local businessman, Thomas Watters Doggart, who would become a founding elder of the church and whose grand-daughter Valerie Walker remains a member of Ballycrochan Baptist Church in Bangor. The second was Joseph Bowden, a founding member of the church and whose daughter Maud Hamilton is our longest serving member in the church today. Many of these young converts joined an open-air service in William Street in the town on 4th February 1923, which then led to the first service in the Orange Hall in Mary Street the following week, 11th February 1923, at which there were approximately 100 people. After temporarily moving to the Good Templar's Hall in North Street a new building was opened in Greenwell Street on 8th March 1924 with an initial membership of 38.

The first building was made of corrugated iron and wood but served the church well for the next forty years. During these first forty years the church was faithfully served by Pastor John Ravey, Pastor George Olley and Pastor George Thomas. The church also had the honour of sending many men and women into full-time Christian service in this period, but more on this below.

DEVELOPMENTS

Fellowship was a regular feature of the church from its infancy,

although back in 1920s they remained rather formal affairs. By the 1950's things had progressed slightly to include bus trips. The next major development in the life of the church was in the 1960s, however, with the move from Greenwell Street to the church's current site in Frances Street. The site was procured due to its central location on a main thoroughfare through to the very heart of the town.

On 24th September 1963, Pastor William Wilson—one of the founding members and former church Secretary, but by then Pastor in Grove Baptist Church—laid the foundation stone. In October 1964 the building was completed at a total cost of £20,000. The opening services for the new building took place on 3rd October 1964 and attracted quite a lot of local interest. Pastor Wilson gave a brief outline of the history of the Baptist witness in the town and this was followed by the preaching of Pastors Orr, Irvine and Thompson. The event was followed by three weeks of special gospel meetings.

Interestingly, just a few years earlier a visiting missionary Jake Johnson, who visited the church in August 1956 on his way to the mission field in India, described the church in this way: "This was without question the best and most alive church in Newtownards and the Lord is blessing them very much." Over the next 50 years or so the Lord continued to bless his church under the ministries of: Pastor Norman Baird, Pastor Sam Carson, Pastor Gordon Cardwell, Pastor Harold Chambers and Pastor Tom McLaughlin, who with his wife Anne and daughter Deborah remain faithful and committed members of the church in Newtownards to this very day. Alongside these men Peter Firth, Geoffrey Wright, Andrew Roycroft and Stuart Burnham also served faithfully as Assistant Pastors.

This period coincided with a significant number of men & women being called from the church into full-time ministry. Also during this time, with the support of the Baptist Union of Ireland and neighbouring churches—especially Dundonald Baptist Church—Newtownards Baptist Church was instrumental in the

planting of a new Baptist Church in neighbouring Comber on 17th November 1966 with 22 founding members (a number of them sent from Newtownards Baptist Church). The positive connections between our three sister churches continue to the present day as evidenced, for example, by our joint services together each summer.

The Children and Young People's work, established in the 1940s by Dorrie Gunning and Mrs Olley as the Young Life Fellowship, expanded at pace during the 1970s under the leadership of Charlie & Margaret Davidson and Eddie & Marianne Carrigan. These couples were of course supported by many others such as Florence Kerr, Susie McCann and Joanne Wilson. Notably, while Charlie, Margaret and Eddie have gone to be with the Lord, all the others remain in active membership in the church which is such an encouragement to us. A significant extension programme followed the expansion of the Children and Young People's ministry, in which new main and minor halls were constructed to support this growing ministry in 1988. During the time of Pastor Stephen Cassells and the assistant Pastor David Holmes the church undertook and completed a major renovation programme of its main church building—the main sanctuary had been largely untouched since its original construction back in the 1960s. This time the renovations alone cost over £300,000. This renovation programme completely transformed the main church building into its current state, which God willing will serve us extremely well. The benefit of these renovations has been apparent over the past 12 months as post-pandemic we have been able to restart many of our ministries and witnessed the Lord's blessing in many ways. Including quite of few new evangelistic contacts who are coming along regularly to the church, there have been three baptisms, ten new members and two of our younger men being recognised as Deacons.

We continue to pray that the Lord will indeed continue to build his church in the town of Newtownards as he had faithfully done so over all these years.

KEY FEATURES OF THE CHURCH

Newtownards Baptist Church has always been active and intentional in its biblically grounded desire to reach its surrounding community with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Over the years this has taken different forms:

- Tent Missions to Annual Conferences
- Door to door visitation in the local estates to various outreaches to the wider Ards peninsula
- Various Mission Teams
- Campaigners and Holiday Bible Clubs
- Schools outreach via our part-time youth co-ordinator and the Amazing Journey.

The core desire, which underpins all of the above, is to reach the lost with the love of Jesus by sharing the Word of God with them.

In addition to this intentional evangelism the church has also had a rich heritage of discipleship and mission. The Lord has worked through his local church in Newtownards to call, teach and train many men and women for full-time Christian service. Indeed, over the years more than 30 couples or individuals have been called into full time service from Christ's local church in Newtownards Baptist. A demonstrative list includes:

- Full-time pastoral ministry: William Wilson, Willie Mullan, Jim Shanks, Jim Irvine, Hamilton Moore, Raymond McCullough, Roy Graham, Wesley Crawford, Lindsay Allen and Andrew Roycroft.
- Full-time Christian mission: Mary Belshaw to Australia, Etta Kisby to Africa, James & Dorrie Gunning to Brazil with Acre Gospel Mission, Roy & Sadie Grant to Brazil with the Evangelical Union of South America, Trevor & Yvonne Bennett with Slavic Gospel Association and then to Brazil with Acre, Trevor & Christine Morrow with Baptist

> Missions to Peru and now with the Slavic Gospel Association, Carrie Mitchell still faithfully serving 25 years later in Nepal, and many more—David & Anna Bowers to Peru with Baptist Missions, Sandy Stirling with Slavic Gospel Association, Stephen & Michelle Thompson with Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

All the above called and commissioned by God into full-time Christian service from Newtownards Baptist Church

These observations help us, first and foremost, to recognise the enduring love and steadfast goodness and faithfulness of God, through Christ, to his people and his church. The praise and glory must therefore go to him alone. Second, they remind us, consistent with the words of J. D. Douglas, that we meet "as inheritors of a great legacy." This ought to challenge and inspire us in Newtownards—and in all our respective church fellowships—to reach out with the gospel and love of Christ continually and intentionally to those around us, to make disciples by baptising them and teaching them all that Christ has commanded and to be willing to go and serve the Lord wherever he has called us.

I finish with some words of the Apostle Paul from 1 Corinthians 15:58: "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain." As we look back and reflect on the Lord's work, whether over these past 100 years in Newtownards or elsewhere, let us also go forward, abounding in the work of the Lord knowing that in the Lord our labour for him is not in vain.

JONATHAN EDWARDS AND THE LORD'S SUPPER

DAVID LUKE

Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) was one of the most celebrated figures in the evangelical movement that swept the English-speaking world in the eighteenth century. During more than twenty years of ministry in Northampton, Massachusetts, in the British colonies of North America, he led his congregation through two seasons of revival. This helped to bring him to international attention. His ministry in Northampton came to an ignominious end, however, when his church dismissed him. Although various stresses and strains were at work in the background, the presenting issue was his change of position on who should be admitted to the Lord's Supper. By 1749 it had become public that he now adopted a position on the subject that overturned the church's long held views on the qualifications for admission to the Supper. Northampton's position

was, to some extent, novel and had been introduced by his predecessor, Solomon Stoddard.

Stoddard was a revered figure who had ministered at the church for sixty years and was dubbed by some 'the pope of the Connecticut Valley.' Although, Edwards complied with Stoddard's practice regarding the Lord's Supper until almost the end of his time at Northampton, an examination of his writings and sermons indicates that for much of that time he lived with unresolved tensions between what he saw as the significance of the Supper and how it was practised in the town. To understand this better, it is necessary to trace some of the historical background to the celebration of the sacrament in its New England context.

THE BACKGROUND

In the medieval church the celebration of the Mass—the unbloodied *re*presentation of Christ's sacrifice at the altar—was the high point of church practice and crucial to the matter of salvation. With the Reformation came a new understanding of salvation centred upon the finished work of Christ at Calvary, that did away with the need for the Mass. It proved easier, however, to dispense with the Mass than to agree about how the Lord's Supper should be celebrated. This issue became one of the most protracted and contentious among early figures in the Reformation, notably between Lutherans and the Reformed. Yet not even the Reformed were agreed about the meaning of the Supper and what it represented. Furthermore, key figures, such as Calvin, often changed their minds. This lack of a fixed understanding among the Reformed is reflected in the variety of views expressed in their Confessions.

In England, where the Reformation lagged behind the continent, the celebration of the sacrament was informed by European debates and the ideas of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury. By the accession of Elizabeth in 1558 much of the heat in the English debates about the Supper had dissipated and there seems to have been a widely held, although not clearly articulated, consensus about its meaning. Subsequently, there were

few significant disagreements among English churchmen over the subject. Rather, the focus now moved to the issue of the further reform of the Church of England. Where there were ongoing debates about the Supper, they were less concerned about the meaning of the sacrament, than with the attendant practices that made it seem too like the Mass. Those who pushed for further reform were known as Precisianists or Puritans.

Amid the fervent ecclesiastical debates of Elizabethan England, it became clear to some that further reform of the church was either unlikely, or if it came, it would not go far enough. As a result, they began to advocate separation from the established church. Although pursuing Separatism was precarious and, in some cases fatal, it was an established reality in English ecclesiastical life by the early decades of the seventeenth century. Those who took this path now found themselves embroiled in debates about maintaining the purity of the church. Many among them came to believe that only a pure church, which consisted of those who had undergone a true work of conversion, could properly administer the sacraments. Some who held to these views remained as Independents, others continued to work out the implications of their views and came to adopt Baptist ecclesiology.

Concern over persecution and the desire for the freedom to pursue their view of the church led several dissenting groups to the Netherlands. From there, some of them proceeded to the colonies of North America. Those who settled in the region known as New England adopted a congregational polity. They emphasised the visible purity of the church, which consisted of true believers (visible saints) existing in communion with one another. While these churches continued to practise infant baptism, based on the belief that children of believing parents were included in the covenant, they denied the Lord's Supper to those who had been baptised until they were able to satisfy the church that they had truly undergone the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit.

This gave rise to the 'conversion narrative' where a person gave an account of their conversion that conformed to a certain

(although a much debated) set of steps that resulted in their conversion. This usually involved such stages as humiliation, legal awakening, conviction, spiritual conflict, genuine sorrow and, ultimately, a sense of assurance. It was only upon a relation of such an experience that a person could become a full church member and be admitted to the Supper. Furthermore, it was only those who were admitted to full church membership who could offer their children for baptism and enjoy the full rights of citizenship, including the right to vote and to own land.

This approach to church membership was beset by several problems. First, not everyone could account for their salvation in the prescribed manner. This led to people either moulding their experience to fit the expected formula or, as was increasingly the case, refraining from applying for church membership. For, secondly, to apply for church membership, and then partake of Supper, without a genuine work of conversion, they were told repeatedly meant a person eating and drinking unworthily. This was something that had eternal consequences and many were reluctant to place themselves in such spiritual danger. Thirdly, as the spiritual fervour of the first generation of settlers passed fewer people became full church members, as such they could not offer their children for baptism, which began to lead to a lack of cohesion, not only in the church but also in society.

By the late seventeenth century there was a growing sense of crisis in New England and a new approach to baptism and church membership was adopted. It was now agreed that baptised parents, who did not profess conversion, could present their children for baptism. Nonetheless, it remained the case that no-one could participate at the Lord's Supper without first being able to relate their conversion experience. Critics dubbed the new position the 'half-way covenant.'

One keen supporter of the new approach was Solomon Stoddard, yet even this did not go far enough for him. By the end of the century, he began advocating the idea that the Lord's Supper should not be placed on a different level than other ordinances, such

as preaching. Instead, people should be encouraged to attend the Supper, which he argued was a 'converting ordinance.' Stoddard was prepared to admit to the Lord's Table any who were baptised, held to the main principles of the Christian religion and were not living scandalous lives. His view did not meet with widespread support in New England and was, it seems, only ever adopted in Northampton in the early eighteenth century. By the time Edwards became his grandfather's assistant in 1726 this approach to the sacrament had been in place for more than a decade.

Stoddard died in 1729 and Edwards became the sole pastor in Northampton. Although he revered his grandfather who had led the church through five seasons of revival, he was uneasy about some of his practices. One area of concern was his practice surrounding admission to the Supper. While he continued with his grandfather's practice, and it was almost twenty years before his misgivings became public, it is evident from an examination of his writings that he was never fully comfortable with Stoddard's view of how the sacrament should be celebrated.

EDWARDS' VIEW OF THE LORD'S SUPPER

Edwards' had a rich, multifaceted theology of the Lord's Supper. This is evident in his personal writings and in his sermons, where he preached a sacramental sermon every eight weeks in preparation for its celebration. Four key ideas about the significance of the Supper can be identified in his work.

First, Edwards' viewed the Supper as a memorial. He described it as "a holy supper to be celebrated in remembrance of the Lord Christ and his redemption."[1] The Lord Jesus had inaugurated the Supper as perpetual reminder of his death at Calvary and had commanded that all Christians should celebrate it. It was necessary to have such a reminder since, as Edwards reasoned, even

[1] No.186 1 Corinthians, 16:1,2 WJE 17:239. References to Edwards' works are to the critical Yale edition and are cited in the established form of WJE for the published volumes and WJEO for the online volumes. The latter volumes are not paginated.

great events of the past had been forgotten. Yet, this was more than a bare reminder of Christ's death, rather its aim was "to fix our minds [and] to give us lively ideas of Christ and the things of Christ."[2] As such, this memorial should not simply inform minds, it should also stir hearts.

The memorial also served as a means by which Christians might proclaim Christ. As they celebrated the Supper, they testified their "Respect to Christ in this Ordinance by Giving up our selves Entirely unto Jesus Christ making a solemn Renewed dedication of our selves to him."[3] In doing this, they renewed their commitment to the Lord Jesus and declared the infinite excellence of his person. Significantly for Edwards although this was a memorial meal, he did not consider Christ to be absent from it. He told his congregation if "we come to the Lord's supper & find nothing of Christ there & don't meet with him we shall [have] reason to go away mourning & with heavy hearts."[4] Christ was present with his people as they celebrated the Supper and that ought to fill them with the greatest joy and stir their hearts. This is a recurrent theme in each of the ways that Edwards thought about the Supper—that Christ met with his people at the table.

To some extent Edwards saw Christ's presence as being represented in the actions of the minister as he presided at the sacrament. He followed in a Dissenting tradition that saw the celebration of the Supper as a dramatic re-enactment of its first celebration, with the minister taking the role of Christ in offering the bread and wine to the congregation, just as Christ had offered it to the disciples. If in preaching the minister spoke with the voice of Christ, in ministering the sacrament he acted on Christ's behalf. In this way there was a sense in which Christ was especially present at the sacrament in the person of the minister. It was also distinctive as a memorial because its physical nature engaged all the senses and it was, therefore, a multi-sensory way of meeting with Christ.

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[2] No.328. Luke 22:19, WJEO 49.
[3] Letter to John Erskine, May 1749 WJE 16:271.
[4] No.668. Matthew 9:15(b), WJEO 59.

Second, Edwards viewed the Supper as a covenant seal. The idea of the Supper as a covenant seal was prominent in New England and the sacraments were sometimes referred to as "the seals." He argued that in the celebration of the sacrament Christ sealed his covenant with his people and his people sealed their participation in the covenant. He stated that in the sacrament "a mutual covenanting between God and us...is most solemnly renewed and sealed. This mutual covenanting that there is between God and his people is never more solemnly transacted than it is in this ordinance."[5] Participation in the sacrament was a covenant renewal ceremony with the sealing representing the union between Christ and his people and their mutual friendship.

Once more, Edwards thought that the minister of the sacrament acted in Christ's place confirming his covenant with his people. Again, in this way Christ is present at the Supper with his people.

Third, Edwards thought of the Supper as a means of spiritual nourishment. This idea was prominent in the Reformed tradition, however, writers tended to be better at stating their belief that this was the case than in explaining how it occurred. For Edwards, at the Supper, participants feasted upon Christ "with his benefits that he purchased by his obedience and death, and which he communicates by his Spirit." He noted that such benefits included "sanctification, spiritual knowledge, the manifestation of God's favor, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Ghost and the exercises of holiness in good works."[6]

He believed that a meal was an appropriate way to do this because it "nourishes the soul as food does the body...it gives life and strength to it."[7] He pushed this idea further stating that this was more than a meal, it was a feast because in a feast "the provision is what excels ordinary food. The provision that God has made for our souls in

[5] No.270. 1 Corinthians 11:29, WJEO 48.
[6] No.86. Luke 14:16, WJE 14:282.
[7] WJE 14:282.

Christ is exceeding excellent."[8] This meal reminds us that God has provided abundantly for every need of our soul.

For Edwards the soul was nourished in the Supper by "viewing of the Beauty of Jesus Christ as the body lives by food. When the believer sees the divine beauty of Christ it refreshes his inward man; it rejoices his heart; it quiets his soul." When a person feeds upon Christ in this way it,

> begets and draws forth gracious inclinations and desires and holy affection and enables [him] to perform truly gracious and holy actions and to bring forth fruit unto holiness. To walk and run in the ways of God's commandments and be of a heavenly conversation.[9]

As such, when someone participates in the Supper, they should enjoy the happiness of divine love as they contemplate the magnitude of what God has accomplished through the death of his Son.

In the Supper Christians discovered,

> a real sense and apprehension of the divine excellency of things revealed in the Word of God. A spiritual and saving conviction of the truth and reality of these things, [which] arises from such a sight of their divine excellency and glory; so that this conviction of their truth is an effect and natural consequence of this sight of their divine glory.[10]

Fourth, Edwards viewed the Supper as a means of communion. This communion was both vertical and horizontal. He stated in one sermon "The thing designed in the sacrament of the Lord's supper is the Communion of Christians in the body & blood of Christ." As he talked about communion, he laid particular emphasis upon the fact that as Christians sat at the Lord's Table,

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[8] WJE 14:284.
[9] No.206. Psalm 78:25, WJEO 46.
[10] No. 295. Matt. 16:17, WJE 17:413.

Christ sat with them. He stated Christians "may look upon [Christ] as sitting with them at his Table." His presence with his people on this occasion was as real as his physical presence with the disciples at the inaugural Supper. When people participate in the meal by faith, they "Come to have actual communion in the body & blood of Christ."[11]

Once more he stressed the important role of the one who ministered at the sacrament because everything about its celebration was set to remind us of its first celebration. As in the first Supper the minister stood in Christ's place, the bread and wine represented the body and blood, the suffering of Christ and his offering himself to God and to believers, as they fed upon the elements. He also remarked that bread and wine were especially appropriate since they were the basics of life. Their simplicity meant a person's attention was not drawn to them but to the spiritual realities they represented. The bread and wine were signs, just as the preached word was a sign, pointing to divine realities.

He further saw the Supper as a means by which a person might satisfy their spiritual appetites. When God regenerated a person, he placed within them a new set of spiritual desires. While physical appetites ought to be restrained, no such limits should be set upon spiritual appetites which should be given "Unbounded liberty." The person who had been born again should hunger after "those Pleasures that are spiritual, the Pleasure of seeing the Glory of Christ and Enjoying his love and having Communion with him." The Supper was the ideal means for a person to both stimulate their appetite for Christ and to satisfy it by feasting upon him. As he stated, "here we may hope in some measure to have our Longing souls satisfied in this world by the Gracious Communications of the spirit of God." Such occasions pointed towards the great eschatological feast when Christ's people would eat and drink with him in his eternal kingdom and "fully Enjoy Christ and shall with Christ Enjoy G[od] the F[ather and] shall partake with him in his

[11] No.156. 1 Corinthians 10:16(a), WJEO 45.

Enjoym[en]t of the F[ather's] Love & the Complacence that he hath in his son."[12]

At the Supper Christians not only enjoyed communion with Christ but also communion with their fellow believers. Edwards pointed out that communion involved mutual participation in the benefits won by Christ. As such participation was "not a Partaking of the same benefits separately & Ignorantly & unwillingly but 'tis a Common Partaking of benefits in union & society."[13] If a person was to have true communion with Christ, then he must also have communion with his people, who share in his blessings since "those that Are in Christ they have the spirit of Christ." The celebration of the Supper demonstrated, "how all the Church of Christ doth together Partake with Christ in his spiritual benefits. How they Partake with him in the benefit of his suffering & Righteousness and partaking with him of his spirit and of his Joy & comfort."[14]

In the Supper Christians enjoyed Christ's benefits together and they enjoyed their common union with him. The Supper was a place where Christians set aside their differences and enjoyed true fellowship with each other. In this way, the celebration of the sacrament was again an anticipation of the eschatological feast.

Putting these various elements of Edwards' theology of the Supper together it becomes clear that he could never have been entirely comfortable with Stoddard's view that it could act as a converting ordinance. If the Supper was a memorial feast in which Christ's people remembered his death in an affecting way and contemplated his presence, then it is difficult to conceive that there was any benefit in this for the unconverted. Likewise, those who did not fully participate in the covenant could not seal it again. It was asking them to seal a covenant whose terms they had rejected. Nor could there be any nourishment by the Spirit at the Table for those who had not received the Spirit of Christ. On the same basis an unconverted person could not enjoy communion with Christ and his

[12] No.287. Luke 22:30, WJEO 48.
[13] No.103. 1 Corinthians 1:9, WJEO 44.
[14] No. 977. 1 Corinthians 10:17(b), WJEO 69.

people if he had not first entered a saving union with Christ and his people. While Edwards may have accepted his grandfather's practice regarding admission to the Supper, his understanding of what occurred in the Supper precluded any benefit for the unconverted.

This becomes even clearer when Edwards' views on 1 Corinthians 11 are taken into consideration. For all in the Puritan tradition a key text regarding the Lord's Supper was 1 Corinthians 11:28, "But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup." Everyone in this tradition, including Edwards, recognised the importance of self-examination before participating in the Supper. This self-examination was with a view "to critically try our behavior by the institutions and rules of Christ, taking care strictly to conform ourselves thereto." He noted that, "If we would examine and judge ourselves, we should not be judged; or if we were judged, it would not be to condemnation, but only as being chastened as children, that we might escape condemnation."[15] Self-examination was not to be practised so that a person would exclude themselves from the Table but that they might participate in the right way and enjoy its benefits. As he pointed out in one sermon,

> Let us therefore take heed to ourselves at all times before we Come to the Lord's Supper to search & try ourselves & see if there be any wicked way in us. Let us think on our ways & turn our feet into Gods testimonies. Humbling our selves for our Past sins & taking serious Resolutions of future amendment.[16]

Self-examination was an occasion for repentance before coming to Supper.

As Edwards exhorted his congregation to self-examination at least part of his purpose was to warn those who were tempted to come to the Supper and eat and drink in an unworthy manner. His warning was directed at those who only participated in the Supper

[15] Blank Bible, WJE 24:1052.
[16] No.156. 1 Corinthians 10:16(a), WJEO 45.

so that they might offer their children for baptism. He also warned those who lived ungodly lives and then came to the sacrament as a matter of social convention before returning to a godless lifestyle. For Edwards participating in the Supper unworthily was a piece of mockery in which people were in danger of eating and drinking condemnation to their souls. He concluded in one sermon "If you live in any known way of wickedness, don't come here to eat and drink damnation to yourselves."[17]

With such stern warnings in place, it is again difficult to believe that Edwards was ever comfortable with the idea that unconverted people had a place at the Supper. The implications of his personal views, however, did not yet impinge on church practice. Those implications became public in 1749 when a young man approached Edwards with a view to becoming a communicant member of the church. He was the first to do so for several years. Edwards examined him in the usual way but also asked if he could give a credible and visible profession of true godliness. This was not the "conversion narrative" of earlier times but simply an expression that "they themselves should suppose the essential things, belonging to Christian piety, to be in them."[18] News of this proposed change in how a person should be granted admission to full membership spread rapidly and led to a year of debate in Northampton, at the end of which Edwards was removed from the church, with only around ten per cent of the congregation supporting him.

He left Northampton and, in 1751, became a pastor and missionary to the Indians in Stockbridge, Massachusetts. He remained there until his appointment as president of the College of New Jersey (later Princeton Seminary) in 1758. Shortly after taking up the role, he died as the result of a smallpox inoculation.

EDWARDS, THE LORD'S SUPPER AND IRISH BAPTISTS

How ought we as Irish Baptists reflect on Edwards and his views on the Lord's Supper? No doubt we will have some sympathy for the

[17] 185. I Cor. 11:28-29, WJE 17:272.
[18] WJE 12:181.

views which ultimately saw him dismissed, that only those who can give an account of having undergone genuine conversion should be admitted to the Lord's Supper. That reflects our practice as Irish Baptists. Do we, however, have more to learn from Edwards on this subject? Let me suggest four ways his views might cause us to reflect further.

First, Edwards held the Lord's Supper in high esteem, as did his grandfather. Yet, part of his grandfather's argument was that there was a danger in elevating the Supper above the other ordinances that Christians were required to attend, such as prayer and preaching. Stoddard's view is one that Irish Baptists have some sympathy with, in that we have tried to avoid the suggestion that there is grace available in the Supper that is not available in the other means. Yet, Stoddard took this view in a direction Baptists are not comfortable with—that the unconverted, therefore, should be able to attend the Supper in the same manner as they should attend preaching etc.

Edwards, on the other hand, viewed the Supper as being an event of great significance, notably because Christ met with his people at the sacrament in a particular manner. He met with them in the same way as he met with his disciples at the inaugural meal. As a result, there was genuine communion between Christ and his people. In one sense Christ *was* available to his people in the Supper in a way that he is not through other means. Therefore, only those who have faith in Christ, should sit at his Table. Again, as Irish Baptists we will have sympathy for Edwards' conclusion.

Yet, we might also feel the tension between the two views—the Supper is not a special means of grace but it cannot be treated in exactly the same way as other means, such as preaching and prayer. After all, there is no other means given to us where we are called upon to examine ourselves before participation. While we might exercise caution about elevating the Lord's Supper to a special position, we nonetheless need to understand that there is something distinctive in its celebration.

Second, as Irish Baptists we are committed to a memorialist

view of the Supper. Yet, we must ask ourselves what that view entails. Does it also commit us to the idea of divine absence? Does it mean, that as someone has quipped, the last place a Baptist would expect to meet with Christ is at the Supper?

Certainly, the idea of a memorial as espoused by Edwards and others did not mean that Christ was absent. Instead, Christ was present with his people as they remembered his death. Through his Spirit he stirred his people to an affectionate remembrance of who he was and what he had accomplished through his death. Furthermore, Christ's presence with his people in this way gave them a foretaste of the greater feast that was to come.

As Baptists we need to ask if we practice a form of memorialism that does not explore its possibilities to their fullest extent. One of our Irish Baptist forefathers, R. H. Carson of Tobermore, robustly defended a memorialist view of the Supper but also noted, "Not only is it true, as we think, that in the Supper we have communion with Christ, but that communion is of the nearest and most intimate character."[19]

Has our practice of memorialism, as Michael Haykin has suggested in his recent book led to a more careless view of the Supper than that held by our Baptist forefathers?[20]

Third, while Edwards, like many of his Reformed predecessors, believed in the weekly celebration of the Supper, the practice in Northampton was to hold the Supper every eight weeks. As the Supper was celebrated Edwards regularly took the opportunity to preach a sermon about the sacrament. As such his congregation received regular instruction about its significance alongside exhortations to participate in the Supper in a worthy and beneficial way.

As those who celebrate the Supper weekly it is not practical that on every occasion there is a sermon about the Supper. It does,

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[19] R. H. Carson, *The Church of the New Testament: What it was and How it Worshipped.* Circle Co-Operative Printing: Belfast, 1890: 122.
[20] Michael A.G. Haykin, *Amidst Us Our Beloved Stands: Recovering Sacrament in the Baptist Tradition.* Lexham Press: Bellingham, WA, 2022.

however, raise the question about whether our congregations do receive instruction about its meaning and significance. We hear sermons about baptism but do we hear sermons about the Lord's Supper? Or do we simply assume that everyone understands the Lord's Supper and why we should celebrate it? Or that they understand what is occurring as they celebrate it?

In pastoral ministry the most common question I was asked about the Lord's Supper was, do we have to do this every week? It always indicated to me a certain weariness with the Supper on the part of the enquirer. My answer to the question was that the Lord Jesus instituted this meal for our benefit not as a hurdle to be overcome. It again raises the question as to whether our congregations need more instruction and exhortation regarding the importance of the Lord's Supper and the benefits to be gained through its celebration.

Fourth, throughout his ministry in Northampton Edwards was clear about the dangers of participating in the Supper in an unworthy manner. This unworthiness could be either in terms of those attending the ordinance who were unqualified or those who were qualified but were living with some known sin in their life. Most notably he was concerned about those who sat at the Table while at enmity with their neighbours. Edwards repeatedly warned against the danger of hypocrisy, by which he meant not that a person was deceiving others but they were deceiving themselves about their true spiritual condition. The danger for the person who participated unworthily was that he was eating and drinking judgement on himself.

The seriousness with which Edwards treated this scriptural warning demonstrates his pastoral concern and the profound significance he attached to the Supper. In doing so he sought to strike a balance between the need for self-examination and the command to eat. The aim of self-examination was not self-exclusion but proper preparation. He knew that proper self-examination would reveal all manner of sin, as he was a realist about indwelling sin in the life of the Christian. Yet, he did not believe that sin should

exclude a person from the Supper, rather it should encourage them to seek in Christ as the only remedy for their condition.

Edwards' approach raises the question of whether we, as Irish Baptists, treat the matter of self-examination before the Supper with sufficient seriousness. Or is there a danger that we encourage only a perfunctory examination and ignore the apostle Paul's warning about the danger of eating and drinking unworthily? Do we in our approach to the Supper convey the message, at least implicitly, that we can approach this gift from the Lord Jesus in a casual manner which is without consequence?

CONCLUSION

Edwards' theology of the Lord's Supper was rich and multifaceted. It was also the product of his saturation in the Bible's teaching about the ordinance. We may not dot every "i" and cross every "t" with his sacramental theology but our reflections on the whole subject will only be deeply enriched as we engage with him. Furthermore, his theology prompts us to carefully examine our own understanding of the Supper and how our faith might be strengthened and enriched through its celebration. Remembering that, as Edwards put it, its purpose ultimately is "to fix our minds; to give us lively ideas of Christ and the things of Christ."

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