



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

Church re-opens after arson attack



The interior of the re-furbished building

On Saturday, 26th May, Coragarry Free Presbyterian Church, in Co. Monaghan in the Republic of Ireland, was re-opened after being very badly damaged in an arson attack in the early hours of Lord's Day, July 4th 1999. The entrance porch, kitchen, prayer room and toilets were so severely damaged that they had to be demolished. A portable hall used for a Sabbath school was totally destroyed and the inside of the main building badly smoke-damaged. A tractor belonging to a builder was also destroyed. The total cost of rebuilding and refurnishing the building was £130,000. Insurance will cover some 70% of the cost of rebuilding and repairs. The Irish government has refused compensation, claiming that the church must prove that three or more individuals were involved in the incident. No one has ever been charged with the attack. Dr. Ian Paisley, Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church, was asked to open the re-furbished building and unveil a commemorative plaque in the porch of the church marking the event. The minister, Rev. Gordon Dane presided at the service which was attended by an overflowing congregation. The offering at the service amounted to just over £8000 and this meant that the building was opened debt-free.

Dr. Paisley was also the guest preacher. He took as his text Isaiah 61:1-3, setting forth the grand purpose and glorious ministry of Christ.

On a day when crowds were flocking to nearby Monaghan town to catch a glimpse of the so-called relics of Thérèse, it was good to have the sound of the gospel of the free grace of God sounding out over the rolling hills and fields surrounding the church building on a beautiful and warm day. This is the 30th anniversary of the first gospel mission in the little Orange Hall which stands near to the present church building. At the beginning of 1971, Rev. Ivan Foster, then minister of Bethel Free Presbyterian Church in Enniskillen, conducted meetings out of which the present congregation sprang. Ministers who served in the congregation were : Rev. Austin Allen (Tandragee), Rev. Alan Smylie (John Knox Memorial) and Rev. Maurice Baxter (Covenanters' Memorial).

Ireland needs the gospel and never was the opportunity to present it more open than at present. Rome's scandals have done much to alienate the younger generation in the land. Open criticism of the clerics may be heard in the media, something that was unthinkable not so long ago.

Pray that God will bless the witness of the Free Presbyterian Church in the south of Ireland and that a fresh vision will be granted to God's people in Northern Ireland for this very needy mission field on their doorstep. May God raise up men like Charles Graham and Gideon Ousley, brave Methodist preachers in the 18th century, whose exploits for Christ make the most thrilling reading.

Over dear Ireland, Lord send the fire; Free State and Ulster, Grant our desire. Set Ireland free, Lord, All power is Thine; Grant us revival, As in '59.



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May God stir us to pray such a prayer fervently once more.