



The Burning Bush - Online article archive

Report of a visit to Canada and the USA by Rev. Ivan Foster just 47 years ago.

He was part of a delegation of FP ministers who visited North America in October/November 1972. Rev James Beggs, Rev William Beattie and Rev S B Cooke were also part of the delegation.

Taken from "The Revivalist" report of the visit.

The invitation to join the deputation from the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster in a visit to America and Canada was certainly a privilege. Nevertheless, because of the recent opening of our new church in Enniskillen I was loth to be absent from my pulpit when our congregation was making every effort to fill our new building. However, as I prayed about the matter I was reminded of some advice given by Jordan Khan, a faithful servant of the Lord, who preached some time ago in our churches. He had said that if ever we received an invitation to preach in Europe or U.S.A. we should accept it, for God had surely given the Free Presbyterian Church a message for the world. The more I thought about this, the more I felt convinced that I should go, even if it were not for the full four weeks. I was supported in this by my elders, so I gladly agreed to go for three weeks.

My first week was spent in the Bible Presbyterian Church of Toronto. The minister, Rev. H. McEwen, met Rev. Beattie, who had travelled with me from London at Toronto airport. I had a meeting that evening (Thursday, 26th October) at 8 p.m. From my experience of Toronto, gained during the few days I spent there in 1969, I felt inclined to speak to God's people on the theme of preparing our hearts for God's blessing. As our meetings were attended mostly by Christians, this proved to be the right course of action. It was the testimony of the Christians in the meetings that the Lord through His Word had shown them more clearly the need for personal holiness before we can expect His power. The numbers were not large, averaging fifty on the week-nights and a full church on Sunday evenings. I had innumerable opportunities of speaking personally to members and exhorting them to press onward. It is most depressing for Christians on the American continent when they consider their few members and the vast number of indifferent sinners around them.

It was planned that I should take part in two television programmes in which I was to be questioned by a panel. But, lo and behold, the T.V. equipment broke down and we were told that I could not now appear. It seemed strange, to say the least.

I also spoke at a luncheon in Jarvis Street Baptist Church, given by the Canadian Council of Evangelical Protestant Churches. There was a prolonged question time afterwards, with questions coming from many Ulster people now living in Canada.

Our largest meeting was the final rally held in a school auditorium. There were approximately 300 in attendance.

One of the highlights of my visit to Canada was meeting members of the Monteith family from Omagh, whose brother Mr. Ernie Monteith is a committee man in our Omagh church, and a young member of our own congregation Mr. George Robinson, whose father is an elder in Bethel Free Presbyterian Church.

Because the members of the Bible Presbyterian Church discovered that my birthday would be celebrated away from home they gave me a party. So on the last night after the service there was a gathering in the basement of the church and I was asked to cut the first slice of a specially-iced cake. The kindness of God's people is universal. It was with sorrow that the next day I boarded the plane for New York and then on to Nashville, Tennessee.

I was met at Nashville airport by Rev. Melvin Perry, pastor of Grace Bible Presbyterian Church. Angela Davies, a noted Black Militant Communist, also arrived that day to speak in the local negro university. Rev. Perry had already announced that our first meeting would be a protest meeting against Communism. This received some attention from the Press and I was interviewed as soon as I landed. The questions asked denoted a complete lack of knowledge of the Ulster situation. During my stay in Nashville I appeared on television and took part in programmes in which listeners could phone in questions. It became quite like Ulster at times.



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I was booked to preach four times in Rev. Perry's church and four times in Rev. Clyde Smithson's Church, which was also in Nashville. I again felt compelled to address God's people as they hold the key to revival. I experienced great help from the Lord in these meetings and there were many Christians who came to me privately to tell of restorations wrought by the Holy Spirit. The standard of Christianity in America is very much lower than here at home and this was something the people lamented over as God's Word was preached.

During my stay in Nashville the American Presidential election took place. In fact it was my birthday. The fellowship tea which was given the night before I left Nashville also became a birthday party. Two in one month is good going.

A small group of Bible Presbyterians left me to the airport where I was to fly to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and then to York, Pennsylvania.

I left Nashville with an invitation to return in August, 1973, an invitation I desire to know God's will upon, before Rev. Darrell Hagler met us in Pennsylvania and we went straight to his church for our first meeting. I told him of the messages I had preached and he felt I should do the same in his church. I think that the meetings in York were our best, although the attendance was not good, just the members of the church plus a few strangers being present. However, as the message was for God's people I was content with the attendance. God was speaking to His own and what had to be said was for them alone. The numbers increased considerably for our final meeting in which I dealt with the ecumenical movement. At the end of the meeting a member of the Lutheran Church stood up and publicly declared that he and his family were getting out. I hope many others will follow suit.

During the final and third week I travelled for one meeting to the neighbouring state of Maryland, to the city of Baltimore, "the murder capital of the world," as it is called. There I spoke on the radio and preached with some liberty at, "The Church of the Open Door" and to a Christian Business Breakfast meeting. While in Baltimore I was able to contact Rev. Bert Cooke by phone. This was my first contact with any of my brethren.

I spent my last day and night in Faith Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. We had a time of heart-warming Fellowship with Dr. Arthur Froelich, a Bible Presbyterian minister, who was speaking in the seminary for one week. I renewed fellowship with Dr. Lynn Gray Gordon, whom I had met on a few previous occasions. He invited me to speak at his class in the seminary where he lectures on Pastoral Theology. We spent some time answering students' questions about the spiritual aspect of life in Ulster. There were some eager to come over and wondered if they would be welcomed. I answered them that there would be a warm welcome for them.

On Friday, November 17, I flew out from Philadelphia airport at 9 p.m. and with a six-hour flight and a six-hour time change I arrived in London at 9 a.m. and arrived in Enniskillen at 1.30 p.m., happy to be home and thankful to the Lord for the many spiritual benefits we have in Ulster, benefits which only become apparent after experiencing the spiritual wilderness that others of God's children are now in. I was also determined to pray for the Church of God in America that revival might come.