"TO GOD BE THE GLORY"

Retelling the Story of

The Cornton -

"A Church Within A Community"

by

P. Catherine Coles

Foreword

by

Mrs D. P. McCallum

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NOTE: In addition photographs and relevant newspaper cuttings, etc are preserved by Mr J. Galloway, under separate cover.

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Foreword

"As we enter this building, may we be conscious that this is a door into not just a hall, but into further work for Christ."

I made this comment eight years ago on September 3rd, 1966 as I turned the key and opened the door into the new hall. It was a moment I have never forgotten. The fact is, however, that the beginnings of a thing can easily be forgotten unless someone takes the trouble to make a record, and I am so happy that Miss Coles, who was so much involved in these beginnings, has undertaken this task of making permanent the story of these early, exciting and exacting days.

The Cornton story is refreshing because it is a story of children and of those who loved and served them for Jesus' sake. The work has since expanded to include all ages and stages, but it began amongst boys and girls. One remembers, too, the early team of workers, and of the far from ideal conditions in the old Community Centre. Little did I imagine in those days that the key of so beautiful a building as is now in use, would be placed in my hands. But it was, and in the new building, as in the old, children are loved, welcomed and served.

There is a sense in which the story of the Cornton is Jim and Ruth Galloway's life story, because they have been identified with the leadership of the work there from the very beginning, and have given themselves unsparingly and gladly to the task. And they are still at it! I am glad that this record will bear testimony to such faithful service.

This is the story of the beginnings of a work of God, but many chapters have yet to be written. May the present be worthy of the past, and may the future eclipse them both.

November 1974 G. R. McCallum

Prayer of Dedication at the Opening of the Cornton Hall.

3rd September, 1966

Beloved brethren, forasmuch as it has pleased the Lord to put into the hearts of His servants to build this House for His worship and service, let us now fulfil the purpose for which we are assembled of dedicating it to the honour of God's most holy Name: to the glory of God the Father, Maker of heaven and earth; to the glory of God the Son, the Saviour of the world; to the glory of the Holy Spirit, the Sanctifier of the people of God, we dedicate this House. For the worship of God in praise and prayer, for the public reading of Holy Scripture, for the preaching and teaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen, exalted and returning, we dedicate this House. For the teaching and guiding of the young, for the upbuilding of those who believe in the perfecting of the saints, for the conversion of sinners and for the extension of the Kingdom of God, we dedicate this House, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, One God, we dedicate this House.

The Student-Pastors in the Cornton

Rev. J. M. Wieland
*Mr. A. Robertson
*Mr A. Cook
*Mr G. Campbell
Rev. D. McClenaghan
Mr J. Gordon (commencing Dec.1974)

The Cornton Diaconate

Mr. J. J. Carr
Mr. G. Dickson
Mr. W. Dudgeon
Mr J. Galloway
Mr. C. George
Mr H. McWhinnie
Mr. A. Webster

* Now ordained minister.

INTRODUCTION

There are various methods available to anyone who writes about a work the Lord is doing, and the first step is to ask the Lord which method is His best in any situation. One can collect and document hard facts and then set down an historic record. One can stand outside the work, looking in and looking back, forming opinions and expressing them on paper. One can move into the realm of God-given insight and be allowed to bring to bear another dimension on the facts supplied by the historic record, and the events shared and recalled by people involved at the time.

Perhaps no one way should be used exclusively. Just as there are some things which exist in the eye of the beholder so it is safe to say that many apparently plain facts will be coloured by the memory and experience of those who, in reading them, will remember so much that has not been put into words. Some, too, may colour what they read with their own opinions. Those spiritually attuned will see behind a fact that is merely recorded just how marvellously the Lord was at work.

This brief document is an attempt to collect facts and record them for permanent reference. It concerns what God has done in one small plot of His vast vineyard. The purpose of the record is to help those who follow after, for the years pass and generations replace one another and memories are short.

Many have contributed to prepare these pages and I count it a great privilege to be allowed to make it into a whole - a few pages, perhaps, in the tradition of that far greater and more wonderful Book of Remembrance, for the material for these pages is the result of those who fear the Lord speaking with one another, and the proof that the Lord heeded and heard them is, in part at least, to be seen in the people who are now His Church in the Cornton Hall. I would like to thank all who have helped to make this record possible.

Someone has said "The Church in the Cornton is alive with God". If that is so then anything can happen, and will happen, for where God is and where He is allowed His freedom to work there is blessing, challenge, opportunity, and fruit. There, also, is His adversary. This is always

so and neither a church nor an individual Christian dedicated daily to the Lord goes unmolested. It is only the dormant and the dead which do not attract the enemy of souls. What matters is that "God is with us" for God is only with us for good - our good, and that of all those around us. This is the explanation of the Church in the Cornton: we are only blessed that through us He may bless others.

P.C.C.

From Malachi 3: 16 & 17 (R.S.V.)

"Then those who feared the Lord spoke
with one another; the Lord heeded and
heard them, and a book of remembrance
was written before him of those who
feared the Lord and thought on his name.
"They shall be mine, says the Lord of
hosts, my special possession ....."

1 GRASS ROOTS.

The title of this chapter is not just making use of a modern expression but a description of the ground upon which the houses throughout the whole Cornton housing scheme are built. The area itself has comparatively little history, compared with the places of historic fame round about. The waters of the Forth lie to the south and until the early part of World War II it was little more than low-lying farm land and quiet paths where one could walk without being pushed off the road by speeding cars.

One of the first questions newcomers ask concerns the name given to the place. It is always referred to as 'The' Cornton - just as the neighbouring area is known as 'The' Raploch. The ritual question is "Why 'the'?". One is tempted to give the ritual answer and quote the late A.A. Milne's son, Christopher Robin, who when asked why his teddy bear was called Winnie-the-Pooh, shrewdly replied, "Don't you know what 'ther' means?" Of course we know. 'The' is a word of distinction. We have 'the' monarchy; we may borrow 'a' book from the library but we read 'the' Bible. The Cornton has its own distinctions. To those who are working there the distinctions concerning the work are varied and exciting but as far as the name is concerned we have to come right down to earth and look at a very mundane matter.

For some reason Stirling Council have always referred to this area as 'The Cornton Municipal Housing Scheme' and I note they still do so in their records and on official occasions. It would be impossible to use that title in full, and even in a day of endless initialled references we are not likely to call the place or the work the 'C.M.H.S.' Hall. So 'The' Cornton it began and so it remains and for many people those two words have become synonomous with a living work of God amongst ordinary people in the twentieth century.

During the war and in the years immediately after it there was a great demand for new houses, and restrictions on land and available materials. To contend with this the Stirling Council laid out this Housing Scheme in pre-fabricated houses. These first houses were the typical war-time single storey pre-fabs that began to spring up all over the country to replace homes demolished by the bombing.

Later, to these were added some two-storey houses and later still, blocks of more modern flats. In 1964 the whole area was again in the hands of the architects and planners, and much of the Cornton of today is the result of this further rebuilding.

Before the days of every man to his own four-wheeler there was not much industry available around the area to employ the people whose homes were there. The Kork-'n'-Seal factory became involved in war work and employed many women, and there was a bacon factory near by. Other workers were dependent on public transport, bicycles and Shanks's pony to get them in and out of this dormitory area that was cut off in a loop of the waterway of the Forth. The Co-Op. supplied the main general store and there was, perhaps, one newsagent-cum-sweetshop. Everything was on the basis of emergency and temporary, adequate only to the times in which we then lived. That the houses lasted longer than expected, that the place took on a down-town shabbiness and reputation as the years since the war slipped by with few, if any, of the promises taking shape, was not the fault of the people living there. Those who have suggested that something of a ghetto situation arose and that the people degenerated into those who did not welcome help, are those who have not met, mixed with, and worked alongside the folk themselves. The Cornton people are first and foremost people in their own right, no better and no worse than people anywhere else.

In this comparatively isolated pocket of families one element of life was overlooked. The end of World War II was not marked by spiritual revival, nevertheless wherever people congregate to live or work or spend their leisure there are always some who have a sense of need beyond the material and visible. Many young and busy parents show this by a desire to send their children to a Sunday School. It is as if something in a recess of memory is not quite blotted out. Something sometimes whispers 'Suppose what you heard as a child yourself is really true?', and by sending their children to find out for themselves - just in case - they settle some of the unease in their own conscience.

When the Cornton Municipal Housing Scheme was planned, laid out, completed and occupied no provision was made for this side of human life. There was no church and no ground set aside for such a building. There was a Community

Centre - a vast barn of a place - but thirty years ago the idea of a multi-purpose building to include a church had not taken root. The worshipping section of any community is a minority and the Centre was designed to cater for a crowd. It was constructed of corrugated sheeting, draughty, easily damaged and very costly to heat and remarkably unattractive inside.

Over the years various Christian bodies did try to meet this spiritual need. For a time the Brethren had some form of witness there. When that failed the Salvation Army attempted a Sunday School which also failed because of a lack of staff. The Boys' Brigade from St.Andrew's Church had the use of the Centre for a time and a united group of ministers and workers from various churches tried out the experiment of after-church services on Sunday evenings. None of these lasted long and two points must be remembered regarding their break down. The private car was not owned as widely as it is today and this meant a long trudge from the town and back at the end of a busy day for those who were taking part, or the inconvenience of waiting about for public transport. And in winter, always a cold hall to be in and the constant cost of trying to make it even a little warmer.

At some date in 1959 there was an opportunity given to all interested parties to appear before a Dean of Guild Court and declare any interest they might like to have in the Community Centre. Three men representing the Stirling Baptist Church attended that Court. All the other applicants were interested in secular events so these three, who had fully expected to be swamped by other denominations, had the spiritual field to themselves, and their request for permission to work there amongst the children was warmly upheld by a member on that Court. With this encouragement for a toe-hold in the area a meeting of the Stirling Baptist Church Sunday School teachers was called in October of that year and the opportunity to work there was put to them.

On November 25th 1959 the first Sunday School was held in the afternoon. The minister from the Stirling Church, Rev. D.P.McCallum, and the Sunday School superintendent, Mr Jack Adam, opened the work with an initial attendance of over one hundred children, and a gift of £5 for hymn sheets from Miss Gavin, then of the Sunday School Union. After an initial period the work was passed over to

a Cornton superintendent, Mr J. Galloway, who has been there ever since, letting the Lord's call to service have priority in his life. Long since a deacon, he is also virtually a 'home missionary' in the most real sense of that phrase.

The Centre was still shared with the B.B. which involved much running up and down close stairways to get and return the key each Sunday, but after a time the B.B. also gave up and the Council were willing to let the Baptists retain the key. They also were given freedom to renovate the hall and rooms as much as possible and to do what they could to heat them. This was a tall order and tribute must be paid to the generosity of the Stirling church through the sympathetic interest taken by the late John McIntosh, then Fabric Convenor.

This aspect of making the hall usable was no small labour but it was a labour of love, and the same spirit of care for any property loaned or given for the work of the Lord is still one of the outstanding characteristics of the men and women who give their service to this work. No least detail is neglected and no hardship deters them, and they bring to the care of the premises the same total dedication of a 'mind to work' that they bring to everything they do for the people among whom they work. In those earliest days this was no light matter. The vast bleak hall was heated by two gas fires suspended from the roof! Far from insulated walls or ceilings, far from any double glazing, these men were contending with breakable - and broken - corrugated sheeting, windows that were regularly in need of repair which meant only polythene sheeting and cardboard. The Centre was set in the middle of a grassy area intended for recreational purposes, which really meant boys playing football and children of all ages up to mischief withstones. The drainpipes were just right for climbing and made the roof accessible to all but the most timid. This task of keeping such a building weather-proof, slightly warm and moderately attractive would have daunted most people. It never totally daunted the Cornton workers and it is from this memorable date: 25th November, 1959 that the Baptist work in the Cornton began - and, to date - has never ceased.

2 FEEDING THE LAMBS 1959-1965

These six years saw the laying of a good foundation and the consolidation of each year's work by that of the next. Throughout these years the Sunday School and Bible Classes were constant and all other work - organisations, visitation, tract distribution - were all aimed at supporting the children's work. Primary Sunday School was held at 2.0 p.m. and Junior and Bible Classes at 3.0 p.m. which made a very long and busy Sunday for those who attended the morning service at the town church and perhaps even took a Sunday School class there, and then went down to the Cornton in the afternoon, and many supported the evening service at the town church again at night. Yet the fact remains that while more teachers could have made the teaching situation easier, no lack of volunteers ever closed or seriously threatened to close any section of the Sunday School.

Children were always in evidence, and the encouragement which meant most to the teachers was the way many of the youngpeople came running to meet and walk with their teachers, talking freely to them. Parents were not over-interested and it was disheartening to find only a few at a summer prize-giving or the Harvest Thanksgiving Service. Sunday School trips were more productive from the point of view of contact with parents, and as many as three buses had to be hired for the occasion.

All the incidental work was geared to strengthen the Sunday Schools. The first weeknight event has weathered every storm and is still in operation today. It is the monthly Teachers' Meeting and many teachers have professed to finding spiritual help in their own Christian lives through the prayer and warmth of fellowship found in this informal gathering. It seems hardly necessary to add that much of the quality of the Sunday School work is the fruit of that fellowship.

During the summer of 1960 there was a Mission held during the holidays which was profitable to the Sunday School when it reopened although at the time it did not work out exactly as planned by those leading it. It was well-attended by children, but it proved impossible to get enough adult helpers to make full use of the material in the way intended. Later there were other organisations and

missions. The Girls' Life Brigade started weekly meetings and the Andrew Club, already operating in the town church, moved down to the Cornton and at once attracted around eighty children of all ages, every Saturday morning. These organisations and the three summer Missions run under the well-known banner of the C.S.S.M. were all designed to make two-way traffic for the Sunday School. First they gave additional contact between children and teachers or other adults concerned outwith the hour on Sunday afternoons, and they also reached out to attract other children and introduce them, through the secular and spiritual activities, to the Sunday School. The Andrew Club was based on 'Find another, find another, just as Andrew found his brother;'.

So the years passed and with each year more lambs were being fed and cared for and shepherded, as far as possible, from nursery groups, through primary, junior and Bible classes.

At first the funds that such a work required were obtained largely from Bring and Buy sales until the truth came out that many of the teachers were doing nearly all the bringing and the buying themselves as very few outside folk came to support the effort. This was certainly due in part to the distance of the Centre from the town, and in part to the lack of interest shown at that time by most of the parents. At the time that this was realised those working there were also coming to see the way in which the Lord undertakes to meet the needs created by His own work. Since then there have been no sales, no appeals and no lack. "And when He said to them, 'Lacked ye anything?' they said 'Nothing, Lord.'"; so it was then and so it is today. Increased costs and rising prices may stagger our finite thinking but they do not disturb the Lord. It has been said:'Since all the cattle on a thousand hills are His and He is our Father, if need arises He can always sell cattle for His children!' It is when such reverent trust and bouyant faith coincide that things begin to happen.

While focussing attention on the lambs of the flock, the under-shepherds did not ignore the sheep. In 1961 - 1962 there was a small meeting taken by the town church Women's Auxilliary to try and reach some of the local women. Tracts and S.G.M. booklets were regularly distributed house to house. These were never just pushed into the doors if personal contact could be made. However, this

usually had to be done in the evenings and a knock on a door was seldom heard. It was easy to see in passing up and down the streets that most people were too busy with the god of the Box even to hear the knock. When one was invited in there was a feeling of reluctance on the part of the family and the atmosphere of competing with the Box was not helpful. It was sometimes even worse if, out of courtesy, the sound was turned down for a few minutes to see why the visit was being made. It was not the right moment for personal work and one could only leave whatever literature one had brought and move on.

To know that now in 1974 there are some homes in which it is possible to hold the week-night meeting indicates a little of what has been going on. In those days the very suggestion was impossible.

The Summer Mission in1964 included a night for 'teen-agers only with a Billy Graham film, 'The Heart is a Rebel', as the main item on the programme. This was well received and attended by over sixty 'teenagers, many of whom we saw on no other occasion. Earlier that year (January) the Bible Class reached out to the local Elderly Citizens. Instead of having a party for themselves they gave one to these older folk. The young people did most of it them-selves and a few from the town church helped with singing, to entertain them.

That year there was carol singing round the roads during Christmas week, an effort which included house to house distribution of a specially prepared Christmas tract. This venture was warmly welcomed, doors and windows were opened and some special requests were made for favourite carols to be sung. A Christmas Carol Service on the Sunday evening had the largest adult congregation of any activity in the Centre to date. It is interesting to note that these two special Christmas activities ran into the sort of trouble that can spiritually be called 'bedevilment' for one car load of carol-~~singers were~~* stuck with a gear-box which suddenly broke in the middle of the rush-hour traffic while the van went on ahead and did not know what had happened. Then the Centre was flooded as a result of a burst pipe on the day before the Carol Service. Both events went through: the idea of calling either off never occurred to anyone. The Cornton teachers, like Napoleon, had no strategy up their sleeves for defeat.

* singers were

One other side issue which helped the Sunday School was the week's annual camp organised by the town church Sunday School, and to which the Cornton children began to go. They came back having seen a new dimension of the Christian life, and having seen and heard much more of the love of the Father for them than is possible in the one hour of Sunday School on Sunday afternoons. In camp, in the context of living, working, playing, travelling, eating and sleeping, they had shared life with friendly adults in Christian fellowship.

The hall of the Centre was vast by any standard. That, and the fact that few children were ever taken to a church by their parents, made for some discipline problems. There was nothing about the premises to make it easy to control children or to help break up the school into small groups that would not distract each other. There was little comfort for the teachers and mostly the hall was unable to be heated even to a reasonable temperature. Under these conditions it was often felt that the children were barely listening. Two new features were introduced and produced encouraging results. First was the system of learning a Memory Verse each week and these verses were spelled out in colourful ink on coloured cards and pinned up round the hall. This brightened the walls and drew the children's attention to the Word and helped them to 'hide God's Word in the heart'. This work was helped forward by the Andrew Club which used the verse of the week for its Password on Saturday morning and there was considerable competition between boys and girls to win the Memory Verse shield for the month. One incident at that time is proof of what was happening in the attempt to get these key Bible verses into the children's hearts and memories. One night a teacher was standing near some of the houses waiting for a 'bus. Floating out of one of the windows, loud and clear, came a child's voice repeating her verses to a mother who was obviously busy in another room!

The second development at this time was the entering for outside Bible exams. To any who knew the original Sunday School this suggestion would have emptied the hall, but although a few dropped off during the exam period the majority stayed, took the exam and did progressively well over the next few years. This was rewarding to both the children and teachers and some of the results were of a high standard. The exams taken were those of the Scripture Union and so were taken throughout the whole country.

And so, quietly, steadfastly, the work went on and 1965 came in and with it a sword of Damocles. Rebuilding was now in full swing and was long over-due. The pre-fabs, originally given a life span of ten years had been in use for something between twenty-five and thirty, perhaps. Now the semi-derelict Community Centre, which for so long had been held together by loving care, grim determination, polythene sheeting, and cardboard and drawing pins, was earmarked for demolition and there was no alternative accommodation in the whole area.

There was, inevitably, a question mark in the minds of some: was this the end of the road for the work in the Cornton? For others there was no question at all. 'God is still on the Throne and He will remember His own,'. No one, at that time, had the least idea how the Lord would provide, not even the most trustful nor those who later came to be closely involved in how He provided, but there was a strong sense that something had been begun in obedience to His will and that the work begun was incomplete. The only step was prayer, coupled with a willingness to wait and see what God would do.

3 LINKS IN GOD'S CHAIN 1965-1966

To recount adequately the intervention of God over these two years requires a digression. To begin with we go back a decade to the All-Scotland Crusade when Billy Graham visited this country. Opinions are always divided after a campaign of this kind as long term results usually fall short of the potential for success at the time. This is not peculiar to a large campaign only. Every minister knows that by whatever means his church membership roll increases not all will stay the pace, and it makes little difference in this respect how the unsaved are brought in: some never look back and some drop off sooner or later. This has been the typical result of that Crusade but while many who made a profession of some sort at the time are no longer to be found in any fellowship it is equally true that there are many today on the mission field, many in the ministry, many standing as Christians in the professions and many running ordinary Christian homes and leading Christian lives as a direct result of Billy Graham's visit. It is true that his coming was like a pebble flung into the sea, and circles are still widening as a result of his witness. This is all more relevant to the Cornton than may be seen at a glance. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the new building in the Cornton today is directly related to that Crusade.

In 1955 following one of the meetings I counselled an elderly lady who made a sincere confession of spiritual need and rededicated her life to the Lord. Within a few years she was involved in active service for the Lord, teaching in the Cornton Sunday School, having responded to a call for more teachers when she was well over seventy. As in New Testament days, she first gave herself.

In 1964 she found herself in the position of having outlived all her immediate family - and a loneliness which can only be fully entered into once it is experienced personally. She also found herself in possession of some money that was exclusively her own to use as she pleased. There was a suggestion that she might like to go on a cruise away into some sunshine. This was a type of holiday she had enjoyed in her husband's lifetime and often contemplated with much pleasure. But now she had given herself to the

Lord, and as far as she was concerned that giving included every material possession. If He gave the green light for a cruise she would be delighted, but only if He did so. At the same time she asked for prayer over the right use of 'a little bit of money I have' and for any suggestions as to how the Lord might want it used. At this stage there was no mention made of any amount involved.

I was with her at the time and she called me in from some job I was doing. Promising prayer I remarked, as I went out of the room, that of course there was the need of a place for the Cornton Sunday School, for we both presumed some fund would be set up to meet this need. Nothing more was said or done, except that we each took the matter that concerned her to the Lord in prayer. She made the next move with a tentative suggestion over the telephone to an astonished Rev. D.P.McCallum, asking if he could accept a contribution towards the building of a place to carry on the Cornton children's work. It should be added here that she was aware of the type of temporary portable hall that was currently used by such organisations as the Faith Mission. Her initial offer was for nine thousand pounds, and this was added to twice. Having given herself to the Lord this faithful steward now gladly gave all that was exclusively hers to give.

With that, committees were set up, architects brought in, plans drawn up, sites examined and the work contracted for and begun. By January 1966 the walls were 4ft high. On February 19th the Ceremony was held for laying the Foundation Stone. This was carried out by Rev. G.M.Hardie, M.A., B.D., secretary of the Baptist Union of Scotland. On June 19th the Cornton Community Centre was available for use for the last time before its demolition and was used for the Prizegiving of the Sunday School. This was attended by more parents and children than usual. Interest in the new building going up in the midst of their own homes was increasing. It was being called 'our church' by the locals, and some were asking plainly when Sunday services were going to begin. So it was that the people themselves turned the building designed as a multi-purpose hall for children's work into a place of worship and prayer.

The menace of vandalism on building sites is well-known and reference has been made earlier to the acts of destruction directed against the fabric of the Community

Centre. It is worthy of note that vandalism on the site of the new building was minimal. At an early stage, almost as a routine matter, the question of employing a watchman was brought up but was never required to be implemented. This was a work that the Lord was watching over; there was prayer made by His people for both the building and the men building it, and there was innate respect locally for something that was related to God - a factor we do not always recognize in people and use to the full. In the same way very little damage has been done, inside or from outside the new building since its opening eight years ago.

Feeding the lambs would continue, but now hungry sheep were nosing their way into the fold. "Feed My lambs- feed My sheep" the Lord had said, and there was no turning back now from this widening ministry.

It is significant to note that a great debt of gratitude was due to the Fabric Convenor, John McIntosh, of the town church for his unfailing interest and sympathy in all that had to be done to keep the old Centre even habitable. He was often far from well himself but he took a keen interest in the plans for the new building and the choice of site. On the day preceding the last use of the old premises he was Called Home with much work well done for the Lord. Knowing that the communion of saints is real, and that the thin curtain which divides us from them may have very little substance from their side, it may well be that he has been allowed the joy of knowing how the work has gone on.

July and August are holiday months and therefore present problems for getting things done. But God was with us and there was no longer break than usual in the summer for the Sunday School work. The new building was opened on September 3rd of that same year - 1966. The next day the first morning service was held under the student-pastorship of Rev. J. M. Wieland, followed by Sunday School and Bible classes, but these two events belong to the opening of a new chapter.

* * *

Throughout the building of the new hall the diaconate had faithfully respected the donor's wish for the gift to have no name attached to it. Some found this difficult to understand but the underlying principal was a spiritual one. There is no need now to hide the identity of the giver

because her purpose has been served. She knew her own weaknesses and at the time of making the gift she confided to me with that twinkle in her eyes by which many lovingly remember her, that there was in her that human streak which would enjoy the 'glory' of being known as the donor, and it would thereby lose the real essence of giving. Now that the far better trumpets have sounded for her on the other side, and she has heard her Lord's 'Well done!' it no longer matters what is said down here. Known or unknown, many have given God the glory for what He has done and is doing in the Cornton, and that is all she wanted.

Her name was Isa Neilson, and it is of interest that her own father, who died suddenly when she was about eighteen months old, was one of the pioneers of seaside mission work for children in the summer months. There is also a reference in the cover of his old Bible to Children's Talks given at Causewayhead, Stirling around 1880. It was sad that even before the foundation stone was officially laid she was too ill to be at any of the Ceremonies then or at the opening, but to the end of her life here she retained her keen and loving interest in the work and the workers.

4 PIONEERING 1966-1968

The idea of the work in the Cornton Community expanding to include a place for regular Sunday worship had not been envisaged when the building was planned. However no adjustments were needed to the building as it was a well-designed, dignified, multi-purpose building* and from the outset many have registered a 'something' extra which makes for worship. It was less easy to know how to deal with the problem of supplying a minister. Ultimately it was decided that a student at the Baptist Training College should be invited to 'supply' the ministry, thus getting some extra practical experience during his period of training.

The first such minister was Rev. J. M. Wieland who came for two years and set the pattern for this type of ministry. Although he was technically a student at the College he had a great deal of pastoral experience already to his credit. He was a 'mature' student in the currently accepted sense of the word and he was mature in the wider meaning also. His studentship with the College was undertaken for the specific purpose of sitting for his B.D. exam but he had been a Baptist pastor Lochgilphead for three years and before that, pastor for ten years with an Assembly of God church in Aberdeenshire. All this followed the valuable experience of service with the R.A.F. Volunteers during the war. Therefore, while he was the first of several student pastors his studentship was unusual, and much of the foundational work with this new worshipping community was due to the gift of this man and his wealth of Christian love and experience.

While this set the pattern for the next several years it also left problems. A student-pastor was now the accepted way of supplying the need for a minister to this people, but not every intake of students includes such maturity, and while each successive student has poured out his best, each has been labouring under the disadvantage of a lack of mature experience to enable him to do as much as he would have liked. Even Mr Wieland felt the pressure of having to divide his energies between studies and the pastorate. Small wonder if younger, less experienced men have sometimes felt the task beyond them.

*The architect was Mr R.B.Rankine, D.A.,A.R.I.B.A., A.R.I.A.S.

It is necessary to mention this for the form of the ministry is still under review and only by looking back can we see some of these aspects of the work. Any student taking up this challenging extra to his studies can be sure of the sincere prayer fellowship of those he works with and those who have gone before him, and one rich in understanding will be the man who served first at the inception of this unusual ministry.

As this was the start of an entirely new undertaking there was very little tradition behind it - there was that of the Baptist Union in general and the Stirling Baptist Church in particular. However, as far as the Cornton was concerned, Mr Wieland was a pioneer. He saw the opportunity in the Sunday morning service to establish a congregation of worshipping people. No gimmicks or stunts were used to bring the people in, they came because they wanted to come, and they received sound Bible expositions - words that were truly able to build them up. Following the morning service the student-pastor took the Bible Class for 'teenagers and was quickly their friend as well as their pastor. The possibility of having a resident pastor was still in the future so any pastoral work - visiting the sick and the shut-in - to which this student-pastor was dedicated by his own love for the people, had to be crammed into this one already taxing day, which in itself was a part of his very busy student life all the rest of the week in Glasgow. Of course all the burden was not on his shoulders and there was help at hand from Stirling's own minister, although for this first year he was himself under much pressure for time as he was serving the Baptist Union nationwide as its President. But there were willing deacons and Sunday School teachers and others who all helped out to make this first pastorate as far reaching as possible. The Cornton Hall was becoming a spiritual home in the area and people were looking towards it with their varying needs.

All Baptist ministers meet the problem from time to time of parents who are not clearly, Scripturally, taught about the place of baptism in the life of believing Christians. Many who enjoy the ministry have not reached the place of receiving sight for their own blindness, and when a baby is born to them they are not ready to grasp the teaching of the New Testament in this respect. They, in what is perhaps a newly awakened and simple approach to God which often follows the gift of a child, have stirrings

within which make them want something for God for their child. Experienced ministers often have to contend with a very real problem here, delicately balancing truth with the compassion they need to show to the parents who are only ready to go so far and have, as yet, seen no further. It is well for the people of the Cornton that the first time this problem arose a student of Mr Wieland's pastoral experience was at hand. In this, as in many other ways, he had much wisdom and sanctified good sense to bring to the situation. The heart of the matter lies in blessing the child in the eyes of the local Church and at the same time not committing non-Christian parents to vows intended for Christians to take. That Mr Wieland was not free to follow his own practice in this matter but had to accept the over-ruling of the 'parent' church was a disappointment to him and to others concerned, and yet even the very submission itself to those in authority had value: those who are going on with the Lord, even when they are sure of the Lord's commission in some matter are often obliged to concede to older Christians. The Lord sees the heart, and where the motive both of the thing given up and the reason for giving it up please Him, thenHe is able to use the submission for the blessing of His people.

In the case referred to above the student-pastor and deacons were allowed to hold the Service of Blessing the child and the thanksgiving of the parents in the home one Sunday afternoon. This is not a local problem only, nor is it one which affects the Baptists only and it is of interest that it confronted this new Church so early in its existence, and that the man appointed at that time was so able to help solve so vast a matter with such grace.

Statistics are really out of place in assessing a work such as this for what is seen of men is only an out-of-focus glimpse of what the Lord is doing. Most of His work is hidden from sight, often because frail humanity can be clumsy in its handling of spiritual revelations and miracles. However, out of interest it can be stated that the initial numbers that attended those opening ceremonies and first services were maintained. On Easter Sunday 1967 the congregation still numbered over seventy, and when there was a Parents' Night there were two hundred present. It is worth recalling that at one time it was difficult to attract more than about six or ten at such an event.

On February 25th 1968 the first Baptismal service for Cornton believers was held in the town church and here was that first full step of feeding the sheep. In the old days the work had gone no further than the Bible Class stage. Here was the first growing on into obedience, witness and responsibility within the local church, following a profession of life in Christ and membership by faith of the one universal Church which is His Body. Since that Sunday evening in February there have been several from the Cornton fellowship who have been baptised.

The next step was inevitable and the result of much prayer and longing: on September 29th 1968 the first Communion Service was held in the Cornton, and at that Service the Communion cups and plates, which had been donated were dedicated.

So the foundations were laid, the lambs and the sheep were being cared for side by side. Throughout the two years of this ministry the work had grown steadily. Roots were going down deeper and deeper into the Word and into the soil of faith, and the first tender greening of the ground was visible.

Verses from the First Letter of Peter come to mind in relation to this pioneer student-pastorate as it came to an end and a new chapter was about to begin:

> "You have been born anew .... through the living word of God; .....you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Once you were no people but now you are God's people; ....by His wounds you have been healed. For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls."
>
> from I Peter 1 & 2 R.S.V.

5 "TENDING THE FLOCK .... WILLINGLY"

In the five years since the first student-pastor was called from the Cornton at the conclusion of his studies to a Baptist congregation in England there have been four more student-pastors, ministering for periods between one and two years. As far as the work of this pastorate is concerned there have been no great changes in the pattern and each man has moved on, on completion of his studies, to a full-time ministry in another area.

With the coming of a married student in 1972 it was possible to re-negotiate with the Stirling Council and remind them of an earlier promise to let a house within the Scheme to a minister attached to the Cornton Hall. The Council were willing to reopen this arrangement and so for the past two years the student-pastor has been living right amongst the people, which is a situation helpful to the care of any people. It is a step forward, perhaps even a step nearer to the realisation of the hope that before long the community will be served by a full-time minister. Many things point in this direction and clear guidance is often made up of being aware from many little straws in the wind, which way the wind is blowing. The people in the community are settled in their new homes and a majority will stay even though a few in any area are always on the move. The Christians among these settled ones are themselves growing into a maturity which needs an experienced, mature ministry.

This in no way denigrates the student-pastors, each of whom has done well, but it is a fact that the congregation is no longer suitable as a perpetual training ground for the younger, inexperienced man. Younger members of the congregation are able to go up to the town church and the older members, whose needs are such that require experienced shepherding, are less able to go, and are more dependent on ministry coming to them, either in their own homes or within walking distance.

While the main facets of the work remain - Sunday morning worship, Sunday School and Bible Class and other organisations through the week - each student has made his own unique contribution, and formed his own opinion of the work. Each has derived his own blessing from association with place and people, and each has endeared himself to

those he has served. Those who took up the challenge with anxiety came through at the end to find themselves compensated with joy beyond anything they had expected.

From the inception of the work in 1959 there was strong evidence that the key to the Cornton work was a spirit of Christian love and caring amongst the teachers and for the children. This caring for one another went straight on into the new young Church, and this togetherness in fellowship was felt and appreciated by the students who came into it.

As has been said already, different students had differing gifts to bring to the whole, and for one at least there was an emphasis on the older, the sick, and the shut in folk. There are those today at the heart of the fellowship who were initially attracted through home and hospital visitation, being made to feel they were cared for in time of trouble.

Now that the place was established help came from other sources. There was a Mission carried out by a team of University students from various universities, centred in the hall. They took part in the services, visited the local schools and business premises, did house to house visitation, organised special children's meetings and 'teenage programmes. At the end of each day they held Evening Prayers to which all were welcome. The Mission lasted two weeks at the end of September. The men took up residence in the hall and the girls were given hospitality in local homes in the congregation. Coming as it did at the end of the summer it injected into the community a renewed awareness of why the hall was there and what the Christian Gospel was all about.

Another summer saw the hall used as a camping base for a Boys' Brigade Company from the south of England. As the campers moved about the place local children were naturally curious to see all that was going on. Even in this way contacts were made and once the children were over the doorstep and into the hall, there were those around to see that they, too, were given the all-important message.

During the second student-pastorate a week-night meeting was started for prayer and Bible Study. With only one short break this has continued ever since. It is now clear to those who meet in this way that here lies the hub of power that is needed for the Sunday and week-day activities.

For a time this meeting was held in the hall, in one of the smaller rooms but it has moved over to the New Testament pattern and now meets as the Church within the homes of local members, and is deeply valued in a spiritual sense. There is, always, a right time and a right place for every aspect of life: "a time to be born and a time to die; ..." The words of that well known passage covers most aspects of life. They are equally true of Christian fellowship. There is a time for public worship and a time for private prayer and a time for a small group to meet in the warm and familiar setting of a home. Things can happen there which would not happen in the more formal meeting, nor could happen in isolation in just the same way.

Recent events bear this out. In a home in the area just such a week-night meeting was being held. During the session they were twice interrupted by people coming to the house. One was a visitor - a minister of another denomination who called when in the district. He was made welcome and was impressed by what he witnessed. No changes in the evening had been made because a strange 'dog-collar' had joined them! The other interruption was a friendly tradesman who had long promised a bit of help to those whose home it was. Until that particular evening he had never got around to it. He, too, was made welcome; laid down his tools and joined in. He was not only amazed by what he saw and heard but wanted to know when there would be another such meeting. Two very simple contacts, and yet neither would have taken place if that meeting had been formal and held in the hall. The visiting minister would have found his friends' home shut and gone away without seeing them; the tradesman would not have walked into a church building to do a job of work when it was open for a meeting. The Lord knows what He is doing, and when man is flexible in the hand of God things happen and people are blessed.

The main congregational worship service has followed the traditional Sunday morning pattern and a Communion service has been added on the first Sunday of each month. This is much appreciated. Evening services have not yet come into their own, largely for two reasons; over the whole country attendance at an evening service - if there is one to attend - is at a low ebb; and so far there is no clear guidance as to the form this service should take in the Cornton. Is it to be bright and geared to reach

the youngster who has no thought of going up to the town church where a clear evangelistic service is being carried on? If so, is the traditional time of 6.30 p.m. the right time for this age-group? And is the traditional pattern of hymn-prayer-hymn-Bible reading-hymn-message-hymn the right style? Is it to inclue extras, even gimmicks? Is it to have modern music, instruments, solos, testimonies, with discussion time and even coffee? Is there to be a coffee bar type of meeting instead, later in the evening, with young people from the town church coming down to meet and mix with the local young people? Should there be a service to cater for the older people who are often lonely, and for whom Sunday can be a long, lonely day? For many of them the town church is too far away and transport is not easy. In an evening service they could find comfort in the old familiar hymns no longer sung because there are so few evening services in which to sing them.* They could find friendship and fellowship, they could have their hearts warmed by hearing the old comforting truth that will help with the new and alarming trials; they could go home afterwards warmed by a cup of tea and a more personal word with their pastor or deacon. These questions all have to be faced as a God-given policy is hammered out for the future, for it is a rebuke in these days to have a warm comfortable church building empty on a cold winter evening.

Tied up with this is the growing sense of urgency that the time may have come for the people to support - at least in part - a minister whose love and concern for them is not in conflict with time demanded by looming examinations. No student can give the whole of Sunday to a preaching and teaching and visiting ministry; time in the week to prepare for that ministry; time to get to know the people to whom he is to preach; time for them to get to know him well enough to give him their support and listen to him with confidence. This two-way traffic of minister and people getting to know each other is a vital part of the minister's raw material for his preaching. Then, too, he must have time to study and attend lectures and time for his own recreation, time for living as a whole man, time for his family and contemporary friends. All these contacts are necessary, especially through the student stage if the man is to keep a steadfast balance. "There is a time to work and a time to play" as well as time to be found for other things. No church should ask too much of any minister, least of all a student.

* The B.B.C. still considers 'Sunday Half Hour' is one of the most popular programmes.

With regard to the evening service: special occasions such as Christmas Eve, Christmas Sunday, Easter and so on, do meet with a response. The potential is there, the habit is not - at least, not yet. This autumn (1974) a series of evening services was held during seven consecutive Sundays in October and November. It is of note that after a slow start interest was building up gradually and numbers were increasing by the time the experiment came to its end. Perhaps the habit was just beginning to be formed?

Although there was one gift made in the first place so that the hall could be built without fear of debt or loan repayments there has never been any lack of anything needed to equip or maintain the work. There is a spirit of loving generosity akin to that in some of the early churches of New Testament days, for the people and by the people, and this suggests that when the time does come a minister will not be left needy in the midst of this congregation. Not only have all the material items for the work been given but men and women have freely given themselves and their talents to whatever has needed to be done about the place. The premises, even after eight years of hard use in all weathers by children and young folk as well as by their elders, for secular occupations as well as services, never look anything but well cared for, bright, clean and with an air of welcome. Perhaps those who do all these unseen duties are aware of an unseen Presence with them as they work.

Evidence that the 'bricks and mortar' of a church building are the Lord's concern has been made clear again this year. There has been a problem of inadequate heating, especially over the winter of '73-'74 when a fuel crisis accentuated the deficiency. It was then discovered that the roof, a large span of 45 ft long and 16ft deep on each side was not insulated against loss of internal heat. The roof is tiled on battens and roofing felt and the inside of the ceiling is cedarwood panels from apex to wall. The problem was how to get to any space between the tiles and the panels to make good the lack of insulation. To remove either the tiles or the panels would be a lengthy and costly undertaking.

As in every congregation where laymen are involved alongside the specialist minister there are those with a variety of skills. In the Cornton three deacons took this problem on their own shoulders. As they set to work they found that the Lord had gone on before them and prepared

their way. It is true that He does help those who help themselves and other people. When the roof was originally designed a small space was left between the panelling and the battens to which the tiles were secured. The present recommendations for insulation is that the material used should be 2" thick. The space left, for no specific reason eight eyars ago was two inches, running the full length of the hall and the full depth of the span. There is also a small foft over the platform which gaves access to this cross-section of the roof and allowed for sheets of polystyrene, two inches thick, to be eased into the space and pushed along the length of the hall roof.

This evidence of the Lord's providing in advance of need for His own work encouraged these deacons, and it was a task that needed encouragement. Not only did they give many hours in evenings and during their holidays but often worked in cramped positions up scaffolding and in stuffy corners of the loft. They did an incredibly wonderful job for only the cost of the material and their willingness to do it - and most probably some sacrifice on the part of their wives regarding jobs around the home!

Here and there it was necessary to remove a panel in order to ease a sheet of the material along, especially around the lighting points and it was impossible to do this without some damage to the cedawood panel. To look up at the roof now one cannot see any gap, any scar, any blemish and yet no panels were renewed. At the time great care was taken to preserve every splinter and when the job was near completion each small shred was glued back into its own place.

This attention to detail and care of the property is mentioned here because it is typical of the care that is taken over the work that concerns people. People matter to those who are in this work, and this characteristic handling of the greater and the lesser details in itself supports the message that is preached by the men in the pulpit: that our God cares, that He cares for the individual, so that the hairs of our head are counted. He marks the fall of the sparrow; He sees the secrets of the heart; He honours those who honour Him and who, without thought of reward, do all their work unto Him with no policy in mind for getting by with anything less than the best.

6 "STEADFAST, IMMOVABLE ..."

And now in 1974 another new session has begun and another change of pastorate is due in the immediate future. Many involved are asking to be shown the pattern very clearly. There is no doubt at all that from the training point of view this ministry is a blessing to these students before they take up a first charge on their own, in spite of the pressures the experience means for them as they try to combine their student and pastor commitments, and in spite of their own feelings that both suffer to some extent as a result. Even so it must be said that the Cornton is not primarily for the purpose of training students and any 'tradition' like a right of way takes hold very quickly. In only two more years a decade will have passed - the new building has already been in use longer than the old one by the Baptists - and the spiritual growth of this people, who are themselves nearly ten years older, could be restricted by lack of a ministry growing and ripening in experience at a comparable rate.

Each student-pastor, once he has moved on into his own sphere of responsibility, realises clearly the value of a growing, stable continuity of ministry for any people.

No one can deny that there are great difficulties attendant upon such a step of faith. There were difficulties in 1959 when the vision of Sunday School work was first discussed. There were difficulties all through the life of that work in the old Community Centre. There were great difficulties in 1964 when the end of the only available premises was inevitable. There have always been 'lions in the way' of every Christian work, but the Lord is able for anything where He finds faith. Faith is handing Him a blank worksheet and signing our names at the foot as being willing to carry out whatever He may write in the space above our signatures. To see the details first and then decide to sign on might be obedience but it would not be faith. Faith is the essential element for pleasing God: "Without faith it is <u>impossible</u> to please Him." It is so obvious in many ways that there is a people in the Cornton who desire to please the Lord.

Nothing that has been said on this matter is meant to discourage any future student-pastor, but rather to convince

him that his position with its immense pressures is understood and to assure him that his problems are not unique and that he is prayed for by those who stand alongside him in the work. It is also meant to help focus the attention of those responsible for the ministry, and who may be too close at times to see the situation in perspective, on a few of the problems that face the people and the young pastors. It is necessary to look ahead and expect the Lord to meet progressive need. It is true that He is changeless but that is because He does not need to change in order to meet changing conditions. It is we who have to make changes to fit into His progress which is always towards ultimate victory.

* * *

This year has also seen the completion of a secular multi-purpose Community Centre on a nearby site. In some ways this will be a valuable challenge to the Christian witness: it will shake what can be shaken, and establish all that is unshakable. Some who have only attached themselves to the hall because there was nothing else to go to will obviously drop off, and this may serve as a purifying element as the work goes ahead. Numbers are not the essential criterion for Christian work. If any worker is tempted to feel discouraged in the light of this new development which may well be very attractive especially to the young folk it will be salutary to remember that the Lord gave His people a clear eight years' start, let alone the previous seven years of Sunday School work. If what is being done is done obediently and faithfully to the Lord none need fear near-by alternatives. All that will happen is that our effort to make the choice crystal clear will be that much easier.

It is said that the end of a piece of writing is very important: it must tie up all loose ends satisfactorily. It is also said that the book "The Acts of the Apostles" with the sub-title "The Acts of the Holy Spirit" can have no ending until the Lord returns. There can be no literary ending to the Story of the Cornton 'until He comes'.