

Written in 2002 - a short history of NorthWest Baptist College & highlighting □
Fairview Baptist Calgary Member Involvement.

INTRODUCTION

We will shortly be hosting a combined church service with our friends from Killarney Baptist church. The Wrays from Caracas, Venezuela will be our speakers. The Wrays were raised in the Crossfield--Ardrie area of Alberta. After completing high school they attended NBTC in Vancouver after which they obtained teaching degrees at the U of C. Following this they went to Columbia where they taught in the Alta Vista missionary school. They later took on a bible-teaching ministry among student ministers. They helped found the El Redil church in Medellin. From there they went to Caracas to help found a church among the middle class who had not as yet been reached with the gospel. This has proved to be a very difficult task but with prayer, hard work and persistence a church has been gathered together. We had Beven as our student pastor for one summer. It has been our privilege to help support the Wrays from the beginning of their ministry.

NORTHWEST BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

(a short history)

As mentioned previously the Wrays attended NBTC in Vancouver. Not everyone knows that this college had its roots in the old Westbourne Baptist church located on the doorstep of the Calgary Exhibition & Stampede in Victoria Park.

Westbourne began as a mission outreach of First Baptist church in 1903 at 13th Ave. and 2nd St. SE. A permanent building was built later at 13th Ave. and 4th St. SE with funds donated by the congregation of Westbourne Baptist church in London, England. The new building was named in honour of their benefactor. This church was to play a key role in the future development of the Province of Alberta, and the ultimate formation of *FEBCAST*.

Perhaps its best known lay-preacher was the late William (Bible Bill) Aberhart who, in 1921 took over the pulpit of Westbourne at a time preceeding the Great Depression that ultimately stripped away the greater part of the Province's monetary and social resources. Canada's Christian values had been severely tested during the carnage of WW1, and the aftermath of the postwar period; when many faced an uncertain future. Mr. Aberhart came to Calgary from Brantford, Ontario to become the Principal of the Mount Royal School. Because of the severity of the depression he became interested in the Social Credit movement. He started a Radio Sunday School on CFCN which reached into Saskatchewan. Soon the struggling little mission church was filled to overflowing.

Along the way, in 1921, Westbourne had declared its independance from First Baptist church. Then, in 1927, this congregation under Mr. Aberhart built the Prophetic Bible Institute on 8th Ave. west and moved into the new edifice. Mr. Aberhart had the facility to express his political views in conjunction with his Christian beliefs; and drew a wide radio audience on Sunday afternoons. Among his radio converts was a young man from Saskatchewan by the name of Ernest Manning. The rest is, as they say--history.

Later on, some former members of Westbourne, encouraged by Mr. Harry Scrimgeour returned to the old Westbourne building and began services once more. Mary Holstine (nee Stuart) of our Fairview congregation attended the services at both the *old* Westbourne church and at the *new* Prophetic Bible Institute. Her mother brought her young children across the city on the old street cars, summer and winter, twice on Sunday and again in the afternoon for Mr. Aberharts' radio broadcast. Her father was an ardent listener of the broadcast. Mary recalls attending Sunday school when Mrs. Aberhart was the superintendent in old Westbourne. She remembers the bare wooden floors and spartan surroundings of the basement, but recalls her enjoyment of the God-honouring lessons. Her older sister Gladys was a teacher in the Sunday school; who also sang in the choir along with the late Mable Frew.

Dr. Morley Hall came to old Westbourne in February of 1930. He commenced what proved to be a fruitful ministry. With several church members he went to the small outlying towns of Crossfield, Benalto and Drumheller. These, together with Norwood in Edmonton (now *Fellowship*) became the five churches which formed the nucleus of our present fellowship. As in the time of Mr. Aberhart, the radio ministry once again proved its worth. The broadcast known as the Back Home Gospel Hour aired each Sunday evening--reaching many souls for Christ. Mary Wylie's family from Midnapore first attended services at the Prophetic Bible Institute, and later at Westbourne under the ministry of Dr. Morley Hall. She and some of her family were baptized there. In later years, Bob Heggart attended old Westbourne before removing to Killarney--a new daughter church. In turn, Fairview was established as an outreach from Killarney.

Dr. Hall held street meetings on Railway St. near the church. At one of these meetings during Stampede week c1930, a young prodigal farmhand (lately of England and Ontario)--here for the revelry of the Stampede, while passing by, soon found himself rivetted to the spot. At the age of 19 years he turned his back on a life of difficulty, hurt and despair to embrace the Saviour. His name was Jack Pickford.

Dr. Hall, in company with the Rev. George Dawe from Mission City, BC responded to a pressing need for a Bible Training school by founding the Western Baptist Bible College in the basement of old Westbourne church. Mr. Dawe was the first principal. The first class of approximately thirty students included Elizabeth Wylie, Jack Pickford, and his future wife--Alberta. Jack boarded with the Wylie family while he was engaged in the practical aspect of his training. Eventually, he became head of the school. Upon the outbreak of WW2 the school was closed for patriotic reasons.

In 1945, following VE day, thought was given to reopening the Bible school. The BC convention was much stronger (financially speaking) so it was deemed prudent to relocate WBBC to the Vancouver area. Providentially, the Rev. J. Erickson of the Fundamental Bible College in nearby Port Coquitlam invited the BC fellowship to enter into a joint agreement. He had purchased a property for \$1900 at a tax sale. The building was the former Bel-aire Manor--a luxury hotel built in the late 1880s by a speculator from England who misjudged the permanent location of the coastal terminus

of the then recently completed Canadian Pacific Railway. The hotel never fulfilled its intended purpose. During WW2 the building, in a state of disrepair, was used as a hostel for Merchant Marine crews who, from time to time, were in transit between eastern and western ports.

The Fellowship raised \$7000. to purchase the property outright from Mr. Erickson, who remained in a leadership capacity. [Grace Ansley (nee Nudd) who had attended the old Westbourne Sunday school in the early 1920s attended a Bible school elsewhere that had previously been founded by Mr. Erickson.]

It required a tremendous financial and physical effort on the part of the participating churches to refurbish the dilapidated building. Fruits, vegetables and all manner of foodstuff was donated. The most memorable aspect of gratis work at the school was "coal day" when a donation of a winter's supply of heating coal from the mines at Drumheller, Alberta was transported by the CPR at, perhaps, nominal cost to Port Coquitlam. The coal was a gift of the Alberta brethren. On its arrival in Coquitlam yard the car was switched to a side track. Classes were suspended, and "all hands" including the faculty unloaded 40 tons (80,000 pounds) of coal, *bagged* it in sacks, then transported it to the college in the old school bus. The operation was repeated later on during the winter season.

A number of busy ministers took on the role of teachers. Despite the burden of a large **ministry**, the **first principal**, Dr. Rowell of Central Baptist church in Victoria, BC travelled to Coquitlam each week via the steamships of the Canadian Pacific Coastal Service; then returned to his own pastorate for the weekend. People, such as Andrew Grieve, Lorimer Baker, Esther Peacock and Jack Pickford were among many who served on the faculty. Included also was the Rev. Grahame Reeve and his wife Norma who came west from Ontario in 1948 to pastor Collingwood Baptist church. He taught History, Greek and Hebrew. He was slated to become Principal of the school but unfortunately suffered a heart attack which proved fatal. One of his four children, Joan Braumberger served Fairview Baptist church in Calgary as church organist.

The school remained in the Port Coquitlam area for 12 years. Jack Purdy, our former pastor was enrolled in the final class at this location. Dave Edmonds, brother-in-law to Meryl Pearce, also attended about that time. Sadly, the Port Coquitlam school board appropriated the best of the schools lands. Dr. Pickford was able to obtain enough money to relocate the school to the Marine Drive location. In March 1958 a 1.8 acre parcel of land was purchased. Its buildings (including a fieldstone mansion once owned by a prominent lumberman) were remodelled. The overall cost of of this endeavour came to \$52,957.74--leaving a balance of \$342.76 from the sale of the Port Coquitlam property. The newer school produced many of our church leaders: including our present pastor Bob Marsh, former pastor Warren Weibe, Marifaith Cole--our treasurer, Ken Landymore, Rick Baker and his wife Tammy, the Wray's of Caracas, Tom Birch and his wife Ev., Doug and Bruce Birch, and Meryl Pearce's daughter Carol. [This just a partial list of names].

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Eventually, another move was in the offing. In 1987, the Marine Dr. property was sold for about 4.5 million dollars and the school was relocated to the site of Trinity Western University at Langley, BC. A number of our young people attended this campus including Sharilyn Landymore. Due to financial constraints, the property was sold to Trinity Western on December 15, 2000. The seminary section continues to function; training ministers.

As to *old Westbourne* where it all began, the old edifice has stood the test of time. On a recent visit there, Mary Wylie and I [Merle Hartley] felt that we were standing on sacred ground. Despite all of the fiery darts that Satan could hurl at it, this church has remained a beacon for God. It is the mother church for many of our Alberta churches. After the congregation relocated in the northwest of Calgary, the Alliance church in the area looked after the Sunday school children and a few of the adults that remained in the area. Several groups have since occupied the old building. Eventually it became derelict--surrounded by "crack" houses. One day a little old lady sat on the front steps of the church weeping and praying that God would once again open its doors to the lost souls who resided in the general area. Victory Outreach has since established a work there for street people. These stalwart people preach the Word, feed and clothe the hungry, have established a Sunday school, and a nursery that cares for babies: under the tender gaze of a picture of our loving Christ. They have rid the area of "crack" houses and have refurbished them suitable for shelters for troubled "teens". They locate people who have HIV and have no fixed address.

Most importantly, they have gained the trust of the entire community. They carry on this work day by day, thus fulfilling Christ's great commission. The very reason *Old Westbourne* was built, nearly 100 years ago.

Due to the spectre of ongoing Stampede expansion its future is uncertain. But this we know: that through the years, the old church has been instrumental in--the rescue of the perishing, care of the dying, Snatching in pity from sin and the grave; Weeping o'er the erring ones, Lifting up the fallen, Telling of Jesus the mighty to save."

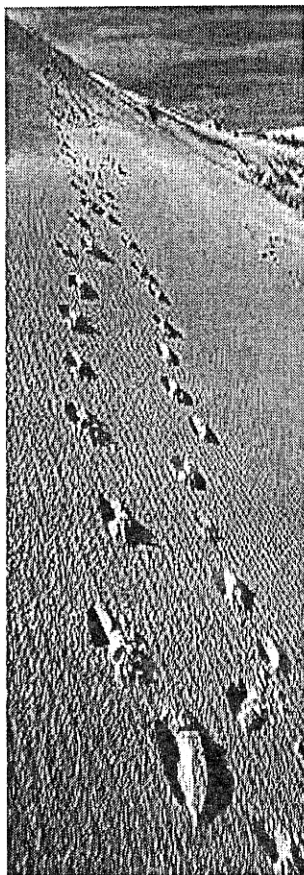
Thanks to Mary Holstine (Stuart); Mary Wylie; Meryl Pearce for the loan of Ian Bowie's excellent book concerning the Pickfords; and Grace Ansley (Nudd) for their contributions of firsthand reminiscences. Thanks also to Sharilyn Landymore for use of her college books; and to Westbourne Baptist church for contributing their archival information. And to S. D. Hartley for producing the finished document.

Roberta Merle Hartley

January 16, 2002, Calgary, Alberta

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FOOTPRINTS



You are invited to a
Centennial Celebration of
Ministry through
Westbourne Baptist Church
September 10-11, 2005

Saturday: Footprints of the Past

4:30 BBQ 6:30 Celebration Service
with Pastor Dennis Burriss

Sunday: Footprints for the Future

10:00 Celebration of Worship
with Dr. Kent Anderson

Please RSVP by August 28 to
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Telephone Number.

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just in case you don't hear
from her soon

Meryl Pearce

Please excuse my
scrawl as my
hands are crippled with
arthritis.



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