



# THE HISTORY OF FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH

*1871-2021*

CELEBRATING 150 YEARS

# **The History of Forest Baptist Church, 1871-2021**

Reece Gordon



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# Pastoral History

1871 – Elder Charles Northrup	1920 – Rev. Thomas Doolittle
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1884 – Elder J. Williamson	1942 – Rev. G. Gerald Harrop
1884 – Rev. John Logan Kay	1944 – Rev. Ralph D. Wright
1888 – Rev. J. W. Kelly	1949 – Rev. Alfred J. Fieldus
1890 – Rev. Richard Marshall	1954 – Rev. Victor A. Hall
1892 – Rev. J. A. Keay	1959 – Rev. Ralph F. Willson
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1898 – Rev. A. R. Park	1971 – Rev. J. Loren Gorman
1900 – Rev. J. A. Banton	1972 – Rev. Perley Tidd
1902 – Rev. C. J. Triggerson	1976 – Rev. Ken Duncan
1903 – Rev. Charles E. Burrell	1982 – Rev. Kirk Wellum
1907 – Rev. John S. Leckie	1985 – Rev. Bob Lewis
1911 – Rev. R. J. Garrett	2000 – Rev. Laurie Morris
1914 – Rev. Armin Aaron Holzer	2001 – Rev. Kevin Furtney
1915 – Rev. H. Elmer Green	2011 – Rev. Brian McGuffin
1918 – Rev. Percy G. Buck	2014 – Rev. Tyler Strickler
1919 – Rev. M. Neilson	2015 – Rev. Mark Kennedy

# Introduction

The Puritan minister Urian Oakes famously referred to historians as the “Lord’s Remembrancers.” By his definition, a Remembrancer was someone who used history to inform, remind, and inspire others to reflect on God’s mercies. In a sermon preached in Boston on May 7, 1673, Oakes extended this responsibility to all believers: “It is our great duty to be the Lord’s Remembrancers, that the mercies of the Lord may be faithfully registered in our hearts and remembered by us. It is a desirable thing, that all the loving kindnesses of God, and his singular favors to this poor and despised out cast might be chronicled and communicated to succeeding ages.”<sup>1</sup>

This project aims to capture the history of Forest Baptist Church in its past 150 years. It considers the church’s founding, expansion, and mission. Biographies of memorable pastors, missionaries, leaders, and congregants are also included. While the work follows a general chronology, it is also divided into three thematic sections. “Foundation” tells the story of Forest Baptist as it grew from a small congregation meeting in a log cabin to a growing body of believers with a heart for international missions. “Fellowship” focuses on the social activities of the church, including its clubs, associations, and ministries. The final section, “Faithfulness,” celebrates Forest’s submission to the word of God and the ways that the faith has been passed down through missions, evangelism, and youth ministries. Times of difficulty, leadership changes, and the global pandemic are also discussed.

This work has relied on archival material, including newspapers, genealogies, reports, and other histories. I owe a particular debt to a historical pamphlet prepared for the

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<sup>1</sup> Urian Oakes, *New England Pleaded With* (Cambridge: Samuel Green, 1673; Ann Arbor: Text Creation Partnership, 2011), 23

church fifty years ago by Rev. Albert Motchman and Allan Burr. Furthermore, this project would not have been possible without the dedicated work of the anniversary committee: Tyler Strickler, Jan Van Den Boogaard, Marnie Montgomery, Hannah Woods, Lenore Cates, Dorinda Hoornweg, Greg Gordon, and Nicola Gordon.

While I have tried to record this information as accurately as possible, this is not a complete account of the people and activities of Forest Baptist Church. Many people, stories, and events have unfortunately been excluded. With this in mind, I reference the words of the father of church history, Eusebius of Caesarea, from the introduction to his fourth century work, *The Church History*: "This project requires kindness on the part of the reader, since I feel inadequate to do it justice as the first to venture on such an undertaking, a traveler on a lonely and untrodden path. But I pray that God may guide me and the power of the Lord assist me."<sup>2</sup>

May this history aid us in being the Lord's Remembrancers.

*Soli Deo gloria,*

Reece Gordon

September 13, 2021

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<sup>2</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *The Church History*, translated by Paul L. Maier (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2007), 22



## Foundation: 1871-1921



*You have heard a score of times, that if you do but drop a pebble in a brook, it causes a small ring at first, then another outside of that, and then another, and then another, till the influence of the pebble is perceptible over the entire bosom of water. So it is when God makes his people a blessing.*

Charles Spurgeon

### **The Founding of Forest Baptist Church**

Forest Baptist Church was formed out of a heart for missions. In early 1855, Elder Williams from Arkona Baptist Church was commissioned to organize a second Baptist congregation in the neighbouring area. He chose a site on 6<sup>th</sup> Warwick Line, where a small log schoolhouse was built to accommodate worship services. While Williams' vision for a church plant continued after his departure, the Warwick mission had difficulties gaining traction. As a result, it wasn't until 1870, during the pastorate of Elder Conrad, that Arkona Baptist would make a second and more permanent attempt at branching out. At their request, thirty-one members of Arkona Baptist were set apart as founding members of the Warwick Church in March 1870. They would meet as an independent congregation for communion, prayer, and covenant meetings while still complying with the rules and discipline of Arkona Baptist. In addition to Warwick, Conrad also visited Forest that year and reported to the Home Mission Board "that the work was

capable of extension.”<sup>3</sup> Keeping with the momentum, fifteen members of the Warwick Church split into a separate fellowship under Rev. Charles Northrup to become Forest Baptist Church.

### **Charles Northrup**

The Northrup’s were an influential Baptist family who could trace their roots back to the Maritime Baptists who fled to Canada after the American Revolution.<sup>4</sup> In 1842, the Northrup family financed the Lakeview Baptist Church in Elgin County – the first ever to be built in the region. While Lakeview Baptist had a prosperous early history, differences in the congregation led to a painful split in 1870.<sup>5</sup> This division may have pushed Charles Northrup to seek ministry opportunities away from Elgin County, evidenced by his arrival in Forest in 1871.

While exercising pastoral oversight in Forest, Northrup also established preaching stations at Warwick Village and Warwick Centre. The details of Northrup’s ministry, and his desire to build a permanent church building in Forest, are indicated in his report to the Home Missions Board: “I preach at four stations; total average congregation, 123; total members in Warwick churches, 51; sermons preached during the year, 149; visits made, 263; miles traveled, 1,484; baptisms, 1. It is a day of small things on this field. The past year has been one of laborious sowing, with the recent ingathering, the first fruits. Being a new field, we have no chapel of our own, except a claim on two of the churches for accommodation. We have secured lots and

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<sup>3</sup> Allan Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet” (Forest: Forest Baptist Church, 1971), 3

<sup>4</sup> Ida Louise Haggan, *The Haggan Papers: Genealogies, Part III* (St. Thomas: Elgin County Library Board, 1978), 1

<sup>5</sup> Hugh Joffre Sims, *Sims’ History of Elgin County* (St. Thomas, Elgin County Library Board, 1984), 252

intend to build in Forest and Warwick Village. Our prospects are brightening and we feel encouraged.”<sup>6</sup>

As indicated in this report, Northrup had negotiated a deal to use the buildings of other local churches. This included the Ebenezer Congregational Church, which consisted of only a simple frame building on the corner of Union and Clyde Street. The Baptist and Congregational churches agreed to host a joint Sunday School, but met on alternative Sundays for worship services. Unfortunately, this arrangement proved to be less than ideal for both churches and was short-lived. The failure of the Warwick Village mission added to this discouragement, as did the deaths of several leading members of Forest Baptist.<sup>7</sup>

In 1872, the pulpit was passed to Elder William Hillyard – records indicating that five were baptized under his leadership.<sup>8</sup> In the meantime, Northrup moved to Woodstock to study as a ministerial student at the Canadian Literary Institute. Established in the 1850s to expand the Baptist presence in Upper Canada, the Institute trained future Baptist pastors and missionaries and laid the foundation for other Baptist institutions, including the Toronto Baptist College and McMaster University, where many of the future pastors of Forest Baptist would train.<sup>9</sup> Northrup later served as a minister in Illinois, and in Glasgow, Scotland, where he died in 1921.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 4

<sup>7</sup> Burr, 4

<sup>8</sup> Burr, 4

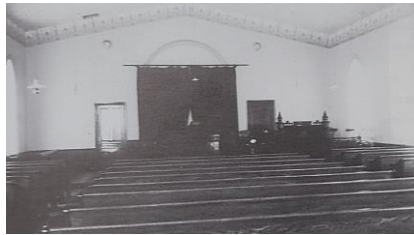
<sup>9</sup> Gordon L. Heath, Dallas Friesen, and Taylor Murray, *Baptists in Canada: Their History and Polity* (Hamilton: McMaster Divinity College Press, 2020), 44

<sup>10</sup> Haggan, *The Haggan Papers*, 9-10

## J.A. Baldwin & The Prince Street Chapel



*Rev. John Amos Baldwin*



*The Prince Street Chapel, 1902*

Rev. John Amos Baldwin replaced Hillyard as pastor in 1875. Baldwin was clearly a gifted and personable minister, and the people of Forest Baptist enthusiastically embraced his leadership, giving him an affectionate nickname, the “Baptist Bishop of North Lambton.”<sup>11</sup> During Baldwin’s ministry, the membership of Forest Baptist multiplied by five times – primarily due to the revival of 1877-1878, during which seventy-five people were baptized. As a result, by 1880, Forest Baptist had grown to ninety-five congregants.<sup>12</sup> Fortunately, a new chapel on Prince Street had been built to accommodate the growing congregation. The chapel was built in 1875 and dedicated the following year. It was made of brick with a stone foundation and was capable of seating 250 people, marking a significant

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<sup>11</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 4

<sup>12</sup> Burr, 4

improvement over wooden shelter the congregation was accustomed to gathering in.<sup>13</sup> Financially, the church was also making great strides. For example, while building the Prince Street chapel had incurred a sizable debt, it was dissolved entirely within one year. This was due to the help of Rev. Dr. Thomas Leslie Davidson, the superintendent of the Home Mission Board, who took up pledges in support of Forest's new chapel and preached at its dedication.<sup>14</sup> While Forest Baptist continued to draw support from the Home Mission Board until 1879, it gradually earned its financial independence, which was seen most notably in the congregation's ability to offer Rev. Baldwin a stable salary of \$380.<sup>15</sup> Baldwin continued his ministry in Forest until David B. Davidson replaced him in 1881. He died in 1914 while pastoring in Muskegon, Michigan, and is buried in Arkona.<sup>16</sup>

## Church Covenant

With a new church building and its membership on the rise, Forest Baptist had to navigate the joys and challenges of living in community. One way that Forest Baptist could organize itself was by using a church covenant. Since the early twentieth century, Baptist churches in Ontario and Quebec were encouraged to adopt John Newton Brown's *Covenant* (1853). Brown was an American Baptist pastor and theologian who authored the moderately Calvinistic confession, the *New Hampshire Baptist Confession of Faith*. His church covenant was published in *The Baptist Church Manual* in 1853, which helped teach Baptist distinctives to

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<sup>13</sup> Mona Huctwith, *Forest: Its Beginnings and More* (Forest: DanCam Press, 2001), 247

<sup>14</sup> Huctwith, *Forest: Its Beginnings and More*, 247

<sup>15</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 4

<sup>16</sup> Michigan, U.S., Death Records, 1867-1952 for John Amos Baldwin, Michigan Department of Community Health, Division for Vital Records and Health Statistics (Lansing: Michigan)

potential church members. The original covenant closed with a pledge to “carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God’s Word” in all circumstances, and as such, was used as a document for church discipline. Forest Baptist adopted Brown’s *Covenant* at some point in its early history and continues to use it to this day with some minor alterations.<sup>17</sup>



Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness and comfort, to promote its prosperity and spirituality, to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines, to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations.

We also engage to cultivate the devotional life, to rear our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances, to walk vigilantly in the world, to be just in our dealings, honour our promises and commitments and exemplary in our behaviour and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the Kingdom of our Saviour.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love, to remember each other in prayer, to aid each other in sickness and distress, to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech, to be slow to take offence, always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the direction from Scripture to secure it without delay.

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<sup>17</sup> Heath, Friesen, and Murray, *Baptists in Canada*, 107-108

## **The Mission Circle**

Forest expanded its interest in local and global missions under the pastorate of A. P. MacDonald. Since 1890, Rev. Richard Marshall had been jointly pastoring Arkona and Forest. In 1892, a small Baptist congregation in Thedford requested services, and Marshall left Forest to turn his attention there. Resultingly, Forest called A. P. MacDonald, then a student at McMaster, to be their next pastor. After settling in Forest, MacDonald was ordained and began a three-year-long ministry.<sup>18</sup>

A small group of women had already organized themselves into a mission circle in 1883. This was in response to an appeal by Miss Rowles, the president of the Sarnia Missions Circle, for “stirring up interest in the missions cause” in Canadian churches. While no records indicate the activity of this small society before MacDonald’s arrival in 1892, their attitude was optimistic: “although we are a feeble little band we hope that with God’s blessing and our own zeal and energy to be able ere long to report a good work for the Master.”<sup>19</sup>

MacDonald reorganized the Mission Circle – appointing Mrs. Don Campbell as the Secretary-Treasurer and Mrs. Bowden as president. Meetings were typically held in member’s homes, and special meetings were hosted throughout the year for specific causes, included supporting Rev. Charles Mitchell and Rev. Percy Buck when they went on mission to Bolivia. In their later history, the Mission Circle sponsored nurses in India, made bandages for hospitals out of old sheets, and participated with Baptists worldwide in a Day of Prayer. The Circle also sent food parcels overseas, invited missionaries to speak at special

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<sup>18</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 5

<sup>19</sup> Joyce Campbell, “History of the Mission Circle of Forest Baptist Church,”  
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events, and organized the “Indian Fund” to reach Canada’s native peoples. Women such as Rena Campbell, Ella Mack, and Evelyn Sparling served with the Mission Circle for many years – as did several pastor’s wives, including Mrs. Doolittle and Mrs. Broughton.<sup>20</sup>

### **The Canadian Baptist Mission to Bolivia**



*Rev. Charles N. Mitchell*

Rev. Charles N. Mitchell accepted the pastorate of Forest Baptist following the transfer of A. P. MacDonald to Alymer in 1895. Mitchell was a student studying at McMaster at the time and was described as “a ripe scholar [with] great possibilities before him in Canada.” Despite the real possibility of Mitchell becoming an accomplished pastor and biblical scholar, he “counted not his gifts too great to set before the heathen,” and left for Bolivia in 1896 to spearhead the newest Canadian Baptist mission to Latin

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<sup>20</sup> Campbell, “History of the Mission Circle of Forest Baptist Church,” 1-2



America. The congregation was “deeply touched by his sacrifice.”<sup>21</sup>

The Canadian Baptist mission to Bolivia was initiated by Archibald Reekie, a young ministerial student from Kincardine Township, Ontario. During his studies at Woodstock College and McMaster, Reekie read a story about a Mexican man who converted with the help of Southern Baptist missionaries. Reekie was inspired to join the mission field in Latin America and was especially interested in Bolivia, where there was no current Protestant witness. Like Mitchell, Reekie sacrificed his academics to go on an exploratory trip to determine the possibility of a Baptist mission in 1896. After narrowly graduating, Reekie made his case to the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec and his vision was soon realized. Reekie was joined by “a score of McMaster men in the land of the Southern Cross,” including Charles Mitchell.<sup>22</sup>

The main interest of this early mission was to build a church and school for educating the locals and establishing an independent native clergy. While Reekie selected the mining village of Oruro to begin this work, Mitchell kept busy overseeing Cochabamba City in the central valley of the Andes mountain range. Will Payne, a fellow Baptist missionary serving in Bolivia, visited Mitchell and his wife in the rural district around Cochabamba in 1900, reporting: “Mr. Charles Mitchell gave us a welcome, and we were glad to see a number of children attending his school. He had been working away quietly for some time but had not been

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<sup>21</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 5

<sup>22</sup> William H. Brackney, “A Good Knight in a New Crusade: Archibald Reekie and the Origins of Canadian Baptist Witness in Bolivia,” in *Bridging Cultures and Hemispheres: The Legacy of Archibald Reekie and Canadian Baptists in Bolivia*, ed. William H. Brackney (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 5-6

able to gather many to hear the Gospel; he told us of his great desire to see something done.”<sup>23</sup>

In 1908, the missionary Norman Dabbs (later to become the first Canadian Baptist martyr) commented on Mitchell’s effort to train local men for the pastorate : “from the first he had encouraged the believers to assume responsibility for their own work by personal witness, preaching, and financial contributions.”<sup>24</sup> This was an impressive accomplishment, considering that the Canadian Baptists lacked support from fellow Protestant missionaries and had to contend with the strong influence of the Roman Catholic Church. A particularly powerful opponent was the Bishop of Cochabamba, Jacinto Anaya, who verbally attacked Baptist missionaries through the pages of the *El Heraldo* newspaper. In one instance, a mob led by the local clergy of Cochabamba marched to the home of Will Payne, throwing paving stones and shouting “heretics, enemies of the holy religion!”<sup>25</sup>

The original Canadian missionary gang were burned out by 1916. Charles Mitchell himself had fallen seriously ill, and was moved to the English hospital in Antofagasta, Chile, where he died the following year. The political uncertainties of the First World War, long separations from families, deteriorating health, and Mitchell’s death made it necessary to transfer leadership to a group of younger missionaries.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Will Payne and Charles T.W. Wilson, *Missionary Pioneering in Bolivia, With Some Account of Work in Argentina* (London: H.A. Raymond, 1900), 207

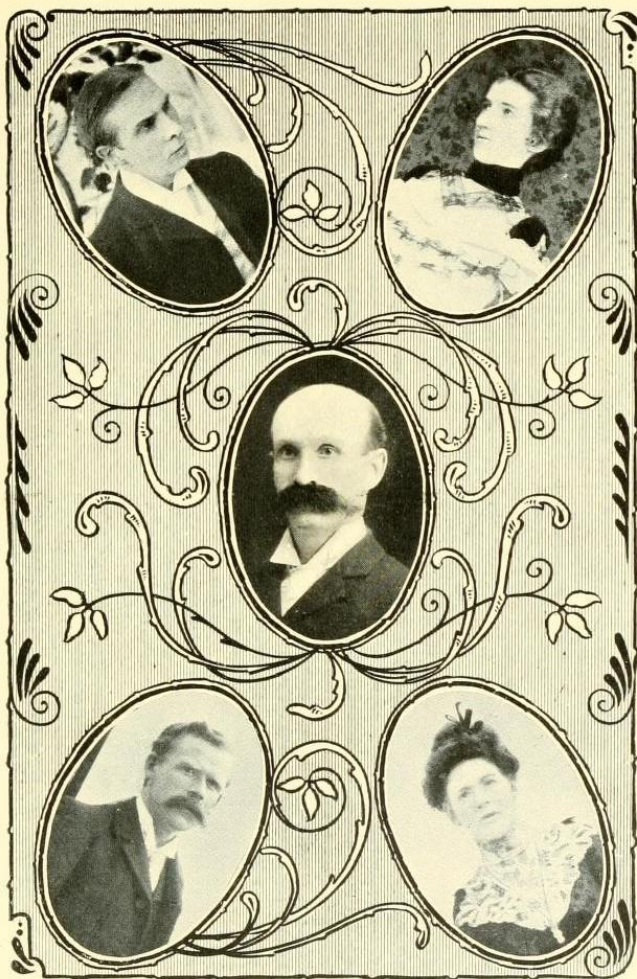
<sup>24</sup> Emigdio Veizaga, “The Legacy of Canadian Baptists in Boliva,” in *Bridging Cultures and Hemispheres: The Legacy of Archibald Reekie and Canadian Baptists in Bolivia*, ed. William H. Brackney (Macon, Georgia: Smyth & Helwys, 1997), 94

<sup>25</sup> Edmundo Murray, “William Smith [Guillermo] Payne (1870-1924), missionary in Argentina and Bolivia,” *Irish Migration Studies in Latin America* (2006): 281-282

<sup>26</sup> Brackney, “A Good Knight in a New Crusade,” 29

CHAS. MITCHELL.

MRS. MITCHELL.



ARCH. REEKIE.

R. ROUTLEDGE.

MRS. ROUTLEDGE.

SOME OF THE CANADIAN BAPTIST MISSIONARIES.

*Taken from "Missionary Pioneering in Bolivia"*  
*by Will Payne & Charles T. W. Wilson*

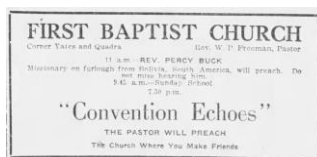
The congregation at Forest Baptist Church received news of Mitchell's death in 1918. Stirred by his sacrifice, many made contributions to continue the work he had helped establish. Among those who "offered their services freely" was Forest's young pastor, Rev. Percy G. Buck.<sup>27</sup>



*Rev. Percy G. and Anne Buck with daughters Dorothy and Jean*



*Percy and Anne Buck, 1918*



*Rev. Buck's Lecture Advertisements*

<sup>27</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 5

Buck was still a student when he first began preaching at Highland Park Baptist Church in Westboro, Ontario, in 1913.<sup>28</sup> After completing his studies, he enjoyed a short pastorate at Forest Baptist, taking over from Rev. H. Elmer Green in 1918.

Buck arrived in Bolivia in 1919 and joined a group of Canadian Baptist missionaries who worked among the Aymara peoples in the Lake Titicaca basin. The focus of this mission was to help local farmers by furnishing them with livestock and farm equipment. Buck and his companions also helped secure land deeds for the peasant class, opened secular and religious schools, and paved the way for better access to medical care.<sup>29</sup> The Bolivia Bible School, where Buck taught, continued the original work of training a native pastorate.

By the early 1940s, the conditions in the area where Buck ministered had steadily improved. Although Buck first described Bolivia as “[like] the Feudal Age of Europe” in which Roman Catholic Church controlled the people’s worship, and “little attempt [had] been made to educate the inhabitants,” he now saw advances in religious liberty, education, and a “people eager to receive the gospel.”<sup>30</sup> Buck attributed this success to colleagues such as Rev. A. Plummer, who ran an agricultural school for native farmers that was a “great help in carrying on [...] religious work among the people.”<sup>31</sup> Yet, the political conditions in South America and the shortening supply of missionaries threatened to undo this work. In response, Buck returned to

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<sup>28</sup> “Early minister speaks,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 27, 1973

<sup>29</sup> “Mission Work in Bolivia Described,” *The Lethbridge Herald*, February 10, 1944

<sup>30</sup> “Mission Work in Bolivia Described,” *The Lethbridge Herald*, February 10, 1944; “Mineral Depots Rich in Bolivia: South American State Comes into its Own Furnishing Supplies to the Allies,” *Calgary Herald*, June 22, 1925

<sup>31</sup> “Mineral Depots Rich in Bolivia”

Canada and went on a lecture circuit to Baptist congregations across the county. At the 1943 meeting of the Eastern Baptist Association, Buck firmly argued against putting the mission to South America on hold until the end of the Second World War: "it is not enough to wait until the war is won, and then we will see what can be done. But, what of the work of God? The link between home and foreign fields must be kept tight. No stream can rise higher than its source. Our 'front line' insists upon efficient and practical support at home."<sup>32</sup> Later, in 1944, he reminded a crowd in Calgary: "God has sent us with the key and the lock that is holding the thousands of India and places like Bolivia in bondage, and there is no greater service a Christian can do than freeing men and women."<sup>33</sup> Buck continued his work in Bolivia for thirty years, and frequently returned to preach in Canada.

Forest Baptist Church played a significant role in the Canadian Baptist mission to Bolivia by providing two of its pastors and the support of its congregation. The historian William Brackney relays the impact and significance of the effort of all Canadian Baptists during this period: "as pioneers of Protestants, Baptists created a new meaning for soul liberty and the priesthood of all believers in the face of centuries-old Catholic institutions. And, in due course, it would be the Baptists who led in democratic land reforms at Huatahata, where peasants were given ownership shares of agricultural lands. Bolivian Baptists in succeeding generations of the twentieth century evolved as a progressive evangelizing community with social concern."<sup>34</sup>

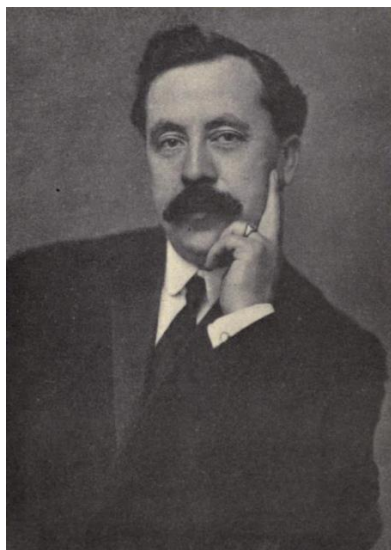
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<sup>32</sup> "Missionary Work Said Urgent Now: Baptist Association Hears Need for Active Campaign in Foreign Fields," *The Gazette*, October 7, 1943

<sup>33</sup> "Foresees Trouble in South America," *Edmonton Journal*, March 14, 1944

<sup>34</sup> William H. Brackney, "The Legacy of Archibald B. Reekie," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28, no. 2 (April 2004): 82

## Charles Burrell & The King Street Chapel



*Rev. Dr. Charles E. Burrell, 1922*

It was to a discouraged congregation that Rev. Charles E. Burrell began to minister in 1903. Burrell had immigrated from London, England, and was educated in law and theology in Canada – eventually earning doctorate degrees in both. His natural tendency for learning and leadership allowed him to be ordained in his first church when he was only sixteen years old.<sup>35</sup> After spending nine months pastorless, the people of Forest Baptist accepted Burrell, whose abilities raised their spirits so much that he was named the “second Baldwin.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> William E. Thompson, “Some Observations About Prince Edward County’s 250 Years of History,” *The Farmville Herald*, January 12, 2005

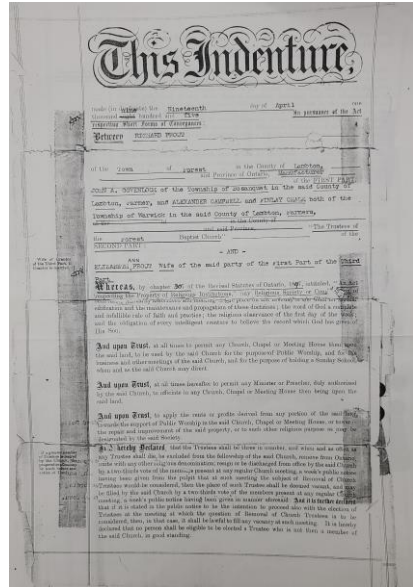
<sup>36</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 5



Rev. Charles E. and Mary Burrell, 1899



Forest Primitive Methodist Church, 1880



Church Property Deed, 1905



Following Baldwin's example, Burrell led a second "forward movement" to purchase a new building. The chosen site was the former Forest Primitive Methodist Church on the corner of King and Prince Street, which the Methodists could not keep due to a lack of funds and declining church membership.

In 1884, the Primitive Methodists joined the Methodist Church of Canada, making it the largest Protestant denomination in Canada. The Methodist congregation in Forest was made up of Methodists from across Lambton County who met as a single congregation in the King Street Chapel. The church building was constructed between 1875-1878. Although financial difficulties slowed the project in its early stages, when the building was finally unveiled, it was said to be the finest Methodist church building outside of Toronto.<sup>37</sup> This praise was well-placed, especially since the chapel's architect, Robert William Fawcett, had been trained in Toronto and specialized in the Romanesque Revival style.<sup>38</sup>

The Methodists sold their building to the Salvation Army in 1905, who sold it to Forest Baptist for \$4000 that same year. The congregations swapped buildings, and the Salvation Army moved their services to the Prince Street Chapel, while the Baptists began remodeling their new building. Burrell continued his ministry for two years, during which forty-eight people were baptized. Revival services were also hosted at the church by the McMaster Evangelistic Band, resulting in a "rich harvest of blessing."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Eleanor Nielson, "Pioneers and Preachers: A History of Forest United Church," (Forest: Elanor Nielson & Forest United Church, 1977), quoted in Kevin Furtney, "Local Church History Paper: Forest Baptist Church," 5

<sup>38</sup> Robert G. Hill, "Fawcett, Robert William," *Biographical Dictionary of Architects in Canada, 1800-1950*, <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/node/2084>

<sup>39</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 5

Burrell ended his ministry in Forest in 1907 and was followed by Rev. John S. Leckie. Leckie was described as a gentle leader who was “firm to the gospel message” and lead by a “strong evangelistic outlook.”<sup>40</sup> Under his leadership, thirty-one were baptized, and the church became free of its debt from the purchase of the King Street Chapel. In the meanwhile, Burrell went on to serve in churches in Toronto, Hamilton, and Niagara Falls. He also spent three years as an evangelist in North Carolina, and served as a military chaplain at Camp Lee, Virginia, during the First World War. Burrell permanently settled in Farmville, Virginia, and ministered to the large Baptist congregations there. He later retired from the pastorate due to bad health and focused on writing local history, publishing his landmark work, *The History of Prince Edward County*, in 1922.<sup>41</sup>



*The King Street Chapel following renovations, 1905*

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<sup>40</sup> Burr, 5

<sup>41</sup> “Rev. C. E. Burrell Resigns Pastorate: Letter of Resignation Read to Congregation Last Sunday Morning,” *The Farmville Herald*, October 19, 1928

## Armin Aaron Holzer & The First World War



*Armin Aaron Holzer, 1904*

The First World War brought change, turmoil, and an unlikely pastor to the pulpit of Forest Baptist Church. Although opinions were mixed among Canadian Baptists about going to war in 1914, general sentiment eventually warmed towards the conflict. A. L. McCrimmon, the Chancellor of McMaster University, gave his consent by stating it was “wholly consistent to be a Baptist and to be in support of the war.”<sup>42</sup> The most outspoken advocate for Canadian intervention was Rev. T. T. Shields, the pastor of Jarvis Street Baptist Church in Toronto, who spoke of how Germany “sinned not only against Belgium, France, or Britain but against the whole moral order and against the higher government, namely God’s.”<sup>43</sup> In response, Forest Baptist sent six members and fifteen adherents to serve overseas during the course of the war.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Michael A.G. Haykin and Ian Hugh Clary, “O God of Battles”: The Canadian Baptist Experience of the Great War,” in *Canadian Churches and the First World War*, ed. Gordon L. Heath (Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014), 174

<sup>43</sup> Haykin and Clary, “O God of Battles,” 176

<sup>44</sup> Haykin and Clary, 187

Amid this frenzy and excitement, Forest Baptist called Rev. Dr. Armin Aaron Holzer to the pastorate. Holzer possessed a “knowledge of the scriptures and teaching abilities possessed by few” and “added much to the welfare of the church and paved the way for the spiritual progress which came under his successor, Rev. H. Elmer Green.”<sup>45</sup> However, the fact that Holzer was a native of Austria, a country with which Canada was now at war, became a point of tension and a source of later controversy.

Holzer was the son of Rabbi Ignatius Holzer, an influential Jewish leader who had personal connections with the Austrian court and Emperor Franz Joseph I. During his childhood, Holzer found a talent for playing the violin. He eventually went to music school in Germany and toured professionally across Europe. During his time at the German conservatory, Holzer met a preacher, Rev. D. H. Dolman, who facilitated his conversion to Christianity in 1899. After a brief period of study in England, Holzer ventured to the United States to pursue seminary education, earning degrees at Mount Herman College, Ruskin University, Rochester Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.<sup>46</sup> In the 1910s, Holzer began a ministry in Canada and quickly earned the reputation as one of the most eloquent speakers in Ontario, mostly owing to his capability to speak in six languages. His short ministry at Forest Baptist was reported positively as a “good work.”<sup>47</sup>

In 1915, Holzer was called to Central Baptist Church in Sarnia and Rev. H. Elmer Green replaced him at Forest. While a local newspaper promised Holzer would be “warmly welcomed in Port Huron and Sarnia,” his

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<sup>45</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 5

<sup>46</sup> “Interest Shown in Evangelist: Rev. Armin A. Holzer, Jewish Preacher, Has Unusual History,” *Kenosha Evening News*, June 12, 1925

<sup>47</sup> “Central Church Has New Pastor,” *The Times Herald*, March 4, 1915

experience was brief and bitter.<sup>48</sup> In February 1916, the Canadian Parliament buildings in Ottawa suddenly caught fire. While the cause of the fire was purely accidental, Canadians were quick to blame enemy sabotage, and slandered those of Germanic ancestry as traitors. This included Holzer, who was accused of preaching German propaganda from the pulpit and tearing down patriotic posters in and around his church. This resulted in a formal investigation against Holzer by the Immigration Board. A local newspaper reported that “among the members of his congregation, it is felt that the investigation by the immigration board is a desirable thing.”<sup>49</sup> Holzer spoke out in the same article: “my patriotism has been misunderstood, I place God before the nation, but that does not mean any sacrifice of patriotism.”<sup>50</sup> Despite his protests, Holzer felt the overwhelming pressure to leave his post as a pastor in Sarnia and made plans to flee to Pittsburg, vowing never to return to Canada. In a later interview, he gave his reasons for abandoning his county: “I left Canada because I saw no reason for enduring the hatred everybody of German blood was subjected to. I am a Canadian subject, but that fact had little effect there.”<sup>51</sup>

Holzer later emerged as a famous evangelist in the United States. He was often billed as “Holzer the Hebrew” while touring churches to share his conversion story and preach on the urgency for Christians to reach their Jewish neighbors. To that end, Holzer became the leader of the Palestine Mission Board and its affiliated group, the Palestine Prayer Fellowship, which published the “Zion’s

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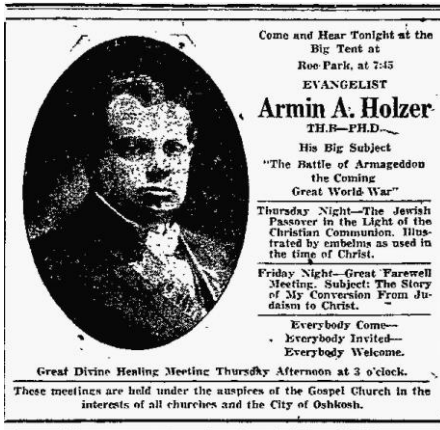
<sup>48</sup> “Central Church Has New Pastor”

<sup>49</sup> “Holzer to Leave for New Post: Sarnia Pastor Dismissed for Alleged Pro-German Utterances Will Go to Pittsburg,” *The Times Herald*, February 10, 1916

<sup>50</sup> “Holzer to Leave for New Post”

<sup>51</sup> “Canada Anti-Teutonic; Minister Removes Here,” *Pittsburg Post-Gazette*, February 21, 1916

Good News and Palestine” magazine to encourage missions in the Middle East. Holzer’s heart for Jews also drove him to write articles on anti-Semitism, Adolf Hitler, and the Nazi regime. In 1937, Holzer expressed his opinions on the emerging pattern of Jewish persecution in Nazi Germany: “I think the present persecution in Germany which the Jews are suffering is only part of God’s way to get the Jews back into the Holy Land, their real home. The Jews who have settled there have made a garden out of the wilderness, and an even greater future is in store for the Jews in the Holy Land.”<sup>52</sup> In 1950, Holzer unexpectedly converted to Roman Catholicism and ministered for his remaining years as a member of the Edith Stein Guild, an organization that helped converted Jews. At the time of his death in 1962, Holzer had made multiple trips to Palestine and toured extensively in the United States and Europe to spread the gospel.<sup>53</sup>



Come and Hear Tonight at the  
Big Tent at  
Roe Park, at 7:45  
EVANGELIST  
**Armin A. Holzer**  
THEO-Ph.D.  
His Big Subject  
"The Battle of Armageddon  
the Coming  
Great World War"  
Thursday Night—The Jewish  
Passover in the Light of the  
Christian Communion. Illustrated by emblems as used in the time of Christ.  
Friday Night—Great Farewell  
Meeting. Subject: The Story  
of My Conversion From Judaism to Christ.  
Everybody Come—  
Everybody Invited—  
Everybody Welcome.  
Great Divine Healing Meeting Thursday Afternoon at 3 o'clock.  
These meetings are held under the auspices of the Gospel Church in the interests of all churches and the City of Oshkosh.

Advertisement for one of Holzer's revival meetings



**HOLZER TO  
LEAVE FOR  
NEW POST**  
Sarnia Pastor Dismissed For  
Alleged Pro-German Utter-  
ances Will Go To  
Pittsburg  
PATRIOTISM HAS BEEN  
MISUNDERSTOOD HE SAYS  
Border City Is All Excitement  
Over Abrupt Departure of  
Former Baptist  
Preacher

Holzer leaves Sarnia

<sup>52</sup> "Rev. Armin Holzer Speaks at Carter Church This Week," *The Elizabethton Star*, September 16, 1937

<sup>53</sup> "Requiem Offered for Jew Convert, Once a Minister," *Arkansas Catholic*, September 14, 1962



PRAY FOR THE PEACE OF JERUSALEM  
THEY SHALL PROSPER THAT LOVE THEE  
(PS. 122:6)

# PALESTINE

(SUPPLEMENT)

BI-MONTHLY MISSIONARY BULLETIN OF THE  
PALESTINE MISSION BOARD AND ITS PALESTINE PRAYER FELLOWSHIP  
(INCORPORATED)



PALESTINE

## EASTER ISSUE

SPECIAL REPORT NUMBER

Published and Printed in Jerusalem, Palestine

# Zion's Good News and Palestine

A Quarterly Magazine to Further the Missionary Interests of the  
PALESTINE MISSION BOARD.  
DR. ARMIN A. HOLZER, Editor.

Vol. IV

JANUARY-MARCH, 1932

No. 1



DR. ARMIN A. HOLZER (in the Inset) and below: C.H. ADAMS (Missionary Helper)

**The Palestine Faith Home** — Jerusalem is situated in the Jerusalem Township on the road between JERUSALEM AND BETHLEHEM known as the MAN ELIAS ROAD. A few yards from the Faith Home is the Well of the Wise Men and a little further on is Rachel's tomb. The field of Roza in which Ruth was gleaned is also in the vicinity.

**The Palestine Faith Home is the Home for Jewish Converts.** It is fitted out with a Dormitory — a workshop, Dining, Social, and Reading Room, a Commissary to control the provisions and to distribute to the poor and needy (as the Lord will permit and provide). A plot of ground for agricultural purposes — an office and a meeting Place.

### PALESTINE MISSION BOARD

Administration Headquarters  
PALESTINE FAITH HOME  
4724-36th Ave N. E. SEATTLE WASH. U. S. A.

FOUNDER: DR. ARMIN A. HOLZER, JERUSALEM.

E THREE. Ps. 122:12

*President of the  
Palestine Mission Board*  
V. T. J. McCROSSAN

*Chairman of the  
Palestine Prayer Fellowship*  
JAMES MARRIETT

ARTERLY PERIODICAL  
TION'S GOOD NEWS  
and  
PALESTINE  
Dollar for Three Years

No. 1

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A 1932 issue of "Zion's Good News and Palestine"  
by Armin Aaron Holzer

## Forest Baptist's Golden Jubilee



*Rev. Thomas Doolittle*

Rev. Thomas Doolittle came to Forest in 1920. Doolittle's pastorate was one of the longest in the church's history at that point, stretching until his retirement in 1925. During that period, Doolittle led a third "forward movement" to purchase a parsonage on Main Street south. This feat earned him the title of "a third Baldwin" and "a second Burrell."<sup>54</sup> He remained in Forest as a permanent resident until his death in 1931.

By the end of its first fifty years, Forest Baptist had grown to a body of 115 members with a sizable budget of \$5,250.<sup>55</sup> The church had several independent ministries and had already proven its interest in global missions by supporting

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<sup>54</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 6

<sup>55</sup> Burr, 6



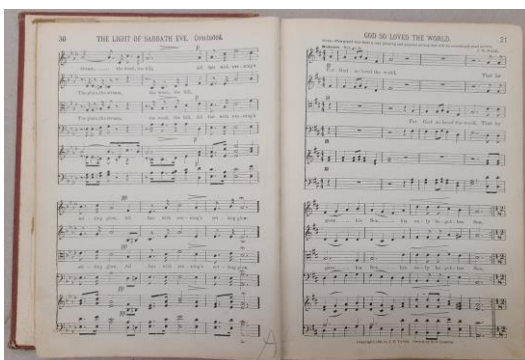
the work in Bolivia. The pastorates of Baldwin, Burrell, and Doolittle were especially fruitful, with many being baptized and experiencing revival under their leadership. The congregation's generosity also facilitated the purchase of two new church buildings and a parsonage. George Codling, the church's clerk in 1921 and a witness to these events, offered his own summary: "verily it is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes."<sup>56</sup>



*Main Street Parsonage, 1920*



*Mr. and Mrs. George Codling*



*Anthem Treasures Hymnal used at Forest Baptist, 1915*

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<sup>56</sup> Burr, 6

## Fellowship: 1921-1971



*The Spirit calls us into the fellowship of them that believe. It is not the absent, questing, doubting Thomas that Jesus comes, but to Thomas returned first to the Shepherd's little flock. It is there, and only there, that the confession can be made: "My Lord and my God."*

G. Gerald Harrop

### Sunday School

Sunday School has played a central role in the life of Forest Baptist since its founding. Two of the most memorable teachers in Forest's early history were Ella Mack and Mrs. Robert Phillips. Together they organized annual Mother's Day and Rally Day services under the Sunday school ministry. Sunday School Christmas concerts were the most popular event, drawing crowds large enough to fill the local town hall.

In 1955, Junior Church was organized by the wife of Rev. Victor A. Hall. Under her leadership, boys and girls aged eight to twelve gathered in the Sunday School auditorium to learn Bible stories. Mrs. Hall used colorful visual aids, flannelgraphs, flashcards, and other creative tools to communicate the gospel. Learning the books of the Bible and memorizing verses were stressed, and many boys and girls accepted the gospel – later becoming youth leaders themselves. Mrs. Hall also became director of the Forest Daily Vacation Bible School, a position which she held until the end of her husband's ministry in 1959. Funds for the

program were provided by several local churches, whose members gathered together to serve in the DVBS ministry at Forest Baptist. The theme for 1958 was “Come Follow Me,” which drew 235 children in attendance. Funds for missionary work were collected each day, and a letter addressed to the children of Forest Baptist by missionaries in Jamacia was read, encouraging prayer and support for their own Bible school.<sup>57</sup> Mrs. Edgar Rawlings took over the children’s ministry from 1960-1964 and was assisted by Mrs. D. Minielly who upheld the high standards set by Mrs. Hall.<sup>58</sup>

Unfortunately, at the end of 1960, Rev. Ralph Willson reported that Sunday School attendance was being neglected. Willson addressed the congregation that year in the annual report: “Bible study is much more important than the 14% attendance of our members on Wednesday evening would indicate. [The] instruction offered by our excellent [Sunday School] staff merits far better support than it is receiving. Homes and school are increasingly leaving Christian culture to the church. Then let’s measure up!”<sup>59</sup> At the time, nine Sunday School teachers and officers were serving the church. An additional three staff members attended a work camp at Camp Hermosa in Goderich. Others put on the Mother’s Day service, Christmas concert, and Sunday School picnic – events that drew an average of about one hundred participants.<sup>60</sup> Willson used the church bulletin to encourage even more participation. Advertisements for the Baptist Young People’s Union meetings, for example, included the subtitle: “you’ll enjoy it – if you come.” One church bulletin from April 1960 includes

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<sup>57</sup> “Forest Daily Vacation Bible School Report,” *The Free Press*, July 30, 1958

<sup>58</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 11-12

<sup>59</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “The Annual Report for the Year 1960,” (January 25, 1961), 1

<sup>60</sup> “The Annual Report for the Year 1960,” 5

a cautionary poem about the consequences of neglecting regular church attendance. Titled "I Voted to Close the Church," the poem contains the line: "I voted that the children of the Sunday School no longer be taught stories of the Bible and no longer lift their tiny voices in singing."<sup>61</sup>

Thankfully, Rev. Albert Motchman gave an optimistic report in 1971: "presently, our Sunday School is showing growth."<sup>62</sup> Since the mid-1960s, the Sunday school had raised funds for missions in Angola, Bolivia, India, and a youth work in Quebec known as Grande Ligne Mission. The church also supported a Christian day school in Bolivia, contributed funds to the seminary at Richmond College, and backed the Leprosy Mission, which offered aid to people suffering in isolation from tropical diseases across the globe. In 1963, a Sunday school library was established by Mrs. Arvon Davis, who provided Christian reading material for all age groups in the church. When Motchman made his report in 1971, the average attendance in Sunday school was seventy-five. Mrs. Fawcett and Mrs. Clemens ran two large classes for teenagers, while a former missionary, Juliette Voirol, was instrumental in bringing sound biblical teaching to the adult class.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Forest Baptist Church Bulletin, April 24, 1960

<sup>62</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 11

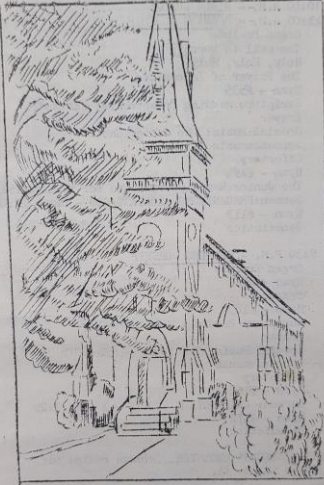
<sup>63</sup> Burr, 11



*Forest Baptist Sunday School Class, 1902*



*Forest Baptist Sunday School Class, 1906*



FOREST BAPTIST CHURCH  
Forest, Ontario

Rev. Ralph F. Willson, Pastor

"Rejoice in the Lord, ye righteous; give thanks  
at the remembrance of his holiness." - Psalm 97:12  
Sunday, April 24, 1960  
A HELPFUL PLACE TO WORSHIP

# "I VOTED TO CLOSE THE CHURCH..."

Last Sunday I voted to close the Church; not intentionally, nor maliciously, perhaps but carelessly, thoughtlessly, indifferently, I voted. I voted to close its doors that its witness and its testimony might be stopped. I voted to close the open Bible on its pulpit - the Bible that had been given us by years of struggle and by the blood of martyrs who died that we might have it to read. I voted for our minister to stop preaching the glorious truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. I voted that the children of the Sunday School no longer be taught the stories of the Bible and no longer lift their tiny voices in singing. I voted for the voice of the choir of the congregation to be stilled, and that they no longer sing in united praise.

I voted for every missionary to be called home, every native worker supported by the church to stop preaching, every hospital, every school and every dispensary in its foreign missionary fields to close. I voted that its colleges close their doors and no longer bother to train its youth for Christian service. I voted for every home missionary project to be abandoned, every influence for good and right and for truth in our community to be curtailed and finally stopped. I voted for the darkness of superstition, the degrading influence of sin, the blight of ignorance and the curse of selfish greed once again to settle their damning load on the shoulders of an already overburdened world. FOR, YOU SEE, I COULD HAVE GONE AND I SHOULD HAVE GONE, BUT I DIDN'T. I STAYED AWAY FROM CHURCH LAST SUNDAY.

Signed.....?

*Forest Baptist bulletin and poem: "I Voted to Close the Church,"  
April 24, 1960*



*Junior Church, 1971*

## The Second World War



*Rev. Oliver E. Broughton, 1938*

It was on the Sunday before Remembrance Day in 1938 that Rev. Oliver E. Broughton preached two of his most fateful sermons. The first, "Is Peace in Our Time Possible," was intended to "[lift] the curtain on certain scenes" in Europe and "[show] their religious significance." It was also likely a tongue-in-cheek response to Britain's Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain, who informed the world two months prior that he had negotiated a lasting peace with Hitler's Germany. Fittingly, the service ended with the "Sacrament of Peace," at which new members were accepted into the church.<sup>64</sup> The second sermon was much more personal for the pastor. In his evening sermon, "My Religious Experiences at the Front," Broughton offered recollections of his time as a soldier in the Great War. Broughton had

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<sup>64</sup> Unidentified newspaper clipping from the collection of Forest Baptist Church, October 31, 1938

belonged to a pre-war militia unit before volunteering for the Canadian Expeditionary Force in 1916, serving in France until his unit demobilized in 1919.<sup>65</sup> Certainly, Broughton's status as a veteran made him the ideal candidate to lead Forest Baptist into the Second World War.

Many congregants of Forest Baptist eagerly volunteered for the armed forces between 1939-1945. They served in the Infantry, Air Force, and Navy, while others joined administrative and medical branches. During the conflict, the church was touched by the deaths of two of its members in uniform. The first, Harry Keast, was a Sergeant in the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). Harry was the son of church members Arnold and Mary Keast, who farmed in Lambton County. Keast attended Forest High School and Sarnia Collegiate to study as a machinist. He also seemed to be interested in flight at a young age, as building model airplanes was one of his many hobbies. In 1942, Keast enlisted with the RCAF, quickly climbing in rank as an officer. On December 2, 1943, Keast led his squadron in a risky bombing raid over Berlin, Germany. He was later declared killed in action along with the rest of his crew. Shortly after his death was confirmed, Keast's Wing Commander sent a letter to his wife, Kathleen. The Commander kindly reported: "he proved himself to be one of the squadron's most capable young air gunners, and we could ill afford to lose him and his crew. Not only was he popular with his fellow sergeants, but earned for himself the admiration and respect of all ranks with his cheerful personality, and his ability as an air gunner."<sup>66</sup> Forest Baptist mourned this loss alongside the Keast family. Today, Keast's name is listed alongside those of his comrades on the Bomber Command Memorial Wall in Nanton, Alberta.

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<sup>65</sup> Library and Archives Canada, RG 150, Accession 1992-93/166, Box 1117 – 5, Personnel record of Oliver Edward Broughton

<sup>66</sup> Library and Archives Canada, *Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947*; Series: R.G. 24; Volume: 27876, Personnel record of Harry Arnold Keast





*Sgt. Harry Arnold Keast, 1942*

## **PILOT OFFICER KEAST IS BELIEVED KILLED**

Previously reported missing in air operations, Pilot Officer Harold Arnold Keast, R.C.A.F., is now officially reported "missing, believed killed." His wife, the former Kathleen Grimshaw, on the editorial staff of *The Star*, has been informed that the International Red Cross, quoting German sources, states that he lost his life Dec. 2, but gives no further information.

He enlisted in September, 1942, and went overseas in July, 1943. He had taken part in six bombing operations over Berlin. Besides his widow, he is survived by his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Keast, Hamilton; a brother, Ramsay, and a sister, Sylvia.

*Toronto Star, January 1944*

Golden Kennedy was the next to fall. Kennedy had enlisted with the Royal Regiment of Canada in Kitchener in 1942. In his civilian life, Kennedy had worked as a grocery store clerk, and as such, was assigned administrative duties with his regiment, acting as their pay clerk. In October 1942, Kennedy was transferred to Camp Ipperwash, near Kettle Point, where he worked as an orderly while completing infantry training. It was at this time that Kennedy began attending services at Forest Baptist. Indeed, Kennedy had grown up in a firm Baptist family in Ceylon, Ontario, and was known around Camp Ipperwash as a committed Baptist and "total abstainer."<sup>67</sup> During this time, the commanding officer, Captain N. Muir, wrote a description of Kennedy for his permanent military record. He reported: "[Kennedy] has a very refined nature and is not overly aggressive. He spends a great deal of time writing letters home and to his friends. He attends the movies regularly and occasionally takes a girl, although not steadily. Better than average ability and intelligence but little aggressive spirit and probably incapable of getting it."<sup>68</sup> Another Army examiner noted Kennedy's musical giftings and love of the pipe organ. During his time at Forest Baptist, Kennedy gladly took on the role of organist and led the congregation in worship.

During his time at Camp Ipperwash, Kennedy put in multiple requests to be transferred for service overseas. This request was eventually granted in September 1943, and Kennedy joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, The Royal Regiment of Canada, on active duty. The regiment landed in France on July 7, 1944, fighting through North-West Europe towards Germany. It was during these brutal months of combat that Kennedy was taken prisoner by German forces and

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<sup>67</sup> Library and Archives Canada, *Service Files of the Second World War - War Dead, 1939-1947*; Series: R.G. 24; Volume: 27440, Personnel record of Golden Ernest Kennedy

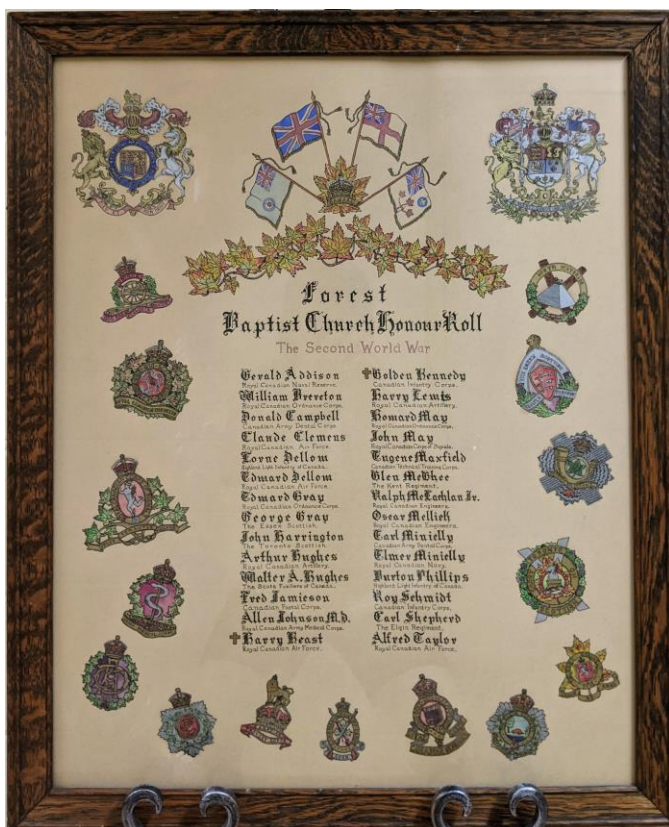
<sup>68</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Personnel record of Golden Ernest Kennedy

transferred to Stalag VIII-D prison camp in Teschen, Czechoslovakia. The conditions in the camp were deplorable and prone to the spread of disease. Kennedy fell ill with Typhoid as a result, and died in late 1944. Forest Baptist first received news of Kennedy's capture on November 1, 1944, and eventually, notice of his death. The church mourned the loss of their talented friend and a memorial service was organized at Frank Street Baptist Church in Warton.



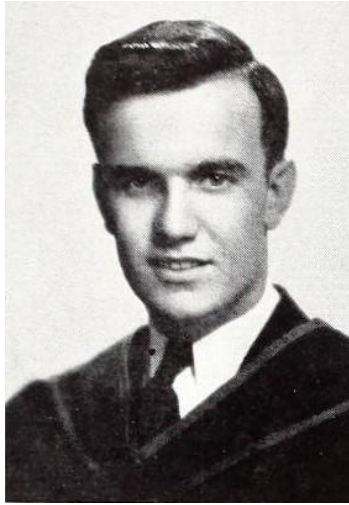
*Pvt. Golden Ernest Kennedy with girlfriend during the war*

Rev. Ralph Wright was the pastor at the close of the Second World War. With the aid of the Women's Service Club, organized by Wright's wife, Edith, the church made a fitting honour role that listed each congregant who served during the war. The general secretary, H. H. Bingham, also led the church in dedicating new furnishings in memory of Keast and Kennedy. The church then turned its attention to preparing for its 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1946.



*Forest Baptist Church Honour Role for the Second World War*

## Temperance & The Social Gospel



*Rev. Dr. G. Gerald Harrop, 1942*

In the 1940s and 1950s, Forest Baptist involved itself in movements influenced by the Social Gospel. Simply put, the Social Gospel is a code of ethics “resting on the premise that Christianity [is] a social religion, concerned with the quality of human relations on this earth” and is “a call for men to find the meaning of their lives in seeking to realize the Kingdom of God in the very fabric of society.”<sup>69</sup> To that end, the Social Gospel addressed issues like poverty, crime, labor rights, and alcoholism.

The pastor most interested in social reform was Rev. Dr. G. Gerald Harrop. After studying for a year in New Jersey, Harrop enrolled at McMaster, from which he graduated in 1942. After graduation, his first pastorate was at Forest

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<sup>69</sup> D. R. Sharpe and A. A. Shaw, “Progressive Social Christianity in Western Canada,” in *Memory and Hope: Strands of Canadian Baptist History*, ed. David T. Priestley (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 1996), 198

Baptist, where he would remain until 1944, when he accepted a scholarship for advanced Old Testament Studies at Chicago University Divinity School.<sup>70</sup> Harrop was unafraid of being controversial. In fact, his graduation yearbook described him as finding “recreation in the baiting of ego-driven authoritarians and pulpit-pounders.”<sup>71</sup> While records of his time at Forest Baptist are scarce, it appears that the congregation asked Harrop to take up the fight for temperance.

In 1942, Harrop penned a letter to Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King to show support for a recent speech King gave titled “Temperance and a Total War Effort.” In that speech, King promised to restrict the traffic of alcohol, reduce the strength of liquors, and ban alcohol advertising. While the speech made few appeals to Christianity, King did end his broadcast by encouraging Canadians to “put on the armour of God” to endure the “greatest ordeal through which our young country has ever been obliged to pass.”<sup>72</sup> In the following weeks, King’s desk was flooded with letters from Baptist ministers. This included Harrop’s, which reported Forest Baptist’s gratification to “learn that the Federal authorities are aware of the problem.”<sup>73</sup> King’s private secretary, H. R. L. Henry, responded to Harrop’s letter, thanking the congregation for its support.

In 1956, Harrop was invited on to the faculty at McMaster University after receiving his PhD from the University of Chicago. There, his academic passions were the Hebrew

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<sup>70</sup> Burr, “Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet,” 8

<sup>71</sup> McMaster University, *Marmor Yearbook* (Hamilton, Ontario: 1942), 46

<sup>72</sup> Library and Archives Canada, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation fonds, accession number 1982-0043, item number 204098, “Temperance and a Total War Effort,” December 16, 1942, audio recording

<sup>73</sup> Library and Archives Canada, G. Gerald Harrop to William Lyon Mackenzie King, W.L.M. King Papers, 1942, Primary Series Hackett - Jutras. (M.G. 26, J 1, Volume 325, pp. 2276463 - 277395), 276650

276650

Forest, Ontario,  
Dec. 21, 1942.

The Prime Minister of Canada,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Dear Sir,

The congregation which assembled in the Forest Baptist Church on the morning of Sunday, December 20th has instructed me to write to you in appreciation of your proposed action to curtail the consumption of alcoholic beverages, as set forth in your speech of last Tuesday evening.. We are gratified to learn that the Federal authorities are aware of the problem and are prepared, with Provincial cooperation, to take steps which are designed to meet it,

Very sincerely yours,

*G. Gerald Harrop*

Rev. G. Gerald Harrop, B.A., B.D.  
Minister, Forest Baptist Church.

*G. Gerald Harrop's letter to William Lyon Mackenzie King,  
December 21, 1942*

language and the Prophets. During this time, Harrop wrote several books on biblical theology, as well as politics. Indeed, it was during the late 1940s and 1950s that Harrop's activism took a new turn. Motivated by Social Gospel principles, he became an ardent supporter of Tommy Douglas and the Co-Operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), which later became the New Democratic Party (NDP). Harrop was a close friend of Douglas' and even served as his pastor for a short time when he ministered at First Baptist Church in Regina, Saskatchewan. Harrop remained a life-long supporter of the NDP, and in 1984, published a biography of the politician Stanley Knowles.<sup>74</sup>



*G. G. Harrop participating in a faculty debate at McMaster University, 1954*

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<sup>74</sup> "Harrop, Rev. Doctor Gilbert Gerald," *The Halifax Herald Limited*, January 27, 2005





*Rev. Alfred J. Fieldus*

Forest Baptist's crusade for temperance continued under Rev. Alfred J. Fieldus. Fieldus was an English immigrant who took up studies at McMaster after the First World War. In 1949, he was installed as pastor of Forest Baptist – coming from his previous posting in Dresden, Ontario.<sup>75</sup>

In 1953, a debate arose in Forest on the “liquor question”. Three schools of thought emerged during this time: those who wanted a licensed beverage room, those who wanted an outlet store, and the “drys” who wanted neither of those options. Fieldus offered his own opinion in a letter to the editor of the *Forest Standard*: “I do not think that any of our right thinking and responsible citizens want a beverage room in Forest, in spite of claims otherwise. There may be some question on the part of some as to the desirability for a Government Liquor Store, and I can appreciate their arguments for the same. But if what I am giving to understand is true, many who favor a Government Liquor

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<sup>75</sup> “Rev. A. J. Filedus Accepts Delhi Call,” *The Windsor Star*, August 20, 1953

Store are not in favor of a hotel beverage room, and a fight with our sleeves rolled up will be on if this vote on the beverage room should be brought about.”<sup>76</sup>

In August 1953, Fieldus accepted a call to minister at Delhi Baptist Church and left Forest after a five-year ministry. Although towns like Forest continued to debate the legality and morality of public drinking, the liquor question slowly lost its relevance in Canada. By 1960, the Social Gospel efforts of Forest Baptist came to an end, with a noticeable shift towards personal evangelism. Programs to reach unbelievers and the backslidden were encouraged under the leadership of Rev. Ralph Willson, who pointed out that “the natural increase in Canada’s population is out-distancing the total efforts of evangelism by about fifteen to one.”<sup>77</sup> To that end, Forest Baptist entered a new season of “rekindle[ing] the fires of devotion to Christ and his Church” and “long overdue spiritual recovery.”<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> “Liquor Question,” *The Windsor Star*, January 24, 1953

<sup>77</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “The Annual Report for the Year 1960,” (January 25, 1961), 1

<sup>78</sup> “The Annual Report for the Year 1960,” 1

## The Women's Service Club



*Women's Service Club anniversary celebration, 1970*

The Women's Service Club was first organized in 1945 by Edith Wright for "deepening Christian Fellowship among the ladies of the church and to raise funds to assist in the maintenance of the local properties of the church."<sup>79</sup> The club's first action was to purchase a frame for the church's honour roll of those who served in the Second World War and a Canadian flag for the church. The women also had the communion table refinished, and purchased new cups, ceiling lights, and pews. The club took particular pride in maintaining the organ and repairing the old and new parsonages. Later, the women would host wedding showers, going away parties, special lunches, and funeral receptions. A "good cheer committee" was also organized under the Women's Service Club to provide comfort for the sick and disabled. A popular way to fund these projects was to hold bazaars and bake sales or request special offerings

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<sup>79</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 17

from the church.<sup>80</sup> In the 1960s, the club expanded its ministry to churches in Canada and across the globe by purchasing furniture for Sunday School classrooms, funding missionaries, and providing relief for victims of natural disasters. It was also around this time that the long tradition of gifting clocks to newlywed couples was established.

The Women's Service Club added greatly to the welfare, morale, and maintenance of the church. To that end, a banquet was organized in 1970 to celebrate their service and success. The club operated under its original name well into the 1980s and 1990s, continuing to organize activities "too numerous to mention."<sup>81</sup>

### **The D.U.O & Young Married Couples Club**

Ministries for young married couples have been a present feature of church life since the 1950s. For instance, in 1957, a fellowship club was established called the D.U.O (Do Unto Others). The club was created during the pastorate of Rev. Victor Hall and chaired by Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Rogers. About ten couples gathered for worship, study, and fellowship – motivated by their club motto: "let us fail in trying to do something rather than sit still and do nothing." The D.U.O also contributed financially to the church and sponsored the annual New Year's Eve service.<sup>82</sup>

In 1968, under the direction of Rev. Albert Motchman, a new group was created known as the Young Married Couples Club. Their primary purpose was to engage couples in discussion and create opportunities to socialize. The men of the group often volunteered for maintenance projects at the church, and the group took care of supplies for the nursery

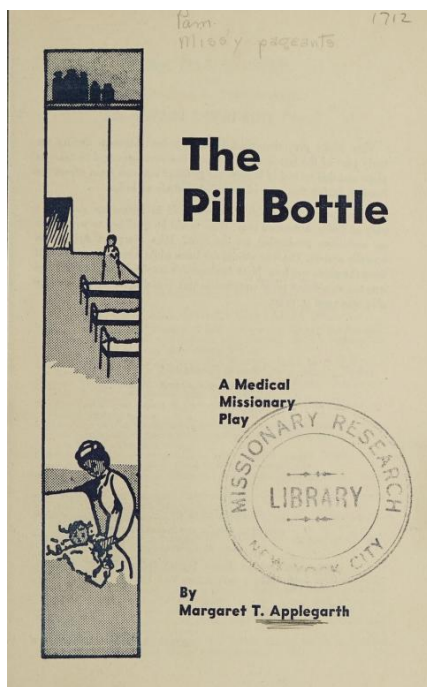
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<sup>80</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary: Women's Service Club, 1945-1970," 1-7

<sup>81</sup> Margaret Humphries, manuscript from the collection of Forest Baptist Church, 1996

<sup>82</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 18

program.<sup>83</sup> One of the group's most notable activities was putting on plays in local churches. An especially popular production was "The Pill Bottle," which was directed by Mrs. Reginald Windatt. The play followed a modern college girl who wanted to become an interior decorator but changes her mind to become a doctor when she visits her missionary parents in India.<sup>84</sup> Baptists promoted the play across Canada to attract more medical missionaries to India.



*The Pill Bottle by Margaret T. Applegarth*

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<sup>83</sup> Burr, 18

<sup>84</sup> Grace Sloan Overton, *Drama in Education, Theory and Technique* (New York: Century Company, 1926), 268

## The Baptist Young Peoples Union

The Baptist Young People's Union (B.Y.P.U.) was a joint initiative by Canadian and American Baptists to care for the rising number of young people in the denomination. While the early history of the B.Y.P.U is challenging to decipher, it appears that this initiative began as early as 1891.<sup>85</sup> The organization hoped to inspire, train, and use young people under a singular banner and equip them to teach and defend Baptist distinctives. The Union organized conferences, attended rallies, and participated in evangelism efforts. The B.Y.P.U. held some of its earliest meetings in Detroit to attract more Canadians. In 1896, the annual report at Detroit declared: "with an enthusiasm which fairly shook our Canadian Zion with joy, the Baptist Young People's Union of Ontario and Quebec was organized May 1. For enthusiasm, no Baptist meeting in Canada has surpassed it."<sup>86</sup>



*Souvenir badge for the 14<sup>th</sup> International  
B.Y.P.U. Convention, Detroit, 1904*

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<sup>85</sup> John Wesley Conley, *History of the Baptist Young People's Union of America* (Philadelphia: The Griffith & Rowland Press, 1913), 1

<sup>86</sup> Conley, *History of the Baptist Young People's Union of America*, 41

No records indicate when the B.Y.P.U. first came to Forest Baptist, but it has nevertheless played a vital role in the lives of the church's youth for many decades. In 1935, the Union was supervised by Mae Bell and Rev. Andrew A. Barnes, who did the majority of the teaching. Mildred Campbell acted as president and was supported by Leslie Taylor.<sup>87</sup> During the winter of 1949 and 1950, under the sponsorship of Mrs. Harold Hall, a half-hour gospel presentation was broadcast over the CHOK radio station by the church's youth. Between 1959-1961, the Union was re-organized at Forest and hosted larger youth meetings. Throughout the 1960s, the group conducted church services, sing songs, went Christmas caroling, and visited Rest Homes. Forest's youth also participated in interdenominational crusades and revival meetings, serving as ushers, choir members, counsellors, and prayer partners. An Easter sunrise service at Ipperwash was hosted each year, with the B.Y.P.U. providing its assistance.<sup>88</sup>

Throughout its history, many members of Forest Baptist faithfully served the B.Y.P.U. as leaders and mentors. Some of these leaders include Mrs. Francis Sparling, Mrs. William Campbell, Rev. Albert Motchman, Helen Campbell, Wayne Clemens, Marilyn Bell, Bryon Sparling, and Allan Burr. While Forest Baptist retired the B.Y.P.U. name at some point in the 1970s, the church has maintained a young people's ministry to the present day.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> "Young People Name Officers," *The Windsor Star*, January 10, 1935

<sup>88</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 15-16

## Explorers



*Explorers, 1971*

The Explorers was a ministry for children and youth interested in global missions. It was first organized under Rev. Oliver E. Broughton and re-organized in 1964 by Rev. Albert Motchman. The group met to study missions books, especially from countries where Forest Baptist sponsored missionaries. This included Bolivia, India, Africa, Malaya, Indonesia, and Canada. The children often wrote letters or sent cards to those abroad, and they also served the local community, especially the residents at Osborne Retirement Home. The Explorers also took part in the church's broader missionary activities overseen by the Mission Circle. The youth were responsible for two services, using the themes "Put on the Whole Armour of God" and "Biographies of Eight Home Missionaries." Later, the club would serve the North Lambton Rest Home, prepare special missionary studies for the church, raise funds for UNICEF, and participate in their own World Day of Prayer.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Burr, 14



## Forest Baptist's Centennial



*Centennial celebration dinner, 1971*

1971 was a festive year for the members of Forest Baptist. The steeple and outside of the church building were repainted in 1970-1971, and the choir was arrayed in new golden gowns for a special service honouring the church's upcoming centennial anniversary.<sup>91</sup> The church planned for special events and services throughout the whole month of July – inviting the entire town of Forest to participate. During the first weekend celebration, Rev. Ronny Kernohan, a former church member serving as a pastor in Detroit, came to deliver three messages. Music was provided by the church choir, The Marsh Quartet, Mary Rawlings, and Forest's own quartet, "The Messengers," consisting of Stanley Ball, Bryon Sparling, Paul Campbell, and Norman Sparling.<sup>92</sup> The church then welcomed Rev. George A. Cawfield from Petrolia Baptist Church to preach on the second weekend. Musicians from Wallaceburg Baptist

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<sup>91</sup> Burr, 8-9

<sup>92</sup> "Forest Baptist Church Celebrate Centennial," *Forest Standard*, June 30, 1971

Church accompanied Cawfield's services, as did The Steward Sisters, "The Messengers," and others. The church also welcomed back Rev. Ralph Willson as a guest preacher and encouraged youth to be involved in planning and leading services. In all of these events, the main goal was "not only commemorate the past 100 years of the church but to serve as a milestone for the future."<sup>93</sup>

It was at this time that the church decided to keep a written record of its history. A centennial committee was created under Rev. Albert Motchman which compiled a booklet of some highlights from the church's past one-hundred years. Allan Burr and the centennial committee edited the history with the assistance of Mrs. Leonard Humphires and Bryon Sparling. The authors reflected: "over the years we have had been privileged to have many Godly men who have preached the truth from the pulpit and in appreciation of all the early pioneers and founders of our Church, and all others, who have gone to their heavenly reward, also including the now living, who in many ways willingly shared in time, efforts, and substance for the Churches progress and witness, we heartily thank God." It was during the centennial year that the church's oldest congregant, Mrs. J. E. Burney, passed away after 79 years of membership.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> "Forest Baptist Church Celebrate Centennial"

<sup>94</sup> Burr, "Forest Baptist Church Centennial Booklet," 9



*"The Messengers"*



*Centennial Committee, 1971*



*Rev. Albert Motchman*



*Mrs. Mae Rogers, organist*

# Faithfulness: 1971-2021



*A sincere hope is forecast – that today's youth in attendance shall recall and cherish and pass on to others, what here they were taught and received by the Holy Spirit. [...] And may they serve acceptably and merit the Lord's well done.*

Albert W. Motchman

## Expansion and Relocation

In 1976, Rev. Ken Duncan came to Forest and plunged the church into a new era of expansion, both spiritually and numerically. After decades of meeting in the same facility, a new addition was built on to the church in 1977, which gave new classroom spaces, allowing for different ministries and programmes to have designated meeting places. An auditorium was also built on the main floor.<sup>95</sup> Duncan was well-pleased with the new addition, including his new office space, reflecting: "there have been some days the bright sunshine coming in the window has made me peaceful when I have arrived at the office in [turmoil]. I have found since moving in that many people have come to share their joys and sorrows with me. I want to say that the door is always open."<sup>96</sup> Duncan remained with the church for the next five years. At his departure in 1981, he maintained that one of the highlights of his ministry was seeing the building

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<sup>95</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Our History," Forest Baptist Church, June 2001, <https://www.forestbaptist.ca/about/our-history>

<sup>96</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples: Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 1978," 1



*Groundbreaking ceremony, 1977*



*Rev. Ken Duncan baptizes Ethel Green, 1981*

“completed to the glory of God.” Duncan also added, speaking of the church’s spiritual growth: “spiritually it has grown deeper in its knowledge of God and understanding of His Word. Those who once only sat and listened are now taking leadership in teaching and administrative duties [...] A new leader will be chosen who will have new ideas and plans. There will be new areas of opportunity and challenge in service. We need to take hold of God and trust Him to use us for His purpose in Forest.”<sup>97</sup>

In 1982, Forest invited Rev. Kirk Wellum to the pastorate – a position he held until his replacement by Rev. Bob Lewis in 1985. It was then that Pastor Bob began a wonderful ministry of healing and teaching which led to the church’s continued growth through the 1990s. Pastor Bob especially influenced the Kids Klub, Friendship Club, and AWANA. A part-time youth leader was also hired at this time, leading to a growth in the youth ministry.<sup>98</sup>



*Rev. Bob Lewis*

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<sup>97</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Annual Report for the Year 1981,” 1-2

<sup>98</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Our History,” Forest Baptist Church, June 2001, <https://www.forestbaptist.ca/about/our-history>

By 1997, the deacons began to discuss the issues of overcrowding, especially at summer services. Temporary arrangements were made to increase capacity, but the church acknowledged them as “less than ideal.”<sup>99</sup> While a permanent solution had yet to be decided, it was at this time that the congregation began to raise money to purchase a new facility.

It wasn't until 2000, with the arrival of Rev. Laurie Morris, that the church was able to purchase and renovate the Forest Central Public School on Prince Street. The Forest School had been initially constructed by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. In 1974, it had underwent a significant renovation, adding six classrooms, a gymnasium, kitchen, and counselling room. Forest's pastor at that time, Rev. Perley Tidd, offered a dedication prayer at its opening ceremony.<sup>100</sup> Under Pastor Laurie, the congregation worked hard on renovations, moving AWANA programming to the school in March, prayer meetings in May, and Sunday evening services in July. A special decommissioning service was held on Labour Day in the old church on King Street, and then all ministries were moved to the new church on Sunday, September 10<sup>th</sup>. Within the first year of occupying the school, the congregation made further plans to construct a permanent sanctuary and modify some other rooms.<sup>101</sup>

In 2006, a nine-member Building Council chaired by Keith Karr was created to build a new sanctuary. After a year of prayer, meetings, and discussions, the Building Council held its final meeting in July, 2007. It reported: “we will have a facility that will allow us to enhance our worship, and

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<sup>99</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Annual Report for the Year 1997,” 3

<sup>100</sup> Lambton County Board of Education, “Official Opening 1974 Addition to Forest Central Public School,” April 25, 1974 (Forest: Lambton County Board of Education, 1974)

<sup>101</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Our History,” Forest Baptist Church, June 2001, <https://www.forestbaptist.ca/about/our-history>





*Rev. Laurie and Anne Morris*



*Forest Central Public School*

service to Him. Only God could have orchestrated the events allowing us to overcome many obstacles during the 18 month process. We must never forget where our church founders started from, and the vision that God has given us for the future.”<sup>102</sup> A groundbreaking ceremony was planned that September. The church gathered to pray and sing hymns of celebration, including Forest Baptist’s historic theme song, “How Good is the God we Adore”<sup>103</sup>:



How good is the God we adore,  
Our faithful unchangeable Friend!  
His love is as great as His power,  
And knows neither measure nor end!

’Tis Jesus the First and the Last,  
Whose spirit shall Guide us safe home,  
We’ll praise Him for all that is past,  
And trust Him for all that’s to come.

Bryon Sparling presented a history of the church and an update on what God had been doing in recent years. Letters and greetings were also offered by the CBOQ, Forest’s mayor Gord Minielly, M.P. Bev Shipley, and M.P.P. Maria Von Bommel.<sup>104</sup> When the sanctuary was finished in mid-2008, an additional dedication service was held, at which Alistair Begg was invited to preach. Reflecting on this year of growth, Pastor Laurie wrote: “God has been faithful and even though we had some glitches in terms of the timing of the building, to have finished the project with a great worship service with Alistair Begg was like the ‘icing on the

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<sup>102</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church 2007 Annual Report,” 29

<sup>103</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Ground Breaking Service for Sanctuary Addition,” September 2, 2007 (Forest: Forest Baptist Church, 2007)

<sup>104</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Ground Breaking Service for Sanctuary Addition”

cake’ for me, personally. Our congregation continues to be ‘Word-Centered’ rather than ‘seeker-driven,’ however we must never allow ourselves to become self-centered rather than missional.”<sup>105</sup>



*Forest Baptist’s sanctuary addition*

## **RIOT & Unashamed Youth Ministries**

In 1992, a major denominational survey reported that 96% of teens would leave the church within two years of graduating high school. Forest’s youth leaders at the time saw this trouble ahead, noting that “Satan seeks to destroy young people because he knows that they are a major potential weapon in the arsenal against his kingdom.”<sup>106</sup> Under the direction of Pastor Bob Lewis, more time and resources were poured into Forest’s youth ministry, which was rebranded as RIOT (Radical Individuals of Truth).

The early years of RIOT were successful, with high attendance by the church’s teens and others from the Forest community. The group met on Friday nights for praise, prayer, and studies on teen issues. In 1997, under the

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<sup>105</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 2008,” (February 11, 2009), 4

<sup>106</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church 1992 Report,” 2

leadership of Jon DeActis, the group embarked on its first missions trip. RIOT members also had the opportunity to minister to the local community through evangelistic efforts, such as the annual “concert in the park.”<sup>107</sup>



*Rev. Kevin and Elizabeth Furtney, 2021*

Forest’s youth ministry caught a second wind with the arrival of Rev. Kevin Furtney in 2001. Pastor Kevin came to the church from the Divinity program at Heritage College and Seminary and was hired as an associate pastor focusing on youth. In the early years of his pastorate, the youth ministry rebranded as “Unashamed” and expanded to include other groups, such as “Oasis.” In 2007, the church witnessed the birth of a student-led initiative called “Refuel.” This ministry intended for high school and college students was designed to give a “spiritual boost” during the middle of the week. Coupled with Refuel was the Crave Small Groups, which allowed students to meet for intimate bible studies. The weekly Unashamed meetings continued to be fruitful, with times for games, music, and group

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<sup>107</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Annual Report for the Year 1997,” 22

studies. Special events included P.A. Day hockey games, tubing, and bowling. The Soul Fire Youth Retreat and Youth Rallys were also well attended.<sup>108</sup>

In 2010, Pastor Kevin accepted a call to pastor at Summerside Church in London, Ontario. The decision was an emotional one for the church family, especially its youth, who received the news of Kevin's departure while they were on retreat at Forest Cliff Camp. While there were many moments of tears, Kevin ended his pastorate by baptizing one of the youth in Lake Huron. As pastor Kevin reported: "mourning turned to dancing!"<sup>109</sup>



*Rev. Brian McGuffin*

Rev. Brian McGuffin arrived in 2011, bringing fresh ideas and energy into the youth ministry. Members from the congregation stepped up to serve the Unashamed group

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<sup>108</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "2007 Annual Report," (February 13, 2008), 14

<sup>109</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church 2010 Annual Report," (February 23, 2011), 8

during this transition period, including Bill Dakin, who delivered the message every third week. The youth group continued to attend events during that year, including the CBOQ Blizzard retreat and a camping trip to Algonquin.<sup>110</sup>

Pastor Brian had to manage several pastoral duties in his first few years of ministry, including directing the Music Committee and preaching regularly. However, working with the youth was a challenge he accepted, even while Pastor Laurie went on sabbatical. In 2013, the College and Careers group was revived under the leadership of Greg and Nicola Gordon. Pastor Brian began working more closely with the age group by leading their new Sunday School class. One of Pastor Brian's most notable contributions to church life was his introduction of fitness and martial arts classes. The two groups for men and women were well attended, especially by the youth. This successful ministry was later passed to Jason Hotke and Crystal Karr.<sup>111</sup>

The leadership of the youth ministry shifted again with the installation of Rev. Tyler Strickler. Pastor Tyler was raised in Hunters, Washington, though he was familiar with Forest Baptist through dating and marrying Salome Burgin. Pastor Tyler studied at Moody Bible Institute and Baptist Bible Seminary before coming to Forest in 2013 to intern under Pastor Laurie. He preached at morning services, facilitated a Spiritual Life Conference, and produced a devotional book for the Sunday School class – demonstrating his skill as an expositor.<sup>112</sup>

In 2014, Pastor Tyler took over the Unashamed group, alongside Michael and Kathleen Gordon, Kaylee Elliot, and Mitchell Elliot. The youth group did a joint event with

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<sup>110</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church 2011 Annual Report," (February 22, 2012), 5

<sup>111</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "2013 Annual Reports," 9

<sup>112</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "2013 Annual Reports," 11

Wyoming Baptist Church, travelled to the United States for a Teen Leadership Conference, and attended Winter Recharge at Word of Life in Owen Sound.<sup>113</sup> After Pastor Tyler transitioned to the senior pastor position, the Unashamed ministry was mainly handled by Michael Gordon, and Matt and Jody Ferguson. Presently, the group is led by Jan Van Den Boogaard, a pastoral intern.



*Rev. Tyler and Salome Strickler,  
Ben, Titus, Calvin, Theo*

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<sup>113</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “2014 Annual Reports,” 9

## Pinery Park Ministry



*Toby Burgin leads a service at Pinery Provincial Park, 2017*

Since the early 2000s, Forest Baptist has brought the gospel to campers from across Canada and the United States at the Pinery Provincial Park. While Rev. Ken Duncan records holding two services at the park during the summer of 1978, the Pinery Park ministry was not a regular feature of Forest's outreach and evangelism until the pastorate of Laurie Morris.<sup>114</sup> When the ministry was organized in 2003, several of the church's men became involved in bringing the message, and many more served as members of the worship team, greeters, and children's program leaders. The ministry was received positively by park staff and visitors, with the highest attendance at some services being 150 campers.<sup>115</sup>

Pinery services were offered throughout the 2010s, until the coronavirus pandemic forced the ministry into a hiatus in 2020.

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<sup>114</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Go Therefore and Make Disciples: Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 1978," 1

<sup>115</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church 2006 Annual Report," (February 7, 2007), 12



## **Guest Worker Ministry**

The Guest Worker ministry began in 2003 to reach Spanish-speaking workers in Lambton Shores. The guest worker “task force” sought to reach individuals with the gospel, make connections with their families at home in Mexico, and eventually build a year-round Spanish congregation in the area. This was a successful attempt, with many local workers accepting the gospel and becoming regular attendees of Forest Baptist. In fact, one of the first to be baptized in the new sanctuary was a guest worker from the Sarnia area.<sup>116</sup>

In 2008, Andrea Pepper approached the Guest Worker ministry with an idea to reach workers from the Caribbean Islands, particularly Jamaica. This request came when more Jamaican workers were moving into the area and looking for connections in the community. This goal was further spurred by a sermon Pastor Laurie preached in early 2009, in which he explained: “Jesus commissioned His disciples in Acts 1:8 to follow his plan to start where you are (Forest), move to the next realm Judea (Lambton Shores), and to accomplish that the disciples had to leave their comfort zones and travel through Samaria or in our case cross cultural contact.”<sup>117</sup> As a result, the ministry’s reach spread to Exeter, Strathroy, and Ingersoll. Members provided bibles, warm clothing, and food to the Jamaican workers. An additional effort was started to fund one orphanage in Jamaica each year. This included the Hanbury Home for Children in Kendal, Manchester, which took in boys and girls facing neglect and abuse.<sup>118</sup>

Today, the ministry is led by Steve and Deb Adair.

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<sup>116</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 2008,” (February 11, 2009), 24

<sup>117</sup> “Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 2008,” 24

<sup>118</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church 2014 Annual Reports,” 14

## Mission to Haiti



*Dorothy Sparling caring for children at the House of Hope,  
La Pointe Mission Station, Haiti*

For several decades, the church has supported and sent missionaries to Haiti. As Forests' own Mission's Committee aptly put it: "there is a very definite relationship between Forest Baptist Church and ministries in Haiti - we just seem to be connected!"<sup>119</sup> This connection is primarily through the work of Bryon and Dorothy Sparling and Kyrk and Deborah Baker, through there are many other congregants who have served in Haiti in various capacities, including as medical missionaries.

The Baptist Haiti Mission was initially an effort by American missionaries in the 1940s, namely John Turnbull, to provide economic, medical, educational, and spiritual aid to the struggling nation. Through their work, over 350 churches, each with their own attached school, have been raised. Various hospitals have also been established, as well as many social programs. These achievements have earned

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<sup>119</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church 2013 Annual Reports," 25

Baptist missionaries deep-felt respect from the Haitian people and their government.<sup>120</sup>

Bryon and Dorothy Sparling began their work in Haiti in the 1960s and 1970s. Dorothy received medical training and was sent to assist at the House of Hope, which was a new medical centre for disabled children at the La Pointe mission station on the northeastern coast of Haiti. Meanwhile, Bryon had heard of the Haiti mission from Forest Baptist's interim pastor, Ray Holley, and applied for a position as a welder.<sup>121</sup> The Sparlings labored in Haiti for several years, during which they were engaged. During that time, they met residents such as Ecclatan Remy, who came to the medical mission as an unsaved teenager and later became the pastor of a church in Chansolme.<sup>122</sup> Later, Bryon and Dorothy's daughter Bonita would serve as a missionary at the House of Hope, and with Lemuel Ministries.<sup>123</sup> A group from Forest Baptist also joined Bryon in 2010 to help rebuild parts of Haiti after a major earthquake, and in 2013 to help Kyrk and Deborah Baker construct their new ministry in Artel.<sup>124</sup>

Forest Baptist supported the Bakers during their ministry in Haiti. They were involved in growing crops, laying the foundations for schools, hosting a VBS program, teaching at the Summer Bible Institute, and building a training centre.

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<sup>120</sup> Baptist Haiti Mission, "Our Story," Baptist Haiti Mission, accessed September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021, <https://bhm.org/about-us/>

<sup>121</sup> Dorothy Sparling and Elizabeth Davis-Dagg, *The Beauty of Resting and Waiting Patiently: The Life Story of Dorothy Davidson Sparling* (London: Bethel Baptist Print Ministry, 2019), 83, 101

<sup>122</sup> Sparling and Davis-Dagg, *The Beauty of Resting and Waiting Patiently*, 108-109, 123

<sup>123</sup> Sparling and Davis-Dagg, 117

<sup>124</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church 2009 Annual Report," 16; Forest Baptist Church, "Forest Baptist Church Annual Report Book for Calendar Year 2012," (February 27, 2013)



*The Baker Family, 2017*



*Group from Forest Baptist Church in Artel, 2013*

## COVID-19 Pandemic

When the coronavirus broke out in Ontario in March 2020, it was unlike anything the church had experienced in its lengthy history. Not only did the pandemic disrupt the activities and gathering of the church, but it also forced new theological questions. These questions included the purpose of corporate gatherings, how individuals and the church should submit to the government, and if the pandemic was a sign of Christ's imminent return.

In the early days of the pandemic, Forest worked to figure out how to be a gospel-centered community amid new social-distancing legislation. On Sunday, March 22, Pastor Tyler delivered the first of many pre-recorded sermons, online sermons. Although sharing his deep grief over the inability to meet in person, Pastor Tyler also reminded the church that "[the virus] has not changed the character of God, [...] our mission as his people, nor has it diminished the power of his Word."<sup>125</sup> He later followed up with an online article on thriving spiritually during the pandemic, encouraging Forest Baptist (among other things) to seek appropriate gospel community, maintain spiritual disciplines, be attentive to the needs of others, and pray for wisdom.<sup>126</sup>

As the pandemic stretched across the following months, sermons and programs continued to be offered in an online format. Preaching responsibilities were shared by Pastor Tyler, Pastor Mark Kennedy, and pastoral intern Jan Van Den Boogaard, while Sunday School programming was recorded by Faith Guerette and Sam and Nora Gordon.

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<sup>125</sup> Forest Baptist Church, "2020/03/22 - AM Sermon," YouTube Video, 46:03, March 22, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b16bLDI7Gyc>

<sup>126</sup> Tyler Stickler, "Spiritually Thriving During the Cultural Shutdown," *The Road to Emmaus* (blog), March 23, 2020, <https://www.forestbaptist.ca/blog/spiritually-thriving-during-the-cultural-shutdown>

Pastor Mark, who served as visitation pastor with an emphasis on seniors, also had to find new ways to serve in the community.

Following new legislation in Ontario, the church was able to gather for in-person services on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This was a time of relief and joy for Forest Baptist, which had been missing fellowship for the past three months. These smaller corporate gatherings continued until April 2021, when the Ontario government announced an “emergency brake” lockdown. At that time, it became necessary to hold drive-in services in the church parking lot, where members sat in their cars and listened to the sermons over the radio. In June, services were moved outdoors to Geoff Greening’s farm. Although Covid-19 restrictions began to lessen, Forest Baptist continued to hold outdoor services on Goeff’s farm during the remaining summer months.

While Pastor Tyler acknowledged his sadness that the pandemic hindered the church’s gathering and ministries, he reported at the end of 2020: “my joy far outweighs my sadness, for God has not failed to build His church or change His people.”<sup>127</sup> Indeed, while the pandemic was a time of immense suffering, it did not stop people from responding to the gospel, growing in their faith, and witnessing to the culture around them.

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<sup>127</sup> Forest Baptist Church, “Forest Baptist Church Annual Report, 2020,” (March 10, 2021), 3



*Rev. Mark and Sue Kennedy*



*Jan and Julia Van Den Boogaard*

# Conclusion

2021 brings new changes for Forest Baptist Church. In July, Pastor Tyler announced he had accepted a call to pastor at Colfax Baptist Church in Washington. Pastor Tyler preached his departing sermon in July and received a heartfelt farewell from the congregation. At the same time, Pastor Mark has transitioned to part-time work as a visitation pastor, and Jan Van Den Boogaard has been functioning as a pastoral intern. Presently, a pastoral search committee is working to identify Forest Baptist's next senior pastor. Meanwhile, Pastor Robert Leyland is assisting the elders during this time of transition.

After many challenging years, Forest has opted to leave the CBOQ. Forest has been associated with the CBOQ for almost its entire history, marking this decision as a significant step. Presently, the church is a member of the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada and the Covenant Life Renewal Association (CLRA). The latter has been a powerful voice for reform within Canadian Baptist churches.

Forest continues its missionary vision by supporting churches and individuals across the globe. This includes Nathan and Sarah Montgomery with Mission Aviation Fellowship in the Congo, James and Jenneka Lundeen with Pioneer Bible Translators in Tanzania, and Samuel and Bonita Schaefer with Crossworld in Germany. Forest also partners with El Palmar Baptist Church in Ecuador, helping to rebuild their church and expand their witness in Latin America.

As Forest Baptist transitions into the post-pandemic world and searches for new leadership, it is tempting to view the future as uncertain. Yet, this account of the church's past 150 years should serve as an encouragement and an exhortation to stay the course. Indeed, it allows us all to make the affirmation: "to God be the glory, great things he has done."





1871



2021