

Cookstown Independent Methodist Church

Twenty-Five Years of Witness 1983 – 2008



"Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."
1 Samuel 7v12

Thanks to all who have helped in any way over these 25 years of witness,
and especially to those who have prayed for the work.

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Foreword

Mrs Mavis Leonard

This short history of the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church written by our Pastor is a story about what Christ has done. Like Nehemiah in chapter 2 v 20 we could say, 'The God of Heaven, He will prosper us, therefore we His servants will arise and build.' We believe that the Lord has brought us into His Kingdom for such a time as this.

As a Fellowship all praise and thanks to God for all the way that He has prospered us, from humble beginnings to the growing congregation we now have twenty five years on.

We also owe a great debt to our beloved Pastor, his dear wife and family who always have been of tremendous encouragement and inspiration to us over the years.

The Pastor's ministry has been invaluable and God has been pleased to save souls and expand His Kingdom. No matter whether in the church or in general visitation, he and his wife have always shown a great genuine love and empathy for people.

As a congregation we appreciate the Pastor volunteering to write this history of the work. We know that this is a first hand account as he has been with us practically since the inception of the work.

You will read a number of testimonies in this book which tell from first hand experience what God has wrought.

It has been the Pastor's intention when writing, to not just quote facts that are now history but to include the experiences of some who can relate as to how our church has impacted on their lives for eternity.

It is important for us to leave something for future generations as a reminder of what God has done through the vision, sacrifice and dedication of some of the dear saints who were willing to see the Gospel Chariot going forth in Cookstown.

Some of these dear friends are now in the Glory but "being dead yet speak" (Hebrews 11 v 4) and their memories live on in our lives and so may this short history of the work be a future inspiration to all families, friends and neighbours.

Mrs. Mavis Leonard

Foreword

Rev. Malcolm Patterson

As Pastor of the church I would like to pay tribute to the faithfulness of God's dear people in the Cookstown Congregation, who have been beloved brethren, steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.

Many thanks to all who have helped us and encouraged us in any way during our twenty five years of ministry in Cookstown. We have greatly appreciated the prayers of so many people both inside our Fellowship and those in other congregations.

It has been my privilege to work over these many years alongside a committee who were always conscious of their responsibilities.

It isn't possible of course to tell all of what God has done as one is too aware that you cannot measure the work of God and His doings as "His ways are not our ways." We will let eternity be our judge. There are a number of pictures and testimonies included in the book relating to different aspects of the work over the years.

Perhaps at a future date, someone will take up the pen and give a fuller account as to what God has done.

Meanwhile it is my earnest prayer that this short history spacing a quarter of a century will be a "book of remembrance," (Malachi 3 v 16) used of God to challenge us to greater things in the days before us.

Rev. Malcolm Patterson

Preface

Cookstown was founded as a market town in 1628 by Dr. Allen Cooke when King Charles 1 granted a patent to form a market town which was to become known as "Cooke's Town". By this charter, a free commerce in buying and selling of goods was permitted. Grain, linen, flax and thread for linen were often sold at market. The market is still renowned throughout the country and many locals and vendors frequent the busy stalls on Saturdays.

A linen business commenced in 1765 at the Wellbrook Beetling Mill just a couple of miles west of Cookstown.

By 1771 the Rev. John Wesley had introduced Methodism to Cookstown. Through the 18th century and right up to the Irish Potato Famine, Cookstown became a small but robust town with building programmes in place.

By the year 1837, Cookstown had grown to a population of about 1500 people. It had four churches, a dispensary, two Sunday Schools, a magistrate, a member of parliament, numerous gentry and clergy, one physician, five surgeons, a post master, three inn keepers, numerous publicans, shop keepers and traders.

The Cookstown district currently has a population of 35,500 and consists of a total area of 235 square miles. It extends into the unspoiled Sperrin Mountains in the west, and to the east is the vast expanse of Lough Neagh, the largest fresh water lake in Ireland and the United Kingdom. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty.

The market town of Cookstown boasts the largest and widest street of any town in Ireland. Its population is now approx 11,000 compared to approx 9,000 in 1983.

Cookstown is a town that has known great changes during these past twenty five years. Many fields used previously for agriculture have been transformed for commercial use or for large scale domestic development.

Culturally the town has also known change with many from ethnic minorities now living and working here.

Spiritually the people of the town and the Cookstown district have great needs. With the increase of social activity and the growing number of night clubs etc. one must look beyond the exterior to see a dear people who can be changed by the power of the Gospel.

It was in the summer of 1983 that God would raise up a separated witness at the north end of the town, where people would hear and respond to the old fashioned Gospel being preached.

It is our prayer that as you read the following pages that you too will give thanks to God for what He has been pleased to do through the witness of the Independent Methodist Church. Thank God He is, not only the God of the past, but the God of the future who promised "I will do better for you than at your beginnings." I am greatly indebted to a good friend and brother in the Lord, The late Mr. Jim Kane (Morgan's Hill Road Cookstown) who presented me in 1991 with a photograph album covering the different facets of the work of our building. A number of these pictures you will see in this book. May we as a Fellowship never lose the vision but continue to look to what God can do in the lives of those who seek Him.

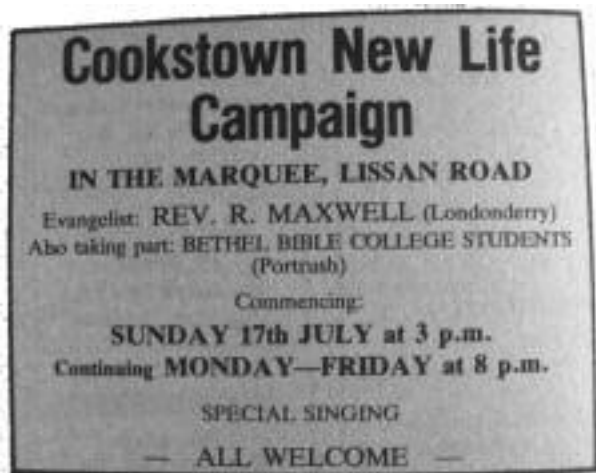
The name which we gave to the church manse when purchased in 1999 is "Ebenezer" which means "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us". I believe it is the time to keep our eyes on Christ and constantly realize He is our hope for the future. We as a congregation can look back over a quarter of a century and like Samuel raise that testimony that, "the Lord has helped us".



The present committee L-R, Rev. Patterson, Stewart Brown, Mavis Leonard, Sammy Allen, Winston Thom, George Weir, David Trainor.

Chapter 1 – Humble Beginnings

Prior to the work commencing in Cookstown an associate evangelist of the F.I.M.C, Mr. William Honeyman, commenced Gospel missions in and around the Cookstown district. Sometimes the meetings were small but God blessed the preaching of His Word and a number of people sought God and were wonderfully transformed by saving grace. A few of these converts would meet for prayer, sometimes in a hay shed at Claggan Lane and were very keen to see others converted.

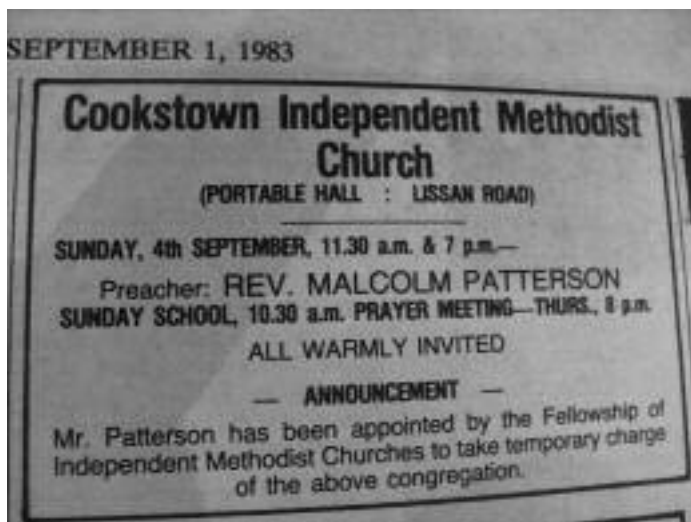


It was in July 1983 that a tent mission was organized by the Fellowship of Independent Methodist Churches. A group of students from Bethel Bible College in Portrush assisted the evangelist the Rev. Robert Maxwell. Towards the end of the mission a few folk indicated that they would love to see an Independent Methodist witness in Cookstown. As a result a portable hall was left on the site, belonging to Mr. Malcolm Thom, at Lissan Road beside where the tent campaign had taken place.

An advertisement was placed in the Mid-Ulster Mail indicating the commencement of a permanent work.

The first services on Sunday 21st August 1983 saw a small congregation with the speaker being Rev. Tom Cross. That little hall, which locals viewed with suspicion, was to be the birth place of the Cookstown Fellowship. Many thought that it was a passing phase and in a short time it would disappear and the early enthusiasm would fade. "Little is much when God is in it", and it was evident from these early days that God would do something in this needy town.

Just a few weeks after its inception the General Council felt led of God to ask Malcolm Patterson, who was an evangelist in Cork with I.M.M., to consider praying about his future in the South of Ireland and to seek God regarding moving to the little flock at Lissan Road. Little were they aware then that he too had been seeking God along with Olive Ferguson as to whether or not God would have them in the pastorate or on the mission field. The word was quickly confirmed from Isaiah 60 v 1 "Arise and shine for thy light is come, the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee". It was in August that he took his first prayer meeting, speaking from Psalm 91 and then returned 2 weeks later after picking up his belongings in Cork. The local paper, Thursday 1st September 1983 indicated that it was on a temporary basis. Someone joked that "it was a good job it was not permanent!"



The Rev. Patterson moved into a mobile home which was parked at Richard and Margaret Kempton's farm at Claggan Lane. Later a house was offered in the Blackhill housing estate at the south end of Cookstown.

Those were testing days for any young Pastor but God was good and needs were always met. A gift from a dear friend who is in the Glory now, provided a 1972 green Hillman Avenger at the cost of £100. That car would later break the neighbours hearts when many times it would be seen being pushed down the Blackhill and the Drum Road. Money wasn't plentiful but the small handful of Believers were always willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ. There was a weekly offering of approximately £40 and for the Pastor's stipend he received £25 of this.

Harvest Services



In the Autumn of 1983 we had our first harvest thanksgiving weekend services. We didn't even own an organ then but one Sunday, after the service, Mrs. Nora Reid decided to give the little congregation the one she had in her house. Nora, who had played the organ in earlier years in Kildress Parish Church offered to stand in as there was no one else then to play. The little wooden hall by the side of the Lissan Road was packed for the harvest services. It was decided to start a building fund as what we would really need shortly was a site and a hall of our own as we owned absolutely nothing at present.

Wedding Bells



It was 7th January 1984 that the Pastor married Miss Olive Ferguson in the Dungannon Independent Methodist Church. Olive had been an evangelist in Donegal and also in the Limavady area and she would bring an added benefit to the work. The Bible says, "two are better than one."

Membership Formed

It would be a year before membership was formed and so up until this the Pastor was treasurer, secretary, Sunday School and Lifeline teacher. After membership classes a number of members were received into the Fellowship on 7th July 1984. The guest speaker was the Rev. William Magee who read from 1 Timothy 3. We then held our first annual society meeting.

Amongst the small group that came into membership there are still three actively involved in the work today. Our first Secretary elected was Mrs. Mavis Leonard and 25 years later she is still our Secretary. Mrs. Leonard is a very gifted writer and has kept meticulous minutes of all our business meetings. Many over the years have received letters of encouragement and of comfort from her on the church's behalf.

Mr. Winston Thom was elected Sunday school Superintendent and still is to this day. He has been ably assisted in the children's work by his wife Kathleen and their ministry in the Sunday school has been invaluable. "Children will rise up and call them blessed" Proverbs 31 v 28

Mr. Stewart Brown, who is also a foundation member, has been our church treasurer since 1996. He has been ably assisted by his wife Grace. Stewart along with Winston are very gifted tradesmen and both were of tremendous help whenever God opened up the way forward to erect a permanent building.

Mr. Richard Kempton left the congregation in 1985 to go into Bible College in the U.S.A. Richard is now a Pastor and still lives there with his wife and family. When he returns to the homeland he still pays us a visit and expresses how thrilled he is to see the good hand of the Lord upon the work over these many years.

Mrs. Jean Crane was also another dedicated founder member of the Fellowship. She now resides in Fairhill Care Home and you will read her testimony later on in this book.

Victor and Anna Fraser were also very faithful supporters of our work right from its inception. Victor went to be with the Lord some years ago. His wife Anna is in advanced years and is a resident in Fairhill Care Home.

Sadly 3 of the others who came into membership for many years now are no longer walking with God.

Chapter 2 – Prayer Answered

For many weeks tremendous emphasis was placed upon seeking God in prayer. Meetings would be held often in the early mornings and sometimes during the day. We longed to see God at work in saving souls and it was a great encouragement one night while meeting in prayer when a gentleman from the housing estate who hadn't been in church for years, arrived at the prayer meeting. At the close of the meeting he waited behind and sought God to save him. For many years later he attended our church, and it was on Friday 3rd March 1995 that I conducted his funeral service.

Finding a Site

There was a strong feeling that the time was now approaching whenever we should look to God to lead us to a site where we could erect a more permanent building. A number of approaches were made regarding sites nearby where the portable hall was placed at the Lissan Road. Enquiries were made but there was no interest on the owners part to sell.

One day our attention was drawn to a site at Lissan Drive/ Morgan's Hill Road where a 'For Sale' sign had blown down after being up for several months. Our first impression was that it would be too small or maybe not possible to get planning permission. An approach was made to the Estate Agent who told us that the vendor, Mr. McDonald from Pomeroy would only sell it not subject to planning permission. An approach was made to the Planning Office which was situated then at Molesworth Street, Cookstown and we were informed that the possibility of getting that site passed for a Church was practically nil.

This meant even more so that God's guidance was paramount if we were to purchase this site. The site was bought purely by faith that planning permission would be granted, at a cost of £10,000, £8,000 of this being borrowed from the Northern Bank. The manager then was a cautious gentleman, but later told the Pastor to congratulate the congregation as the loan was paid back well before the scheduled date.

Planning Permission Refused

It wasn't a shock to learn that the site hadn't been given planning permission by the Council after we purchased it. Our faith was in a great God who could and would remove mountains and so we continued to pray that God would open up the door so that His witness could be established.

The reason for planning permission not being granted was primarily that it would be detrimental to the area. Mr. Alan Kane a local councillor then and now a QC and Mr. Kenneth Loughran also a former councillor drew up a petition which was handed into the Council meeting on 26th Sept 1984. This stated that the people of the area favoured a Church building and that it would be an enhancement to the area. Amazingly only two locals refused to sign and one of those as years passed by was led to the Lord by the Pastor after she asked him to visit her.

mid ulster mail

5th Year. 40

Thursday, 4th October, 1984

Price 15p

Church plan approval easier to get in Russia — Councillor

A COUNCILLOR has claimed it would be easier to obtain planning permission to erect a church in communist Russia than in Cookstown.

DUP councillor Alan Kane made the remark at a meeting of the local District Council after the Department of Environment's Planning Division refused to grant an application for the erection of a temporary church building in the town.

When details concerning applications were presented at the Council meeting it was announced that an application for a temporary church building at Lissan Drive/Morgan's Hill Road area of the town for Cookstown Independent Methodist Church had been refused.

A planning officer told the Council that the plans were turned down as the temporary building formed a "substandard type of development" and he added that it was "detrimental

to the visual amenity of the area."

The news was not welcomed by Councillor Kane who described it as one of the "most ludicrous ever" to come before Cookstown Council.

He handed in to the Council a petition from 48 households in the Lissan Road/Morgan's Hill Road area which read:

"We the undersigned residents who live in the immediate vicinity of the proposed Independent Methodist Church site believe the present site to be untidy, an eyesore and detrimental to visual amenity of the area."

"We believe that the proposed temporary and eventually permanent church building on a levelled site would be a neat, painted, well kept and welcome

enhancement to the visual amenity of the area."

Councillor Kane told D&E officials that families from various classes and creeds of all religious persuasions were overwhelmingly united in support of the application for a church building on that particular site. He said they had put up with the present site for many years and said it was an "eyesore and a scrub on the landscape of the area." The Council had written to the owner of the land to have the land cleared up yet when the church purchased the land to erect a temporary building they were faced with a refusal from the planning department, said the councillor.

Pointing out that people were appalled at the Department's decision, Councillor Kane

added: "It would be easier to obtain planning permission for a church in communist Russia than for planning permission to erect a church in Cookstown."

He described the refusal as "illogical and indefensible" and pointed to the Church, which had only started up in Cookstown, as "a peaceful body of people who had not done anyone the slightest bit of harm."

Councillor Kane said he could not understand how such a building would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the area bearing in mind the present state of the land.

"The planning people must live in some dump in the back end of nowhere if they think the present site is something which is good for the visual amenity of the area," he stated.

As a result of Councillor Kane's remarks the Department officials agreed to take the application back and review it again.

Chapter 3 – Church Opening and New Beginnings

Continuing prayer was made regarding the planning application and this was eventually answered when planning permission was granted by the planners.

On Saturday 3rd November 1984 Mr. Stanley Bell cleared the site free of charge and later donated the filling for the church car park. A portable hall was purchased from Fivemiletown Church at the cost of £1,000. This needed several repairs and many late nights were again spent stripping paint and repairing the building at Richard Kempton's farm.

A new kitchen was added to it, and this also served as a prayer room which comfortably held 12 - 15 people. It also accommodated a Sunday School class.



↑ Inside of the wooden church

The hall was finally opened on Saturday 9th Feb 1985 followed by a Gospel Campaign conducted by the Rev. William Magee. The total cost of the hall including repairs and the extension was approximately £2,600. A large congregation gathered from across the province and also many locals attended the opening service and the following Mission.



Rev. Malcolm →
Patterson pictured
at the opening of
the church building.

Ordination



After almost two years serving a probationary period, the Church Board recommended their Pastor for ordination. The ordination service was held in the Dungannon Independent Methodist Church on Friday 7th June 1985. This was not only the home Fellowship of the Pastor and his wife, but would be a more suitable venue as the building in Cookstown then would not hold the numbers expected.

← Rev. Malcolm and Mrs. Olive Patterson pictured with their son Timothy after their ordination service.

First Wedding in Building

The building was registered for marriages a short time after its opening. The first wedding took place on 21st June 1985 of Miss. Hazel Reid and Mr. Stanley Ferguson.

This was not only the first marriage in the church, but was the Pastor's first wedding to conduct. There was a lot of measuring going on to see if the aisle was wide enough to accommodate the bride to be's, flowing wedding dress!



Chapter 4 – A Vision Fulfilled

The Change

A plot of ground, for years it lay,
And I passed it nearly every day,
When I was young, and full of fun,
I would often go there to play.

Time flew past as it always does,
But the place stayed just the same,
And my own two boys would sometimes go,
To that spot to play a game.

Then one day I noticed a change,
Something was different – you see!
The weeds were gone and the ground was flat,
And I wondered why that should be?

Another day, I looked again,
To see what could be seen,
And the little hall in the sunshine shone,
All painted and bright and clean!

And now each day as I pass it by,
My heart just lifts and sings,
For that's the place where I go now,
To worship the King of Kings!!

My heart was like that plot of ground,
Once cold and barren and bare,
But now it's alive and full of joy,
For my Saviour is dwelling there!

written by **Daphne Newell**

After meeting in this building for a couple of years, the work was continuing to expand and meetings were held to discuss the possibility of erecting a permanent building on the present site. It was decided to contact Mr. Hewitt from Lisburn to draw up plans and for the Board members to visit some other Churches to get ideas regarding what they reckoned the new building should look like. The total cost for the plans was £1,725. It was in February 1988, four and a half years from the inception of the work that plans for a permanent building were submitted to the District Council for approval.

Foundations were laid during the July holidays of 1988 by a group of hard working men who had arrived on the site. This was followed by the steel work being erected sometime later by Mr. Paul Bruce at a cost of £6,950 which used up all that was in Church funds.

↓ Erection of the steel work



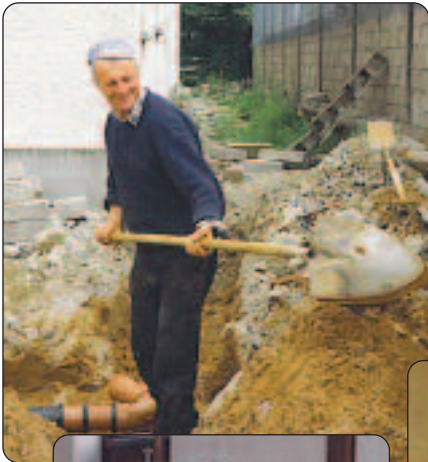
Many of the ladies would often work behind the scenes preparing and bringing the meals to the workmen. Many went beyond the call of sacrifice but, as a congregation we would want to put on record that the two main tradesmen for the project were Mr. Winston Thom and Mr. Stewart Brown. We are all too aware that they were never the type of men who looked for praise, but while many of us could help out practically, their expert eyes were always needed. Voluntary work when it continues for a long period can soon grow thin in its ranks but these men gave of their best, as did others in any spare time they had. It was not unusual to start work very early in the morning, and there were some nights when some never got to bed!

Some Board meetings were held during the building programme but one always remembers when one Board member said that the Church would never be built sitting in meetings where everyone was comfortable. The sleeves needed rolled up and the work started.

Our wooden building was becoming outgrown by the congregation and everyone was looking forward to the day when we would move into our new permanent building.

After almost 3 years the new building was opened on Saturday 28th September 1991 at 3:30pm.

Around 500 people including many from across the province packed into the newly built church. The overflow was accommodated in the wooden church building. The guest speaker was Rev. Tom Cross. The soloist was Mrs. Ruth Maxwell. Gifts to the church were dedicated at the opening; these included an organ, a beautiful carved mahogany pulpit, communion table and chairs, a table and bookcase for the hallway and an oak bureau.



←
Mr. Winston
Thom



→
Mr. Kenneth
Black



↑ Mr. Stewart Brown



←
Rev. Malcolm
Patterson

COOKSTOWN INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH

invites you to join with them
at the

Opening & Dedication Ceremony of their New Church Building

on
SATURDAY 28th SEPTEMBER 1991
at 3.30 p.m.

Secretary : Mrs. M. Leonard, 5 Braside Cottages, Cookstown, Co. Tyrone

↑ The invitation to the opening of the new church building



↑ Mr. Stewart Brown (Trustee), Rev. Malcolm Patterson & Mr. Winston Thom (Trustee) pictured at opening of new building.

It was on 12th October 1994 that the pastor informed the leaders Board that the Church was now debt free. It was decided to continue the Building Fund as the next project would be the surfacing of the car park.

Chapter 5 – The Work of the Sunday School

A Sunday School commenced on Sunday 4th September 1983. It had been advertised in the Mid-Ulster Mail. Many things in life start with small beginnings and no doubt the launch of a Sunday School, on the first Sunday that the Pastor preached would also be a step of faith. The grand number of children who arrived for the first class was one, along with a few adults who were keen to learn more of the ways of God. That child would soon seek the Lord as Saviour and is now living and married in the U.S.A. Three more children all from the one family joined a few weeks later and it wasn't long until numbers were steadily on the increase.

At the annual meeting in 1985 it was reported by the Superintendent that there were now 14 children on the Sunday School roll book.

Christmas Party

The first Christmas party was held a few months later on the 17th December. It was decided to join up with the Dungannon Fellowship and this was repeated again the following year. In 1985 we began to hold our own Sunday School Christmas party in the Silver Band Hall, in Cookstown. We continued this for several years until in more recent years our friends in the Cookstown Baptist Church offered us the use of their hall.

↓ Sunday School Christmas Party 2007



Children's Day Services



Our first Children's Day was looked forward to in anticipation and was held on Sunday 24th June 1984. The guest speaker was Mrs. Ruth Maxwell from Newbuildings and everyone was so pleased to see 13 children taking part. This gave the parents and friends an opportunity to hear the children and also introduce them to our Fellowship, and hear first hand what the children were being taught.

Sunday School Outing

The first Sunday School Outing was held on Saturday 30th June 1984 when a small mini bus was hired and the venue was Portrush. The weather always seemed to be that much brighter back then and we would meet up for tea in a hall and play games on the beach.

↓ Sunday School Outing



A Moving Sunday School



↑ Current Sunday School teachers, L-R, Mrs. Olive Patterson, Mrs. Hilary Black, Mr. David Trainor, Mrs. Kathleen Thom, Mr. Winston Thom, Mr. Tony Kelly, Mrs. Louise McCormick.

At present our Sunday School teachers are, Mr. Winston Thom (appointed Sunday School Superintendent 1984), Mrs. Kathleen Thom, Mrs. Louise McCormick, Mrs. Olive Patterson, Mrs. Hilary Black, Mr. David Trainor, and Mr. Tony Kelly - Bible Class Teacher.

It was in February the following year, 1985 that our Sunday School moved from the portable hall, to a semi permanent building, which had been erected on our present site at Lissan Drive. A class was held in the kitchen and a home made partition was used to divide the sanctuary for Sunday School classes. At our first Children's Day services in this building we had 20 children attending.

At the end of September 1991, the Sunday School and Bible Class were on the move again. This time in the new building there was plenty of space and rooms to teach the growing number of children who were now attending. A few years ago the two Sunday School rooms at the back of the church were divided into three. That leaves six rooms available for teaching the children and now the kitchen is also used.

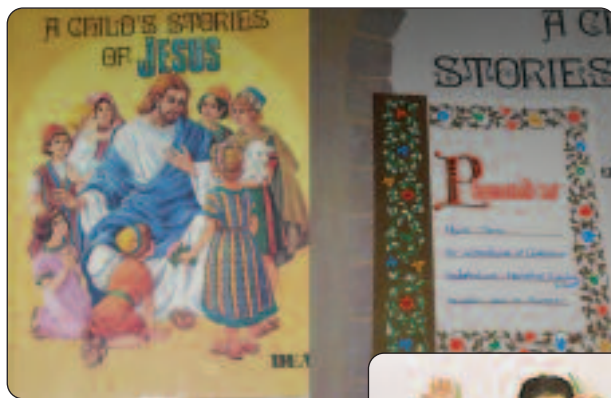
We are praying at present that God would open up the way for us to extend again, as space has become limited. We would love a new hall and more teaching facilities for the youth work.

During these past 25 years it has been our practice to award any child who has completed a four year term of unbroken attendance. Those who have achieved this have been presented with certificates and watches. It has been a thrill over the years to see a large number receive their gifts. Those who fulfilled 8 years unbroken attendance were Ruth Elliott and Naomi Elliott. Those who fulfilled 12 years unbroken attendance were presented with a Study Bible and money. These included Timothy Patterson, Jonathan Patterson, Samuel Patterson and James Mallon.

We thank God for those who have been saved, and for lasting impressions made upon young lives. To all who have prayed and supported the work over many years, eternity only will reveal what sacrifice and dedication has achieved.

We now have around 60 children and youth attending our Sunday School and Bible Class. Some are now another generation of children, whose parents were former pupils.

To mark 20 years of service in the Sunday School a gift was given to Mr. Winston Thom (Sunday School Superintendent) at the Children's Day services of 2004. Mrs. Thom was given a bouquet of flowers.



← First Sunday School Prize presented to Mark Thom

Sunday School Class 1993 →



Childrens
Day 1997 →



← Childrens
Day 2002

Childrens
Day 2008 →



← Childrens
Day 2008

Lifeliners

Lifeliners commenced at the beginning of October 1983. It was held on a Friday night. Leaflets were circulated in the area using a colouring in competition and offering prizes for the best. To our amazement a considerable number of children arrived for the first meeting (some to claim their prizes) others to see what Lifeliners was about. This has always been a very important part of the work. Throughout the years a number of the children who attended Lifeliners also began attending our Sunday School. There are also a number of children who have attended who belong to other places of worship. There are usually around 50 children on average who attend Lifeliners. Again like Sunday School, some of the present children who are attending are those whose parents came in the past when they were children. We divide up into 3 different groups with a couple of teachers in each group.

A Christmas party has been held each year. Our first Christmas party was held in a hall just off Milburn Street. For many years now this has been held in the local Silver Band Hall. We also have our annual Parent's Night where a good number of family and friends gather to hear the children sing, quote Scripture and recitations.



← Current Lifeline Teachers,
L-R, Mrs. Louise McCormick,
Rev. Malcolm Patterson,
Mrs. Olive Patterson,
Mrs. Eileen Young, Mrs. May
Weir, Mrs. Tina Stewart and
Mrs. Kathleen Thom.



Lifeline Parents ↑
Night 2003



Lifeline Parents
← Night 2008

Chapter 6 – Youth Work

CentrePoint

Over the years there had been youth meetings held throughout the winter months. It was in September 2005 a young people's work commenced called CentrePoint. Timothy Patterson was appointed youth leader and the meeting is held on the first Friday night of each month, with various people taking part.

It has always been an encouragement to see those who come from other Fellowships. The youth has always benefited from the Haven Youth group held in our Dungannon Independent Methodist Church.

Young people today seem to think nothing of travelling much further than folk travelled 25 years ago. It has been good to see a number of the youth travel to different parts of the world to help in a practical way.

Some years ago we started to hold a family barbecue in Drummanor Forest Park. This is an evening of fun and fellowship when many of the parents, youth and children come along. This year was no exception with a splendid evening enjoyed by around 150 people.



↑ Barbecue
2004



↑ Barbecue
2005



← Barbecue
2008

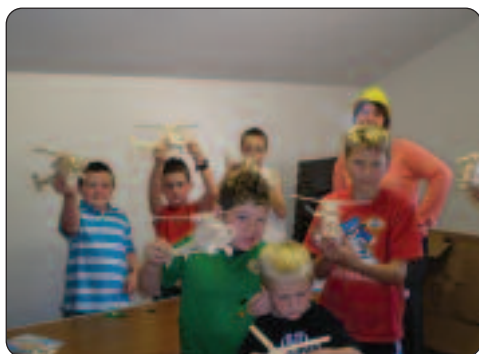
Summer Bible School

It was in the summer of 1985 that we commenced a Summer Bible School which has continued every year since. It takes place during the month of August and lasts for 5 days. In the early years it was held in the mornings when Bible Stories, Quizzes etc. were told and this was followed by refreshments and games in the car park. When our new building started, for health and safety reasons we had to stop the latter. Most of the children who attend are locals as we don't have a bus to transport them. We previously used C.E.F. material but owing to it being used in several of the other churches we found that by the time our Bible School came around, the children knew the material so well, that we decided to change some years ago and now use an American based children's programme. This also includes craft work. We now run it in the evenings and have always found that it has been extremely well supported. The efforts that the teachers have put in have been invaluable.



Bible School 2007 →

← Bible School 2008



Bible School 2006 →

← Bible School 2007



Chapter 7 – Ladies Fellowship



← First invite to Ladies meeting

It was on Monday 19th November 1984 that the first Ladies meeting was held in the portable hall at Lissan Road. The speaker was Mrs. Olive Patterson: around 8-12 ladies attended regularly for the first number of months. At the annual meeting in March 1986, Mrs. Patterson reported that the numbers had been increasing and now there were 15 attending. It was a great encouragement

that one lady who had started to attend had called at the Pastor's house at Blackhill to seek the Lord. It was a thrill after all these years to see that same lady present Mrs. Patterson with a bouquet of flowers at the ladies outing (2008) and she is still as keen for the Lord.

The first annual ladies outing teamed up with the Dungannon ladies; this continued for a few years. It wasn't until the summer of 1989 that a mini bus was hired and a group of ladies travelled to Belfast for their outing.

Over the years some of those very faithful ladies of our Fellowship have gone on to be with the Lord. We always were indebted to Mrs. Nora Reid who faithfully played the organ for many years. Never once did Nora fail to perform her duty; she was a very committed lady who always put the Church first.

Many have spoken of the blessing and encouragement received under the ministry of various speakers from different parts of the world and backgrounds.

↓ Relaxing at the Lady Dixon Park, Belfast





↑ Ladies Fellowship 2007



↑ Ladies Outing 2008

Mrs. Eileen Dobson presenting
Mrs. Olive Patterson with flowers →
at the Ladies Outing 2008



Chapter 8 – Milestones Along The Way

Missions

During these past 25 years a number of missions have been held in the various church buildings that we have occupied. It has been good to see God move and souls being saved. As a Fellowship we have noticed that very often souls got saved not only during the missions but prior and afterwards.

Caddy Missions



It was in November 1987 that we held our first Gospel mission outside of our church building. We went to a hall at Caddy (Tullylagan, Cookstown). Approaches had been made prior to the mission for the use of other halls in the area but we were informed that because we were outside the main denominations, they wouldn't be made available to us. It was amazing to see the number who attended that mission. In the

closing meeting on the Sunday afternoon there were 116 people packed into the hall; that mission primarily was a time of sowing the good seed. The Bible tells us to "cast our bread, upon the waters for thou shalt find it after many days." Ecclesiastes 11:1

It would be just over 10 years later in February 1998 that we returned to conduct another 3 week mission in that same hall. I remember well that as we were praying for the mission there was especially one elderly gentleman, whose son had been recently converted through the work who was very much in our thoughts. That man was the key holder of the hall. Both he and his wife had attended the earlier mission and always made me very welcome in their home. It was a thrill one night shortly before the mission commenced when I had the joy of leading him to the Lord. He was an upright farmer but discovered he still needed Salvation.

God really moved during this time of mission. A number of souls sought Him for Salvation including our second son Jonathan.

We had tremendous support from many of the churches in the area. Children's meetings were held and these also were exceptionally well attended. Many came from nearby Sandholes, Donaghey and Tullylagan district.

I think we will never forget the rich times of fellowship and supper that was enjoyed afterwards around the big hearth fire in the back room of that hall.

Dunman Mission

A three week Gospel campaign was held in a portable hall at Dunman in February 2001. It was conducted by the Pastor and one of the lay preachers, Mr. Stewart Brown. Much prayer had ascended for this mission and it was a joy to see so many unconverted attend. One local lady from the housing estate remarked that in her lifetime she had, "never seen so many of her neighbours at a mission."

There had been extensive visitation in the area and contacts were made which are still ongoing.

The day the mission finished another mission started a short distance away. It was a joy to see those who had attended Dunman seek the Lord at the latter mission, some of whom are members of our congregation today.

Tent Campaign

A tent campaign was held at the Dungannon roundabout on the outskirts of Cookstown. It had been discussed and prayed about for some time prior as this was our first ever tent mission to hold as a church. It commenced on Sunday 21st May and continued to Sunday 4th June 2005.

A great band of willing workers helped to prepare the site, supply the meals and guard the tent nightly.

The guest speaker was Rev. William Park whose ministry was greatly blessed of God. It was a tremendous encouragement to see upwards on 300 people gather nightly at the tent at the Dungannon roundabout, Cookstown. Many from neighbouring congregations gave their whole hearted support.





Purchase of Church Manse

A discussion took place at a meeting in the church on the 29th September 1993 whenever the opportunity was given to everyone in the congregation to discuss the purchase of a church manse.

The Pastor and his family were extremely happy living in rented accommodation at Coolreaghs Road, and he voiced his opinion that he didn't want to see the church going into excessive debt but rather wait until a good deposit had accumulated.

This would be another mammoth task, but wouldn't come to fruition until nearly 6 years later.

A beautiful manse was purchased in May 1999 at 29 The Dales, Cookstown at a cost of £96,000. It was amazing how the Lord met the financial need. We never begged for money at any time, but the congregation always rose to the occasion.



← The church manse



Manse patio →



← Pictured at the manse open night,
Mr. William Stewart and Mr. Jack Irwin.

Services of Appreciation – 15 Years of Ministry

Special services of appreciation were held by the congregation to mark 15 years of ministry for Rev. & Mrs. Patterson and also to mark the milestone of 25 years of service. Not bad for a Pastor who was coming in a temporary capacity!

Remarks were made by both of them that these have been tremendous years greatly enjoyed. Although as in any ministry you meet with discouragements the encouragements have always come out top. Perhaps the greatest trial for us was in 1994 whenever throat problems caused the Pastor to go off work for 3 months. He was told then by the consultant that he may not be able to always carry on preaching. This has been a "thorn in the flesh" over the years as with the effects of asthma sometimes there has been the plague of throat, chest and lung infections. It has been tremendous to have a congregation who have always stood faithfully behind a Pastor and his family.



There have been many happy times enjoyed in the ministry but also the sad times whenever sickness comes or the Lord calls away those who have seen the 'Gospel Chariot' go forth. It's always difficult to let go of those who have stood by us and encouraged us in the Lord's work. We have always felt that the work was like one big family.

25 Years of Ministry

On Saturday 27th September 2008, the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church was packed to capacity for a special service of appreciation to mark 25 years of faithful service of the Pastor and his wife, Rev. Malcolm & Mrs. Olive Patterson.

During this past quarter of a century of ministry many lives have been touched and changed by God. A number of the congregation related in testimony what God had done for them and how they were led into the Cookstown Fellowship.

Mr. Stewart Brown, chairman for the evening gave a brief history of the work and spoke of the dedication of their Pastor and his wife over these many years. He said that "God had blessed their ministry and that as a congregation they wanted to show their appreciation by organizing this special meeting".

A number of gifts were presented to the Rev. & Mrs. Patterson, Timothy, Jonathan & Samuel by members of the congregation.



↑ Rev. & Mrs. Patterson pictured receiving gifts, with the present committee.



Senior Citizens Christmas Dinner

We held our first Senior Citizens Christmas Dinner in December 1998. A number of pensioners had previously stated that they would be happier if a charge was made for the dinner. There is a nominal fee charged of £5 each. Practically everything for the lunch is donated by the congregation and so as the expenditure is so little those attending the dinner receive a gift with the remainder going into church funds. We hold this in our room upstairs and usually cater for around 50. It's true to say that we don't have the most adequate facilities but we have the commitment of hard working ladies who enjoy giving of their services. The senior citizens look forward to this and amazingly it is now 10 years since we started it. I don't think any hotel in Cookstown could offer such a sumptuous meal.



← 2005



2007 →

20th Anniversary Dinner

20 years of our church in Cookstown was commemorated by a special dinner which was held in the Cookstown Baptist Hall (kindly granted) on Wednesday 8th October 2003. Around 140 people were present and a wonderful time was enjoyed by all. Mrs. Mavis Leonard (Church Secretary) and Mr. Stewart Brown (Church Treasurer) were presented with gifts to mark 20 years of service. Mrs. Nora Reid cut the anniversary cake.



Mr. Stewart Brown and Mrs. ↑
Mavis Leonard, receiving
gifts to mark 20 years service.



25th Anniversary Dinner

A special anniversary evening was held at Glenavon Hotel, Cookstown to celebrate 25 years of the Cookstown Fellowship. Around 160 members, family and friends gathered on Thursday evening 30th October 2008.

A large commemoration cake with a picture of the church was cut by the church secretary, Mrs. Mavis Leonard and Mr. Sammy Allen, who had just celebrated his 87th birthday the previous week.

Following the splendid meal a number of folk present provided the programme for the evening. These included poetry, singing and musical items. A 'guess who' competition was enjoyed by all as a number of photos from bygone years were shown by data projector. Also a selection of photographs were shown which had been taken at the recent service held in the church to mark 25 years of ministry of Rev. and Mrs. Patterson. At the conclusion of the evening a number of gifts were presented.

The Pastor concluded the evening in prayer.

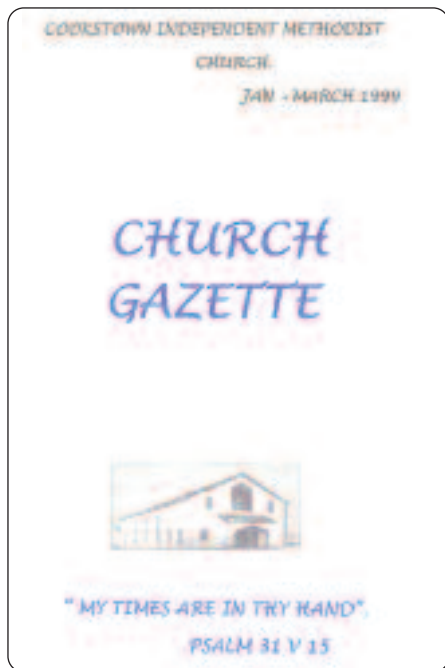


Mr. Sammy Allen and Mrs. Mavis Leonard cutting the anniversary cake.
Also included, Mrs. Olive Patterson and Rev. Malcolm Patterson.



Church Gazette

A Church Gazette was launched in January 1999. The aim of this was to keep the congregation informed as to what was happening in the local congregation. The Gazette is printed quarterly and contains a list of coming events, a testimony from someone in the congregation and a sermon. Mrs. Nora Reid, (Tulnacross Post Office) was the first testimony to appear. This gave some the opportunity to put in print how they came to know the Lord as their Saviour, who otherwise would never have done it in a public meeting. Some articles are also included which have been forwarded on by members of the congregation. At the beginning 50 copies were printed but now 150 copies are printed. This is also available on our church website where some as far away as Sweden and England read it regularly.



Cover page of the first Gazette
(available from www.cookstownimc.org)

Church Website

It was in 2003 that a church website was launched. This was designed and is maintained by Timothy Patterson. It has proved to be a great benefit to not only the congregation but also to the many visitors from various countries of the world who visit it. There is quite a detailed selection of photographs displayed of different aspects of the work. The address is www.cookstownimc.org

Chapter 9 – Lives touched by God

Testimonies of blessing and saving grace over these 25 years

Rev. Malcolm Patterson

I was born on the 13th October 1958 at our family homestead at Lurgacullion which is just three miles from the village of Ballygawley. I was the second son of a large family of six girls and five boys. Right from my earliest memories we were taught to work. My parents believed firmly in the work ethic and there was never much time to spare for recreation. My father owned a sawmill, besides farming and also working for some years in Moygashel factory. My mother not only farmed but worked for 20 years as a traffic warden in Dungannon.



When I was just 13 I took Rheumatic fever and so was off school for over a year. My mother, some of the family believe any way, spoiled me as our family doctor back then, the late Dr Henry said, "that there were some things that I wouldn't be able to do."

I must honestly say, "that although there were times when I had to help my father in the sawmill, I just hated it." Even the sound of the saw was enough for me. Many times I opted to do the milking instead as I loved working with animals, but many find it hard to believe that I never drove a tractor in my life, and I'm sure never will! I still love animals but wouldn't have made a farmer.

When coming 14 years of age I saw an advert in our local paper where a draper was looking for a full time assistant. I was still at school but looking back it seems strange I applied for the post and said that, "I couldn't work full time but I could work part time." The shop owner, Arnold McIvor arrived one evening when I was milking the cows and offered me the post. I worked there for some years part time and after leaving school worked for the late George Cuddy in Dungannon.

As the years passed by my old employer Arnold offered me another post. This time in charge of the shop. I loved it and it was from here that I would eventually leave and go to Bible College.

As a child I was taught the Scriptures. Each Sunday we were taught at a local Brethren Sunday School that we would be eternally lost if we were to die unsaved.

I had always good respect for the Gospel. When very young however I entered and enjoyed the 'things' and pleasures which our world offers. I didn't have a car then and I shared a home with some lads who worked in the bank in Dungannon. It was from there that we travelled the North always trying to find the better places of entertainment. No matter where I went there was a deep longing in my heart not to waste my life and those impressions from Sunday School often reminded me of the need to avoid Hell and of the reality of the Lord's return and of the consequences of being left behind.

It was in 1977 I met Olive whom I would later marry. Both of us attended a mission outside Loughall and it was there we were to find Christ. I struggled with the assurance of Salvation for some time as there were days when I was putting the emphasis on feelings rather than faith. The local rector told me that there was no need for 'born again' Salvation. I'm glad his words didn't divert me from the path I had started on. One night I prayed a prayer that I heard sung at church "How can I make a lesser sacrifice when Jesus gave His all". I surrendered my life completely to the Lord and still realize the importance of daily doing this. In my heart I had a concern that God was calling me into His service. I struggled with this and tried to bargain with God as I didn't want to obey His call. I found it difficult to tell my boss then, Arnold McIvor, that I was leaving. I remember well his response, he said, "If you were leaving to go to another shop to work then I would try to keep you, but when it's God's call, I would never want to stand between you and God." Arnold was so good to me, and an excellent employer. At Christmas time he would tell me to pick myself a new suit from the rails; no wonder the Cookstown people thought that, at times I was quite well dressed! I loved even through Bible College days to work there on any holidays that I had.

Olive and I got engaged in 1978 but afterwards we broke it off for five years. I went into Bethel Bible College in the Autumn of 1980. Thank God for those days. I was then to spend a year in practical work in Co. Cork. It was there that I worked with Alan Robinson from Bangor, who is now a Pastor in the U.S.A. We had precious times there and we often thank God for the good friends we know in that part of His vineyard.

It was in the summer of 1983 that I came to Cookstown, a town that I knew very little about. I used to think that maybe one day I would finish on a foreign mission field as I never wanted to go into the ministry. God had a different plan for my life and when asked to pray about coming to pastor the new church in Cookstown I received confirmation through the verse "as my Father hath sent me even so send I you." Olive and I were married in January 1984. We proved God in so many ways that sometimes we feel that it would take a book to share it all!

Samuel Rutherford who was a Pastor in Answorth in Scotland said "If one soul from Answorth meets me at God's right hand then my Heaven will be two Heaven's in Emmanuel's Land."

We thank God for many in Cookstown who have found Him through the work here. Many are now in the land that is "fairer than day." I can honestly say that we love the place where God has called us. We value everyone in our Church family and we look on all of them not just as our Church members but as our real friends. Both Olive and myself continue to value your prayers for our 3 boys, that they too will find God's will for their lives.

To all who pray for us and our family we humbly say, 'thank-you'. O how quickly the years have passed. We have both now turned 50 (although I still don't believe it). It is our prayer to spend and be spent in the work of God. "Only one life, will soon be past, only what's done for Jesus will last" Praise God!

Mrs. Olive Patterson

My first memories of hearing the Gospel was at a children's meeting held near our home in Dungannon. I received a prize for attendance, of a Gospel text which hung on my bedroom wall. The words haunted me as I grew up: the message was, "By grace are ye saved through faith". I often would wonder what grace was that could save me, but I don't ever remember having it explained. Our home was not a Christian home and from an early age I tasted the pleasures of the world. Often while attending the dance halls and the places of entertainment I would ask myself the question, "Is there not more to life than this?"

At the age of 18 I met Malcolm and he started to take me to church. I thought this was rather strange as I hadn't attended any church for many years. He knew the way of salvation, knew he needed to be saved but yet was still in the world also.

One night whilst visiting at a friend's home a Christian arrived, who told us that, "we needed to be saved, and that soon the Lord Jesus could return." It scared me to think that the Lord Jesus was coming back again, it was the first time I had ever heard about this. We were invited along to a tent mission, that was being held outside Loughall. A gentleman offered us a lift to the meetings as often as we wanted to go. As I listened nightly to the Gospel being preached I longed to get right with God. I knew that God was speaking to me, and felt that this would be the mission to get saved at. I didn't know how I could ever get saved as all my family were unsaved and surely I would become a laughing stock. I had been smoking from an early age and loved it, this was a great obstacle to me as I wondered how I could ever stop smoking. The more I thought about it the more it seemed an impossibility that I could ever be saved.

After knowing that God was speaking to me in a very definite way, I decided to stop attending that mission, "thank God" that I started to attend again.

One night will always stand out in my memory, that was the 21st June 1977. I decided after the meeting to wait behind and to trust Christ as my Saviour. I had my mind made up that I was saying, "Good bye to the world", and I was placing my life in God's hands.

I didn't feel any different and began to doubt if God had done a work of grace in my heart. At that time I was working in a factory, I began to witness to others, but didn't feel happy or know the assurance of salvation. A Christian girl, who also worked with me, told me that although I may doubt - it was "by grace ye are saved through faith". The light dawned on me and I realised that "salvation is of the Lord". I now began to understand that grace was unmerited favour. And that I didn't need to doubt or worry. It wasn't based on feelings but in faith in what Jesus had done for me on Calvary.

It was in 1980, that the Lord called me into His service. I attended Bible College for two years, and then went to work as an evangelist in Donegal. It was a privilege to see a number of people respond to the message of Salvation and to know that many are still going on with God today.

I look back over the years that have so quickly gone into eternity, and I realise more and more that "Only what is done for Jesus will last". I have proved Him to be a Friend above all friends, whether on the mountain tops or in the valleys of life He is always there.

God has answered many prayers over the years, not always perhaps the way I expected, but one can always rest in the knowledge that, "as for God, His way is perfect."

I never wanted to be a Pastor's wife but then sometimes God asks us to do what we never intended to do. I must say that I love the work of God and over many years now we thank Him for the many who have stood by us as we have sought to give our best to the work He has called us to in Cookstown.

Mr. George Allen

Mr. George Allen, and Mr. Edgar Carson
keeping the grounds of the church →

I was born in the year 1932. I was one of a family of eight children. Our home was at Coolreagh's Road. I don't remember my father as he died when I was very young. After my father's death we moved to Oldtown Street, that's where my childhood life was spent. As a family we were sent to Derryloran Church and Sunday School.



My first job when I was 14 years old was in Gunning's factory. I spent quite a while there. In 1950 I decided to join the army. After five years there I returned home and got a job in the 'Bacon Factory', as it was known then. It was through this job that I came into contact with the Thom family.

I knew little about religion and for many years I was addicted to alcohol, smoking and gambling. Owing to my drinking problem I had to live at times with my sister, sometimes with the Thom family and sometimes at home. I had very few friends owing to the drink, but I will always be thankful for the Thom family who stood by me through thick and thin. One morning I started drinking early, in fact I spent all day at it. On my way home I heard a voice telling me not to go back to drink. I think that was in August 1995. From that day I have never taken drink. I still visited the dens of iniquity to prove that I could stay off, but one year later I stopped those visits. It's only in more recent years that I realized that people were praying for me and that God was working in my life.

One Sunday morning I visited the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church which is very near to where I live. I received a warm welcome at the door and I have been going there since.

On the 14th of February 1997 the Rev. Patterson visited me in my home, it was during a Mission that he was conducting in Caddy (Tullylagan). He spoke to me about getting saved. I told him, "That I would think about it", but on the Saturday I was tormented all day. I was under deep conviction of sin. At 10:15 that night I asked the Lord, "to forgive my sins and to come into my heart."

It wasn't easy, as being off the drink and on many tablets, made me nervous, but with my faith in God I got through it.

I would like to thank all those in and out of the Church who have prayed and encouraged me in my Christian walk. Especially I want to thank the Pastor and his wife for all their support.

I just read recently that God is all the Christian's employer. He gives each one of us different jobs. I enjoy working around the Church with Edgar as there's much that both of us have in common. We go down to the Church every Saturday and tidy up around it.

My intention is that whatever time I have left of this life to serve God to the best of my ability.

Mr. Edgar Carson

It is amazing that God could forgive someone like me. As a child our family was brought up at the Burn Road Cookstown. After school I would spend time around the town, often spending my money on the jukeboxes. My father went off to war and my mother was left to bring us up. She would send us to Sunday School at Derryloran Parish church. I left school as soon as I could and got a job in the local Bacon factory. I always looked forward to a Friday when after work I would head for the nearby pub. This went on for years.

It was in 1965 that I decided to get married and start to attend church. Sadly, I must say, "I never heard it preached that I needed to be saved". In 1990 I took ill and was admitted to hospital where it was thought that there was something minor wrong with me. Soon I was diagnosed with cancer and humanly speaking I wouldn't have long to live. I had been baptized and confirmed and often I would turn to the prayer book for spiritual help and would read the prayers for the sick. I honestly did think to myself that I was 'good living'. My sickness progressed and I was to spend a long time in hospital, often lingering between life and death. Those were awful days. At one stage I thought I was in Hell. It was in January 1998 that I really heard or realized my need of Salvation, that was in the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. After attending a few weeks I started to really think about getting saved. I started to read the Bible. One night after the sermon was over I didn't want to leave but finally did without the Saviour. A few weeks later at the close of the service when I was shaking the Rev. Patterson's hand I just couldn't let go. I stayed behind and trusted Christ to save me. I have made some great friends in this church and I greatly enjoy the fellowship. My neighbour George Allen was a great help to me after I got saved. He would come to me and seek to help me along. I am glad that I am sure that all is well for Eternity.

Mr. Sam Newell



I was born into a home in Stewartstown where my parents faithfully sent us to church. Sadly I never remember in my youth being taught of my need of Salvation. For over forty years, I had no thought of God and church became a place I attended whenever there was a wedding or a funeral.

As a young man it wasn't long before I started to frequent the local pubs. At one stage in my life I would have gone out drinking 7 nights a week. I also enjoyed football and mixing with the other lads.

My life took a change (for the better) when I met Daphne and we got married. It seemed to settle a little. We were blessed with two boys.

In August 1985 I took ill. At that time our boys were attending the Independent Methodist Church which is near our home. Daphne asked the Rev. Patterson to visit me while I was in hospital. After coming out of hospital I started going a few times to church really just to say, "Thanks for the visitation". We attended a Harvest weekend there also. I didn't miss a night, which broke all records for me! One night after coming home late from my work in Unipork, my wife Daphne told me that she had got saved that afternoon. I said "that I wouldn't make it hard for her". That was Thursday night. The following Sunday I spent a good time as usual drinking in the British Legion, however I knew that God was also speaking to me about my sin and my need of a Saviour. On Sunday night I attended church again and as the Pastor preached I thought that Daphne had told him all about me. He seemed to be preaching directly to me and about my lifestyle. Daphne assured me that she hadn't been an informer! Looking back I now know that the Holy Spirit was dealing with me. After the church the Pastor called at our home. I wasn't that enthused to see him. He talked about Salvation and I agreed with all that he said, however I felt it wasn't for me yet.

That night I couldn't sleep, I told Daphne I needed to get saved but as she wasn't long saved herself she said, "maybe I should wait until the morning". I was afraid that if I died that night that my soul would be lost. Daphne found the Pastor's telephone number from the church notice board. He got up out of his bed and pointed me to the Lord. That was 3rd November 1985. Personally I believe that it was my last opportunity to get saved. God has changed my life completely and has led me on since.

Mrs. Pearl Glendinning



"Life is what you make it," some say and I suppose there is a great element of truth in it. I was born into a large family. We never wanted, and although there may not have been all the luxuries which are associated with modern life now, we were a happy family.

My childhood years were spent at Drumraw, just outside Cookstown. It was from here that we would walk to school in the nearby village of Sandholes. We belonged to Desertcreat Parish Church, where we faithfully attended Sunday School and church on Sundays. It was here that I was baptized as an infant and later confirmed.

In 1954 I married my husband Freddy. He carried through life the wounds of war as he had been wounded by the Germans. He died in 1989.

It was in 1994 that I moved to live at the Moneymore Road. It was to be here that life would take on a new meaning. I had always enjoyed life to the full and nothing I enjoyed more than dancing.

One Sunday I was invited to the evening service in the Independent Methodist Church, not far from where I now live. I started then to attend most Sunday evenings for about 6 months. The Pastor would remind everyone that their greatest need in life was God's Salvation and the reality of the brevity of life. I began to think seriously about what I was hearing and a deep longing came into my heart to get saved. One day when I was out visiting an urge came upon me to return home early just in case the Rev. Patterson would visit me. God makes no mistakes whenever there is a seeking soul. That was to be the first day that the Pastor visited my home, the 28th April 1995. I wept as I asked the Lord Jesus Christ into my heart to forgive my sins. I love getting out to church on Sundays and the Prayer meeting on Thursday nights. Although I suffered a stroke since getting saved, I'm thankful to God for all His blessings and the fact that I can still meet for worship.

Miss Sarah Dobson

Sarah, or Miss Dobson as many knew her was a great blessing and inspiration to our Fellowship. She went to be with the Lord in February 2001. I knew Sarah when I worked in McIvor's shop in Dungannon, back in the 1970s and 80s. I never thought for a moment that in God's plan one day I would be her Pastor and conduct her funeral service. She worked for many years as a



ward sister in the maternity ward at the South Tyrone hospital where she saw many lives enter this world, including our eldest son, Timothy. Sarah wrote her testimony for the Church Gazette, issue March-June 2000. She wrote, "it was during the beginning of World War II, I was a young student nurse in a Liverpool hospital. Most nights we could hear from the air raid shelter the wail of the sirens, then the drone of the airplanes and the bombs falling. The hospital was very near the docks and the river Mersey. As there were a lot of ships in it, the enemy was intent on destroying them. It was a dangerous place to be, so the patients, mostly children, were nursed in the shelters at night. Maybe those shelters would get in the way of a bomb too. The question was, if that happened, where would we be? Or where would I be? I had heard the Gospel at the Baptist church near the hospital, the Foxteth Tabernacle and I knew I needed to be saved. Although I had been christened as a baby and confirmed at 14 years of age I had no assurance that I would go to Heaven when I died.

One Sunday morning as I sat in the Baptist church I asked Jesus to forgive me. I knew that I was saved. On the 12th April 1942 I went through the waters of baptism. It was in 1984 that I started attending the Cookstown Fellowship which had just started and was in its early days at the Lissan Road. I am grateful to God for answered prayer and for the prayers of the Rev. Patterson and those in the Fellowship who constantly prayed for my brothers and myself. God answered prayer first for my brother Joe in 1993 and then my brother John in saving them. I am so thankful to God for all His faithfulness to me over these many years."

"Jesus was slain for me at Calvary,
Crowned with thorns was He at Calvary,
There He in anguish died,
There from His wounded side,
Poured forth the crimson tide, at Calvary".

Mrs. Eileen Dobson

As a child I was brought up in a cottage at Clare which is just about one mile outside Cookstown. I was one of a family of ten. I knew from a child of my need of Salvation as my mother used to send us to the Brethren Sunday School at Kingsbridge which was not very far from our home.



One day a missionary came from India called Mrs. Williamson. She was holding special teenage meetings at Molesworth Street. I attended these nightly for a number of weeks along with my sister. One night God spoke to me and I waited behind to seek Him. In those days I was working in Gunnings factory. One day Mr. David Turkington who ran a choir asked me to join. We often travelled around the various churches singing the Gospel hymns. Sad to say that I lost out with God.

When I was 19 years of age I met Arthur who I later married. We worked very hard on the farm and I didn't attend church for many years. One day Miss Sarah Dobson invited me to attend some meetings being held at the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church which met in a wooden hall then at Lissan Road. I knew that I was not right with God. I loved to attend the little church and I was always made very welcome. I longed for God but I could never seem to get the courage to wait behind and talk to the Pastor.

On the 14th February 1985 I couldn't hold back any longer. The ladies meeting was on that night but I couldn't wait and so I got into my car and drove to the Pastor's house which at that time was at the Blackhill. The Rev. Patterson wasn't in but his wife was. I told Mrs. Patterson what was wrong, that I longed to get back to the Lord again after all these years in a spiritual wilderness. She prayed with me and a great peace came to me. God gave me a lovely promise from Isaiah 44v22 "I have blotted out as a thick cloud thy transgressions, and as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me for I have redeemed thee". Thank God from that day in my life I have sought to follow Him.

Mrs. Kathleen Thom



Truly God is good. I thank Him for saving me. Sad to say I was not brought up in a Christian home but I had loving parents who sent me along faithfully to church and to Knockaleary Sunday School. It was near to where our home was. Each Sunday we listened to faithful preachers telling us of our need to be saved. I loved to sing the choruses and hear the Gospel stories. In my teenage years I was introduced to the things of the world. I got a love for the picture house and the dance hall. It was back then that I started smoking too. I later got married to Winston. We had a family of 5 children.

God was merciful to me and brought me under conviction of sin. It was during this time that a Christian friend invited me to a Gospel Mission. It was on that night 12th May 1982 that I trusted Christ as my Saviour. With the hymn writer I can say, "a happy night, when Jesus washed my black heart white".

Life has brought with it many trials. God has been good to us and in the trials of life we have proved His faithfulness, "He is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother". I thank God for a faithful Pastor who preaches God's Word Sunday by Sunday, and for the fellowship of God's people.

Mrs. Thom is the wife of our Sunday School Superintendent Winston and has been teaching Sunday school for many years and also Lifeliners.

Mrs. Nora Reid



Nora went to be with the Lord at the end of December 2005. Her unique character touched many lives. She was a Postmistress of Tulnacross Post Office. As a child she played the organ in Kildress Parish Church and later in life used this talent for many years as our Church organist. I remember well asking if anyone could play as we had no organist. Nora never professed to be an expert organist but was always faithful Sunday by Sunday. We all have our memories of Nora. She and her sister Mrs. Anna Fraser, also with us from the beginning of the work

but now in Fairfield's Care Home, used to clean the church week by week. Anna used to joke that she did the cleaning while Nora played the organ. Nora whose little car was seen all around the country sometimes with many bumps in it used to say that she never had an accident that was her fault! Nora used to have flats to let. She wanted tenants who didn't smoke, didn't drink or didn't tell lies. Needless to say, her flats were often unoccupied. Nora wrote her testimony for our Church Gazette January - March 1999.

"My early years of life were spent helping my mother in the Post Office. I wasn't aware back then that this would prove to be my vocation in life until I retired in 1997. I managed to clock up 54 years of service and thank God I only missed one week through sickness. After getting married to William Robert who was an accountant, we spent many happy years living in the U.S.A. For many years I never went to church and then in 1972 my husband died. Some years later a Mission came to Orritor. My sister Anna who had got saved some time prior invited me along one night. The Lord always makes the way of Salvation very plain and as I listened to the Gospel preached I became aware that although I was a good person, I still wasn't saved. It wasn't however until at another Mission conducted by the Rev. S. Workman that I decided to trust Christ as my Saviour. That was on the 19th day of June 1983 the best day of my life! That summer the Independent Methodist Church commenced in Cookstown and so I started to attend. I have been blessed over these many years now under the ministry of our Pastor the Rev. Patterson. I am glad that as he was preaching recently on 'worry' that I can say, "I have no worries". I believe in prayer and just leave all with God. Since retirement God has been good to me and I have seen more of Ireland in these last 2 years than I have seen in my lifetime! My motto for life now is, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you".

Mr. George Weir



I was born into a good home and though my parents believed in prayer and respected the things of God they were not born again Christians. It was just after the out break of World War II that our family were divided. The younger two of the family were taken to live just outside Belfast. My early memories at about the age of six were of our windows being smashed. My mother couldn't cope with all the responsibilities of life and family and so I was sent to live with my Grandmother just a short distance from Cookstown.

I quickly adjusted to my surroundings and at the age of seven started to attend Derryloran Primary School.

My Grandmother was a disciplinarian and she would always insist that we would attend Church and Sunday School. At times I decided to hang around the town instead and inquire what the lessons were about just in case there would be an inquiry after I came home!

I often thought of my father who was serving in the army and would wonder what was happening to him. I soon made a new life for myself. I entered the things of the world and by the time I was eighteen years old I was a heavy drinker and often getting into serious trouble.

I became a horrible person, on many occasions being arrested and ending up in Police custody. Eventually I finished in a mental institution locked away in a padded cell. Often I would make promises that I couldn't keep because of the drink. I thought there was no way out of it and that eventually I would end up dying of its effects.

One day I met May McNichol the most decent girl that ever I met! She thought that she would be able to sort me out and so she took a big chance and married me! Life didn't change however and I continued my lifestyle of drinking.

Eventually we had three children but still there was no settling of me. My health ultimately broke down. One day I met a man on the street who told me that the only one who could help me was the Lord Jesus Christ. I had already in life made several professions of a new start and attended many Churches but never felt that I really fitted in to any of them. I started to attend the Independent Methodist Church in Cookstown. I would listen to the Pastor each Sunday preach a very serious word from the Scriptures. I would feel wretched in myself.

One Sunday morning I felt under such deep conviction of sin. I had a great desire to change my ways and this time not only profess Salvation but possess it. I left the service that morning and phoned a good friend Davy McMahon. We met in a

lay by at the Cookstown - Moneymore Road. With all the teaching that I heard at Church and the verses that Davy was sharing with me, I was convinced more and more that God was giving to me a final chance. I started to cry and it wasn't long until both of us were weeping. I asked the Lord to forgive me and to give me a real dislike for drink. He took my hand that morning and has never let me fall. I received a deep assurance of Salvation and I remember shouting in the car, "Davy I'm saved."

I returned home and broke the news to May. She wouldn't believe me as she had heard all this before. This lasted for three months and May knew this time that I was different. For sometime afterwards we held a Starous Meeting in our home.

I was a new person in Christ, I got a new love to study God's Word. It was a privilege to me to complete a number of correspondence Bible study courses from Bethel Bible College. These were a great help to me to get an in-depth study of the Word of God. I started going to meetings and attending my Church where God was really blessing me and encouraging me in my new found faith.

I thank God for Rev. Patterson, Mrs. Patterson and the family and pray that the Lord will bless them. Now just to finish and to say, "That we are in the Fellowship in Cookstown twenty odd years and we have been truly blessed" and I just want to thank everyone for their friendship and prayers.

Jonathan Patterson



I was brought up in a Christian home and praise the Lord for it! From a very early age sent to Sunday School, and lots of other children's meetings. I soon learnt of how Jesus loves all regardless of age, gender or skin colour. I remember clearly one day in Sunday School hearing of the man in the Bible who had leprosy, and how this leprosy resembled my sin. It started off small but soon spread. This man in the Bible simply called upon Jesus and he was healed both inwardly and outwardly. This struck a chord in my young life and I soon began thinking more and more about becoming a Christian.

However it wasn't until February of 1998 when the Independent Methodist Church held a Mission in a small hall named 'Caddy', that God began to really convict me. After the Mission one night I remember having a dream about being in Hell. That night I awoke in a sweat and I asked the Lord Jesus Christ to save my soul from sin and to forgive me. It says in James 2v10 "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all." This meant that although I had only sinned for 11 years, I was as guilty as everyone else of sinning against God, and was just as worthy of being punished, and unworthy of being forgiven. I know now that God does not send anyone to Hell; we have to go there ourselves!

Being only 11, when I decided to become a Christian, it can only be described as simple childlike faith, the way that God commands us to come. Back then I did not understand why God would love someone like me, but it is often better just to accept it rather than try to understand it. God assured me that my sins were gone, and He changed me. For many of the years following, I can only describe myself as being 'lukewarm', at best. Praise the Lord for forgiveness. Whilst in 6th Form of the High School I began to realize that God wanted all of me. I needed to be willing to submit to His will. He led me to study History in Coleraine University where I spent 3 years. I remember well one night hearing of Christians who stand outside pubs and clubs giving out coffee, tea and tracts. God told me to do it, I said 'Yes' then didn't. Being 19 at the time and stubborn I did not think this was for me, even though God had told me so. God very graciously did not give up, it took 6 months for Him to get me out and telling people about Jesus love for them, and His ability to transform their lives.

In my final year of University I led the small group Bible study, as well as doing outreach. God has given me tremendous opportunities to work and tell of Him both in Northern Ireland, Romania, and Poland. Soon this will include joining the OM ship for a period of 11 weeks, when I will be going off to Australia. I do not know what the Lord has for me in the future but my life is in His hands. What a transformation for a shy backward fellow. Psalm 118v23 "This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes."

Mrs. Mavis Leonard



From I was a child, I knew of my need of Salvation. We attended children's meetings where the Gospel was made very plain to us all. I often heard God speak clearly to me but would seek to close out from my mind what He was saying.

As I passed into my teens and then eventually marriage and the responsibilities of bringing up a family, like so many others in life I put spiritual things to the back of my mind.

Our children attended an afternoon Sunday School in the local Assembly Hall. They were faithfully taught the Word of God and my youngest daughter got saved at the age of 8. This was the beginning of the Lord working in our family.

It was some years after this that God started dealing with me. He would remind me of how often at the same age, I had heard the same Gospel but had never yielded to its claims.

One day in my own home I asked the Lord Jesus Christ into my life. It wasn't however until, when attending a Gospel meeting that I received the assurance of Salvation. The Bible became a new book to me. An unbelievable peace flooded my soul and my whole outlook in life was totally changed. I knew that Christ had done something for me.

There were many missions held around Cookstown over the years and I would attend as many as possible. I just loved listening to the Word of God being preached. It was in the summer of 1983 that a tent mission came to the Lissan Road in Cookstown. It was from this mission that a new church was born called the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church.

Right from the beginning God made it abundantly clear to me that this was to be my spiritual home. We started to meet in a small wooden hall with just a few people. The Lord was in our midst and He has wonderfully blessed the work. That hall holds many happy memories of blessed times we had together. We often sensed the Lord's presence in a real way.

God wonderfully answered prayer for me in saving many of my family including my husband Bertie who went to be with Him some years ago.

There have been many trials in life but God has always seen me through. I can say with the hymn writer, "I never could doubt Him or journey without Him for Jesus is precious to me."

Sunday by Sunday as I sit under the ministry and teaching of a faithful Pastor who we praise God for, I have been truly blessed. I just want to live for the Lord.

Mrs. Jean Crane



My former name was Jean Leonard from Ardtrea. I was the eldest of a large family. As children we were sent along to Sunday School twice on a Sunday. In the morning to the nearby church Ardtrea Parish and in the afternoon Kingsmills Gospel Hall. It was in the latter that I heard of my need of Salvation, but not having anyone in my family to encourage me to take this step I put it to the back of my mind.

When I reached the age of 18 I married Thomas Crane. On Boxing Day 1999 we celebrated our 61st Wedding Anniversary. We were blessed with a son called James and 2 years later we had another son called Thomas. We didn't know when Thomas was born that God would only give him to us for a short time of 2 months. I often

felt bitter at God for taking away my son at such an early age. I would often question, why!? When our son James came to the age for confirmation I decided that as I had never been confirmed that I ought to be at the same time. This to me was just ritual as I knew it would do nothing for me. In latter years my husband Tommy became ill. We had lived for many years in Omagh but felt that we should move back to Cookstown.

In the early 1980s my sister in law Mrs. Mavis Leonard got saved. She would invite me to different meetings but at first I wasn't interested. One night I decided to go along to a Mission at the Lissan Road. I knew that God was speaking to me but I still didn't get saved. In February 1984 the Logos OM ship docked in Belfast and some of the crew visited Cookstown on outreach. A young man asked me at my door, "was I saved?" and I had to answer "no". I felt that this was my opportunity to get right with God and so simply on my knees at the settee I asked the Lord Jesus to forgive my sins. I never regret taking that step; my only regret is that I didn't do it early in my life.

I thank God that sometime later my husband Tommy also trusted Christ as his Saviour. One night while I was attending a meeting in our church, he telephoned Mrs. Patterson and she had the joy of leading him to the Lord. I now look back and see that my parting with my son Thomas is only for a short time. My desire is that God will help me to serve Him for the remainder of my life.

Mrs. Crane has been one of our foundation members of our congregation. She has always been very faithful to the work. Because of health reasons she moved a few years ago from her home just opposite the church and is now a resident in the Fairfields Care Home.

Mrs. Hilary Black



"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift". 2 Cor. 10v15, just 8 words, but words which have been precious to me. I was brought up on a farm at Ardtrea where I lived with my parents and brothers. It was a good home where we were loved, taught to work hard and have proper values in life. Unfortunately it was not a Christian home and my parents thought that as long as you lived, a good, straight, decent life and went to church regularly that you would be in Heaven one day. I thought the same as I didn't know any different. I wasn't taught about Salvation at Church, home or Sunday School and I had no close relatives as far as I can remember who were saved people.

I met Kenneth when I was 17. He was a Christian so it wasn't long before I realized there was something different about him. He started to ask me to Gospel meetings. One night we attended Aughrim Gospel Hall where the late Hedley Murphy was speaking on prophecy. What a shock! These meetings frightened me and made me uncomfortable. I started to read my Bible and attend other meetings sometimes along with my mother. A tent campaign came later that Summer conducted by Hedley Murphy and it was here that I gave my heart to Christ. Later Kenneth and I got married and we were blessed with 3 children. It was in 1985, when our children were small that we started to attend the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. My parents Willie and Violet Stewart were already attending this church. I am glad we did as our children heard the Gospel faithfully taught at Lifeliners, Sunday School, and church. Looking back over the years I am glad I have a loving Saviour to guide and to keep me and my family. We have now 2 Granddaughters Mya and Faye Lily and my desire is that they along with the rest of my family will come to know my Saviour too.

Mrs. Margaret Martin



Mrs. Martin went to be with the Lord in January 2004. She wrote her testimony for the Oct-Dec 2000 issue of the Church Gazette. She lived at Morgan's Hill Road, a short distance from the church.

I would describe my early childhood days, as days that I look back upon with many happy memories. I was brought up always to work hard on the family farm. Our home was between Lisnaskea and Enniskillen. For a short time I lived with my aunt right on the border. In fact when I went to bed my head could be in the South of Ireland and my feet in the North!

My background is Methodist. I was brought up that no matter if it was hail, rain or snow we had to walk a number of miles to church and Sunday School. As children we would receive 6 pence for the collection. This seemed very tempting to have to give all this as an offering so often I would spend part of it in the shop I would pass on the way to church. We heard the Word of God taught faithfully. The sermons were good but I was a bit of a rascal and was not very interested in them and so often I was given sweets to keep me quiet.

Back years ago in Fermanagh there were lots of Mission Halls. I attended many of these and sat under the preaching of many of God's servants who worked in the Irish Evangelistic Band and also the Faith Mission. It was however in a tin hut

belonging to the Elim Church in Brookborough that I came under conviction of sin and got saved. I don't remember the date but I do remember the experience.

As a teenager I wanted to get married but back then I had to wait until I was 21. I married Henry Martin a Postman from Sussex. He passed away many years ago. We had our trials but God had always been good to us during the 40 years or so that we lived in Cookstown. It was during the 'big snow' of 1947 that we lost our little child when he was only 16 months old. That was very difficult to accept but I know we will meet again one day in Heaven.

I started quite a number of years ago to attend the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. The Lord has blessed me there and I must say, "that I never took as great an interest in any other church in my life". I enjoy the Sunday service and the Ladies Fellowship. I just want to spend the rest of my days in doing what I can for the Lord.

Mr. Sammy Allen



I will always be eternally thankful that God saw fit to bring the Faith Mission Pilgrims Billy and Mary Magee to preach the Gospel in the Hall just beside our home in the year 1966. It was during the Mission on 3rd March that I repented of my sins and sought the Lord in His mercy to save me. God has been so good to me over many years, whether on the mountaintop or in the valley, He has always been faithful. I was an out and out Methodist for many years and still a Methodist at heart but some years ago I felt that the Methodist Church had left me.

Today I thank God for bringing into the Cookstown district the Independent Methodist Church. Having been a Methodist all my life I loved the message they proclaimed. I got to know the Pastor shortly after he came to Cookstown and though I still went to the Methodist Church we often would meet and have fellowship sometimes at other meetings in the area. After some years had passed by I told him that the Holy Spirit was drawing me towards the Independent Methodist Church. I joined the Church in the year 2000 after a long battle wondering what to do. I know it took me a long number of years but I thank God that He clearly led me here. I praise Him for the fellowship, worship and prayer - this has been a blessing to me. The Rev. Patterson has been more than a friend to me, through his ministry in preaching, visitation and leading me through a time of

serious illness. I have always been welcome at the manse by Mrs. Patterson and the 3 boys. And I thank God for them all. On arrival at the Church on Sunday morning the welcome is from the heart and you take your seat and feel the presence of God. This has been a Bethel to me and the Word preached in power and the fullness of the Spirit of the Lord. It brings joy to your soul and prepares you for another week. Then the midweek prayer meeting. The Pastor starts it off with a Word from the Bible, then a good number pray. It is very moving listening to the brothers and sisters pour out their hearts to God. It is through this time of prayer that God blesses the ministry of the Church, souls are saved and God's people are blessed and sick people are touched and healed.

In 2005 I had a trapped nerve in my back and a chest infection which sent me to hospital for a week, after which. I came home in reasonable health. It was later at a Sunday morning service that I collapsed with a heart problem, some weeks later I collapsed again. I thank God for the many good folks in Church who rendered their services to me. We are blessed to have a paramedic and nurse in the congregation. I went to the Royal Victoria Hospital and got a pacemaker fitted. Then the following year I was diagnosed with bowel cancer. I have learned much from my health experiences. God is fulfilling His plan in my life, and I will praise Him until travelling days are over. One Sunday night after I recovered I gave my testimony in the Church. Back then I didn't know what all God was planning for me. Another dear friend in the Church Mr. John Anderson was also going through a period of sickness. We got very friendly and often visited each other in the Royal Victoria Hospital. I visited John 2 days before he was heading off for surgery in the Royal Victoria Hospital. We spent quite some time together talking about our sicknesses. He loved the Lord and wasn't ashamed of it. He also had been very friendly with the Rev. Patterson and often talked about him. I was to return and visit him after his surgery, but John did not come home. He didn't recover from surgery and the Lord called him home. One day we will meet again.

What has the Church meant to me? It is a foretaste of Heaven and a blessing in a sin sick world. Praise the Lord.

Mrs. Eileen Young

"Littlebridge House, Drummullan" is where I was born. My father was a farmer and both he and my mother worked very hard to rear the family of 5. From a child I was sent to Sunday School and Church at Ballygoney Presbyterian Church. I became a communicant but never knew that I needed to be saved. After leaving school I worked in the Daintyfit Factory in Cookstown and later in Milligan's supermarket. In 1975 I met Robert and we were married in 1980. The Lord blessed us with 2 boys Alan and David.



John my eldest brother had been going to the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church for some time and later encouraged us to go there too. We started to attend and there I heard the Gospel preached in its simplicity, and I wanted to hear more, about how the Lord Jesus died for me a sinner. It didn't matter about all my good deeds, nor my Church attendance, I knew I still was unsaved.

One Sunday morning the Rev. Patterson announced that after the service there would be a Communion service of thanksgiving to remember the Lords death. He announced, "if you know and love the Lord as your own and personal Saviour, you are welcome to join with us." I knew then that although I knew of the Lord Jesus, I didn't have a personal relationship with Him. It was from here the Lord would start to convict me. On Sundays I would hear about eternity, I knew I didn't want to be in Hell and I was so afraid of death. On 1st February 2004 a Mission started in our Church, the evangelist was the Rev. Philip Johnston from Omagh. I attended regularly every night and praise God on 9th February 2004 after the meeting the Rev. Patterson led me to the Lord. Since I got saved the Lord has been, "my refuge and strength". He has walked with me in the dark valleys and has been a stronghold in the day of trouble.

My brother John died one week after major surgery which was in March 2007. That has been a tremendous loss to all our family, but thank God that he was ready to go and one day we will meet to part no more. I now help out in Lifeliner's and I enjoy it tremendously. I love the Prayer Meeting and have seen God answer prayer. I thank Him for saving my son David and continue to pray earnestly for the remainder of my family and friends. Thank God for the spiritual guidance of Rev. Patterson and Mrs. Patterson and for the prayers and friendship of the Church family in Cookstown. It has been a great encouragement to me in my spiritual pathway.

Mr. David Trainor



I was one of a family of six children, brought up on a small farm outside Cookstown. My family all belong to Desertcreat Parish Church. On Sundays we were sent faithfully to Sunday School and to the services. I was taught the traditions of religion but not the necessities.

At the age of 16 I joined the army. Here you were taught about discipline, obeying orders, and how to survive physically and mentally in any situation that may arise. Needless to say as you can imagine there were many opportunities to be involved in the things of the world within army life. Nightclubs, alcohol and

cigarettes were all easily accessible and I partook of all of them. In July 1982 I married Lynn Weir from Moneymore. Our first daughter was born 2 years later. We decided to return home and arrangements were made to transfer from the army to the UDR. Two more daughters were later added to the family! We set up home in Cookstown and decided to send our eldest girl to the same Sunday School that I had attended. She wouldn't settle and so after some consideration we decided to send her to the Cookstown Independent Methodist Sunday School. Looking back I believe this was the Lord working out my path to come to Him.

The following years I attended this Church occasionally. I would hear how Christ died for me, was crucified for my sins and the need for Salvation if I would ever be in Heaven.

A Gospel campaign later came to our Church. I attended it and knew that God was calling me to trust Him as my Saviour. I went to visit the Rev. Patterson on the Saturday night just to talk things over. Even while there I still thought that I would make it to the pub after the visit. I left his home that night under real conviction of sin and inwardly knowing that it was time that I was getting saved. The following Sunday morning on the way out of the service I literally broke down in tears in the hallway. I couldn't go on any longer. In the upstairs room the Pastor prayed and led me to the Lord. Psalm 34v4 became very real to me. "This poor man cried and the Lord heard him". That poor man was a picture of me! That was Sunday morning 25th February 1996: Jesus broke the chains of sin and set me free.

I found fellowship with God's people very important and I am glad that early in my Christian life I had a great longing in my heart for the place of prayer. God has been good to me. I have found in my Christian life there have been many setbacks that only prayer and encouragement from God's people have seen me through. The Pastor has always been of great help to me. I know I would not and could not have done it on my own. I still pray and trust God that one day each of my family will come and find this same Saviour who saved me those years ago.

Mr. George Thom

I was brought up in the town land of Orritor, just a few miles from Cookstown. We lived on a small farm which meant plenty of homegrown goods. I had a good life and went to Orritor School. My father was a saved man, and we were sent to Sunday School most Sundays. I never remember hearing or being told at Sunday School of my need to be saved.

When I left school I began to work in the Bacon Factory in Cookstown. Now that I was earning my



own money I was able to taste the things of the world! I started off moderately at the picture house, the dance hall and then on to the gambling. When I look back I can see over the past years how subtle the Devil is when he says "there is no harm in it".

As I grew older the girls came into my life. During my lunch hour my friend and I would walk around Cookstown. We started to visit a Greengrocers shop because there was an attraction behind the counter. My friend fixed me up with the girl a Miss Violet Lennox and later we got married. The Lord blessed us with 3 children. The call of the world was still in my life and I was travelling a road to destruction and misery.

One day one of the boys took ill and was taken to hospital. After a time in hospital we were told we would lose the boy, so we decided to bring him home. We didn't know how to pray, we just asked the Lord to make the child well again. I promised that I would change my ways. Thank the Lord the child got better. The Lord kept His promise, but sad to say "I never kept my promise to the Lord". Around 1972/1973 my brother Winston stopped smoking. I said, "if you stay off a year let me know and I will stop". I did stop, I didn't know it but this was the Lord Jesus Christ working in my life. In 1978 the desire for drink had left me. This brought a lot of peace to our home.

Quite a number of years later my wife and I started to attend the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church on Sunday nights. We live in the housing area beside it. I can say we clearly heard the Gospel preached, we heard about sin and that Heaven was only for those who were saved. The Holy Spirit was dealing with me and no matter where we were on Sundays we always made it back to attend the evening service.

One Friday afternoon while we were driving past the Church we noticed that the Pastor was painting the outside of the wall. I said to Violet "why would no-one help to paint the wall?" On my way back I stopped and offered to help and to my surprise my offer was accepted.

The Harvest services came to the Church and Violet and I attended. During the services conviction of sin deepened in my life. On the Sunday night the message really opened up my heart so much that when I went to bed I could not rest or sleep. The power of the Word of God had gripped me. In the morning I went to work at Dunman Creamery where I started the pasteurization plant which didn't seem to be running correctly. It was around 5:30 am 1st November 1983. I realized that it was the Lord Jesus Christ calling me. I just sat down on the chair, confessed and repented of my sins and asked the Lord to save me. On that morning the Lord made me over anew. The Lord saved my wife Violet at around the same time. We are so grateful for all the Lord has done for us.

Mr. Sydney McMullan



I was the eldest of a family of 4. Brought up on a farm near the Moy, I was sent to Sunday School and Church. My parents were very good people but not saved. My Grandfather, who was a saved man, lived with us, and I remember hearing him sing hymns around the house. His favourite hymn was "when the roll is the called up yonder I'll be there".

At the age of 15 I left school and started working on the Dairy Farm at home. I did not have much time to get involved with the things of the world, but I was still a sinner. The Bible says in Romans 3v23 "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God".

I was married at the age of 21 and set up home near Stewartstown. Within a few years my wife and I, were blessed with a daughter called Judith and a little boy called Jonathan. We were very happy and felt that life was going well for us. When Jonathan was about 1 year old my wife started having fainting attacks. Later, tests were carried out in hospital. One day the Doctor called me into his office to tell me that my wife had cancer. This was a very big shock for me. 2 months later she had a serious operation which was not successful and 1 month later she died at the age of 29. I didn't know where to turn and I was very sad.

I do believe that through all this God gave help because I felt that I had coped fairly well. Some years later I had an incident when a bull attacked me and God wonderfully spared my life.

After some time had passed, I met Jennifer and we got married. A few years later we were blessed with another girl called Sharon. Sometime after a Mission came to our area and Jennifer got saved. The following year she started to attend the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. I also went to that Church the occasional time when I could get away from the farm. Later, we both attended more frequently. I felt I was hearing the Gospel and I knew that I needed to be saved.

In February 2002 a Mission came to the Church conducted by the Rev. Alec Passmore. As I attended the Mission each night the Lord was really speaking to me about getting saved. On 14th February I stayed behind after the meeting was over and the Rev. Passmore led me to the Lord. I thank the Lord for the way He has kept me and guided me ever since.

Sydney and Jennifer were very faithful members of our congregation and in 2005 moved to the home farm and now attend the Dungannon Church.

Mr. Mervyn Ferguson

My early childhood days were spent at Coagh where I attended Ardboe Primary School. I was sent regularly to the Parish church where I had been baptized as a child and was later confirmed.

I was never too fond of school and when I was able to leave I took a job as a mechanic. From this I spent twenty years working in the Cheese Factory just outside Cookstown. In 1999 I started working in Copelands.



In life I had an interest in listening to pipe bands and came to know David Trainor who plays the bag pipes. He often witnessed to me and invited me different times to attend the Independent Methodist church in Cookstown. I eventually started to attend during the later part of 2007. Once again I was hearing about my need of Salvation. I had heard about Jesus dying for me and my need to trust Him. My mother would have sent us to different church meetings when we, as a family were growing up.

As I listened to Rev. Patterson preach, a great longing came into my heart to be saved but I never could pick up the courage to stay behind and talk to the Pastor.

One Sunday Rev. Patterson gave me a church calendar. It was the 25th anniversary one of the Cookstown Church. I didn't know a few weeks before how useful it would prove to be.

A mission started in the church, February past 2008 and again on the Sunday evening I longed to be saved but once again the devil got the victory and I went home.

The preacher made reference to his brother who had suffered a heart attack, but God in His mercy had spared and saved him. I asked myself that night, "If this had been me, where would my soul be?"

The following morning I suffered a very severe heart attack and I was rushed to the Royal Victoria Hospital. That was where the church calendar would come in so useful.

While in the ambulance I asked my wife to contact Rev. Patterson, she would get his telephone number on the calendar and ask him, "could he come and visit me that Monday in Belfast?"

He was at his home place at Ballygawley and Mrs. Patterson got the message through to him. It wasn't long until he was at my bedside. I remember well, lying in hospital surrounded by machines and drips and saying to him how glad I was that he had taken time to come and see me.

It didn't take long for me to say that I really wanted to get saved. He led me to the Lord, as I lay on what could have been my death bed. I have been in hospital a number of times since and I have had the opportunity to tell others about my experience and to share the Gospel with them.

I love listening to the word of God preached and have been truly blessed through the ministry of our Pastor. I am now back at work again and anyone I meet hears about what Jesus has done for me. I recommend Him to you if you still don't know him.

Mr. Alan Elliott



I was brought up on our farm near Stewartstown, the second eldest of a family of five boys and one girl. It was a good home but not a Christian one. I have many happy childhood memories that I thank God for.

I did not attend Sunday School and only started attending Church when I was around the age of seven after a neighbour offered to bring my older brother and myself along. Soon our mother started to attend Church with us. We also had a minister who visited our Primary School and told us Bible stories but I never remember being told that I needed to be saved. I continued to attend Church out of the sense of duty and believed life simply consisted of doing your best, not doing anybody harm and you would get to Heaven. By now my older brother was out working and I was looking forward to leaving school and starting work also. However on 24th October 1978 tragedy struck our home when my brother Jim aged eighteen was killed in an accident at work.

Our whole lives were turned upside down and my parents never got over that day. After Jim's funeral an elderly Christian man visited our home and explained about the uncertainty of life and that God's ways are not our ways and maybe Jim's death could be God's way of showing us that we were not living as we should. A few months later my whole family started to attend Church.

Soon I left school, started my first job and made new friends and began to go out to discos at the weekends. In 1979 I was involved in a motor cycle accident and it wasn't until sometime later that I realized that God maybe used this accident as a means of bringing me down. At that time it never struck me that if I had been killed I would have ended up in a Christless eternity.

In the early 1980's a new minister came to our Church and he arranged a two-week Gospel Mission conducted by Rev. Craig from Portadown. I attended the

Mission and as the nights went by started to enjoy the meetings. One night Rev. Craig spoke on Heb. 2v3. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great Salvation". I was put under conviction of sin and for the first time in my life I knew if I died still in my sin I would go to Hell. That night at my bedside I simply asked the Lord Jesus to forgive all my sins and invited Him into my heart. At first I didn't feel any different but later I received the assurance of God's Salvation in my life. The early days of being saved were not easy and I was afraid of what my friends and family would say so I did not tell them that I had got saved until some time later.

There have been many times in my life of which I could testify to God's leading and guidance. In 1985 I got a new job in the ambulance service and a few months later I was introduced by a friend to Esther. In 1990 we got married and set up home in Orritor and God blessed us with two girls. We have been attending Cookstown Independent Methodist Church since we were married and have been truly blessed by the faithful ministry of Rev. Patterson.

Finally I would like to say that I am so thankful to serve a loving, faithful and a long suffering God who is not willing that anyone should perish and I would strongly urge any unsaved person who may be reading this testimony to accept God's free gift of Salvation through Jesus Christ His Son who died on Calvary for your sins as well as mine.

John Ch. 3 v 16. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Mr. Simon Black



I had the privilege to be born into a good Christian home, which is all too often taken for granted. I have an older brother Tim, and a younger sister Abigail. From my earliest recollections I was taught the Word of God. I knew that Jesus died on a cross and if I repented of my sins then I would experience His saving grace in my life. Each Sunday at Sunday School and Church I was reminded of this fact.

As a child I did ask the Lord to save me, but never had the real assurance of Salvation. After finishing my G.C.S.E's at Cookstown High School I felt the pull of the world upon my young life. It was at this point one of my friends became a Christian. This started me thinking about my spiritual state.

I knew that my heart was not right in God's sight, and that God was convicting me. A year passed by and the Lord kept speaking to me. One night a friend asked me, if I was saved? I had to answer "no". Just then I imagined what it would be like for me to stand before the Great White Throne Judgment, the Lord asking the same question and I would reply with the same answer.

This really frightened me, I started to seriously think about Salvation. I left my friends and went straight home. The devil whispered in my ear that my friends would laugh at me and I'd never be able to carry it through. Anyway I decided that I couldn't let this opportunity pass even if I had no friends as a result. That night I knelt at my bedside and asked the Lord into my life and to forgive my sins. After this I never felt I'd missed out in any way by being a Christian. My life was much happier and took on a new meaning.

I was thankful that the Lord guided me, especially as I prayed about which course and university to attend. My first year at Stranmillis was a little difficult as I had no Christian friends there. I did take my stand for the Lord at the start of the course and soon my fellow students got to know that it was pointless to ask me to go out clubbing and to the pubs. This was a testing time for me but towards the end of that year I met up with a few other Christian boys and we became friends. I'm thankful that the Lord kept me at this time when it would have been so easy to have gone back into the world. The Lord has provided for me in every way. Many times I'm sure I haven't even realized it. He has given me a teaching post in Ballyclare High School which I enjoy and has brought Pamela into my life. We now live at Ardtrea and have 2 daughters, Mya and Faye Lily. The best advice I can give you is to give your life to the Lord and He will direct you. Proverbs 3v5-7.

Mr. Stanley Reid



There are many great things in this world to have, but one of the greatest must be a testimony to God's saving grace. One day we will all have to leave our earthly things behind us, and knowing the Saviour will be all that really matters.

I was brought up on a farm at Drumard. From here we were sent to Lissan Parish Church and also to the Sunday School there every Sunday. I attended day school which was a place I always hated and many times I thought I would rather go to jail than go to school. Some days I would scheme from school and spend my time in the nearby plantation. I said farewell to school at the age of 13 Years of age and took up work for a farmer. It wasn't long until I was mixing with those who were much older than myself. They introduced me to the pubs, playing darts and then to drink. I started smoking when I was young and many times I would gather up the butts from along the roadside to smoke them.

One day into our district came the Faith Mission pilgrims. They were no strangers to us, as my father at different times allowed them to use the bottom of one of our fields to set up their tent for their Missions. I started attending the Mission, as there wasn't much else for us to do. We had no TV's in those days. Sometimes nine or ten of us would go along and squeeze into the back seat. This time the Mission was being held in Knockadoo in a Blacksmiths shop. The late R.A. Patrick's father was the Blacksmith at that time. We went to the Mission for a laugh and brought matches with us, and while the Pilgrims preached we would break them up and flick them into the ladies hats in front of us.

One night the Pilgrims were having a prayer meeting, a few had gathered to pray, amongst them the late Mr. Bob Mitchell. For those of you who remember Bob he had a fairly loud voice. That night as I listened to the praying going on inside I heard Bob pray for different people one of whom was Stanley Reid! For the first time in my life I realized that I needed to be saved. One night one of the Pilgrims preached about the Saviour knocking at the door of my heart. I never forget that night it was such a challenge to me but I trembled for the fear of man. I left off Salvation each night, but even in my sleep I could hear Bob Mitchell pray for me. If I got saved maybe they would say I had become a "headcase". Near to the end of the Mission I thought of all that I would have to give up if I was to get saved and I reckoned the cost was too great. God however, kept working in my life. I came up with a plan that maybe I would get saved. I told God I would go that night to the Mission and if the back seat was full I would move up the hall and I would get saved. That night I had to go to the front seats. I don't know what was preached but as soon as the Mission ended I responded to the Saviour. One of the Pilgrims knelt on the cement floor with me; carpets would have been a luxury then! An oil lamp gave the light for the Scriptures. I confessed my sins, that was on a Thursday night. The Lord had saved me! My cigarettes went into the old Blacksmith's stove. My best encouragement was being invited to attend a prayer meeting. That's well over 50 years ago now, as a lad of 17 years of age.

Life has had its ups and downs. A very dark cloud came over us one day when I returned home from my work in the Cement Works to discover that my wife wasn't well. Later she discovered she had cancer and only had weeks to live. What a shock that was! I left the hospital that day, I was so upset I couldn't find my car in the car park, I didn't know what to do. We had five young children, four boys and a girl.

God drew graciously near to us and in November 1981 God took my wife home. At times I didn't know what to do, I would be up at 6 o'clock to get out the washing and then returning after my work in the Cement Works to see that the rain had all washed onto the ground again. I had good friends who prayed for me and were a great help to me. There were times when I would go to bed and feel that I would never be able to stick this pressure, but God saw me through and blessed us. We lived at the Grange Road at this time. I prayed that God would get us a house in the town. To me it was a miracle the way that He undertook and

provided. I didn't want to be going into debt and so my house sold for the same price as my new one. I've learned in life that its good to pray about everything.

Some years ago I had a stroke. For someone who has lived an active life this has brought about great changes. God has been good and has seen me through difficult times before. I would sincerely like to thank all who have prayed for me and who encourage me. I'm glad that my life and my future is in the Lord's hands - what about yours?

For some years now I belong to the Independent Methodist Church which is just across the road from where I live. I have been greatly blessed there.

In His Hands

By Noel Grant

What lies out ahead for me?
Thankfully, I cannot see;
But, of this, I'm always sure,
Blessed Jesus goes before.
Ever faithful friend and guide,
With me now, whate'er betide:
Come what may, from life's demands,
Praise the Lord, I'm in His hands!

Mr. Jack Irwin



I was brought up on a farm at Ballymaguire. The home has been in the family for four generations. I had two brothers and two sisters. I was the fourth child; sadly my eldest brother William David died from whooping cough. This was a great blow to my parents and my mother never really got over it. My mother was a real born again Christian and believed in us hearing the Gospel from a young age, so we were sent faithfully to the Brethren Sunday School which, on a Sunday was probably much to my dislike.

I came under deep conviction of sin through the prayers of my mother and I asked the Lord into my heart at the age of 12. I wasn't going to tell anyone but then I told my mother and she was delighted. I attended Ballytrea Primary School which I must admit I was not very fond of, I would rather have been at home on the farm working with the horses.

When I reached the age of 13 years I left school. I didn't worry too much about education. A short time after this a mission was held in Curglasson Mission Hall

conducted by Mr Boland and Mr Wheeler, and it was there that I got the full assurance of Salvation.

John 6 v 37 says "Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" and in Romans 10 v 13, "For whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

My father went to the Church of Ireland and naturally I went there too, for a long number of years, after I left Sunday School.

Later I was to meet a girl called Barbara who became my wife. The Lord blessed us with three girls and two boys.

Gradually through time work took over my life, God was not having the place that He should have and I realized I was following afar of. As a result I got into a backsliden state and was anything but happy. But I knew the Holy Spirit still kept dealing with me for which I am thankful.

Some years ago my wife wasn't happy with the church that we belonged to. We talked this matter over and decided to go different places on a Sunday night, but few appealed to us. One night we attended the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church and it was there we really heard the Gospel preached. We continued to attend on a Sunday night, until one night my wife enquired of a lady could anyone come on the Sunday mornings and the lady said that, "we would be very welcome". At that time the church met in the wooden building.

The following Sunday morning when I came in from the farm my wife said she was going to the Independent Methodist church. When she arrived home I got the whole sermon from her so I might as well have been there myself!

That morning I knew it was time for me to ask the Lord to restore unto me "the joy of His Salvation", and I thank God that He heard me. The words that came to me were "Take up thy cross and follow me" and "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

Life is full of ups and downs. Six months later two of our daughters were involved in a serious road traffic accident. The eldest girl wasn't expected to live, as her injuries were so horrific. But there again the power of prayer is much greater and I thank God that He spared our two daughters.

Some years ago Barbara had a brain haemorrhage. She was given little hope of recovery, as only one in three ever survive. I was devastated and so was our whole family. I depended so much on her, she has always been a true help mate. God graciously spared her and brought her home to us again; for this I will be eternally grateful.

God has been good to us and has been with us through many difficult times. I sincerely, "thank God" and all who have prayed for me and our family and who have been an encouragement to me in my Christian life. I have been truly blessed by the faithful ministry of Rev. Patterson over these many years now.

All I want to do with the rest of my life is to put God first. I pray that my testimony will give encouragement to some one else and I conclude with the words of the hymn.

"What a day that will be,
When my Jesus I shall see,
And I look upon His face,
The one who saved me by His grace,
When He takes me by the hand,
And leads me through the promised land,
What a day, glorious day that will be".

Mr. David Stewart



Two verses of Scripture which spoke to me as a young man were, Gen. 6 v 3, "My Spirit shall not always strive with man." And Rev. 3 v 20, "Behold I stand at the door and knock."

My recollections of child hood were whenever my parents separated, when I was about 12 years of age. I was brought up mostly by an unmarried aunt of mine who owned a small farm. I didn't like school and because I had a bad stoppage I was inclined to be very shy in class. After I reached the age of about 18, like most young people I thought I knew it all. I got myself a car but was never worried about taxing, mot, or insuring it. It wasn't long until the police got to know me and often I got into trouble.

In early years I would have gone to church but didn't understand really what was being preached. I do however remember one day listening to a sermon about Hell. I was very afraid of ever being there. I knew I wasn't saved and one day intended to be.

After leaving school I was a mechanic and often people would leave their cars in to be repaired. One day there was a top of the range BMW left with me to repair. I thought it would be very impressive to drive up and down the long main street of Cookstown in it. I eventually drove my borrowed BMW out to the Moneymore Road corner where there used to be a Shell Service Station. I noticed at the road side a young woman with a massive ruck sack beside her. I thought to myself there's a "damsel in distress". I did a handbrake turn and spun around on the road. I immediately thought there's a girl I could marry.

That girl was hitching a lift to Larne to get the boat back to Scotland. That day however she never got to Larne. I started a relationship with her and we lived together for many years. I believe that God had His hand upon my life, no doubt there were those who were praying for me but I felt I didn't deserve to be saved. It wasn't until the beginning of January 2005 that God started to draw Tina and myself to the Independent Methodist Church in Cookstown. Shortly after attending Tina trusted the Lord Jesus Christ as her Saviour. I began to think seriously about getting saved. I was so afraid of my friends as to how I could ever tell them that I was thinking this way. It was on Sunday 23rd January 2005 that I gave my heart to Christ.

After getting saved I realized who the devil was and he often tormented me and reminded me of my sin. One day I picked up the courage to call at the manse to speak to our Pastor. I'm glad I did. I was able to speak confidentially to him. From the Word of God he showed me as to how we may remember our sins after we are converted but God not only forgives but forgets them.

It was on 14th May 2005 that I married that girl who had been hitching the lift, all those years prior. I give God thanks that now we have a Christian home.

Mrs. Tina Stewart

I was born on the Isle of Lewis which is at the top North West corner of Scotland. This is an island that has known revival coming to it in the past. I had heard about the revival but I've never witnessed it. When I was growing up there was a lot of spiritual darkness. I would describe my parents as God fearing, and they sent me along to Sunday School and also to church. I don't ever remember hearing the Gospel being preached regarding my personal need of Salvation. There were those in my family who were saved but never told me of my need. Maybe it was that my mind couldn't then take it in.

I went into the ways of the world in my early teens. I began drinking heavily and taking drugs and when I reached the age of 15 I ran away from home. I thought that my problems would now be over and that I would find something better in life but that wasn't to be and I always seemed to run into more trouble. God preserved my life and I believe its only because of God's mercy and grace that I am still alive. I never could settle anywhere and was constantly searching for things that would never satisfy. I had travelled much but I couldn't find the missing link, my life was so empty.

In 1992 I was living in Denmark. My sister who was saved was involved in a car accident which claimed her life. I knew she was in Heaven and would keep asking myself the question what if it was me? I knew that I wasn't prepared for eternity. I used to be very angry with God for allowing my sister to be killed.

I moved to live in Ireland many years ago and when David picked me up and offered me a lift I was at the end of my tether and was contemplating suicide. I was so low and this I thought would be an easy solution. I believe looking back on that day that the Lord had His hand in bringing David and me together. We lived together for many years and both of us were in the things of the world. After some time I got very tired of the parties and all that the world offers and I went through a very dark time in my life when I became deeply depressed.

I had a Bible that my sister had given me on my 18th birthday. I always kept it but never opened it but one day while in depression I began to read where Jesus said, "come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden and I will give you rest."

I was searching and in December 2004 both David and I found ourselves in the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. This was our first time. We spent that Christmas and New Year in Dublin which was when the tsunami took place. I was so afraid and I asked God, "to save both David and myself". I was still searching. The following weekend I was back in the Cookstown Fellowship and though there were many present that night I felt God saying to me that "now is the time to get right with Him". I cried floods of tears all through that meeting - in fact the hymn sheet was soaked through. I knew I couldn't go out of the service without speaking to the Pastor. It seemed a long walk from the pew to the hallway where he was shaking the peoples hands as they left the service. I tried hard to compose myself and told him that I wanted to get saved. That was on Sunday 9th January 2005. My life became new and I found the true meaning that night when Jesus came into my heart. I can honestly say that, "I love Jesus". I can never understand why He loved such a person as me but my life has been completely changed. I have a love for people now which I never had before. I look at every day as a gift from God and I thank Him that I am still alive.

David was saved two weeks later and we were married by Rev. Patterson on 14th May 2005. Our wedding though small was a tremendous day. The highlight for us both was the presence of God in blessing our wedding day. We both look forward now to what God has for us in the future and in His plan.

Louise McCormick

I was brought up a Roman Catholic. We were a family of three girls and one boy. My mother and father separated when we were quite young and because of the circumstances we were placed in a children's home. The home was mainly run by nuns and there was a chapel beside it and so we went to mass every Sunday. We were well looked after but I suppose the most important thing was, that the four of us were kept together. Sometimes when families separate



they never see each other until later in life. After a year or so in care we came back to live in Cookstown. There were still difficulties in the home but our granny came to live with us and she was a great support to my mother and us.

I remember going back to Primary School which wasn't easy after being away and it took a while to settle back in. At the age of eleven I got confirmed and went on to Secondary School. During those years my granny always encouraged us to go to mass every Sunday. As I got older I only attended chapel for weddings or sometimes funerals.

I left school when I became sixteen and got a job child minding. It was great to earn my own money. I started going to disco's, smoking and drinking and staying out late. This didn't please my mother very much. Things didn't work out at home so I moved out and got a place of my own. In 1990 I met Derek and later on we got married and we were blessed with two daughters. This was the first time I really had any stability in my life. In 1988 Derek gave up lorry driving and got a job driving locally. He started to attend church and missions and when he came home I would enquire how he got on. He related the Gospel message and that was the first time I heard of my need of Salvation. One night I accompanied him to a mission in Coagh. I began to become interested in reading the Bible. I realized it didn't make any difference that I was a Catholic and Derek a Protestant, we both still needed to be saved. God began to work in my life and in 1998 He took away any urge I had for smoking and drinking.

It was about the year 2000 at the Cookstown Independent Methodist Church. I remember one Sunday morning when I was leaving Derek to church, Mrs. Thom came out to speak to us. She invited me in also but I made excuses. A few weeks later I did start to attend. A Gospel mission followed the mission our church had at Dunman and both Derek and I went along to it. It was held in Moneymore Congregational Church, conducted by Rev. Workman. We both got saved on 8th March 2001.

As a family we are glad that God has led us into the Cookstown Fellowship where we have been blessed as we have listened to His Word faithfully preached Sunday by Sunday. The words of this hymn sum up my testimony.

“Thank you Lord, for saving my soul,
Thank you Lord, for making me whole,
Thank you Lord, for giving to me,
Thy great Salvation, so rich and free”

What the Church has meant to me - Mr. Winston Thom

It was Jeremiah the prophet who said in chapter 42 verse 3, "that the Lord thy God may show us, the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do". I remember well the commencement of the work of our Fellowship at Lissan Road. Prior to the launch of the new church in Cookstown a tent campaign was held at Lissan Road. A number of ministers gathered together one night after the meeting to hold a special time of prayer to ask God's will as to whether or not a work should start in Cookstown. The work was born out of prayer.

The church commenced on Sunday 21st August 1983 when a small number were present. The Rev. Cross was the preacher for that first Sunday morning. The hall was very humble, just a wooden portable. No curtains on the windows and our heat came from super sers.

We knew that we needed someone to take up the charge of the work and God answered prayer wonderfully and sent us along Mr. Patterson. He has been with us ever since, even though back then it was to be a temporary charge. We have always been blessed as a Fellowship through his ministry and as was mentioned at the 25th Appreciation Service recently we trust that God will allow him and his wife to remain with us for many more years to come.

There were great financial needs that had to be met as we as a congregation didn't have very much money. We used to gather for prayer in that little hall at different times during the day. God heard our prayers which were in simple faith and He always supplied our needs.

It was in February 1985 that God provided us with a semi permanent building on our present site. It was whenever the planning permission had been turned down for a church that we laboured on in prayer. I never saw new converts as confident in prayer that God would overrule in this seemingly impossible situation and that the plans would go through.

God has answered prayer in a wonderful way for the work amongst the children. I have been Sunday School Superintendent since its inception and now we are beginning to teach another generation of those who previously attended our Sunday School and Lifeliners. As a Fellowship there have been times of sickness and sadness which are all part of the realities of life. There were those who needed major surgery, and God answered prayer in raising them up. Others in His will He has called home to that "land that is fairer than day." We all miss them, they were very much part of us but even during the funeral services we have felt God's presence drawing very near to comfort and support us even in life's dark valleys.

God has been good to us as a Fellowship and it has been wonderful to see prayer answered by the Salvation of precious souls. There are many who attend the work now who previously had been prayed for by the church for years and years. I have observed those who were drifting far from God but He wonderfully undertook and

moved in mysterious ways, melted and broke them down and brought them to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and we all give Him praise for that. I thank God for not only friends but some of my family who have been saved through the work.

Some time ago an old Baptist lady mentioned to me one man in particular who belongs to our Fellowship. She spoke of the tremendous change in his life after he got Saved. We give God praise for answered prayer and we are praying for even greater things.

I was greatly challenged as a young convert by what Rev. Cross spoke on at the inception of the work. He said, "Wherever God has called you to, put your shoulder to the Gospel Chariot and make it go forward". It's a strange thing, sometimes to hear testimonies where people say that, "God has called them to a certain place, but half time they are never there". It has been a challenge to my heart over these 25 years which so quickly have gone into eternity, to seek to put my best into the work here and make it go forward. I love the place of prayer and love to meet with God's people. We praise Him for all that is past and trust Him for all that's to come.

Chapter 10 – Conclusion

It is our prayer that as you have read this book you have been blessed and encouraged to see what God can do from humble beginnings.

It has been impossible for us in the limited space of this book to include all the testimonies and accounts of what God has done.

We give thanks to God for all whom He has led into our Fellowship during this past quarter of a century. It is our prayer that this, “spiritual home” will be a blessing to all until Jesus returns.

E.M. Bounds said, “What the church needs today is not more machinery, not more gimmicks but men, men of believing prayer.”

We as Pastor and people give thanks to God for all His faithfulness to us as a congregation and it is our earnest desire that each one of the congregation will hear the words on that great eternal day, “well done thou good and faithful servant”.

Rev. Malcolm Patterson