

Missionary Alliance congregation needs new home

Main St. church soon to be vacant



Built in 1869 by the Baptists, this Georgetown church has been housing the Christian and Missionary Alliance congregation for almost seven years. The group plans to move into larger quarters now, finding the 112-year old church too small. They've raised over \$150,000 in pledges for the next three years toward purchasing property and building a modern sanctuary. (Herald photos by Ani Pederian)

By ANI PEDERIAN
Herald Staff Writer
The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church in downtown Georgetown needs a new home.

The congregation voted last November to relocate because they found the former Baptist church atop the Main Street hill getting too cramped.

The 125-members pledged more than \$150,000 over the next three years to purchase property and build a new church, according to Reverend Peter Ralph.

Rev. Ralph, 34, is a big man with a soft voice. He's been with the congregation since it numbered only 50 seven years ago.

"This is my first full-time parish church," he said. "I had a lot of learning to do, but the people and I grew together."

Originally from Stoney Creek, Rev. Ralph said he studied at a liberal arts college in Nyack, New York, after he finished high school. Then he worked at the Canadian Theological College in Regina for his master's degree in divinity. Connected with the university of Regina, the theological college is "warmly evangelical", he said.

The Christian and Missionary Alliance Church was founded 100 years ago by a Canadian, Albert Simpson, who based the operation in New York. Rev. Ralph said Mr. Simpson desired to deepen personal Christian life and to preach the gospel to foreign missions.

MISSIONARIES
"Missionary work is very much a part of this church," said Rev. Ralph. "The North American Alliance churches have 1,000 missionaries functioning in 47 countries of the world."

Rev. Ralph said Canada's budget is \$4 million for missions this year. The Georgetown Alliance church pledged \$12,000 last year. To encourage interest in missionary work abroad, a missionary convention is held, with mis-



Tenth
in a series

lonaries brought in to talk to the Georgetown congregation for four days a year.

Rev. Ralph said his church members do some door-to-door missionary work in Hallow Hills. Sharon, his wife, went door-knocking to invite neighbors to bible studies when they first moved to Georgetown, he said.

Rev. Ralph said his congregation isn't growing by taking members from other church groups. Instead, he says, it's attracting people who've chosen to put their faith in Christ, and are "unchurched."

"Sometimes it can be an intimidating experience to come to even the warmest church," Rev. Ralph said sympathetically. "They don't know when to kneel or stand, and are reluctant to come to church." He said people who feel that way can read and study the Bible in their own living room. The home bible study program generates a lot of sharing. With an inductive approach to the bible, Rev. Ralph said, people open up and talk about their lives in the small groups which meet in living rooms.

Dating to 1967 in Georgetown, the Alliance Church began with services held by Paul Collins in the Cedarvale Community Centre, with one family attending. For two

years, members used to bring their own heaters with them to service, plugging them in against the cold.

UNTIL MOVED
The growing group met in homes afterward and at St. Andrew's United Church on Mountainview Road South until they moved into their own building in 1975.

Built in 1869, the Main Street church belonged to the Baptists until they moved into their larger Mountainview location. As a centennial project, the Baptists rebuilt the steeple of the Main Street church.

"They tell me at one point in time when the Baptists were still here, the fire department would come to paint the frames of the church steeple, and the church would feed them dinner," said Rev. Ralph.

The church was rented out to the pentecostals until the Alliance group bought it from the Baptists.

Rev. Ralph commented on how the acoustics inside the church are very effective.

"You can hear resonance just with your voice," he said. "And it's a great place for singing."

The basement of the church has a modern kitchen with appliances donated by its members. A tiny table with low benches sits square in the centre of the kitchen and is used for Sunday School by the tots.

Rev. Ralph said the building used to have an old wood stove, and told the tale of how somebody throwing out the ashes from the stove managed to get the nearby horse shed on fire. The shed is no longer there.

If you look above the old lantern hanging at the entrance of the church foyer, you notice a trap door. Rev. Ralph pulled a long cord to the right

of the front foors to open the trap.

TO BELFRY
"I've never climbed to the belfry, but there are three

ladders which take you all the way to the top," said Rev. Ralph. "I've often thought you could get spectacular photos from up there."

He said the minister's office to the left of the church stage used to house the organ pipes, until the organ was removed.

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IN THE CHURCHES

By Bob Ollivier

Baptists gather in Falls

Several church-related items were overlooked last week when space limitations forced this column's cancellation. The Herald apologizes to its readers.

Last week was the annual convention of the Fellowship of Evangelical Baptist Churches in Canada (long name for a large organization of churches, of which Maple Avenue Baptist in Georgetown is part).

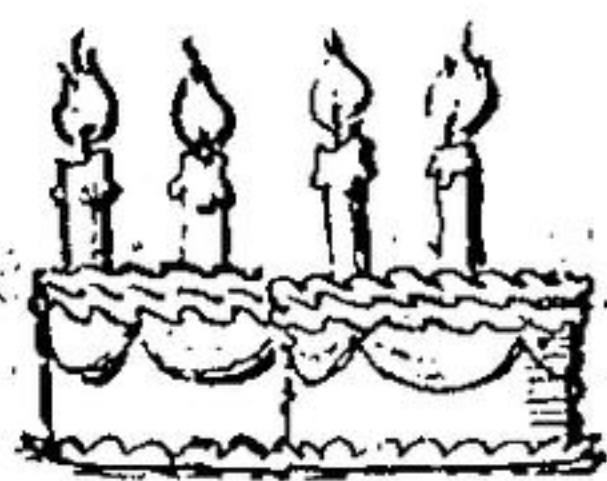
The local church sent delegates to the convention at the Sheraton Brock Hotel in Niagara Falls, Ontario, where the theme was based on Psalm 128-131: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we are glad".

There were delegates from 250 of the 460 churches in the Fellowship, a total of 600 in attendance. The rally of witness was held in the convention centre at Niagara Falls, New York, where 1,000 turned up. Having spoken to some of those delegates last weekend, I caught some of the enthusiasm and the excitement of a church organization moving rapidly ahead in a day when many churches are losing members.

Did you ever wish you could meet some of the characters in the Bible? Last Sunday evening members of Maple Avenue Baptist Church had such an opportunity when David Foster of Oakville's Chartwell Baptist Church gave a "Dramatic Sermon" based on King David. Mr. Foster took a special course at Dallas Theological Seminary in dramatic preaching, and came dressed for the part of the King. A very thought-provoking message in an entirely different form, where the speaker uses no notes, speaks the part of the character and keeps one spell-bound for 30 minutes.

There are about 5,000 in North America and some in our area. Chanting, an integral part of some established religions, is a vital link to their brand of mind control, and should not be looked upon as "cute" or harmless. These cults are a blight on our nation and on Christianity, and should be avoided while being understood and prayed for.

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