

Christian Fellowship

Worship carried out in pastor's basement

By Ted Wilcox
CLAREMONT — Church in a house?

Yes, most certainly, say members of the Stouffville Christian Fellowship, a non-denominational group of about 75 that meets regularly in a concession 8, Pickering, home.

In fact, most actually prefer having a house to the more conventional building for both worship and "fellowship" times together through the week.

Says Fred Tomlinson, pastor of the group, "It's a whole lot cozier and more comfortable than a cold auditorium... And it's conducive to being open to the Lord and to worship."

Meetings are held in a spacious room which runs nearly the length of the downstairs of the house, which is occupied in the upstairs by Mr. Tomlinson, his wife and four children.

"The scripture would suggest," said Mr. Tomlinson, "that the local church is... a company of people who really love one another and enjoy being together. The house becomes the focal point for the fellowship."

Besides two meetings Sunday and another on Thursday night, many members arrive at the house Tuesday evenings and Saturdays, "sharing their lives together," as Mr. Tomlinson puts it.

Members join in work and recreational times at the house, and meals are prepared and eaten together both Saturday night and on Sunday.

The house is owned by the federal government as part of the land expropriated for the shelved Pickering airport project. Mr. Tomlinson said the fellowship would likely be located at the house "for the foreseeable future... but whether we will continue in this location remains to be seen."

"He said that 'what we do hope to see is other groups springing up in other locations.'"

Having a "fellowship house" has been in the mind of Mr. Tomlinson from the group's inception, partly due to his own experience in a large house fellowship in Liverpool, England for eight years, four of which he served in a leadership capacity.

The Stouffville Christian Fellowship gained its name from where its first meetings were held, last summer in Latcham Hall, Stouffville. Since then, meetings have taken place in the Youth Centre on Highway 47 and at the Green River Baptist Church, before the "fellowship house" began to function last fall.

An elder in the group, Gene Paisley of R.R. No. 3, Stouffville at first thought people wouldn't make use of the fellowship house because they would be so involved in their own homes. But later, said Mr. Paisley, he saw there are "thousands of people who need just this kind of thing... Now I'm convinced."

When The Tribune asked several newcomers to the fellowship why they became involved there in the past year, however, the uppermost reason wasn't the meeting place.

A visitor to the area from Holland, Fred DeBruin, said he was "impressed by the love" and that he "saw something of Jesus in these people... There was so much reality to it that I became a Christian."

Stojan Ninkovic, a Yugoslav-born delivery van driver from Toronto said, "I was looking for a particular quality of

fellowship, and the first night I saw it manifest in love."

Mr. Tomlinson admits that not everyone who attends the fellowship reacts in a positive way. Some have been known to leave meetings soon after they start, and others don't come back after several weeks or months at the fellowship.

"A major factor is people don't want to get involved in anything that intense and demanding," he said.

"Some prefer the security of a big, solid denomination... and appreciate church attendance that makes little or no demands on you. It's hard to come without getting involved 100 per cent. It's not nearly so easy to be merely a meeting attendee."

Mr. Tomlinson adds, however, that the majority who come to the fellowship do respond positively. "It's not only outwardly attractive, but meets the deeper inward needs of our lives," he said.

First-time visitors to worship times in the brown brick bungalow rarely go away with a blasé attitude about their experience.

"It's different," said Mr. Tomlinson about the gatherings. "Reactions vary according to the kind of things they're used to... The thing most striking to a person coming in is that these people are deadly serious about what they're doing."

The meetings usually consist of a series of quite spontaneous elements, with everyone encouraged to take part. Evening sessions often last for more than two hours.

"To be a participant is more fun than to be an observer," says Stojan, one of the more vocal worshippers. "And just as I can't sit still during a good 'hockey' game without shouting or clapping, I find it natural for me to participate in worship."

During worship, members are free to express emotions, pray aloud, choose hymns, use a "gift of the Spirit" or "share" from the Bible or their own experience.

"Gifts of the Spirit" are believed to be powers divinely given "for the profit of all," in the words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12, the apostle listed these "gifts," among others: prophecy; healing; the gift of faith; speaking in a language unknown to the speaker; or a "tongue"; and the interpretation of tongues.

The presence of "spiritual gifts" in the fellowship, in the minds of many, would class the group as "Charismatic", a movement in various denominations and groups which emphasizes "the gifts."

Mr. Tomlinson, however, says that while there are "tremendous similarities" between the group and "Charismatics" that there are "some points we wouldn't see eye to eye on."

Concerning "the gifts," Mr. Tomlinson said, "There is a need for mature leadership to determine what is and what is not of God... And the fact that so many have had bad experiences with the gifts should in no way quench their desire for them."

The role of a spiritual gift in a meeting was illustrated recently by the following: A first-time visitor was convinced that a young woman was "taking the group for a ride" as she spoke aloud in a "tongue." The highly

educated visitor said she recognized and comprehended messages in Greek, Latin and French being spoken. She learned later that the speaker, who works as a typist, in fact knew none of these languages.

While overtly "miraculous" events are not the norm in the fellowship, other stories can be told as well. Mr. Tomlinson cites these examples:

— An interpretation of an unknown "tongue", given in English, was "heard in French" by a visitor from Quebec who spoke very little English.

— A woman's chronic gall bladder problem has not returned since the elders prayed for her a year ago.

— A man's chronic back problem disappeared after prayer.

— The wife of a young couple who had been trying to conceive their first child for seven months became pregnant a week after prayer.

"We do believe God can and is willing to heal us," said Mr. Tomlinson. "We simply hold to the statements of scripture."

As with other unusual "manifestations of the Spirit," healing does not occupy the prominent position it does in many circles. Instead, warmth, love and caring are a prime emphasis in both meetings and conversations among members.

Bible study, both personal and corporate, is another regular part of fellowship life, and meetings usually include a message by Mr. Tomlinson.

One emphasis in the teaching is on "holiness" or "purity of heart." Says Mr. Tomlinson: "We're not people who go around with a 'holier than thou' attitude, but we do believe that holiness is clearly taught in scripture as not only possible, but essential to knowing communion with God."

A former school teacher, Hollie Niccolls affirms she has learned to "know God" at the fellowship. "He's real to me now," she said. "And when I talk about God and Jesus, I'm not talking about someone I've heard about, but someone I know."

Miss Niccolls moved to Claremont from Bowmanville last month to be more involved at the fellowship, and is looking for work in the area.

A similar testimony is expressed by Rick Boyle, a car mechanic who moved from London, Ontario to be part of the fellowship. "We wanted to have what these people have, and the only way to do it was to move down. We have never regretted it... Now I can say that our lives are complete."



Fred Tomlinson, pastor of the Stouffville Christian Fellowship, here addresses members of the group in the R. R. No. 2, Claremont home where meetings have been held since last fall. While most members prefer a house to a

church building, Mr. Tomlinson emphasizes that the location of the meetings is not as important as the working out of the member's faith in everyday life.



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HOURS OPEN: Mon.-Fri.: 9:00 am to 9:30 pm, Sat.: 9:00 am to 6:00 pm — We now accept Master Charge.

Devout disabled welcome members

STOUFFVILLE — You don't have to be handicapped to attend meetings of the Stouffville Christian Handicapped Fellowship, says Joanne Strang, chairman of the group. She told The Tribune anyone who wants to "just come and praise the Lord with us" is welcome.

The group has met the third Friday each month at the Stouffville Youth Centre since April. Meetings usually involve times for singing, sharing, a speaker and refreshments.

Miss Strang said the group is modelled after the Toronto Christian Handicapped Fellowship, which was started 10

years ago. She said she had become interested in starting one here when she met a handicapped visitor in Markham one day who had no place to go to church, although he wanted to.

"I thought, 'How many other handicapped people out there who know Christ can't go to church, and how many others don't know Him,' she said.

The largest contingent at the local handicapped meetings are residents of Participation House in Markham.

Miss Strang, who has cerebral palsy, is from Scarborough and works as a clerk at World Vision International in Willowdale.

Church Services

ALTONA MISSIONARY CHURCH
Pastor — V. Klauwe
Sunday, Oct. 3
10:30 a.m. — Sunday School
11:30 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:30 p.m. — Evening Service
Wed. — Prayer Meelin
8:00 p.m.
You are cordially invited to the Missionary Church

GORMLEY MISSIONARY CHURCH
Rev. Cecil Rosenberger
Pastor
Phone 887-5846
Oct. 3rd
9:50 a.m. — Family Sunday School
11 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:30 p.m. — Evening Inspiration
Wed. 8 p.m. — Family Night
A WARM WELCOME AWAITS YOU ALWAYS

SECOND MARKHAM BAPTIST CHURCH
Gormley-Stouffville Rd. At 6th Conc. (Kennedy Rd.)
Mr. Tom Hamilton
Phone 887-5651
Sunday, Oct. 3, 1976
Please call for bus ride
10:00 a.m. — Bible School for all ages
11:00 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:00 p.m. — Evening Service
Wed. 8:00 p.m. — Prayer & Bible Study

CHRIST CHURCH ANGLICAN
254 Sunset Boulevard
Sunday, Oct. 3, 1976
9:30 a.m. — Holy Communion
Sunday School & Nursery School
Everyone Welcome
Rev. W.F. Edney
Rector, 297-1634, 640-1461

CHURCHILL BAPTIST CHURCH
(Aurora Sideroad & 9 Conc)
Rev. Paul Hope B. Th., — 640-5629
Minister of Youth — Jim Clubine
9:50 a.m. — Sunday School for all ages — Bus ride available
11:00 a.m. — Morning Worship
7:20 p.m. — Evening Service
Wed. 7:30 p.m. — Family Night for all ages
Thurs. 3:15 p.m. — Pioneer Girls Grades 2-8
Fri. 7:00 p.m. — Youth Night
"We warmly welcome you"

STOUFFVILLE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH
460 Main St. E. Ph: 640-5696
Rev. S.A. Grant, Pastor 640-4903
SUNDAY, OCT. 3, 1976
9:45 a.m. — Christian Education Hour
11:00 a.m. — Missionary & Communion Service
7:00 p.m. — Fellowship & Evangelism
Wed. 8:00 p.m. Bible study & Prayer

BLOOMINGTON CHRISTIAN GOSPEL CHURCH
Rev. C.W. Sorley
9:45 a.m. Sunday School with a Warm Welcome
11:00 a.m. — Pastor Sorley, Studies in the Book of Daniel
Mon. 8 P.M. — Rev. Richard Cohen, born and raised in a Jewish home after accepting Christ, gave up a prosperous business career to become a Missionary to his own people. Now he is in charge of one of the largest, and most strategic Jewish Missions in the World, with The American Board of Missions to the Jews.
Wed. 8 P.M. — The film "Israel My Son" Filmed in Israel, including moving scenes of the liberation of Jewish survivors from Dachau Concentration Camp, and of the 1948, 1956, 1967 Wars.
Guest Soloist — Mr. Tom Walker
Beth Sar Shalom Fellowship, Hamilton, Ontario.

MCCORMACK MEMORIAL CHURCH
Highway 48 at Vivian
Rev. C.W. Sorley Pastor
Sun. 9:45 a.m. Pastor Sorley preaching, assisted by the Emmanuel Bible College Quartet.
Sun. 7:30 p.m. — Dr. Tom McCall, Missionary, American Board of Missions to the Jews, presents "Christ in the Passover" This is not a film but a live, dramatic presentation of the Jewish Passover. This will be an unusual experience for Gentile Christians.
Tues. 8 P.M. — Mr. Zola Levitt.
A very talented Hebrew Christian, speaker, writer, musician. Taught at Xavier University and Indiana University, also the Public Schools of San Antonio and Pittsburgh. He has been an instrumentalist and conductor. Now an Evangelist, ministering to his own people.

STOUFFVILLE MISSIONARY CHURCH
159 Main St. E.
Rev. J. Hamilton, Minister
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3
9:45 a.m. — Family Sunday School. Bus service available
11:00 a.m. — Mr. Neil MacFarlane, Jamaica Theological Seminary.
7:00 p.m. — Annual W.M.S. Thank Offering Service. Mr. MacFarlane will speak.
Wed. 7:30 p.m. — Prayer and Bible Study
Fri. 8:00 p.m. — Film for the Youth — "A Stranger in My Forest"
"You're always welcome at the Missionary Church"

STOUFFVILLE UNITED CHURCH
Sunday, Oct. 3, 1976
Rev. J.L. Carder
B.A.B.D.
11:00 A.M. Communion Service
CHURCH SCHOOL
9:45 a.m. — Inter Congregation Class
11:00 a.m. — Nursery, Kindergarten, Primary & Jr. Classes
YOU WILL BE WELCOME

ST. JAMES PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Rev. Ted Green, B.A.
640-4195
10 a.m. — Worship
11 a.m. — Sunday School
All warmly Welcome

UNIONVILLE GOSPEL HALL
2nd Street at Hwy 7
LORD'S DAY
Breaking Bread 9:30
Sunday School and Bible Class 11:30 a.m.
GOSPEL Meeting 7 p.m.
Wed. Prayer — Bible Study 8 p.m.
All Heartily Welcome

ALTONA MISSIONARY CHURCH
We invite you to our 101st Anniversary Service at Altona Missionary Church.
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 3rd
SUNDAY SCHOOL at 10 a.m.
MORNING WORSHIP at 11 a.m.
Morning Service with the Rev. Ward Shantz and Evening Service with the Rev. Arthur Walsh.

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