

IN THE FIELD OF RELIGION

"WORSHIP SERVICES" AMONG THE EARLY SETTLERS OF CALTON

Slightly over one-hundred years ago, a number of Canadians by the names of VanVelzar, Corperong, and Pritchard came from Nova Scotia into the wilds of Elgin County near what is now known as Calton.

They originally belonged to the church of England, but not long after their arrival in Elgin, they embraced the views of the Open Communion Baptists. They were joined some years later by the McConnell's and B.J. Timpany, who also hailed from Nova Scotia.

Elder McDormond was the first Baptist preacher to conduct a special mission in the settlement. His first sermon was preached in the open air under the shade of a large beech tree. Not long after this, Deacon Timpany, a regular Baptist, suggested the formation of a church in Calton and it was largely through his efforts the church was organized.

The early members of the church took their religion seriously, and those who did not were liable to stern discipline from the church elders. This fact is apparent from a resolution which appears in the records of 1870 reading as follows:

"Whereas it is expedient that the discipline of the church should be carried out, we resolve that members who do not sustain their relations to the church and absent themselves for three months from the Lord's table without lawful reason, will be dealt with according to the rule of the Gospel."

Calton Baptist Church



Before lightning destroyed
the steeple.



Calton Baptist Church in 1957. Rev. C.K.Dolby, pastor.

This church formerly had a very fine steeple which was twice hit by lightning, damaging it to the extent that it was necessary to take it down.

CHURCH HISTORY

On March 14, 1855, a memorial signed by 18 brethren and sisters was presented to the regular Baptists in Malahide, Jubilee and Bayham. They requested the Parent churches to grant them letters of dismission that they might organize themselves into a church. The reasons they gave for urging the request were that they were a long way off from their home churches and they lived in the centre of a well populated section in which there was room for a church. This request was granted and on the fourth Saturday in April, they organized themselves into a church. Elder S. Baker was chosen Moderator and Elder Herman Fitch, the clerk. The first church was erected on land given by Deacon Timpany and was known as Malahide Union Chapel. This church was open to evangelical services.

When the present church, shown in the picture, was built, everyone donated what money and material they could spare until they had enough with which to build, and then by giving of their time the church was soon ready for use. This took place in the year 1887 and the church was opened free of debt. The membership at this time was about 100. It was and still is known as Calton Baptist church.

CALTON BAPTIST CHURCH
up to June, 1905.

In the south east of Elgin County lies the Township of Bayham, whose coasts front the shores of beautiful Lake Erie. About one hundred years ago a number of Canadians of the names of VanVelzer, Corporns and Pritchard came from the Province of Nova Scotia into the wilds of Elgin, near what is now known as Calton. They brought with them not only sound bodies and mental and moral strength, but a love for the word of God. They originally belonged to the Church of England but not long after their arrival in Elgin, they embraced the views of open communion Baptists. They were joined some years later by the McConnells and Mr. B.J. Timpany who also hailed from the Province by the sea. Elder McDermond was the first Baptist preacher who conducted a special mission in the settlement. He felt for sometime before coming that God was leading him to the place. His first sermon was preached in the open air under the shade of a large beech tree, after that he carried on special services for three weeks in the school house, and as a result about thirty-seven were baptized. These converts united with the old Baptist church.

Not long after this the late Deacon Timpany, who was a Regular Baptist suggested the formation of a church in Calton and through his efforts the church was organized. It is of the beginning and subsequent history of the Calton church we write this brief sketch which was prepared for the Jubilee meeting.

We are looking back to-day over a long stretch of years. It is the Jubilee, it shall be holy unto you. Fifty years of life and service for Christ are completed. There is much of the history of Calton church that will never be known on earth for no complete record exists, and most of those, who could have furnished the facts have gone to their reward. But we are not left without some records of the events that transpired long ago and these are such as should make us all devoutly thankful to God. The inception of the church in Calton was not the outcome of strife as have been some. In an old book belonging to the late Deacon Timpany in which much regarding the events of nearly forty years are recorded, we learn the beginning of the movement that culminated in organization.

On March 14th, 1855, a memorial signed by eighteen brethren and sisters was presented to the Regular Baptists churches in Malahide, Jubill and First Bayham. They humbly requested the parent churches to grant them letters of dismission that they might organize themselves into a church. The reasons they gave for urging the request were, that they

were a long way off from their church homes, and that they lived in the centre of a well populated section in which there was room for a church. In the words of the memorial "We feel it would add to the prosperity of our dear Redeemers name in this place if there were a visible church of the same faith and order. Again they assured the parent church that their request was not from want of affection for their respective church but from their abiding desire to extend the borders of the Kingdom of our dear Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The memorial was signed by brethren H. Camp, John VanVelzer, B.J. Timpany, J. McConnell, Ames Powell, Abram Corperan, Jesse Baldwin and sisters Alaurah McConnell, Sarah Elizabeth Camp, Betsy A. Pritchard, Phoebe Pritchard, Margaret Truman, Elizabeth Stark and Sarah Chalk. The names of Levi Johnston and Elizabeth McConnell also appear on the list of constituent members. The request of the brethren and sisters was presented at the Covenant meetings of Malahide Jubilee and First Bayham was granted.

On the fourth Saturday of April following they organized themselves into a Church of Christ adopted the articles of faith in the Encyclopedia of religious knowledge and agreed that on the fourth Saturday of each month they would hold a Covenant meeting. On Saturday, May 26th an ecclesiastical convened at Deacon B.J. Timpany's farm, which still stands to recognize them as a sister church. The churches of Malahide, Jubilee, Bayham Union and First Bayham sent delegates and visitors were present from Aylmer Jubilee, Bayham Union, First Bayham and Southwold. Elder L. Baker was chosen Moderator and Elder Hemare Fitch was chosen clerk, after hearing the minutes regarding the organization, the Council unanimously agreed to recognize them as a Regular Baptist Church. In the afternoon of the same day, Elder Baker preached and conducted a conference. On the next day the public recognition services were held. Elder Fitch preached and gave the right hand of fellowship, and Elder S. McConnell offered prayer and gave the charge. The record describes the meeting as "a precious season."

At this meeting, brethren B. J. Timpany and John Van-Velzer were chosen the first deacons. The first baptism took place the day after the Recognition, when two members united with the church. The first break in membership occurred in March, 1856, Sister E. McConnell fell asleep in Jesus. The minutes say "She was strong in faith trusting in God, and had lived a living member of Christ." In August 1856, the church met in the new chapel for covenant meeting and dedication services. The first church building was erected on land given by Deacon Timpany and was known as Malahide Union Chapel. It was open to any evangelical denomination for religious services. The pews were private property, and had doors on the end with buttons on them. The owners of the pews were two kinds of Baptists, two kinds of Methodists, Church of England and Universalist. Seven different denominations preached at various times in the chapel.

When the chapel was paid for the doors were removed and the seats became free to all.

During the pastorate of Elder Hall, which began in February, 1859, there were many times of refreshing and blessing granted to the church. A minute of deep interest was recorded on March 27th. Our late reverend missionary, A. V. Timpany and a Sister in Christ were baptised. In the closing weeks of 1862 a work of grace broke out which continued.

Mrs. Raymond then Clarissa Westover tells of the work of grace of that time. Deacon Timpany had suggested to the church holding a weekly prayer meeting. It was kept up all through the summer, sometimes attended by many and often by few. The two or three to whom was given the promise of blessing were always present. In the following winter the revival broke out, and a large number of the youth of the settlement were converted and baptized. Many of the peculiar features of the present revival in Wales were seen in the meetings of that period. Public confession of sin, and desire to obtain salvation, along with thanksgiving for salvation received mingled with the praises of God's people.

On October 20th, 1867, Rev. A. V. Timpany preached his farewell sermon in the grove near the church. About two thousand were present from the neighbouring settlements. The same day he baptized a candidate into the fellowship of the church.

The following resolution appears in the record in 1870, "Whereas it is expedient that the discipline of the church should be carried out... We resolve that members who do not sustain their relations to the church, and absent themselves for three months from the Lord's table without lawful reason will be dealt with according to the rule of the Gospel.

The record tells of another gracious outpouring of blessing in 1875 and 1876. During the pastorate of Elder H. Story.

The long and successful pastorate of the late Elder George Mason began in 1877 and continued until the year 1893. During his pastorate the church was visited with many gracious seasons of blessing. Over one hundred were added to the church by baptism during the year. The character of his work as pastor is seen in the strong and earnest lives of those who are now the leaders in the work of the church. His memory is cherished in the hearts of all the elder members of the church. In the year 1887, the church erected the present chapel and opened it free of debt. There is a beautiful audience room with gallery at one end and a commodious and comfortable basement in which the Sunday School and prayer meetings are held.

It stands as a monument to the abounding liberality of the members of the church.

The church which has been known from its organization as the Malahide Union Church, in entering its new home changed its name to that of the Calton Baptist Church. From this church there have gone out to labour for Christ at home and abroad Rev. A.V. Timpany, first Canadian Baptist missionary to the Telequa, Rev. Stuart Timpany M.D. A.B. M.U., Rev. Heman McConnell, U.S.A., Mrs. (Rev.) H.E. Stilwell, Canadian Baptist Mission India.

The following have filled the pastorate at various times: Rev. Messrs. Hall, Clutton, Richmond, Jackson Storey, Geo. Mason, P.R. Carey, J.H. King and E.J. Stebe, Jr.

The following have been Deacons of the church: B.J. Timpany, John VanVelzer, John McConnell, Joseph Cartwright, Ezra Woodworth, James VanVelzer, George Truman, Harvey Chalk, Eber Kinsey.

June 14/1925.

In the Bayham side of the towline running north and south between the two townships of Malahide and Bayham stands the Calton Baptist Church, built of brick veneer with basement of building stone, made possible by the efforts of Elder George Mason, who had then been pastor for about ten years in the old Malahide Union Building, the former name of the church.

In 1818 a little over one hundred years ago a company of Pioneers came from Nova Scotia to Boston, Mass. by sail-boat experiencing on the way a severe storm and only by God's mercy were they spared to reach their destination.

They drove from Boston with horses and wagons crossing into Ontario (then Canada West) at Niagara-on-the-Lake coming to Nova Scotia street known as the first concession of Malahide and Bayham. In the 1840's and 50's the people hungering for the word of God would go by foot, by horse-back and ox-team, anyway to get there, to the old Baptist meeting house on the First Concession of Bayham east of Otter Creek and north of Port Burwell.

The first people to locate in the Calton neighbourhood were the Corperens, the Pritchards, the VanVelzers. Some of the VanVelzers with the Hamiltons going west of St. Thomas settling near Iona. Malahide was then a wilderness and those who Homesteaded in the Fourth Concession had to blaze a trail from the First Concession to their future homes.

The land was good but heavily timbered with Pine on the sandy land and Beech, Maple, Walnut, Elm, Ash, Hickory and Oak on the clay land, a fortune were it there today but at that time an obstacle like a mountain to be overcome. In 1855 when a new generation had sprung up and prospects were brighter the desire for a place to worship of easier access caused a petition to be sent to the surrounding churches asking help to organize themselves into a regular Baptist church. That this desire was God given has been proved by the subsequent history of the Calton church.

The charter members were:

Brothers-

H. Camp
John VanVelzer
B.J. Timpany
John McConnell
Abram Cerperen
Jesse Baldwin
Amos Powell

Sisters-

Almira McConnell
Sarah A. Timpany
Ruth Cerperan
Clarissa Westover
Sarah VanVelzer
Elizabeth Camp
Betsy Ann Pritchard
Phoebe Pritchard
Margaret Truman
Elizabeth Stark
Sarah Chalk

The pastors have been Rev's. Hall, Plutton, Richmond, Jackson, Sterey, and Manson. Rev. George Masen, pastor of Malahide and Bayham and Malahide Union churches for seventeen years seldom missed an appointment, rain or shine, sometimes meeting ten and sometimes fifty at prayer meetings.

One hundred additions prove that a patient sowing of the word, God will give the increase. Stephen Marney a young man with an evangelistic turn followed Rev. Masen holding a long series of special meetings, a large number being converted and Rev. Masen coming back to baptize them.

In the fall Mr. Marney was persuaded to go to Woodstock College and Rev. P.R. Carey was called to the pastorate, followed by Rev.'s J. Harry King, E. J. Stebe Jr., and Rev. C.E. McLeod under whose pastorate the Jubilee was held in 1905. On Saturday a roll call and covenant meeting was held, those who could be present responded by testimony to their names. Others not present sent earnest letters which were read at the meeting. Sunday morning and evening Rev. C. E. McLeod the pastor preached to large and appreciative audiences. This was an Epoch in the history of the church. After Rev. McLeod resigned we had supplies for the winter then secured Mr. Albert Hughes of the Woodstock College for the summer. Rev. L.H. Vail followed that fall then Rev.

Andrew Smith, Rev. John Marshall, Rev. A.A. Fanjey leaving December 1925. Rev. A.J. Shultz came May 1926 followed by Rev. George Simmons 1933. Rev. Ernest Butcher 1936 Rev. J. H. Curtis 1943 to April 1948 and Rev. George Downing November 1948 to September 1951 and Rev. C.K. Delby, 1952-1958.

For a time no regular minister was available. Reginald Babbi conducted services for a time followed by Reverend Mr. Sherman, a retired Baptist minister from Sparta. Mr. Sherman conducted services until Reverend William Harkins, from Ireland, was inducted into the pastorate of Lakeview, Calton and Port Burwell churches in 1961.

Continued in Book no 2.