

FIRST PASTORATE: GALT, ONTARIO

We had a choice of serving congregations in either Whitby, Leamington or Galt; all in Ontario. It was a difficult decision to make. I was thankful that we were led to go to Galt. The quiet streets lined with beautiful big trees, keeping our house cool in the summer, was a gift from Above to me. The heat during Ontario's summers was not my most comfortable time.

The first week of June, 1958 we said good-bye to beautiful Holland, Michigan. Also, even though I only went to meetings of a group of seminary wives once a week for two winters, I found that I had learned some valuable things. It was a time for devotions, fellowship and teaching on to how to be a Pastor's wife. At the time I felt very inferior because of the language barrier but appreciated their help to me.

On June 11 Dad was installed as the first Pastor of the newly organized Church of Galt. That too was a highlight in our lives.

Another special event was that Dad was asked to serve as a Chaplain aboard an immigrant boat. The S.S. "Grote Beer" was leaving from Montreal on July 26 and the returning S.S. "Waterman" was to leave Rotterdam on September 15, 1958. Dad was "paid" for his work by way of a free trip back and forth. At first it looked impossible for us to go along but when our parents heard about this they insisted that we all should come. The money they sent us paid for the biggest part and the rest we were able to pay. The preparation was like a dream. It was so unexpected. I never gave it a thought that this could happen so soon after Dad graduated. We traveled by car to Brockville, staying overnight at the home of Pastor and Mrs. Cor Bons. The next day we traveled by bus to Montreal, sleeping at my cousin Nelly Ravensbergen and their family. They brought us to the boat there. When the customs officer examined our passport, to our dismay, they discovered that our two year old son John was missing from the list of our children. Kees and Nelly were a great help to us as they were our witnesses that Johnny was our son by birth. They had offered to care of him if necessary but we could not bear the thought of leaving him behind. By the custom officer's good graces it was arranged that by time we would arrive in Rotterdam the papers would be there to make him part of our family; passport-wise!

We did not have any storms on the sea like 10 years before. But for a couple of days it blew hard enough to have Dad's lectern fly from one end of the theatre to the other. Even though there was an evening message every day and Services on Sunday, I attended only a few. The trip this time was only nine days! In comparison with our other trip this was far better. Since Dad was busy for much of the day I was worried about our little Johnny. He wanted to be on deck but the railings were not made for a tiny tot. He could easily slide in the sea as all our kids could but they realized the danger. It was good that we could have restful nights.

It was more emotional than I thought it would be; to see everyone and to be at all the familiar places again. I had rooted deeply enough in Canada to gladly go back after six weeks in the Netherlands. It is hard to describe the impressions. There had been many changes in these years. My parents had moved from the farm to their retirement home in Schipluiden. The farm had been remodeled into two homes for my brothers. Six brothers married since I had left home and had their families. Also quite a number of Uncles, Aunts and neighbors had passed on, etc.

Opa Moerman, now a widower, had decided to return with us on the ship for a visit of 11 months to Canada. Also, my sister Cathy came with us; this time to immigrate. The return trip was very good and we were thankful when we sailed into the New York harbor. We took a taxi to the bus depot. The taxi had to make two trips because of all the extra luggage. From there the Greyhound took us to Brockville where our car was left. Cathy stayed there and found work for the time being. This was because her fiancé, Fred Busse, was a porter on the S.S. Rijndam. They could now see each other when he stopped off in Montreal. It was so good to be back in Galt again as we had lived there only seven weeks on 84 Aberdeen Road South, before the trip. We were now ready to assume a normal life again. This was Murray and Jack's first time to attend school in Canada and Anne was to be enrolled in kindergarten. It was hard for them to adjust after all the excitement of moving from the USA to Canada followed by our trip to Holland. Anne by now had forgotten her English and for the first week spoke only Dutch in school.

The biggest room upstairs in Galt was Dad's study. There were also two bedrooms and a bathroom there. The third floor was Murray and Jack's domain. They liked the attic with its small windows on the front and the back. The boys were even prepared in case of fire up there. About 29 years

later Murray told me that he had braided a strong rope to let themselves down through one of these windows if necessary. Perhaps it was a good thing that I did not know all these things at that time. Downstairs we had a large living room and kitchen, plus a pantry. Since we had no furniture for the living room we bought a couch, armchair, coffee table, two end tables with lamps and a new rug. It looked beautiful and cozy. I felt richly blessed. I could hardly believe that it was ours to enjoy! We have used this furniture for many years. One of the lamps I gave away when I moved from the Mayerthorpe farm and now I regret that sometimes. But these things do happen when your life changes so suddenly. In the basement there was a large cement water cistern for the rainwater from the roof and behind it a cement coal bin. The house was brick with stucco on the outside and very firmly built. It was close to our Church which was a great benefit for us. School for the children was not too far away either.

Dad was very busy in the Church but found the time to make a good size garden in the fall. We visited our 25 families in their homes in the fall and established a visiting program for us together which we kept in all the Churches we served.

We visited all newly-wed couples, when babies were born and bereaved families several times. We also went to anniversary celebrations. At the wedding receptions we stayed until the official part was over; about one hour after the meal. I have missed only three weddings and three funerals in all the years while Dad was in active ministry because of illness. This way we found close contact with all the people in their joys and in their sorrows.

In the spring of 1959 we received the good news that our fifth baby was on the way. We were very happy about this surprise because I had two miscarriages in the last three years. It felt to me that I had to be satisfied and content with our four children. I had a very good pregnancy and was looking forward to "that day." I had heard the tale from Pastors' wives that Pastors' kids were often born on Sundays. And this time indeed, on a Sunday morning I woke up with the sure feeling that the baby was beginning to look for an exit. I went to Church but said nothing to Dad yet, but during lunchtime Dad's eyes were looking me over and noticed that this was the day too! Jimmy was very considerate to let his father give the message in the evening as well. Mrs. Zantinga, one of the mothers in "Israel" (every congregation has a few of them) stayed with me that evening. It was midnight before we went to the Hospital

and at 4:30 am Jan.25, 1960 our fourth son was born. How we thanked God for this gift we had not expected and also for the easy delivery this time. God added more joy to our family. James Peter, who was six pounds at birth, grew fast and was closely watched by his bother Johnny who seemed to be endlessly proud of his baby brother.

Four weeks after Jimmy's birth we had a terrible blizzard. We had the radio on to listen for further news on this storm and as one of the reporters was speaking we heard the noise of sirens; not knowing that these sirens had to do with the fatal accident which took the life of Esther, the wife of our friend John Van Oostveen. It was on the evening of the dedication of the Church in Cooksville (now Mississauga) John and Esther served. On their way home to the Van Oostveen's farm with the special speaker, the Rev. Kolebrander and his wife in the back seat, the terrible accident happened. Rev. Kolebrander's wife was killed too. When we received the news late that evening I was just numb from shock; we hardly slept that night. Dad was asked to preach the Sunday before the funeral in John and Esther 's church. His text was on Job 1:16 which says, "And I alone escaped to tell you." What an unforgettable Service this and the Funeral Service itself was. Esther was a sweet humble person and had been a close friend. Their second child was on her lap, just one year old and his life was spared.

In the fall of 1960 Dad was spading an addition to our garden very close to the house. When I saw this I knocked on the window for the fun and said, "Are you sure that we will still be here next summer?" His answer was, "Don't worry Mom, we will be staying here." He knew that I was teasing him and that I loved to stay. Very soon thereafter came a phone call from New York with the question if Dad would consider a call to Edmonton, Alberta. What a disturbing thought! This came to us like a thunderclap from a clear sky. Dad said that he would not but the pressure was on and did not let up for weeks. Dad went to Edmonton on request, to come to the right decision. Our Church in Galt did very well in these two years and we loved our work here, so why "immigrate again?" There was no need to move; we had moved a dozen of times since our move to Canada, I reasoned. Then other thoughts came tumbling in; "there is a need in Edmonton." There are two vacant churches there who need help and so the struggle went on. When Dad returned he still did not know the answer but soon the day came that we had to decide. Once more we asked God to make it very clear to us what to do and that night He did! We woke up shortly after one another and Dad was sure that we had to

move to the West. What a relief to know what direction the Lord wanted us to go. I had complete peace with it, even though I was looking against the leaving part. That farewell song I was to sing many times yet in my life. (This problem might stem from my immigration, who knows?) Dad made an arrangement to finish all the winter work of catechism and new members' classes etc. We would not move until April 3rd (1961). Both Churches were happy but our headquarters in New York disagreed with the agreement. They told us that the effect of our ministry would be lost if we stayed that long. We have never felt this. It was a good time to adjust to the facts of leaving and moving. This spring we were blessed with another surprise, our sixth baby was on the way!

April 2 was the day that Dad preached his farewell sermon with a luncheon afterward, tokens of appreciation, hugs and tears. I am always relieved when that part is over. My emotions work overtime. "I live too intensely," a few Doctors have told me but I guess this is me!