

Chapter 23

Edmonton

(August 1986 - July 1988)

Some of the priorities were to shepherd back those who had quit attending. Half of them had been "church-shopping" while others were not worshipping anywhere anymore. Another emphasis was to lead the congregation back to charismatic ministry and worship. We encouraged and supported those struggling to hang onto the weekly Prayer and Praise services and also the annual and/or semi-annual Retreat.

We also found that due to a time of strife quite a few people had felt too uncomfortable to proceed in making profession of their faith. This resulted in many people joining our first New Christian class, our Stacy was among them; what a joy this was.

Toward the close of the year we had a representative group of ten members who were ready to go to work on a Philosophy of Ministry. We used the Philosophy of Ministry of Surrey as a start or guideline. The end result however was that here in Edmonton we came up with a more detailed one. It became very clear that the Holy Spirit led us from start to finish. When the Philosophy of Ministry was approved by both consistory and congregation, we set out to obtain resumes of candidates for the position of Senior Pastor.

In the meantime Corrie's health had begun to deteriorate; tiredness was almost the order of the day. Then came July 19, 1987 when she woke me up during the night telling me that her left arm was very sore and stiff. We called on God in prayer and soon thereafter we were on our way to the Charles Campsel Hospital. Anxious days followed but while she was being treated we all kept in mind that help is always just a prayer away.

A few months prior to this I had arranged to go with our oldest grandson, David, to a Conference of the Holy Spirit to be held in New Orleans and this was now only a few days away. Our prayers were not only for healing but also, "Lord, what shall we do now as to this Conference?" After consulting Doctors Corrie and I decided that we should go. Though I must say that it was not just a test of faith, equally so a test of "Do not be anxious about anything." And so it was that we kept on quoting and trying to apply the rest of these words both when saying "good bye" as well as during the rest of the time while being apart from one another. "But in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

David and I had a most rewarding time at the Conference. It was sweltering hot and at the same time we had to get used to sleeping with air conditioners blowing cold wind all night. We were together with tens of thousands of people, all filled with the Spirit of the living Lord. What an experience the Worship Services were! Yet, my mind hardly ever was away from the Hospital bed in the Charles Campsel Hospital. It was such a blessing to have people there praying for her too.

And how grateful we were when arriving in Edmonton and seeing Corrie again. By this time her blood pressure had stabilized but she was still rather weak. Her heart raced even when she got ready for bed and she needed to sit in bed for a long time until her heart slowed down.

Shortly after we had brought her home we had a tornado hit some of the city; not that far away from us. For our experience with this I refer you to what Corrie has written about it:

“It had been very warm (30 degrees C) for the whole week and the skies were beginning to show ominous clouds. The weather forecast was for severe thunderstorms. But since we had not been living our normal organized family life we did not have much in the fridge. So it was decided that Dad would go quickly to Safeway to pick up some groceries. Stacy drove along for she knew where things were; this way they would be back in no time. While I gratefully was trying to enjoy my own familiar surroundings again, the phone rang. It was Jack who told me that now the radio was warning about tornadoes in our area. He said, “Mom, go downstairs and sit under the front door step against the wall.” Lightening and thunder increased. The wind began to blow very hard and hail was beginning to hit the windows. This was no weather to be home alone trying to recuperate from heart trouble but Dad and Stacy would be home any moment. With a pillow, flashlight and a glass of water, I tried to settle down all the while praying for safety to bring Dad and Stacy back home quickly. I listening whether I would hear them come and open the door; it was a very stressful.

It seemed to be a long time before I heard Dad's booming voice calling, “Mom, where are you?” By now the worst was over but Dad was very concerned about me. He put me in bed and after a while I was beginning to feel somewhat more normal again. It also was time to thank God for sparing our lives. Before picking me up at the Hospital Dad had heard there could possibly be a tornado later in the day but Dad had not mentioned it to protect me from becoming too upset about it. (We well remembered the one when we lived in Holland, Michigan.) Soon I heard why it took them so long to pick up the few groceries. All electrical power had gone off and therefore no cash registers were working. Then they decided to return without groceries, but could not get out because the wind blew people off their feet. Also the water and hail was coming down so hard and thick, it was dangerous to be outside.

When the power came on again we learned that a tornado had slashed a path of death and destruction through certain parts of the city. Dad and Stacy had seen that shingles and other debris were all around the Church's parking lot; later we found out that one tornado had struck a couple kilometers away in a Mobile Home Park. Some of our Church members were living there as well.

First Dad called all the children that the tornado had missed us and we were well. Then he drove to the Trailer Park to see how the people were. The Police had closed everything off but since he could show he was a clergyman he was allowed to go through. He told us that it looked as if an invisible hand from heaven had stripped all the trees bare. And as to the mobile homes and the streets, it looked as if he was in a war zone again.”

Corrie's health made us realize that we should round off our ministry in Edmonton. She not only needed to be away from stress but also from fumes and other city pollutants. (This decision made me give a premature recommendation to the calling of a new Senior Pastor, concerning which I had some unanswered questions. I made a mistake. I should have retired without having a Senior Pastor in place by the time we left. I have regretted this mistake very much.) We decided that I would work in Edmonton only 3-4 days, while the rest of the week we would be out in the fresh air and quiet surroundings at Mayerthorpe. During my daily walking exercise I had seen an old camper for sale, which we purchased. And since the house was still rented out, we placed it just off the yard for our temporary living accommodations. We put it up where we were sheltered north and west, while toward the east and south things were open to bless us with sunshine. It was just south of where the machine shed is now. After the evening preaching we ordinarily drove down there.

It was June, 1958 that I was ordained to the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and now here it was nearly June, 1988; 30 years after the special event. I was 36 years old at that time and 10 years older than just about everyone who at that time graduated from Seminary. I prayed at that time that God would allow me to be able to give 30 years of full time Gospel ministry. Well, with the exception of the two years out during 1976-78, the 30 years were now behind us. There is no doubt that it was a journey with God from beginning to end. Yet, the spiritual growth moved me from being a Biblical conservative Christian, with its strong emphasis on the Reformed "Forms of Unity", to evangelical and evangelistic Christianity, to wearing the hat of being a strongly charismatic Pastor.

All of this while never giving up on any of the former. Perhaps it is better to say that at times the emphasis was more on the one than on the other, while always seeking to stand solidly on the authority of the Holy Scriptures. In all of it my preaching ministry has always been characterized by seeking to be prophetic and apostolic. Also, there has been a social, moral, and political emphasis in my preaching. Looking back over my life, I can now see why as a young man, I was drawn into the underground and resistance army during the year of the Hitler occupation. It was my social and political consciousness.

The New Testament had John the Baptist and also John the disciple, Gospel and Letter writer. I do not want to compare myself with the former yet my preaching also contained an emphasis on self-examination and repentance. And as to the latter John, I must also be in New Testament company, for the meaning of John (God is gracious) sometimes stood out as "Boanerges" Son of Thunder as we see in Mark 3:17 and Luke 9:51-55 while at other times he was known as the "Apostle of Love." As our years add up we experience that God's faithfulness keeps on multiplying. It is our prayer that in return faithfulness to God will continue to mark our lives.

Our labors in Edmonton concluded in July, 1988. (Jack had offered his farm truck to move our belongings to our retirement home.) We had sought to have the realization of the event dawn on us for sometime now but when it arrived there still were mixed emotions.

It is the end of a long period in one's life and yet it seem to have arrived so quickly. The time had come to notify the renters in Mayerthorpe to vacate the premises. This was so Corrie could be

comfortable in the house, for the three days a week we were staying there, when the weather was not conducive to be in the camper. Corrie was having lots of problems with irregular heartbeats and racing of heart. We shall not lightly forget the long and late evenings we spent together in prayer sometimes wondering how long God would still keep us together.