

# Pastoral Excellence

## Rev Dr Fred Cawley

Just two days after receiving Rev Graham Lyle's resignation from the pastorate of the church, the treasurer reported to the deacons that a name "bearing a good report" had been given to him regarding the vacancy of the church. Rev



*F. Cawley*

Frederick Cawley, a missionary with the Baptist Missionary Society (BMS), was invited to occupy the pulpit on Sunday 10th October 1926. Two days later a 'call' was made to him to become minister of Falkirk Baptist Church, which he accepted. The Falkirk Herald reported it was "as unforeseen and unsought as it was warm and unanimous". The church had arranged the settlement of the new minister before the leaving minister had been given a farewell social! Rev Fred Cawley's ministry at Falkirk began on 1st December 1926, with his induction service on 5th December, a ministry which many consider to be the most influential in the history of Falkirk Baptist Church.

## Librarian

Fred Cawley was born at Exmouth, Devon in 1884. He worked as a librarian prior to his acceptance in 1909 by Spurgeon's College, London, for theological training. He joined the Baptist Missionary Society in 1913, spending nearly ten years at Bihar in North India. There he was

# Pastoral Excellence

instrumental in forming a large YMCA branch which met a need for the British troops stationed there during the First World War. During his time in India he met and married Mary Gould Coutts, a missionary teacher from Galashiels. In 1922 they went to the pastorate at St Johns, Port of Spain, Trinidad, where the BMS appointed him superintendent of the southern churches of the island. On returning to England in 1926, he was valedicted with his wife at the annual BMS assembly in Leeds. It was their intention to return to India in the autumn of 1926, but a heavy deficit in the funds of BMS led him to volunteer to seek a church at home in order to lessen the financial burden on the Society. The call to Falkirk Baptist Church came shortly afterwards.

The induction service was conducted by Rev J C Hughes of Dunnington, Warwickshire, as the Principal of Spurgeon's College, Percy Evans, had been unable to be present. The chairman, Mr Balfour Gray, made the light-hearted comment to those present that he'd noticed Mr Cawley had been rather perturbed the other day when he observed Falkirk's motto on the lamp at the Burgh Buildings. *Better meddle wi' the de'il than the*



Rev & Mrs Cawley, 1926

*'Bairns' o' Fa'kirk.* However he went on to assure him that they were not a bad lot in Falkirk! Mr & Mrs Cawley shared 'the missionary vision', and their missionary interests and background soon reflected into the life of the church. A Missionary Committee was formed; a Girls Missionary Sewing Meeting was started by Mrs Cawley; and funds were raised (specifically for the Baptist Missionary

## Pastoral Excellence

Society) through missionary boxes and a monthly 'lantern lecture'. He arranged for one of the church organisations to make a yearly donation to a school for missionary children. A number of senior members of the church speak of the influence that Mr & Mrs Cawley had on their lifelong interest in world mission.

### Fred Price

In March 1927 one of the members of the church, Mr Frederick Price, was accepted by the Baptist Theological College in Glasgow for theological training, continuing the steady stream of people over the years 'sent out' from Falkirk Baptist Church into full-time Christian service. Fred Price, who also had connections with Falkirk Town Mission, was called to the student pastorate at Lochgelly Baptist Church in July 1928. Afterwards, he had pastorates at the Baptist churches in Peebles (1930 - 1932), Peterhead (1932 - 1949) and Kirkintilloch (1949 - 1965), before moving to the village of Sarratt in Herts. The main features of his ministry was his great gift of expression in prayer and the high quality of his pastoral ministry.

In the early days of his ministry here, Fred Cawley formed a Young Peoples Committee, and once a month held a service specifically for young people. He proposed a Service of Dedication for the infants of church members. One practice of the church at this time, and which was also fairly common in other Scottish Baptist churches, was the noting of deacons' attendance at Sunday services and mid-week meetings. The discussing of the results would always be on the agenda at the next deacons meeting. This would certainly have provided an incentive for deacons to attend these meetings! By the mid 1930s, however, this practice had largely ceased.

In the late 1920s and into the 1930s the country

fell into economic Depression. Church membership was rising, again exceeding 200 members, but income was falling, and throughout Fred Cawley's ministry the church faced financial difficulties. Life was hard for most working class people, and many were out of work while many more lived in fear of losing their jobs. The church played an important part in people's lives, and church activities were well attended. The proliferation of church organisations catering for all ages and needs (both spiritually and socially) was a feature of the inter-war years. In 1929 Falkirk Baptist had a Sunday School (known then as the Sabbath School), Christian Endeavour, Choir, Boys Scouts, Bible Class, Baptist Missionary Society Collections, Women's Auxiliary, Girls' Guildry, Band of Hope, Baptist Medical Mission, Young Worshippers League, Women's Sewing Meeting, and the Zenana Medical Mission.

## Scholar

At the church Annual General Meeting in January 1931, the secretary of the church "extended, on behalf of the Deacons Court and the congregation, the united thanks and appreciation of all to the minister for his most excellent, able, and faithful services to the church and all its departments and works". A year later the President of the Baptist Union of Scotland visited the church and wrote in the Scottish Baptist magazine that he "found a church fully ripe with expectancy during the minister's Sixth Anniversary. The work done by Rev F Cawley and Mrs Cawley has been so effective that their people are in great heart".

Fred Cawley was a scholar, and applied himself to extensive reading and disciplined study, even though his was a busy pastorate. While he was in Falkirk he graduated in Arts and in Divinity through London University, and in July 1934 he

“For nearly nine years he had exercised an unforgettable pastoral ministry”

“I Will Build My Church”

was awarded a PhD by Edinburgh University for a thesis which was later published as “The Transcendence of Jesus Christ”. He involved himself fully in the community, being associated with the Toc H movement (a post First World War men’s movement following Christian principles which tried to preserve the traditions of fellowship and service shown during the war) and as one of the chaplains at Falkirk Technical School. In 1934 he was elected President of Falkirk Rotary Club, the first minister to be elected to this position in a Scottish Rotary Club. The past President described him as a man of understanding, sympathetic feeling, high ideals and acute vision. He was elected to this position the same week he received his PhD, and also the same week as he unfortunately damaged his leg at the church Sunday School trip, which meant him having leave of absence from the church until November that year.

Rev Ian Cameron, a past member and deacon of the church, recalls Dr Cawley’s ministry at Falkirk. “He was a man whom I hold in the highest regard. He is my father in Christ. He was truly a godly man and a scholar with a true pastor’s heart. When he heard that I had come to Falkirk he made it his business to contact me although he was confined to bed with a damaged leg. That was typical of his pastor heart. His scholarship was never paraded but it came through time and again. Always friendly, he was never familiar. His preaching was always profound, but there was something for immediate acceptance as well as what kept you pondering till well into the week. I repeat that I hold him in the highest regard as a man, a preacher, a pastor and a friend.”.

Dr Cawley’s ministry in Falkirk came to an end in July 1935 when he left for Denmark Place Baptist Church in Camberwell, London. For nearly nine

# Pastoral Excellence

years he had exercised an unforgettable pastoral ministry. Both he and Mrs Cawley had endeared themselves to the congregation, and all who recall his ministry here speak very highly of him. At his farewell service his life and work was highly praised from all parts of the community. Dr Cawley replied by saying, "I will never forget you because this was my first home church after coming from the ends of the earth. You have been my first home congregation. How true, as I have discovered, are the words, 'East West, Home's Best'. My ministry has been a happy one. There were difficulties, times of hesitation, times of possible crisis, but our relationship has been from first to last a very happy one, and a very happy ministry". His fellow ministers in the town told him that he and Mrs Cawley had made a great impression in the town, and Falkirk would never forget them. The congregations on his last Sunday in Falkirk Baptist were described in the Falkirk Herald as being "possibly the largest in the history of the church".

## Spurgeon's College

The call in 1938 from Denmark Place Baptist Church to Spurgeon's College, his *Alma Mater*, cut short one of the most promising ministries in South London when he was appointed Tutor in Old Testament Studies. His varied experiences as missionary and minister, his gift for teaching, and academic abilities fitted him well for the training of ministers and missionaries. G W Harte, secretary of Spurgeon's College, wrote the following words of Dr Cawley in the April 1939 edition of 'The Sword And The Trowel' : "He has the brow of a scholar, kindling eyes set in a face of gentle austerity, which even in righteous indignation never quite loses its habitual tenderness. In speech he is measured and deliberate, knowing the value and beauty of words,

## Pastoral Excellence

and ever there is the authentic note of a winner of souls. No universalist in his interests, he is a specialist who makes everything serve his concentrated purpose. A militant mystic. A strong man. A man in Christ”.

### Principal

Fred Cawley also served as pastor of the Baptist Tabernacle, Maple Road, Penge from 1940 until 1946 which kept him in touch with pastoral ministry during the difficult years of the Second World War. When Dr Percy Evans retired as Principal of Spurgeon's College, Dr Cawley was called to be Principal. He was installed as Principal on 27th September 1950 in Bloomsbury Baptist Church, London. The senior members of the church speak with great pride that *their* minister was called to this high position. At the installation service, the chairman said that Dr Cawley was now embarking on the master-work of his life. He went on to say that Dr Cawley had the personality of a leader, but above all he was a man of God. Dr Cawley held this post until his retirement in 1955 at the age of 71. Afterwards, he and Mrs Cawley moved to Edinburgh to live. As an indication of the regard with which his ministry was held in Falkirk, he was invited to be the speaker on the important 150th anniversary of the church held in 1958. His preaching ministry continued until Mrs Cawley's ill-health kept him at home to care for her. After her death in 1973 he went to live at 'The Tor' Baptist Home for the elderly in Edinburgh. The following article, from Spurgeon's College Record for 1975, was written by Rev Peter Clarke and is titled 'A College Greeting to our Principal Emeritus'.

*It is past the time for epilogue at a minister's farewell service. A slight, upright figure ascends the platform and, with eyes gleaming, waits for silence to fall on the crowded hall. A clear,*

# Pastoral Excellence

*dramatic voice reads from Acts 13, then points to God's hand behind the events of the evening, and His servants are sent on to new service. The point is made unforgettable, and then that same voice communicates the blessing of the Living God upon His people.*

*Now over 90 years old, Dr Frederick Cawley still makes a telling contribution to Christian events around Edinburgh, to the Fraternal, and especially to Bristo Baptist Church, where he worships twice every Sunday, and is regular at all the midweek activities. If his church friends fail to take him, he catches the bus! His health is good, and all his faculties acute, though he takes care not to overdo things, and sometimes admits to being a bit tired.*

Rev Dr Frederick Cawley died in Edinburgh on 12th June 1978, at the age of 93. Rev John J Brown, who has kindly submitted the article 'A Tribute To Frederick Cawley' for inclusion in this book, wrote the following of Dr Cawley : "He won the deep affection and respect of those whom he served as pastor and as teacher, and will be remembered for his pastoral gifts, his evangelistic zeal, his missionary vision and, above all, for the spiritual quality of his character and commitment".



Spurgeon's College, London