

The Boy Preacher

Rev D Graham Lyle

During the time of vacancy which followed, the setting up and operation of the vacancy committee didn't initially run smoothly, perhaps because it had been 33 years since the last vacancy. Vacancy aspects such as the majority required before a call could be made to a pastor, and



D. G. Lyle

whether or not seat-holders who were not members were privileged to vote (which, it was decided, they were) had to be discussed. An invitation, however, was made to Mr Robert A Barclay of Edinburgh to have a student pastorate in the church for five months at the start of 1923. In February 1923 the church called Rev Duncan Graham Lyle to the pastorate of the church. He accepted, but said he wouldn't be free until October that year.

Born in Motherwell in 1897, Duncan Graham Lyle was educated at Dalziel High School in Motherwell. He left school at the age of 14 to work in Colvilles steel works in Motherwell. He paid his own way to university, being educated at Glasgow University and the Baptist Theological College in Glasgow. He graduated MA from the university, studying subjects such as Political Economy, Moral Philosophy, Scottish History, Literature and Geology. At the College, he was first in Christian Ethics and New Testament

The Boy Preacher

Exegesis. He had student pastorates at the Baptist churches in Carluke (1920 - 21) and Larkhall (1922 - 23). Graham Lyle was known throughout Lanarkshire as “the boy preacher”, and was looked upon as one of the young men of promise in the Baptist denomination. His preaching was described as “fluent and impassioned”, his language as “polished and effective”.

Manse

The church at this time was renting a house in Cochrane Street for use as a manse. The owner informed the church that he was selling the house, so the decision was made to buy a manse in time for the arrival of the new minister in October. In April 1923 the church bought ‘Ingleside’ in Woodlands Crescent, and this house is still the present manse. The house cost £750, so a loan from the bank for £550 was taken out, with the remainder coming from money raised through renting out the church halls to the nearby Employment Exchange.

Graham Lyle married Miss Agnes Lamb of Motherwell just a few weeks before being inducted as minister of the church. He was aged 26 when he was inducted on Sunday 21st October 1923. Mr & Mrs Lyle were presented with a drawing room clock which had an inscription “Presented to the Rev and Mrs D Graham Lyle MA, by the congregation of Falkirk Baptist Church on the occasion of their marriage, and the commencement of their ministry in Falkirk - 21st October, 1923”. This clock still remains in the family, with their daughter Miss Christine Lyle.

At his induction service, Rev Graham Lyle stated that his work would be evangelical, and his aim would be to bring men and women to the foot of the Cross and to the feet of Jesus Christ in repentance

The Boy Preacher

and faith. In February 1924, he arranged for a mission to be held in the church later that year in November, with Mr W D Dunn an evangelist. He proposed setting up a "Look-Out Committee" in the church, whose duties were to keep in touch with visitors, as well as visiting former church members who still lived in the district. Mr Lyle also arranged for a 'Ministers Box' to be placed in the vestibule, so that members could send him

Deacons Court 1926



back : Mr W Jarvie, Mr W McClenaghan, Mr A Nicol, Mr J Black, Mr J Kennedy, Mr Duncan, Mr J McGregor
front : Mr Braid, Mr A Balfour Gray, Rev D Graham Lyle, Mr W Crichton, Mr A Snedden

correspondence in private. The timing of the communion services were changed from every alternate week to twice a month, being held on the first Sunday morning and third Sunday evening, the way it is today. The church began holding Open Air services in the town, and youth organisations to cater for the number of young people joining the church were started. A Christian Endeavour was started in October 1924, and in September 1925 a Boys Scout Troop and Girls' Guildry began. The primary aim of the Girls' Guildry was to keep girls in the church who thought they were too old for the Sunday School and not

The Boy Preacher

quite ready for full membership of the church.

A Sales Committee was set up and its function was to raise money, by various means, as the church required it. Mr Lyle introduced the Freewill Offering Scheme in 1924. Under this Scheme, participants promised to give a certain amount of money in an envelope each week to the church. Mr W Braid took over the Scheme initially. (The way of collecting offerings from the congregation hasn't changed much from this date. Since 1917, the offering was collected by passing collection plates around the pews. Before then, a collection plate was placed at the church door). In August 1925 the Sales Committee put in a request to the Deacons Court "that the deacons, during their visitation, endeavour to push the sale of photographs of minister and church". One of these photographs of the church was presented to the church by Miss Kathleen Lyons, daughter of Rev John Lyons (1955 - 1980), when the church celebrated 100 years of worship and witness in Orchard Street in October 1997.

Temperance

Mr Lyle, along with other ministers in the town, associated himself with the Temperance Movement (abstinence from alcohol) and put his signature to a temperance advert, which appeared in the Falkirk Herald in 1925, encouraging people to think about the benefits of temperance. The Baptists in Scotland had long been associated with the Temperance Movement and considered it to be a key issue in social reform, although a large section of the poorer population in Scotland were hostile to temperance. The former minister of the church, Rev Alex Paterson, and the church treasurer, Andrew Balfour Gray, were both members of the Scottish Baptist Union

The Boy Preacher



Provost J.C. Gilchrist

Temperance Committee. Temperance strategy focussed on the young and Falkirk Baptist, along with many other churches, had a Band of Hope meeting for children. The Band of Hope continued in the church until as late as 1972, and was under the leadership of Mr & Mrs Campbell who had ran it for 26 years. For many years, however, the Band of Hope had functioned purely as a children's club.

During the 1920s, Falkirk Baptist Church was closely identified with public life. A significant event was the "kirkin' o' the Council" on Sunday 15th November 1925, when the Provost, Magistrates and Council were present in the church. The Provost (Mr J C Gilchrist) and the Town Clerk (Mr A Balfour Gray) were both members of the church, and were undoubtedly influential in bringing this high profile event to the Baptist Church. Both men were well known and respected in the town, and were among Falkirk's more prominent public personalities. John Gilchrist held the office of Provost for a three year term from 1925 until 1928.

Bazaar

The main recommendation of the Sales Committee was the holding of a Public Bazaar to raise money to pay off the loan owed to the bank for the purchase of the manse. The bazaar was held on Friday 15th and Saturday 16th October 1926 in the Town Hall. A souvenir guide was produced, which gave details on the history of the church, and who the Baptists are. Photographs of a number of members of the church who were stallholders, the minister, and the Deacons Court are also included, along with information on the different organisations in the church. The local newspapers, the Falkirk Herald and the Falkirk Mail, each reported on the bazaar. The church was described as being one of the more active

The Boy Preacher

local spiritual organisations, and a strong agency for good in the town. 1926 was the year of the General Strike, and comment was made in the newspaper that “the bazaar is being held at a time when conditions are far from being of the most favourable kind. Many people are undoubtedly feeling the effects of the coal strike, and have little to spare for purposes other than their own immediate needs”. On the first day, however, £467 was raised, and the overall total raised was £750, more than paying off the loan owed to the bank. The bazaar was an event in which the whole church got involved.

The Falkirk Herald, dated 16th October 1926, captured the scene and atmosphere of the bazaar for its readers with the following article. “The interior of the hall presents an unusually bright and attractive spectacle. Garlands of multi-coloured bunting hang to and fro, and all around the front of the gallery are festoons of coloured muslin. The rear of the cafe, which is draped with material of tangerine and grey, adding a delightful touch to the general layout. The various stalls have their own distinctive colours, which are also worn by their respective attendants. Chinese lanterns lend a picturesque Eastern touch. In addition to the cafe on the platform, there are no fewer than nine stalls, while a miniature shooting gallery is upstairs. On entering the hall, one first encounters the Work Party stall on the right, resplendent in a bright colouring of light helio. Garments, dainty and useful, are arranged on shelves and offered for sale at prices which are bound to tempt buyers. On the left is the soap and toilet requisites stall, the colour of which is



Advert of 1926 bazaar

The Boy Preacher

myrtle green. At the east end of the hall, flaunting the patriotic red, white, and blue, stands the Girls' Guildry stall, at which one may select from a wide range of household necessities and luxuries. The display at this stall gives indication that the young ladies of the Guildry have employed their knowledge of homecraft to good effect. Proceeding, one comes to the entertainments stall, which comprises all the attractions of a fair ground. The colour scheme here is of maroon and white. In many ways the White Elephant stall, clad in pale pink, belies its name. The 'souvenirs' of which there is a delightfully varied collection on view, are of a dainty and attractive as well as useful kind. The groceries and provisions department naturally has much of a useful nature to offer, and from a blaze of crimson the busy attendants dispose of quantities of everything in the food line. Pale blue is the colour of the Christian Endeavour stall, where beautifully worked garments of every kind charm the eye and open the purse. Everyone is tempted at the cake and candy stall. Enhanced lighting adds the final touch to the entire scene. ". The bazaar was one of the last events of Mr Lyle's ministry here. On 19th September 1926 he intimated that he had received a 'call' from Cambridge Street Baptist Church in Glasgow. His ministry in Falkirk ended on the last Sunday in October.

Although his ministry of three years at Falkirk Baptist was relatively short, the church prospered significantly under Mr Lyle's ministry. He was described as a preacher of outstanding ability, his discourses being "scholarly, forceful and masterly". During his three years ministry here, 86 names were added to the church membership. Mr Lyle said that his work in Falkirk had been evangelical. He went on to say that although his emphasis was on preaching, and often he had

The Boy Preacher

worked far into the night to have something ready for Sunday, he had tried to make sure that the visitation side wasn't affected, referring to the 700 house visits he had made. A senior member of the church recalls Graham Lyle's ministry, saying that Mr Lyle is one of the best preachers he has heard, and remembers that people would travel from miles around to hear him preach, and at times the church was so full that the only place left to sit was in the aisles.



Presentation of Robes to Rev D Graham Lyle on occasion of 25 years in Church of Scotland ministry. Mrs Lyle is pictured second on the left.

Cambridge Street Baptist Church, with over three hundred members, was double the size of Falkirk Baptist. The minutes of that church record how Graham Lyle's ministerial emphasis again focussed on evangelism, preaching, and visitation. There were open airs, missions, and over 400 pastoral visits in his first year. He was at Cambridge Street Baptist until February 1931 when he resigned to do some missionary work with the Church of Scotland Highlands & Islands Department at Lower Cabrach in Aberdeenshire. The most likely reason for his change to the Church of Scotland ministry was the higher salary

“He displayed powers of eloquence unsurpassed throughout the country”

The Boy Preacher

which Church of Scotland ministers received, rather than for doctrinal reasons.

Commendation

Graham Lyle was ordained and inducted into the Church of Scotland ministry in March 1932, and his first charge was Gordon Park at Whiteinch in Glasgow. In the Centenary publication of Gordon Park, published in 1974, Mr Lyle was described as “displaying powers of eloquence unsurpassed throughout the country. He had a spiritual sensitiveness and gift of expression that made his preaching penetrating, powerful, and poignant.” His series of addresses there under the title of “Cries From The Cross” was described as “perhaps the most eloquent exposition of Scripture ever heard in Gordon Park.” When he left Gordon Park, he did not leave as “the boy preacher”, but as “the experienced minister of the gospel”. His experience at Falkirk of raising funds for the church manse helped him at Gordon Park. In 1934 the congregation, in an act of faith during a time of economic depression, bought and installed a pipe organ at a cost of £600. The congregation allowed him to go back to the steel works at Motherwell on a part-time basis, as he wanted to help out with the war effort. For this work, he received a commendation from the King. The following article is from the Sept - Oct 1940 issue of ‘Gleanings’, the magazine of Gordon Park Church.

As most of our members are aware, Rev D Graham Lyle deemed it his patriotic duty to assist in the national effort by working three shifts per week at his former trade in Motherwell. His Majesty the King expressed his appreciation of this loyalty when it was reported to him by the Duke of Hamilton, whose letter to Messrs Dalzell reads :- “I have had the opportunity of telling the King of my visit to the Lanarkshire Steel Works

The Boy Preacher

last week. His Majesty was very glad to hear of the truly admirable spirit prevailing there and was most appreciative of the splendid example set by the Rev Duncan Graham Lyle”.

Typhoid Epidemic

Mr Lyle left for Lasswade Old Church, Lasswade, in the presbytery of Dalkeith in October 1940, a church which was over 700 years old. It was a difficult time to be in the ministry, as many people were away on war service. He left for Cambuslang Rosebank in January 1951, and was there until October 1954 when he moved to Aberdeen King Street where he was until his retirement in September 1967. Perhaps his greatest work was at Aberdeen where he was chaplain to the City Hospital over 15 years. This covered the typhoid epidemic during the 1960s when Mr Lyle was the only minister allowed into the City Hospital where initially all typhoid victims were sent. He ministered there with determination and courage. Rev D Graham Lyle died in Aberdeen on 14th March 1979, aged 81.



Visit by Queen to Aberdeen regarded as giving the 'all clear' to the city at the end of the typhoid outbreak (1964). Rev D Graham Lyle is second from left.