

A Brief History of Faith Presbyterian Church (PCA), Tacoma, Washington

By Elder Ken Anderson, et al

What follows is a brief history of Faith Presbyterian Church, Tacoma, Washington. This is a story of the Lord's great goodness to us over the years, often in spite of ourselves. We are thankful to the Lord for his faithfulness and for preserving us over time.

The idea and the desire for a new body of believers was actually fostered several months prior to its official organization. It was the summer of 1952 that a small group of like-minded Christians—about 8 to 10—first met weekly at the home of Mr. and Mrs. William J. Love, 607 N. Cushman Ave. The purpose of the group was worship, Bible study, fellowship, and discussion of the possibility of forming a new church. As the group grew in number, Sunday and Wednesday services subsequently were held in the basement at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Russell Trace, 901 N. Yakima, and then in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Roy A. Martin, 1432 N. Anderson. After a few months the number of those attending warranted forming a Sunday School in addition to the worship service and this began at the Martins' home.

On February 1, 1953, services were moved to Warren Hall, 2509 ½ 6th Avenue, where the congregation met for about 2 ½ months. It was here that a provisional Session was formed of Mr. Love, Mr. Trace, and Mr. Martin—all previously ordained elders in the Tacoma Bible Presbyterian Church—with Chaplain John B. Youngs as Moderator.

On February 16, 1953, the Rev. William R. LeRoy, a missionary candidate to Brazil, was called as Interim Minister, while efforts were being made to secure a permanent pastor, and served until December of that year. As the previous church connection of most of the people had been with Tacoma Bible Presbyterian Church, and as the doctrinal standards were identical, it was thought proper at the time to continue the temporary use of the name Bible Presbyterian in newspaper advertising, etc. Dr. Robert G. Rayburn, then Moderator of the Bible Presbyterian Synod and President of Highland College, Pasadena, California, occupied the pulpit on Sunday, April 19, 1953. This was also the date of the first services held at the Masonic Temple Building, 47 St. Helens Avenue. Dr. Rayburn moderated the first business meeting of the church as an organized body. Elders elected to the Session were: Dr. Frank Clark, Mr. Norman Anderson, Mr. Oscar Schrupp, Col. Wesley B. Hamilton, Mr. Roy A. Martin, and Mr. L. M. Bullen. Twelve deacons were also elected. The charter membership numbered 198. Acceptance into the Pacific Northwest Presbytery of the Bible Presbyterian Synod followed on May 8, 1953.

During the following month the congregation was asked to consider a suitable name for the new church. "Trinity," "Grace," and "Calvary" Bible Presbyterian Church were among those suggested, but the name "Faith" was adopted on May 20, 1953. Thus the name of the church became Faith Bible Presbyterian Church, Bible Presbyterian Synod. The constitution and by-laws were adopted on May 18, 1953 with incorporation with the State of Washington effective November 23, 1953. The first congregational photograph was taken on May 31, 1953.

The Rev. James E. Hanson, from Sprague, Washington, began his ministry as permanent pastor on November 15, 1953, having accepted a call to the pulpit on the 20th of September. Accompanying Mr. Hanson to Tacoma were his wife Janet, son John, and daughter Joanne.

Under Mr. Hanson's leadership the church continued to grow and various new ministries were initiated. These included a weekly radio broadcast on station KTAC called "Bible Questions Answered," Bible conferences held at Lake Retreat with Seattle and Wenatchee Bible Presbyterian churches (with the first held in August of 1954), and support to missionaries: the Rev. & Mrs. William LeRoy in Brazil and Miss Edna Barter in Arabia. A manse for the Hanson family was eventually purchased at 5019 South G St. The Session, consisting of 24 elders (8 of which rotated off the Session), met every second Thursday of the month. The Diaconate, consisting of 11 Deacons, met the fourth Thursday of the month. Twelve men served as Trustees, which met following the first meeting of the Session after each Congregational Meeting. According to the financial statement of January 1, 1956, the annual church income for 1955 was \$15,570.61 and the annual church expenses were \$13,628.32.

A building site at South 8th and Shirley Streets was purchased on February 22, 1956—10 lots for \$7,000. Four months later, on June 24th, groundbreaking ceremonies were held. South Shirley Street was then unpaved and vacant lots of Scotch broom formed much of the surrounding scenery. Businesses were few and far between on the now busy Sixth Avenue thoroughfare. The Building Committee consisted of Dr. Frank W. Clark, J. Guy Eernisse (Vice Chairman), Ernest Everett, Gen. W. B. Hamilton (Chairman), Reuben C. Haugen, Lowell Hewitt, Anthony Maras, Harry McColley (Secretary/Treasurer), Roy Quam, John J. Schrag, and Dr. Somers R. Sleep. Other members of the Session were: Norman D. Anderson, John W. Jones, Jr., William J. Love, Clyde O. Payne, Oscar Schrupp, S. S. Stevens, and Russell Trace. During 1956 the Bible Presbyterian Synod became the Bible Presbyterian Church, Columbus Synod.

Two years later the architectural firm of Worthen, Wing, Seifert, and Forbes was hired. On June 25, 1958, the bid of Brynstad Builders in the amount of \$110,902 was accepted, and construction began on August 23rd. A sketch of the new church was featured on the front cover of the October 1958 issue of The Bible Presbyterian Reporter, the magazine of the Bible Presbyterian Synod. Although the target date for completion had been the 1st of January 1959, all was not ready for the first services in the building until Sunday, April 26, 1959.

Dedication of the new building to the glory of God was held during the week of May 17-24, 1959. Special speakers from the Pacific Northwest Presbytery took part in the week-long celebration including the Rev. Carl J. T. Straub of Edmonton, Alberta, the Rev. Wilber Antisdale of Spokane, and Dr. Douglass Parris of Seattle. Dr. John Walvoord, President of Dallas Theological Seminary also spoke. The new main sanctuary had a seating capacity of 500, the parking lot was designed for 70 cars, the youth room had a capacity of 140, the steeple was 69' tall, and the building was valued at \$150,000. About 450 were present at the dedication services. At the time of dedication the Diaconate consisted of the Rev. James E. Hanson (Chairman), Kenneth Anderson, Harry DeSoto, John Dobler, Ross Everett (Clerk), Leslie F. Lecy, John Norgaard, Emil Nordstrom, Phil Pierce, Roy Quam, Arthur Riebli, Roland Schrupp, Carl Seifert, Smith Snyder, and R. P. Watson.

As a member church of the Bible Presbyterian Synod, a highlight of this affiliation was hosting the 25th General Synod, July 22-28, 1961. Over 150 pastors, elders, and family members from churches across the country attended. It was at this meeting of the Synod that the name of the denomination was changed to Evangelical Presbyterian Church, which change resulted in a new

name for the congregation: Faith Evangelical Presbyterian Church. During the same week, at Lake Retreat Conference Grounds, the young people of the denomination—the Evangelical Presbyterian Youth Fellowship—held their annual Bible Conference.

After more than ten years as pastor, Mr. Hanson concluded his ministry on April 4, 1964. The church reception was combined with a celebration of the Hanson's 25th wedding anniversary. The church was without a permanent pastor for the next two years. The Rev. Alex H. Sauerwein served as Interim Pastor from June 15, 1964 until February of 1966. His wife, Della, accompanied him to Faith.

During the time of Mr. Sauerwein's ministry, the denominational name had changed again, due to a merger of two national bodies. In 1965 the Reformed Presbyterian Church, General Synod, with roots going back to colonial times and the much younger Evangelical Presbyterian Church combined to form the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod. The congregation's name was changed to "Faith Presbyterian Church," with denominational affiliation indicated separately as RPCES.

On February 20, 1966, a pastoral call was issued to the Rev. George H. Ackley of Bellingham, Washington, who was installed on March 27, 1966. The Lord's ministry continued apace. In 1968, the Session appointed an Elder as Moderator of the Diaconate and Deacons became voting members of the Session committees. The average Sunday School attendance in 1968 was 165. Miss Mabel Seamons led the Junior Church, which met during worship service. John and Thelma Hanson led the Senior High Youth Fellowship which included Bible conferences, ski trips, parties, and other activities. A number of young folk came to know the Lord under this fellowship including several future ministers. In 1969, the round wooden tables were made for the dining room. Other ministries included Faith Homebuilders, Vacation Bible School, Women's Fellowship, and support to missionaries that included an annual fall Missionary Conference. A men's breakfast was begun in 1973 that met monthly. In 1975, the average Sunday morning worship service attendance was 168 and in 1976 Sunday School averaged 101.

1977 proved to be an eventful year in the life of Faith Presbyterian Church. On January 10th the final payment was made on the church mortgage to the Bank of California. The total loan had been \$110,902.00. Later that month the Session called the Rev. James Hanson, the first pastor of the church, to rejoin the pastoral staff. The 25th Anniversary of the congregation was celebrated with special meetings, services, and a mortgage burning. On Memorial Day Sunday a large framed Memorial Roll of those members who had died since the church's inception was presented to the congregation.

During the Spring of 1977, tensions, which had been an undercurrent in the church's life for some time, surfaced in a divisive way. These culminated in a congregational meeting Wednesday, July 27th at which the congregation was asked to vote on a motion to leave the denomination. Dr. Robert G. Rayburn came from St. Louis to moderate the meeting. Two of the church's long-time members, Miss Mabel Seamons and Miss Elizabeth Love were asked to speak for and against the motion. Miss Seamons spoke in favor of the church leaving the denomination and Miss Love spoke against the church leaving the denomination. The motion, requiring a majority of two-thirds, failed by a very slim margin. The result was the departure of a substantial majority of the congregation

including Pastor Ackley who formed a new church – Village 3 Church. The Judicial Commission of the Presbytery appointed the Rev. James Hanson as Interim Pastor, having declared the pulpit vacant. The Rev. Bill McColley, a son of the congregation and pastor of the Presbytery's church in Calgary, Alberta also served as Pulpit Supply during this time. Three men who had served the congregation formerly as elders, Ken Anderson, Joe Gronewold, and Harry DeSoto, were appointed the church Session. The regular services of Sabbath worship and midweek prayer continued.

A Pulpit Committee was appointed in the Winter of 1977-78, and a call was issued on April 29th to Robert S. Rayburn, a Covenant Seminary graduate then finishing doctoral studies in Scotland. Rob and Florence moved to Tacoma in May of 1978, his ministry began on May 23rd, and in a service on June 4, 1978, he was ordained to the ministry by the Presbytery and installed as Pastor. In 1978 the Diaconate began a Bible study on McNeil Island, the blue Trinity Hymnals were introduced, the ladies of the church initiated the annual Christmas luncheon, the elders began what would become the annual home visitation, and the Wednesday prayer meeting took on its present form.

During 1979, the Deacons' Fund was established to aid those in our congregation and as an outreach and witness to the community. The "Love Loaf" was begun as our annual Thanksgiving gift to World Vision.

In 1980, an invitation was extended to the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod to join the Presbyterian Church in America. In June of 1982, the merger of these two denominations was completed and the congregation gained thereby a new affiliation with the PCA. Also in 1980, the church sponsored three Vietnamese refugees from the camp in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Tan Phan, Khong (Connie) Nguyen, and Tuan Phan.

A one-year internship is required for ordination to the pastoral ministry in the Presbyterian Church in America. The first to fulfill such a requirement in this congregation was Mr. Jack Collins. In the Winter and Spring of 1984, Mr. Collins pastored the church in the absence of Dr. Rayburn who was granted a sabbatical leave of five months which he took with his family to study at the Free University in Amsterdam. In 1984, for the first time in 30 years, a congregational photograph was taken.

In August of 1985, custodian Mr. Fred Johns retired after 23 years of faithful service in maintaining the church building and grounds. On Thanksgiving Day, 1985, a violent windstorm tore off the entire metal ridge running the length of the sanctuary roof. In April of 1986, while Pastor Rayburn taught for a month at Covenant Seminary, the Rev. Ian Tait of Welwyn, England, preached and pastored to most happy effect in his absence. In September of the same year the Women's Fellowship was reorganized as "Women In the Church" (WIC). The first men's all-night prayer meeting was held in the autumn. In January of 1987 kneelers were installed in the sanctuary pews.

In April of 1988, the 35th Anniversary of the church was celebrated with special services. Charter members of the congregation and former members were invited with their families to a special dinner. Dr. Robert G. Rayburn came from St. Louis to preach in the Sabbath services, April 24th. At the time, the Session consisted of Pastor Rayburn and Elders Bob Rogland, Dick Hannula, Eugene Shaw, Steve Jack, and Ken Anderson. The Diaconate consisted of Dave Hannula, Mike

Brauhn, Dave Halinen, John Schrupp, Tim Skrivan, Eric Irwin, John Pappuleas, Bill Smith, Mike Stipek, and Brian Payne.

Increasing attendance and an ever-growing number of children and young people made imperative the remodeling and expansion of the church building. A building program in several phases was proposed in 1989. After adjustments made necessary by both building code requirements and financial considerations the last of three proposed phases, the remodeling of the sanctuary, was completed in the Spring and Summer of 1991. During the renovation the congregation worshiped in the church basement.

In June of 1990, Kevin and Dana Skogen returned to Faith Presbyterian Church from seminary studies in St. Louis. Mr. Skogen began his ministry as a Pastoral Intern and was called and ordained as Associate Pastor in the Winter and Spring of 1991. In January of 1993, Mr. Skogen left with his family to assume the pastorate of Reformed Presbyterian Church (PCA), Lookout Mountain, Georgia. The Lord made substantial use of his ministry especially among high school and young adult members of the congregation. In January of 1993 a call was extended to Mr. John Birkett, a senior student at Covenant Theological Seminary, to come as Pastoral Intern with a view to an eventual pastorate. He and his wife Debbie departed in June of 1993. Mr. Birkett accepted a call to Christ Presbyterian Church (PCA), Owensboro, Kentucky and became the pastor in 1994.

The elders had begun in 1979 a systematic visiting of every member of the congregation each fall, focusing on a particular topic. In the fall of 1993, Session Visitation was devoted to “our calling as Christians to be salt of the earth and the light of the world” as the church congregation entered its “middle age.” The congregation was warned about the temptation to lethargy marked by criticism and defensiveness and encouraged to keep their edge with an eye fixed on the truer and deeper purposes of worship, fellowship, and ministry.

After years of prayer and planning, Covenant High School opened for classes in September, 1992, with over 40 students enrolled. A ministry of Faith Presbyterian Church, CHS began classes on the church property utilizing the church basement, a portable building purchased and installed in the spring and summer of 1992, and the physical education facilities of the nearby YMCA. Elder Robert Rogland was the High School's first faculty member and Elder Richard Hannula its principal. Doug Bond became the third full-time faculty member in the fall of 1993.

In May 1994, Mr. Richard H. DeMass was called as Associate Pastor. He and his wife Lisa arrived from St. Louis in June where Rick had been a student at Covenant Theological Seminary. At this time the worship services consisted of an 11:00 a.m. service and a 6:00 p.m. service. In addition there were Sunday School and a mid-week Prayer Meeting. In 1995, a second morning service was added at 8:15 a.m. The Diaconate continued to support the Tacoma Rescue Mission, Templo Maranatha (a local Hispanic congregation), and Prison Fellowship's Project Angel Tree as well as assisting individuals. An organ was added to the worship service on a trial basis.

By the spring of 1995, there were 79 students at Covenant High School. This was the first year students were graduating who had attended all four years. This was also the year CHS began to seek accreditation through the Association of Christian Schools International. In the fall of 1996, there were 91 students at CHS representing 27 different congregations; 30% of the student body

attended Faith. An awning was installed on the front of the church to help relieve crowding in the narthex during fellowship time after the morning service. The building fund had begun to be replenished after being used for the renovations so that by January 1997, \$100,000 had been raised.

In 1997, CHS enrolled over 100 students and was granted accreditation by the Association of Christian Schools International. For the first time in many years a Vacation Bible School was conducted in June 1997. In addition to the regular youth activities, including the annual leadership conference in Horn Creek, Colorado, some of the senior high schoolers went on a church mission trip with Amor Ministries to Mexico in August to help construct a home.

Thirty-six couples went on a retreat to Lake Quinault Lodge in February 1998. The church welcomed Mike Simpson as the church's first administrator in April. In May, the church celebrated the 20th anniversary of Dr. Rayburn's ministry with a reception dinner at the Tacoma Club. The congregation elected four new deacons in October, bringing the total to fourteen. By January 1999, there was \$390,000 in the building fund. The CHS juniors and seniors went on their bi-annual trip to Great Britain. There were some trials: the church had to impose church discipline, we suffered the death of loved ones including an infant, and there were private sorrows that had to be borne. But, in the midst of it all, the Lord continued his faithfulness and blessing.

The Rev. Ian Hamilton, pastor of Loudoun Parish Church, Newmilns, Scotland, spoke at the CHS graduation in June of 1999 at First Presbyterian Church. In the summer of 1999, the first church newsletter was published. The Rev. Ian Tait, long associated with both Covenant College and Covenant Seminary, a Puritan scholar and bibliophile, visited from Great Britain and preached in August. During the summer, the church hosted the national conference of Church Music at a Crossroads. Attendance at the sessions ranged from 100-300. Speakers included Michael Horton and Ken Myers. The Men's Nights of Prayer continued twice a year with one before Reformation Sunday and the other on Good Friday. By this point in time, two-thirds of the congregation was involved in small "covenant" groups. Membership crept just over 500 and as of January 2000 there was \$600,000 in the building fund.

During 2000, in preparation for expansion of the church facility to include a fellowship hall and classrooms, two adjacent homes were purchased. Another visit from Khen Tombing of Manipur, India, this time with his wife, Rith, and daughter, Naim, was a highlight. In 2001, four ruling elders were added to the Session bringing the total to eleven. After a number of evening sermons on Communion, changes were made in the way the Lord's Supper was celebrated which included the addition of wine and the congregation coming forward to partake of the sacrament. Udo Middelman, formerly of L'Abri, came for a weekend in March. We were honored to have Dr. David Calhoun from Covenant Seminary fill the pulpit over two Lord's Days in the summer while the pastors were on vacation. Mindy Belz, the International Editor of *World* magazine was the guest speaker at the ladies' annual Christmas brunch. A high point of the year was seeing one of our sons, Max Rogland, receive a call to pastor Trinity Presbyterian Church in Rochester, Minnesota.

Five new deacons were elected in June 2002: Andy Allen, Mark Aown, Peter Chiou, Doug McComas, and Micah Tamminga. During 2002, Elder Ross Bentson retired and in that summer, Mr. Ben Shoemaker served the congregation as an intern. In the fall of that year, the Session decided, due to the size of the congregation, to end the 24-year practice of annual Session home visitation and organize the congregation so that each Elder would have oversight over a portion of the membership. After much hard work by several able men in our congregation and months of waiting, in December the City of Tacoma finally approved our master plan for the development of our property for the sake of both the church and Covenant High School. In January of 2003, Elder Ken Anderson went to be with the Lord. In May of 2003, the church celebrated its 50th Anniversary at the Landmark Convention Center, formerly the Masonic Temple, site of the first worship service on May 20, 1953. The Rev. Martin Payne, pastor of Bay Springs Presbyterian Church, Bay Springs, Mississippi, and son of Mrs. Bonnie Payne, charter member, was the special speaker.

These last 50 years have been a time of salvation and of affliction, of birth and death, of growth in the life of faith and of stumbles and doldrums. We have sought to be faithful and, no doubt, have failed in many ways, but are most grateful for the Lord's blessing, and for unity and progress on many fronts. Most of the charter members of Faith Presbyterian Church are no longer living. A number of the current members will not still be in the world when the present congregation's little children are grown to adulthood. The generations pass. But the church's story remains the same.

Far down the ages now,
 Much of her journey done,
 The pilgrim church pursues her way
 Until her crown be won;
 The story of the past
 Comes up before her view;
 How well it seems to suit her still--
 Old, and yet ever new!

'Tis the repeated tale
 Of sin and weariness;
 Of grace and love yet flowing down
 To pardon and to bless:
 No wider is the gate,
 No broader is the way,
 No smoother is the ancient path
 That leads to light and day.

No sweeter is the cup,
 Nor less our lot of ill;
 'Twas tribulation ages since,
 'Tis tribulation still:
 No slacker grows the fight
 No feebler is the foe,

Nor less the need of armour tried,
Of shield and spear and bow.

Thus onward still we press,
Through evil and through good;
Through pain and poverty and want,
Through peril and through blood:
Still faithful to our God,
And to our Captain true,
We follow where He leads the way,
The Kingdom in our view.

Horatius Bonar

Weekly Average Church Attendance

Year	Sunday School	Morning Worship	Evening Worship	Prayer Meeting
1981	38	75	37	27
1982	51	92	42	31
1983	59	106	53	37
1984	80	134	73	43
1985	102	173	97	53
1986	102	179	106	48
1987	115	201	121	51
1988	160	248	154	54
1989	176	282	183	54
1990	193	317	202	63
1991	195	324	205	58
1992	220	335	224	62
1993	221	352	236	52
1994	245	360	236	62
1995	222	381	238	55
1996	257	406	236	57
1997	258	406	250	65
1998	290	418	264	66
1999	327	450	288	62
2000	342	472	311	65
2001	336	496	339	61
2002	347	502	323	63