

The Story OF St. Faith's



M.E.N.W.

St. Faith's, Charlton, 90th Anniversary October 2000

Dear Friends -

I had hoped to bring this history right up to the present time, instead of ending in 1923, but have run out of time for the necessary research. Please watch for the next installment!

Eventually, we hope to have the complete history printed in book form, with illustrations. It would help greatly with this if you would let me know if you find any misinformation, so that this could be corrected in the next printing. And please, People of St. Faith's, begin gathering stories NOW! Today's events are tomorrow's history.

Sincere thanks to all who have made contributions to our story: to those who researched the Internet: Kate Scott, Eric Crowther, Jeannette Deacon, Father Ken Amer, Karen McCarty; to those who provided material: Michael Scott, who sent a vast amount of information about St. Faith's Tyne mouth, England; Chuch Martin, history student at Thornloe University; Marthe Brown and Mary Beth Miller, Division Archivists; Father M.J. Scully; David Attwater; Pauline Bloomfield; Margaret Butler, Jean Wallace; Audrey and Burt Byerley and the Hough Connection; to all who have lent books for reference, and to the local people who have given stories which will be included in the next installment; to Kevin Ryan, whose book "Sawdust to Ashes" provided background material; to all others who have helped in any way; and to a long list of books consulted.

And special thanks to Kate and Eric, who have copy-edited the manuscript, and have typed it from my pages of barely-legible scribble; to Charlton Town Hall who will be doing the printing, and to Janet Saunders who will be helping with it.

Muriel E. Newton-White

CHAPTER I

WHO WAS ST. FAITH?

Who was St. Faith? A little child, in the last few years of the third century; a child who played with her friends, both pagan and Christian, in the streets of her hometown of Agen; a child who gathered rushes on the banks of the Garonne River; who picked wild flowers on the hillsides of Aquitaine.

A little girl, in the first few years of the fourth century; a little girl raised on the stories of Jesus and his apostles, and of the first Christian martyrs; a little girl being taught that the joys of heaven far exceeded the joys of earth; a little girl whose heroes and role models were the martyr-saints of earlier years; who may have dreamed of herself wearing the crown of martyrdom. A little girl of perhaps 12 or 13 who died for her faith by being roasted on a gridiron, in the year 304.

We can picture her with the dark hair and dark eyes of the people of her province, dressed in the simple "tunics" usually worn by the children of the Roman Empire. We know nothing of her parents - though some of the legends tell that she was of noble birth - but we are told that she had two sisters who also became martyrs.

The known facts about St. Faith are few. She was one of those who died in the time of the Emperor Diocletian, in the last of the great persecutions, at the hands of the governor of Spain, Dacian. Her home was Agen (pronounced ah-zhen) in the province of Aquitaine, in what is now south-western France. Evidence that she actually existed is found in her inclusion in the "Martyrology" of St. Jerome, compiled within a hundred years of her death. The legends that have come down to us of her are not outrageously fanciful and there is no reason why most of the stories could not have been true.

The background of her story is taken from old histories. After the sporadic but fierce periods of persecution that Christians had known since the time of the Apostles, there came a lull of some forty to fifty years. Under Diocletian and his co-rulers, Galerius and Maximian, this last systematic persecution was directed first at Christian buildings and sacred writings, then against the clergy, and finally against all who refused to curse Christ and worship the emperor and the pagan gods. Their fate was torture and death. This took place mainly in the East.

At first, all this would have seemed remote from the Town of Agen. No doubt St. Faith would have heard people say, "It can't happen here!" She would have continued in her quiet life - until word came that the storm of persecution, under the ruthless governor Dacian, had reached northern Spain. She would have heard of the cruel death of the young Deacon Vincent, early in the year of 304. Finally, in autumn, she would have seen the arrival of Dacian in her own neighbourhood. Her Christian neighbours, including their bishop Caprasius, were making secret preparations for flight into the surrounding hill-country. Faith decided to stay home.

This is her story, as told in "Saints and Martyrs of the First Twelve Centuries" by Mrs. Rundle Charles, 1898:

... And so it happened that the glory of leading the forlorn hope of Agen fell on the little maiden Faith, still but a child; for God has chosen weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty. Of noble blood and gentle courtesy of manners, the beauty of the soul exceeded the beauty of her form. From her cradle she loved the Saviour, her God, and would have no other master.

Left in Agen whilst other Christians had taken refuge amongst the rocks, she was summoned before Dacian. As she went to the tribunal signing herself with the Cross, as it had been signed at baptism, on brow, lips, and breast, she prayed, "Jesus Christ, my Lord, Thou never forsakest those who call upon Thee. Help Thy servant and send my lips words worthy of the questions I have to answer before the Tyrant."

"What is your name?" said Dacian.

"My name is Faith," she replied, "and I try to be like my name."

"And your religion?"

"I am a Christian from my infancy. I serve the Lord Jesus Christ with all my heart and soul."

"Sacrifice to our gods," the governor said, "or you shall die under torture."

She heard these threats without fear. Looking to heaven she said in a clear strong voice, "In the name of Jesus Christ my Lord not only will I not sacrifice to your gods, but I am ready to suffer all kinds of torments."

She was stretched, like Vincent, on the fiery bed of torture.

But all the people were touched with pity to see a young and noble maiden thus tortured and suffering with such courage. "What cruelty, what injustice," they cried, "to torment thus a young maiden of an illustrious house, who has done nothing amiss, whose lips have not been polluted with an evil word, whose only crime is adoring her God!"

And that day a multitude whose names we know not confessed the faith of Jesus Christ and won the palm of martyrdom.

Inspired - or shamed? - by her example, Bishop Caprasius and many of his flock returned to Agen, and they also were put to death. More and more people turned to Christ. The fierceness of the persecution, which was supposed to exterminate Christianity, had the opposite effect: it spread and spread - just as a grassfire spreads if one beats at the flames too violently.

Diocletian abdicated in 305; Galerius continued the persecution until 311, when he gave

up and published an edict of toleration. In 324 Constantine declared the Christian faith to be the state religion of the Roman Empire, twenty years after the death of St. Faith.

For 1700 years, October 6th, the date of her death, has been celebrated as her "birthday" into Eternal Life.

CHAPTER II

PILGRIMAGE TO CONQUES

This is the story of a Pilgrimage, undertaken by books and the internet. Its object is to find out how and why the little girl of Agen in France became so popular in England that many churches were named for her....Please think yourself into the Middle Ages, the Age of Faith, when miracles were expected to happen and therefore did.

We are starting out from England, on our way to the Shrine of Santiago de Compostela – St. James of the Field of the Star– in Northern Spain. Compostela has become almost as renowned a goal for Pilgrims as Rome and the Holy Land.

There is a town in France which we want to visit en route – Agen, in Aquitaine. The Normans have brought stories to England of their heroic young countrywoman who was martyred at Agen in the year 304. We hear that churches here are being named for her because of their connection with abbeys in Normandy of the same dedication, Sainte Foy. Her name in English, "Faith" attracts us, bringing holy thoughts to our minds and making us eager to learn more about her.

We leave home in the spring, wearing the grey gowns that mark us as pilgrims and the scallop-shell badges which are the insignia of St. James the Apostle. Some are making the pilgrimage as an act of penance for sin, some as an act of thanksgiving; some are seeking healing or some special blessing, some are going for the thrill of travel and adventure. And for some of us it is a way of expressing our love for God and His saints.

Apart from the sea route, there are several alternative routes through France. We are disappointed to learn that we were not going near Agen. The way chosen for our group goes through Aurillac, Conques, and Moissac, where there are monasteries for overnight stays. (At some places we have to make do with inns.) Then, we will cross the Pyrenees Mountains and travel westward through Northern Spain to the Atlantic coast. It is a long, hard journey, which could take several months. The old Roman roads are still here, well travelled by the Crusaders and by merchant caravans. Among us are armoured knights to protect us from bandits should we meet any.

One of our overnight stops is at the monastery of Conques, high in the mountains. Here, we find a fine church dedicated to Ste. Foy. We have heard there are many such dedications in

this country, but are surprised to find that her actual relics are here. Why are they not at Agen? However, it is late at night when we arrive, and our leaders insist on an early morning start, so we have no chance to find out. We are promised a longer stay on our return journey.

We continue on the long trip to Compostela, where the Shrine of St. James the Apostle has been famous since the year 830 when a tomb believed to be his was discovered by a shepherd, who was guided to it by a star. Here, we are told of St. James' missionary journey to Spain, after the Lord's Ascension; of his death by being beheaded on his return to Jerusalem; of the miraculous sea-voyage of his body to Spain, and its burial here. We hear of his sudden appearance on a milk-white horse, to lead the Christians to a great victory over the Moors. We feel the thrill of expectancy that perhaps – just perhaps – we might be granted a vision of him here at this sacred site.

The first chapel built here at Compostela has been replaced by a glorious cathedral, where many miracles have taken place. It is evident that one, at least, is a continuing one; the countryside which had become impoverished by wars against the Moors, has grown prosperous because of the pilgrim trade. Even the small boys know how to make the most of this – we are surrounded by them, singing and turning cartwheels for us and promising blessings from St. James, if we give them pennies.

Bringing with us the small treasures which have been blessed at the shrine, we are leaving Compostela and looking forward to Conques, many days ahead.

At last we are back here on the mountainside, learning more of the story of "la petite Sainte Foy." Our hearts are touched by her simple story. It is somewhat of a shock to be shown her statue-reliquary – an austere figure crowned and seated on a throne, shining with silver and gold, glowing with jewels and enamel work. Although our eyes are dazzled by its splendours, we cannot reconcile this forbidding figure with the child saint of the story. We begin to whisper among ourselves. "She looks more like a man than a young girl!" "I thought she was beautiful!" One of our group, himself a sculptor, eyes the statue critically, saying, "They've put a large man's head on a small child's body. That figure can't be more than 85 cm tall – and look at the size of the head!"

One of the monks, overhearing us, smiles as he explains. "This isn't supposed to look like her when she lived on earth a thousand years ago. It represents her transformed by her martyrdom, triumphant, crowned and throned in heavenly glory."

Another monk adds, "Our statue was made in the 9th century, soon after her relics came here from Agen. The figure is made from wood, hollow to contain her relics, plated with silver and gold and set with jewels. Monarchs and wealthy lords still bring gold and jewels to enhance her glory."

No longer looking for simple human beauty, we can begin to rejoice in the figure's

symbolic majesty, our hearts lifted up by the glowing jewels and metals reflecting the flickering light of the surrounding lamps. As we kneel to pray, we feel that her deep blue enamelled eyes are looking right into eternity, carrying our prayers with them.

When we ask why these relics are here at Conques instead of at Agen, where Ste. Foy lived and died, the monks tell us it was to protect them from pillaging, which was a threat at Agen.

On our way once more, carrying with the greatest care tiny reliquaries containing a few drops of holy oil from the lamps burning at the shrine, we listen as one of our knight-escorts gives a different answer to that question.

According to him, back in the 9th century the monks of Conques had no sacred relics. The monks of Agen had Ste. Foy. The monks of Conques coveted her. One dark stormy night, after several years of secret preparation, they went to Agen, broke into her tomb, stole her charred bones, and fled with them. The theft was discovered, a battle ensued, and several monks from both monasteries were killed. Conques won its prize. "It's not unusual," says our informant, "for small relics such as slivers of rock from a tomb, or thread from a garment, to be stolen – but stealing a whole saint is going a little too far!" He laughs heartily as if it is a big joke. Then he adds, "If you hear about a few relics of Ste. Foy being transferred to our Glastonbury, just don't ask how they got there! They will help to spread her fame."

Do we believe his tale, or not? In any case, we decide not to repeat it. What we want to take back to England with us are the good memories of her story, and that glimpse of heavenly glories shown us by the statue.

Also, we are bringing personal stories of our own. The monks of Conques told us that Ste. Foy is a patron of soldiers, prisoners, and pilgrims. Therefore we asked her prayers for safety in travelling: we have come through a fierce attack by bandits, unscathed; we have come through a terrifying storm in the mountains, unharmed; we have been delivered from shipwreck on rocks in the English Channel. One of our group asked Ste. Foy to pray for her brother who was a captive in Paris; he has been released. Our stories of our miracles which mean so much to us will get woven into the legends around the name of Ste. Foy.

And now we are back in England. Ste. Foy has become Saint Faith, and we find she is being celebrated throughout England. St. Osmund, who came here with William the Conqueror and was made bishop of Sarum, now called Salisbury, introduced the traditional rites of the Normans. These, which he combined with those already in use here, have become known as the Sarum Rite. This has become widespread. Because of the Norman influence, the Sarum Calendar has given a special place to St. Faith. She has been given a liturgy of her own for use on her feast day, October 6th. More and more churches are being dedicated to her. We pilgrims are happy to feel that we have helped to spread her renown.

CHAPTER III

ST. FAITH, NORTH SHIELDS, TYNEMOUTH

We will now take a quantum leap of some 800 years from our Compostela pilgrimage. The year is 1891. We are among a little group of people who are the descendants of one of those pilgrims of the Middle Ages. Our home now is in North Shields, Tynemouth, in Northern England. Our men work in the dockyards – but are often laid off. Our women are washerwomen or charladies, our girls are housemaids, and our boys pick up whatever odd jobs they can. In another hundred years we might be called “financially disadvantaged”, but at this time, when a spade is called a spade, we are known as The Poor. Life can be hard. However, here in North Shields, some of us have had the advantage of attending one of the Parish Schools, and so can read and write. We are members of the Church of England, living in the Parish of Tynemouth although we seldom attend the parish church of Christ Church. We feel more at home in the Hudson Street Mission, which Christ Church has been supporting since 1864. This is right in the midst of our over-crowded neighbourhood..

Now, in August of 1891, exciting things are beginning to happen at the Mission. On the 11th we took part in a Vestry meeting to discuss the forming of a “New Conventional District” as it will be called. We elected Wardens, Sidesmen, a Vestry Clerk, a Financial Committee, and a Building Committee. Then we had to choose a name for our new Church. Three names were proposed: St. Bartholomew’s, St. Faith’s and St. Alban’s. St. Faith’s was chosen by a large majority. Perhaps the stories of her brought to Tynemouth by our pilgrim ancestors, had something to do with the choice. Besides, this is truly a venture of FAITH, and what better dedication than to a child whose name is Faith?

The Sunday after the meeting, we ventured into the back pew at Christ Church to hear an address by one of the Curates, the Reverend R. Raggett. He asked for the prayers of the congregation for the new venture. “I am leaving this old Parish Church,” he said, “to undertake a great and a responsible work – the work of endeavouring to build up a Church and Parish in the centre of the thickly inhabited population which at present surrounds our poor Mission Building.” It was good to see that a collection was taken to get the work started.

In September, plans were drawn up for our new Church and Parish Hall. And, just imagine! – we are to have two services every Sunday; Evensong on Friday evenings; activities every day of the week: Men’s Bible Class, Mothers’ Meetings, District Visitors’ Meetings, Sewing Meetings, Clothing Club, Temperance Society, Band of Hope, Penny Bank, and even a Day of Intercessory Prayer on Behalf of Sunday Schools. Mr. Raggett has asked for volunteers to teach in the Sunday School. And our children can hardly wait to join that Band of Hope!

Our big day has come and gone; our Dedication Day, St. Faith’s Day, October 6, 1891.

The Dedication ceremony was impressive, with a large congregation and even a choir. From now on we will be known as "St. Faith's Conventional District" instead of Hudson Street Mission.

We have also held our first Harvest Thanksgiving. The old Mission Building was filled to overflowing, with latecomers having to be turned away, even though the neighbours had lent all their available chairs.

We are eager to have our new building. A splendid site has been secured for it (still on Hudson Street). It will cost 531 pounds, which sounds like a tremendous amount; but, believe it or not, almost enough money has already been raised to pay for it. The Editor of the Parish Magazine paid us a complement, saying "It cannot be said that the working men in the District are not helping themselves, for the utmost enthusiasm is displayed by them." We are contributing our pennies, and looking forward to helping in the building, in any way that unskilled labour can be used. This is an exciting time here in the poor end of North Shields!

We are so happy that Mr. and Mrs. Raggett are moving closer to us to live. Although they will be living in a grand house across the road in Dockwray Square, we feel that it is a generous gesture on their behalf to move beside us. We already love them. The Parish Magazine includes several pages each month with the heading, "St. Faith's Conventional District," which makes us feel good.

Of course, there have been people who criticize. This article is in the October magazine; it is unsigned, but we think it sounds like Mr. Raggett's voice. We quote:

Various objections have been raised by some people to the building of a Church in this neighbourhood, which we can, however, speedily dispose of. It has been said that St. Augustin's Church was built to answer the needs of this populous District. Yes, but it doesn't. If you wish the poor to attend a place or worship, you must build a Church right in the midst of them, so that they may feel it to be their own church. St. Augustin's is too far away, and too well situated amidst better surroundings ever to become the Church of the poor of this neighbourhood...In St. Faith's district alone there are over 4000 souls, and already a large Church population...craving for a fit place to worship in...Almost every Sunday evening a congregation of nearly 300 people has assembled in a building which accommodates 270....And plenty of other people say they cannot come to the present building because they cannot stand the intense heat and the bad ventilation.

If anyone wishes to do a great and a good work, let him liberally help forward this scheme. The poor are doing what they can, and we appeal to the rich to help them....We earnestly appeal to all those whom God has made overseers of His riches, be they great or small, to use these riches for His Honour and Glory.

Our own "riches" are small, but we are indeed doing all we can. And some day, we hope

our St. Faith's people here will be able to help another Mission Church, somewhere else, to get started.

CHAPTER IV

FROM ST. FAITH'S TYNEMOUTH TO ST. FAITH'S CHARLTON

In 1909, eighteen years after the founding of St. Faith's, Tynemouth, we are looking back on a lot of memories. We have the stories of the child martyr St. Faith, told and retold to us since our earliest childhood. We have the memories handed down to us through many generations, going back to the Middle Ages when our ancestors visited the shrine of Ste. Foy in Conques. These are a treasured part of our heritage.

Our recent memories are of the building up of our St. Faith's here in the working class area of North Shields. Our first Church building was dedicated by the Bishop of Newcastle in 1894, after three exciting years of planning, fund-raising, and hard manual work. We have seen two more Mission Churches being built as part of Christ Church Parish; St. Andrews and St. Oswald's. The Rev. Thomas Crawhall has been Vicar of the Parish since 1899.

The missionary spirit is strong in Mr. Crawhall. Under his leadership we have a strong Missionary Guild, as well as an Algoma Association which provides help for the Mission Field in Algoma Diocese in New Ontario, Canada! The very name brings a fresh, clear air of romance and adventure.

And so, a long-time dream of ours is beginning to come true; St. Faith's is making contributions to this Mission Fund. The pennies we used to save to help get our own Church started are still coming in, penny by hard-earned penny, and now they are going out to the wilds of Canada!

Two years ago Mr. Crawhall sent our senior Curate, Mr. Ballard, out to Canada with \$136.83 in Canadian money, to be given to some Church in Algoma. On his return here, Mr. Ballard told us how their Bishop, Dr. Thorneloe, sent him North to the new settlement at Englehart, to Mr. John Leigh. The money was given to Mr. Leigh to help in the building of five small churches in the area, on the understanding that the "mother Church" should be called Christ Church after the mother Church here, and that the daughter churches should be named after the daughter churches here. Of course, we realize that our share of that \$136.83 was very small; Christ Church has contributed most of it – but we are doing what we can. It's rather like the story of the Widow's Mite in the Bible. (*This was the story of a widow who gave a very small amount of offering but it was considered a great sum because it was all that she had.*)

And now this letter has just come to Mr. Ballard from Mr. Leigh:

Extract from the Tynemouth Parish Church Monthly Magazine April 1909

News from the Front

Christ Church
Englehart
Ontario
Jan. 21st 1909

Dear Mr. Ballard,

December 20th saw me duly admitted to the Diaconate; may God use me to his glory and benefit of his Church. There were ordained 3 Deacons (including myself) and two were ordained priests at Sudbury, Bishop honouring me by appointing the Gospeller. It was the first ordination service I ever attended, and certainly a more impressive service I cannot imagine.

Yesterday I had a letter from North Shields, it is encouraging to feel we are remembered by friends in our native land, and that they are remembering us when they engage in prayer.

Our Bishop visited us on St. Andrew's Day and confirmed four candidates; during his sermon he said "the earnest desire surely of every Christian is to see souls brought to Jesus, souls for Jesus should be the burden of every refrain."

Now I know you will be interested to hear we have a service at Charlton every Second Sunday and one at Thornloe every Second Sunday.

We have two lots given us at the former place for church and house. I hope soon to be moving and have the people moving in the way of providing themselves with a church. It is to be called St. Faith's, what will St. Faith's, North Shields, think of this? Is it possible I wonder for them to think of bearing a little of the expense? At present the service is held in the parlour of the Hotel. I go over by train on Saturday and walk back (7 miles) on the Sunday afternoon. The next Sunday I set off for Haeslip (*sic. Heaslip*) about 9 a.m. taking a service there at 11, then I catch the 12.30 train and go down to Thornloe 16 miles south taking a service there at 2.30, catching the 4.45 for Englehart ready for service at 7. In this way we have only Evenson at Englehart which is rather injuring us, but then it is good for the others, they need food and it keeps the idea of a Church before them.

Every day one hears from one or another "I used to be Church of England but there was no church where I used to live and so went to so and so." I don't see really how they can be blamed, it is natural for a religious person to desire to attend some service and when they haven't their own they go elsewhere, the unfortunate part is they do not seem to care to return to the fold of the Mother Church when they have been deprived of her services. This is very different to the Roman Catholics, they may be away in the bush for months and even years, yet their first duty is to attend church when they have the opportunity.

Haeslip (*sic. Heaslip*) is very slow and hard to push forward, but I hope Thornloe will take hold and go forward. My first service was attended by 28 and the second by 18, this is good for a start, the service is held in the Orange Lodge over the Post Office.

Dane is still visited once a month, and a very nice little time we have there. The last time I was there I met a man from Larder, and he wanted to know why

they were never visited there! What can one do? Imagine one man in district extending from Thornloe to the height of land 56 miles and from Larder to Charlton 40 miles. However it is not our battle but the Lord's and who will win we are well assured, only how much better it would be if we had more men and more money.

You will be interested to hear I have had three weddings already; one of these came from Bourkes nearly 100 miles north, there being no one else nearer than myself who could marry and had they been a month earlier they would have had to extend their journey to New Liskeard, another 25 miles.

The first couple I married complained of the length of the service or rather the bridegroom did, who was a Methodist, and then said he would see me again; rather good after making his complaint, isn't it? There is no charge made for marriage in this country, this will explain his promise of seeing me again. The last marriage the couple came without a single friend, so I had to hunt up a best man for them, my wife acting as bridesmaid. After I had done this I said "You have the ring, I suppose?" "No, I haven't," was the answer. Poor man, his bride was terribly shocked, so I had to use one of my own, leaving them to purchase one later.

John Leigh

What a challenge! Are we really able to "bear a little of the expense" for our namesake Church? In addition to what we are already doing? Money is so hard to come by. Is God really asking this of us? Is the challenge too great? We must do as we have always done when faced by problems: pray to God to show us the way.

The answer has come in a strange way. One of our family – a young girl – had a vivid dream. She dreamed of being in a most beautiful big cathedral, praying that God would help us to find the money for that new little Mission Church. While she prayed she was looking at an extraordinary statue made of shining gold and silver and glowing jewels. At first, she thought the face and figure so hideous that they spoil the statue's shining beauty; until she realized that there was something wonderful about the eyes. She felt as if they were looking directly up into heaven – and taking her prayers with them. When she told us about this, we who have had the St. Faith's stories handed down to us know she had been shown a vision of that reliquary-statue at Conques in France, which our pilgrim ancestors had seen nearly a thousand years ago. The strangest feeling came over us when she spoke, realizing that this little girl is about the same age as St. Faith would have been at the time of her martyrdom. We are taking this vision as a sign from God that He will bless our undertaking – and this is proving to be so. One of our group has been given a small raise in pay. One who had been out of work has found a job. One of the girls has found work as a housemaid in a grand house. Coincidences? No!

Should we tell everybody? No! There are still a few people around who would think this was a "Papist practice," too much like praying to a saint instead of to God. It isn't. Having a saint

praying *for* us and *with* us is not the same at all as our praying *to* the Saint. It is, of course, God alone who answers the prayers.

We are praying earnestly for Mr. and Mrs. Leigh and for all the people in the Mission. We hear that they have built a “parsonage” in Englehart. They’re calling it a “shack covered with tarpaper” but say it has three rooms which are fairly comfortable. (Perhaps it’s more comfortable than some of our tenement dwellings – and definitely in less crowded surroundings!) They had to make a clearing in the bush before building it. Christ Church stands beside it, not yet finished inside.

Three of the Churches in Mr. Leigh’s care are to be named after our three Mission Churches here. Ours, St. Faith’s, will be at a little place called Charlton; St. Oswald’s at Thornloe, and St. Andrew’s at Krugerdorf. There is also to be a church at Heaslip, to be called St. James’. We have no St. James’ as part of our Parish here. Is it possible that the stories of St. James’ of Compostela in Spain, visited by our Pilgrims, may have something to do with the choice? We would like to think so.

This spring one of our Parish Curates, Mr. W. Hardy Johnson, is leaving for the Mission Field in Algoma. We are proud of him, but sorry he is being sent to a place nowhere near “our” Mission. He is going to Sault Ste. Marie, a city several hundred miles away from Charlton. We find it hard to visualize a land of such vast distances – and so few people!

CHAPTER V

MORE FROM ST. FAITH’S TYNEMOUTH TO ST. FAITH’S CHARLTON

It is now 1910 and the Vicar has had a letter from the Bishop of Algoma, Bishop Thorneloe, who has made several fund-raising visits to England but has not come to our Parish. We have also heard from Mr. Johnson, asking for cassocks and surplices, which the ladies of our parish are planning to make and send. We have been able to send more money – a good deal from Christ Church, and our “Widow’s Mite from St. Faith’s.

Not long ago we had a big disappointment here. Bishop Thorneloe had promised us a visit from Archdeacon Gillmor, but he couldn’t come; we understand that he was not well. This Archdeacon has been working in Algoma Diocese since 1883, first as a layman, then as a priest, and finally as a Travelling Archdeacon. He has travelled over the whole of that huge diocese, generally on foot. One of Mr. Leigh’s parishioners who is making a homestead in the woods somewhere back of Charlton and who occasionally writes to us, describes the Archdeacon as “a romantic figure of the frontier, with a delightful Irish brogue.” We had so looked forward to talking with someone who knows “our” Mission as well as he does.

The other day we received a letter from this friend of ours, telling the real reason why

Archdeacon Gillmor didn't come. "The arrangements had all been made," he wrote, "the new clothes purchased – the silver-buckled shoes, the apron, hat, gaiters, etc. – the whole panoply of an Archdeacon, and the itinerary settled. But the last seems to have settled something else as well. The Archdeacon mutinied. He refused to go. The Bishop was understandably furious, and the Archdeacon packed his black bag with an outfit very different to the one intended, and sought the friendly shelter of his woods trails until the storm blew over." We understand this to mean that all the elaborate preparations scared him away! Perhaps one of those woods trails led to our friend's lonely log cabin.

We hear of more and more missionary activities in other parts of Canada, including, to our delight, another St. Faith's Mission! The Archbishop of Canterbury has sent a team of seventeen young men who will be based in Edmonton, Alberta, in the Canadian West. They will serve a wide area beyond the city. Perhaps St. Faith has other Churches in Canada that we haven't yet heard about?

In October, our Missionary Guild was visited by the Honourary Secretary of the Algoma Association in London – Miss Green. She gave a vivid and interesting description of the Diocese of Algoma, its vast extent, the limited means of the ordinary dwellers in the region, and the lack of even intermittent provisions of spiritual benefits for the great majority of the people. She appealed for more funds to carry on the work, since, as she says, "however willing and even numerous might be the offers of personal service, they could not be accepted if there were no means of paying the necessary stipends." After hearing her, we are increasing our prayers, and know that God will make it possible for us to increase our giving – again!

By 1911, we are getting to know more and more about Algoma Diocese and feel very close to the people and their needs. Mr. Ballard has given an address describing life and work there. He illustrated his talk with some capital lantern slides – a great treat for us. Some of these slides give us a frosty picture of a Canadian winter.

Mr. Johnson came for a brief visit, telling us about his work in Sault Ste. Marie. A good many of us were anxious to see him with a view to getting information about Canada and the prospects there. Certainly it must be a fine place, among the finest places in the world for steady and industrious chaps to go to. It makes us long to go out there! And I am sure some will do so.

This year has been an exciting one for St. Faith's Charlton. The little church is finished enough to be usable, and the first service has been held there. They even have a Sunday School, organized by Mrs. Leigh. It started with only five children, but they expect the numbers to increase. Children of other denominations will probably join them.

During 1923 we have heard of many ups and downs at "our" Mission Church in Charlton, as there have been here through the war years. In the fall of 1922 the whole of Charlton was wiped out in the disastrous Temiskaming Fire, and the little Church, with all its records, was destroyed. Now, in 1923, a new building has been put up. Miss Green visited there and arranged for Altar cloths, linens, and Communion Vessels to replace those that were lost. This must have been a tremendous blow to that little congregation.

We hear that it's often impossible to hold services there in winter time because of the bad road conditions, with the deep snow, and the extreme cold making it almost impossible to heat the building. However, the people are courageous and dedicated. We hear that they are now doing what we have done all these years - saving their pennies in "mite boxes" to give to their own Algoma Missionary Society. We are proud to share our name with them.

By 1935, our Parish Church and its three Mission Churches in Tynemouth, are flourishing. Here at St. Faith's we are very strong on ministry to children - perhaps our dedication to a child saint has something to do with that? The women of the whole Parish still work on knitting "woollies" to send off the Algoma. Our interest in Mission is as keen as ever. We never forget the vision given to one of our children twenty-five years ago, when we received the assurance that God was hearing our prayers, and would help us to find the means for helping our namesake Church. The money has come, always.

It is now 1938 and here in North Shields we are facing big changes. A slum clearance program is underway, and though the Mission buildings themselves may not be affected, the districts around them are threatened with greatly reduced population. What that will mean to our churches we do not know. The Vicar, Canon Milner, says, "Whatever happens, I am quite sure that both St. Faith's and St. Oswald's must be kept going, if only for the sake of the children of the neighbourhood. It is abundantly clear that the poor usually send their children to the nearest Sunday School, without regard for denominational distinction."

We are praying that our namesake Mission church will continue in this tradition of ministry to children, never forgetting Christ's words "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

There will be changes ahead for all of us, for Charlton as well as for North Shields, but God will see us through. We will remember the words spoken by the little St. Faith before her death, "My name is FAITH - and I try to be like my name."

Sad news. In 1944, St. Oswald's was closed and now, in 1955, St. Faith's is closing and St. Andrews' will close in 1956. Christ Church, with St. Augustin's, will become part of the Team Parish of North Shields.

The Diocese of Algoma has become a self-supporting Diocese, and Christ Church Englehart a self-supporting Parish. St. Oswalds' Thornloe closed long ago; St. James' Heaslip and St. Andrew's Krugerdorf, will close within the next ten years or so. St. Faith's is still going, holding its own. Our missionary ties have come to an end – but the bond is still there. But it is time for the voices of the pilgrims and the workers of North Shields to say farewell. And time for the people of St. Faith's Charlton to tell their own story.

CHAPTER VI

ST FAITH'S STORY: 1905 -1923

In the earliest days of settlement in the Charlton area, travelling ministers and priests would come through and hold services in bush camps and in peoples' homes. One well known figure was Ben Widdifield, a local preacher whose followers became (unofficially !) known as Bennyites. As soon as word of a service got around, regardless of denomination, those who lived anywhere within reach would flock to the place, eager for Christian fellowship. Sometimes one of the settlers themselves would lead a service. The old timers used to tell of the "Shanty Women" who visited the camps, and of Jim Ellis, farmer, another very well liked local preacher. Everyone pulled together. When churches began to be built, the first one in Charlton being the Presbyterian log church, everyone pitched in to help.

Around 1905, the Rev. Alfred Percy Banks, newly ordained minister of the Church of England at St. John's New Liskeard, did mission work among the settlers here. Therefore all records of baptisms and such were kept at St. John's until 1908. In 1907, a licensed lay reader, John Leigh, came from England to the area. He settled in Englehart, where he built a parsonage, a tar paper shack with a lean-to roof, two rooms and a small kitchen joined at the back. The church was being built beside it in a clearing which had been made in the bush. His wife and small son joined him later.

It would have been to this shack that the Rev. Mr. Ballard of Tynemouth, England, came to visit. This is where our connection with Tynemouth began.

In those days, the term "Anglican" was never used among us. We were Church of England, "C.of E.", or simply "English Church". No doubt most of the first members here had strong English accents! Those who were accustomed to speaking to the Vicar and the Curate had to get used to all priests, deacons, and lay ministers being addressed as "Preacher". Some of the

old timers were still using the terms in the in the 1960's. The words, "The Preacher is coming!" always put everyone on their best behaviour.

The first "C. of E." service in Charlton was held in 1908 at the British Hotel, owned by Eli and Mary (Hough) Thib, when Bishop George Thornloe baptized their baby son, Albert. The Bishop and John Leigh had walked out to Charlton from Englehart over a rough road through the bush. Within the next two years, Mr. Leigh married two members of the Hough family: John Atwell Hough of Larder Lake to Myrtle May Donaghue, and John Allason (Jack) Hough to his cousin Jessie, sister of John Atwell. These weddings took place at home.

In 1909, John Leigh was ordained deacon. By now the railroad had reached Charlton: the Charlton Branch. Services for a while were held in a boarding car, set up near the Falls by the T. & N.O. as a temporary railway station. Later, a hall above the Folke's Store in West Charlton was used for services. These were held every second Sunday here, and at Thornloe on the other Sundays.

Several more babies were baptized at home by John Leigh, including Jack and Jessie Hough's first child, John Beever. Atwell John, son of John Atwell Hough, was also baptized, possibly at Larder Lake. The names McConnell, Atterbury, Illingworth, and Lamb are in the Baptism register. Fred Widdifield and Jane Illingworth were confirmed at Englehart.

In 1910, the "English Church" was built by Alf Gardiner. It was named St. Faith's, as requested by the Tynemouth church people. No doubt it was built of lumber from one of the local sawmills.

Also in 1910, Mr. Leigh, now a priest, inaugurated the first Sunday School in Charlton, with Mrs. E. W. White as superintendent and teacher. At first there were only five children, but the number increased as children of other denominations joined. Assisted by Mr. and Mrs. Folke and major and Mrs. Wideman (not C. of E. people) Mrs. White organized Charlton's first Christmas tree for the children. Just imagine the excitement!

Mr. Leigh left at the end of December of 1910 to serve at St. George's, North Cobalt. For the first two months of 1911 Archdeacon Gowan Gillmor filled in at Englehart, Charlton, Thornloe, Heaslip, Dack, Krugerdorf and Swastika. In the early years, nearly all travel between the seven "stations" was on foot; snowshoes in winter. Sometimes one of the settlers could provide a horse and buggy ride or horse and cutter. Sometimes the "Preacher" could use the train, although even the small fare would have been a burden on a very small stipend. The distances were great. Needless to say, there was no way each of the churches could have a service every Sunday.

During the sixteen years from 1907 to 1923, eight incumbents are listed, their average stay being two years. Four of those were newly ordained deacons when they arrived; three were students and lay readers; five were ordained priests not long before leaving the mission.

Sometimes there was a summer student as assistant. Holy Communion services were few and far between. Archdeacon Gillmor used to fill in some of the gaps. The following is a list of incumbents:

- 1907 - 1910: John Leigh: lay reader to deacon to priest
1911 - 1913: Edward Pinnington: student to deacon to priest (left to become a military chaplain)
Assistants: J. Mallinson (1911)
R. Fleming (1912)
W. Griffiths (1913)
1914 - 1916: The Rev. Owen Jull: deacon to priest
Assistant: H. L. Petty (1915)
part of 1916: Archdeacon Gillmor and the Rev. F. Clayton
1916 - 1917: Rev. Roland Palmer: deacon to priest (left to join the Cowley Fathers, Bracebridge)
1917 - 1919: Rev. W. Swainson, deacon
1919 - 1921: Rev. J. Templeton: deacon to priest
1922 - 1923: B. G. Gorse, student and lay reader.

Generally the student shared the "shack" with the incumbent. According to local legend, one pair found it a little difficult to get on together in the such small quarters. On one occasion, the minister is said to have fired a block of firewood at the assistant.

E. Newton-White used to enjoy telling how he hijacked a "jigger" on the Charlton Branch Railway to give Mr. Pinnington a ride back to Englehart. The unfortunate man might have been better off walking, because young Newton, not being an expert driver, dumped him off a few times. People often walked the tracks rather than use the roads which doesn't say much for the condition of the roads at that time.

The first service to be held in the new St. Faith's was during the summer of 1911 with Mr. Pinnington officiating and Roland Attwater as organist. From then on Mrs. Fred Widdifield took turns with Roland.

Mrs. Kilbride began teaching Sunday School along with Mrs. White. Roland used to tell about a little problem that arose between the two women over the Sunday School. Mrs. Kilbride was of London ancestry and left "er aitches" off. Mrs. White was of Welsh ancestry and put them on again - where they didn't belong. When she wanted to be especially emphatic, she ended her sentences with a strong Welsh "whateffer". According to Roland, she questioned Mrs. Kilbride's qualifications as a teacher, "teaching the little children to leave their *haitches hoff, whateffer!*" Anyhow, Mrs. White became less active in the Sunday School because they moved from Charlton out to their homestead in Dack Township. Mrs. Kilbride was still teaching into the 1930's.

The Algoma Missionary News tells of the Bishop's visit to St. Faith's in October of 1911, "Since his last visit the church has been completed inside, satisfactorily, neat and well-appointed, and does credit to Rev. E. F. Pinnington and the congregation... In the blackest of nights and the muddiest of roads, there gathered for Evensong a congregation which filled the church. The Bishop was greatly encouraged by the outlook."

Then there's the story of an expected visit by the Bishop during one of those early years, when everyone was gathered at a home in Charlton for the reception, with goodies prepared and the kettle boiling. They waited... and waited... and waited. Finally someone said, "He can't be coming, we might as well have tea!" Mrs. White, one of the hostesses, looked around for her son Newton, whose job it was to hand around the tray of cake. No Newton. At last his mother tracked him down - sitting on the steps with the Attwater boys, an empty tray beside them. What she said to Newton is not recorded, but it probably ended with a loud "whateffer"!

Mr. Pinnington prepared five people for confirmation in 1913, including J. A. (Jack) Hough and also that year, he baptized Jack and Jessie's second child, Mary Patricia (called Mollie).

He was responsible for the building of St. Andrew's, Krugerdorf, afterwards known as Chamberlain Church. This was opened by the Bishop in 1914, during Mr. Jull's ministry. The Algoma Missionary News reported that one of the settlers, Mr. D. M. Forester, not only did much of the building with his own hands but also ministered in the church himself when no other provision could be made.

Mr. Jull baptized several children, including two Pringle children, two children of Dr. Cooper, David Attwater, Dorothy (Patsie) Reavell (daughter of Elsie (Attwater) Reavell; Winona Campbell and Margaret (Peggy) Hough. The register tells of the burial of Ambrose Campbell at age 34. These names are still known in the Charlton area.

The register also gives a list of Charlton communicants from 1909 to 1916.

John Andrews	Harry Illingworth
Mrs. W. F. (Alice Andrews) Attwater	Jane Illingworth
Oswald Attwater	Gladys Illingworth
Mrs. O. (Margaret Andrews) Attwater	Marion Illingworth
Miss Muriel Attwater	Mrs. Ada Kilbride
Mrs. Elsie (Attwater) Reavell	Mrs. Orrell
Miss Gladys Attwater	Miss Smith
Roland Attwater	Mrs. Walker
Mr. & Mrs. Bolton	E. W. White
Helen Caroline Campbell	Mrs. (Mary) White
Mrs. Harkies	E. Newton-White
John Hough Sr.	Mrs. Fred Widdifield

Mrs. Hough (which one?)
Mrs. Mary (Hough) Thib
Mrs. H...iger (unreadable)
Dorothy Hough

Mrs. Elizabeth Hough
Alex Hough
Letitia Hough

Of course this list doesn't include the small children and unconfirmed people. Many of those listed were quite young. Some of the older ones were real "characters". It must have been a lively congregation!

After the Bishop had made one of his annual visits, the Algoma Missionary News gives this description of Charlton: "A very picturesque village of some promise, at the foot of a long lake navigable for many miles northward and bordered by good farming land. Here the church should be pushed on". Again, in 1916, "This interesting and important region, including several centers of church population and life, has felt the effects of war as seriously as any part of the Diocese. It is no small tribute to the Rev. E. F. Palmer, deacon of less than a year's standing, that he has kept these mission centers in line during the trying period, and has awakened living interest in spiritual things in the chief places. Evidences of this were afforded in the confirmation of 10 persons in Englehart and one in Charlton. (*This was Helen Campbell, confirmed as an adult.*)

Among those baptized by Roland Palmer were Mina McConnell, baptized at home and not expected to live and Keith Reavell, whose father Jim and Uncle Keith were fighting in Germany (Keith Sr. never returned). Mr. Palmer also took the funeral of Oswald and Margaret Attwater's baby daughter Ruth, who lived only six hours. The records show many infant deaths in those days, and much grief for the clergy to share.

Mr. Palmer used to tell (years later, when he was Father Palmer) of walking the track to Charlton when the homesteaders were burning brush on all sides; fires surrounded him and he could hardly see for smoke.

At this time, the Thornloe congregation, whose church was to be named St. Oswald's after one of the Tynemouth churches, was not considered part of the Englehart Mission. A new deacon, Mr. H. Peeling, was in charge there.

Bishop Thorneloe was now an Archbishop. After his 1919 visit, the Algoma Missionary News tells that "a bright little service was held in the morning at Charlton, after which Mr. Swainson (the present incumbent) drove him back to Englehart, and to Krugerdorf Monday morning. (*This "driving" would not have been by car!*) The place has been largely denuded of its male population by the war, but we hope things will improve...Mr. Swainson has done an excellent work in this mission. It is unfortunate that the people have not been able to see their way to erect a parsonage. The little shack at Englehart is not adequate to accommodate Mr. Swainson and his family, and he has been compelled to accept another mission in consequence. Such changes sadly interfere with the progress of the work." The same article speaks of the ravages of the 1919 flu epidemic.

The White family has good memories of Mr. Swainson. A very caring person, he had won their hearts by staying up all one night to help Newton look after a sick cow. Not part of his job description!

When the Archbishop appointed James Templeton to this mission in the fall of 1919, he said, "A splendid opportunity for aggressive work is offered Mr. Templeton in his mission, and he goes with high hopes and sincere resolve to do his best!" Mr. Templeton baptized many babies, including Sabra, fourth child of Jack and Jessie Hough; Margaret, daughter of Reg and Mabel (Playford) Thompson; and Ruth, daughter of Alex and Edna Pope.

Mr. Templeton must have been away in July of 1919, because it fell to Archdeacon Gillmore to marry E. Newton-White and Gladys Attwater. Gladys used to tell about crossing the river at the Attwater farm and walking the hot, dusty West Road in to Charlton. The easier route would have been by river, but the river happened to be jammed with logs - not an unusual situation. Meanwhile, Mr. & Mrs. White brought the Archdeacon in their buggy. No doubt this also was a very dusty trip. However, as they all said, dust was much to be preferred over its alternative - deep mud.

Finally, the Algoma Missionary News was able to report that, "After the long and patient waiting, and many fruitless attempts, a comfortable cottage has been secured for a parsonage (*at Englehart*). This is a great relief to all concerned, but especially to the incumbent." One can well believe it! Perhaps that was the result of some of Mr. Templeton's "aggressive work"? It was also reported that on January 22nd, "On Sunday morning the church was crowded, and a service, quite the best ever held in this region, took place...followed by an interview with the leaders of the congregation on the prospects of the mission...under him (*Mr. Templeton*) good works should be done in Charlton, which seem to have elements of great promise."

During this time, the interior of St. Faith's, St. Andrew's and Christ Church were completed. St. Faith's share of the stipend was raised from \$50.00 per year to \$200.00, and the envelope system was introduced.

Things were looking good. B. G. Gosse, student, an ardent member of the Orange Lodge, took charge in 1922. He organized a Women's Auxiliary for St. Faith's. He had a new drive shed built there to accommodate settlers' horses with their buggies or cutters.

The shed was to be short lived. The fire came on October 4, 1922. This story has been so well covered by many writers - I would especially recommend Kevin Ryan's "Sawdust to Ashes" - that I will only tell of it as it affected St. Faith's.

This begins with an entry in the Vestry Book early in 1923, in B. G. Gosse's handwriting, "Charlton destroyed by fire October 4, 1922. Only two houses left standing. Beaver board plant first to go, St. Faith's Church next."

According to legend, Mr. John Hough Sr. (some say it was his son Jack), who lived next to the church, and had been acting as assistant to Mr. Gosse, had hastily taken the communion vessels and the church records and buried them for safe keeping; making an auger hole and lining up the spot between the two posts. Of course after the fire all landmarks were gone; the place would have been unrecognizable, heavily covered with ash; and on top of that, snow fell the next day. It is no wonder that when Mr. Hough went to dig the vessels up, he could never find them. To this day, people occasionally try their luck with metal detectors. David Attwater, a small boy at the time, remembers the suggestion that perhaps someone had seen Mr. Hough dig the hole and had gone back to steal the vessels! This remains a St. Faith's mystery story.

It is fortunate that the record of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials was in Christ Church's record book, and so escaped destruction. But we have no vestry book or minutes before 1923.

A fire Relief Fund was organized by the Archbishop, as well as a Rebuilding Fund for the five churches which had been destroyed: St. Paul's (*Haileybury*), St. George's (*North Cobalt*), St. Luke's (*Harley Township*), St. Oswald's (*Thornloe*) and St. Faith's (*Charlton*).

Mr. Gosse's entry goes on to say, "The first service after the fire held in Mr. John Graham's boarding car, October 15th (*the Vestry Book shows an attendance of 50 - only 11 days after the fire!*); started service in street car, by Mr. Fred Widdifield. January 21, 1923, received from Rev. R. C. Pitts, Petrolia Ontario, 6 bundles of chairs, 1 lectern, 1 pulpit, two collection plates, 1 organ and stool, 1 bible, 1 Prayer Book, and some pews. Also from Rev. Canon Hincks, Haileybury, 50 prayer and hymn books, and from the W.A. B-Branch, Church of the Redeemer, Toronto, 1 set of communion vessels." The pulpit is another of St. Faith's mysteries - what happened to it? It hasn't been seen in the last 50 to 60 years, anyway!

The Algoma Missionary News reported, "On Feb. 1st the Archbishop, with Canon Piercy, Rural Dean, went to New Liskeard, to meet representatives of the five missions which had lost their buildings...It is a grave question whether Thornloe church should be rebuilt...February 6th the Archbishop was in Englehart. Sickness was abroad everywhere. Mr. Gosse...looked almost a wreck with influenza...Next morning, at Charlton, a scene of desolation. A service including a celebration of Holy Communion was held in an old street car, one of those sent up from Toronto for the use of the people. Despite the cold and the crowding and the inconvenience, it was an interesting service, in fact quite unique. The earnestness of the little band at any rate encouraged the Archbishop to hope for a revival in due time. There were seven communicants. (*15 people in all*) There was no sign to show where the church had formerly stood."

The new church was built in 1923 by Albert and Si Johnson. It had a wood foundation and no basement. David Attwater remembers that it was heated with a big barrel wood stove. A long tin stovepipe high up in the ceiling ran the length of the church into a cement chimney at the west end. The Stove got so hot that no one could sit near it.

Another note from the Algoma Missionary News: "Miss Eva Green visited Charlton in 1923. (*Remember meeting her in Tynemouth?*) Through her endeavours the new church was supplied with altar cloths, linens, and communion vessels ... Mr. W. Wilson presented the brass cross in memory of his mother, and Mr. John Andrews (*David Attwater's grandfather*) provided the carpet for the centre aisle. Mr. Andrews is a devout Anglican, and his contribution to the church funds are a great help in the upkeep of this mission."

The Vestry Book shows, from October 15, 1922 to October 4, 1923, nearly every service was Morning Prayer, with only one more communion on October 4, 1923, celebrated by someone whose signature might be H. Young. Services were held only twice a month; the average attendance being 24. A pretty good record for a devastated community!

After Mr. Gosse left in the middle of October 1923, Mr. Cyril Goodier, lay reader, came for four services only, until the arrival of the Rev. Christopher Lord in June, 1924. From then on one of the two services each month was Holy Communion, until the very cold weather when Evensong was held in the afternoon. Some of the services were taken by a student, F. E. Jewell.

And so St. Faith's continued to "try to live up to the name - St. Faith."