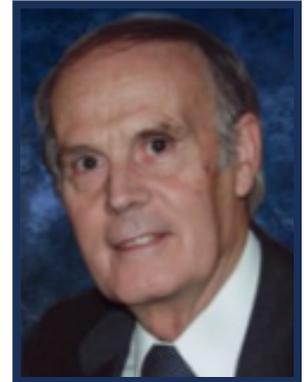


Testimony

Reggie Cranston Tells His Story

I was born the eldest of four sons in the city of Belfast; however, I lived most of my early years with my family in the country, where my father earned his living as a gun-dog trainer. My father had the great honour of training dogs for Sir Winston Churchill and my mother supported him in his work, while lovingly caring for us at home.

My parents were not church goers, but they did insist that we attend Sunday school and church every Lord's Day, morning and evening. In preparation for Sunday, we had to clean our shoes every Saturday night, and on Sundays, we were not allowed any outdoor activity nor removal of church clothes until we were going to bed that night. It was not a Christian home, yet my parents insisted that we keep the Sabbath Day as best we knew how.



In my early teens, I moved with my family to the little village of Laurelvale, a few miles from the town of Tandragee, County Armagh. After I left school, I began to serve my apprenticeship as a fitter/welder. That was the era of Rock and Roll music and Elvis Presley became my idol. I bought all his recordings, saw every one of his films, and purchased every magazine that had his photograph.

In Laurelvale, I met and married a young woman named Doreen Milligan and together we set up home in Tandragee, where we attended the local Anglican church. A Gospel Tent Mission came to the neighboring town of Scarva, to which Doreen was invited. She came home one night with the news that she had accepted Christ. I am very thankful now for what the Lord did in her life through the faithful preaching of the evangelist, Rev. William McCrea.

A year later, another local Gospel Mission was held in the Temperance Hall in Tandragee, with Dr. Ian Paisley as the evangelist. I had heard a lot about this Protestant loyalist, but I had never heard him preach. At that mission, I heard the gospel of saving grace for the first time. The Lord truly blessed the faithful preaching of His servant, because fifty souls publicly professed faith in Christ, but I was not one of them.

As a result of that mission, Tandragee Free Presbyterian Church was established and Doreen and I began attending this new church. Before the church had its own minister, a church member, Mr. Tommy Ryans, began conducting a Monday night Bible study for the youth in the congregation. I went along to listen as Tommy led us through the Scriptures. After three months, the Lord convicted me of my sin and I realized my need of salvation. As Tommy closed in prayer, I prayed silently, "Lord, don't let me leave this meeting tonight without getting saved." When I got to the door, Tommy shook my hand and said, "Reggie, why are you not saved?" I knew why I wasn't saved. What would I do about the Rock music that I loved so much? But the Holy Spirit prevailed and before I left the church that night, Tommy led me to Christ and then read Psalm 34:6 to me: "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all of his troubles." That was Monday, May 5, 1969 after which I was able to recite from my heart the words of this hymn:

O what a wonderful, wonderful day-
Day I will never forget;
After I'd wandered in darkness away,
Jesus my Saviour I met.
O what a tender compassionate Friend,
He met the need of my heart.

The Lord began to deal with me about full-time service through His providence and a sermon preached on Matthew 4:19 by Dr. Frank McClelland, who became the minister of Tandragee. In June 1974, I was accepted as a student for the ministry by the Presbytery of Ulster and placed as a student minister in the Omagh FPC

congregation until the completion of my studies in 1978. Subsequently, I was called to Newtownabbey FPC where I spent over 13 years. During that time, we built a new church building and opened a Christian school.

Finally, the Lord took us overseas to Canada, to the fledgling church in Barrie, Ontario and from Barrie to Port Hope, where we have been ministering for almost 25 years. I thank the Lord for the blessing of a good wife, four sons, their wives, and children. With the apostle Paul, I humbly say: "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry" (1Timothy 1:12).

. . . . *Reggie Cranston*