

INSTALLATION OF REV. ARMEN THOMASSIAN



It was history in the making, and a marvellous night, owned of God, as Rev. Thomassian was installed as the new minister of Calgary Free Presbyterian Church on Friday 6th March. The special service was preceded by a season of prayer on the Thursday evening when we had the joy of being before the Lord with members of the North American Churches. The congregation in Calgary had also enjoyed a breath of God in prayer meetings recently. What followed in the coming days reminded me of a quotation

from Matthew Henry: 'When God intends great mercy for His people, the first thing He does is to set them a-praying.'

Over 80 attended the Installation Service, presided over by the interim moderator, Rev. Ian Goligher. Rev. Andy Foster (Penticton FPC) led in the opening prayer

and greetings were brought on behalf of the North American Presbytery by Dr. Mark Allison (Malvern FPC). The Word of God was read by Rev. Aaron Dunlop (Victoria FPC) who read from Proverbs 3:1-10. It was my privilege to speak on behalf of the Ulster Presbytery (and personally on behalf of Hebron FPC, Ballymoney where Armen came to Christ and served as our student assistant). The prescribed questions to the minister-elect were put to Mr. Thomassian by the Clerk of Presbytery, Rev. David Mook. Armen then subscribed to the Westminster Confession of Faith and Dr. Larry Saunders, Moderator of Presbytery, led in the installation prayer and brought the charge to the newly installed minister. Rev. Thomassian was given the opportunity to address the congregation and Mr. Dwayne Egert extended a warm welcome to Armen and Melanie, and their two children, Elissa and Lois. Mrs. Heather Downey presented flowers to Mrs. Thomassian and Mrs. Goligher. Dr. Frank McClelland brought the proceedings to a conclusion with prayer. All in all, it was a very good evening, much of the Lord's presence was felt, and supper was served by the ladies of the congregation.



The following Lord's Day was a day to remember when we knew a visitation from the Lord. Dr. Saunders spoke at the Adult Bible Class on Psalm 71. Dr. Frank McClelland brought a most suitable challenge at the Worship Service on Exodus 15:14 - 'Go forward.' Mr. Philip Hanna, close friend of Armen and Bible Class leader from Hebron, testified at the evening Gospel service. No one could have anticipated how appropriate his

words would be to a young man attending the service that night. I felt compelled to bring a message on the Cross - 'The Greatest Story Ever Told.' After the service, I was greeting a dear brother at the door, who spoke to me about his family. He said, 'That is my son, Caleb,' pointing to a young man several yards away who was in conversation with Philip. I asked, 'Is he a believer?' His father, with tears in his eyes replied, 'I honestly don't know.' I walked over to Caleb, introduced myself, and gently inquired into his spiritual standing. This led to Philip and I conducting a lengthy discussion about the things of God, at the end of which I asked, 'Is there anything we can do for you?' Caleb answered: 'Please pray for me.' We took the opportunity, there and then, to sit together, and I committed him and his spiritual needs to the Lord in prayer. When Philip and I raised our heads at the conclusion of the prayer, Caleb



remained before the Lord, and wept his way to Christ. You can imagine the joy afterwards in the hearts of his family, and among the members of the Calgary congregation, and in our hearts too as we became spectators of God's marvellous grace.

Tuesday night was the Midweek Bible Study and Prayer Meeting. Mr. Norman Hanna, clerk of Session in Ballymoney, brought a challenging word on the subject of prayer from Acts 12. This was followed by an amazing time of

supplication as the congregation prayed with tears, each one taking part pleading with God for the salvation of their loved ones. We became spectators once again. Norman, Philip and I all testified that we desired to participate, but felt constrained just to listen. Caleb was present at the Prayer Meeting with his mother, and prayed audibly. He first thanked the Lord for the grace which had triumphed in his heart on Sunday night, then sought the Lord earnestly, with much brokenness, for his brother, Isaiah, to be saved. We had a strong conviction at the end of the time of prayer, that surely God is going to bless and would not turn away such earnest pleadings from His people. On Wednesday we (the Ulster contingent) moved on - My wife Susan and I to Toronto, and Norman and Philip to Vancouver. However, how delighted we were to receive the news the following Lord's Day that Isaiah had attended the Gospel Service, and Armen had the joy of pointing him to Christ as he wept tears of repentance before the Lord. 'This is the Lord's doing, it is marvellous in our eyes.'

Undoubtedly, God has put His seal upon the work in Calgary.

He has done more than we could ever have anticipated, truly, as Paul says, 'exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think' (Ephesians 4:20). It is our earnest prayer that 'He who hath begun a good work... will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.' We trust that this breath of Revival will spread like a mighty fire across all our sister churches in North America, and leap across the North Atlantic Ocean to the churches of the Ulster Presbytery. Please continue to pray that God will continue to own the ministry of Rev. Armen Thomassian, and help him, his wife and children to settle in quickly to his new charge, church, country and culture. The Calgary folks have made them feel exceptionally welcome, and we appreciate their sincere effort.

