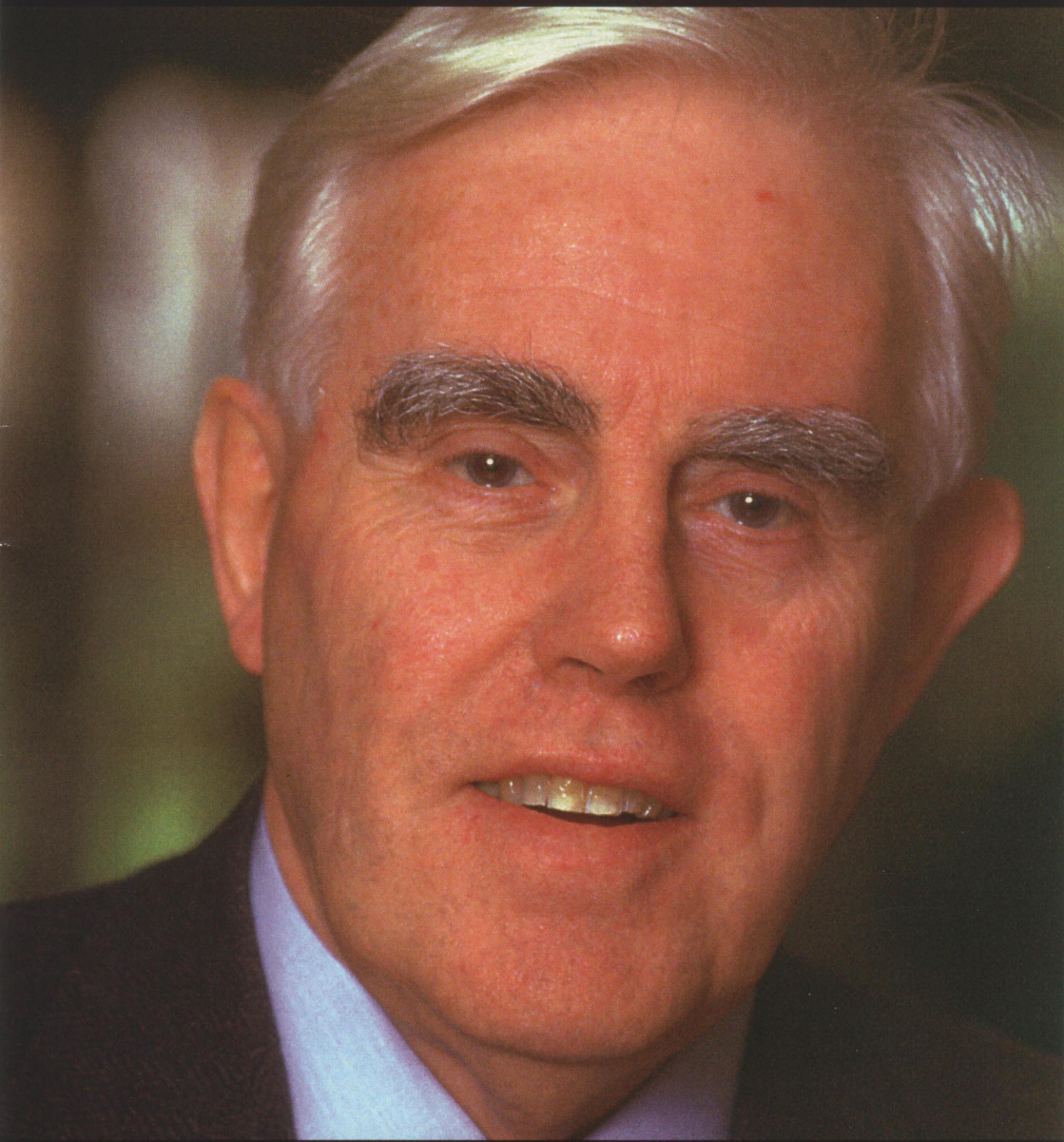


REV GRAHAM HARRISON



47 YEARS OF MINISTRY
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(1962 - 2010)



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Revd Graham Harrison Emmanuel Chapel 1962-2010



Introduction

Who can possibly measure the value of forty-seven faithful years of ministering the Gospel, 1962-2010? Perhaps the best answer is that which was given by Mrs Harrison to a visitor to the Church, who was, as an observer, trying to evaluate what was being achieved by the Church. Mrs Harrison commented that "There are many people now in Heaven as a result of the preaching of the Gospel in this place". Many other people have furthermore been greatly blessed in many ways as a result of the tireless labours of Mr and Mrs Harrison.

This little booklet is simply a record of their work, and a tribute to them, with heartfelt thanks from a whole host of people. Ultimately, as the Harrisons would wish, the glory is all to the name of our God,



but it is right and appropriate that there should be this record given as a permanent record in their memory.

It is not surprising to note that, in the history of the Church, Mr Harrison has had the longest period of ministry in a Church which was founded in 1866, as a result of a visit to Newport, of the great Charles H. Spurgeon. Mr Harrison was preceded by (number of years of ministry in brackets) the Revs Pardoe Thomas (34), J. Meredith Jones (17), Griffith Harris (3), Edward Elliott (12), H. Luther Jones (5), B. J. Allsopp (8), John Bennett (5).

Mr Harrison's ministry has covered almost half a century, during which there have been enormous changes in our country, and a great decline in spiritual things, but we thank him for his stand for the unchanging truth of God, during which time he has stood, as someone has suggested, as a "Rock of Gibraltar."

May we, as a Church, continue to stand for that unchanging Truth, under the ministry of the new, incoming Pastor, Rev. Bernard Lewis. May we also pray unceasingly for what the Harrisons have brought before us continually, what they and many others desire, that is, for a mighty work of the Holy Spirit in revival.

Appointment to Alma Street

I think we are correct in counting 11 people (9 members including 2 on the deaconate) in our present congregation who were present when Mr. Harrison came as Pastor of the Church in Alma Street Baptist Church in 1962. It was an important time as there were many challenges facing the church. The conflicts between the ecumenical and evangelical stances in proclaiming the gospel was being debated in the 1960s and the ministry of John Bennett in Alma Street had established a foothold in the evangelical camp. The church buildings were in a dilapidated state after the war years when many of the buildings were used and neglected by the forces. The church members were keen on



not having a long period before calling another pastor and when Mr. Harrison came to preach when still a student at Oxford the church was immediately struck by the quality of his Bible based teaching. On his first visit many still remember his sermon on the 'three crosses at Calvary'. The first sermon as pastor was the start of expository study and his text was 'Paul, an Apostle'. He then proceeded to teach in sermons and on Wednesday evening Bible studies, including interactive discussions, the doctrines of the Christian Faith from an evangelical point of view. He was then in his late twenties and straight from College but with a strong pedigree of Bible based teaching.

We have many personal memories from the 1960s including the Harrison's move of house from Cardiff Road to Dewsland Park Road hours before their dear daughter Nia was born. The traumas of the Church fire and resulting rebuilding before it was knocked down in the Pill redevelopment; the 'coming out' of the hold over us by the Baptist Union; the work with the large Young People's group of active teenagers; the 'Tramp supper' social when Graham and Lynne walked in hardly recognizable; the camping holiday following in the footsteps of Paul across Greece. All these have personal anecdotal tales too numerous to relate. Brenda and I moved from Newport in 1966 and returned in 2001 but what has not changed was the sound preaching and teaching of the Harrisons and the warmth of the fellowship of believers in the church congregation.

However, none of the social and personal memories are what we respect both the Harrisons for, this is reserved for their unflinching stance for the Bible based teaching and ministry both in our church and wider afield. Mr. Harrison's academic acumen was well suited to the creation and teaching on the pastor training colleges at Bryntirion and LTS. Their influence has been recognized worldwide.

No doubt, other writers will emphasize the above aspects in more detail. Many individuals could relate the personal and very private encouragements received on his pastoral visits, or the warmth and empathy during a time of bereavement or encouragements at a



wedding. Many pastors and churches have benefited from his wise counsel.

The old Alma Street has gone but Emmanuel Church remains. Other Pill churches have suffered a decline and many have closed. The Bible focused churches remain; this has a lot to do with the church leadership skills, teaching ability and determination of our self-effacing pastor. Thank you both, for your devotion to caring for our needs over all the years.

Alan and Brenda Jones

Graham Harrison: The Preacher

I am conscious, as I write this, that many of those reading these words will have heard far more of Mr Harrison's preaching than I have; after all, I attended, with my family, Emmanuel Evangelical Church (Newport) for a mere three and a half years whereas some of the members of the church there have known Mr Harrison as their minister for several decades. Yet I write these words as someone who worked alongside Mr Harrison during my time in Newport and who spent many a precious hour with him on Friday afternoons discussing, amongst other matters, the grand theme of preaching the Word of God.

Where does one begin when considering the preaching of a man who has ministered in the same church for nearly 50 years? Well, I think we should begin with just that fact: that he has ministered in the same church for such a long time. When I was a student on The Evangelical Movement of Wales' Theological Training Course (which Mr Harrison was, of course, instrumental in establishing and running for so many years) I remember another well-respected Welsh minister saying to the students what a remarkable feat it was for a man to preach in the same church for such a lengthy period; he was referring to Mr Harrison. There are not many men who have ministered in the same place for as



long as Mr Harrison and, it is possibly true to say, there are not many who would want to! Although I am a preacher with far less experience than Mr Harrison I do nevertheless realise the difficulties involved in preaching to the same congregation week upon week, year upon year, decade upon decade: after all, you cannot preach 'old sermons' or use the same old anecdotes and illustrations!

Yet Mr Harrison, I know, would not have us dwell on the hardships of such a lengthy ministry but rather the blessings of it: yes, the blessings of getting to know a congregation and the needs of the individuals in that congregation and, of course, trying to meet those needs through the preaching of God's Word and other forms of pastoral care. Mr Harrison has also highlighted to me the blessings of preaching to the children and grandchildren, and even great-grandchildren, of people you have known for so many years.

So Mr Harrison's faithfulness to the congregation (and their faithfulness to him) must be highlighted at the outset but it has been, of course, a faithfulness centred on the Word of God. At Emmanuel the preaching and hearing of the Word of God has been kept at the centre of the life and worship of the church. We live in times when, even in many churches, far from underlining the authority and necessity of the Word of God attempts have been made to undermine it; the reading and preaching of Holy Scripture has become, what I call, 'a side-stall in the circus of a service'. This has not, however, been the case at Emmanuel: Mr Harrison, supported by godly church officers, has steered a steady course and has not allowed the fellowship that they have responsibility for to be 'tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine'. Mr Harrison's firm belief has been, and still is, that 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.' When Mr Harrison preaches you have a man who knows he is wielding 'the word of God... quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword...' It maybe interesting for you to know that, when I was considering coming



to Emmanuel, to work alongside Mr Harrison, I spoke to another minister to seek his advice; he commended Mr Harrison to me, telling me that he was a man who had kept to the true course when many others were drifting elsewhere.

When it came to what he should preach on, Mr Harrison was not against preaching 'a series' of sermons but believed that a series need not necessarily include a whole book of the Bible but perhaps just a verse or a passage. He was particularly concerned, and how this needs stating, that every week lost sinners should have the opportunity hear the Gospel and hence the Sunday evening's message would be particularly directed at those still outside of God's kingdom.

Yet even when Mr Harrison was preaching through a series he knew the importance of being open to the leading of God the Holy Spirit and His leading would dictate how much of the verse or passage he preached on and, occasionally, might lead to him preaching on something entirely different if a particular situation demanded it. It wasn't just in the preparation of his sermons that Mr Harrison sought the guiding help of the Holy Spirit, however, for (more than in any man I have known) Mr Harrison knew how much he needed God the Holy Spirit to anoint his preaching with power and he regularly sought this for his own preaching, and mine, when we prayed together on those Friday afternoons.

I suppose, if I were to try and sum up what has struck me about Mr Harrison's preaching then, besides his faithfulness to the task of clearly preaching 'all the counsel of God', it's the fact that he never sought to draw attention to himself but only to God, to Christ, to the Gospel! Mr Harrison is a 'quiet man', a man who feels his own weakness, but when he preaches it is with a God-given and God-glorifying authority.

I have the dual privilege of representing numerous theological students who thank God for the example of Mr Harrison and numerous church members (at Emmanuel and beyond) who thank God for the preaching of Mr Harrison. But that is, of course, what Mr Harrison would have us to: thank God for he would be the first to say:



‘Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy Name give glory, for Thy mercy, and for Thy truth’s sake’.

Geraint Richards

Graham Harrison - The Pastor

Graham Harrison's pastoral gifts always stemmed from the pulpit; his concerns for the flock were an extension of, and a development from his preaching, which was applied to the spiritual life of the members and to the needs of others who attended the services, and others from further afield, such as students studying in LTS and Bryntirion, and fellow ministers who valued his wise counselling.

His deep concern for the souls and bodily needs of the flock caused him very often to go the extra mile, even travelling considerable distances to meet the needs of the Church members as well as their relatives who were not members.

I am sure that I speak for the whole fellowship when I say how much we valued his help in times of bereavement, illness, family problems, problems in work, depression, and countless other needs. These needs would be faced with wise counselling, and how aptly he brought scriptures to bear on particular situations.

Many of us will know that he would visit, particularly if we were in hospital, having just got off the train when he was returning from lecturing in the London Theological Seminary, before getting a meal and then going off to take a prayer meeting.

His tender concern for the bereaved was particularly shown at funerals, where great comfort was given from the scriptures, and unbelievers were brought face to face with the eternal issues of life and death. Difficult situations were always faced boldly, and the light of scripture brought to bear on the issue, always with appropriate scriptures to meet the needs of that situation.



We thank God for such pastoring by Mr and Mrs Harrison, in which they followed most diligently the exhortation of the apostle Peter to "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock." (1 Peter 5,1-4).

I am sure that Mr and Mrs Harrison can look forward to what we read in the next verse - "And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away,"

On behalf of the Church members at Emmanuel, thank you from the bottom of our hearts, and may the Lord continue to give you much grace in the rest of your days.

Phil Watson

Graham Harrison - the Wider sphere

Mr Harrison's activities, apart from his work in Alma Street/ Emmanuel, took him to a great number of other areas of service in many parts of the world. Some of the countries where he was invited to preach at various churches and conferences were Malaysia, Ivory Coast, Singapore, Pakistan, Congo, Australia, Zambia, Sri Lanka, USA. He was much in demand! Some of these were related to pastoral visits made to the three missionaries from the church - Ann, Carol and Sylvia.

There were also the commitments to lecturing in LTS, Bryntirion, as well as to the Evangelical Movement of Wales in various capacities - committees, the EMW Magazine, ministers' conferences, as well as chairing on many occasions the Westminster Fellowship of ministers from many churches in England and Wales (that is continuing).

It is good to know that he has also produced one book, sermons on Genesis, as well as having been one of the editors of "Christian Hymns"



in its first format in 1977 and its new version in 2004. In that book are also some of his very fine hymns. We must not forget, too, the very fine hymns of Mrs Harrison, also in that hymn-book.

There is no doubt that the church at Emmanuel benefitted enormously from Mr. Harrison's wider activities, just as he also did, being blessed with good health and strength to be able to achieve so much on top of all the responsibilities in pastoring the church.

We praise God for all that has been accomplished, and pray that the Lord may continue to use him widely.

Phil Watson

Mrs Harrison

I have had the privilege of knowing Mrs Harrison in our secular activity of teaching, as well as in the Church at Emmanuel. She has always been the same, having a keen sense of humour, made all the funnier with a dead-pan expression. Her concern for her pupils and their welfare was a natural expression of her concern for the welfare of all members of the fellowship at Emmanuel. She has been a tremendous support for Mr Harrison, as he sought to minister to the fellowship over such a long time.

Mrs Harrison's reputation as a cook has been evident to all, and I for one will miss her wonderful cakes and desserts – others may prefer her amazing savouries.

It remains to thank you, Mrs Harrison, for all you have done for us and for giving an example of love, concern and dedication towards people at Emmanuel over such a long time. God bless you both in the future as He has done in the past.

Richard Jones



Reflections on 47 years in Alma Street/Emmanuel

I have been looking recently at a photograph taken on the pavement outside the old Alma Street Chapel on September 20, 1962 on the occasion of my ordination. It is the one that was reproduced in the recent edition of the LINK magazine. One thing I would never have imagined then. It is doing what I am attempting to do now – write at concluding note for this farewell booklet!

First of all I would never have imagined that over 47 years later I would still be here as minister of the same church. Even then such long ministries were not common. I remember hearing another Minister who had moved on to another pastorate after four or five years saying that he had preached himself out and had nothing more to say.

Add to that the scale of the "disaster" that broke upon Pillgwenlly. Just a month before I commenced my ministry the wall of a house in the district fell down and a survey convinced the council that the same was likely to happen to about 30% of the houses in the next 20-30 years. The result was that the town council stopped offering improvement grants, with the result that anybody who could get out of the district did so.

Within a few years Alma Street Baptist Church was just about the only property in most of Alma Street not boarded up! The police discovered the corpse of a man around the corner in a house in Charlotte Street with his legs eaten away by rats up to the knees!

Then in 1966 came the fire – which turned out to be a blessing in disguise, as it meant that our old, dilapidated chapel was partly rebuilt or renovated so that when the council eventually decided to include us in the redevelopment they had to recognise that our premises were in first class condition.



None of the 47+ years have been easy. How I would like to record the story of spectacular advance as far as the Gospel was concerned. But that has not been the case. Much of the fruit over the years has been "hand picked". It has not been easy to see generation after generation of young people having to leave Newport to get work – with a few moving in to replace them.

In addition the increasing antagonism that the man in the street has shown towards the message of Christianity, with Christ reduced to an expletive, the terrible collapse of morality together with the determined attempts being made by all political parties to strip the nation of its distinctively Christian heritage have not made things easy.

But through it all, the Lord has kept me here – with no freedom being granted me to move on to "greener pastures" at home or abroad – as various possibilities of doing so came.

I well remember one Sunday some months after the fire. The previous Sunday I had been preaching in a rather large church in Scotland. I remember how just prior to my going from the vestry into the pulpit, the secretary there took out a clothes brush and brushed me down. Apparently his action was not a reflection on my scruffiness: it was his regular practice! One week later and I was back in Alma Street before the morning service. We had to meet in the School Hall because of the fire. Before anyone else had arrived I found myself dusting off the chairs to make them ready for the congregation. From the sublime to the ridiculous, you might say!

What I have tried to do down through the years has been to preach the word of God. I have done that with the conviction that this is what must be at the very heart of any ministry. It is God's thoughts not ours that are relevant. I only wish that I had done it more powerfully and persuasively and with more evidence of God's blessing upon it. But I could never contemplate doing anything else. Along with that



has been a concern that our worship should be God honouring, not flippant and superficial.

Two other principles have governed my pulpit ministry. One has been each Sunday to have at least one service in which the message of the gospel is clearly preached.

The other has been to urge upon the church both the necessity and the possibility of revival. Increasingly I am convinced that only a pouring forth of God's Spirit on his church can change the situation. But I believe with all my heart that God can visit us again in this way.

People have been asking me what I am going to do in my "retirement" and the answer is that I do not know. I hope to have further opportunities to preach. But that is in God's hands – which is really where we all need to be. He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us – and I hold on to that.

One other thing I should say and that is how deeply grateful to God I am for giving me the wife he has! Without her help, support and advice I do not honestly know how I would have managed in the ministry. I believe that God calls only men to the Ministry, and therefore a particular man to be the pastor of a church – but in his wisdom and grace he has certainly given me a "helpmeet" for me.

Although we have no plans to move from Newport and shall continue to live at our present address and also retain our membership in the Church, we shall deliberately not worship here for some months until the Rev Bernard Lewis has settled in. I am very happy that he has accepted the call to be Minister of Emmanuel Evangelical Church and he will have my wholehearted support. May he experience the unmistakable blessing of God on his ministry. I urge you to pray for him and support him in every way.

Graham Harrison



