

An Eyewitness Account Of The Formation Of Portadown Baptist Church (Formed 1924)

On the 28th September a small company of people assembled in the "Catch-my-pal" hall in Edward St., some to witness, and some to join in, the forming of a new Baptist Church. There were 46 persons present.

Pastor Bell of Tandragee took the chair. After the singing of "O God our help in ages past", Mr R. J. Clendinning, who had been carrying on tent mission work in the town, read the second chapter of Ephesians. Then Pastor Fraser of Shankill Road, Belfast set forth, in a very clear and forcible way, the distinctive doctrines of Irish Baptists. Among the many important facts that he brought before our notice, he said that Baptists did not teach "Adult Baptism", but that they do teach and practise "Believers Baptism".

After the singing of a second hymn, Pastor Bell gave a very timely exhortation, based on the words of 1 John 3:1, bringing us face to face with the love of God which reached us "while we were yet sinners", and which, like the Lord Himself, is unchangeable. He pointed out in a most convincing way that God's unchanging love is a guarantee that He will never cast off any of His children.

While we were all joining in the singing of another hymn of praise, those who did not wish to join in fellowship around the Lord's table went away, leaving twenty-two to remember the Lord in His own appointed way.

After the Breaking of Bread, an invitation was given to all those who wished to join the church just being started, to come forward and sign their names. Sixteen put down their names without any hesitation.

Pastor Bell then said that the Home Mission Committee had recommended Mr G. H. Weir to take the Pastoral oversight of the new cause, and he suggested that someone should propose and someone second that he be now called as Pastor. Mr Curran proposed, and Mr J. Woods seconded, that Mr Weir should be asked to become their Pastor, and it was unanimously carried by a show of hands.

After Pastor Bell had given Mr Weir the right hand of fellowship, and had spoken words of exhortation and encouragement, the meeting was brought to a close by prayer.

Again at 7:00pm, we had a public meeting in the hall in Edward Street, when about one hundred people were present to hear the words of life. Pastor Fraser took the leading part in this service; addresses were given by Messrs Clendinning and Weir, after which Pastor Bell sung a solo entitled "The very same Jesus"; and then closed the meeting with prayer.

The day was one of marked blessing, and everyone who was present at the services seemed to be very conscious of God's presence in the building.

Under the auspices of the Northern Baptist Association, convention meetings were held on Wednesday 1st and Thursday 2nd October 1924. On Wednesday evening addresses were given by Pastors Hodgett and Weir. On Thursday afternoon Pastor Freeman of Coleraine gave a most helpful Bible reading and Pastor Houghton of America rendered the Lord's message in song. Then on Thursday evening Pastors Bell and Burrows gave us the closing addresses of the convention. At the close the people stood and sang heartily "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow", and we all felt that truly the Lord is gracious.

These meetings were all well attended and the speakers seemed to vie with one another for which could exalt the Lord Jesus Christ most. To Him be all the glory, for He alone is worthy.

May the Lord bless the Baptist testimony in Portadown, and keep each member of the church true and loyal to their Lord, who ever liveth to make intercession for us.