



*"We love the place, O God,
Wherein Thine honour dwells;
The joy of Thine abode
All earthly joy excels."*

FITZROY AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

PAST AND PRESENT

75th Anniversary of Present Building



FOREWORD

THE writing of even a short sketch of an institution 129 years old, were the records not all existent or available, could prove a rather formidable task. The writing of Fitzroy's history, however, entails no such difficulty. Its Kirk Session and Committee Minute Books are all forthcoming—a fact which, in itself, is a tribute to the good historical sense of those who from time to time were their custodians.

Whatever difficulty, therefore, one now experiences in dealing with the facts of our Church's past history is not one that arises from any shortage of materials, but rather from the necessity of selecting and compressing them into a handy and convenient form.

The work of selecting and compressing sometimes brings the person responsible into hot water. Yet that is not altogether without its advantages. It was G. K. Chesterton who once said: "I believe in getting into hot water, it keeps you clean."

To the many kind friends who have helped me, and in particular to Drs. J. B. Woodburn and T. M. Johnstone for their invaluable advice, and to Mr. A. H. Finlay, in whose mind the idea which led to this historical sketch originated, I say a very sincere "Thank you."

R. E. A.

Fitzroy:

PAST AND PRESENT

THE BEGINNING of most things is usually comparatively small, yet, on that account, surely, none the less promising or interesting, indeed, the greater the contrast between the initial day of small things and the more developed stage of later years only adds, for most people, to their pride in its history.

Consequently, it is in that class we find ourselves in this short sketch of Fitzroy's origin and growth, for here we have a somewhat unique story—unique almost to the point of unbelief—inasmuch as there can have been few, if any, congregations in our communion that started, and for seven years remained, without any house of their own within which to worship. Yet from that humble and homeless commencement there followed a sequence of events that ultimately patterned into a position of outstanding usefulness and service.

The period of its preliminary planning, the beginning of the 19th century, was ecclesiastically a time of controversy and schism. Presbyterianism had then become, in Ireland as in Scotland, divided into two parts, one known as the Seceders, which in its turn was again subdivided into Burghers and Anti-Burghers. This latter partition originated in Scotland over the taking of an oath which the Burghesses in some towns had to swear.

Although this oath was of no immediate or practical concern to the Irish Seceders, it split them into separate communions like their brethren across the Channel. Hence, for nearly seventy years these two branches of the Secession Church in Ireland ranged themselves rather ruthlessly against each other.

At that time there were five Presbyterian Churches in Belfast, two of which afterwards became Unitarian; two belonged to the Synod of Ulster (Rosemary Street and Donegall Street, now Cliftonville); and the fifth (Berry Street, afterwards Linenhall Street and now the Crescent) belonged to the Secession Synod.

Berry Street Congregation had Anti-Burgher sympathies and so, about the year 1813, those who were attracted by the Burgher attitude began thinking in terms of a new and separate congregational life. It was at this time, for this reason, and among these people, that the Church we now know as Fitzroy commenced its Congregational career.

In the year 1818, the Irish Burghers and Anti-Burghers laid aside their differences and coalesced. It was then expected by many of the Anti-Burghers of Berry Street that the new Burghers' Congregation would unite with them. The young Congregation, however, thought otherwise, and although their resources were small and their numbers few, they resolved, notwithstanding, to maintain a separate existence, much to the disappointment of the Anti-Burghers.

In this way we became the sixth Presbyterian Congregation to be formed in Belfast, and the second in connection with the Seceders.

On the first page of the Session Book, dating back to 1824, there is a short statement of the rise and early progress of the Congregation in Dr. Edgar's own handwriting. It reads as follows:—

“Previous to the Union of the two Bodies of Seceders in Ireland, a few individuals in Belfast, feeling severely the difficulty of attending Public Worship, even with the nearest congregation of their own Body, and anxious to promote the interest of Evangelical Truth, applied to the Down Presbytery for supply of preaching. This was granted, and for a length of time the new Congregation attended on the ministry of preachers appointed by the Presbytery of Down, and of others who generously volunteered their services. The meetings were held, first in the Covenanters' House; again in the Methodists' House, Donegall Square; for a long period in that belonging to the Independents, who manifested the most Christian liberality towards the infant Congregation; and lastly in the large room in Commercial Court, off Donegall Street. At length, after having encountered many difficulties and fierce opposition, and having laboured for upwards of seven years without adding much to their strength, they presented a Call to John Edgar, who was ordained over them on the 14th November, 1820.

“The Congregation at this time consisted of twenty-two families.

“From that period they began to entertain hopes of being able to erect a House of Worship, and on the 6th January, 1822, by means of their own unwearied exertions, and those of their Minister, they saw their hopes realised in the opening of their Meeting House in Alfred Place.

“‘And he went up, and looked, and said: ‘There is nothing.’ And he said: ‘Go again seven times.’ And it came to pass at the

seventh time that he said: ‘Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand.’

“‘And it came to pass in the meanwhile that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.’”

J. E.

THE REVEREND JOHN EDGAR

John Edgar was a son of the Rev. Samuel Edgar, D.D., Minister of the Secession Congregation in Ballynahinch, a man so highly esteemed by his brethren in the Ministry that they appointed him, not only Clerk of their Synod, but also their Professor of Divinity.

The prospect before his son in regard to the Call to this newly-formed Belfast Congregation was far from promising. The Seceders of that day were “uninfluential and unfashionable and the members were almost all in very limited circumstances. The annual stipend promised was £40, and it was unsafe to reckon on the punctual payment of that slender salary.” Furthermore, the *Regium Donum*—the forerunner of the Sustentation Fund—was withheld for a number of years from John Edgar, the first Minister. This was largely due to the fact that the Anti-Burgher Congregation of Berry Street, peeved, no doubt, that the new Congregation had refused to join their ranks in 1818, petitioned the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland to refuse them a grant from this Fund. An extract from this unbrotherly memorial reads: “That the Presbytery of Down have in this town on the 14th inst. ordained a young man as Minister of eight families and a few individuals—making in all thirty; that they have no meeting-house; . . . that there is no necessity for another congregation of Seceders in this town, except to oppress the country by paying a bounty to one whose services are only desired by a few,” etc. This was doubtless part of the “fierce opposition” to which Mr. Edgar refers in the Session Book statement quoted above.

The prospect before Minister and people was thus, at the outset, far from bright—a handful of people; a meagre stipend (all they could afford, possibly); no *Regium Donum*; and no Church building of their own in which to worship. These difficulties, which might have baffled most men, only served to reinforce Mr. Edgar's zeal and invincible perseverance, two of the outstanding characteristics of his life.

The story is told of a Scottish Minister, the Rev. James Lapslie, Minister of Campsie, a powerful and determined man, who during the Chartist times was a staunch supporter of the Government and a pertinacious enemy of the black-nebs, as the friends of political reform were nick-named. One evening when returning from a party he encountered a band of colliers, who insulted him. One of them even swore that if it were not for Mr. Lapslie's black coat he would thrash him. Upon hearing this threat, the Minister at once threw his coat

on the ground, saying, as he cast it from him: "Lie you there, divinity. Here stands Jamie Lapslic." Thereupon he set about his insulter and bestowed upon him a sound thrashing.

We have no record that Mr. Edgar ever resorted to physical force, but he possessed that rugged strength of character which won the hearts of many and overawed not a few of his opponents.



Rev. JOHN EDGAR, D.D., LL.D.

Dr. Killen describes him as follows:—

"He was a Protestant and a Calvinistic Presbyterian to the core; and there was an outspoken independence about him which the old leaders of public opinion in the borough did not always admire. He certainly was little indebted for any degree of popularity he enjoyed to his personal appearance. He was robust and well proportioned, and somewhat above the middle size; but his complexion was swarthy, his features strongly marked, and his general

aspect might have betokened a descent from one of the sable sons of Africa. His manner also was abrupt, and his voice, though good and strong, wanted those silver tones by which some speakers are so greatly recommended. He knew how to put his arguments; and a critic might have found it difficult to detect anything amiss in the language of the rough orator. His observations were always striking and sensible; and, though cautious men often thought him rather rash, the candid portion of the public began to give him credit for honesty and manliness."

One of his first concerns on entering upon his pastoral charge was the erection of a Church building. To raise the necessary funds was no easy matter and necessitated outside help. To that end Mr. Edgar visited both Scotland and England, and although the cost of the Alfred Place building was only £500, he said later that much of it was collected in half-crowns and in coins of even smaller magnitude and value. His subscription list contained the names of not less than 2,000 donors.

The Church was opened for Divine Service on the 6th January, 1822, by the Rev. John Rogers of Glasgow, who preached at noon, and by the Rev. John Reid of Drumbanagher, who preached in the evening.

It is hard for us to-day to visualise that Church and its surroundings. Belfast was at that time only a little town, and the "new Meeting-house," as it was then called, was built on the outskirts, in Alfred Place, adjacent to Alfred Street, on a spot which shortly before had been the bed of a mill-dam, and a popular resort of skaters in the winter season.

On the occasion of the Church's opening the building could only be approached by a line of planks laid along the ground for a considerable distance, and woe to the unfortunate pedestrian who happened to slip off the narrow wooden pathway, for on either side he might sink ankle deep, if not knee deep, into a slough of most unsavoury odour.

In 1826 the Secession Synod elected Mr. Edgar to the Professorship of Theology, a position which had been rendered vacant by the death of his father. This work he carried on in addition to the pastoral duties of his Congregation. The little Church in Alfred Place thus became a Divinity College, for it was there his classes were held.

THE TEMPERANCE REFORMER

Three years later, in 1829, he started his temperance campaign, a pioneering work with which his name will always be associated. At that time whiskey was regarded as a necessity of life. It was kept in the Session Room of almost every Presbyterian Church, and when the preacher descended from the pulpit he was not infrequently presented with a glass. As he visited his flock he was also very frequently offered whiskey, and if he refused he was looked upon as both proud and unsocial.

It was largely due to the influence of a fellow student, the Rev. Joseph Penney, an Irish Presbyterian who had emigrated to America, that Professor Edgar came to realise the need of temperance reform. Mr. Penney visited Ireland in 1829, and was so full of zeal for the extension of temperance societies in Ireland that Professor Edgar, after weighing his arguments most carefully, determined to make the cause his own. Dr. Killen states: "He inaugurated his proceedings by opening his parlour window and poured out into the court before his house in Alfred Street the remaining part of a gallon of old malt whiskey purchased some time before for family consumption." A few days later he launched his first attack against the drink traffic by a strongly worded letter in the Press. He also convened a public meeting for the inauguration of the new cause.

His own Church was small, so he tried to secure a larger building, but, at first, this was refused him. The Independents declined to lend their Chapel in Donegall Street for such a purpose. The Methodists, though with some reluctance, it is true, consented to give him the use of their meeting house in Donegall Square. There in October, 1829, was delivered the first address in Ulster in support of the temperance cause, announced by public advertisement. The first temperance society was founded in September of the same year, and one of the first names subscribed to the pledge was that of John Edgar.

The success of the temperance movement far exceeded Professor Edgar's expectations. In four months twenty-five temperance societies containing 800 members had been established. In one large district it was reported that ardent spirits had been banished from wakes and funerals, while an increasing number of Ministers took up the cause.

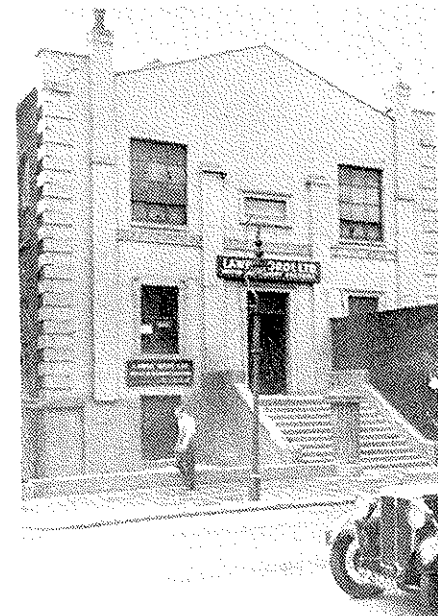
Professor Edgar was indefatigable in his labours. During the next few years he travelled far and wide, speaking at meetings large and small. In 1830 his itinerancy is more like that of a commercial traveller than a Minister. In February he was in Dublin, where he spoke at the foundation of the Hibernian Temperance Society. In March "he delivered a powerful address at the first public meeting of the Newry Temperance Society." That same month he went to Scotland where he advocated the cause before large audiences in Greenock and Glasgow. A few weeks later he delivered a series of lectures in the West of Ireland. In June he was present at the first public meeting of the Bradford Temperance Society, where, we are told, he spoke for upwards of two hours. During the same week he was in Manchester. Thus he carried on this tremendous task, sustained by that hidden source of strength which is given abundantly to those appointed for great services.

In spite of all his many activities, however, both as Theological Professor and temperance advocate, the Congregational work was not neglected. Gradually the Congregation grew in numbers until the little meeting-house in Alfred Place was unable to accommodate them. It was then determined to erect a larger building to seat about 700 people.

ERECTION OF ALFRED STREET CHURCH

The new edifice, costing £2,150, was erected in Alfred Street, and was opened for public worship on 8th January, 1937. The opening services were conducted by the Rev. Dr. Mitchell of Glasgow.

It is worthy of note that a few years previously, one third of the heads of families connected with Alfred Place had been engaged in the spirit trade, but by the time the new Church was opened almost all of them had either left or had given up their business.



ALFRED STREET CHURCH

Nor did the Minister suffer by reason of his uncompromising opposition to strong drink. On the very first day for the letting of pews in the new Church the stipend was doubled.

The old Church in Alfred Place, no longer required by the Congregation, had still a useful function. Knowing that the population of Belfast was rapidly increasing, and that many were in danger of lapsing from the Christian Church, the Session decided to use the old Church as a mission hall, and placed it under the care of a missionary.

The scheme proved successful, and soon another Congregation was organised, and a Minister ordained.

By-and-by the little Church in Alfred Place became too small for the increasing Congregation, and so a second swarm hived off and built Eglinton Street Church.

Once again a missionary was employed in Alfred Place; again a Congregation was collected and a Minister ordained, and the same thing happened as before. The Church proved too small and a third swarm left and formed the Congregation now known as Argyle Place.

Thus the little meeting-house in Alfred Place was the nursery of three distinct Congregations. Eventually the building was sold and converted into a warehouse.

In July, 1836, Hamilton College, in the United States, conferred on Professor Edgar the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity. The announcement was conveyed to him by his old friend and fellow student, the Rev. Dr. Penney, who seven years earlier had prompted him to commence the temperance reformation. Dr. Penney had then become President of that College.

DR. EDGAR: MODERATOR OF ASSEMBLY

The year 1840 marked the union of the Synod of Ulster and the Secession Synod, and two years later Dr. Edgar was elected Moderator of the General Assembly. In that year the Church celebrated the bi-centenary of Irish Presbyterianism, and the occasion was marked by the establishment of a fund to be devoted to evangelistic work in Roman Catholic Ireland. The Congregation of Alfred Street, though it consisted of only 180 families, raised £350.

In 1847 it was decided by the General Assembly that the occupants of professorial chairs in the College should be relieved of their congregational duties. Consequently in the spring of 1848 Dr. Edgar resigned Alfred Street.

In 1855 at the opening of the Assembly's College, Dr. D'Aubigné, the celebrated historian of the Reformation, who came from Geneva to give the inaugural address, declared that he would rather be the author of the "Cry from Connaught" (which was written by Dr. Edgar just after the famine of 1847) than of all the volumes he himself had written.

EXTRACTS FROM MINUTES

Before passing on from the days of Dr. Edgar's ministry, we give here a few extracts from the Minutes of Session, preserved to us from the erection of Alfred Place Church. They show some of the problems which confronted Church office-bearers of that time, and the strong arm of the law which then ruled in ecclesiastical circles:—

In 1830—

"Agreed that Mr. should be admonished in the Session for coming into the meeting-house in a state of intoxication

on a week evening, when a lecture was delivering to the young belonging to the Congregation."

In 1831—

"Suspended Mr. from Church privileges for being intoxicated when Mr. Edgar called to visit him."

In 1837—

"Refused admission to an individual on account of irregular attendance on public worship."

In 1838—

"Mr., having applied for baptism of his child, and having been kindly spoken to respecting a prevailing report of his having received a bribe at the late election, has avowed it, defended it, and conducted himself towards the Session in a very insolent manner. Resolved therefore that he be refused privileges till he manifest signs of repentance."

In 1841—

"Resolved "that Messrs. wait upon our precentor to say that they do not sanction his singing additions to the Psalms in public worship."

In 1841—

"Agreed that the services on Saturday before the Communion Sabbath should be at 7½ o'clock in the morning and 12 noon."

In 1844—

"Mr., having put away his wife, having resisted at law her efforts to obtain sustenance from him, having acted in an obstinate and disrespectful manner in opposition to the efforts of Minister and Session of this Congregation to reclaim him, and having become a fugitive from discipline—the Session cut him off from the communion of the Church and publicly announced their act."

In 1844—

A member "appeared before the Session and expressed her penitence for the crime of fornication, and her willingness to make public profession of penitence before the Church." It was later reported of the same member "that she was this evening publicly rebuked before the Church for the crime of fornication and being suitably admonished was restored to Church privileges.

CALL TO THE REVEREND GEORGE SHAW, A.B.

Following Dr. Edgar's resignation in 1848, the vacancy seems to have been of short duration. In less than two months after the first meeting of Session and Committee to consider the vacancy, Mr. Shaw, their future Minister, was elected.

The Rev. George Shaw was born in Castlecaulfield, County Tyrone, on 24th August, 1817; the fourth son of Mr. Edward Shaw, J.P. At the age of fifteen he entered business in The Linen Hall, Belfast, with



Rev. GEORGE SHAW, A.B.

Messrs. Stewart and Cunningham, later joining two older brothers in business in America. While there he decided to enter the ministry, and in 1837 came home to study to that end. On the completion of his College course, he entered upon the duties of the ministry in Chester, where he continued nearly two years until Called to Alfred Street.

A few years after Mr. Shaw's induction Dr. Edgar's reference to him at a public meeting throws some light on the quality of the man. He said: "My chief anxiety in retiring from the pastoral charge of the Congregation was to be succeeded by a man possessing my entire confidence. Of the talents, qualifications or ministrations of him whom, with my hearty concurrence, you have chosen I say nothing. Of all this you can judge for yourselves as well as I. But one thing I will say. Since he became a member of the Presbytery there have been a number of very trying, very testing scenes—scenes exceedingly well qualified for trying of what stuff men are made; and, after having through all these marked the votes and speeches and whole conduct of your young Minister, I am proud this night to declare that George Shaw is just the Minister which Alfred Street pulpit requires—a thoroughly courageous and thoroughly honest man. I have left you, therefore, in safe hands."

From the records we have of him, scanty though they are, it would seem that Mr. Shaw was by no means unworthy of such a tribute. His ministry was characterised with earnestness and zeal, and like his predecessor, his activities were not confined to his own Church.

The Rev. A. J. Wilson, Clerk of Assembly at the time of his death, said of him:—

"Mr. Shaw was one of that band of fathers who in a former generation took the lead in all movements connected with the Glory of God and the welfare of the Church. The pure evangel, the sanctity of the Sabbath, the revival of piety were dear to him, and he was long chosen as the fittest to draw up the report on the state of religion for this Court. He had the confidence of the community, and some of the wealthiest and most liberal of our Church members made him their steward, and large sums of money were placed in his hands and left for his disposal. Mr. Shaw was one of the founders of the Sabbath School Society, and laboured for its welfare as long as strength remained. His deepest interest was devoted to the missions of the Church and he gave two of his children to the work amongst the heathen. He was eminently a man of God, steadfastly animated with a solemn sense of responsibility. Without seeking pre-eminence in the Church Courts, he did his duty, and never hesitated courageously to maintain his convictions and steadfastly to follow the course he believed to be right. As a Minister, he enjoyed the confidence and affection of his flock. He was a kind and faithful pastor, whose visits were prized by the sick and sorrowful, and those who passed through his Communicants' Class could not forget the urgent tenderness with which he inculcated personal piety."

In a ministry of half a century it is not surprising that the impressions made were deep and abiding. We have still a number of

members in our Congregation who sat at his feet and who speak in affectionate terms of his love and sincerity, and of his devotion to the Church of his fathers. Quite a number of these members have told me that even beyond the bounds of the Congregation he was affectionately known by the name of "Shipwreck Shaw," and this by reason of the fact that not infrequently his sermon included a graphic description of a storm—and a shipwreck.

ERECTION OF FITZROY AVENUE CHURCH

Looking back upon that long and fruitful ministry of 50 years we recognise certain landmarks worthy of special mention, and one that comes to mind most readily on this, the seventy-fifth anniversary of its opening, was the erection of our present suite of Church buildings.

Seventy-five years ago the need for the erection of a new Church was the same as to-day—the increasing population of the city and the extending bounds of the city limits. In 1872 Alfred Street was already a down-town Church, and the Congregation was gradually moving further out.

After careful consideration the Minister and people decided that the time was opportune for the erection of a new Church. Mr. Shaw took a leading part in all the arrangements that followed, being the Convener of the Building Committee.

The first step was to secure a suitable site. In the first Church Building Report, presented by Mr. Shaw, we read:—"After some negotiation with Mr. Robert Corry, the owner of the ground, an agreement was signed for a plot which contains 100 feet frontage on Fitzroy Avenue, by 161 feet on Caledonia Street, and 142 feet on the north-west side, held by a lease in perpetuity, at the annual ground rent of £35.

Both the streets referred to in the agreement have since changed names. Of course, in those days conditions around the Church were very different from to-day. In the Street Directory of 1868, four years before the building of our Church was commenced, Fitzroy Avenue consisted of ten houses, while there were three in Rugby Road and five in College Park. All the area known as "The Plains" was then unoccupied with houses. Indeed, it was not until after a visit paid to the Holy Land by two speculators, Sir Robert J. McConnell and James Rea, in 1891, that the plains were built upon, and the streets given eastern names, such as Palestine Street, Jerusalem Street, Damascus Street, etc.

Before commencing building operations, the Church premises in Alfred Street were sold, rather prematurely it would seem. This meant that from the month of August, 1872, until the opening of the new

Church almost two years later, the Congregation was without a Church building of their own, during which period they worshipped in Clarence Place Hall.

The Committee invited a number of architects to submit plans for the new Church, and in all ten plans were received. After careful consideration the plan drawn up by Messrs. Young & Mackenzie was selected, and Mr. William McCammond, builder, was entrusted with the work.

On 26th October, 1872, the foundation stone was laid by a member of the Congregation, Mrs. Workman, the widow of Mr. Robert Workman, a highly esteemed and honoured elder of the Church for many years. It is gratifying to know that some of her grandchildren are still in our midst.

It is evident the building of the Church took longer than the Committee anticipated. The contractor undertook to have it finished by 1st November, 1873; actually the dedication services could not be held before the following spring, and even then the spire was not completed. This delay was, in part, due to a strike of stone masons which held up operations for a time.

The estimated cost of the Church, including the spire, was £5,500, but as £1,600 was realised from the sale of the Alfred Street property, the total liability of the Congregation was in the region of £4,000. So generously did the members contribute, however, that when the Church was opened, only a comparatively small balance had still to be paid off. Thus encouraged by the faithfulness of the people, the Committee undertook the further responsibility of erecting school buildings and sexton's house at the rear of the Church. This work was completed the following August.

In the Building Committee's report of 1875, we read:—

"The Lord was graciously pleased to help us in our work. Even far beyond our expectations, large and generous contributions flowed in

"In the month of August last we were permitted in the good Providence of God to take possession of our new schoolrooms and once more to assemble the children and young people of our Sabbath Classes beneath our own roof.

"And here it becomes us to acknowledge the good hand of God upon us, the while that the house was in building, no accidents, save one or two of a very trivial kind, occurred from first to last. Quietly, steadily and comfortably the whole work went on. Yet we cannot forget that for many hours on one day we were made to feel how entirely the successful completion of our work was in the hands of God. If the gale which began to blow that bright summer's morning, and which swayed the scaffolding around our almost finished spire, had risen but a few points higher,

nothing could have saved us from a great disaster, but the storm died away, and we were preserved from great damage and loss."

The entire cost of Church, school buildings and sexton's house, together with the necessary fittings, was £8,200, and yet the total debt the following year after completion was only £1,300, a truly remarkable achievement.

A survey of the earliest reports indicates that the Congregation continued to grow under Mr. Shaw's ministry. The total number of families in 1877 was 197, and year by year this number increased.

In the report of 1880 we read:—

"The pew accommodation in the Church has not been equal to the demands made on us from time to time during the year. Some who would fain have waited on the ministrations of our esteemed Pastor have been obliged to seek accommodation elsewhere, while others, loth to leave us, are satisfied to put up with the inconvenience of sitting anywhere and everywhere in the hope that they shall, ere long, find a settled resting place, and have a pew, or portion thereof, which they may call their own.

"In order to meet the demand for pews the Committee have had under consideration a proposal to erect galleries in the transepts."

It would seem that this question of erecting galleries in the transepts came up for consideration on quite a number of occasions, but the work was never undertaken.

When the Church was built, the only means of access to the gallery was the tower stairway. It was felt, however, that this caused a division in the Congregation, as those sitting on the gallery seldom came into contact with those sitting below. There was also a difficulty in getting people to sit in the gallery, and so a new stairway leading from the vestibule was erected.

As soon as the school premises were completed work amongst the young was undertaken with considerable vigour. Morning and Afternoon Sabbath Schools were started, and at the end of the first year the average attendance had been 114 in the morning and 180 in the afternoon. Later the numbers increased considerably. Night schools were also organised. Every Monday evening during the winter months the girls of the Congregation came to the Lecture Hall where they received instruction in reading, writing, counting, geography, history, etc., closing every evening with a Bible lesson. The success of this work may be judged from the fact that the average attendance was frequently over one hundred. A similar school was started for men each Tuesday evening, but did not prove quite so successful.

WORK IN McCLURE STREET

Fitzroy Congregation has never at any time in its history been lacking in eager Church workers whose delight it was to serve their Master. Shortly after the erection of the Church quite a number of these people found an outlet for their energies in the McClure Street area. At that time there was no Mission Hall in the district, and so cottage meetings were organised to meet the spiritual need of the neighbourhood. Those meetings were at first carried on by voluntary workers, who also visited from house to house, making personal contact with the people and distributing tracts. It was soon felt that some central meeting place was required, where Sabbath School work could be organised, and in 1878 a temporary wooden structure on the site of the present Mission Hall was erected. This work continued to flourish, and two years later the average attendance at the Sunday evening meetings was 250. In those days students from the Theological College rendered valuable assistance in the work, and no doubt received useful experience in the art of public speaking. One of the most outstanding and enthusiastic of these young men was a member of our own Church called Henry Montgomery, at that time in training for the ministry. In later years he was better known as Dr. Henry Montgomery of the Shankill Road Mission.

Increasing numbers and the fact that the timber of the walls of the temporary structure began to weather, made it imperative for the Congregation to consider a building of a more permanent kind, and so in 1885 the present building was erected, not only for use as a Mission Hall but as a day school for the children in that neighbourhood. The Church Report of the following year states: "We are happy to think that, as a Congregation, we are now more thoroughly equipped in having admirable school buildings for the education of the young, under our own immediate supervision, as well as commodious rooms for our Mission Sabbath School and Meetings."

This building provided educational facilities for the children in the McClure Street district from 1885 until 1939 when the School was closed and the pupils transferred to Ormeau Road School. The same year it was reported at the Annual Meeting that the Church had transferred the building to the Belfast City Mission.

At the present time the work is being carried on with great acceptance by Mr. William Lynas, who has been missionary in that district for thirty years. Although our Church is no longer responsible for carrying on the work it is gratifying to find that our members still take a great interest in the McClure Street Mission, as did their predecessors, for as well as assuming financial responsibility for the afternoon Sabbath School, our Church gives the largest annual contribution of any congregation to the funds of the City Mission. Nor

is our confidence in this work misplaced, as, year by year, our missionary is responsible for linking quite a number of people in that district with our Church.

It is interesting to record that a former missionary of McClure Street, Mr. Francis Mulligan, who is still with us, and is a valued member of our Kirk Session, celebrates his golden jubilee in missionary work this year. In 1899 he took up the work in McClure Street, later becoming the General Secretary of the Belfast City Mission.

A RESIGNATION AND INSTALLATION

In 1892 after an active ministry extending well over forty years, Mr. Shaw intimated to the Congregation his intention of resigning the pastorate. At the Annual Congregational Meeting held on 13th April, 1892, the following Resolution was adopted:—

“Having heard the statement made by Mr. Shaw regarding his intended resignation of the active duties of the pastorate of this Congregation—this meeting, with regret, concurs in the step thus proposed, and begs to assure Mr. Shaw of their continued and undiminished attachment to him, and their thorough readiness to do all that in them lies to make his remaining years, years of comfort and of rest.”

Steps were taken to appoint a new Minister, and on 28th February the following year the Rev. William Colquhoun, B.A., was installed by the Belfast Presbytery as his Assistant and Successor.

Mr. Colquhoun was a native of East Donegal, being brought up in connection with Donaghmore Congregation.

On the completion of his College course he was ordained in First Ahoghill on 18th January, 1881.

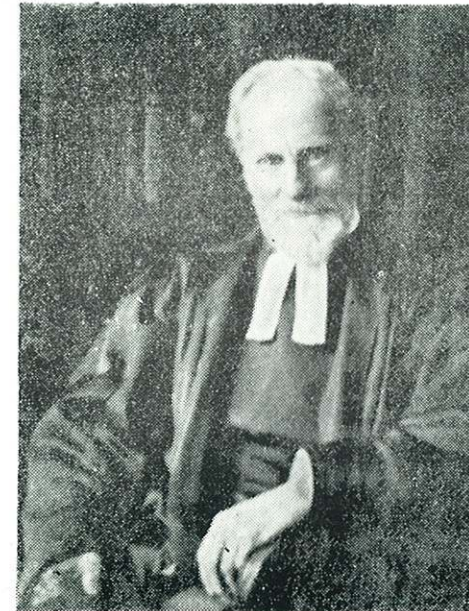
After a ministry of five years he was Called to First Omagh, where he was installed on 31st March, 1886, and where he continued to minister until called to Fitzroy.

At the reception social given in his honour two days after his installation in our Church a most cordial and enthusiastic welcome was extended to the new Minister, and presentations were made by the Congregation to both Senior and Junior Pastors.

Mr. Shaw, who occupied the chair, spoke of the great pleasure it gave him to welcome his junior colleague. He referred to Mr. Colquhoun's past ministry, to his outstanding gifts and character, and commended both Minister and people to the God of all Grace.

Mr. Colquhoun's speech that night was typical of the man, combining the notes of humility and sincerity with that pawky humour which the older members of the Congregation can remember so well. One or two extracts from that week's *Witness* are worthy of quotation. After thanking the Congregation for their enthusiastic welcome, the report goes on:—

“If he were a young man just beginning the work he would probably have a great programme to put before them—schemes for revolutionising that end of the city, setting fire (in a metaphorical sense) to the College across the way, and possibly blowing up the Faculty. But he had seen enough of life to learn the limitations of human power, and he came to them accordingly with the most pacific purposes, with no project for blowing up anything or anybody, but with the greatest hope of carrying out his intention. His desire was to begin work there in a quiet, common-sense way. He could assure them that any great things



Rev. WILLIAM COLQUHOUN, B.A.

they might have heard of him existed only in the imagination of individuals naturally poetic, and he hoped his friends who had come that evening from a distance would not prove of this poetic turn, especially as he always had a perfect horror of being white-washed while he was living, and having guns fired over him when he was dead.

“Since he came to town he had heard that there were many young men in Belfast at present sorely perplexed with religious doubt. He was delighted to hear that, for next to an earnest believer the finest type of man was an honest doubter. The young

men he knew here fifteen years ago had next to no doubts about anything, except perhaps the best brand of cigars. It was a matter for profound thankfulness that they had been succeeded by a more serious generation, anxious to know the truth and to do their duty. He had the greatest sympathy for all such, for he had had doubts and difficulties himself long ago, and had some left even yet. If they would leave their doubts and difficulties a little, and go and do something practical, they would probably find that very little would come out of them, for the simple reason that in general there was very little in them. The best way to get more light was to walk and work up to the edge of the light they had. "If any man will do His will he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God."

After Mr. W. D. McBride, on behalf of the ladies of the Congregation, had presented Mr. Colquhoun with a pulpit gown, Bible, Psalter and a chair, Mr. Colquhoun, in thanking them for their thoughtful kindness, said he thought that the gown would convert some of his acute angles into aesthetic curves, while their gift of a Bible reminded him of his duty to declare the whole council of God.

It is evident that Mr. Colquhoun quickly won the affection and loyalty of the Congregation. His gift of friendship made him a welcome visitor in every home. Members of the Congregation have told me how the children would run to him as soon as he entered the home, climb upon his knee and pull his beard, and he had always some little anecdote for them. He loved children and they loved him.

One of our members told me that when he was a little boy, sitting one day on his knee he unfastened the buttons of Mr. Colquhoun's waistcoat. "Now," said Mr. Colquhoun, "button them again," but when he came to the end there was a button left over. He took out a few buttons and buttoned again, with the same result—a button too many. Then Mr. Colquhoun said: "My boy, you will have to start right if you are going to end right," so having unfastened all the buttons he found the missing button-hole at the top and, starting right, he ended right. It was a great truth of life, simply taught, a truth that boy never forgot.

But not only did Mr. Colquhoun attract children, but older people were drawn to him by the warmth of his sympathy, his ready smile and his gift of humour.

One of his most popular stories told to me on more than one occasion was to the effect that when Mr. Colquhoun was ordained and went to live in Ahoghill, he learned of a certain hard-headed farmer who was not in favour of his appointment. He went to visit him as soon as possible, and found him at work in a field. The farmer at first had little to say to him, but went on with his work while Mr. Colquhoun talked to him. At last he very bluntly declared: "To tell

you the truth, I was not in favour of you coming to our Church." When asked the reason, he said: "I don't think you can preach." "Well, now," said Mr. Colquhoun, "I agree with you entirely. I don't think I'm much of a preacher either, but these other people in the Congregation seem to think I can, so why should you and I hold out against them." That man later became one of Mr. Colquhoun's most loyal members.

As a preacher, Mr. Colquhoun had few equals; his style was unique and his sermons most original. I have in my possession a number of his sermons in outline, noted down by a member of the Congregation for the benefit of a sick friend, and they make very interesting reading. His illustrative genius was extraordinary. He always seemed to have just the right illustration to drive home a point, and these were not infrequently taken from the open book of nature.

After Mr. Colquhoun's installation, Mr. Shaw continued to take an interest in the affairs of the Congregation until infirmity curtailed his activity. He passed away on 28th October, 1899, fifty years after his ordination.

MEMORIAL WINDOW

In recognition of his long and faithful service in their midst, and to perpetuate his memory, the Congregation erected a beautiful stained glass window in the south side of the west transept. It consists of two lancet windows. In one Christ is depicted as the Light of the World, with the words underneath: "Behold I stand at the door and knock." In the other, a sower is represented, and the text underneath is: "The Seed is the Word of God." A little rose window above portrays a dove with outstretched wings, carrying an olive branch. At the base of the window is the following inscription:—

"In loving memory of the Rev. GEORGE SHAW, A.B.,
fifty years Pastor of this Church, who fell on sleep October,
1899, aged 82. He was a good man, and full of the
Holy Ghost and of faith."

Erected A.D. 1901

TWENTIETH CENTURY FUND

The turn of the century saw heavy financial demands made upon the Congregation, which they met in a manner worthy of their highest traditions. At the General Assembly held in June, 1898, it was decided to launch a scheme to raise £100,000, to be called the "Twentieth Century Thanksgiving Fund." An extract from the Minutes of Assembly reads:—

"That the fund be applied first to the consolidation of the home interests of the Church, including the Assembly Hall, Church

Extension, the Utilisation of Licentiates, and the Aged and Infirm Ministers' Fund; secondly, to the extension of missionary work abroad, especially in India and China."

The raising of the money was spread over a three-year period, and although the target was never reached, it was highly creditable to the Church of that time that over £90,000 was contributed.

The target set for our Congregation was £3,000, and at the end of the third year it was reported at the Annual Meeting that more than that amount had been subscribed. This was the largest amount contributed by any congregation of the Assembly.

While this collection was actually being taken, another heavy demand was made upon the Congregation's generosity. An extract from the 1901 Annual Report explains part of the reason:—

"Your Committee regret to have to report that in the month of December last, owing to the prevalence of strong winds, the vane and some of the stones at the top of the Church spire became loose and required attention. Arrangements were therefore made to have the necessary repairs executed by a steeplejack, under the direction of the architects.

"On Sabbath Day, 27th January, immediately after the conclusion of the Morning Service, the entire scaffolding which had been erected to execute these repairs, with about fifteen feet of the masonry, was blown down by a severe storm which prevailed. In connection with this matter, we desire to acknowledge with thankful hearts our Heavenly Father's preserving care, inasmuch as on the occasion referred to no one was injured, although the members of the Congregation were just retiring from the Morning Service—some of them, indeed, being still within the building at the time of the accident."

When considering the repairs necessary to the spire, the Committee also decided to carry out certain renovations. As well as having the Church premises painted and renovated, they decided to install electric light, and to erect suitable iron railings around the Church grounds.

All this entailed another appeal to the Congregation, and in a short time the sum of £1,350 required for the work was either paid or promised. The readiness of the Congregation to meet these heavy commitments was truly remarkable.

THE COMING OF THE ORGAN

At the time this improvement scheme was being considered, it had been suggested that a Church Organ might be included, but it was felt that this was too big an item on top of all the other expenditure that had been undertaken. However, as soon as the renovation scheme was concluded, the question was again raised.

Until then the Church had no instrumental music. The choir, under the leadership of a precentor, led the praise. At first they occupied the pews at the side of the pulpit, and then from 1883 the front pews of the gallery, which position was considered more suitable. For many years the choir leadership had been in the hands of Mr. W. D. McBride, assisted by Mr. J. Barnett Steen, who frequently acted as his deputy. In 1904 Mr. McBride found it necessary to resign owing to ill-health, and his place was taken by Mr. F. J. Moffett, who later became the first organist of the Church, a position which he filled with great acceptance.

The introduction of instrumental music led to much controversy and heart-burning in many Presbyterian circles, but on the whole the members of Fitzroy accepted the innovation harmoniously.

After the decision to have an organ was taken, plans and estimates were obtained, and in consultation with Mr. Alfred Hollins, organist of what was then known as Free St. George's, Edinburgh, it was agreed that a suitable situation for it could be found behind the pulpit. The order was placed in the hands of Messrs. Norman & Beard, Ltd., London. The installation was completed in January, 1906, and the organ was opened by Mr. Hollins on the 21st of the same month.

Reference was made to it in the Committee's Report at the next Annual Meeting. "The organ has now been in use for the past three months, and in the capable hands of our organist, Mr. F. J. Moffett, its sweetness, variety and power have been fully manifested, and its aid to our Praise Service, both musical and devotional, has been recognised and enjoyed by the entire Congregation." It is interesting to note that the entire cost of the organ, including all structural alterations, was only £1,200.

Shortly after the installation of the organ, a scheme for providing a hall for the Old Boys' Association in connection with the 9th Belfast Company of the Boys' Brigade was put before the Committee of the Church.

A circular letter was sent out on the 11th November, 1907, signed by Mr. Colquhoun, Mr. M. A. Mitchell and Mr. W. Cowper, to the members of the Congregation, setting forth the need for suitable premises for the Old Boys' Association, which was already in a flourishing condition. The probable cost of the building would be £700. Towards this the Old Boys already had £200 in hands, and they promised to be responsible for another £100. The Church was being asked to raise the remainder.

The scheme met with very hearty support. A subscription list, published in the 1909 report, shows an amount of almost £450 either paid or promised.

The Hall was opened on the 25th October, 1908, by the Right Hon. Thomas Sinclair, D.L. He said he looked upon the erection of that Hall as one of the most forward steps yet taken in connection with the

foundation of such clubs in the city. Under the captaincy of Mr. Campbell, the 9th Company had attained its present success, and he wished long life to their captain and his brother officers, and trusted that they might all be spared to see their high expectations realised in the success of that Hall, which he had great pleasure in declaring open.

Another interesting meeting was held in the same premises on 22nd February the following year, when Mr. W. A. Smith of Glasgow, the founder of the Boys' Brigade, inspected the Hall and expressed his pleasure and satisfaction that the past members of the 9th Company had such a well-equipped building at their disposal, which they believed was the first of its kind in Ireland.

THE ELDERSHIP

It has been said that a congregation gets the Minister it deserves. If congregational desert is, in a like manner, the determining factor of the eldership, then there can be no higher tribute to Fitzroy's worthiness than the outstanding men who adorned that office throughout the years.

Space does not permit of our referring individually to them all. We must content ourselves rather with noting the effects of their work as a whole. And the one outstanding effect of their life and work is the fine, gentlemanly, loyal spirit that they imparted to the Congregation. Yes, and more than that, for if we are still a strongly evangelical Church, emphasising the saving power of Christ, that also is the fruit of the zeal and fervour of those spiritually-minded men who, down the years, set and steered our Church's course.

A photograph of the Minister and Session, taken in 1913, which hangs in the Minister's Room of the Church, and which we have taken the liberty of reproducing in these pages, gives us some idea of the type of men entrusted with the spiritual oversight of the flock. When one thinks of the strength of character and godly piety of these men, we feel like saying with one of old: "There were giants on the earth in those days."

In 1917 a social meeting of the past and present teachers of Fitzroy Avenue Sabbath School was held in the Lecture Hall, to honour five members of that Kirk Session who had rendered long and faithful service to Sabbath School work. All five of them had either been teachers or superintendents for over 50 years. Their names were—Messrs. T. McBride, E. Bennett, J. Workman, R. E. Crawford and J. Megaw.

Mr. Colquhoun, who was in the chair, remarked that such a record of service in the Sabbath School by five elders all in the same Session was, he thought, altogether unique, and he was afraid that if the higher critics ever read the report of that meeting they would be likely to maintain that Noah was a pure myth, that there never had

been any flood at all, and that the antediluvians were still playing marbles round Fitzroy Church.

Gifts to mark the occasion were presented by Messrs. William Cowper and M. A. Mitchell.

Mr. Thomas McBride was then Session Clerk, a position he occupied for many years, having been connected with the Congregation since the days of Dr. Edgar. Mr. Colquhoun later said of him: "He had an unflinching faith in the power of the Gospel. Some might have thought him narrow and unyielding in his opinions, but he was broad as the truth he saw, and was the stuff martyrs are made of."

Mr. John Workman's whole life was spent in the Congregation. He was a son of Mr. Robert Workman, one of its founders, who served as an elder in connection with the old Alfred Street Church for 30 years. He is described by a brother elder as a man of quiet manner, of sweet and gracious disposition, which won for him a place in the affections of the people. He was a faithful servant of the Master, and was deeply interested in quite a number of missionary activities both at home and abroad. One of his daughters became the wife of the Rev. William Colquhoun.

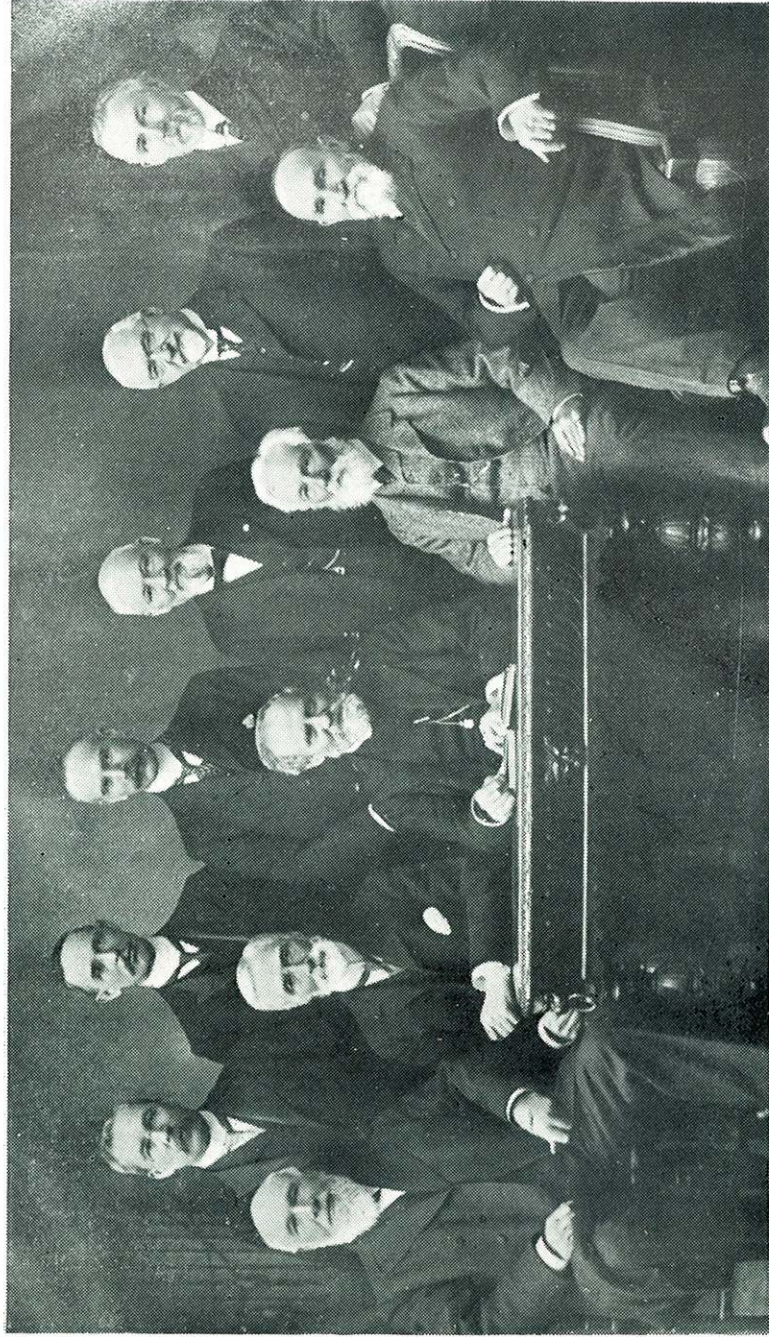
Mr. John Megaw is best remembered for his Bible Class work. Quite a number of those who sat at his feet entered the ministry of our Church, and there are those who still recall with gratitude the gracious influence of his life upon them. A strong temperance advocate, he was so impressed by the evils wrought by the drink traffic that he became one of the most fearless temperance advocates of his time.

Mr. Hugh Aikin, who had been an elder since 1900, was always ready to take a Bible Class or Sunday School Class when occasion demanded. A most willing helper in the work of the Congregation, he visited the sick and aged with great regularity, bringing comfort and help to those in need.

Mr. Andrew G. Campbell was for many years Treasurer of the Sustentation Fund, and later Treasurer of the Congregation, discharging his duties with great zeal and faithfulness. In him the McClure Street Mission had a special friend.

The name of Mr. John Campbell will long be remembered for his association with the 9th Belfast Company of the Boys' Brigade. He was appointed Captain of the Company in the early nineties, a position he worthily occupied until in 1913 he went to Canada. Those who passed through the ranks during those years know something of his strength of character and the tremendous influence for good he exercised over the boys. He evidently left the Congregation shortly after that photograph was taken.

Mr. R. E. Crawford was not only Superintendent of the Morning School, but being a man of practical affairs, for many years he supervised



FITZROY AVENUE CHURCH SESSION, 1913

Andrew G. Campbell, John Campbell, Marcus A. Mitchell, Robert E. Crawford, Edward Bennett, William Wright,
 Hugh Aikin, Thomas McBride, Rev. William Colquhoun, B.A., John Workman, J.P., John Megaw
 (Session Clerk)

all the work done about the Church premises. So attentive was he to the upkeep of the property that Mr. Colquhoun once said of him: "A mouse wouldn't be long about until Mr. Crawford would detect it and hunt it down." His name is also gratefully remembered by the Church at large for the time and attention he gave to the Church House. Every necessary repair or possible improvement was seen to without a moment's delay.

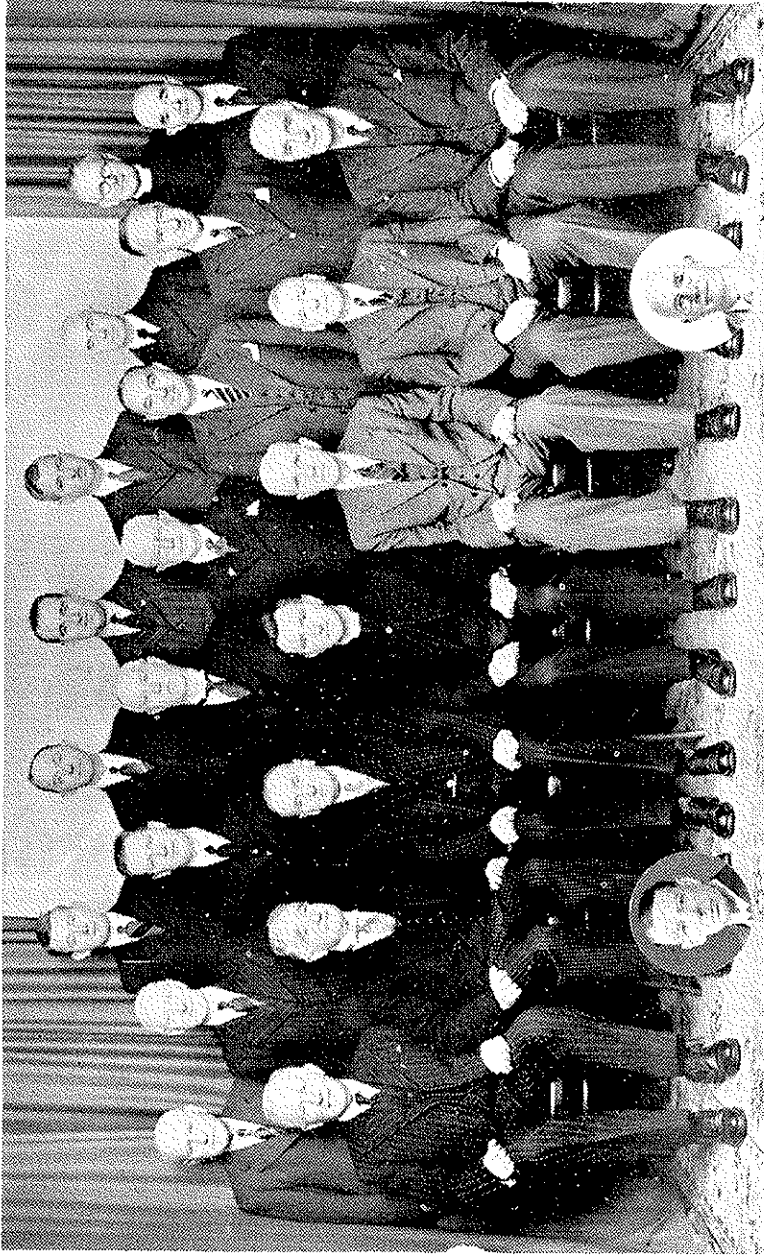
Mr. Edward Bennett, connected with the Congregation from the Alfred Street days, was, like Mr. Megaw, an enthusiastic advocate of the temperance cause. A firm believer in the importance of aggressive evangelistic work, he superintended for many years a large band of tract distributors, and took a deep interest in the McClure Street Mission work. It is said of him that whenever he noticed a vacant pew on the Sabbath—and he had an observant eye—he took pains during the week to enquire into the cause. Thus he proved himself a faithful overseer of the flock.

Mr. William Wright was the National Secretary for Ireland of the Y.M.C.A., who, for his management of the Red Triangle work in the camps and barracks of Ireland during the first World War, received the M.B.E. A man of great faith, he delighted to use his talents in God's service, and in particular in his own Church. A lover of good music, he took a keen interest in the praise service of the Congregation, and was the author of one of the hymns in our Revised Church Hymnary, "March on, my soul, with strength." It is interesting to note that one of his granddaughters, Miss Betty Stevenson, is a member of our present choir.

Of all the Members of Session in that photographic group, taken in 1913, only one—Mr. M. A. Mitchell—was alive at the time of the 75th Anniversary of the opening of Fitzroy, celebrated in April of this year. We regret to say, however, that within recent weeks, he too, passed over to the other side and joined that great company of Elders around the Throne. Dr. Woodburn, writing shortly after his death, said of him: "He was ordained as an elder of this Church nearly 40 years ago, and acted as Session Clerk for the whole of the 21 years of my active ministry. He was a man who did with all his might whatever his hand found to do—a keen business man, and just as keen in the work of the Church. He had high ideals, and endeavoured to carry them out in all that he undertook—honourable and upright in all his ways."

Such were the men Mr. Colquhoun had around him in 1913, and they were but typical of the eldership of our Congregation before and since, for let us not suppose that those who preceded them or those who succeeded them in office were any less loyal and devoted to the cause of the Master in our Church

KIRK SESSION, 1949



J. F. Jenkins, W. Lynas, W. Whiteside, W. Templeton, G. Crawford, Rev. Prof. R. J. Wilson,
 J. McGaw, W. P. Brown, J. Ellison, F. G. McMullen, F. W. Sloane, W. E. Dornau, J. A. Glen, H. P. Wilson,
 R. Workman, J. H. Ireland, S. M. A. Lowry, Rev. R. E. Alexander, F. Mulligan, J. H. A. Patton, J. A. Campbell,
 G. D. F. McFadden (Inset) W. Smyth (Inset)

Here let me but record the names of those servants of God who have served on the Session since then, but who are no longer with us, that memory may serve to recall the worth of those whom you have loved and respected for their work's sake:—

JAMES WILSON	ordained	1923	transferred	1926
ROBERT BAILLIE	"	1923	"	1927
JOHN PATTON	"	1923	passed away	1925
W. R. REA	"	1923	"	1933
GEORGE BLACK	"	1925	"	1933
WILLIAM BAXTER	"	1925	"	1935
D. S. K. SHAW	"	1925	transferred	1938
J. BARNETT STEEN	"	1925	passed away	1942
FRANK CARLILE	"	1932	"	1947
R. McCLATCHEY	"	1937	"	1942
WILLIAM SHAW	"	1937	"	1941
CECIL BRENNAN	"	1937	transferred	1943

Much could be written and doubtless will be written about our present Session. But that we leave to others, who from the higher vantage ground of some future date may glimpse the wider picture of our work and witness to-day.

The first World War cast its shadow over the closing years of Mr. Colquhoun's active ministry. The bronze Memorial Tablet placed in the vestibule in 1921 records the names of seventy-two members of the Congregation who served in His Majesty's Forces, fifteen of whom laid down their lives for King and Country.

RESIGNATION AND INSTALLATION

In 1921 Mr. Colquhoun resigned. At the Annual Meeting, held on the 11th May of that year, he informed the Congregation that he had been advised to seek relief from the full work of the Congregation, and he intended asking the Presbytery to proceed with the appointment of his Assistant and Successor. A deputation was then appointed to appear before the Presbytery at its next meeting.

A Commission, under the Moderatorship of the Rev. D. A. Taylor, D.D., was appointed to confer with the Congregation. The usual steps were taken. A Selection Committee was appointed, and after careful consideration their choice fell upon the Rev. J. B. Woodburn, M.A., D.D., the Minister of First Holywood.

Dr. Woodburn is a son of the manse, his father having been Minister of Ballywillan Church, near Portrush. After a signally successful College career, he was ordained in Rostrevor on the 2nd January, 1901; installed in Castlerock on 8th December, 1908; and installed in First Holywood on 20th April, 1916. During his ministry in Castlerock Dr. Woodburn took a post-graduate session in Heidelberg University.

It was also during his ministry in Castlerock that his book, "The Ulster Scot: His History and Religion" was published, a book which quickly commended itself to the public because of its accuracy and strict impartiality. It was very favourably reviewed by the leading newspapers and magazines of Great Britain and Ireland.

It was during his ministry in First Holywood, in the year 1920, that he received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from the united faculties of Assembly's College and the McCrea Magee College, Derry. He was the youngest Minister on whom that degree had ever been conferred.



The Very Rev. J. B. WOODBURN,
M.A., D.D.

When the Call from Fitzroy Avenue was presented to Dr. Woodburn it was no easy choice he had to make. Apart altogether from the work he was asked to undertake, was the fact that our city was then in the throes of civil war. In those days, law and order had given place to burning, looting and murder. Human life was held cheap as the flame of party, and religious strife was fanned by acts of violence.

In the copy of *The Witness* that carried the report of Dr. Woodburn's installation, and side by side with it, is a letter signed by the heads of the various Churches appealing for peace. Here are a few extracts from it:—

"As representing the various Protestant Churches, we would earnestly appeal to all who may regard our words, to exercise the strictest control over their own words and actions, and to use all the influence they can command to bring to an end the outbursts of crime which are a disgrace to any civilised community.

"We are not in a position to apportion the blame for these outrages that are taking place, but we believe the Protestants were not the original aggressors. However, crime provokes crime, and tends to repeat itself in a vicious circle. It seems to us that the present duty of each party is not so much to emphasise the guilt of others as to make sure that its own members hold themselves aloof from violence.

"We would suggest that this letter be read from the pulpits of all Protestant Churches in the city on the coming Lord's Day, and that Ministers and people offer prayer to Almighty God that peace and goodwill may be fully and finally established."

The appended signatures to this letter were W. J. Lowe, Moderator of Assembly; Charles T. P. Down, Bishop; and W. H. Smyth, President of the Methodist Church.

Lawlessness, however, was no deterrent to our Senior Minister. Indeed, he possesses a quality of spirit which is challenged by trying circumstances. Thus he began his ministry at a period when fear and anxiety haunted the minds of a great many people.

Dr. Woodburn was installed in Fitzroy on Friday, the 6th January, 1922, exactly 100 years after the opening of the Alfred Place Church.

The following Monday evening a reception to Dr. and Mrs. Woodburn was held in the Lecture Hall. After tea, Mr. Colquhoun took the chair and, in his opening remarks, expressed his pleasure at the unanimity and heartiness that had characterised the Call to Dr. Woodburn. He expressed his pleasure at having him as a colleague, and cordially welcomed Dr. and Mrs. Woodburn to Fitzroy.

After several members of the Congregation had spoken, Mrs. Colquhoun, Miss Mary McBride, Mrs. Jordan and Miss Marion Steen, on behalf of the ladies of the Congregation, robed Dr. Woodburn.

Dr. Woodburn then took the chair and was enthusiastically greeted. Having thanked the ladies for presenting him with the handsome gown and cassock, he said: "The main feeling which I have had these past four weeks is one of deep humility. I have felt the great responsibility of being Called to be the Minister of Fitzroy Church, and I could not go forward but that I feel to-night that the God who led me among

you will be with me in the future. In taking up this work, I hear Him saying to me: 'My Grace is sufficient for thee.'

Referring to his Senior Minister, Mr. Colquhoun, he said: "Had I had my choice among the Ministers of our Assembly as to the man I would like best to assist, I would rather have him than anyone else.

"I was told by a friend: 'You'll find Mr. Colquhoun hard to follow.' 'No,' said I, 'he will be one of the easiest men to follow.' He said: 'How do you make that out?' 'Well,' I said, 'the result of his life-work is a deep-seated Christian spirit in the Congregation—the most noble result any man can achieve, and that spirit will be a tremendous asset for me to start with. The Minister whom it is hardest to follow is the man who has not done his work.' I look forward to many years of happiness working with him."

He then went on to speak of the Church's opportunity amongst youth. "What I would like to see in every church," he said, "is the enthusiasm of youth wedded to the experience of middle life and the wisdom of old age. When we unite all the different energies of the different sections of the Congregation for Christ, then we shall do wonders."

JUBILEE OF FITZROY

On the 13th April, 1924, the Jubilee of the Church was commemorated. Special services were held, and the preacher was the Rev. Dr. Mackintosh Mackay of Glasgow, then reputed to be one of the finest of Scottish preachers.

MISSIONARY ACTIVITY

It has been said that a missionary-minded Church is a living Church. If missionary zeal is the criterion of spiritual life, then throughout its long history Fitzroy has not been lacking in such life.

At its Visitation of the Congregation in 1910, the Belfast Presbytery in its finding highly commended the Congregation for its generosity. "The liberality of the Congregation to many good causes shows itself unmistakably in the gifts to the various Mission enterprises, and in particular to the Foreign Mission. The spirit of Him who came to seek and to save the lost reveals itself in the earnest efforts of many of the members to bless other lives at home and abroad."

The liberality upon which the Presbytery commented continued to manifest itself, and in the year 1919, the peak year of missionary giving, the Foreign Mission collection amounted to well over £1,000. We bear in mind, of course, that money was circulating very freely immediately after the first World War.

It was, however, to the personal contacts our people had with the mission field that we are most indebted for the missionary spirit which has existed, and continues to exist in our midst.

Since 1883, Fitzroy has not been without a representative on the foreign field; their names form an impressive roll of honour:—

Dr. W. W. SHAW	Manchuria
Miss SHAW	India
Miss M. STEEN	India
Dr. INA HUSTON (now Mrs. H. Martin)	India
Miss ROGERS	India
Dr. JAMES ROGERS	India
Mr. DAVID O'NEILL	Qua Iboe
Miss E. MULLIGAN (now Mrs. Thompson)	China Inland
Miss R. O'NEILL	India
Miss M. CHRISTIE	Damascus

For these, our own members, who have rendered such valiant service to the Master's Kingdom in lands beyond the sea, we give God our heartfelt thanks. It is our earnest hope that others may hear the Master's Call: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel," that in our ranks there may be those still found who will take up the "torch of faith" as others lay it down.

THE END OF A MINISTRY

On Easter Sunday morning, 1934, the Rev. William Colquhoun passed to his great reward in his 84th year.

The following is a copy of the Memorial Minute as approved by the Church Committee:—

"We, the members of the Committee of Fitzroy Presbyterian Church, place on record our loss at the passing of our Senior Minister, the Rev. William Colquhoun, on the morning of Easter Sunday. As the day was dawning, like his Lord, he arose to be with the God he loved and served.

"He was a man of great mental gifts, very human and very humorous; a man who lived constantly in the presence of Christ, and whose preaching made one feel that his Lord was very near. Visiting Ministers have often remarked two noteworthy features in the Sunday services in Fitzroy Church—reverence and receptiveness. These two features were due largely, if not altogether, to Mr. Colquhoun's preaching and influence.

"We shall miss him very sorely in our homes. When he came to visit us he left a benediction behind. Faces grew kindlier

and hearts became softer whenever he hove in sight. We felt he understood us and our burdens and our sorrows, and the troubles became lighter when we shared them with him.

"We sympathise deeply with his wife, who watched by him and tended him, so carefully all these years, and we pray that the God of all comfort may be her support all her days."

TABLET TO MEMORY OF MR. COLQUHOUN

In token of the affection and esteem in which Mr. Colquhoun was held by the members of the Congregation, a tablet was erected and placed on the wall to the right of the organ. This tablet was unveiled on the 15th December, 1935. On that occasion Dr. Woodburn, who preached the sermon, said:—

"On the tablet to be unveiled and dedicated this morning are the words 'To the Glory of God and in glad remembrance of the Reverend William Colquhoun, dearly beloved Minister of this Church from 28th February, 1893, till 1st April, 1934. 'To me to live is Christ.'"

"These simple words say much to us about one whom God gave to this Church, and to our Presbyterian Church in Ireland—a great, a unique gift—for there was no one quite like him. He hated with intense hatred all eulogies, but I feel if he sees us to-day, which I think is very probable, he is looking upon us with loving sympathy, knowing that this service and this memorial are an outpouring of love on the part of his friends, and love is never waste.

"I thought of dividing what I was going to say this morning into three heads—The Preacher, The Message and The Man—but I found it impossible in his case to separate the preacher from his message or the message from the man.

"One of the places where he was outstanding was in the pulpit. We Ministers listened to him and we said to one another: 'That is great preaching.' It was great preaching, because it came hot from his heart and revealed his dedicated personality.

"Speaking once about the making of a sermon, he said: 'A sermon is not a cartridge that can be put in mechanically and then shot out again, as if the preacher were no more than an iron gun. To discharge a few cold, dead sentences at a Congregation, as you fire leaden shot at a snipe, is not preaching.'

"He hated all insincerity, all sham, all hypocrisy. Once he wrote me: 'I would ten times rather hear a man cursing in earnest (in earnest underlined) than merely elocuting in the pulpit. It would do me far more good.' If young men going out to preach

would only preach what the world needs—the truth of the old gospel filtered through the tissue of a man's brain and shot out hot from his heart, it would save them from a query once put by a little boy to his father about one of my children's sermons. The boy sat silent at the dinner table, and then with a rather solemn bewildered look on his face, said: 'Daddy, do you think yon was true that Mr. Colquhoun said to-day in his sermon or was he only preaching?' He always had the ability to think deeply and penetratingly and kept an open mind. He realised that we are all just at the kindergarten stage of the knowledge of God and we can ill afford to dogmatise, except on the big truths which we have experienced."

The tablet was unveiled by Dr. William Colquhoun (a son of the late Mr. Colquhoun) in the absence through indisposition of Mrs. Colquhoun. The tablet, the gift of the Congregation, has a medallion of Mr. Colquhoun at the top. The carving work was executed by Miss S. R. Praeger.

DEATH OF ORGANIST

In December, 1935, Mr. F. J. Moffett, who had been organist ever since the instrument was installed, passed away. It is recorded of him: "He was a splendid musician, and his lovable nature made so strong an appeal to those who were associated with him that only loyalty and friendship could be given in return."

Mr. Richard Hogg earned the gratitude of the Congregation for the valuable assistance he rendered Mr. Moffett during the closing years of his life.

Mr. Moffett's successor was Mr. Alan Capper, who was appointed in May, 1936, and continued as our organist until his resignation in 1945, when Mr. Ivor Burns took over the work.

MODERATOR DESIGNATE

In 1940, Dr. Woodburn's faithful and devoted service to the cause of Christ's Kingdom was recognised by the Church at large, in calling him to be its Moderator.

In the May copy of the *Missionary Herald* that year, an impressive article appears under the heading: "The Moderator Designate," in which is expressed something of the Church's estimate of our Senior Minister. Here are a few extracts from it:—

"The voice of the Church in the choice of a Moderator seldom errs, and this year there can be no doubt that she has chosen wisely. The universal respect in which Dr. James B. Woodburn

is held will ensure him a cordial welcome to the chair. A man of unassuming and genuine piety, thoroughly devoted to the work of the ministry, cherishing the highest ideals, and a preacher of great directness and power, he brings to his new office qualifications that augur well for a successful year. His friends know him as one who would never let a brother Minister down, and who is notably sympathetic towards those of his brethren whose lot is cast in difficult spheres of labour. In days when the Assembly debated means for alleviating their lot, Dr. Woodburn forsook his habitual reserve and led the movement for Church reform. This was a real act of self-sacrifice for one who by disposition prefers to remain in the background, and finds no pleasure in the arena of Church controversy, and the clash of public debate.

"As joint Convener with Dr. Haire of the Assembly's Supplemental Widows' Fund, he has shown his earnestness to help those whose means are very scanty, and more than a few Ministers' widows have cause to be grateful for his efforts.

"No one can be brought into contact with Dr. Woodburn and fail to be impressed by his utter sincerity, his unflinching adherence to the highest aims, his sympathy with the down-trodden and the oppressed, his interest in every form of social work, and the warm heart he brings to those of his people who are in any kind of sickness, misfortune, or distress.

"It is universally felt that he will bring to the chair a grace of bearing, a dignity of demeanour, a clearness of vision, a decisiveness of resolution, and at the same time a courtesy and charm, which are bound to place him in the front rank of those distinguished men who have adorned the Moderatorial Office of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland."

At the Annual Meeting of Fitzroy Church, held in the Gamble Library of the Assembly's College on the 24th April, 1940, the Congregation marked the occasion by presenting Dr. Woodburn with Moderatorial robes.

Gifts were also given to Mrs. and Miss Woodburn.

Dr. Woodburn, in his address that night, recalled that Dr. Edgar of Alfred Street, founder of Fitzroy, was the third Moderator of the General Assembly in the year 1842, and that it was no secret that the late Mr. Colquhoun was offered the Moderatorship, but declined owing to ill-health. This further honour to Fitzroy was largely because the Church at large appreciated the struggle the Congregation maintained to keep in the forefront of every good work.

It was Dr. Woodburn's misfortune that the closing years of his active ministry, like those of his predecessor, were clouded by war. Shortly after its outbreak in 1939 the Lecture Hall and adjoining rooms

of the Church premises were requisitioned for military purposes. The very day Dr. Woodburn was inducted to the Moderatorial office, the evacuation of Dunkirk was taking place, and before his year of office was completed the devastating air-raids of 1941 had laid waste large areas of our city, killing and maiming hundreds of our citizens.

The Moderatorial year of office, in ordinary times, tries the strength of even robust men, as has been evidenced in recent years. But for Dr. Woodburn there was added also the physical strain of attending evening meetings, and sometimes travelling long distances at night, under black-out conditions. Coupled with that was the mental and spiritual strain of seeing others suffer, and sharing in their sufferings.

It is true the strain of that year sapped his energy not a little, and the seeds of future illnesses were then sown, yet at the same time he found the needed strength to fulfil all the duties the Church laid upon him.

In the report of the Congregational Committee the following year, in welcoming Dr. Woodburn back again after his year of office, this worthy tribute is paid to him: "We are glad to welcome back Dr. Woodburn to his pastoral duties after a year in the Moderatorial Chair. We have reason to be satisfied with the manner in which he maintained the dignity of that high office, and for his courage in criticising when necessary those social evils in our civic life, which call for quick and drastic remedy."

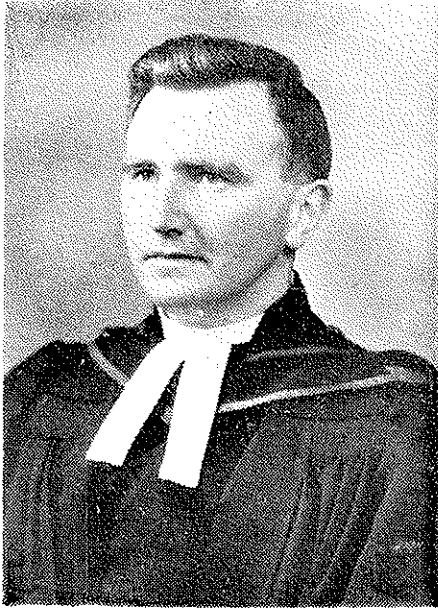
In 1942 Dr. Woodburn intimated his intention to retire from the active duties of the ministry as from October 31. His decision came as quite a shock to Session and Committee, and many members appealed to him to reconsider the matter. Dr. Woodburn, however, said this was not possible, and that he would like all to realise that he believed he was acting in the best interests of the Congregation. Various speakers acknowledged the splendid service that Dr. Woodburn had given to the Congregation.

The following were appointed to represent the Congregation at the next meeting of the Belfast Presbytery, when Dr. Woodburn would ask leave to retire: Messrs. Marcus A. Mitchell, Session Clerk; Frank Carlile, George Crawford and J. Herbert Ireland. Mr. Ireland, who was the spokesman on that occasion said: "Many of our people would treasure in the imagery of their hearts the memory of his visits when there was sickness or sorrow in the home." Concerning his pulpit ministrations, he said: "Recently a well-known medical doctor was worshipping in Fitzroy, and after the service, in conversation, he pointed to the pulpit, which had just been vacated by Dr. Woodburn, and said: 'There you have Presbyterianism at its best.'"

ASSISTANT AND SUCCESSOR APPOINTED

The usual steps were taken to appoint Dr. Woodburn's Assistant and Successor. A Commission of Presbytery, under the Moderatorship of the Rev. Cassells Cordner, B.A., had charge of the vacant Congregation, and under their supervision a Call was made out in favour of the Rev. R. E. Alexander, of Trinity Church, Ahoghill.

Mr. Alexander was born at Broadlea, in County Donegal, not far distant from the birthplace of one of his predecessors, the Rev. William Colquhoun.



Rev. R. E. ALEXANDER, M.A.

His father, William Alexander, is a descendant of one of the early Presbyterian settlers in the Laggan, who came over from Scotland in the 17th century. His mother, a native of Belfast, was a school-teacher prior to her marriage. She had considerable musical ability, and for almost 20 years was organist in Ballylennon.

On the completion of his college course he was Assistant in St. Enoch's for a time. Later he received a Call to Trinity Church, Ahoghill, where his ministry lasted exactly six years. During his ministry there he married Miss Mildred R. Alexander, B.Sc., daughter of Mr. and Mrs. William Alexander of Cookstown.

The day after he was informed of the Call to Fitzroy, one of his worthy office-bearers visited the Manse and said to him: "If I were you I would seek the Lord's mind on it, but I wouldna go."

Mr. Alexander was installed in Fitzroy on May 11, 1943, and the following night his wife and he received a warm welcome from the Congregation at a reception social held in the Smyth Hall.

The generosity of Fitzroy Avenue Congregation was very much in evidence that evening, for not only were tokens of appreciation and esteem given to Dr. and Mrs. Woodburn, and to Miss Joy Woodburn, but handsome gifts were also given to Mrs. Alexander and Joy "the second," as well as pulpit robes to the new Minister. The robing ceremony was performed by Mrs. Jordan, Miss Gardner and Mrs. Moffett.

The generosity of the Congregation was only equalled by that of Dr. Woodburn, who, in his remarks that evening, spoke of the great pleasure it gave him in welcoming his junior colleague, and of his readiness to co-operate with him in every way possible.

When Mr. Alexander commenced his ministry in Fitzroy, many of the young men and women of the Congregation were then on Active Service. These he contacted by letter, and had many interesting replies from all over the world.

In all, eighty-four members of the Congregation served in His Majesty's Forces, nine of whom did not return.

PEACE THANKSGIVING FUND

In 1946, the year following the end of hostilities, our Presbyterian Church inaugurated a Peace Thanksgiving Fund. The Minutes of the Assembly read: "In order to give tangible expression to the Church's feeling of gratitude to the Giver of every good gift, the General Assembly resolve to raise a sum of One Hundred Thousand Pounds as a Thanksgiving for Peace."

Half of the amount raised was to be allocated to the provision of hostels for Presbyterian students at Magee University College and Queen's University, the remainder to be used for the benefit of the Home Mission and the Boys' Residential Club.

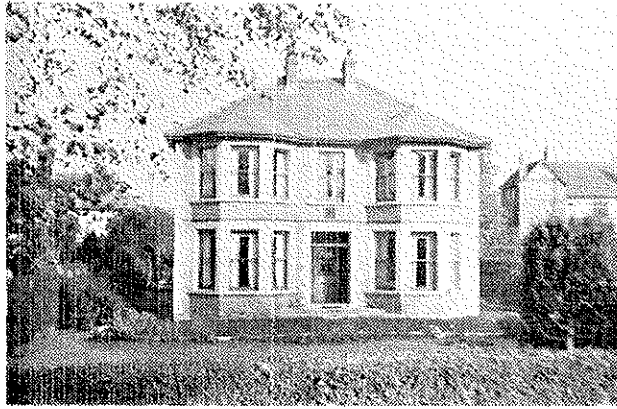
An amount equal to stipend was considered the right target for each congregation. It is pleasing to note that within a year of the launching of the scheme in Fitzroy, this target was passed.

PURCHASE OF A MANSE

In 1947 the Congregation purchased a Manse for their Junior Minister, the old Manse in Wellington Park having been sold some

years earlier. The resolution, which was unanimously passed at the Congregational Meeting, read as follows:—

“That, subject to the approval of the Presbytery, the premises known as 50 Malone Park, Belfast, be purchased at the price of £2,795, and be vested in the Education Board of the Belfast Presbytery as Trustees for the Congregation, and that the Committee of the Congregation take the necessary steps to have this carried out and a Trust declared of the property in favour of the Congregation, in accordance with the law of the Church.”



THE MANSE

RENOVATION SCHEME

There is one other item of a financial character which remains to be recorded—a five-year plan for the renovation of the Church premises.

It had been noted for some considerable time that the fabric of the Church, built of Scrabo stone, had weathered considerably, and in places required refacing and pointing. After careful consideration the Committee decided to appeal to the generosity of the Congregation.

The amount to be raised was estimated at £6,000. Members were asked to contribute either one single payment, or smaller amounts spread over a five-year period. The first collection was taken up on 10th April, 1949, the date of our special Anniversary Services, held to mark the seventy-fifth anniversary of the opening and dedication of the Church.

An insertion in a local paper shortly after the Anniversary Services reads: “Congratulations are due to the Minister and members of Fitzroy Avenue Church on the success with which they inaugurated a large-scale scheme of renovation. Special Services were conducted by the

Revs. D. Esler, B.A., B.D., and J. H. Withers, B.A., B.D., and in addition to offerings amounting to £2,663 17s od, further subscriptions of £2,836 were promised over a five-year period. This leaves the estimated requirement of £6,000 virtually secured.”

Within four months of the first collection £3,000 had been subscribed, and over that amount promised during the next four years.

LOOKING BACK

As one examines the historic documents of our Congregation, there are many other events one would like to record, and many names one might mention, names of people whose consecration to the Master's service enabled them to carry out work of supreme importance for our Congregation.

We think not only of the great succession of Ruling Elders, but of those who served on the Congregational Committee, men and women of keen business ability and vision, who were unafraid of great projects.

Nor would we forget that great company of people who claimed membership in this Congregation, and who found spiritual life and strength in its fellowship.

To these our brethren of a by-gone age, we, who have entered into their labours, owe a deep debt of gratitude; and although they are no longer with us, that spirit of unity, toleration and Christian fellowship which has characterised our great family Church in the past, lives on.

LOOKING FORWARD

Yet while recognising all we owe to the past, we are deeply conscious that the future of our Congregational life depends upon our consecration to the Master's service. To attempt to live for long on the spiritual capital of the past would soon exhaust our resources and lead to a spiritual devaluation.

We are fortunate to-day in the membership of our Session; fortunate, too, that the temporal affairs of the Congregation are in the hands of a most capable Committee, and that we have leaders in all our organisations who are trustworthy and are determined to see the cause of Christ's Kingdom prosper in our midst. With such people in office, who have the confidence of the Congregation, and depending on the Grace of God, without which all human effort must eventually fail, we look forward to the future with sober confidence, believing that the God in Whom our fathers trusted will not forsake their children.

How then can we end better than with the words of our Senior Minister, Dr. Woodburn, spoken on the occasion of our Church's Jubilee, twenty-five years ago:—

“When everything is said and done, we come back to the old story; church buildings avail nothing, preachers avail nothing, organs mean nothing, unless they are all impregnated with the Spirit of the Head of the Church, unless the foundation is built on Jesus Christ our Lord. The Church succeeded in the past only when it held to it and practised the Will of God, and it will succeed in the future only in proportion as it has that vision. The only reason for the existence of any Church is to perfect the spirit of man. The beauty of the Church, the size of the congregations and the like, are only the by-product which follow an outpouring of the Spirit of God.”

