

Five into One – St. Paul’s Church

In 1838, at a meeting convened by the rev. Murray McCheyne, in the wake of the loss of the Dundee steamship *Forfarshire*, of Grace Darling fame, Mariners Church of Scotland was instituted as a Seaman's Mission. It adhered to the Free Church in 1843. As business and professional people joined the membership changed, and in 1850 St. Paul's and the Seaman's Mission went their separate ways. In 1852, the present building replaced the former place of worship, in Reform Street.

Mission effort was now directed to the Overgate area, for 10 years in the Old Gaelic Church in Long Wynd - an interesting link with the early days of Albert Square - and latterly at 145 Overgate, resulting for a very brief period in an independent Wilson Free Church. Schools were organised in Overgate and Dock Street and Wallacetown.

The Very Rev. Dr. William Wilson, minister for 30 years from 1848, was successively convener of the Assembly Home Mission Committee, Moderator of the General Assembly, Principal Clerk to the General Assembly, and Joint Convener of the Sustentation Fund, to which that that time St. Paul's was contributing the equivalent of six minimum stipends. A similar level was achieved in the 1920s, when the equivalent of five minimum stipends was contributed to the Central Fund of the United Free Church, of which the Rev. Dr. James Weatherhead was Convener. As Moderator of the General Assembly in 1927, he was involved in the negotiations leading to the Union in 1929, when St. Paul's became a Church of Scotland charge.

The Overgate premises, redesigned under the Rev. Richard A. Waterstone and reopened in 1892, were the centre of considerable mission activity for the next 60 years. In two World Wars they served as a social centre and canteen for the Forces, and during the Depression of the 1930s, for the unemployed. Although mission services continued under Mr. F. Hunt and Mr. J.K. Robertson until the 1960s, the welfare state overtook much of the work done. The Dorcas Society, founded in 1861, remains the sole survivor of the Overgate mission work

Over the years, considerable efforts were made to enhance the church building. Around 1900, a number of the stained glass windows were installed, supplemented in 1914 by a window in memory of the Rev. Dr. William Patrick, who left in 1900 to be Principal of Winnipeg Presbyterian College, and in 1948 by two windows in memory of the Very Rev Dr James Weatherhead.



The pipe organ, by Walcker of Ludwigsberg, was installed in 1902. A communion table and chairs to match the light oak of the new pulpit and organ were added. Oak panelling in the vestibule was a gift in 1938 in memory of Sir George and Lady Ritchie. Also in the vestibule were mounted war memorial plaques in brass and a plaque commemorating the jubilee of the Boys' Brigade in Dundee, for which St. Paul's over the years provided four Battalion Presidents.

Under the Rev. James Munn and the Rev. Basil G. Hardy, St. Paul's continued to be forward looking. Thus, in 1945, St Paul's alone in Dundee was in favour of women elders. For a time, St. Paul's co-operated with the Steeple Church in the work of the Mary Slessor Centre.

After the Union with Meadowside in 1981, the Rev Basil G. Hardy continued as the minister of the united charge until his retiral in 1984. The Rev. Maudeen I. MacDougall was the first minister of the united charge, and devoted 29 years of service to the congregation.

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