

# The History of Edinburgh City Mission

## David Nasmith: A Dynamic Founder of Missions (1799 – 1839)

In 1799 David Nasmith was born in Glasgow. He grew up to become a devout Christian with endless energy and passion for founding Missions. In fact, in his short life (40 years) he founded over 60 Christian City Missions and agencies, including the YMCA.

He founded the first city mission in Glasgow on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1826 and proposed the original vision of the movement thus:

*“.....That the object of the Society shall be to promote the spiritual welfare of the poor of this city, and its neighbourhood, by employing persons of approved piety, and who are properly qualified to visit the poor in their houses.”* (Delores Burger, Practical Religion: David Nasmith and the City Mission Movement, 1799 – 2000, p.27)

At the first Annual Meeting on 1<sup>st</sup> January, 1827, in the Trade’s Hall, Glassford Street, Glasgow, the message to the first missionaries was:

*“You will convert the houses that were tenanted by men of the foulest passions, into churches of the Redeemer, where the Lord the Spirit will dwell and the God of Salvation will be loved and served. You will arrest the progress of vice and promote the interest of virtue. You will make our poor, our ignorant, our degraded population stand forth in all that freshness and fairness of moral and of spiritual excellence.”* (Ibid., p.28)

Nasmith was daring to challenge the spirit of the age and shake the churches out of their slumber with three key principles:

- 1. Evangelize our cities when the churches mostly believed the lie that Britain was “Christian” and didn’t need missionaries.**
- 2. Evangelize our cities using ordinary men and women without theology degrees, which was unheard of.**
- 3. Evangelize our cities using evangelical Christians from all Church denominations, when people said it would be impossible.**

W. Edwyn Shipton wrote in 1845, that the missionaries were:  
*“Christian men, bound by no other ties than those of the “common faith” and of common object. The City Mission from the first was nondenominational.”* (Ibid., p.29: Shipton, W. Edwyn, Lectures: Delivered before the Young Men’s Christian Association, 1845 – 1846, Vol. I, London, James Nisbet and Co., 1875)

And again: *“This was something new. A Mission of laymen, not trained in University or theological colleges, but able to proclaim the facts of the Gospel in everyday language... ..Someone who would go where they lived, meet them on their own ground, sit to listen as well as well as to talk, and then explain in words they could understand, the message that was proclaimed from the pulpits of churches to which the slum-dwellers never went.”* (Ibid., p.29)

In 1828, Nasmith mailed his vision and plans to principal cities and towns in Scotland, England, Ireland, France, and other places on the continent of Europe, to Asia, to Africa, and to Canada and to America. He spoke out passionately at the founding of the Manchester City Mission in 1837:

*“.....if we expected the poor to flood to our churches, we were greatly mistaken, and if we wanted our places of worship to be crowded, we must carry the Gospel to the homes of the poor. The object of the mission is not to make people Protestants or Roman Catholics, Baptist, Episcopalians, Methodist or any other sect: its object was in no way sectarian, but to unite all denominations of Christians, and by one strong effort, to pluck sinners as brands from the burning.”* (Ibid., p.46: Manchester Guardian, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1837)

In a day when ordinary evangelical Christians of all denominations and organizations work together in reaching the world for Christ, only God knows the full extent to which the Church owes the God-given pioneering life of David Nasmith, who by his vision, preaching and personal example broke the mould of a Church bound by the traditions of men.

## **Edinburgh City Mission**

*“On the 1<sup>st</sup> March 1832, eight gentlemen met together in the shop of Messrs Young and Miller, 375 High Street, to confer with David Nasmith in regard to the formation of a City Mission in Edinburgh.”* (Annual Report, 1895, p.101)

Thus began Edinburgh City Mission. It was probably the 19<sup>th</sup> city mission to be formed by Nasmith, the first having been in Glasgow, the second in Dublin, and probably 16 city missions before Edinburgh City Mission

(ECM) in America (ibid., p.10). However, ECM is ranked now as the second oldest city mission in Britain.

As with all city missions, Nasmith set out a clear vision for ECM, because “without a vision the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18)

### **The ECM Vision**

Attached to every Annual Report was a clear constitution, parts of which read:

*“Article II: The design of the Society shall be to carry the Gospel, irrespective of denominational distinction, more extensively among the inhabitants of this city, by visits for religious conversation and reading the Scriptures, by meetings for prayer and Christian instruction, - by stimulating all persons to a regular attendance upon the preaching of the Gospel, - by increasing Scriptural education, through the medium of Sabbath or Infant Schools, or otherwise, - by the formation of loan libraries, - and adoption of such other means, as the Managers may judge important to attain the designs of the Society.”* (Annual Report: 1834 – 1835, p.3)

Instructions to the Agents (missionaries): *“1<sup>st</sup>: Your business is to visit the inhabitants of the district assigned to you, for the purpose of bringing them to an acquaintance with salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ, and by doing them good by every means in your power.....the sole object of the Mission being to bring sinners to the Saviour.”*

*“Your work is awfully important: you have to deal with immortal souls, many of whom may never have an opportunity of hearing the Gospel but from you, and whose eternal destiny may depend upon the message which you deliver to them: Be faithful, be simple, keep the Lord Jesus continually before your own mind, and commend Him and His finished work to the people. Never forget the awful possibility suggested by the Apostle, - that after one has preached the Gospel, he himself may ‘become a cast-away.’*

*Go forth daily to your work with your hearts lifted up to God for the assistance and direction of His Holy Spirit, relying upon his promise for wisdom and strength, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist. **Let the glory of God, and the salvation of souls, be your chief – your only end.**”* (ibid., p.4)

## **The Early Days: 1832 – 1859**

In the first year six missionaries were salaried by private individuals and the city was split into 30 districts. The vision was to have missionaries from ECM in all those districts. By 1834, seven of those districts were covered.

The first report on ECM in 1834 records the following: 2178 meetings were held; 39, 377 people attended those meetings; 16,873 homes were visited; 5,488 sick people were visited; 152 copies of Scripture were given out, or sold at a low price; 12,837 tracts were received ; 33 children were sent to day school; 13 to Sabbath Schools and 304 were attending ECM run Sabbath Schools. By 1837 sixteen missionaries were employed and the records state:

- 49,543 people attended meetings
- 46,715 people were visited at home
- 16,109 sick people were visited
- 200 Bibles were given to people
- 45,763 tracts were given away
- 110 children started day schools
- 22 Sabbath Schools were run by ECM
- 506 children attended ECM Sabbath Schools.

As the missionaries pressed on in their task of reaching people they unearthed the real state of the city; in parts it was given over to a decadence of shocking proportions – much to the horror of the churches that lived in a sort of religious ghetto, thinking the nation was “Christian”. The cry went out through ECM to shake the Church:

*“Oh! Professing Christians of Edinburgh, awake! No longer shut your eyes to this dismal state of things.”* (Annual Report: 1834 – 1835, p. 35)

The missionaries’ strategy seemed to be the one laid out by Jesus; they searched in their district for “a man of peace” and settled there, using that home as a base for reaching folk in the area. Many were indeed converted and transformed, but thousands were ignorant of the Gospel.

## **Drunkenness and Poverty**

Over and over again the reports tell of multitudes in abject poverty, usually caused by alcoholic addiction. The subhuman existence of people in these places was horrendous:

*“In looking over the names of those I have visited, I believe that one out of every five, is either much given over to intemperance (alcoholic addiction), or a confirmed drunkard.” (Ibid., p.37)*

*“When I went into the house, three of the children were lying on the floor, on a mattress, with scarcely anything to cover them, and all deeply afflicted with the loathsome disease (i.e. small pox); two of them were very ill, and one seemly dying. In a small closet on a wretched bed covered up with a few dirty rags, lay the body of the poor girl, who had died in the morning. I had seen her before, and a very blooming young person she then was; she was fifteen years old, but so malignant had been the disease, and so awfully brutal the treatment to which she had been exposed, that it was difficult to recognise, in the black mass of corruption that remained, the body of a human being. The mother was drunk – most disgustingly drunk. The poor girl it seems had been in place, and had come home, in the fever, which generally precedes small pox. The wretched parents made her lie on the floor, and the father kicked her, - kicked his dying child! The mother’s conduct was worse still, - but let darkness cover it.” (Ibid., p. 42)*

But good news was coming out of these hell-holes; stories of lives transformed by Christ’s love and power:

*“Visited the reformed drunkard mentioned a few days ago; I scarcely knew either the house or the children. The change is indeed wonderful – everything in the house is now scrupulously clean, and in its proper place. Everything before, was confused, filthy and abominable. When I went in, the eldest girl was preparing a substantial dinner; and the former gownless, ragged, wretched mother, was sitting at a table decently clothed, and making herself a new gown! The whole appearance of the family equally surprised and delighted me. ‘Great and marvellous are all thy works, Lord God Almighty.’ What pleased me most of all, was the quiet and humble deportment of the poor woman herself. She did not seem at all to expect praise, or to court condemnation, but with tears she remarked that she was now quite ashamed of her former conduct. She then proceeded to give the most horrifying description of the evils of intemperance, that I have ever listened to; and then she spoke (and it was delightful to hear her) of having won back the affections of her husband, and the confidence of her children – some of whom are grown up. A pale and sickly-looking young person was sitting in the corner of the room sewing. When I looked towards her, she turned aside her face. I thought who it might be, and spoke kindly to the poor wanderer, which seemed to*

*melt the mother more than anything. It may be in the recollection of some readers of this journal, that about a year ago, I made mention of a woman coming into one of the meetings in a state of intoxication, and bawling out with fiendish glee, that she had a daughter on the street. Dear readers! This is the woman, and this is her daughter. So soon as the mother came to herself, she went in search of her erring child, whom she found, and now watches over with a mother's care.” (Ibid., p.44)*

## **The Stirring of the Churches**

By 1839 the churches were well aware of what God was doing through ECM, as it spearheaded outreach in the city:

*“In regard, indeed to the whole operations of the Mission, its indirect effects are at least equal to all the other good which it produces. Of these the most important is, that a missionary spirit has been excited in the city.” (Annual Report: 1838 – 1839, p.11)*

Stirred by the example of ECM, churches and individuals set up missions and supported their missionaries, so that, including ECM workers, there were 30 in the field by 1839, whereas before ECM there were only about three (Ibid.)

The fear of God seemed to accompany ECM workers as they sought people for the Lord in the dens of iniquity:

*“A sight of the missionary is not unfrequently sufficient to quell a riotous brawl, and induce the guilty wretches to rush into their lurking places, and, when he comes in close contact with them, conscience frequently operates so powerfully, as to induce them to admit the truth that condemns themselves.” (Ibid., p. 56)*

A spiritual breakthrough was coming to Edinburgh:

*“During the past year the people of God have been aroused from lethargy.....Sinners in numbers, not like the gleanings of the vintage, but like the firstfruits of a coming and abundant harvest, have been made to cry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ And many have been added to the Lord.” (Ibid., p.71)*

## **The First Revival: 1841 – 1843**

The first wave of revival and awakening hit Edinburgh in 1841. The **Shelter**, in the Grassmarket, had been set up by some Christian ladies in 1840, for the purpose of providing a rehab house for young women who had been involved in crime and prostitution. ECM missionaries were invited to preach there on a rota basis. One of them reported:

*“As I formerly stated, there has been for some time past a considerable awakening among the inmates of this institution with regard to their souls. I held a meeting with them this evening and addressed them from Matthew xiii. 45, 46, ‘The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price went and sold all that he had and bought it.’ Not only did an extraordinary deep feeling pervade the meeting, but it might be termed what Scripture calls a Bochim, a place of weeping; many of them wept nearly all the time of the address, and a number of them cried aloud; however I was enabled to get through without my mind being much embarrassed, and I scarcely ever felt more liberty and enlargement of heart. After the exercises were over, a young girl, apparently about fourteen years of age, came to me weeping, and earnestly desired me to go and visit her parents – I said, “My young friend, what must I say to them?” She replied, “They are not religious, and I wish you to speak to them about their souls, and about Christ,” but she had much difficulty in telling me this for weeping.” (Annual Report: 1842 – 1843: p.10)*

Another wrote: *“In the evening, the place is generally crowded with the poor, the ragged, the unwashed, and the miserable, who listen with deep attention and tearful eyes to the truths presented before them.” (Annual Report: 1844 – 1845: p.19)*

By 1848, 19 of the 30 districts in Edinburgh were covered by 25 ECM missionaries. Five of them worked in the High St. and Canongate; four in the southern part of the city; one in the western; one in Stockbridge; one in Greenside; one in Catherine St.; one in Joppa and Portobello, and others elsewhere. Some of the missionaries were financed by ECM; others were supported privately, but Nasmith’s vision to spearhead a united evangelical city-wide mission was becoming a reality.

The 1853 Annual report mentions ministries that had emerged, apart from the main district work. Mother’s Meetings had been set up, as had Subsaving Banks to help the poor to budget effectively. A missionary was also appointed to the City Police. By 1856 Open Air outreaches were

underway and Church ministers joined the ECM missionaries in preaching the Gospel in the Meadows, Queens Park, the Pleasance and in other places:

*“.....the audiences were usually very large and exceedingly attentive. From 10,000 to 12,000 tracts were distributed on these occasions.”*  
(Annual Report: 1856: p. 21)

ECM ran outreach meetings in the Victoria Lodge in the Cowgate and Merchant St., in the Metropolitan Lodging House in the Grassmarket, in the Female Industrial Home in Corstorphine, and in the Shelter (Grassmarket).

Besides this, loan libraries were set up by ECM in all 30 of the districts, which greatly helped the process of educating the masses and hundreds of children were encouraged to attend day schools, as well as Sabbath Schools.

Some Missionaries, to combat the influence of Atheism on the men, set up public lectures on science related subjects, in order to educate people, with a view to eventually bringing them to Christ:

*“Sometimes a Missionary finds it useful to invite the more intelligent working men in his district to explore with him the volume of nature, as well as the volume of revelation, by the aid of the telescope; microscope, or other scientific instruments, and especially by lectures and conversational meetings on interesting and important subjects of general information, which are treated as naturally to present the truth as it is in Jesus in all its grandeur and attractiveness.....Short lectures on Geology, Astronomy, Zoology, and History have been delivered by the Missionary....the object of these meetings was to combine science and religion.”* (Annual Report 1856: p.20, and 1857: p.23)

### **The Great Revival: 1859 – 1861**

In 1859 Christians were stirred to pour out their hearts in united prayer across the city, and God answered them with a deep revival:

*“A spirit of fervent prayer and of earnest ‘waiting for the promise of the Spirit’, has of late years pervaded, in a remarkable manner, many of the churches in town, and has found the means at once of its expression and its maintenance, in the Union Prayer Meeting, held in Queen St. Hall,*

*and in similar devotional services conducted elsewhere.” (Annual Report: 1859: p.18)*

An outbreak of God’s Spirit in Pilrig School, Leith, led to a deep conviction of sin and salvation to many of the pupils there. This resulted in a movement which spread throughout the city, particularly in the Old Town and Newhaven, and which centred around Carrubbers Close Mission on the High Street. This had formerly been called the Whitefield Chapel, but had become run down, and had ended up having the infamous *Celebrated Cathedral of the Prince of Darkness*, an atheist society, running there, before Christians re-consecrated it and renamed it Carrubbers Close Mission. Indeed, ECM worked *“in unison with that of those friends, chiefly from Carrubbers Close, who have of late years conducted so many devotional and evangelistic meetings in and around Edinburgh, and in whose success they have shared.”* (Annual Report: 1861: p.15)

We read in the ECM reports about the revival that centred on this (non-ECM) building, sweeping into the Missionaries work:

*“...Multitudes who would formerly have resented any direct inquiry respecting their state before God, began eagerly to court opportunities of being conversed with on this topic, and some would follow the missionary to his house, or accompany him in a walk to the country, pressing, in various forms, the momentous inquiry, ‘What must I do to be saved?’* (Ibid)

Another Missionary wrote:

*“There has been a great stir among the young people of the district, some of whom are wonderfully changed in spirit and deportment. Every evening they come to the meeting, or the class, seeking for Jesus.”* (Ibid., p.19)

In this time of abundant harvest we are told: *“Many institutions are happily in operation, all more or less directly subsidiary to the great objects of the gospel ministry: the Bible Society; the Religious Tract and Book Society; the “Monthly Visitor” Society; City, Country and Coast Missions; Sabbath Schools; Industrial Schools, Temperance Societies and Savings Banks; Refuges, Reformatories, and Hospitals; the Destitute Sick Society; the Societies for supplying the poor with cheap coals, clothing, meal, and bread; and to these may now be added the Society for teaching the Blind to read.”* (Ibid., p.24)

The huge harvest of seeking souls was caught in this unified evangelical network and the 1860 Report joyously recounts it:

*“In the words of the recent ‘Call to United Prayer’, ‘There is a visible moving of the dry bones in this great valley of the dead....one reaper after another has been sent to us, and each has found his own field white for the harvest. As the fruit of a manifold agency, coarse and reckless men have become as little children entering the Kingdom; harlots have returned into the bosom of their wondering families, testifying of Jesus; the self-righteous and the secure are asking with burdened hearts, ‘What shall I do to be saved?’” (p.14)*

### **Thirty Years On: 1864**

ECM celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary with this glowing report:

*“When the Edinburgh City Mission was formed, not one congregation in the city was known to employ and support a missionary; there are now at least forty congregations in town that have a salaried missionary agent, daily engaged in evangelistic work in some part of the city. Some years before the establishment of the City Mission, there had been as many as eight or ten individuals appointed to give more or less time to the reclaiming of spiritual wanderers or outcasts in various parts of Edinburgh. But there had been such lack, either of sympathy and support on the one hand, or of method and efficiency on the other, that by the time the founders of the City Mission met, the number of these earlier agents had been reduced to three or four, who were with difficulty feeling their way through a few of the more destitute localities. There are now not fewer than.... a grand total of 96.” (30 with ECM) (p.12)*

### **The Peak Years and the Moody Revival: 1865 - 1900**

In 1865 ECM moved its HQ from the High Street (first 375 High St., then 126 High St.) to 5 St. Andrews Square and in this period the number of missionaries either being salaried by ECM, or working in conjunction with it, grew to **33**, which was the highest number on record. By 1875 there was a combined **130** missionary workforce across the city united by its common goal – the salvation of Edinburgh in a population of 200,000 (Annual Report: 1875: p.11). In 1870 we discover that *“public interest in City Missions was never greater than it is now.”* (Annual Report: 1870: p.10)

ECM produced its first advert in 1869, which read:

*“Special Services Rendered by City Missionaries:  
CHILDREN sent to ordinary Day and Sabbath Schools, or according to  
circumstances, to Ragged Schools and Reformatories.  
SITUATIONS found for young persons of both sexes  
BIBLES and other books and tracts circulated  
LENDING LIBRARIES established in the Mission districts  
POPULAR LECTURES given on interesting and useful subjects  
CLASSES for Mutual Improvement formed or encouraged  
PENNY SAVINGS BANKS, Mother’s Meetings, and Bands of Hope  
promoted  
DRUNKARDS reclaimed; Fallen Women sent to Reformatories  
Large LODGING HOUSES, Night Asylums, Hospitals and Police Cells  
are specially visited  
DISTRICT MEETINGS held for Reading the Scriptures, simple exposition  
and prayer  
THE SICK AND DYING visited, funerals attended, and assistance and  
advice given to benevolent persons and societies in the distribution of  
cheap coals, meal and bread etc.”*

The year after that we read of ECM missionaries to the blind (250 blind people in Edinburgh), to the elderly men, to the Cabmen, Police Force, Fallen Women (women missionaries appointed to the Prostitutes), and to the soldiers (Annual Report: 1870: p.10).

In 1873 **Moody and Sankey** from America hit Edinburgh like a whirlwind. Horatius Bonar, the hymn writer and former minister of St. Catherine’s Argyll, reckoned that almost every home in the city had been affected by this revival. The previous waves of blessing in the city had prepared people for this huge current that swept through the population, converting thousands to Christ. We hear about the deep impact from ECM:

*“By far the most important circumstance connected with the history of the City Mission for the past year, probably the most important during the whole period of its past existence, is the religious awakening by which the community has been, and still is, moved, chiefly through the influence of the work of Messrs. Moody and Sankey.”* (Annual Report: 1873: p.13)

One ECM missionary said: *“I have seen more of the Lord’s mighty doings during the past three months than I expected to see in this life...Nearly a hundred persons have met around our tea-table for*

*converse and Bible instruction, nearly all of whom profess to have got pardon through faith in Jesus.” (Ibid., p. 14 – 15)*

### **The Influence of ECM on the City Authorities**

God gave a promise to Abraham: “....*I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.*” (Genesis 22: 17 – 18)

Who would have thought that God’s vision through David Nasmyth would prepare the way here for such a massive breakthrough, that in turn would release thousands of missionaries trained here in the Bible colleges of Edinburgh to impact the world, bringing in millions of people for God’s Kingdom, the effects of which are still reverberating around the world in such places as Africa and China? Who would have thought that through that vision and little gathering of men in 375 High St., the Lord would have opened up the way eventually for Christianity to transform our nation through men in “the gates” or places of influence and policy making in Edinburgh? No wonder Scotland became known as the “Land of the Book” as these movements were added to the rich Christian history of the Reformation and Covenanters.

ECM had already appointed a team of Directors to run the Mission back in 1832, and a team of “Extraordinary Directors” was appointed in an advisory capacity in 1886. Their names reads like a “Who’s Who” in Edinburgh, showing the high regard that people had for ECM. In the Period between 1832 and 1970 the following men were either Directors, Extraordinary Directors, Examiners or Supporters, especially at the Annual Meetings. Some of these are listed below:

Rev Dr. D.T.K. Drummond (Director and founder of St. Thomas, a church through which have come the present day congregations of P’s and G’s and Emmanuel)

Rev Dr. David Dickson

Rev Dr. John Brown

Rev Daniel Bagot A.M.

Lord Provost, Adam Black (his statue is in Princes Gardens)

Charles Cown M.P.

Colonel George Cadell

Sheriff Graham Speirs

Lord Provost, the Duke of Argyll

Rev Dr. Guthrie (founder of the Ragged Schools)  
Rev Professor Thomas Chalmers (first Moderator of the Free Church of Scotland)  
Principal Dr. Cunningham  
Lord Provost, Adam Black M.P.  
Very Rev Dean Montgomery (Bishop of Edinburgh)  
Sir William Muir (Principal of the University of Edinburgh)  
Rev Professor Blaikie (Moderator of Free Church)  
Major General Nepean Smith  
Colonel A. G. Young  
Sir Archibald Campbell  
Professor Sir T. Grainger Stewart (Head Surgeon)  
Earl of Moray  
Councillor R.A. Douglas  
Councillor John Laing  
Councillor Neil McLeod  
Bailie Martin (Head of Public Health)  
Judge John Pitcairn  
Sir Allan Colquhoun J.P.  
Sheriff Orr K.C.  
Sir Colin Macrae  
Sir Andrew Frazer  
Judge John Laing  
Bailie Richardson  
Bailie Pollard (he was the ECM Director who, by using our records, put pressure on Government to reform sanitary conditions in Edinburgh, Annual Report 1896)  
Lord Alness  
Lord Polwarth  
Lord Sands  
Sir John Cowan  
Rt. Hon. Robert Munro K.C.  
Lord Provost Inches  
Judge William Baird  
Rev. Dr. Graham Scroggie  
Bailie Rev. Dr. A.D. Sloan  
Rt. Rev Professor Hugh R. Mackintosh (Moderator of the Church of Scotland)  
Rev Dr. D.E. Hart-Davies  
Hon. Lord Wark  
Professor Sir John Frazer  
Rt. Rev Professor David Lamont (Moderator of the C of S)  
Rt. Rev Dr. James M. Black (Moderator of the Free Church)

Principal D.W. Lambert (Faith Mission)  
 Rev Professor Allan Barr (Moderator of the UF Church)  
 Lord Guthrie  
 Sir John Falconer  
 Lord Cooper  
 Earl of Southesk  
 Lady Stuart  
 Rev Dr. Dr. Whitley (St. Giles Cathedral)  
 Very Rev Charles L. Warr (St. Giles Cathedral)  
 Lord Provost, Alexander Stevenson  
 Rt. Rev Dr. Leonard Small  
 Judge W. R. Hall O.B.E.  
 Rt. Rev Professor Thomas F. Torrance M.B.E.  
 Rev Derek Prime (Charlotte Chapel)  
 Rev Colin Peckham (Faith Mission)

It was because God's vehicle of ECM had such an impact on Edinburgh that the Church, Council and Government had great respect and support for its work, bringing about a lasting transformation.

Here are some of the comments made by the City's leaders:

*"I am therefore glad to find that, in the operations of the City Mission, this principle (i.e. of having missionaries attached to 30 districts in the City) has been so far proceeded on, and should rejoice if, by the extension of your resources, you were enabled to carry it forward even till you have reached the desirable consummation."* **Professor Dr.**

**Thomas Chalmers, First Moderator of the Free Church,** ( from his letter addressed to the first Annual Meeting, Jan 30<sup>th</sup>, 1846, in the Music Hall, George St., Annual Report: 1846: p.12)

*"I approve of this society exceedingly, in one respect, especially, that it employs lay missionaries .....I rejoice.....in the unsectarian character of this society....."* **Lord Provost, the Duke of Argyll** (Annual Meeting, Music Hall, Dec 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1850, Annual Report: 1850: p.7 – 8)

*"....(the churches) felt the reproof the City Mission addressed to them, and followed the example it set them."* **Dr. Guthrie, Founder of the Ragged Schools** (Annual Meeting, 1866, Annual Report: 1895: p.10)

*"There is no Society that more deserves the support and the thanks of the Community than the Edinburgh City Mission."* **Lord Provost, W.S. Brown** (Annual Meeting, Dec 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1909, Annual Report: 1909: p.3)

*“I believe in the City Mission.....the old Gospel is not worn out. People who doubt it should come and make the acquaintance of this Society. There is broken earthenware being repaired in Edinburgh, and instead of remaining a curse to society, these become good husbands and fathers, and useful members of the community.”* **Sheriff R.L. Orr K.C.** (Annual Meeting, Dec 19<sup>th</sup>, 1911, Annual Report: 1911: p.3)

*“This work has the warm approval of the City Authorities.”* **Lord Provost, Inches** (Annual Meeting, Dec 16<sup>th</sup>, 1915, Annual Report: 1915: p.6)

*“There is a fine spirit in the Mission, and it is just the Spirit of Christ.”* **Rt. Rev Dr. Norman Maclean, Moderator of the Church of Scotland** (Annual Report, 1927: p.8)

*“This Mission exists for the bringing of souls to Jesus Christ.”* **Bailie The Rev Dr. A.D. Sloan** (Annual Meeting, March 20<sup>th</sup>, 1933)

*“There is no more valuable work done by any other agency in the City.”* **Hon. Lord Wark, High Court Judge** (Annual Meeting, March 19<sup>th</sup>, 1934, Annual Report, 1934: p.....)

*“The City Mission is doing a great work.”* **Bailie George D. Brown, City Treasurer** (Annual Meeting, March 16<sup>th</sup>, 1937)

*“The Edinburgh City Mission is.....repeating the authentic spirit of Jesus Christ.”* **Rt. Rev. Professor Daniel Lamont D.D., Moderator of the Church of Scotland** (Ibid)

*“We honour the Edinburgh City Mission, its workers, its ideals, its achievements...for it is a daily evidence of the Divine Command that we should love one another.”* **Professor Sir John Frazer, K.C.V.O, M.D., F.R.C.S.** (Annual Meeting, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1938)

*“City Missions are indeed no longer upon their trial, their value having been proved and acknowledged for many years past....as Lord Shaftesbury remarked, Glasgow, to which we might add Edinburgh – puts London fairly to shame.”* **North British Daily Mail** (Annual Report, 1873: p.12)

This is an extraordinary statement when we consider the previous paragraph had been a quotation from Lord Shaftesbury, who says that he, the former Prime Minister of France (M. Guizot) and Sir George Grey, all agreed that Christianity in London, particularly through the work of London City Mission, had held back the Revolution of 1848 that swept through Europe. The state that ECM “puts London fairly to shame”, is indeed a sign of the national love and respect we had in those days.

The quotations of Lord Shaftesbury, who gave a speech at Wemyss Bay in the autumn of 1874, are recorded below:

*““Were it not,” says his Lordship, “for the London City Mission, and other kindred associations, I really know not what would be the condition of the metropolis of London. But I am certain of this, that if God had not put it into the heart of excellent men like David Nasmyth, of whom all Scotsmen may well boast, some five and thirty years ago, to found and carry on the London City Mission, and kindred institutions, the metropolis of London, and a very large proportion of the empire of Great Britain would have been totally uninhabitable by anyone who pretended to civilization, morality and religion.....I remember the great Revolution of 1848, when, as you know, every throne was in the dust....I remember, after that day, talking with M. Guizot, who had been Prime Minister of France, when he said, “I will tell you what saved your empire. It was not your constables; it was not your army; it was not your ministers, it was the deep, solemn, religious atmosphere.....it is the religion of England that saved the empire of Great Britain.” He was right.....Sir George Grey said to me “I am satisfied, as Secretary of State, that London could not have been kept in order, had not the state of mind been prepared by the operations of associations such as these.”* **Lord Shaftesbury** (Speech of Earl of Shaftesbury at Wemyss Bay, autumn, 1874, ECM Annual Report, 1874: p. 11 – 12)

## **1900 - 2000**

The 1898 Report concluded that *“Multitudes have been lifted out of the degradation into which they had fallen, and larger numbers have been prevented from falling.”* (p.10) It had been a glorious time of harvesting; particularly between the years 1840 and 1880. Now ECM and Edinburgh were entering a new century. What would it be like?

By now ECM had become very well-known and respected in the City and other missions put themselves under its supervision. Both Niddrie Mission and the Grassmarket Mission did this. ECM had spread its influence throughout the City, being called upon to help with all sorts of things. Extraordinary ministries, such as the *Children’s Fortnightly Holiday Fund*, had been set up under Mrs. Stirling Boyd, which allowed 2,000 children to go on holidays from 1895.

A Parish Nurse had been appointed by ECM to minister to the miners’ families in Craighall on the Niddrie estate, and ECM took on the

Coalmen's Mission. In 1907 there were six District Missionaries: two in Canongate; one in Dumbiedykes; one in Meadowbank; one in Arthur St., (1886, where HQ is today) and in Fountainbridge. Missionaries were appointed to the Public Houses (1892) and Breweries (1887), to the Cabmen (1856), Police Cells (1852) and Police Force (1861), Lodging Houses (1895?) and Fallen Women (1860).

In 1908 we see a photo of a missionary with a horse pulling his mobile tea and coffee wagon for his street outreach to the cabmen. The next year ECM and Evangelization Society joined forces to hold Tent Meetings in the Cowgate and in Canongate, with much success. Kitchen Meetings, or evangelistic dinner parties, became popular from about 1910, although Missionaries had been doing this informally for many years before then.

We still hear of effective evangelism, and particularly in the Mission Halls. For example, in 1913 we read that 33 people were converted one evening in the Canongate Hall: *".....every night saw wonderful miracles of grace.....Every night souls surrendered. Fourteen of these live in my district, and are all going on splendidly."* (Annual Report 1913: p.4 and 6) In that same year ECM also opened up a rehab home for 12 men at 6, Drummond St.

### **The War Years: 1914 – 1945**

Amidst the carnage of the First World War, the ECM workers were kept very busy, counselling and encouraging many who had lost loved ones. The 1915 Report says: *"Never before have our City Missionaries won and held the confidence of the people to a greater degree than now amidst the widespread sorrow and anxiety consequent upon the war."* (p. 1)

*"The Missionary in his daily round of visits has to lead sorrow-stricken ones into the deep heart of things – to the God of all comfort and compassion."* (p.7)

### **Mission Halls Run by ECM**

By 1928 six Mission Halls were run fully by ECM. They were:

1. Galloway's Entry: 53 Canongate (since 1855)
2. Little Lochend Close: 115 Canongate
3. Comely Green: 9 Comely Green Place
4. Dumbiedykes: 47 St. Leonard's Hill

5. Broughton: Logie Green Rd.
6. Free Buccleuch and Greyfriars Church Hall: 24 West Crosscauseway.

Besides these, Halls at Niddrie and St. Andrews (Leith) were used greatly by ECM workers.

The Halls were full to breaking point, to such an extent, that people sometimes had to be carried out because of the stuffiness in summer! The 1934 Report estimates that about **4,000 people** met in the six Halls each week for a multitude of different meetings. Whilst the preaching of the Gospel remained the main thrust of ECM, we also notice the practical care of those Missionaries to the poor and needy. The 1934 Report relates that they provided:

- *100 tons of coal*
- *820 parcels of groceries*
- *353 pairs of boots and shoes for boys and girls*
- *36 hot water bottles for the old and infirm folk*
- *milk and nourishing food for children.* (p.4)

In 1935 a police station was converted into Abbeyhill Mission Hall, and the old Galloway Entry Mission Hall was replaced by this premises because of its larger space.

ECM listed seven Mission Halls during this period and Missionaries were working with the Transport Men, Cabmen and Taximen, Lodging Houses, Burgh Court (Police Cells), Districts, Benevolent Fund and Open Air Meetings. Since the end of the nineteenth century, **music outreach** had become popular, both in the open air meetings, whether in the smaller gatherings in the courts and closes off the Royal Mile, or at the big gatherings with other churches, or in the Mission Halls.

In 1939 the **Second World War** broke out. Again the nation went through a deep crisis; again ECM was there for the multitudes who grieved and suffered. A Mission Hall at Jane St., Leith also opened up for ECM during this year, as the work carried on moving forward.

### **Post War Years and into the Swinging Sixties**

In 1958 effective work began in the Inch, meetings being held in a primary school, and much District Work was done to reach the locals.

Hospital visitation was blessed by God in an extraordinary way, as many elderly people gave their hearts to the Lord Jesus. One ECM Missionary says: “.....in *Queensberry House*, where we have seen many of the elderly people accept the Lord Jesus as their own personal Saviour.” (Annual Report: 1959: p.6)

And again: “*Many pages could be filled with the accounts of other hospital patients converted during the year.*” (Annual Report: 1963: p.7)

“*One glorious afternoon no less than five patients came to the Lord.....*” (Annual Report: 1965: p.5)

It was also a very fruitful time amongst the children. One Missionary rejoiced with a revival amongst them at a Summer Camp:

*“It is difficult to describe God’s moving that week amongst the children. For most of us it was something new to see children weeping under deep conviction of sin, and whole dormitories being moved as the Spirit of God came upon them. Children who were already Christians knelt in small groups and prayed for their friends. Praise God for this mighty working, and pray that the boys and girls, 113, in all, who accepted the Lord Jesus, may be protected from the evil one.”* (Annual Report: 1959: p.7)

We read of the Halls overflowing with children and of the Mission in Burdiehouse in 1965, with 160 present on average every night. “*Many hundreds of children are being reached for Christ each week,*” wrote a Missionary, and in the Inch, 500 – 600 children heard the Gospel in a three day outreach (p.9).

A highlight of the 60s was Billy Graham’s Edinburgh Christian Crusade at the Usher Hall in 1966. The meetings were “*sometimes overcrowded*”, and “*literally hundreds of people, young and old, (were) coming to a knowledge of Christ.*” (p.4)

However, despite the obvious successes with the elderly in the hospitals, and with the children, and with the Crusade, the Church began to realize that morality and indifference to the Gospel were beginning to spread in Edinburgh. The 1961 Report shares some of this reality:

*“Twenty thousand people have volunteered to be shot into space, and the reason most of them give is – boredom. Suicides, crime, divorce, and road accidents continue to break all previous records. The optimism of*

*thirty years ago has given place to serious apprehension and gloom in spite of the fact that materially “we’ve never had it so good”.*

*Hundreds of millions of pounds are spent annually on drink, nicotine and gambling, and now the authorities are thinking seriously of putting the clock back a hundred years by re-opening the public houses on Sundays. Mankind is sick, and the Gospel is the only remedy.” (p.3)*

In 1968, **The Inch Mission Hall** was opened, and an address was given by Rev. Professor G.N.M. Collins, of Free Church College, and by Rev. Philip Hacking, of St. Thomas, a church which had closely supported ECM since 1842. In the same year, Rev. “Charlie” Main was appointed to visit the **G.P.O. Sorting Office**, in connection with the Post Office Christian Association.

### **The Modern Age: 1970 – 2007**

In 1970 there were only *four Missionaries* left running five Mission Halls (Abbeyhill; Dumbiedykes; Broughton; Hay Drive and The Inch), and reaching the Special Classes of Hospitals and Eventide Homes (Retirement Homes), Lodging Houses and Prisons, the Post Office and Transport Men. Without having some good, faithful volunteers, it would have been impossible!

In this period we start to see the numbers of people at Mission Halls being depleted. One ministry, in Dumbiedykes, had done a sterling work for years but we learn:

*“The shift of population from the older districts of the City has depleted attendances at some of the halls and a clearance has been placed on the St. Leonard’s Hill Hall. It also becomes increasingly difficult to persuade non-Christians to attend meetings.....” (Annual Report: 1970: p.3)*

*“The attendances at Logie Green Road.....are small.”*

*“The only meeting now held at Comely Green Place is the Sunday School.” (Ibid., p.5)*

The immoral landslide in Britain becomes really noticeable from now onwards: *“The moral corruption in Britain has reached proportions, which ten years ago would have been unthinkable, but so far there is little sign of any reversal of the trend, or recognition of the cause of our troubles.” (Annual Report: 1972: p.3)*

In 1974 the Missionaries start to write about being subject to much abuse by the gangs of youth, and of repeated vandalism of their Halls, particularly at Niddrie. However, a new initiative was opened up – an **ECM outreach café**, which ran very effectively, as a spiritual oasis for about 20 years (in 1981 it became the *Mission Cellar*, a shop for second hand clothes).

On 19<sup>th</sup> October, 1978, the Gorgie Railway Mission (formerly the Gorgie Gospel Hall) was handed over to ECM for outreach into that community, and in 1980 we read that the following ministries were operating:

*Gorgie Mission Hall: David McFarlane*

*Inch Mission Hall: William Chalmers (alias Bill Chalmers, who had joined ECM in 1976!)*

*Niddrie Mission Hall: Alex Dunbar (General Superintendent of ECM)*

*Assistant: Derek Laidlaw (husband of Ann, ECM secretary, appointed in 1975!)*

*Outreach Café: Mrs. Cattenach*

*Dumbiedykes Mission Hall: William Esslement (honorary)*

*P.O. and Transport: Alfred Gamble*

*Prisons: Vacant*

*Hospitals and Nursing: Mrs. Long (honorary)*

*Homes and Eventide Homes: Vacant*

## **All Change**

A growing God-given desire seemed to grip the hearts of a number of Christians for an outreach to begin on the new West Pilton estate, and so, a new Missionary, W. Bullin, was appointed there in 1981 to visit homes. The work became effective and the **West Pilton Christian Centre** was opened on the estate in May, 1983. The year before, on 27<sup>th</sup> November, St. Andrew's Hall (formerly known as the Market Hall Mission in 1886), on Arthur St., was officially handed over to ECM and opened up for ministry the following year, particularly as a drop-in.

The next year (1984) ECM bought its present HQ building, 9 Pilrig St., conveniently placed next to St. Andrew's Hall (now known as the Pilrig Centre). The ECM HQ had begun, in 1832, in 375 High St., after which it moved to 126 High St (1840), and then to 5 St. Andrews Square (1842), followed by a move to 6 York Place(????). In 1964 the *Monthly Visitor Tract Society*, which had been founded by David Nasmith, sadly came to an end. ECM was offered the building as its HQ at a low cost, provided it

maintained the vision to propagate **Christian literature** throughout Edinburgh, a task which ECM was delighted to honour. Thus the keys to the building at 122 Thirlestone Rd. were handed over to ECM

The year 1984 was marked by many trials for the Missionaries, several had severe health issues, and vandalism on property was especially bad, but by now there were six Mission Halls: *Gorgie; the Inch; Niddrie; St. Andrew's; Dumbiedykes and West Pilton Christian Centre*. In that same year, Billy McGillivray was appointed to assist Bill Bullin at the West Pilton Christian Centre.

In 1986 Bill Chalmers saw at least ten come to Christ at the Inch Hall during the *There is Hope Campaign*. He said: "*Few things can be more exciting than three generations of one family coming to faith in Christ Jesus in a matter of weeks.*" (p.13) This campaign was a reminder to ECM of its early pioneering days in which it led the churches in City-wide evangelism. In this case there were 30 churches involved in the outreach. There were many evangelism items during those weeks, including the use of films like *Cross and the Switchblade* and *Thief in the Night*, which captivated large audiences. A team of 15 young Christians from YWAM (Youth With A Mission) also came to help with evangelism, drama and music, and camped in the Inch.

During this year (1986) the Dumbiedykes Mission Hall, because it was not working well, as in former days, because of the changing population, was turned into a Care Shelter for the homeless, and re-named *St. Leonard's Hostel*. They could come in and find food and clothing, and during the winter nights a team catered for them in the building. This eventually became the **Care Shelter**, a project run by *Bethany Christian Trust*, which organizes 35 churches to run a rota system for the homeless during the cold winter nights.

In 1988 *Operation Outreach* was born. The vision behind this was to have 6 students who would take a year out to come and work alongside the Missionaries, whilst also having seminars and training at HQ. This became known as *Streetlevel*. They would be put up by Christians and would have to be sponsored. In 1990 there were four students doing the programme, but sadly it fizzled out a few years later.

But another exciting ministry opened up: **Crossline**. When the Exorcist film was shown in the 1970s, many people became anxious about occult things, and a Christian counselling unit was set up in England, called

Crossline. This came to incorporate general counselling for people. Ian McNeill was appointed to set up a branch here in Edinburgh at ECM HQ.

Bill Chalmers had an old caravan, which he decided to use for the work amongst the homeless. The idea was to have a mobile unit fitted up with facilities for hot drinks to serve them by Waverley Station throughout the year. And so, he and a team, started up what was called *CareCaravan* (1991). Bethany Christian Trust joined in with the work, and a Van was bought, and the name changed to the **CareVan** (1996). Many churches in the City now share in this project on a rota basis, and it is jointly run by ECM and Bethany.

In 1996 John Hopper was appointed to reach the workers in the Ports and Lothian Buses, whilst Ken McLean was attached to the Royal Mail. Four years later, to celebrate the Millennium, ECM was involved in the *Jesus Millennium Project*, which involved working with Christians across the City, offering the *Jesus Video* to hundreds of people, in a city that was becoming increasingly ignorant about the Gospel.

### **New Age and Paganism**

Since the 1960s Edinburgh had witnessed the steady rise of the occult and New Age. Bill McGillivray wrote in 1991: *“There is an increasing number of folk coming for help as a result of supernatural happenings, either to them as individuals, or in their homes. Usually this is brought about by them having been to Spiritualists or being involved in New Age religion or Occult practices.”* (Annual Report: 1991: p.9)

In 2004 Paul James-Griffiths transferred from working with London City Mission to join ECM, and was given the broad remit of ***Street Outreach***. This included training Christian teams and leading them in outreach at New Age Festivals, and at the huge Pagan Festivals, supported by the Council, such as Beltane Fire Festival and Samhuinn (Halloween), in which as many as 12,000 can gather to celebrate Pagan fertility rites, which would have been recognizable by St. Columba when he came to Scotland in AD 563.

It has also meant outreach to the students at Edinburgh University, which today has become an atheist stronghold. Evangelism takes place through such events as *Edinburgh Creation Group*. The intention is to seek to dismantle humanistic evolution and replace it with God’s Gospel and values, by using Christian PhD scientists, and others. The old-fashioned

“hot drinks on cold days” outreach outside the University library also takes place during term-time.

Both *Eternity*, a Christian outreach chamber music group (led by Isolde James-Griffiths), and the *Celtic Tour*, a Christian walking tour on the Royal Mile, hosted by “St. Cuthbert” and “John Knox”, seek to bring out our rich Christian heritage through the Arts, to communicate the Gospel. Outreach during the huge *Edinburgh Festival*, in conjunction with *Shine* (an International YWAM outreach) also takes place every August.

**2007 and Beyond.....To be added.**