

WALLENSTEIN BIBLE CHAPEL
The First Thirty Years
1968 – 1998

Albert Martin

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Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to chronicle some of the blessings of God in the life of the congregation of Wallenstein Bible Chapel during the first thirty years.

Prologue

It was in the 1920's and 1930's that a number of individuals in the Hawkesville area discovered the same liberating truth that the Reformers had discovered some four hundred years earlier: that a person is brought into a right relationship with God by grace alone, through faith alone. Sometime in September of 1931, or possibly on the first Sunday of October, a number of the new believers met for the first time at the newly organized Hawkesville Gospel Mission in the home of Nathan Martin for Sunday School. Nathan's brother, Israel, taught the adults, while his sister, Susannah, taught the children. A year or two later Sunday evening preaching services were begun.

On Sunday morning, September 9, 1934, the small group met for their first public Breaking of Bread service. Although some of the details concerning the form of church government and practice remained to be worked out, this occasion marked the beginning of the Hawkesville/Wallenstein congregation. That afternoon, about fifteen believers were baptized in the Conestogo River, approximately one kilometre west of Wallenstein. The occasion attracted a crowd estimated at a thousand, the majority of whom were probably more inquisitive than supportive.

The number of believers continued to grow, and by 1939 it was evident that a larger meeting place was needed. A property at the corner of Geddes Street and Hawk Street, a few blocks from Nathan's house, was purchased and construction commenced in the fall. Dedication services for Hawkesville Gospel Hall were held on December 17, 1939.

On Saturday, September 7, 1946, the first annual Hawkesville Young People's Rally was held. In the beginning these Rallies were held on Saturday afternoon and evening only. Commencing in 1952, the Rallies were extended to include Saturday and Sunday. The name was eventually changed to the Annual Fall Rally because the young people of the 1940's were still involved, even after they had become

grandparents.

In the late 1940's, the Hawkesville assembly began holding Community Fireside meetings in the Elmira high school auditorium on one Sunday evening a month (except during the summer) In the early years these meetings started at 9:00 p.m. in order that pastors and music groups from the area churches could minister in the Fireside meeting after their own evening services. Sometime later the meetings were moved to John Mahood School and the starting time was changed to 8:00 p.m. The Fireside meetings continued until May, 1971.

By 1951 the Hawkesville congregation had again outgrown its facilities. In late 1951 and early 1952, the Gospel Hall was extended by twelve feet, increasing the seating capacity of the auditorium from 125 to 200.

In November, 1960, the name was changed to Hawkesville Bible Chapel. In January, 1961, Family Bible Hour was started. Prior to this there had been Sunday School classes for both adults and children at 9:30 a.m., followed by Breaking of Bread at 11:00 a.m. Bulletins were first published in March of 1961 on a monthly basis. Since July of 1970 they have been published weekly. The Sunday evening starting time was changed from 8:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. in May, 1961, and to 7:00 p.m. in September, 1996. Elders were first publicly recognized in the Hawkesville congregation in 1963.

The Elmira Community Drive-in Services were started in June of 1961 on the farm of Mel and Esther Weber on the Elmira by-pass, a few kilometres north-east of Hawkesville. These services were held each summer on Sunday evenings from about mid-June through August. The meetings were cancelled for the summer of 1980 because of highway construction on the by-pass; that fall a decision was made to discontinue them entirely.

In the fall of 1961, the young people from the six assemblies in Brantford, Gait, Guelph, Hawkesville, Stratford, and Waterloo began meeting monthly at one of the chapels for Christian Youth Fellowship Rallies. The first Rally was held on September 22, 1961, in Brantford; the speaker was Arnot McIntee. There were also social events such as car rallies, hay rides, skating parties, banquets, and picnics. The final function, held on December 18, 1971, was advertised as a "C.Y.F. Christmas Party at W.B.C., Cost 50 cents, (no dress-up)."

In the fall of 1962, the leadership at Hawkesville invited Allan and Joyce Weber, who were involved in various forms of Christian ministry on Prince Edward Island, to move to the Hawkesville area to do home visitation, in August, 1963, Allan returned home with Joyce, his P.E.I.-born wife, and their three children.

Allan, as a colporteur, began calling at homes in the Hawkesville area. In addition, Allan and the Hawkesville elders began going out in pairs, usually one evening a week, to visit people in the community who were seeking spiritual help. A number of home Bible studies were begun. As a result many people were added to the Hawkesville assembly over the next few years. By the fall of 1967 it was obvious that something had to be done in order to accommodate the growing numbers. The congregation was strongly in favour of erecting a larger building, preferably near Wallenstein. A building committee was appointed. The committee members were Noah Martin, Chairman; Amos Hoffman, Vice-Chairman; Urias Bauman, Urias Brubacher, Ezra Frey, Aaron Martin, and David M. Martin.

When Arthur Wilkinson was approached about selling a building site from the corner of his farm, one kilometre south of Wallenstein, he replied that if the new building was to be used for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then he wanted to donate the land. His generous offer was accepted, and title to a two-and-one-half-acre lot was transferred to the assembly. The sod-turning ceremony was held on March

30, 1968. A contractor, C. L. Martin & Co. Ltd. of Floradale, was hired, and by November of 1968 Wallenstein Bible Chapel was ready for occupancy. The new chapel had thirteen Sunday School classrooms and seating for 450 people in the main auditorium.

THE FIRST TEN YEARS

Dedication services for Wallenstein Bible Chapel were held on the weekend of November 9 and 10, 1968. The speakers were Allan Weber of Elmira, Sydney Hoffman of Agincourt, Frank Guthrie of Guelph, John Martin of Hawkesville, and Abner Bauman of Prospect Heights, Illinois. People came from far and near to celebrate this milestone in the life of the Hawkesville/Wallenstein congregation.

The elders at the time of the move to Wallenstein were Ezra Frey, Amos Hoffman, David Hoffman, Israel Hoffman, John Martin, Noah Martin, and Onias Weber. Urias Brubacher and David M. Martin joined them soon after the move.

The congregation grew immediately because a substantial number of people had been waiting for the move to the larger building.

After returning from a convention of the Christian Business Men's Committee International in Boston, Massachusetts, in October, 1968, the wives of some of the Elmira CBMC members, having a desire to minister to ladies, began meeting for prayer at the home of Erma (Gord) Gingrich in Elmira. Several of the ladies then visited a new outreach in Guelph called a "Ladies' Coffee Hour." Subsequently an interdenominational committee was formed, and Mary Ann (Edgar) Martin invited some thirty-five women to her home for the first Elmira area Ladies' Coffee Hour. Everyone who was invited came. The following month, forty-five ladies crowded into Mary Ann's big old farmhouse. More space was needed; the committee accepted an invitation to use the new chapel at Wallenstein. The numbers continued to grow, reaching 170 in October, 1978. In December of that year the ladies held the first Annual Coffee Hour Outreach Banquet to which the men also were invited. The speaker was William McRae.

In the spring of 1969, the Wallenstein Bible Chapel Youth Chorale made several trips to a recording studio in Mannheim, west of Kitchener, to cut an LP phonograph record entitled "Make a Joyful Sound." The conductor was Barry Daniels and the pianist was Dianne Daniels.

In 1971 Sunday evening outreach meetings were held in Moorefield. These meetings, which had been slated to run from January through March, were extended to June 13. On the following Sunday evening the first Drayton Drive-in Service was held on the farm of John and Marie Wassink west of Drayton. An old railway caboose, the "Gospel Train," served as a platform. These services continued each summer until the end of August, 1978.

In the fall of 1971, Wallenstein held Sunday evening outreach meetings at the United Church in Goldstone.

In November of 1971, a number of individuals from Wallenstein participated in Crusade '71 with evangelist Terry Winter and soloist Homer James. The crusade, held at the K-W Collegiate Institute auditorium in Kitchener, was sponsored by several assemblies in the Kitchener-Waterloo area.

In 1971, at the conclusion of his eighth summer at Graphite Bible Camp in Eastern Ontario, John Martin submitted his resignation to the camp. His two youngest sons, Murray and Neil, suggested that he should start a camp closer to home, assuring him that he was good for at least another ten years of camp work. Around this time John heard of two others in the Wallenstein assembly, Abner Frey and Cleason Weber, who shared his burden of starting a camp. A site on the west side of Conestogo Lake was chosen. In the

spring of 1972, John and Neil, along with a number of volunteers and the help of a farm tractor and a bulldozer, began pulling out thorn trees, terracing the waterfront, hauling in sand for the beach, and erecting a pole frame building which housed a kitchen at one end and a meeting hall at the other. The directing couples, John and Melissa Martin and Neil and Mary Martin, lived in cabin trailers. Tents and tent trailers provided accommodation for the counsellors. The first two-week session of day camp at Conestoga Bible Camp began on July 3, 1972, with fifty children. From these rudimentary beginnings has grown the camp as we know it today with additional buildings, a swimming pool, and a directors' residence. John and Melissa were succeeded by Rob and Sheri Wynja, and Scott and Ruth Ann McConnell; the present directors are Clarence and Eva Martin, who started in 1988. The camp is also used by various groups as a retreat centre during the off-season.

Conestoga Bible Camp, which began as a ministry of Wallenstein Bible Chapel, was incorporated in 1980. The Board of Directors comprised representatives from the congregations at Bethel Bible Chapel and Lakeshore Bible Chapel in Waterloo, Listowel Bible Chapel, Tavistock Bible Chapel, Wallenstein Bible Chapel, and Woodside Bible Chapel in Elmira.

In the fall of 1972, Wallenstein held Sunday evening outreach meetings at the Drayton Public School.

In January of 1974, newlyweds Dave and Connie Martin left for what turned out to be an eight-month stay in Puerto Rico where they assisted Esther Frey and Bob and Martha Cooper in erecting the first buildings at the new camp. In the succeeding years many more work parties went from Wallenstein to Puerto Rico, some to the camp, and some to the Evangelical School for the Deaf.

At the 1975 Annual Business Meeting of Wallenstein Bible Chapel, it was decided to hold a prayer meeting on February 9, 1975, for those interested in starting meetings in Elmira. Further prayer meetings were held. On April 22, the first Prayer Meeting and Bible Study was held at the home of Neil and Mary Martin in Elmira. These mid-week meetings continued at the Martin home until September when the Bible Study was moved to the basement of the Co-op store in Elmira. On October 5, 1975, Elmira Christian Fellowship held its first Sunday services at Riverside Public School. There were 125 present at the 10:00 a.m. Breaking of Bread meeting and 130 at the 11:00 a.m. Family Bible Hour.

On July 4, 1976, there was a dedication service at the site of the future home of Elmira Christian Fellowship (Woodside Bible Chapel) at 290 Arthur Street South. The dedication services and official opening of this new chapel were held on May 1, 1977. The congregation grew, and in 1988/1989 a larger facility was built at 200 Barnswallow Drive. Dedication services were held on October 8, 1989. The building on Arthur Street was sold to the Elmira Pentecostal Assembly.

Around 1975 several families started meeting in Listowel for home Bible studies. The group grew, and on Sunday, July 2, 1978, approximately ninety-five people met in the Orange Hall in Listowel for their first Breaking of Bread service. Nine families from Wallenstein formed part of this assembly. Exactly two years later the assembly began holding Sunday services in the newly erected Listowel Bible Chapel at 545 Blake Street East.

On November 4, 1978, services were held at Wallenstein Bible Chapel to mark the congregation's tenth anniversary at that location. The speakers were John Martin, Abner Bauman, and Sydney Hoffman.

THE SECOND TEN YEARS

After South Vietnam surrendered to North Vietnam on April 30, 1975, the communists drove many South Vietnamese from their homes. Among these was the Luu family, who fled to the forest. Two years later the Luus were able to escape by boat; the vessel was so crowded that no one could lie down during the seven-day voyage to Hong Kong. On arrival, they were placed in a refugee camp. From among the various countries that had offered to take refugees, the Luu family chose Canada.

On July 26, 1979, there was a congregational meeting at Wallenstein to discuss what could be done to help the refugees from South-East Asia. It was decided to sponsor a family, and a Refugee Family Committee was formed consisting of Reinhard and Alma Frede, Israel and Anna Hoffman, Clayton and Lila Martin, Edgar and Rebecca Martin, Lal and Margaret Raniga, and Cleason and Mary Weber. In late November, Mr. and Mrs. Luu and four of their daughters were met at the airport in Toronto and brought to Clayton and Lila Martin's home in Floradale where they stayed for a few weeks before moving to an apartment in Elmira.

In early 1981 another Luu daughter, her husband and their young son, as well as a Luu son and a young man who had worked for Mr. Luu in Vietnam, came from Winnipeg. They moved in with the Luus who were now living in a rented house in Kitchener.

Soon after arriving in Canada, Mr. Luu learned that his brother and family had been sponsored by Poole Mennonite Church and were living in Milverton. As a result of this connection, the Poole and Wallenstein congregations jointly sponsored another brother and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Loi, along with their five children, Mr. Loi's elderly mother, two widowed sisters, and a teen-age son of one of the sisters, a total of eleven people. The Loi family arrived in January of 1982 and settled in Kitchener.

The Luus were a hard-working family and were soon self-supporting. Within three years they were able to buy a house in Kitchener. Mr. Luu, who had owned a bicycle shop in Vietnam, found a job at a bicycle shop in Kitchener where he was employed until his retirement. He is living in Toronto at the present time. Mrs. Luu was kept busy caring for her extended family and babysitting her grandchildren while the parents went to work. She passed away suddenly in November, 1989. The funeral service was held on Sunday afternoon, November 12, at Wallenstein Bible Chapel, followed by a committal service at the Hawkesville cemetery.

At the time of writing, two of the Luu daughters own a houseware and gift business in downtown Kitchener, another has a hairdressing salon, and the men are employed in factories in the Twin Cities.

In the spring of 1980, five couples in the Tavistock area expressed an interest in starting an assembly, provided that John and Melissa Martin would move to Tavistock. John had been holding Bible studies throughout several preceding winters in the Stratford/Tavistock area. That summer the newly formed group purchased and renovated the old Knox Hall (formerly Knox Presbyterian Church) at the corner of William Street and Oxford Street, and renamed it Tavistock Bible Chapel. By the time that the first regular services were held on Sunday, October 5, 1980, five more families had joined this assembly. On November 1, 1980, John and Melissa moved from their Hawkesville home of thirty-seven years to their new address in Tavistock.

During the four summers of 1980 to 1983 the Wallenstein and Woodside congregations held joint Sunday evening services; these were at one chapel in July, and at the other in August.

In the summer of 1981, after a lengthy period of searching and evaluating, Wallenstein replaced the hymn book "Choice Hymns of the Faith" with "Hymns of Truth and Praise."

1982 began with some of the stormiest weather in the history of Wallenstein Bible Chapel. Sunday evening services were cancelled on January 10 and 31; on January 17, services were cancelled for the day. The Loi family, who arrived from Hong Kong at around this time, may have been wondering whether Canada had been a wise choice.

The AWANA Children's Club, a program of Bible lessons. Scripture memorization, games and crafts for children ages 7 to 13, met for the first time at Wallenstein, on October 1, 1982. AWANA continued through the 1989/1990 season. Wallenstein then developed a similar program, called Friendship Company, which was tailored to meet specific local needs. It ran from October, 1990, to April, 1998.

In April of 1985, several men from the Wallenstein assembly paid their first visit to the Guelph Correctional Centre with Gerrit Blok of New Life Prison Ministry. Currently, three teams go into the Centre on two Friday evenings a month. Videos are shown, spiritual issues are discussed, and Emmaus Bible Correspondence Courses are offered.

In August of 1985, the Wallenstein congregation moved into a tent for ten evenings of special meetings with evangelist Joe Reese. The services ran from Friday, August 9 through Sunday, August 18. Finding a suitable site had been difficult because of traffic concerns. However, when Ed and Emma Weber offered the front field of their farm, three kilometres west of Elmira, everyone involved was satisfied and the plans proceeded apace. The meetings were blessed with good weather until the final evening which ended with a deluge.

In the spring of 1986, the starting time of the Breaking of Bread service was changed from 9:30 a.m. to 9:20 a.m. to allow for a ten-minute organ prelude. The congregational hymns in the service, however, continued to be sung a cappella until January, 1992, after which hymns were accompanied by piano, if requested. Beginning in April, 1998, all hymns and choruses sung during the Breaking of Bread service were accompanied by piano or organ.

In 1986 the congregations of Guelph Bible Chapel, Wallenstein Bible Chapel, and Woodside Bible Chapel compiled a booklet of choruses entitled "Worship and Praise," to augment the hymn books. That summer Wallenstein began using individual communion cups. From June 2 to June 8, 1986, a number of individuals from Wallenstein participated in the Terry Winter Crusade, K-W Alive, at the Kitchener Memorial Auditorium.

In July of 1988 all Sunday services at the chapel were cancelled while the building underwent major repairs. The roof, windows, and carpet were replaced, the ceiling was repaired, the pews were sent out for refinishing and re-upholstering, and a central vacuum system was installed. During the renovation period, Sunday morning services were held at the Community Centre in Drayton.

THE THIRD TEN YEARS

During a number of years beginning in the early 1970's, Wallenstein was active in outreach in the Moorefield/Drayton/Goldstone areas with evangelistic meetings, drive-in services, Sunday evening outreach services, and home Bible studies. On Monday, October 24, 1988, interested parties met to discuss the possibility of holding home Bible studies in the Drayton/Alma area. There were fifteen families represented at this meeting, all from the Wallenstein assembly. They decided to rent a meeting place as soon as possible, and to hold approximately six weeks of Monday evening meetings at which Richard Haverkamp would teach church principles and evangelism. There was also strong support for starting regular Sunday services within six months.

On Easter Sunday, March 26, 1989, this group, known as Alma Bible Church, met for the first regular

Sunday service in the old gym at Alma Public School. The church comprised twenty-five families, eighteen of which came from the Wallenstein congregation. By the end of June, Alma Bible Church had made an arrangement with the congregation of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church in Alma, whereby the two congregations would share the Presbyterian Church. By 1996 Alma Bible Church had outgrown the Sunday School facilities at St. Andrew's; on January 5, 1997, Alma Bible Church began meeting at Alma Public School again, this time in the new gym. Alma Bible Church has purchased a five-acre building site just north of Alma.

"And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." Colossians 1:18

Resources

Wallenstein Bible Chapel: 1968; n. ed., n. publ.

Saved to Serve: The Treasure in Earthen Vessels; John M. Martin, Gospel Folio Press, Grand Rapids, MI, 1994.