



Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, Inc.

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60 YEARS

It hardly seems possible, but this fall 2017 marks 60 years I have been in the Lord's work on a full-time basis! I would like to share an outline of my testimony, background, and beginnings in the ministry. In doing this, I am on biblical grounds: Paul often told his testimony, even before leaders like King Agrippa (Acts, Chapters 22 and 26).

Growing up, my mother would read Bible stories to me, pray with me, and had a spiritual influence on my life. At the age of nine, I received Christ as Savior and was baptized. In my early teens I began to spend a lot of time reading the Bible. I had a hunger to see, *for myself*, just what the Bible says. I was amazed to find things in the Bible I had never heard and some things I had heard, or assumed to be there, were *not*!

I did not realize to what extent this would have on my life later, but I began to memorize scriptures (Psalms 119:11). And I always included the address (chapter and verse). I developed my own method of remembering references. I knew John 3:16. That helped me remember Luke 3:16, 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:16, and Revelation 3:16. I knew Amos 4:12. That helped me remember Hebrews 4:12, Acts 4:12, etc. I knew Genesis 1:1 and John 1:1. That helped me remember Psalms 1:1, Acts 1:1, Hebrews 1:1, Rev. 1:1, etc.

The pastor of the church my mother and I were attending in Riverside (California), encouraged me to be involved to play the piano, sing, and preach! My first attempt at preaching, which was at his invitation, was at the age of 15. My text: "Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize, so run that you may obtain" (1 Cor. 9:24).

In 1957 I was weeks away from high school graduation. I was prayerfully seeking God's will for my life. I had a desire to be in his work, *whatever* that might be. During that time I realized I knew something for which I had no logical explanation. Was it a word of knowledge (cf. 1 Cor. 12:8)? I simply knew that in the June issue of a Christian magazine we received in the mail, an evangelist would be advertising for a piano player to help in meetings. *This* would be my open door.

Each day as I rode my Cushman Scooter home from high school, I was wondering if this particular magazine had come in the mail. Each day I would ask my mother. Finally that day came, the magazine was there with the ad an evangelist advertising for someone to help in meetings that summer as a piano player! What made this whole thing even more unlikely was that this magazine did not normally carry ads like this. But there it was! What I had *not* foreseen was that this evangelist was not located nearby, but was in *Canada* and *eastern* Canada at that, in Ottawa!

Nevertheless contact was made by mail; I was accepted. My mother was for it; my dad was not so sure! "By faith," not knowing just where this would lead (cf. Heb. 11:8), I sold my Cushman motor scooter for about \$70, enough to pay for a Greyhound bus ticket to Ottawa.

Though the bus left Riverside at midnight, my mother and dad, and an uncle, were there to see me off, also some Christian young people I knew, singing gospel choruses. Soon I was traveling through cities I had only heard of: Salt Lake City, Cheyenne, Omaha, Chicago, Detroit, Toronto, etc.

The Canadian evangelist with whom I worked that summer was an older man. During that time I met a number of pastors, some who eventually asked me to come (on my own) to hold meetings in their churches. Being young I had turned 18 in August they felt their young people could relate to me. Here was a sincere young man who had a heart for God. The world and the Devil did not have *all* the young people! So in the fall of 1957, one by one, doors opened for me to hold meetings in Canada and then down into New York State.

Looking back now, I realize how young I was. But at the time, it just seemed normal to do what I was doing. Young preachers in the Bible include Jeremiah and Timothy even Paul, at the time of his conversion, was a young man (Jer. 1:6; 1 Tim. 4:12; Acts 7:58).

Being young, I could not speak with any personal knowledge about some great revival or spiritual outpouring years before, but having memorized hundreds of verses, I could, as Paul commissioned Timothy, "Preach the word...[and] do the work of an evangelist" (2 Tim. 4:2,5).

Just prior to Christmas I returned to California by train. In January, a preacher I had known for some time (who used to be a neighbor) was pastoring a church on an Indian reservation in California. I was invited to come there and hold meetings, which in turn led to other meetings in California, and soon other states.

Ministry has continued all these years! It has been my life. I have never had another occupation. I have had the opportunity to hold meetings, not only in California, but Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Delaware, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Louisiana, Maryland, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin; and in Canada: Ontario, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Alberta.

One unique preaching opportunity came in 2012 when I was invited to serve as Guest Clergy on a 14-day Holland America Cruise from Fort Lauderdale, Florida, through the Panama Canal, to San Diego, California. The first church service was somewhere between Cuba and Aruba on the open sea, and numerous other meetings, well attended, followed. There is an account of this on our website: ralphwoodrow.org under the article: "Ships in Scriptures."

During the early 60s I had radio programs on a number of stations, including superpower border stations heard in quite a few states: XERB, XEMO, XEG, and XERF. To encourage people to write to me and as an extension of my speaking ministry I began putting some of my messages into print which were offered on the air. This developed into a mailing list and, year after year, ever since 1961, I have shared articles freely to those on this list. In time this became a ministry in itself and, along with the books we have written, quite far-reaching. And today this outreach has been extended even more because of the Internet.

In 1961 we incorporated our ministry as the Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association. To incorporate one must use a distinctive name, so my name was included. This was actually less arrogant than calling it "GOD'S Evangelistic Association." As to the words Evangelistic Association, these had been used by quite a number of ministries, the best-known being the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, a name which continues to this day.

Incorporation is simply a legal procedure which makes it easier to be recognized by the IRS (which we are) to issue income tax receipts to donors, to do bulk mailings with the post office as a non-profit organization, etc. I realize there is a perception among some that if one "incorporates," the government will be able to tell you what to preach, what not to preach, etc. If that were true, I would understand the objection; but that has never been the case in our experience.

I have never believed that God's church is limited to one particular denomination or group, but is made up of *all* who know Jesus Christ as Lord and whose lives have been changed by Him. What one has in his heart, in my view, is more important

than wearing a particular tag. I have had ministry opportunities, and have learned things, from a variety of groups and ministries. I do not say, "I have no need of you!" (cf. 1 Cor. 12:21).

Looking back over these years, I am thankful for the way financial needs have been supplied. Seldom has there been an abundance, but needs have been met—sometimes in unique and unexpected ways. This has happened without me begging for money or using gimmicks. Those who give offerings to our ministry—and some faithfully send an offering every month—do so by choice. I am grateful.

Almost every day this summer, temperatures in Palm Springs have reached over 100 degrees. In June, two days in a row, the high temperature was 122 degrees. Some will recall Paul's instructions to "come before winter" (2 Tim. 4:21); here we say to those planning a visit, "Come before summer!" Fortunately, the warmer desert climate provides a beautiful winter. Some who own homes here stay *only* during the winter, like our neighbors in the houses across the street from Toronto, Minneapolis, and New York. The man from New York was in one of the Twin Towers on 9/11, grateful he was able to escape.

As to our ministry locally, for the past several years I have served as pastor of "River of Life Worship Center," which functions as an inter-denominational church, founded back in the 50s. I share the pulpit with a long-time friend and pastor, Fred Horner. He and I met at a church camp when we were teenagers. Both of us went on into the ministry. Fred, along with his wife, Leah, pastored churches in southern California and later served on the mission field in the Philippines, Singapore, and other countries. We kept in touch over the years. Who would have thought we would be serving together, years later, as co-pastors! Fred is also a board member of the Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association.

We have a good supply of some of our previous articles, one of which will be enclosed with this mailing. Some may have received this before. You may want to read it again, and/or pass it on to someone else. God bless you; thank you for caring and sharing!

—Ralph Woodrow

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