

The Rhondda Valley Comes Alive to God!

Shortly after the birth of the present day Apostolic Church in 1916, the industrial valleys of South Wales became very receptive to the message of the new generation of apostles and prophets.

The coal mining community of the Rhondda Valley was significantly impacted with a total of 14 churches quickly commencing, from the head of the Valley in Blaenrhondda, to the market town of Pontypridd, 12 miles away.



In 1924 a march of witness took place along part of that route from Llwynypia to Pontypridd, a distance of six miles. Apostles Daniel Powell Williams and Thomas Rees led the procession with D.P. Williams riding on horseback. Early records claim that up to 1,200 people participated in that march as together they demonstrated their faith in Christ and celebrated the birth of the Apostolic Church in their valley.

One of the first churches to be planted was in the village of Cwmparc, a community with a population of around 1,000 people, living in rows of terraced houses built around its two coal mines. From this community the Apostolic Church in Cwmparc has given to the Apostolic Church in the UK, two of its Presidents. The first was the late Pastor T.V.Lewis, and the second, Pastor Warren Jones, now retired and living in Swansea. Interestingly a third, Pastor Tom Saunders, was also a boy from The Rhondda, but not from Cwmparc.

From these small beginnings, the church from this small village, and this historic valley, has produced leaders who touched the nations of the world.

The Apostolic Church met in the village school, in contrast to the five other non-conformist chapels and the Church in Wales, part of the Anglican Communion. All these places of worship had fine buildings, and many of them were numerically strong.

In these humble surroundings one Sunday morning there was a prophecy, which directed the elders to visit the home of Evan William Owen, and his wife Anna Bertha Owen. They were to tell them the Lord had spoken, and that it was God's will they should leave their church and join the Apostolic Church. Anna Bertha and Evan were devout Christians attending the Welsh Baptist Church, favoured by many colliery workers in the village as colliery officials including the manager also attended there, and it was in the workers' interests to be seen in Chapel on Sundays if they wanted to remain in employment! Evan had no such concerns as he was the local chimney sweep!

The elders knew that Evan Owen was a strong, and at times, a stern man. They lacked the courage to obey that prophecy, and so a week passed by and nothing was done. The following Sunday morning the church gathered and the elders were this time rebuked in a second

prophecy, for their failure to obey the Word of the Lord and visit Evan and Bertha Owen to communicate the prophetic word.

This time they obeyed, and with no small measure of fear called at the small terraced house in Tallis Street, Cwmparc, the same street in which two future Presidents of the Apostolic Church, T.V. Lewis and Warren Jones would live, and the house where Roy Lewis was born. They told Evan what they believed the Lord had said in prophecy and left him and his wife with that message.

The Owen family were Baptists, not Pentecostals, and all this was strange and unfamiliar language. Their Chapel was their spiritual home and for them and their three children, Erfyl, Elwyn and Dilys, it was where they belonged spiritually. Dilys was a young girl and her brothers in their teens, and when their parents spoke with them about the possibility of joining the Apostolics their reaction was very negative. They had heard all about the "*Holy jumpers*" and what was reported to happen in those services and there was no way they wanted to leave Salem, the lovely chapel with its large congregation and trained choir. Erfyl was a musician and Salem is where he particularly wanted to stay, and nurture his ambition to become its Percenter when he became older.

Anna Bertha and Evan spent that week seeking to hear from God themselves, as it was not only their future but also their children. The following Sunday arrived and they had received no clear indication from God, so could they trust this "Prophecy?" When they left their home that Sunday morning the choice was to turn right to Salem, or left to the school. That morning they made a step of faith with Erfyl, Elwyn and Dilys following, and found themselves in the school where the Apostolic Church was meeting.

From that day on, they remained faithful to the Apostolic Church and all it stood for, until their death in the mid 50's. Anna Bertha gained a reputation as a great preacher and travelled to many parts of the country preaching at ladies meetings. Soon the whole family were totally involved in the life of the Apostolic Church, serving the Lord with total commitment during their entire lives. For many years prior to her death Anna Bertha was a very sick woman, confined to her bed during that period. She was a prolific poet and wrote many hundreds of poems, testimony to her strong faith despite her suffering. During those years she kept a record of the many pastors who visited her and prayed with her. To this day the family has that record with the names of over 50 pastors who ministered to her during her illness.

Not many years after its beginnings in the school, the local church acquired a plot of land in Cwmparc where they started work to construct their own building. It was a corrugated iron construction and outside was a baptistery where many of the converts were baptised over the years. Mrs Louie Jones, a non-Christian, lived very close to the building site, and often stopped and watched the church as it was being built. After it opened, Louie started attending the church and soon she herself was converted and became a follower of Jesus.

Many years later, one of her many grandchildren, Warren, became a pastor in the Apostolic Church and for many years served as President and National Leader. Another granddaughter Linda, married John R Jones, Aberdare, who also became a pastor in the Apostolic church. Karen Jones, yet another granddaughter married Robert Brown, who too became a pastor in the Apostolic Church.

Evan and Anna Bertha had three grandchildren, Carol, Roy and David. Roy Lewis was for almost 40 years a pastor in the Apostolic Church, with his wife Sue, until his retirement in 2011. Roy served as a member of the National Leadership Team under the direction of Pastor Warren Jones, and so they together served God within the Apostolic Church.

Another grandson of Bertha and Evan Owen was David Owen, a pastor in the Assemblies of God for over 40 years until his retirement in 2015.

Carol and her husband attend an Apostolic Church in South Wales, and so the three grandchildren and their spouses remain faithful to the faith of their parents and grand-parents. In later years, Tom and Rita Jenkins, became part of the Apostolic Church in Cwmparc. Rita's parents, Richard and Doris Morgan were part of another Apostolic Church in the Rhondda, in a small community called Penyrenghlyn. Today one of their sons, Andrew Jenkins, is an apostle serving in South Wales.

This photo from 1932 shows church members only. A number of members were missing as the photo-shoot was on a Saturday when some people were working. It clearly indicates how quickly the church had grown from nothing to what it was when the photo was taken. Pastor Roy Lewis' grandparents, mother and uncle are in the group photo, as was Pastor Warrens' grandmother and one of his uncles. The photo was scanned from Pastor Roy's original copy.

MEMBERS OF THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH, CWMPARK - 1932.



Mrs. W. Pebler Mrs. T. Ross Mrs. S. Jones W. E. Jones W. Lewis I. Jones I. Samuel E. Owen D. Davies Miss M. Thomas Mrs. W. Lewis W. Pebler
 J. Jones Mrs. W. Lewis Mrs. S. Davies Mrs. M. Jones Mrs. T. Williams Mrs. J. Higgon Mrs. T. Morgan Deaconess Mrs. W. Andrews Deaconess Mrs. D. Williams Deaconess Mrs. E. Owen Deaconess Mrs. T. J. Williams Deaconess Mrs. M. Worthington
 E. Owen Deacon J. Richards Elder T. Morgan Elder D. Phillips Elder W. Lewis Overseer S. Davis Elder R. Andrews Evangelist D. Thomas Deacon W. Andrews Deacon
 Miss D. Owen Miss P. Higgon Miss I. Davis Miss M. Worthington Miss L. Higgon Miss E. Williams Mrs. F. Bailey Mrs. I. Samuel

Photo by
 T. Martin, Swansea & Co.
 Penarth

We honour those people, who in the early part of the 20th Century seized what was then a unique revelation given to them by the Holy Spirit. They paid a huge price in many ways for their faithfulness, as being Pentecostal, and more so Apostolic, at that time carried with it a huge stigma.

We honour that anonymous local channel who heard from God and in faith boldly spoke the word.

We honour the elders of that fledgling church who went to the home in Tallis Street Cwmparc, and with temerity shared that prophecy with the Owen household - they stepped out in faith and obedience.

And finally to Evan William, and Anna Bertha Owen, who that Sunday morning stepped out with their three children, Erfyl, Elwyn and Dilys leaving what was behind them as they trusted in God for what was ahead. The Owen family, and the Jones family, from this small and insignificant Welsh village, trusted in God and served Him well, but they also gave to the Apostolic Fellowship children and grandchildren, who with their partners have committed themselves to the service of God.

What a legacy we have received from them.

We honour these people, and many others like them, who made great sacrifices to grasp and pass on the heritage which we have often heard referred to as The Apostolic Vision.

May we ever cherish and maintain our heritage, and pass on to future generations what God gave almost 100 years ago. May today's generation build an even greater future based on what God gave our leaders in the early part of the 20th Century, and pass on an even greater legacy.

This article is part of a bi-monthly history blog that Pastor Marcus Thomas is compiling in preparing for our Centenary Year.

We wish to give special thanks to Pastor Roy Lewis and his family for researching this article.

Marcus will be launching his book *'The God of our Fathers'* at AblazeUK 2016. This publication will portray the story of ten pioneers from our first century.

