

Fellowship Baptist Trailblazers
BOOK 4

FELLOWSHIP BAPTIST TRAILBLAZERS

**Life Stories of Pastors,
Missionaries and
Church Leaders**

BOOK 4

EDITED BY

**Jonathan N. Cleland, Matthew Maw &
Christian Clement-Schlimm**





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Dedicated to the loving memory of
Frederick Austin Vaughan (1927–2010) and
Mildred Margaret Vaughan (1925–2025)

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Foreword

My earliest recollection of a Fellowship Baptist gathering was at mid-sixties Muskoka Baptist Conference (MBC) in one of the original buildings—filled with men and women, celebrating and singing over coffee and cookies. Even as a child, the joy in that room and the discernible presence of the Holy Spirit made a lifetime impact on me. It was more powerful than anything else I had experienced in suburban Toronto, on TV or at school. To be sure, some of those present had been born in the 1800s, but the fellowship in that moment had overcome the discipline and hardship of the previous century.

My father was ten feet tall to me in those days. Other kids on the street owned better bicycles, and enjoyed more entertainment, but my dad was the one who casually bought a box of dynamite from a construction

company and took it up to MBC to help clear the road they were building. When the church was rapidly growing in the mid-sixties, a group of bikers known as the Vagabonds took up residence in an abandoned farmhouse across the road. They would eventually join in with the Satan's Choice Motorcycle Club and later on the Hells Angels. But Fred Vaughan would visit with them and took enough genuine interest in their welfare that on Sunday mornings they would keep their motorcycles silent out of respect. Whenever I tried to "run with the pack," his strong hand would reach out and pull me back (thank the Lord).

Thistletown Baptist Church survived massive cultural and demographic changes in Toronto partly because the largely European-Canadian congregation of the sixties began to embrace the growing Jamaican and Asian communities without reservation. These were some of the happiest and most formative days of my life, when hundreds packed into Sunday school. Back in the day, church members would simply knock on doors in the neighborhood and promote the Sunday school. But this practice has become more dangerous and less welcome in the twenty-first century. I asked pastor Ken Davis how he managed visitation around Thistletown in 2010. His reply was, "Very carefully," including that he'd often attend public places like the shopping mall and strike up conversations with people. In any event, his love of people was effective.

Back in 1975, while attending junior high, and when Timothy Starr was home missions/church extension secretary, I wrote a letter asking Dr. Starr about the requirements for someone interested in pioneering a Fellowship Baptist church. He took the time to pen a thorough, serious reply—which impressed and encouraged me as a young teen. I noted that in the mid '70s, the Fellowship had more churches across Canada than McDonalds had fast-food restaurants. But there was a disconnect. Everyone knew and loved McDonalds, but not many Canadians knew anything about their local Fellowship Baptist church. Understanding the challenges of evangelism and the potential of the Fellowship in Canada became an obsession.

The late seventies and early eighties were difficult times both for me and the generation around me. Pop culture, economic decline, moral decay and increasing geopolitical forces led to higher divorce rates, suicide of friends and the abandonment of the faith. One thing that kept me together during those years was the reverence I held for certain men and women of the faith. Many of the names in this book were known to me through household conversations between my mom and dad.

Looking back, it was the fellowship of a diverse church community in the '60s that enabled me to marry into a Caribbean family in 1987 and never look back as the Lord blessed us mightily. Mom and Dad hit full retirement, but they couldn't sit still. They pioneered a fourth Baptist church in Angus, and eventually moved to the farm Christina and I had bought in 2001. Dad found an old, boarded-up Gospel Hall down the road that had been empty for twenty years and got permission from its trustees to "give it another shot." I was horrified, since he'd been through strokes and heart attacks and was clearly on the decline. But when dozens started attending, I found his recurring theme of knocking on doors still paid off! One woman up the street said it was just his genuine smile that convinced her to walk to church every Sunday.

One would expect a change in tenor between the original *Trailblazer Series* and this new volume as envisioned by Jon Cleland. Around thirty years have elapsed and the nation has changed considerably. One common thread is of ordinary men and women achieving great things for the kingdom of God through faithfulness in the local community. This book should encourage the reader to use the gifts they have been given and remain faithful—knowing that you are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:1). In the late sixties, I saw evangelists go into suburban neighbourhoods and create a commotion so that scores of kids would soon gather for singing and stories—followed by an invitation to join the bus to Sunday school. You might get into trouble if you tried that approach nowadays. So, evangelism has changed. Society has changed. But this book demonstrates how a newer generation of pastors, missionaries and church leaders adapted while ministering the age-old good news of the gospel.

The Lord has blessed me with living experiences in the USA and Canada. It's easy to look at—say Northern Virginia, where megachurches draw 8,000+ people to a well-produced, high-energy service. And we attend another location where a 120+ year old Baptist church with an awesome, hand-carved edifice rarely draws over twenty demoralized seniors. But when I did the math (local population versus attendance) for these two contrasting regions, I found little difference in the percentage of local population attending church on Sunday! We have our work cut out for us. Let us take courage from stories such as those in this volume and press on for the kingdom of God.

Jonathan Vaughan



Editors' introduction

It is a great honour to be able to edit this volume. I (Jon) was first introduced to the *Trailblazers Series* in the summer of 2022, when I was helping Dr. Michael Haykin with writing the fifty-year history of West Highland Baptist Church, Hamilton, Ontario. One entry that I consulted was found in *Trailblazers* volume 1 on the life of Rev. Lambert Baptist. Pastor Baptist served for several years at West Highland and his entry was an important source for the church's history. It was at this point that I realized the historical importance of having these stories recorded.

However, I also realized that the series, though having three volumes, stopped in 2004. Twenty years later, I knew there were more stories that needed to be recorded. It is our hope that the restarting of this *Trailblazer Series* will record important stories in the history of the Fellowship. We

hope that these stories will encourage young people, like ourselves, as we look to continue the ministry that has been passed on to us.

There are several people we wish to thank for their help in making this volume possible. First and foremost, we thank the contributors. It needs to be noted that all the people listed in this volume were invited to contribute by us. They humbly and gratefully submitted their entries in response to our request. While this is the fourth volume in this series, it is our hope that it will not be the last. So if you know of someone that should be included in a future volume, please let us know. We would love to invite them to be a part of a future volume.

Secondly, we are thankful to Steven Jones, Lynda Schultz and the Fellowship. Steve in particular put together a list of people for us to contact and both he and Lynda have been very encouraging of this project. We are thankful that the Fellowship cares about its history and wants to see this history preserved and passed on.

Thirdly, we thank the Vaughan family. Fred A. Vaughan, who went to be with the Lord in 2010, was the editor of the first three volumes. There would be no *Trailblazers Series* without him. Jonathan Vaughan, Fred's son, has been a great encouragement and we appreciate him writing the foreword to this volume. It is our hope to continue the work that Pastor Vaughan started. This book is dedicated to the memory of Fred and his wife, Mildred.

The people included in this book are listed as *trailblazers*, not necessarily because they have added something new to how we think about or do ministry (although they may have), but because they have, whether they believe so or not, blazed a trail for those of us who come after them. The work of the ministry does not start and end with one person but is passed on from generation to generation. May this volume encourage and inspire the next generation who look to serve Christ's church faithfully and passionately as we continue in the path that has been blazed before us.

***Editors Jonathan N. Cleland, Matthew Maw
& Christian Clement-Schlimm***



1 /

Steve Adams

When our neighbourhood milkman knocked on our door in the winter of 1968, I had no idea how significant and sovereign that event would be. I was growing up in a good but non-Christian home on the west side of what was then Galt, Ontario. Just two blocks away was a small Brethren assembly known as Westside Gospel Chapel. The group who started the work had a vision to reach children of young families in the neighbourhood living in small post-war bungalows.

Don Gowing, the milkman, had a simple request. He lived at the far end of our street and each Sunday morning would travel past our home on his way to the Gospel Hall where he was a member. He noticed as he passed by that my sister and I were always at home on Sundays, as my parents had no church affiliation. He was asking if he could pick up my

sister who was seven and me, five years of age at the time, and take us to the Gospel Hall. My parents agreed with this proposal, and the next Sunday, Don and Dorothy Gowing carted us along with them to church.

Over the next five years, that routine continued. About one year in, my family moved to the other side of town. However, Don, ever the evangelist, had invited many neighbourhood kids to the burgeoning Sunday school, and the church leadership began renting a school bus to gather those of us who otherwise would be unable to attend based on our changing geography.

During those years, wonderful Sunday school teachers including Roy Thompson, Bruce Gowing, Gilbert Crossman, Bob Gowing, Ross Morrell and others, loved on me as they taught me great stories of the Bible. Frankly, my behaviour made me a handful. Nevertheless, the continuing, patient and unmerited love these teachers had for me left a very significant impression.

Mildred Lapsley was a dear lady in the church who had a burden for children and each summer organized backyard Bible clubs. She asked my parents if we might host one at our home, and even though my parents were not Christ followers, they agreed. In the summer of 1973 when I was ten years old, a college student working that summer as a Bible club counsellor presented the gospel in a clear and winsome way. I remember giving my life to Christ under a tree in my own backyard, and consequently had an immediate sense of my salvation in Christ.

Five years later, at the age of fifteen, I was baptized at Westside by Roy Thompson and Gib Crossman. I was the first one in my family to come to know Christ and be baptized. I continued to attend Westside until age sixteen, and then began a slow drift from the Lord.

During this time, my mother, a local politician, was on city council when an organization called Youth with a Mission wanted to set up their Canadian headquarters in Cambridge. Sadly, many misunderstood what this group was about, and that created fear and resistance. My mother agreed to visit their location in the Maritimes to better understand them. This visit had an obvious impact on her life, as she saw people who lived in complete dependence on the Lord and were people of constant prayer.

When I was seventeen, my mother passed away and our home was left in disarray. Her passing was during my last year in high school, and with my father struggling with grief and my sister in college, my future was uncertain.

With little parental input in my life regarding my future, I decided to go into the workforce and not pursue higher education. I took a job in management at a local entertainment facility that had a roller rink, arcade, mini golf etc. Interestingly, the principal owner of the facility was the son of one of the founding members of Forward Baptist Church.

While working here, I met Cheryl LaCroix, a young woman who had a strong faith in the Lord and was attending Ontario Bible College. Having grown up at Temple Baptist Church, Cheryl and her sister had recently begun attending Forward. I was interested in dating her, but she told me in no uncertain terms she would not date a boy who did not go to church. I had told her a bit about my faith background, although at that point in my life there was little evidence of faith. So, I sheepishly agreed to go with her to Forward.

After about my third visit to Forward, I was greeted by an older couple in the foyer. They introduced themselves—Don and Dorothy Gowing, my former milkman and his wife! They were delighted to see me there and had kept me continually in their prayers. What a blessing that was to hear!

Pastor Ernest Kennedy was the senior pastor at the time, and under his clear preaching I rededicated my life to Christ. At a Sunday night service in 1983, a missionary gave a presentation and handed out a commitment card. That night I signed a pledge to be available to whatever the Lord had for me in the future.

In the mid-eighties, I went to work for a major fine jewelry retailer where my father was employed. I soon got a sense that I would like to own my own jewelry store and so in 1986, at only twenty-three years of age, I purchased a small jewelry store in Kitchener. A year after the purchase, Cheryl and I were married and became increasingly involved at Forward.

In 1988, Pastor David Anderson became the senior pastor at Forward. He came from Troy Baptist Church outside of Detroit. Although he only stayed three years, he and his wife Mary had a profound impact on our lives. They had a great passion for reaching those who had little to no access to the gospel around the world. Over the next three years, our heart for the world increased significantly.

In 1991, Pastor David organized a missions work trip to visit our missionaries, the Leavers, serving in Quito, Ecuador. Cheryl and I planned on travelling together but our first son, Spencer, was born just two weeks before departure. Off I went on my own. The trip was pivotal in my Christian life.

Two weeks after I got home, Cheryl and I made the decision to prepare to go but be willing to stay. Upon making that decision, we were immediately contacted by a man interested in purchasing our jewelry store. Four months after returning from my trip, we sold our store with little clarity about what the next step might be. Needing work, a friend offered a job in his business. This hiatus lasted three years, but the Lord used it to ready my heart in needed ways before serving him in vocational ministry.

In 1993, we received an invitation from World Thrust, a missions mobilization ministry in Atlanta, Georgia, to join their staff. We began raising our support and left for this assignment in June 1994, with our son Spencer and our new daughter Riley. This was the same ministry that Pastor David Anderson joined when he left Forward.

After relocating to Atlanta, we realized the ministry we were now part of had significant issues in staff relationships. This resulted in half of the staff leaving six months after our arrival. This painful and confusing experience strengthened our dependence on the Lord and on each other.

We continued to serve at World Thrust and became members of Grace Fellowship Church. The pastor, Buddy Hoffman, had been deeply affected by the ministry of World Thrust and had a growing passion for the unreached. We became good friends, and in 1997 he invited me to become their first part-time missions pastor in this rapidly growing church. We saw the hand of God move in powerful ways during this time, as people from Grace Fellowship Church surrendered their lives to be missionaries and the church became very global in its ministry model. It was also during this time that our third child, Landon, was born.

In 1999, a chance encounter with Dr. Bill Jones led to another major life change. Bill had started a missions ministry (today known as Crossover Global) and was looking for an executive director to replace him. Bill was being prepared to become the president at Columbia Bible College and Seminary. Hence, we packed up again and moved to Columbia, South Carolina. We had the privilege of watching God bless Crossover, as the ministry grew; we bought property and built a new ministry centre across the road from the Bible college and seminary. Although I did not have an undergraduate degree, the seminary allowed me to enroll in a master's program which I was anxious to do. While serving at Crossover, travelling extensively and raising our young family, the Lord allowed me to complete my degree. Looking back, I'm not sure how it all fit!

After serving for five years at Crossover, we had a growing sense that we were to return to Canada. Through a series of nudges from the Lord, we resigned from our position and without knowing what the Lord had for us, we returned to Canada in June 2005.

Mentorlink Canada was a new ministry that had been incorporated but had yet to have someone give it “wings.” I became the first director of Mentorlink Canada. We reconnected with Forward—our home church—and became increasingly active there.

At the same time, I had a growing concern about the number of young adults leaving our churches. Consequently, I started a young adults Bible study and worship service on Sunday nights at Heritage College. We called it 3:16, named after Colossians 3:16. It quickly grew to 200 in attendance. One night, while giving my testimony, a young Heritage student in the audience realized it was her father who had led me to Christ in my backyard some thirty years earlier.

Eight months after our return, the existing lead pastor of Forward Baptist Church resigned. The church was in a difficult place as attendance was down, the staff was small and a few years earlier, a major building expansion had been undertaken.

The church began a lead pastor search that ultimately led to me being asked to assume the role. As I had not been a lead pastor before, providentially, Pastor Ernest Kennedy was invited to join me as my associate and mentor. How amazing that the Lord would allow me to serve alongside the man who had such a profound effect on my life twenty years earlier!

I assumed the lead pastor role at Forward on July 1, 2007. Over the next several years, we got to see the favour of God in our midst in remarkable ways. Our church started to grow, as we became increasingly focused on reaching those far from God in our community.

I eventually stepped away from the leadership of Mentorlink and handed it over to Marvin Brubacher. At the same time, we added additional staff



Steve Adams

at Forward and again God was generous in that area. At one point, we had a pastor on staff in his twenties through to one in his nineties.

Many people came to Christ, and over the next twelve years we baptized about 500 people. Again, we felt God nudging us as a church to launch out in faith. We started two additional locations in 2010, Huron Park and Forward Church Willow. Eventually Forward Willow became a standalone church known as the Church of the City. My oldest son, who was serving at Forward as our junior high pastor, eventually joined the pastoral team of Church of the City in Guelph and today is the lead pastor there. When we started the two new locations, we also started live streaming our services. We were one of the early churches in Canada to do this.

Several unique opportunities arose during those years at Forward. A local public school burned down and within three days we took the school into our facility. An initial request for an eight-week stay turned into almost four years. Again, this gave us opportunities to share the love and hope of Christ in ways we could never have imagined. We also developed a major summer camp ministry, revitalized our facility and saw hundreds of thousands of dollars given away each Christmas to bless our community and make Christ known. Our staff grew to twenty-five and became like a family to one another. What a blessing to have a front row seat for all of this!

After twelve years at Forward, we sensed the Lord might have another new ministry chapter. So once again, with uncertainty about what was next, we resigned to seek the Lord in this next chapter. Through a series of conversations with the Fellowship president Steve Jones and then FEB Central regional director Bob Fleming, I joined FEB Central part time, serving churches in leadership development, skills training and staffing issues. I am also involved in our Next Level Leadership training, our Next Level Preaching training and our interim pastor training as well.

At the same time, I started a consulting organization known as Adams and Co. Our focus is mainly around helping churches secure lead pastors and staff, and on building strong staff teams. We have served many churches—including West Park in London, Calvary in Guelph, Fairview in Lindsay and Emmanuel in Chatham, among others—in discerning and finding who their next pastor may be. We continue in this work and find it a source of great joy and blessing. In addition to this, I have also been involved in several longer-term interim preaching assignments.

Today our three children are all involved in their local churches—our daughter Riley in Sydney, Australia, our son Spencer is pastoring at Church of the City, and our son Landon is an elder at Restoration Church in Cambridge.

As I look back, my heart is filled with gratitude to God for the men and women he has brought into my life at strategic times to direct, encourage and shape me in my walk with the Lord.

Submitted by Steve Adams



2 /

Jacques Alexanian

A giant in the ministry

“In the Mission to the Americas ministry, you have always been considered like a giant, and you still are.”

—Grey Jeffreys, vice-president, *Mission to the Americas*

When I was young, giants were a fantasy that fascinated me. I was impressed by Godzilla and similar creatures that had a huge impact on people. I read about them and watched them on TV. I would have never thought that, one day, I would meet a real giant. That’s what happened when my path crossed Jacques Alexanian, a giant in the ministry.

Childhood

“We cannot understand ourselves if we do not know our roots.”
—*Jacques Alexanian*

The Alexanian's family story started with the butterfly effect of the assassination of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria and his wife Sophia in Sarajevo, on June 28, 1914. The consequences of this event led to the death of about nine million people during World War I. In April 1915, a genocide was carried out against Armenian citizens in various towns and villages of Turkey. Authorities organized death marches across deserts and mountains, with the hope of eradicating these people. Young Pascal Alexanian, Jacques' father, was among the unfortunate victims of these deadly marches. He was made slave to a mean owner before he escaped. Later, Pascal arrived in Syria where he met evangelical Christians who were on an international humanitarian mission. It was through the missionaries' care, full of love and compassion, that he saw Jesus' gospel of grace.

In 1921, Pascal was transferred to Beirut where he joined the French Army. He eventually ended up in France, full of hope and a life of opportunities ahead of him. There he met Mariam who, just like him, had escaped the Turkish massacre upon their people. They got married in 1928 and she gave birth to their first child, a son, to whom they gave a very French name: Jacques. First of four siblings, Jacques was born on September 12, 1929. In the Armenian tradition, being the firstborn is a position of honour, but also one of great responsibility. His father's expectations grew as Jacques got older. Pascal's faith in God made him believe there were bigger things for his son. The son and the father soon discovered they didn't share the same dreams, leading to tensions between them. Jacques' father demanded his son excel at school in order to enter medical school. But Jacques had other dreams. Realizing that he was disappointing his dad, he became a lazy and rebellious student.

Jacques was only ten years old when the Second World War began. During this time, he started to study construction and wanted to be a carpenter. After the war, in 1949, he promptly decided to fly away to a life of prosperity in the United States of America. Among his farewell gifts, his family gave him a New Testament. Jacques was not yet converted. He arrived in Philadelphia, an English-speaking city, with a radio as his



3 /

Dr. Kenton (Kent) C. Anderson

“He who does the work is not so profitably employed as the one who multiplies the doers.”

This quotation from John R. Mott well describes how God has led me in his service. My efforts in service to the Lord and as a life-long member of the Fellowship Baptist community have largely been about raising up new generations of leaders whom God has gifted and called to the ministry of the church. If God has been pleased to use me, it has largely been through the effect of my students and those who have benefitted from the educational systems I have designed and led. I pray that this legacy will continue long after I am gone.

It is an uncomfortable task, having been asked to describe at some length one's life and ministry. I am encouraged by the fact that I was asked to frame this writing as a kind of "testimony" of the work of God in and through me. All that I have done has been by his grace and at his call.

My journey of faith and service begins with God's work in drawing my parents to faith and service years before I was born. Both my mother, Myrna, and my father, Rodney, came to Christ through the youth group at Maple Ridge Baptist Church in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia, under the long and faithful ministry of Reverend A.J.L. Haynes, who became my pastor when I was born. Pastor Haynes served that church for forty-one years. It was through his ministry that my parents came to know and love the Lord and each other. Without their pioneering faith, I would not be who I am today.

Maple Ridge Baptist was a great incubator of pastors and missionaries during those years. I could name many of my friends who came up through that youth group in the 1960s and '70s who became engaged in vocational ministries of various kinds. These were the days before youth pastors, when we were encouraged as "young people" to take leadership for ourselves.

My first sermon was given in an evening service at that church when I was seventeen years old. I had read a book by Philip Keller about the life of Gideon. The sermon that resulted was more a poor retelling of Keller's teaching than it was my own, which was probably appropriate, given my lack of learning and wisdom at the time. But it was a launching pad from which emerged a lifetime of ministry and service. It was a conversation at Camp Qwanoes (a Fellowship camp on Vancouver Island) with Pastor John Bonham of Fellowship Baptist Edmonton that God used to confirm his calling in my life. I had been working a job pumping gas at Mussallem Motors, which kept me from attending church on most Sunday mornings. (Pastor George Dawe would make a point of running out of gas on Sundays so that he could come to encourage me while I filled his tank each time.) After talking with Pastor Bonham, I resolved myself to tell my boss that I would no longer be available to work on Sundays, even if that meant losing my job. I understand there are worse things than working on Sundays, but I recognized that at that point in my life, it was important for me to be in church. My boss seemed unhappy about it, but I was never scheduled on a Sunday again, and I was granted more shifts than I could handle. This was a small encouragement at an important

time, confirming that God would take care of me if I was willing to follow his call.

From there, I ended up at Northwest Baptist Theological College, not understanding how important that school would be to my future. While pursuing my degree, I got involved in a number of Fellowship churches as an intern. I worked with Pastor Bruce Mateika at Fellowship Baptist, Fort McMurray. I spent a summer at First Baptist, Drumheller, working with Pastor Gordon Forbes. Of



Kent Anderson

course, I served at my home church, Maple Ridge Baptist, with Pastors Ian Bowie and Dave Chapman. I served with Pastor Dennis Burris at Westbourne Baptist in Calgary and with Pastor John Greb at Newton Fellowship Baptist. Perhaps the most significant of these was a surprising opportunity to serve as interim pastor at Killarney Baptist in Calgary. The church was in need, and I was available. Only twenty-one years old, I served that church as its sole pastor for eleven months, preaching three times a week, working with the deacons board, visiting the sick and even publishing the bulletins on an old Gestetner machine. We didn't even have a secretary, much less an assistant. By God's grace, the church survived.

I have told my students that I learned the three most important things about ministry during that year, all of which were something a twenty-one-year-old could do: I could show up, I could be reasonably sound in my use of the Scriptures, and I could make sure they knew I loved them. That seemed to be enough.

Following my graduation the next year, I married Karen, who had come to Christ at Whispering Pines Bible Camp, a Fellowship camp near Calgary. We have now celebrated more than forty-one years of marriage. Together, we moved on to serve full-time at Campbell River Baptist and Richmond Baptist as assistant (youth) pastor, working with the senior pastor, David Fairbrother. We then moved north to Prince Rupert Fellowship Baptist, where I served as lead pastor for most of six years.



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