



Woodgreen Presbyterian Church  
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Woodgreen Presbyterian Church is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America, located in Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Organized in 1988, and part of the Canada West Presbytery, with a membership of 150, Woodgreen seeks to be a church that is faithful to the scriptures, true to the reformed faith, and obedient to the great commission.

Woodgreen is currently in the process of seeking out a pastor to lead in the work of serving God and his people. The church's Pastor Search Committee has completed and submitted a church profile that provides important information specific to Woodgreen.

Calgary is a beautiful city situated where the Elbow River and Bow River meet. Calgary offers a beautiful landscape with the prairies on the east side and the Canadian Rockies just to the west. It has a metropolitan population of nearly 1.4 million. Calgary is Alberta's largest city and Canada's third largest municipality.

Below are links that provide additional information on Woodgreen Presbyterian Church and the city of Calgary. You will also find below a brief history on the development of today's evangelical, and reformed Presbyterian presence in Calgary.

[www.woodgreenpca.org](http://www.woodgreenpca.org)

[www.visitcalgary.com](http://www.visitcalgary.com)

On behalf of Woodgreen Presbyterian Church,

RE Paul Mandry  
Chairman  
Pastor Search Committee

MY REMEMBRANCES OF THE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
EVANGELICAL SYNOD AND THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN AMERICA  
AS THEY HAVE EXISTED IN CALGARY ALBERTA

As remembered by Richard Mercer  
With assistance from Jessie (McColley) Mercer  
23 March 2018

HOPE BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

In 1962, my wife, Louellen and I with our daughter, Shawna came to Calgary as “Landed Immigrants” and soon looked for a church home. After visiting several churches, we settled at First Alliance Church where we felt most comfortable with its evangelical ministry. At the Alliance, we became friends with Dr. A. Ross Lawson and his wife, Orlee and with Gerry Smith and his wife, Martha. These two couples decided to leave First Alliance and invited us to join them in meeting for family worship in our various homes. After a short period, we decided to give our group a name because it was beginning to attract other families. We chose the name: Hope Bible Fellowship.

The next milestone for the HBF was to consider affiliation with an existing denomination so we began to consider our options. Ross, Gerry and I were all involved in the “Christian Business Men's Connection International (CBMCI) and we attended a few national conventions in the USA. Through this association, we became acquainted with the Peninsula Bible Church (PBC) and the ministry and writings of Ray Stedman, The author of “Body Life.” We found the organizational structure of this congregation unusual because it was organized as a corporation with a board of directors. Ray Stedman was the preacher and the directors provided oversight of the congregation. There were over fifty groups meeting in homes. That was one option.

Another option was the result of our attendance at the Plymouth Brethren congregation, Bethany Chapel in Calgary where we investigated the concept of rule by elders with no pastor. We were very impressed with the maturity, wisdom and spirituality of these elders, several of whom we had earlier met in CBMC.

A third option was the result of my association with the Reformed Faith through the United Presbyterian Church of North America (UPCNA) while I was growing up in the USA. My father was Clerk of Session for most of these years.

Jim Hanson was a minister serving a church in Billings MT where I had met him, and I suggested to our group that we invite him to Calgary for a series of meetings over a weekend. They agreed, and he came and introduced us to the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod (RPCES). Through Jim, we got in touch with Don MacNair, who lived in St. Louis MO and was the Executive Director of National Presbyterian Missions (NPM), the church planting agency of the RPCES.

## GLENMORE REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – RPCES

We invited Don to come to Calgary and present the RPCES to us and he did so, very convincingly! We had arranged some public meetings for him and Ross had previously been interviewed on the radio about Don's meeting to be held at the Calgary Inn. Trudi Wiechula and her husband, Ted heard the broadcast and attended the meeting. She has been with us ever since and I understand it was Trudi who suggested the name, Woodgreen.

The result of Don's visit was our decision to become a mission church of the RPCES. Don returned to St. Louis and suggested to William D. McColley, a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary who was living in St. Louis that he might consider becoming an organizing pastor of a mission church in Calgary. We invited Bill to come for an extended weekend and his time here confirmed for us, and for him, that he should accept our call. Upon returning to St. Louis, he and his wife, Jessie began planning their move to Calgary.

In 1968, we chose the name, Glenmore Reformed Presbyterian Church RPCES and Bill became the Organizing Pastor and served for 12 years. During his pastorate, we were assisted by numerous other well-known persons in the RPCES whom Bill knew and invited them to come to Calgary for special meetings at different times. These persons included Robert Rayburn Sr., Richard Gray, Francis Schaeffer, Edith Schaeffer, Hans Rookmaaker, Henry Krabbendam, Tom Jones and Ray Dameron. Bill also organized a "L' Abri Conference at the University of Calgary that was led by Francis and Edith Schaeffer with Hans Rookmaaker.

During Bill's pastorate, GRPC grew from our original 14 members meeting in living rooms to a congregation that moved to the gymnasium of Henry Wise Wood Senior High School, and then on to the Haysboro Community Centre followed by eight years of sharing facilities with Southminster United Church.

When GRPC moved from being a mission church to a "Particular Church," the first Session comprised Bill McColley as Pastor and Richard Mercer who was ordained and installed as a "Ruling Elder." Subsequently, Ross Lawson and Gerry Smith were ordained and joined the Session. Later, a young man accepted an invitation to come to Calgary and serve as a professor of Scientific Philosophy at the University of Calgary. Robert D. Jewell had grown up in Bend, Oregon and was a member of the Orthodox Presbyterian Church (OPC). He heard about GRPC and sought us out and became involved in the congregation and was elected to the Session. Soon after he arrived, I had the opportunity to introduce him to Patricia Colvin, a friend and schoolmate of Gerry Smith's daughter, Meredith. She was looking for good loudspeakers for her music system and I knew that Bob was knowledgeable on this subject, so I suggested that he might assist her. That was their first "date."

In 1980, after 12 years of successful pastoring at GRPC, Bill announced to the Session that he felt he had brought the church to a plateau and it might be time for a new pastor with a new vision. We received his resignation with regret and he accepted a call to Bellewood Presbyterian Church RPCES in Bellevue, Washington, not far from Tacoma where he grew up. The family moved to Bellevue and he continued as pastor there for eight years.

In 1981, Glenmore RPC called David Linden as Pastor and he moved to Calgary with his wife Shirley and two children from Colorado Springs CO where he had been serving on the staff of Village Seven Presbyterian Church RPCES. During David's years as Pastor of GRPC, Bruce Hrivnak came to Calgary as a Professor at the U of C and he also joined the Session of GRPC where he served as Clerk of Session. Bruce, his wife, Lucy and their two children were welcome additions to the congregation.

In 1982, the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod merged with the newly formed Presbyterian Church in America by a process known as "Joining and Receiving (J & R) where the PCA received the RPCES as if it had received a new presbytery. Don MacNair who represented the RPCES was instrumental in achieving this pseudo-merger that has proven to be very successful.

In 1984, David resigned as pastor and continued his ministry in Calgary with international students at the U of C. Thus, began a considerable time when GRPC had no pastor so the Session provided leadership in worship and oversight.

#### WEST HILLS COMMUNITY CHURCH - RPCES

Glenmore RPC was looking for a home and had been worshiping in rented facilities for its entire existence, so the congregation decided to purchase a property in Strathcona Heights with the intention of erecting a building. In connection with the purchase of land, a name change seemed appropriate to reflect our desire to locate in a specific community, so the name, West Hills Community Church was chosen. My recollection is that Pat Jewell suggested the name. The congregation then moved to Strathcona Park Community Centre for worship and other activities such as drama performances. This facility was within a few blocks of the purchased property.

#### COVENANT EVANGELICAL PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH – RPCES

Evan Bottomley had been serving as pastor of a Presbyterian Church of Canada PCC congregation in Calgary and he led that congregation to leave the PCC over doctrinal issues and become an independent congregation of the PCA. They chose the new name: Covenant of Grace Evangelical Church, thus, there were two similar congregations in Calgary. The sessions of the two churches met together on several occasions and in December 1982, the Session of WHCC proposed to the two congregations that a merger should be considered. The result was the formation of Covenant Evangelical Presbyterian Church PCA (CEPC).

When the two congregations merged, West Hills PC was without a pastor, so Evan Bottomley became the Pastor and Rich Mercer from West Hills along with Ken Gordon from CGEC were elected as interim ruling elders until new elders were chosen. Clare Martin had earlier moved to the Kitchener-Waterloo area where he served a church plant and then he and Pat returned to Calgary and joined the CEPC Session and served as Clerk of Session.

In 1987, Evan Bottomley decided that he wanted to plant a new congregation in Calgary, so he attended the Church Planting Assessment Centre in California and was accepted as a "church planter." He then resigned the CEPC pastorate and was appointed as "Stated Supply" for CEPC

by the Pacific Northwest Presbytery to serve as Pastor pro-tem until a new pastor would arrive. In May of 1987, the congregation of CEPC, and many other people in the city were saddened when Ross Lawson died.

On 31 December 87, the members of the CEPC Session were Evan Bottomley, Clare Martin, Rich Mercer and David Lawson.

In 1988, CEPC heard that Bill McColley might be willing to consider a call, so the merged congregation, by a 100% favourable vote extended a call. Bill accepted and the McColley family returned to Calgary. On 1 February 1990, Session members were: Bill McColley, David Lawson, Bob Jewell, Clare Martin and Rich Mercer. Sadly, before the McColleys had been here two years, Bill died of a heart attack in 1990 and CEPC was again looking for a pastor. Jessie McColley has remained in Calgary ever since Bill's death.

In 1991, CEPC called Jim Richwine as Pastor. Jim had been an associate pastor at Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church PCA in Ft. Lauderdale FL and he moved to Calgary with his wife, Brooke and their two sons. After a few years, Jim, who was originally from Pennsylvania, decided to return to the United States and seek a pastorate there. He now lives in Alabama.

In 1998, CEPC voted to dissolve the church and appointed trustees to oversee the dissolution of its possessions, the most significant of which was the land that had been purchased in Patterson Heights in anticipation of erecting a building. The earlier property had been sold because, as the community developed, the location was deemed unfavourable for erecting a church building. Therefore, a more favourable property was purchased. Jessie McColley and I were appointed as trustees.

In 2001, as trustees, we created the "William D. McColley Memorial Church Building Fund" and entrusted the funds from the sale of the property to the "Western Canada Church Extension Committee" of the Presbytery of the Pacific North West. The "Memorandum of Agreement" we signed with the Presbytery provided that the funds would be available on a "grant" basis so that they would qualify as equity to assist congregations in the Calgary area for a period of 10 years to purchase land and/or buildings. After that time limit expired, other congregations in the Western Canada Presbytery would be eligible to apply for the funds that might be remaining in the "Fund."

## WOODGREEN PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

During the formative stages of GRPC when the new congregation was meeting in Henry Wise Wood High School, some of the students were attracted to the church and became part of the congregation. John Smed, Caron Harper, Bob Sheath, and Janet Lind, among others formed the nucleus of an active youth group.

John attended L' Abri Fellowship in Switzerland after receiving the encouragement of Bill McColley who had gone to L' Abri often while he was stationed in Germany with the US Army. John and Caron were married and became interested in church planting and the ultimate result was Woodgreen Presbyterian Church. GRPC assisted John with an informal "borrowed session"

of Ross Lawson and Bob Jewell during WPC's formative years. Eventually, John received an offer from the PCA to move to Atlanta GA and serve as the church planting coordinator for the entire denomination, so the Smed family moved to Atlanta. WPC then called Frank Lanting as Pastor and Frank served WPC for over 20 years. During Frank's ministry, WPC engaged the services of Bryan Clarke and Conan Kublik as assistant pastors at different times over several years.

In the early 1980's, Paul Verhoeff and Clare Martin were serving on the Session of WPC along with Frank and then, Paul Mandry and Richard Mercer were elected.

As the congregation grew, the leaders had the foresight to purchase a property and plan to erect a building, but the congregation did not have sufficient resources to qualify for a mortgage, so the current church property remained vacant for several years. WPC applied for the funds in the "McColley Fund" as a grant and the total amount was awarded to them which provided enough equity for the congregation to qualify for a mortgage. Over the period, 2002-2004 WPC proceeded with the erection and occupation of its current building.

#### NORTHRIDGE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Evan planted Northridge Presbyterian Church PCA, as a mission church that met in rented facilities in Edgemont in the northwest area of Calgary and he served as its Pastor. Many of the original NPC congregation were families that had been in the PCC congregation Evan had pastored before he left the PCC. Peter Bowal was a ruling elder in NPC and continued to serve after Evan decided to relocate to Mexico where he served as chaplain for a group of orphanages.

Shawn Doud was called to pastor Northridge and he had a vision for church planting during his pastorate. He encouraged John Ferguson, a former "Reformed University Fellowship" minister from Texas to come to Calgary to plant a new PCA church and John did come and assisted Shawn with the ministry at Northridge. Shawn decided to take a call back in his home state of California and John was left pastoring Northridge, but his philosophy of ministry had been different, and he wanted to fulfil the purpose for which he came to Calgary. The congregation of Northridge decided to dissolve, and John presented his vision of a new church plant to the congregation and invited those who agreed with his vision to join him.

#### NEW CITY CHURCH – PCA

In 2010, John Ferguson planted New City church and it continues to be the other PCA congregation in Calgary. Michael Ivancic is the Associate Pastor and has been leading the congregation after John Ferguson returned to a pastorate in Texas. New City provides a more contemporary style of corporate worship while Woodgreen features a more traditional style.