

Chapter 44

Wales



God used Pete Hodge to establish our ministry in Wales. Pete's Christian journey began when he trusted the Lord in 1971. He immediately became active in evangelism, and at the same time, his girlfriend, Angie, also became a Christian; together, they felt God's call into full-time ministry. The first time Pete saw a sketchboard was when Peter Green, an OAC evangelist from Great Britain, was involved in a mission in the town of Plymouth. In



1972, Pete and Angie were married, and in 1974, they both attended Bible



PETE & ANGIE HODGE - 1972

college for two years. After college, Pete led churches in both Scotland and Wales, during which time a desire to effectively reach those outside the church with the gospel grew within him. After spending a day in prayer seeking God on Caerphilly Mountain in Wales, God confirmed Pete's calling as an evangelist. He applied to join OAC and spent nine months training in Brighton, working with David Fanstone and Derek Heyman. In May 1982, Pete, Angie, and their family returned to Cardiff, Wales, to begin OAC's work in that country. Angie kept the 'home fires' going, which released Pete into the ministry of open-air evangelism.

As the work in Wales began, Pete realized that certain key areas would be important to work on for a fruitful ministry. Here is Pete's account of these details.

Schools

The schools' work took off; this was and has become the major work of our ministry here in Wales. We began in infant and primary schools (4-11-year-olds). The aim was to build good relationships with the kids, and it was such a thrill to hear a big cheer when I arrived to take their assemblies. As the young people moved on to high school, this response was still there, which opened a tremendous door for presenting Christ. This then also affected our ministry on the streets and in universities as the work expanded.

Church Leaders

Recognizing that it is 'through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known ...' (Ephesians 3:10), I didn't want to bypass this principle. Since I was the new guy on the block, I didn't have extensive contact with leaders in the evangelical churches in the city, and broader, so I made it my practice to meet up with various leaders for coffee and a chat and to let them know who I was and of the work we were establishing in Wales and to offer my services to them in any way I could help. Several churches booked me to preach and to conduct some evangelism training. I had to prove that I was committed to the task and that I was staying the course with a long-term plan.

Street and Team Work

In the early days of establishing our ministry here in Wales, open-air meetings were a major focus. We would attract and hold large crowds as we preached in the center of the city. Saturday was the main outreach day, and most Saturdays from about midday to about 3 p.m., we would be out on the streets.

OAC Committee

As we were setting up OAC in Wales, OAC Great Britain encouraged us to form a committee and establish an actual OAC branch in Wales. I was never a "committee type" of man, but I actually wanted to build a team around me who were committed to me and the ministry. Over the years, a group came together that was committed in many ways. I also wanted accountability and, therefore, wanted folks that I could relate to. Some folks also came and served for shorter times and brought their own specific skills and help. Establishing such foundations in ministry are vital for growth.





PETE & AGNIE'S FIRST NEWSLETTER PICTURE

Prayer Letters

"Outreach News" became the name of my newsletter. OAC leadership encouraged us to produce these every three months. I have put a lot of work into getting these together over the years, sometimes hitting it right and other times being a bit disappointed with the content. I aimed to be honest and up front with folks. I did not want to be too positive, giving the impression that revival had

broken out, and I had all the answers. On the other hand, I didn't want to convey the other extreme that I was the sum total of depression! The aim was to keep folks who stood with us informed of what was happening.

As time went by, the ministry of OAC Wales grew; it was encouraging to see it flourishing. 1984 was a particularly busy year; I did 260 school assemblies; 40 missions; 14 seminars on evangelism; 112 preaches in churches; 92 open-air meetings; and drove nearly 20,000 miles!

Through the years, Angie joined me at some events. In the photo on the right, she is taking part in some escapology whilst I was preaching.

As the work in OAC Wales grew, so did the variety of opportunities, including preaching evangelistically in the Cardiff prison; over time, this widened to include other prisons across Wales. Openings to minister evangelistically in universities, both here in Wales and further afield, grew. Additional opportunities to work alongside local churches and to present Christ through various outreach events came our way. In fact, our motto in OAC is "Presenting Christ By All Means Everywhere," therefore, we have tried many variations and methods of communicating the gospel, including gospel magic and escapology. We found that both types of



presentations were very effective at drawing large crowds and illustrating the biblical truths of the gospel.

The ministry in OAC Wales was not just about evangelism but also about training others, supporting those with the gift of evangelism, and helping them grow in their ministry, whether in OAC or elsewhere. In 2007, a man named Steve Harris contacted me, saying he felt called by God to this work. We chatted, and over time, I recognized the call on his life, so I began encouraging him to join me in ministry here to learn on the job. In 2011, Steve became an OAC Wales staff evangelist.

Over the years, I had evidently damaged my voice through bad or excessive use. Leading up to Christmas in 1999, I lost my voice altogether and had to have an operation on my nodules. I was told to now use my voice wisely in the future. Then, in 2011, in Cardiff city center, I thought my voice was OK to preach on the streets again, but halfway through, it gave out; thankfully, Steve Harris stepped in. Doctors warned that if I wasn't sensible in caring for my voice, I could get cancer of the throat. So, I stopped preaching on the streets and in other ministries that strained my voice. Also during this time, a Christian artist friend did a painting for me, saying that she believed God commissioned her to do it! It was a painting of "passing on the baton" (picture below). As I reached the age of 65, I felt it was the right time to hand over the leadership of OAC Wales to Steve; it was definitely the right decision. Steve has led the work here brilliantly, and it is such a thrill to see



him not only heading up the work but also fulfilling the role of Great Britain national director. He is also a powerful evangelist. Since Steve took over leadership of OAC Wales in 2015, his wife, Becky, and Kevin Welch have joined us as evangelists. James Wood joined in 2017. So, we praise the Lord that things are looking good for the future of OAC Wales, and we are in His safe hands.



LARGE CROWD IN BRISTOL AS WE DO SOME ESCAPOLOGY IN 'REACH THE CITY' MINISTRY



PRIMARY SCHOOL ASSEMBLY IN CARDIFF



HIGH SCHOOL ASSEMBLY



PRESENTING CHRIST BY ALL MEANS EVERYWHERE