

Chapter 35

Scotland



Rosemary & Roger Gray 1978

Roger Gray was converted in 1971, and a year later, Cliff College conducted a mission at his Methodist Church in Bournemouth, which included open-air meetings. This was the first time that seeing the gospel reach the ordinary person on the street made an impression on him. So, soon after, some friends and he started doing Sunday afternoon open-air meetings near the seafront, featuring singing, testimony, and short talks. Encouragingly, conversations followed, showing how receptive people were in the open air. After that, on certain Saturday afternoons, he would give out Christian leaflets downtown. This also often led to further gospel opportunities.

In 1978, Roger began a two-year course at the Bible Training Institute (BTI) in Glasgow (later renamed International Christian College). Happily, the BTI was where Roger met Rosemary, whom he later married! The course was quite a change from his nine years of accountancy in Bournemouth! Regular outreach was part of the curriculum, so he teamed up with another student, Clifford, and with a sketchboard, easel, and chalks. They went to Buchanan Street on many Saturday afternoons and their meetings attracted a good number of listeners. Roger became aware that God was increasing his interest in open-air evangelism to a level that had to be continued.

In 1981, shortly after leaving BTI, Roger learned from another student that Open Air Campaigners staff were holding an annual training week in Birmingham, so he attended and saw what a valuable tool the sketchboard was in preaching the gospel! After this, he returned to Glasgow with board and paints, and two weeks later began doing regular open-air meetings with a small team in the city center. They often had crowds averaging 50 people, with many of these spoken to afterward.

In 1983, Roger received a letter from OAC National Director David Fanstone inviting him to consider forming a new OAC branch in Scotland. They prayed over this for a year, and gradually, God confirmed that this was the way forward. In June 1984, Roger left Scripture Union Scotland and started a nine-month training course with OAC, which proved most valuable. The training involved participating in missions in Glasgow, Plymouth, and York, as well as visiting other OAC evangelists to gain experience speaking to different age groups. Several training days for churches emerged from this, together with the start of school assemblies (which grew to over 30 each term over the years)!

In March 1985, OAC Scotland officially launched at Findlay Memorial Church (their home church), with Geoffrey Grogan, BTI principal, as guest speaker. This speaker attracted an excellent variety of Christians from different churches and provided a solid foundation, vital for those called to long-term missionary service.

Rosemary had much experience in children's work and missions in Belfast before meeting Roger in 1978. This was to prove invaluable, both for future OAC children's ministry and increasing involvement with Findlay (where she headed up Discoverers and 625 Club for many years before training up successors).

One lesson they've learned over the years, and are still learning, is that salvation is a work of God. OAC has equipped them with a wide variety of methods and visual aids that, for many groups, are useful for gaining attention. Praise the Lord for this! Yet over these many years, there has been increasing ignorance of the gospel and apathy toward spiritual things by the general public. Roger and Rosemary have become more dependent on God than ever before to open the spiritually blind eyes of people. It's been an uplifting experience to witness people becoming Christians during meetings, although this isn't the norm! Mostly, they hear of changed lives after such gatherings, and sometimes it's years later. Therefore, they've become utterly convinced that God's Word will not return empty (Isaiah 55:11) and that many people are being saved that they know nothing of now but with whom we will rejoice in heaven!

Through the years, here is how God led Rosemary and Roger...

Training: It's been well worthwhile investing time in others, teaching them to share their faith in the open air, visiting homes, in children's and youth events, and wherever unsaved people are. Many people become Christians through personal witness; therefore, it's been good to encourage Christians over the years to share their testimony, using a basic gospel outline based on suitable literature. Every Christian is called to be a witness – but some are also called to speak “up front”! So, it's rewarding to see these particular believers develop as they participate in open-air preaching, take school assemblies, and conduct many other meetings where unsaved folk are present.

Open Airs: With increasing apathy toward spiritual matters in the UK, the number of people listening to street preaching has reduced considerably since the early 1980s. However, God uses the majority of meetings today to gain the attention of some folk; often, it's the teens and early twenties who engage in conversation afterward. This is indeed encouraging, as it's this age group that is missing from so many churches. These young adults have questions that can be answered if only Christians would meet them where they are, which is outside church walls in the open air!



Rosemary & Roger Gray 2019

Schools: Roger thought very little about this aspect of ministry before joining OAC; his main burden was evangelism to adults and training others. But when the doors to schools opened, they were not to be ignored. During their time in Glasgow, over 50 schools have welcomed Roger and Rosemary. They mainly conducted assemblies along with a few opportunities for religious education classes and Scripture Union groups. Many of these assemblies continued each term for many years. Since moving to Yorkshire, they have access to just over 30 schools, most of which they attend each term, some more regularly. In this environment, Bible stories can be shared explaining how Jesus changes lives, how He changed their lives, and how He can change the lives of all who trust in Him. Even though one cannot provide a one-on-one gospel presentation in such settings, a good foundation has been laid. Then, when you see these pupils in town or other neutral locations, the spiritual conversations which were initiated in school can continue to the next level.

In 2009, at the age of 70, Roger and Rosemary retired and moved to East Yorkshire (Bridlington), England. Roger still conducts open-air meetings in nearby towns during the summer months. They both remain actively involved in their local church. Even though, as of the writing, there are currently no full-time OAC workers in Scotland, open-air meetings and school assemblies continue regularly in Glasgow with volunteers from different churches.



MINISTRY IN SCOTLAND



ARIAL VIEW OF OPEN-AIR IN SAUCHIEHALL ST, GLASGOW



JEAN, TRAINEE IN MOTHERWELL



OPEN-AIR MEETING IN GLASGOW



PERSONAL WORK TAKING PLACE AFTER AN OPEN-AIR



ROGER DOING A CHILDREN'S TALK



ROGER DOING STREET WORK IN DRUMCHAPEL



ROGER LECTURING AT A TRAINING COURSE HELD IN MOTHERWELL



ROGER TEACHING A BIBLE STORY TO CHILDREN



ROGER TEACHING YOUNG PEOPLE AT A TEEN RANCH



ROSEMARY AND HER PUPPET, ANGUS