



Interview with Mr Alastair Hamilton

Mr Alastair Hamilton is a member of Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church. He also serves on the Missionary Council and through that, on the denomination's Mission Board. He is the Mission Board's treasurer. He kindly consented to be interviewed by the editor of the Free Presbyterian Vision magazine. Ed.

 **Photo:**
Mr Alastair Hamilton CBE.

ED: Please relate something of your childhood and introduction to the gospel.

AH: I was born in the town of Ballymena, to Christian parents who attended the local Gospel Hall. My Father was a local businessman and lay preacher who, along with my Mum, sought to teach my sister and I the way of salvation from an early age. I was steeped in the gospel as a child and at the age of seven, following months of concern about my eternal future, I was saved in my own home

ED: How did you become involved with the Free Presbyterian Church Mission Board?

AH: In the mid 1980s I began dating the daughter of a minister in the Free Presbyterian Church. We were married in 1989, set up home just outside Ballymena and became members of the local church. I

became involved in the youth work in Ballymena and in due course became Ballymena representative to the Youth Council eventually leading to becoming Secretary of the Council. In 2001 the Youth Council commenced fund raising for a missionary project in Kenya. George McConnell and Margaret Russell thought it would be good for me to visit the work in Kenya to see the project on the ground. That visit was a turning point in my life – I was so impressed with the country, the people and the work, that a seed was sown in my heart for mission work. As a deacon in Ballymena, I became one of the representatives to the Missionary Council and after a few years there, I was nominated to one of the posts that the Missionary Council has on the Mission Board. When George McConnell retired from the Board a few years ago, I was asked to take over the Treasurer role that he carried for many years.

MISSIONARY VISION

ED: What are the primary roles of the Mission Board Treasurer?

AH: The key role is to manage the proper financial tracking and management of the funds that are entrusted to the Board and to ensure that they are used to further works that we are responsible for and in line with the wishes of those who donate so generously. As the work of the Board has increased over the past few years and as regulation and transparency requirements have increased, this work has intensified – we now have 48 individual funding lines to manage and balance from year to year. As our work in Kenya and Uganda are managed through a registered company, that adds another layer of reporting and accountability in both of those countries. We are indebted to Mrs Glenda Graham for the work that she carries out in the Mission Board office – reconciling all gifts received and funds spent on our accounting systems, managing the payroll and gift aid, along with lots of other essential administrative work.

ED: How many missionaries are financed by the Mission Board and where are they presently serving?

AH: We currently provide finance for 22 workers at home and in Spain, Kenya, Liberia, Uganda, Asia and Australia. In addition, we have a further 40 staff directly employed or funded in our school and bookshops in Uganda and Kenya. This not only represents a significant financial challenge but involves increasing levels of administration with pay, National Insurance and pension obligations, as well as managing job descriptions and employment contracts in multiple currencies and legal jurisdictions.

ED: During 2020 there was an appeal for an emergency aid fund to help in various parts of the world. How has that money assisted those in need?

AH: The response to the Emergency Aid Fund was overwhelming, particularly at a time when many of our contributors were facing

employment challenges themselves. The initial target was exceeded by a factor of 3! This has permitted over 2000 aid packages to be distributed to support pastors, families and needy children in all areas of our missionary work. At a time when many of the beneficiaries are out of work, with no income or government support programmes and living from day to day, this aid support has been a real lifeline. The letters of appreciation which we received were heart-warming and made us feel privileged to be able to help in their hour of need.

ED: Do you ever fear that there will not be enough money for our mission works?

AH: Yes! Often we take on new workers or projects and while it seems more straightforward to raise funds in the initial phase, I do worry about our ability to continue to fund into the future. However, I never cease to be amazed at how the Lord continues to fund His will and we have witnessed such cases recently across our Mission work. We particularly appreciate those who provide ongoing monthly support for a worker or project as this helps to remove some of that concern for the future. I have been particularly touched by those godly saints who leave legacies to the work on the mission field. Clearly those decisions were taken years ago but the legacies are often received at just the right time to meet a need. Truly we have witnessed the Lord “do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think”.

ED: Are there particular difficulties in sending money to foreign mission fields?

AH: At present the Mission Board manages receipts and payments in 13 different currencies, using traditional banking, ebanking, online payment platforms and mobile payments services. The online and ebanking systems have significantly enhanced our ability to operate in these currencies quickly and efficiently,

however we are experiencing increasing difficulty transferring funds to parts of the world where Christianity and evangelism are not welcome. We would ask for prayer that these transfer options would remain open so that we can continue to support the Lord’s work in all these areas.

ED: Where are the greatest financial needs in our mission works presently?

AH: There are needs all around – one of the biggest challenges is in Uganda where we seek to manage a school with almost 400 children on the roll. Also, in Kenya, as we seek to develop the new works in Glory Bible Church. In Asia we support pastors and families in over 100 small churches and an orphanage. We are also working with friends to support outreach works in three other countries. We would encourage readers to continue to support the fundraising efforts of the Missionary Council who provide us with regular salary support, contributing 30% of our pay bill each month.

ED: If you could write to every contributor what would you say?

AH: Firstly - thank you. The generosity of our contributors is, at times, overwhelming. We thank those who covenant to support a work or worker every month, those who support our school and orphanage funds and those who give sacrificially to projects as they are launched. We also really appreciate the prayers of our supporters who hold the ropes for our mission workers across the globe. Secondly - if it were possible, I would ask our contributors to go and see the work on the ground and to meet the men, women and children, that we seek to reach with the Gospel, help practically and encourage in the faith. I know that everyone cannot visit the field but we try to ensure that in our publications and video presentations, we show the real challenges and opportunities that there are to seek out the lost for Christ. ■

Whitefield Graduate, Alejandro Bernabeu McAuley Returns to Minister in Spain



Alejandro completed his theological training at the Whitefield College of the Bible and graduated on Monday 14th September 2020 along with six other students. God has opened an effectual door for Alejandro to return to his homeland to preach the gospel in Cortijos Nuevos, Spain. A “Sending Forth” service was held on Lord’s Day 27th September in Hebron Free Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney. Presentations were made to Alejandro and his family. At the time of writing, a “Welcome Service” has been arranged for Saturday 31st October, in Cortijos Nuevos. On the same day the congregation will say farewell to Rev and Mrs Lyle Boyd who served in the church for over 30 years. ■

☒ **Left:** Alejandro and his family at the Farewell Service in Hebron Free Presbyterian Church

Indian Orphan Project

A third distribution of food parcels has taken place successfully in India. The orphan children are spread over 45 villages, often in very remote areas. Please pray that the gospel will go forth to these needy children and that the team of workers who travel to these places would know safety and help. We thank God’s people for their kind and generous support in this ministry. ■



Office:
Mrs Glenda Graham,
3 Carrigenagh Road,
Kilkeel, BT34 4NE
T: 028 4176 5574
office@fpcmission.org

Chairman:
Rev Ian Harris,
23a Moneydaragh Road,
Annalong, BT34 4TY
T: 028 4376 8040
rev.harris@fpcmission.org

Secretary:
Rev David Park,
55 Market Street,
Ballymoney, BT53 6ED
T: 028 2766 2039
hebronfpc@btconnect.com

Treasurer:
Mr Alastair Hamilton,
37A Ballymacvea Road,
Kells, Ballymena BT42 3NH
T: 078 6061 6302
a.hamilton@fpcmission.org

STAY UP TO DATE AT



FPCMISSION.ORG