

The Oak Grove Oracle

(Family News & Views of the Oak Grove Church of Christ)

Meeting Weekly At Our Building Located At:

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Guest Speaker Sunday PM - Colin Graham

(Our missionary in Bangor, N. Ireland)

Tonight, we will enjoy the great privilege of hearing from a dedicated evangelist whom *Oak Grove* helps to support in foreign evangelistic work. Brother **Colin Graham** is visiting here in the U.S. for a few weeks, as he travels about meeting with congregations who have helped to support their work in Bangor, N. Ireland. He is also trying to develop some new contacts, who might help them in the future. Today he and his son, **Jordan** (whom *Oak Grove* also recently supported in preacher training school in E. TN), are sharing the story of the Irish work with the *E. Mt. congregation*, where our son **Ben** preaches. Tonight, **Jordan** will be in Tyler, visiting with an elder of the *Broadway church* (where **Scott Shumate** attends), in hopes of developing them into a supporting church, while brother **Colin** is coming to *OG*.

Oak Grove has been supporting **Colin** and his wife **Lisa** for the past five years with monthly support of \$100 per week. I guess when you hired me to be your local preacher, I kind of turned it into a "package deal." It was not premeditated I assure you, but when my salary was being discussed, one brother suggested paying me a hundred dollars a week more than the figure which was previously proposed. Quickly others agreed with the brother who proposed the higher amount. I then thanked the men for being so generous in their desire to make sure me and my family were adequately cared for financially, but suggested the extra \$100 be given to a missionary friend of mine, who was struggling to make "ends meet" on the mission field in N. Ireland. Long story short, you not only hired a new preacher that Sunday night, but you also got a new missionary in the deal as well!

Personally, I think you got the better deal on the missionaries, as **Colin** and **Lisa Graham** are two of the finest, most dedicated Christians **Janice** and I have ever known. Almost twenty years ago, I was attending a Bible lectureship in the Houston area. The elders there allowed brother **Colin** five minutes to talk about his plans to move his young family (consisting of him, his wife, their three young children, and his widowed mother) back to his home country of N. Ireland, to rekindle a mission work, begun by his parents many years previously in the city of Bangor, N. Ireland. I came home to Mabank, where I was preaching at the time, and told the elders I thought I had found the new missionary we were then looking for to send to a new evangelistic work.

Again, long story short, the **Grahams** came to visit and the rest is history as they say. The Mabank Elders determined to become the overseeing congregation for the Bangor, N. Ireland work. In short order the **Grahams** moved to Mabank to spend a few weeks getting to know the congregation before moving on to Bangor, to labor in the Northern portion of the "*Emerald Isle*," which is a commonwealth member of the United Kingdom (Great Britain).

That was 18 years ago and the **Grahams** are still there persevering in a difficult work. I'm convinced they are truly doing a faithful work of the Lord, for the old devil has shown his opposition to it at every turn, almost from

the day they arrived in Ireland. He has continually hurled obstacles and insults at them from both within and without the church. The story is too long to relate in this short space, but it reminds me of the Apostle Paul's warning to the elders from Ephesus, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, ...I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:29-31).

Paul also suggested a solution to the devil's intrusion, "And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). And that's exactly what the **Grahams** have done - no complaining, no backbiting, no mud-slinging, just noses, minds and hearts back in "**The Book**" and back to proclaiming the saving grace of God's Gospel (Rms. 1:16). The result is souls have been saved and the Lord's church in Bangor continues to press on in what is basically a "godless society," which has been torn by religious strife for many years, if you know your Irish history.

The Bible says we all stand on level ground at the foot of the cross (Gal. 3:27-29, Col. 3:11). In other words, there is no "pecking order," no ecclesiastical hierarchy in Christ Jesus. Christ is the one to be exalted in His church. We owe Him everything. Nevertheless, His Word tells us to honor those who deserve our honor (Rms. 13:7). Surely faithful "missionaries" meet that test. They often give up everything to serve the Lord in difficult places and under difficult circumstances. We "esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake" (1 Thess. 5:13). They are truly deserving of our sharing with them "support in all good things" (Gal. 6:6).

David A. McCain