



BETHEL BEGINS

The origins of Bethel United Church of Jesus Christ Apostolic

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FREE CHAPTER

Chapter 7: Mighty Rushing Windrush

MIGHTY RUSHING WINDRUSH

“In all of my 88 years I have never met any other people as willing to give their all like Bishop and Mother Dunn.” - Elder H E Erving of Nottingham, tribute shared for the 2005 Golden Jubilee of Bethel United Church of Jesus Christ (Apostolic) UK

It must never be forgotten that Bishop Dunn did not come to England to start a church. As Deputy Bishop and Secretary within the Shiloh Apostolic Church Bishop Dunn seemed to be placed as a future presider for that organisation, but this was not the plan of God. Bishop Dunn came to England for two reasons: (1) to earn enough money to pay down on a house back in Jamaica, so that (2) he could get married to his sweetheart, Chloe Effie Thomson (‘Mother Dunn’). The Lord saw an opportunity in Bishop’s love for Mother Dunn to get him where He needed him to be. In fact, it was Mother Walsh’s no-nonsense retort, when he asked to marry Mother Dunn, that triggered Bishop to pray for a “whale, plane or ship” to get him off the Island of Jamaica.

The young Sydney Dunn met Chloe Thomson during a visit to her local assembly. As he set eyes upon her a beautiful young Chloe, a voice confirmed that he was looking at his wife to be. However, because Chloe was not as mature in the faith (so he thought), he was a little uncertain. Ironically, Chloe showed herself to be quite mature indeed as after Sydney proposed she asked a sister to join her in fasting for an answer from the Lord. Funnily, the sister never did fast about it as she already bore witness that Bishop Dunn was the husband for Sister Chloe. Razor sharp as ever, Bishop interjected: “Look at that she was trying to fast me out of her life but serve her right: the sister did not fast for her!”

Love for Chloe Thomson was the catalyst that led Sydney Dunn to England, it was love for Christ that would lead him to spend the rest of his life here. Thank God for Mother Dunn. A matriarch in Bethel. As a teenager, I had the job of assisting the elderly Mother Dunn from home to Gibson Road on Sunday mornings. Mother Dunn lived close to heaven. She was constantly speaking in tongues; she was a loving soul. She served as treasurer for the Gibson Road assembly, as well as a Trustee of Bethel UK for many years. I am told that if someone had stated an amount on their tithes envelope and the money was short of what the person said, Mother Dunn would make up the difference on their behalf without going back to them. Mother Dunn was a prophetess. When she stood up to prophesy, everyone fell silent, operating in the gift of tongues and interpretation, she had a divine authority. A holy hush would descend on the congregation before she spoke as Thus Saith the LORD. It was awesome. Her adorning was not with the jewels of this world, but of a sparking Christ-like character. Thank God for Mother Dunn!

Bishop Dunn set sail for England that year, boarding the S.S Arega on the 18th of December 1954. No sooner had he boarded than his assignment began. Seeing the immorality onboard Bishop preached to the passengers, saving many the embarrassment of arriving in England carrying children that did not belong to their spouses. Interestingly, the LORD used the same ship, the S.S Arega to carry Elder Leon Walrond from Barbados to the U.K in 1956. Elder Walrond served as Bishop Dunn's assistant pastor at Gibson Road for 52 years (1966-2018).

Bishop Dunn arrived in Folkestone on Saturday 9th January 1955 and headed for Birmingham (arriving at 2am on Sunday 10th January), where he would spend the rest of his life. In Bishop Dunn's own words: "No soon than I arrived I began to make enquiries where there was a Pentecostal Church where I could live and feel free, for I could not see myself living in England without the Church that I was born into. In my searching I saw Pentecostal churches and Apostolic Churches, but when I made enquiries,

these were not the churches that upheld the ONENESS doctrine and I preferred to return to Jamaica without a penny as long as I kept the faith that I was taught, believed, and practiced.” (Johnson, 2016).

Bishop Dunn gathered to worship with others who came to England and were without an Apostolic church to call home. These early pioneers included: Bro Miller & Sis Miller (Bishop Miller & Mother Miller), Bro Algernon McKenzie (Bishop McKenzie); Bro George Taylor (Bishop Taylor), Bro Raphael Williams, Bro Bertie Higgins. Upon the arrival of Bishop Dunn in 1955 these saints and others were convinced that Elder Dunn (Bishop Dunn) should be their pastor. It is interesting that many of these early saints to settle in Birmingham hailed from the Apostolic Ark, the first Apostolic Church in Jamaica. God in His infinite wisdom would use them to help plant the work in England. This is fitting seeing how close these saints would have been to the teaching and practices of the Azusa Street Revival and the preaching of the Acts 2:38 message from leaders such as Haywood.

During this time Bishop Dunn and Sister Chloe E Thomson were married. Services began to be kept in the house of the saints Bishop Dunn stayed with. They progressed from a dining room to a school room in Chain Walk, Lozells. Then to Berner Street, where they used a hall above a factory. As the group grew, the brother who owned the house where services began felt he should be the leader. However, when it became apparent the brother was not fully persuaded of the Apostolic doctrine, inviting non-Apostolic preachers to minister, Bishop Dunn decided it best to withdraw for his soul’s sake in August 1955. This stand for truth cost Bishop and Mother Dunn their place of accommodation... but the Lord made room for them for honouring His Word.

House meetings re-started at 145 Holly Road, at Brother and Sister Neil’s house. It was during this time the Lord spoke to Bishop Dunn. As Bishop contemplated going back to Jamaica the Lord said: “You are pregnant with the church, why don’t you give birth!” Then, while Bishop was at work the

LORD called him just before his lunch break and said: “Go up to Gibson Road, go up to Gibson Road, go up to Gibson Road!” Bethel’s beginnings at 2 Gibson Road are the result of a divine call from the Almighty.



▲ Bishop & Mother Dunn in Bishop's office at no.2 Gibson Road (1980s)



▲ Mother Alberta Saunders with Mother Chloe Dunn

READ THE WHOLE STORY

Bethel Begins traces Bethel United Church of Jesus Christ Apostolic from the Azusa Street Revival of 1906, through Jamaica, to Gibson Road, and profiles each of the founding bishops.

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