

MOTHERWELL, ONT.  
*Presbyterian Church.*

# *Diamond Jubilee*

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Motherwell, ONT.  
Presbyterian Church

1858 - 1918

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## Historical Sketch of the Congregation

The history of the Presbyterian Church in the vicinity of Motherwell dates back to the early "forties" when the late Dr. Skinner, then in charge of the congregations of English Settlement and Bethel, in the township of London, extended his missionary labors as far north as Downie and Fullarton, preaching in private dwellings and rude school-houses—"enduring hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ."

The history of the congregation of Motherwell began at a later date. The early settlers in this community worshipped for the greater part, in the Downie church, now known as Avonbank. Faithfully, on Sabbath days, and often in bare feet, these pioneers trudged the long miles, by forest roads, to the Downie services, joyful in the privileges of the House of God of which they had long been deprived. At that time Downie church was associated with St. Marys under the successive pastorates of Rev. John Proudfoot and Rev. William Caven, both, at a later date connected with Knox College. In 1856, St. Marys having grown stronger and desiring the entire services of one minister, the connection between St. Marys and Downie was severed, and Mr. Caven remained with St. Marys. This afforded an opportunity to rearrange the work so as to better serve the requirements of the growing settlements in Downie and Fullarton. Accordingly, in 1857, a petition signed by thirty-five members of Downie congregation resident in Fullarton, was presented to Presbytery at a meeting held in Toronto, asking to be erected into a separate congregation. This petition was granted and the congregation of Mitchell Road was organized, now known as Motherwell.

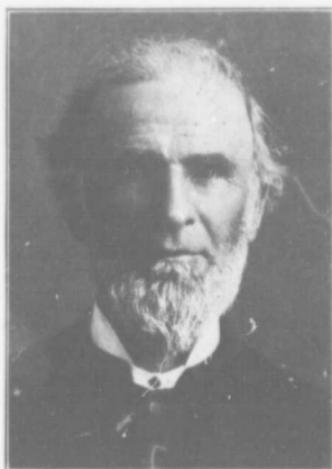


In the same year the first church building on the Mitchell Road was begun. It was a frame structure and considered a fine one at that time. It was not completed till 1858 and was then formally opened.

The first session consisted of Messrs. John Caven, Robert Bain, James Brown and James Watson, all but the first named ordained in 1858.

The first Communion Roll was as follows:—

James Robertson	Robert Bain
Mrs. J. Robertson	Mrs. R. Bain
Mrs. Agnes Hay	James Roger
Mrs. John Waddell	Mrs. J. Roger
James Nairn	James Watson
Mrs. J. Nairn	Mrs. J. Watson
Charles Baird	Robert Roger, Jr.
Mrs. C. Baird	Mrs. R. Roger
Wm. Kirkpatrick	William Laing
Mrs. Wm. Kirkpatrick	Mrs. William Laing
John Bain	Mrs. Alexander Young
Mrs. J. Bain	Walter Noble
James Brown, sr.	John Caven
Mrs. J. Brown	Mrs. J. Caven
John Watson	John McIntyre, Sr.
Mrs. J. Watson	Mrs. J. McIntyre.



Rev. Robert Hamilton

On the first day of July, 1857, the united congregations extended a call to Mr. J. M. King, who afterwards was connected with Manitoba College. The call was declined. After months of delay, another call was extended on the 23rd of February, 1858, to Mr. Robert Hamilton, promising a stipend of \$500 per annum. The call came before the Presbytery in London on the 7th of April, 1858, and was accepted. The Presbytery appointed Mr. Hamilton's ordination trials to take place before Presbytery in Hamilton in June. These having been sustained, his ordination

and induction were appointed to take place in Downie church June 30th, 1858.

On the day appointed Presbytery met in Downie Church. The sermon was preached by Rev. Mr. Walker, of Chatham; the minister was addressed by Rev. Mr. Caven, of St. Marys, and the people by Rev. Dr. Skinner, who had laid the foundations of the church's work here. The event was one of great rejoicing and was made the occasion of a "Great Solre" in the evening of the same day in the church on the Mitchell Road. It is interesting to note some of the speakers on that occasion, as, for instance, Rev. Mr. Caven, who occupied the chair; Revs. Stevenson, of Stratford; Hall, of Nissouri, and Dr. Skinner, above referred to.

The pastorate assumed by Mr. Hamilton at this time was his only pastoral charge. He spent forty-three years ministering to this community in the things of the Kingdom of Heaven. The work was not without difficulties and discouragements. The roads were difficult as are all roads in pioneer settlements. Much of his travelling was done on horse-back and on foot. Indeed even up till his later years Mr. Hamilton walked while doing much of his pastoral work.

Mr. Hamilton had much to do with moral reform in the community. He was an unrelenting enemy of wasteful, immoral and vicious habits, and he met and fought them openly, fearless of any who challenged him. As in most early settlements he found in the liquor traffic the most difficult evil to combat, but he lived to see in a large measure the victory for which he strove.

Mr. Hamilton was always closely identified with the educational interests of the community. He took a keen interest in his home school-section, and did much to advance and strengthen the work, and to kindle in the community an appreciation of the educational ideal. Many of the boys of his day testify now to his diligence in kindling this love of learning. It was his custom to select from among the older boys some who seemed more likely to respond, call them to the manse regularly and give them lessons in Latin and Greek. It was in vain the boys sometimes made their best "sprint" passing the manse that they might miss the drill when unprepared. The good man's keen eye did not let them escape, or if he missed them he sent for them. It is said by one now grown to manhood and more appreciative of his pastor's interest, that he had even turned his coat inside-out while passing to escape recognition, but in vain. Today Dr. Hamilton's portrait hangs in Motherwell school, a recognition of his faithful labors in the interest of the school, and an inspiration still to the boys and girls.

Mr. Hamilton's interest in education, combined with his scholarship and ability, led to government recognition, and he was appointed a Superintendent of Education, a position correspondent to our inspectorate. This office he filled faithfully for several years.



Motherwell Presbyterian Church

Under Mr. Hamilton's labors the congregation grew steadily until, in the year 1863, the membership had increased from 32 to 109. An extension of the church building now became necessary, and, in the progressive spirit of minister and people, the enlargement was made. This building continued the place of worship till 1882. Meanwhile the community had increased in numbers, the country had developed, the material wealth of the people had increased, their homes had been enlarged and made more comfortable. Early in Mr. Hamilton's ministry a comfortable manse had been built on a charming site overlooking the Thames valley, the main part of which is still the home of the minister. It seemed good and fitting that a House of Worship should be erected that would comfortably accommodate the growing congregation, and be in keeping with the prosperity of the community. The building operations were entrusted to a committee composed of A. McFadyen, A. M. Driver, Charles Baird, George Urquhart and J. McCullough. Thus the present structure was erected at a cost of \$6,000, which sum was raised by the congregation in three years.

Of the development of the work one can write but briefly. A few facts, however, will be of interest. To the Elders above mentioned were added, in Mr. Hamilton's time, the following:—John Bain, sr, Charles

Baird, sr., Wm. Laing, George Laurie, Robert Mackie, ordained in 1868. John Laing, John Stephen, William Sterritt, ordained in 1882. Robert Brown, Hugh Russell, J. Thompson, George Young, George Urquhart, ordained in 1892.

The Sunday School work dates back to the early days of the community life, when it was organized and conducted in the old log school-house near Brown's bridge, now known as Motherwell bridge. The founders were John Caven, James Brown, Robert Bain, James Voy and John Bain, sr. The first Superintendent was William Laing, who kept up the work till his removal from the congregation. Charles Baird, sr., then took up the leadership and continued in office for over twenty years. His long and faithful service is gratefully remembered by the congregation and community.

Prominent in the work of the congregation has always stood the Women's Foreign Missionary Society—now known as the Women's Missionary Society. In this work Mrs. Hamilton was always a faithful leader. The Society was organized in 1884 by Mrs. McLaren, of Toronto, and Mrs. Gordon, of Harrington, with ten members. Mrs. Hamilton was the first president and filled that office for many years. Her zeal for missions has left an abiding influence on the congregation.

In 1890 another important step in organization was taken when a Young People's Society of Christian Endeavor was formed. This Society has done its share also in its peculiar field of activity. Many of our present workers and supporters received training in this organization that added greatly to their usefulness in later years.

In 1894 Mr. Hamilton was singled out for honors by Knox College, Toronto. His scholarship and ability had long been recognized by the church. Knox College, on this occasion, conferred on him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The year of honors from his church was also the year of deep sorrow in his home. On the 27th of November death removed Mrs. Hamilton from the home, and her remains were laid to rest in Avonbank cemetery, but truly "her works do follow her."

In 1898 the united congregations celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of Avonbank congregation and the fortieth anniversary of Dr. Hamilton's ministry. Old friends of the congregation from a distance came to unite in the honors paid the beloved pastor, and to express their appreciation of his service.

For three years more Dr. Hamilton continued to serve the charge, then enfeebled by years of arduous toil, he resigned his charge in 1901 and retired from the active duties of the pastorate.

At a meeting of Presbytery held at Cromarty, Sept. 24th, 1901, the resignation was accepted, to take effect the last Sabbath of October. Representatives from both congregations expressed their regret at Dr. Hamilton's enforced retirement, paying high tribute to him and his work in their midst.

The last Communion service under this long pastorate was held September 29th, 1901. At the end of October Dr. Hamilton laid down his work here. The congregations gathered in loving farewells and presented addresses and gifts of appreciation, after which Dr. Hamilton retired to Stratford. Here for nearly eight years he lived and preached as opportunity offered in city and country, relieving pastors, sick or absent, in the same brotherly spirit that always characterized his life. In 1909 he preached his last sermon, and on the 16th of September, about four weeks' later, he passed away, his life work full and well done. His remains were laid to rest in the family plot in Avonbank cemetery among his friends, and amid the scenes of his life labor. We look frequently at his resting place there and think of him who "being dead, yet speaketh."

It is of interest to recall that at the same Presbytery meeting at which Dr. Hamilton's resignation was accepted, one of the young men of Motherwell, Rev. W. G. Russell, was designated for Foreign Mission work. Mr. Russell is the only one in the history of the congregation to take up foreign mission work. His life work was early closed and he passed to his reward October 10th, 1913.

After the retirement of Dr. Hamilton, the congregations of Motherwell and Avonbank, under the guidance of Rev. J. H. Graham, of Avonton, as interim-moderator, made unanimous choice of the Rev. Robert Stewart, of Melbourne, Ont., and on March 3rd, 1902, at a meeting held in Avonbank church, issued a call to him to be their minister. The call was sustained by Stratford Presbytery and forwarded to London Presbytery, where Joseph Mountain and William Sterritt presented the claims of Motherwell and Avonbank. Mr. Stewart accepted the call. The induction took place on the 22nd of April, 1902, in Motherwell church. Rev. Mr. Cranston presided, Rev. Mr. Leitch addressed the minister and Rev. J. H. Graham, the people.



Rev. Robert Stewart

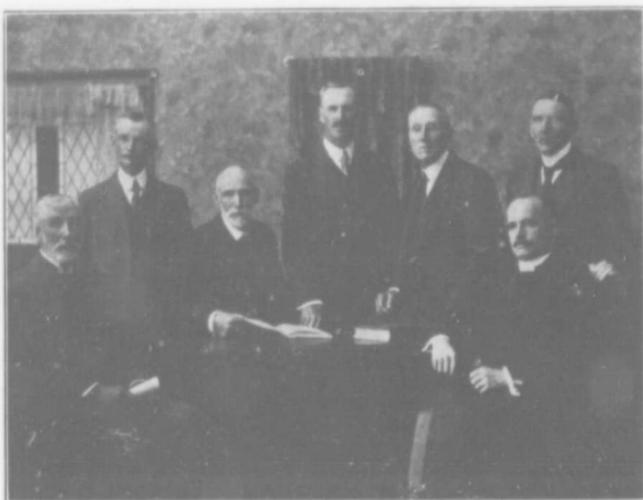
The pastorate thus begun was harmonious and successful throughout. It was not marked by as many changes as the longer pastorate of Dr. Hamilton, but, the pastor and people in their work kept well abreast of their times. The pioneers were passing away. Many retired to the comforts of the town or city. Large families of young people had grown up and scattered. The lure of the West drew many away till the numbers, as in most country charges, were greatly reduced. But the work went on led by Mr. Stewart and a strong staff of leaders, for over fourteen years.

All branches of the work have been maintained and loyally supported. Discouraging times came but the fidelity of the people and pastor overcame. During Mr. Stewart's pastorate 120 members were added to the roll in Motherwell, one-half of whom made profession of faith. There were 67 baptisms.

The Sabbath School work was led by the late Charles Baird and later by Wm. Brown and George Thompson, who is still the efficient and progressive superintendent. While many teachers have done their part in turn, mention should be made of the long and faithful service in the Bible Class of the late William Sterritt and of William Brown. The Sabbath School continues to emphasize the claims of missions. It still supports a pupil in Pointe-aux-Trembles School in Quebec and gives freely to other needy causes.

The Women's Foreign Missionary Society continued its activity during this pastorate, finding in Mrs. Stewart, as in Mrs. Hamilton, a loyal friend and leader. Mrs. Stewart acted as President for several years.

The Young People's Society has also persisted, while many, under no less discouraging circumstances, ceased to exist. The loss by removals of families made the work difficult, but it was not allowed to fail. The Society to-day is active and progressive, and is doing its part to train young people in active service, and in systematic giving, both to current revenue and to missions.



### *Motherwell Session*

Hugh Russell	Geo. Thompson	R. J. Brown	Geo. Gill
Geo. Young	Robt. McIntosh	Rev. G. F. N. Atkinson	

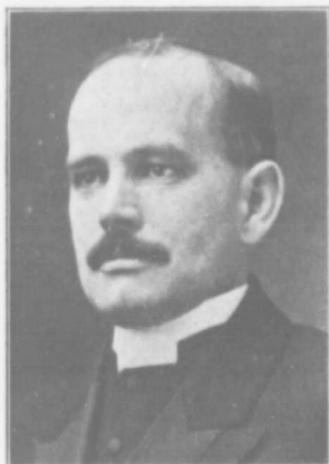
There were marked changes in the Session during Mr. Stewart's pastorate. Messrs. John Bain, John Stephen, Charles Baird, George Urquhart and John Thompson were removed by death; William Sterritt and John Laing retired to St. Marys. There were elected to the office of Elder in 1915, Messrs. George Thompson, George Gill and Robert McIntosh. These, with Messrs. Robert J. Brown, George Young and Hugh Russell constitute the present Session.

During Mr. Stewart's pastorate were some important movements in the church at large affecting her customs and activities. The use of the individual communion cups, instead of the common cup, in the observance of the Lord's Supper, had become quite widespread. In the year 1911 Motherwell congregation adopted the new system and used the individual cups in March of that year for the first time.

During this period also the discussion of the question of the union of the Presbyterian, Methodist and Congregational churches was before the church. In 1912 Motherwell voted in favor of the union, 65 for and 11 against. Again in 1915 another vote of the church at large was taken and again Motherwell voted in favor—76 for and 3 against.

Another movement of importance was in the direction of the larger missionary policy of the church. Again the congregation showed her willingness to respond to the leadership of the church. The Budget plan was endorsed, and the duplex envelope system was adopted. The effect on the offerings of the church has been very marked. The missionary givings in particular have risen rapidly.

In March, 1916, Mr. Stewart received a call from Dutton, Ontario, and decided to accept it. The congregation was again left without a pastor. On the 9th of April Rev. S. MacLean, of St. Marys, declared the pulpit vacant. The usual procedure of hearing candidates with a view to a call was again resorted to. On Tuesday, June 19th, the united congregations met in Motherwell church and decided to call the Rev. G. F. N. Atkinson, B. A., of Tilbury, Ontario. The call was sustained by Stratford Presbytery and presented to Mr. Atkinson at a meeting of Stratford Presbytery on July 11th, 1916, and accepted. The representatives who were appointed to support the call before Stratford Presbytery were H. Russel, J. Sterritt and A. Watson, of Motherwell, and J. Mountain, R. Aitcheson and R. Thompson for Avonbank. The representatives appointed to appear before Chatham Presbytery were R. E. McIntosh for Motherwell and John Oliver for Avonbank.



Rev. G. F. N. Atkinson

The induction took place according to appointment of Presbytery on the 28th of July, 1916, in Avonbank church. A large congregation assembled in the afternoon. Rev. Finlay Matheson, of Stratford, presided; Rev. W. H. Alp, of Granton, preached from the text, "Come thou with us and we will do thee good." Num. 10:29; Rev. J. H. McLean, of Avonton, addressed the minister, and Rev. S. MacLean, of St. Marys, the people. In the evening a congregational tea was served and a large crowd assembled for the concert.

Thus began the third pastorate of the united charge after a history of 58 years. Less than two years have passed. The work goes on. Extensive renovation has been made to the manse property, including a new modern kitchen and bath-room, in which work both congregations have united heartily. The outlook of the work at large is full of promise. The opportunities before us provide stimulus for our best efforts in the days to come.

The following are the names of those at present members of the congregation:—

William Brown	Andrew Watson
Mrs. Wm. Brown	Mrs. Andrew Watson
Mrs. John Sterritt	Mrs. John Porteous
Robert J. Brown	Mrs. Thomas Marshall
Mrs. R. J. Brown	Mrs. John McIntyre
Mrs. John Good	Mrs. George Urquhart, sr.
Mrs. H. Rowland	George Urquhart
Christina Bain	Mrs. George Urquhart, jr
Neil C. Bain	Helen Urquhart
Mrs. H. Bothwell	Minneta Urquhart
Mrs. Andrew Brown	George Roger
Ella Brown	Mrs. G. Roger
Mrs. A. Nairn	Mrs. John Roger
Margaret Nairn	Robert Barr
Charles Baird	Mrs. R. Barr
Mrs. Charles Baird	George Young
Mrs. J. Thompson	Mrs. Robert Ward
George S. Thompson	Robert McIntosh
Mrs. G. S. Thompson	Mrs. Robt. McIntosh
Mrs. J. Butter	Robert E. McIntosh
Mrs. James Barnett	Margaret McIntosh
Jno. Sterritt	Mrs. Milton Evans
Mrs. R. E. McIntosh	Mrs. Richard Wiles
George Parker	Mrs. John McCullough
Mrs. G. Parker	Ewan Cameron
Jessie Watson	Mrs. E. Cameron
John S. Murray	Mrs. Leslie Brown
Mrs. J. S. Murray	Bertha M. Cook
George Gill	Mrs. Wm. Stephens
Mary R. Butter	Mrs. J. Roy Russel
Thomas Driver	Harold McKay
Mrs. T. Driver	James W. Watson
Mrs. Wm. Spice	John Young
Thomas Marshall	Harry E. Bothwell
Leslie Brown	Janet B. Murray
Mrs. Thomas Near	Hubert Russel
Mrs. Roy Hunt	Mary Morrison
Milton Stephen	Tena Bolton
Mrs. M. Stephen	J. Verna Roger
Henry Morrison	Hattie Bolton
Mrs. H. Morrison	Marie Stephen
Nettie G. Gill	William Bolton

Mrs. Wm. R. Spice  
Jennie Gill  
N. Charlotte Brown  
James Barr  
Mrs. James Barr  
Hugh Russel  
Mrs. H. Russel  
John Butter  
Mrs. Bert Ross  
William R. Spice  
Harry Rowland  
Mrs. Ed. Evans  
Myrtle Evans  
Annie Evans  
Thomas Near  
Agnes Young  
James E. Brown  
Mrs. J. E. Brown  
Irene R. J. Rogers  
Milton Evans  
Mrs. Bragg  
George C. McIntosh  
John Bolton  
Ernest C. Rogers  
J. Roy Russel  
W. Norman Morrison  
Mrs. John Butters  
William E. Nairn  
Alexander Urquhart  
D. J. McKay  
Mrs. J. D. McKay  
Mrs. Thos. Standeven  
Mrs. D'Arcy Ross

Mrs. William Bolton  
J. Wilson Brown  
Mrs. Wm. Wiles  
Mrs. Wm. Clark  
E. Roy Hunt  
John Wiles  
Mrs. John Wiles  
Mrs. George McIntosh  
Mrs. G. F. N. Atkinson  
John Watson  
Nellie Brown  
Agnes Thompson  
Mary McIntosh  
Mary Bolton  
Ernest Bolton  
Gladys McKay  
Mabel Hackney  
Margaret Hackney  
Charles Hackney  
Mrs. Chas. Hackney  
Neil Barr  
Lexie Barr  
Gertie Murray  
James Murray  
Alexander Morrison  
Arthur Cairns  
Aimee Roger  
William Roger, jr.  
Mrs. George Brown  
D'Arcy Ross  
Mrs. John Young  
Grace Sterritt  
Harold Roger

This sketch would be incomplete without reference to the service of praise. In the early days this was entrusted to a precentor, the organ and the choir not yet having found their place in Motherwell. So far as the writer of this sketch can learn, the precentors of this congregation were John Bain, sr., John Bain, jr., and David Oliver, sr. The names also of Robert Bain and John McNeil are mentioned as those who led in the Sabbath School and, for a time, in the church.

In the course of time the organ was introduced and a choir was organized. Miss Bessie Bain was organist and choir leader for a number of years. On her retirement to take charge of the organ and choir in Knox church, Mitchell, Miss Ella Brown was appointed organist and Neil Bain choir-leader. On Miss Brown's resignation, Miss Margaret Nairn was appointed organist and is still devoting herself to the work, with Mr. Bain still the trusted leader. The efficient leadership of the musical service in the church has had a very marked effect both in the service of the sanctuary and on the community at large.

On the sixteenth of June, 1918, the congregation celebrated the sixtieth anniversary of the opening of their first church and the induction of their first minister. The committee in charge consisted of the pastor as convenor, Messrs. John Sterritt, John S. Murray, Mrs. H. Bothwell, sr., Mrs. G. Parker and Mrs. Andrew Watson. A great reunion was planned, but the seriousness of the aspect of the Great War led the congregation to limit the celebration of the event to Sabbath services.

The speaker of the day was the Rev. John Neil, D.D., of Toronto, Moderator of the Assembly for 1917-18. He was assisted in the morning service by the pastor. In the evening the congregation was honored also by the presence of the newly-elected Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev. Colin Fletcher, D.D., of Thames Road congregation. There were also present Rev. S. McCoy, D.D., of Victoria, B.C.; Rev. A. H. Drumm, formerly minister of Avonton, and Rev. Gregory, of the Baptist church,

Fullarton. It is worthy of note that on the Sabbath previous Rev. Prof. Andrew Baird, of Winnipeg, a son of a Motherwell family, ex-Moderator of General Assembly, also, of the year 1916-17, was present and conducted services. A message was read from the former pastor, Mr. Stewart, expressing his congratulation with the congregation on the happy events of the day.

The day was fine. The church was crowded. The speaker delivered a strong sermon at the morning service on the subject "A vital church essential to the progress of a nation." In the evening he gave an account of his visit to the Canadian soldiers in England and France as representative of the church. The service of praise was led by the Motherwell choir and was most hearty and inspiring, the large congregations joining in the spirit of the occasion. The oldest member of the congregation, Mrs. John Rogers, was present. Mrs. Rogers joined Motherwell congregation in October of 1858.

Regret was felt keenly that the family of the late Dr. Hamilton were unable to be present. Their bereavement in the recent death of Rev. Alexander Hamilton, D.D., of Keewatin, was still keenly felt both by the family and by the congregation. Dr. Hamilton died very unexpectedly at his home on Monday, June 3rd, and was buried on the Friday following in Avonbank cemetery by sorrowing friends of childhood and college days.

This sketch is written in troublous times. Since August 4th, 1914, the Great War with Germany and Austria-Hungary has raged and spread and increased till most of the great nations and many smaller ones are involved. Germany has challenged the world with her "will to power" doctrine. The British Empire and allied powers have taken up the challenge. Motherwell shares the conviction that these principles must not prevail. From the first her boys began to answer the call. Three have already made the supreme sacrifice. Pte. Malcolm McKenzie and Lieut. Oliver J. McIntosh at Vimy Ridge, Flt. Lieut. W. Gordon Brown "somewhere in France." We pause in reverence and gratitude and love as we think of them. "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

From the first, also, the Red Cross work has found practical sympathy in our community. Work was begun early in the year 1915. In November of that year a Red Cross Society was organized, which has done fine work ever since. Necessaries for the wounded, comforts and special boxes for the boys on active service, continue to be sent without abatement in zeal or thought of sacrifice and toll.

God save our men at arms,  
Shield them 'mid war's alarms,  
God save our men!  
Strong may they stand in Thee,  
Valiant for Liberty,  
Crown them with Victory,  
God save our men!

We turn from the past to face the future with its problems all enshrouded in uncertainty, yet certain to demand of us the fullest measure of sacrifice and service, and to prove the measure of our faith.

"Let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us; and establish Thou the work of our hands upon us, yea, the work of our hands, establish Thou it."