

History of God's work in Naselle from 1903 to 1968

It was in the year 1903 when a young man, Herman Tapio, from Astoria came to nacelle to find salvation. He was an alcoholic and had tried to get victory over it, but in vain. Time and time again he would leave Astoria and his drinking friends and go to a farm in Olney, where he had friends to live with between fishing seasons. But the lord's hand was upon him, and finding a book about salvation, he started to seek God. He had heard that in Naselle there were Christian men, who could help him, and so he came. He found lodging at a Maki farm (now Nyman place) with the Pernu's. The river was the "freeway" in those days and people would go with their boats to meetings in homes. The leading brethren were Mikko Talus and Kalle Korpela, who spoke in services. In one such gathering at the Victor Niemi farm, the Lord et Brother Tapio and he was wonderfully saved. He became a faithful witness, telling everybody of his salvation. Later on he traveled all around holding services and preaching the word of God.

In the fall of 1904 an evangelist, Edward Pirinen, came from Finland with his wife and sister in law to hold revival services, and a real revival broke out. It was said that there was not a home in the Naselle area in which some member was saved and many under conviction. Then in a midst of this wonderful moving God came a great sorrow. Brother Pirinen became sick with TB, which took his life in a short time. Everybody prayed hard that his life would be spared. The brethren even anointed him with oil, as it is written in the book of James, though they didn't not know just how it was to be done. They anointed his whole body with oil and kept on praying and hoping. However, the Lord took Brother Pirinen home from the midst of the revival. The meetings were continued by local brethren and souls were saved now and then.

When the Apostolic Faith Mission in Portland was started the news of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit reached the Naselle Christians and 3 of the brethren were sent to investigate. They were Mikko Talus, Herman Tapio and Taavi Vainikainen. They stayed several days and also sought God to fill them with the Holy Spirit, but none revieced the Baptism at that time. In fact, Brother Talus and Vainikainen came to be against it, as not being for this age. Only Brother Tapio felt it was of the Lord and kept on seeking and waiting for the Promise until in 1909 the Lord did fill him with the Holy spirit. After that, several others from nacelle

became candidates for the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Some of those were Sanfred and Hanna Wiitala, Grandma Wiitala, Matt and Tilda Hundis, Victor and Ellen Ylonen, Laina Pellervo (former Mrs. Pirinen), Fred and Mandy Nyberg and Nellie, etc. They would go to Portland to attend the Apostolic Camp Meeting each summer. And Between times Finnish Christians from Portland and Clatskanie would visit Naselle for services. Matson from Clatskanie would come to services in Naselle, also Nymans and others from Astoria, Brother Kallio, Ericksons and Cochrens etc. from Portland came often. Everything went fine for some time.

Then in 1917 came Evangelist Antti Lajunen from Finland and joined the Finnish group in Portland. He soon realized that there was something unscriptural in the movement and brought it out to leaders. They did not approve of him and soon made it known that he was not welcome to meet with the Finnish group any longer. Most of the Naselle folk were for Brother Lajunen and brought him to Naselle, where he continued to minister for some time, making trips elsewhere between times. The Lord used him wonderfully, so that several were saved and many filled with the Holy Spirit in his services. He also had some of the biggest water baptismal services in Naselle. The ones who were with him were put out of the fellowship with the Apostolic Faith Mission in Portland and so the work in Naselle also became split. One part continued to be "Apostolic Faith" Christians and the rest just Pentecostal believers. The only ones of the Apostolic Faith group were the Matt Hundis family, Charley and Anna Vasara and the Tapio family. Later on, because of having a radio in his home, the Tapio's were asked to leave the fellowship with the Apostolic Faith and they also joined the Pentecostal group.

In 1913 Rev. Ellis Koven visited Naselle for the first time when many souls found the Lord and some later joined the Pentecostal group. By that time when Brother Lajunen ministered here, there was a nice group of the Christians. They were the Sanfred Wiitala family, Brother and Sister Vic Ylonen, Sister Pellervo, Fred Nyberg, Andrew and Hilda Wirkkala, Frank and Olga Johnson, Charley and Saima Wiitala, Otto Wirkkala, Matt and Wilho Saari. Several others were attending the prayer meetings conducted each Sunday afternoon and Wednesday evening. These meetings were in different homes. Only when a visiting preacher was here, the meetings were at the school or in the little "red-Church" (prayer house) near the Otto Hill home by the road.

In 1923 evangelist Sophia Swanson from Cleveland, Ohio and Britta Lajunen (sister of Antti Lajunen) of Finland ministered here for some time, strengthening the believers.

In 1924 sister Aili Lindstrom from Aberdeen came to visit the Christians in Naselle, of whom she had heard so much from Brother Lajunen (who helped her into full Gospel fellowship) and from Brother Matt Keranen, who went around singing and testifying to sinners about salvation and encouraging Christians, wherever he met them, spending some time in Aberdeen also. Somehow Sister Lindstrom had befriended Mikko Talus on his meeting trips to Aberdeen, and so while in Naselle he wanted to honor Sister Lindstrom by announcing a meeting at the High School Auditorium so she could meet the people of the community and get acquainted. It was easy in those days to announce any gathering. You just went to the phone of the farmers' line and rang so many rings and everybody would run to the phone to listen to what was being announced. So that Sunday afternoon the large auditorium was filled with people young and old. At that time, there were no roads yet to any place farther than Knappton, Salmon Creek and Deep river, so it was easy to get even the young people to any kind of gathering. Like at that time, there were for "specials" only a few songs by Wilho and Matt Saari and Sister Lindstrom. Wilho played his Kantele and Matt and Aili played guitars and sang. That was a trio for "specials" for some time to come, until new young people were saved and joined us later. Brother Talus spoke on that occasion, and he was a fluent speaker and interesting. Some testimonies were part of the program and an offering was taken for Sister Lindstrom (only offering ever taken for her). The reason this gathering is mentioned here, is that after attending a few of the prayer meetings, where there were no young people, except the Saari Brothers and Nellie Nyberg, and to see such a gathering and so easily arranged, we felt there was tremendous opportunity in Naselle for revival meetings.

After talking it over with some of the brethren they suggested that the writer should contact an evangelist and they would welcome him. The evangelists were not so plentiful in those days as yet, and so Brother Figstad, to whom we wrote about coming to Naselle, was so busy that only after a few months was he able to come. Before that the Lindstrom family also had moved to Naselle and were able to attend the meetings and see the High School Auditorium almost packed at every service. Few souls were saved. They were the first English services in Naselle,

from then on, we often had them, as the Finnish preachers were not often available.

Rilla Sanders had several services in 1925. Her mother helping her at times.

In 1926 a real effort was put forth to win souls to the Lord. Our evangelists were the Norby sisters (2 Norwegian girls from Seattle) and Evangelist and Mrs. Walter Smith of Raymond came also to help for two weeks. The meetings lasted for four weeks. Whatever was accomplished then and earlier seemed to go to the winds. The leaders in the Congregational and Lutheran churches (none had church buildings yet, but their members were organized) would see to it that new converts became affiliated with them. And instead of growing in the Lord, they just became church-members. The Pentecostal people were not organized then. Some did not wish to get organized so that they could be free to attend services in other churches who had more preachers visiting them and they also had a pastor come once a month from Astoria.

Several of us saw that it was important to be organized and to have our own building for services. So, while evangelist Onni Kestila was in Naslle for some time in 1926 he encouraged people to join together for a church and really get the work going for the Lord. So, most of the Christians in the Pentecostal group joined together and so our church was organized and incorporated at the Court House in South Bend. The next thing was the church bilding for services, which seemed rather hard to accomplish since some of our group had not joined together (several years later they did all join however).

Reverend and Mrs. Thomas Winqvist from Seattle visited here several times and encouraged the saints to get busy building. Several locations were considered as being suitable to be purchased for a church building. Finally Brother Sanfred Wiitala purchased a piece of land where the August Larson home is now located. Before anything more was accomplished it was suggested by the owner of the land where our church now stands, to trade the lot with this property, which also had a house on it. It was felt to be the leading of the Lord as this place was just where we had wanted to have the building erected, had there been a lot for sale then. So, we had the parsonage before the church, and it was rented for some time.

After the death of evangelist Antti Lajunen, who was a martyr for the Gospels sake and was buried in Naselle cemetery, the people got really interested in starting a building fund. And so in 1929 our first church was built and dedicated. Many evangelists and missionaries, Finnish and others, visited in Naselle and held services from then on. Before the church was finished we had few preachers visiting that were not mentioned previously. Rev Secrits from Olympia held meetings in a grange hall. Also, Everett Wilson etc. Reverend Ralph Butterfield held meetings in the new church.

Brother Bogue and Reverend Carlson, Raymond pastors had occasional meetings in our church. Also, Reverend Borseth from South Bend would often come. Reverend Pekka Nuutinen spent the summer of 1930 in Naselle. That same fall in November the Fox Party was invited for a two week meeting. Two young people were saved in those meetings (Hannes Wirkkala and Vieno Torpa) so an invitation was given to the Fox Party to return as soon as possible. In 1931, they returned and stayed for 6 months or so. A revival was started among the young people and many were saved. Meetings were well attended and so they were kept going. However, it was the depression time all over and for our small church to support an evangelistic party of 4 for months became a problem. Only 2 brethren had jobs (Brother Tapio was janitor at school and Wilho Saari drove school bus) the rest were all on welfare at that time. Also, we had an \$800 loan on the church building and were not able to pay even the interest on it. So, the leading brethren suggested that the meetings be discontinued for the time being and perhaps we could get one worker to take care of the regular meetings. It caused some discord and finally the evangelistic party took the new converts and with them started meetings at the Congregational church. It did not work out too well, so the evangelistic party felt it best to leave. Later on that year the Lord led sister Hilma Savolainen to Naselle and helped her to get the group together again and the work and revival continued. Souls were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Also, regular offerings were taken to pay the debt on the church building. And in every way the work was growing ahead spiritually and in numbers.

After Sister Sabolainen felt led to go elsewhere to work, we had evangelists Anon and Amalia Salo as our pastors for 2 years. Then later on we had many lady evangelists for shorter or longer periods to supervise the work. They were Anna Maki at two different times, May Isaacson-Daggett, Helen Tilus, Elsie Ovaska. Also,

the Keys family from California were with us several months in 1936 when we had a revival among children. Many of our present members were saved in those meetings as children. Also, the Carlblom family had a campaign with us and two of the Buntain brothers at different times.

Next an invitation was sent to Rev. Niilo Seppala to come and be our pastor, and he consented to come and was our pastor for 9 years. During that time, the old church had become inadequate as the Sunday School needed much more room and in every way a larger building was needed. So, first Brother Seppala supervised the parsonage part of the building with an auditorium upstairs, until we were able to finance the main church building.

The old parsonage was sold and moved to the school grounds for a teacher's dwelling and the lot was made into a parking space. And an additional piece of land was bought from Vainikainen for more parking space. Finally, the rest of the Vainikainen land was bought for the church for future use.

After Brother Seppala felt led to go elsewhere to work for the Lord, we were without a pastor for some time. Visiting ministers and our own brethren filled in until Reverend W.H. Morton came to pastor the church for nearly a year. After him, Reverend Wayne Ridout was our pastor for 7 years and now our present pastor Alfred Olsen, has been here for five years (1968).

During all these some twenty years or more, we have had many Missionaries visit our church. Also ministers from Finland have been speakers in our yearly Conventions. To mention some of the missionaries who have visited here, they are:

Visiting Missionaries: Tolm Yrjola Family and Aira Koikka were with us for about 6 months, while waiting for an opening to China in 1947. Ana Mäkinen and Hilja Nikkanen also for China, Lauri Heimonen and the Jukka Rokka family for Japan have visited 2 times, Armas Halonen from India was given a furlough after he was released from a concentration camp. His expenses provided by our church. Esther Greus from India, Saara Pyykknen of Formosa, Maija Pelttari, Hanna Helimäki from Japan; Sanfrid and Liisa Mattsson from Ethiopia, Buntains from India. Carlblom from Indonesia; Kathleen Kelknap of Cuba, Alma Raatikainen of Kenya. Also, our

own young people Wilho and Kaisa Saari are in missionary work in Liberia. The Walter Erola family, also members of our church are in the Philippines.

Visiting Ministers from Finland have been, Eino Manninen 3 times, Eino Ahonen 2 times, Veikko Manninen 2 times, Lauri Hokkanen, Otto Koivukangas, Odin Finell, Paavo Poysti of Manchuria 2 times for a few weeks; Earl Poysti and Danielle Poysti; Eva Rinne of India. Finnish ministers from Canada have visited several times like Mattie Hamalainen, Veikko Kyllonen, Toivo Pajala, Eva Kestila, Otto Pyykkonen, John Sievenen, Lauri Karhinen, Anna Ponni, Lahja Rouhiainen-Soderberg, K.A. Hellman, Rudolph Worlin, Veikko Lahde, Urho Lahde, Kustaa Lahde, Hilja Niinikorpi, Thomas and Jenny Winqvist, Sipri Hiitala.

It should have been mentioned also earlier about the good campaign we had with Jim Swanson and later on with his mother, Sister Swanson in 1951 (?) when several were saved and filled with the Holy Spirit. Several were also baptized in water.

A campaign with Richard Bishop in 1942 was also successful, a few were saved and also filled with the Holy Spirit.

In Gospel work from our own church are also Albert and Eva Wirkkala and Aimee Wirkkala-Carathers. Also Hannes Wirkkala has served part time.

June 10, 1968 in Naselle Wash.