

## History of IBC-Jurbise, Belgium

In 1966, France's president, Charles deGaulle announced that NATO would not be welcome any longer. The political branch moved to Brussels and the military branch, also known as the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Power in Europe (SHAPE), moved to Casteau.

The English-speaking Baptist churches scattered among the military bases in France closed, except for Emmanuel in Paris. Emmanuel's congregation commissioned a committee of three families who were moving to begin a new church wherever they were relocated. They were the families of Ed Davidson, John Geenamyner, and Royce Williams.

In March of 1967, the military personnel moved to Belgium, although the families did not follow until the school year ended. In the meantime, the committee contacted Rudy Wood, the nearest missionary with the Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board), located in Luxembourg, to see if he would come to Belgium to help them locate a meeting place. None of them spoke English, But Rudy did. After some negotiations to work out meeting times, Wood arranged for the Protestant Church in Mons to share their building. They kept the name of their mother church, calling themselves Emmanuel Baptist Mission.

A later call to Wood asked if he would come down by train one night a week and lead a Bible study for them. Eventually, he was called to pastor the church, with the blessing of FMB, who had not yet begun work in Belgium. While serving in Luxembourg, Wood had been functioning on the Home Missions committee of the European Baptist Federation, and Belgium was one of the Home Mission sites of the EBF. He had been visiting the French-speaking Baptist churches in Belgium for some time. At that time, there were only 300 Belgian Baptists among a population of 10 million people.

Helen and Rudy Wood moved with their two small children in October of 1967 to Nivelles, located between Mons and Brussels, because there was as yet no military housing and all rental property near the SHAPE base was occupied by military families. However, it proved helpful to Woods when he initiated the beginning of the International Church in Brussels a few months later, which the SHAPE congregation sponsored as its first mission. The Emmanuel Mission had Sunday services in the morning and the Brussels International Church held theirs in the evening.

Within a few months of its beginning, the SHAPE congregation outgrew the facilities of the Protestant Church in Mons and a building was rented in Casteau. Their name then changed to the International Baptist Church of Casteau.

When the Woods left for furlough in August of 1968, the Reverend and Mrs. Robert C. Foster, a newly retired Baptist pastor from North Carolina, came to be interim pastor until the Woods returned in a year. However, since the Casteau church was growing rapidly and had good lay leadership, the Woods elected to return to the full-time pastorate in Brussels, at the time still the weaker congregation of the two. The FMB transferred George and Della Poulos from Greece to Casteau (George was of Greek descent. He was told that because of this, he would have to serve in the Greek military; therefore, he needed to transfer out of the country).

By the summer of 1969, it was recognized that the outreach of the church, particularly to non-Americans and to non-Baptists, was being hampered by inadequate facilities and an out of the way location. A new building was essential. To evaluate the options, a building committee was appointed and tasked in November 1969.

The committee's task was staggering. Church membership was only thirty. Although the pastor's salary was paid by the Foreign Mission Board, the church budget barely covered the rent, utilities, and literature needed to continue normal activities. Help was badly needed. In March of 1970, an appeal was made to the Foreign Mission Board for assistance in purchasing a small piece of land approximately 1700 meters square. Although small, the tract was on the primary road between SHAPE Headquarters, and the supporting Chievres Air Base, a road heavily traveled by the Americans and Canadians on duty there. After many complications and obstacles, the purchase was completed in January 1971, using \$5,000 from the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering and \$3,000 from the church family.

As is typical in military communities, transfers and rotations occur annually. With the loss of membership and leadership, the church struggled to survive. In April of 1971, Reverend Poulos left for furlough, and the church was without a pastor until Dr. W. Harold Hicks arrived in September. The membership appeared to be holding at thirty.

The building problems seemed insurmountable. Although the Foreign Mission Board had allocated \$20,000 for the building, the costs were beginning to escalate. Local contractors and architects spoke only in French. Local building codes and styles were difficult to understand. Credit for foreigners, particularly an unknown church group, was not available. The church could not afford to wait however, and continued to plan for the future under the counsel of Dr. Hicks. The year 1972 had to be the year to step forward in faith if the move was to be made.

In late 1971, an Air Force sergeant and his wife were converted and baptized. Mrs. Suzanne Roodzant was the daughter of Belgian parents and had been raised in France. She was quickly pressed into almost full-time service as the church interpreter. Progress on the building quickened. By June 1972, discussions with contractors and local officials had led the group to retain a local architect to design a building. The architect agreed to advertise for bids, select the contractors, and supervise the construction. In October, contracts were signed.

At this point the church had approximately \$3,000 in the building fund. The Foreign Mission Board had promised \$25,000 while friends in Arkansas had promised another \$2,000. Initial bids were estimated to cost \$32,000 with additional costs to be added later on.

In December 1972, when the building costs seemed to be growing, a special emphasis Sunday was held for the building program. The thirty-six resident members and others gave sacrificially. The gift of \$3,135 was received. The effect on the church, however, was startling. Growth and stewardship took on new life. Building fund gifts continued to come in and exceeded the building cost which grew to be \$3,400.

In January, missionary associates William R. and Helen Reynolds arrived to assume pastoral responsibilities. The enthusiasm in the church was at its highest point. By April, the membership was sixty-five. Sunday School attendance set records three times in one month. Worship service attendance grew to an average of ninety-five to one hundred when other who had watched the building progress began to show interest. The church was approaching the position to carry out its mission more effectively in the community.

As unusual as it seems for a new building to be paid for before the congregation moves in, it is equally startling for a new building to be outgrown before it is completed. Such was the case with the International Baptist Church. The auditorium, with its 120 person capacity, appeared to be adequate for

the immediate future. The Sunday School rooms were already too few. Before the building was dedicated, the church requested the architect to make preliminary drawings for additional classrooms within the boundaries of the property.

The dedication of the new building on Sunday, May 27, 1973, was a high point in the life of the church. Approximately 50 Belgian Baptists from six churches joined approximately 140 church members and friends in a bilingual service. Rev. Jean Desy, (president of the Belgian Baptist Union) and Rev. John Merritt (executive secretary of the European Baptist Convention) participated in the service. As Rev. Rudolph Wood (first pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Mission) gave the dedication message, everyone seemed to sense the unity that we have in Jesus Christ. "To God Be the Glory" was sung in English, French, and Polish.

The church entered its second phase of ministry. With a functional building on an easily accessible site, it was in a position to reach greater segments of the English speaking community and to strengthen ties with the Belgian Baptist Union. The church was the only English-speaking evangelical church in southern Belgium. Since English is the primary language used in the SHAPE headquarters, virtually all of the associated adults fell within its mission field.

A small addition was completed in 1974, and a trailer providing more educational space was purchased in 1975. Still, there was not enough room. Immediately people began to give towards the construction of a new large educational wing. Over the next five years, the church gave more than \$60,000 to the Building Fund. This money was placed in a savings account, awaiting the day when it could be used for construction of the building. In addition, the church received a \$30,000 grant from the Foreign Mission Board.

One of the delays to actual ground breaking was the fact that the church property was not large enough to build the planned building according to local zoning laws. Adjoining property was needed. Finally, after a year of praying and negotiating, an adjacent lot was purchased for \$10,000.

The architect was commissioned to move forward with specific plans. A comprehensive cost estimate was made, and in May 1975, the church voted to begin construction. It committed itself to a cost of \$120,000. Total assets at the time were \$80,000. The church agreed to borrow the remaining \$40,000 from the local Belgian bank. The ground breaking ceremony was held on September 2, 1979. The first shovel of dirt was turned enthusiastically by Madame Eva Marchand, 78, the oldest member of the church and a Belgian citizen. Pastor Ray Reynolds followed and then the deacons, church officers, and a representative from each organization and class. A bulldozer arrived two weeks later and the foundation was begun. By January 1980, the building was dried in and excitement was high.

One major problem occurred—the cost overrun due to inflation of labor and building material as well as the steady decline of the dollar had boosted the total cost to \$133,000. A decision had to be made—cut back on an already austere building plan or stop construction until other financial arrangements could be made. The building and finance committees met. After much discussion and prayer, the committees unanimously recommended to the church to "press on, the Lord will provide." The church approved.

After much discussion, an idea emerged that might just raise the money. At least the plan made it possible for every single member of the church to participate in some way. The plan focused on the common denominator that touched the life of every member—food. If the church members would cut back on their eating habits for one month, the savings could be given to the building fund. If people

would eat only soup, sandwiches, and casseroles for one month, it would be surprising how much could be realized. With approximately sixty families in the church, an average of \$165 per family would raise \$10,000. The month of February was designated as the month of soup, sandwiches, and casseroles. The chairman of the finance committee challenged those who bought their lunches to take a sandwich and those who regularly ate out to have soup, sandwiches, and casseroles at home. The young people were challenged to cut out snacks, junk food, and soda pop. The word of “sacrifice” echoed throughout the auditorium, and the people responded unanimously to accept the challenge.

Within two days, the entire SHAPE community was aware of what was taking place, and even if someone wanted to “cheat”, non-members would remind them of their commitment—all in good fun, of course.

As a kick-off for the month, an all-church soup supper was scheduled for the first Sunday night following the evening service. Midway through the month, an all-church casserole supper was planned. Many families who lived close together joined one another on several occasions for a pot of soup or a casserole. The bulletin board at the church was filled with soup and casserole recipes. There was no pressure on anyone. Instead, a spirit of personal commitment, sacrifice, enthusiasm, and “we're going to do it” attitude permeated the church family.

The last Sunday of February was designated as Victory Sunday. When the day arrived, there was an air of excitement never before felt. The auditorium was packed. Families sat together. While the congregation stood and sang “Beneath the Banner of the Cross”, “Onward Christian Soldiers”, and “Faith is the Victory”, families moved from the pews, marched past the altar table, and placed upon it their offerings. Besides checks and cash, there were jars, cases, bottles, and boxes of pennies, nickels, dimes, quarters, and Belgian francs which children had been saving all month. It took fifteen minutes for the entire church family to come to the front.

While the service continued, ten men were busy counting the offering in the kitchen. At the close of the service, the head usher handed the pastor a slip of paper which recorded the amount received--\$10,132.56. Spontaneous applause erupted; tears filled the eyes of many; faces glowed with joy; families hugged each other; and all joined hands to sing in unison “To God Be the Glory.”

By the next Sunday, the total had reached \$11,800. By the end of April, the \$13,000 deficit was covered. On April 27, 1980, the new building was dedicated. More than 300 people came together to praise God for what He did through His people. The real success came from total family commitment and sacrifice.

The sacrificial giving was not over though. The \$40,000 note from the Belgian bank was paid off in May 1983, eighteen months before it was due. A note-burning ceremony was held on Sunday, June 19, 1983. Ken Bigelow, one of the charter members of the church, spoke on “Together We Dreamed.” Rudy Drautz spoke on “Together We Stared”, and Rev. Reynolds preached on “Together We Plan the Future.”

Gay Selby, volunteer of the FMB, came to assume her assignment as a treasurer of the Belgian mission. In addition to that, she became Ray's secretary, church hostess, started the singles ministry, began English as a Second Language classes, and served on the European Singles Committee.

Because of the growing number of Belgians attending our services, Ron and Nancy Coker moved to the Mons area to begin the Belgian ministry. They started a weekly Sunday School class and later a

worship service. Ron became the pastor of the French language group.

While the church was growing and expanding, God began to call people to the ministry. He also opened the door to plant a church in the Netherlands. In June 1975, four families from the AFCENT community made contact with Helen Reynolds at a SHAPE prayer emphasis. At that time, the ladies discussed their desire to have a church in the AFCENT community. In November 1975, a meeting was held at IBC Jurbise with the group from AFCENT. They prayed and shared the vision for planting a church. IBS Jurbise voted to sponsor the work, and on January 11, 1976, the first service was held in the AFCENT school cafeteria. Ray Reynolds preached. There were twenty-seven in attendance.

Laymen from IBC filled the pulpit, rotating on a weekly basis. Jerry Rumfelt, Mike Fahey, and Larry Carson made up the team. After several months, Mike Fahey assumed the pastoral responsibilities and was called by the mission. On April 13, 1976, the mission adopted a constitution and by-laws. The constitution and dedication service for the Emmanuel Baptist Church was held on June 20, 1976. Many members from the IBC Jurbise church made the trip to the Netherlands to join in the special day of celebration. God has richly blessed Emmanuel Baptist Church through the years. It has become a strong church supporting the EBC.

Jerry Rumfelt, Mike Fahey, and Larry Carson, who led in the development of this church, are now all in active ministry. Larry Carson has been pastor at Emmanuel for twelve years and has served as president of the European Baptist Convention.

There were eighteen individuals called to the ministry at IBC Jurbise from 1973-1990. Their names are listed in the appendix.

The second mission sponsored by IBC Jurbise was at Florennes. In 1986, two Southern Baptist families, the Southerlands and Creightons, stationed at Florennes, began to pray about planting a mission. They made contact with Ray Reynolds at IBC Jurbise. These two families joined IBC and made the 100 mile round trip each Sunday for six months. They brought others with them and the group continued to grow. They also met in their community for Bible study each week. IBC voted to sponsor a mission in Florennes. On April 12, 1987, the mission was constituted as the Cornerstone Baptist Mission with twenty-eight charter members. Richard Southerland was called to be the pastor and was ordained by the IBC May 3, 1987. He served the church for eighteen months. With the signing of the IMS between the United States and the Soviet Union, the base was phased out and the church was closed. On July 6, 1988, the Cornerstone Baptist Mission transferred \$14,789 to the European Baptist Convention for various mission accounts including pastoral aid, new work, and other mission causes. This is a testimony of God's people passing on God's resources to benefit others.

In 1987, big plans were made to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the church. There were many special guests. The theme song "Pass on the Dream" was a special song written for the occasion by Bill Matthews. Some special guests included first pastor Rudy Wood, EBC president of the Belgian Union Henry Bens, representative of the EBC and former member Larry Carson, as well as representative of the FMB Robert Cochran. Special guests returning for the occasion were charter members Sam and Doris Bridges, Ken and Lyn Bigelow, Marie Hyatt and her mother Carmen Hyatt. Nearly 300 people attended two worship services, one in English and one in French. Dr. Rudy Wood preached both services. The celebration focused on the past, present, and future ministries of the church in the SHAPE community. One of the church's favorite hymns was "To God Be the Glory." And we do praise him for the Early Childhood Training Center and its ministry to the children and the community. We praise Him for the Belgians who have been won to Christ, baptized, and discipled. We

praise Him for having used English as a Second Language classes to reach Belgians. One Belgian reached learned English which helped him get a job. He was won to Christ, baptized, and later became the first Belgian deacon in our church. We praise Him for the Hotel Raymond ministry. The newcomers to SHAPE learned about our church and that we cared for them. We praise God for journeymen, volunteers, semester and summer missionaries who served the church and helped strengthen it. One of the strengths of the church was in the area of creating a fellowship that made us a family. From the fall round-up when we dressed in western outfits and barbecued outside to the family holiday dinners, the picnics, the homemade ice cream socials, and lunches served for committee meetings and Dinner Six. People were won to Christ through the church visitation program and then to deepen their walks with Christ there was offered Survival Kit, MasterLife, and CWT training. We praise God that the church has always had a strong focus on missions with strong missionary organizations for every age group. And there was always an emphasis on the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. This offering grew from \$80 to over \$7,000. In twenty years, that is a pretty big growth.

In 1989, Richard and Karen Rettinger from First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida, came to IBC. Richard was to be the director of evangelism and outreach for two years.

In 1991, when the Reynolds returned from furlough, they felt led to join the staff of the European Baptist Convention as Church Planting Consultants. After seventeen years of ministry to the church and the community, there were many meaningful times of recognition and farewells. The Beduerftigs were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to assume the pastorate at IBC.

## CALLED TO MINISTRY AT IBC from 1973-1990

One of the most exciting parts of the ministry of IBC is seeing men and women growing in their commitment to Christ and being called into full-time Christian service. They are now serving in the Netherlands, France, Japan, the USA, and on other mission fields. So the ministry of IBC, through the lives of these people, goes on to the ends of the earth.

Jerry Rumfelt	Pastor, Dover Shores Baptist Church Shelby, NC
Mike Fahy	Director of Missions Baltimore, MD
Larry Carson	Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist Church Hoensbroek, Netherlands
Bill Reynolds	Staff, Oakhurst Baptist Church Atlanta, GA
Barry & Sherie Thompson	former Journeyman Missionaries to France
Mark & Christy Edlund	Missionaries to Japan
Jim Hickman	Pastor, Columbus, GA
Marcie Huson	former Journeyman United Christian Ministries Washington State
Dennis Hicks	Ordained at IBC
Dennis Williams	Music Director at local church
Richard Southerland	Ordained at IBC Major in U.S. Air Force
Marie Hyatt McEntire	former Journeyman Mission Service, NC
Adam Newcomer	
Steve Rayner	Called to music ministry
Ron Littlefield	Southwestern Seminary

## Significant Events in the History of the International Baptist Church, Jurbise, Belgium

May 1967

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Paris, France, voted to sponsor a mission in Mons, Belgium, to serve the families associated with the NATO headquarters that was moving from Paris to Belgium.

June 14, 1967

Three families met for a prayer meeting. This marked the start of the Emmanuel Baptist Mission and was the first known Southern Baptist work in Belgium for English speaking people.

June 28, 1967

Missionary Rudolph Wood moved to Belgium and became the full time pastor of the mission.

July 4, 1968

Rev. Robert C. Foster came as pastor. The mission voted to constitute as the International Baptist Church. The church moved into a rented house in Casteau, Belgium.

September 26, 1968

The church applied for membership in the European Baptist Convention.

October 3, 1968

The European Baptist Convention accepted the application for church membership.

October 6, 1968

The church voted to sponsor a mission in Brussels to be supplied in cooperation with the American Baptist Convention.

July 1969

Missionary George Poulos came as pastor

November 1969

Building Committee appointed to investigate the alternatives available for finding a permanent church home.

December 1969

The church authorized the purchase of property with the purpose of building a new building.

February 22, 1970

The church requested membership into the Belgian Baptist Union and was accepted.

March 1970

The church requested financial assistance from the Foreign Mission Board to purchase church property.

## Significant Events (cont'd)

January 1971

The complicated purchase procedure was completed in the name of the Belgian Baptist Union using \$5,000 given by the Foreign Mission Board and \$3,000 raised locally.

April 5, 1971

George Poulos left on furlough

September 1971

Dr. W. Harold Hicks arrived and assumed the pastorate of thirty members.

May 21, 1972

First conference was held with a local contractor concerning church building plans.

June 11, 1972

Mr. Marbaix, a local architect, was selected to develop plans, procure contractors, and supervise construction of the building.

June 30, 1972

Preliminary plans submitted by the architect.

August 14, 1972

Dr. Hicks returned to the USA and Larry Yoder became interim pastor.

September 12, 1972

Contracts signed with major contractors for construction of the building. Initial estimates (all items not included) called for \$32,000. Available funds included \$3,000 cash, \$25,000 promised from the Foreign Mission Board, and \$2,000 promised from friends in Arkansas. Membership was thirty-six (resident).

September 24, 1972

A ground breaking ceremony was held at the building site.

October 5, 1972

Building plans were approved by the city, and contractors began work.

December 5, 1972

Special emphasis Sunday for the building program brought \$3,135. Available money was approaching the building costs which were now \$34,000.

January 4, 1973

William R. Reynolds, missionary associate, arrived and assumed pastorate of the church.

May 13, 1973

First services were held in the new building with observation of baptism.

May 20, 1973

Church membership reached sixty-five.

## Significant Events (Cont'd)

May 1973

Dedication of new building

May 27, 1973

Sunday School attendance hit a record of ninety-one. The new building was dedicated in a joint bilingual service with the Belgian Baptist Union churches. Approximately 200 people were present.

August 1973

Had first VBS for Belgian children.

September 1974

Two rooms were added to the church

January 1975

A trailer was purchased in order to expand the Sunday School.

January 1976

IBC sponsored a mission in Kerkrade, Netherlands. The mission was constituted as a church in May 1976. The church purchased two lots for future expansion at a cost of \$20,000.

April 1976

The church started a bus ministry.

May 1976

A Kindergarten was started. It grew to a ministry for three, four, and five-year-olds, and was called the "Early Childhood Learning Center."

March 1978

The worship center was enlarged. The support walls were taken down and folding doors were added.

April 1979

The church took action to purchase another lot and proceeded with the construction of a new building.

July 1979

The lot was purchased. The church secured the services of Louis Alard to serve as architect.

September 1979

There was a ground breaking ceremony for the new building.

October 1979

High attendance of 160 in Sunday School.

## Significant Events (cont'd)

January 1980

Church adopted a record budget of \$62,988. \$40,000 was borrowed from a local bank for construction of a building which was to cost \$120,000.

February 1980

Church observed a month of sacrifice. The people gave over \$12,000 to the building fund. From 1977-1980, the people gave approximately \$62,000 to the building fund.

May 1982

A two year volunteer of the FMB arrived in May. She served as the Belgian treasurer for the first year.

November 1982

Marie Hyatt arrived to serve a two year Journeyman mission of the FMB. She worked with the youth of the church.

May 1983

The church paid off \$40,000 loan a year and a half early. The pastor and his wife led a group through Masterlife, a six month discipleship training course.

June 1983

NOTE BURNING

September 1983

English as a Second Language was begun. Usually there were twelve Belgians who attended Friday nights.

Fall of 1984

Began a ministry at the Hotel Raymond to welcome military families arriving at SHAPE. The theme of this ministry was "Learning to Love Living in Belgium."

December 1985

Installed in the church a simultaneous translating system. Began a Christian Witness Training (CWT) program.

September 1986

Missionaries Ron and Nancy Coker began a Belgian ministry.

October 1986

A group of believers serving in Florennes Air Base were later to become a mission of IBC.

April 1987

Florennes constituted as a church with twenty-eight members.

May 24, 1987

The Twentieth Anniversary of IBC was celebrated with several members from years past attending.

## Significant Events (cont'd)

1989

Richard and Karen Rettinger were called by the church to join the staff of IBC. He was director of Evangelism and Outreach. This was a two year commitment.

1991

The pastor and his wife, Ray and Helen Reynolds, left to join the European Baptist Convention staff as Church Planting Consultants.

1992

Missionaries Paul and Jo Ann Beduerftig were appointed by the Foreign Mission Board to serve as pastor of IBC. Because of visa delays, several interim pastors came to serve. They were the Gardners, the Krauses, and the Lees.