

MY JOURNEY HERE



KEITH JOYCE

BY GISELE MCKNIGHT

By all accounts, the Rev. Keith Joyce's childhood was one of adventure, culture and world travel. The youngest child of missionaries, his young life included a myriad of moves, schools, languages, Atlantic crossings, provinces and new countries.

Keith was born shortly after his parents were forced to leave China in 1951, where they'd spent 25 years. In fact, his father had been born in China to missionary parents, and his older brother, Rob, was born there as well.

His father's family was British, his mother, Scottish. They met when Raymond came to Mona's youth group to speak about his life in China.

"They got engaged by mail," said Keith. "From the time they met until they married was four years. They hadn't seen each other again in that time."

They were married in Shanghai Anglican Cathedral in 1939 by Bishop Frank Houghton.

Keith was born in Sussex, England. He and his family stayed in the UK for a year or two and then chose Canada as their home base.

Raymond had always felt called to serve the Muslim community. In fact, that was their focus in China. So it was no surprise that their next move was to Lebanon.

LEBANON

His older siblings were largely grown and stayed in Canada, but at the age of four, Keith was living in Lebanon, learning Arabic and making friends of the Palestinian refugee children his parents looked after.

"My parents always felt we should live among the people," said Keith. "I learned Arabic sooner than English. I was completely fluent."

The little family lived in Lebanon for five or six years, long enough to

experience the beginning of Lebanon's civil war in 1958.

"I remember hearing the guns, going through check points," he said. "Guns were thrust in our window. Dad was driving along and the car got shot at. It hit the back window."

Keith remembers the Americans arriving as a peacekeeping force, which ended the fighting.

Despite the chaos, "I remember that as a happy time," said Keith. "I could speak Arabic as well as any kid."

NORTH AMERICA

They stayed in Lebanon until Keith finished Grade 3. Then they spent a year on furlough in Saskatoon, where his brother and sister were living.

During Grade 5, his parents travelled around North America, so Keith stayed with his parents' friends, an older couple, in New York state.

Keith was the only child in the household, and tried all manner of activities to keep busy and entertained — building blanket forts in the living room, taking an axe to their trees — until they gave up. That meant another move for Keith, par for the course in his unusual young life.

"I was put on a bus from New York to Winnipeg," said Keith. "I was in Grade 5 at the time."

While that might seem shocking to readers, to Keith it was just another adventure, and he arrived safely.

"I was picked up by 'uncle' Fred Mizner. I was to live with them. They were friends of my parents."

They had a big family living on a farm just outside Winnipeg. There were chores to do like bringing in wood and water.

"They were a good family and I just felt like one of them. I remember the wonderful smell of bread baking in the kitchen when we got home from school," said Keith.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Keith, second from right, with other missionary children, having tea in his tree house in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi; Keith, at left, and friends share a ride in the Emirate of Abu Dhabi; Keith in Paris in 1969; Keith and a classmate heading to Sunrise School, 1962; Keith with his family in 2017: Caitlin, Elinor, Jessica and Alastair; Keith, at left, with the Fearnow family travelling first class by train from Bombay (now Mumbai) to Nasik to go to Sunrise School.

UNITED ARAB EMIRATES

At the end of Grade 5, Keith's parents felt a calling to the United Arab Emirates. The local sheik wanted a mission hospital, as opposed to a government hospital, and there was a place for Keith's parents to work in administration there. Evangelizing, out of necessity, was very low key.

Incidentally, the little oasis that formed Keith's home for the next four years — the hospital and village — is now a city of 1.5 million.

Most of Keith's command of Arabic had been lost, so his parents sent him to Sunrise School, a mission school in Nasik, near Mumbai, India run by the same organization his parents worked for, the Evangelical Alliance Mission. Keith was a student there for Grades 6 and 7.

"I had faith in my parents' faith in

God to take care of me," he said of yet another new place to live.

It was at Sunrise that Keith preached his first sermon, a must for every older student.

"When it was my turn, the outcome was that one kid gave his heart to Christ," said Keith. "I have no idea what I said, but he recounts that at his conversion, it was Big Keith who was preaching."

Big Keith was Keith's name, as the school had three Keiths in attendance.

Sports was a big part of Keith's life at school, as were piano and trumpet. Flying to India became commonplace, and he was often in charge of younger kids who were also on their way to school there.

Grades 8 and 9 were spent at Woodstock school in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains.



ALL PHOTOS SUBMITTED



As night fell, the guide let out a couple of powerful and unnerving screams. Then a tiny light flickered far away.

They followed the light to the encampment where they spent the night. Keith slept outside and by morning, was covered in sand.

Looking back, he marvels that his parents became fluent in Mandarin, then half-way through their lives, had to learn Arabic. Both languages are notoriously difficult to learn, he said.

The family left the UAE when Keith finished Grade 9. Grade 10 was spent in Toronto on furlough.

LEBANON — AGAIN

For Grade 11, Keith and his parents returned to Lebanon. His parents had a new mission, the Bible & Medical Missionary Fellowship. They spent

two years there, with Keith getting used to the British school system of O and A levels and spending both years in Grade 11 to accomplish this.

It was the late 1960s, a time of war and strife in the region. Lebanon had historic grievances with Syria, which had always had an unhealthy interest in Lebanon.

"There were tensions with Israel and Syria," said Keith. "We felt them. And you took sides. Sometimes you favoured the Israelis."

Keith's parents felt he should graduate high school in Canada, so while they remained in Lebanon, they sent him to Caronport High School, part of Briercrest Institute, near Moose Jaw, Sask.

The graduating class all had to

preach a sermon, and "I agonized over a passage," said Keith. He decided on Galatians 5:22: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law."

TORONTO

With the end of high school looming, Keith began to ponder his future. Briercrest offered \$50 off tuition to attend their bible school, but he just didn't feel called. Instead he headed for Toronto where his siblings lived.

"I kind of came under by brother's wing," he said. "He helped me out."

"That's where my introduction to Anglicanism began, at Little Trinity Anglican Church."

He began attending with his brother and sister-in-law. As part of this new Anglican experience, he attended a wedding at the church. During the reception, he noted two punch bowls, one with and one without alcohol.

"It had always been banned [in my life], but I thought, here's a place I could explore my faith. It meant I didn't lose my faith because of alcohol."

In fact, this was not the first time Keith had tried alcohol. After Grade 11, he and some school mates had taken a train from Istanbul to London. They spent two nights in Italy, where liquor laws were rather indulgent.

"I felt quite liberated!" he said.

UNIVERSITY

Keith decided to go into music, but first he needed to get the credentials necessary to actually apply. So he spent a year upgrading to Grade 6 piano and Grade 8 trumpet and was accepted to the Faculty of Music at the University of Toronto.

He ended up leaving music and entering the Arts program, deciding to be a teacher. He returned to finish his music degree and was accepted to teachers college.

But a summer job put an end to that plan. He was a day camp counsellor in a rough part of Toronto, witnessing appalling conditions and neglected children.

"It was an interesting summer and I thought maybe I'm not cut out to be a teacher. I decided I wasn't ready for kids and kids were not ready for me."

In the meantime, Keith met Elinor Woollard at university. They married in 1977, and she became a teacher. Keith got a job as the curator of the Enoch Turner Schoolhouse, a museum to honour the brewer who opened a free school for the many Irish immigrant children in the city.

THE CALLING

Keith continued on page 10

MY JOURNEY HERE

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Keith continued from page 9

The museum was just behind Little Trinity, where Keith and Elinor attended. One day, at lunch with the assistant priest, Bob Brow, Keith mentioned that long ago, he'd thought about becoming a priest.

"He just about jumped in my soup!" said Keith, adding he was very enthusiastic, admitting he himself had thought Keith would make a good priest.

God refused to let that thought leave Keith's head, and when Keith talked to Elinor about it, "to my surprise, she thought it was a good idea. So I began asking other people.

"Virtually 99 per cent of them thought it was a good idea. I always believed God speaks through the body of Christ."

The next step was to check with the diocese, where he was warmly encouraged. Then it was on to Trinity College, part of the University of Toronto.

He finished a semester early, was ordained a deacon and was appointed curate at the Church of the Messiah in Toronto. That all happened just weeks after Elinor and Keith welcomed their first child, Caitlin.

Almost two years later, in the fall of 1983, Keith was appointed to St. Paul's in Brighton, Ontario, two hours east of the city.

They spent four years there; then a letter arrived, inviting him to apply for a position at St. Paul's in Knowlton, Quebec, in the Diocese of Montreal. They spent the next nine years there.

These years in Brighton and Knowlton were a busy time as the couple welcomed three more children. Gillian was born in 1984, but sadly, lived only 12 hours. Jessica was born two years later. Alastair was born in 1988 in Quebec.

NEW BRUNSWICK

One day in Knowlton, Keith saw there was a message on the church telephone. It was from Bishop George Lemmon, whom he's met at Provincial Synod, inviting him to the diocese. There were several vacancies: Nashwaaksis, Newcastle

and St. Paul's in Hampton.

Keith accepted a position at this third St. Paul's, and the family stayed there almost three years, until Bill Hockin called, inviting him to apply for the position of dean of Christ Church Cathedral. He was dean from 1999 to 2014.

They returned to Brighton, Ont. in 2014, from where Keith retired in 2021.

Both his siblings, Rob and Margery, died during COVID. The family was able to place Margery's urn in Rob's coffin for burial, a comfort for a family that had struggled with-out closure due to pandemic restrictions.

When it came time to retire, Keith and Elinor chose New Brunswick since two of three children and three of six grandchildren live here. They bought a house in Millidgeville in Saint John.

Keith did very little for the first year, but several months ago felt ready to talk to Archbishop David Edwards about filling in where needed.

He's now leading services at Church of the Good Shepherd in Lancaster and doing some visitation in the parish.

WHERE ARE YOU FROM?

When Keith was in Grade 5 in New York state, he felt a powerful connection to his adopted country of Canada, refusing to put his hand on his heart and sing the American anthem.

Even so, the question 'where are you from' is a complicated one for him.

For all his adventures and travels — crossing the Atlantic on the original Queen Mary ship, staying in Bedouin encampments, learning to drive a Land Rover at the age of 11, watching bombs rain down on Beirut airport, flying to school in India — Keith never questioned his parents' vocation, their decisions about his life nor his own safety.

He learned to be flexible and adaptable. And he has always felt the hand of God on his life.

Does he have a favourite country besides Canada?

"Lebanon," he said. "Though I really enjoyed India. I really enjoyed them all."



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Keith, 13, with his parents in the Emirate of Dubai. Keith was preparing to fly from Dubai to Bahrain to Delhi, to catch a train to Dehra Dun, to catch the bus to Mussoorie, to then walk to Woodstock School in the foothills of the Himalayan Mountains; Keith sits precariously on a balcony in Lebanon in 1969; Woodstock School, where Keith attended Grades 8 and 9, in India; the Joyce family in the 1990s; Keith, Alastair, Elinor, Jessica and Caitlin; reunion of the Class of '69 of Woodstock School taken in 1974. Keith is seen at the lower right; Keith with retired Bishop Harold Nutter in 2011 in Fredericton.