

CC York

Story and photos by Tom Price

Time seemed to stand still. Pastor Dave Sylvester of Calvary Chapel York, England, walked down the aisle with his daughter, Rachel—beautiful in her wedding gown. He remembered when she was just a little girl and he had brought his family from America to England in 1994 to become full-time missionaries. As they reached the altar, Dave moved to the front to welcome everyone. When he asked who was giving away the bride, Dave moved back alongside his daughter to answer, “I do.” Laughter lightened the room, as he moved back to officiate. He looked out over the crowd and back to the wedding couple, felt his voice choke, and remarked, “This isn’t going to be easy!” He asked everyone to pray with him.

Dave later explained, “Sentiment is tied to loss, and the Lord kept reminding me it is not a loss but His will, as she is marrying a young man who loves the Lord and wants to serve Him. They are the next generation.” Dave played a song the Lord had given him about releasing Rachel back to Him as she and her new husband, Caelen Weber, walked joyously back down the aisle.

A Church is Born

Not only has Dave watched his daughter grow into a bride since the Lord brought them to England, he’s also watched the Lord Jesus Christ grow His bride—the Church—in maturity and love at the CC York fellowship.

After attending CC Costa Mesa and serving at CC Prescott, AZ, the Sylvesters moved to England in June of 1994 to help with a fellowship in Bradford. Moving to York in 1996, they started a home Bible study that grew into CC York. They began Sunday services in September of 1997 in the historic Walmgate Bar, a 14th century fortress and medieval watchman’s tower. The church quickly grew and now meets at Fishergate School. Dave’s wife, Nancy, home schools their children and oversees the women’s ministry at CC York. She also serves as dean of women at the Bible College and teaches women’s discipleship.

Recently going through the book of Ephesians, believers at CC York have grown in maturity, love, and boldness in sharing the Gospel. “That’s a pretty big deal here



Believers still meet for home group at CC York’s first home, the 14th century Walmgate Bar.

in England,” Dave explained. “The culture here is more reserved; people tend to be more private that way. Generally, British people don’t approach strangers, and they tend to avoid the subject of religion.”

Building Up Shepherds

CC York annually hosts the UK CC pastors’ conference and recently started a Shepherd’s School, a short-term program in which seasoned pastors equip men for the ministry. Dave and Pastor Bil Gallatin of CC Finger Lakes, NY, simultaneously felt the Lord prompting them to start

the program. Last fall, Dave was reading Matthew 9:35–38 about Christ’s compassion and laborers for the harvest. “I had this strong sense of the Lord’s compassion, and I started to pray for England—that God would raise up shepherds with this heart of compassion to feed His sheep.” Then the phone rang. Bil Gallatin called to say that, as he was praying that morning, God put it on his heart to start a Shepherd’s School in York. “I said, ‘Wow! I was just praying for shepherds.’”

Their vision is to equip British and European men who have a heart to be

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Pastor Dave Sylvester



David Sylvester waits with his bride-to-be daughter, Rachel.



Above, The Shambles is often called Europe’s best preserved medieval street, dating back 900 years.



Pastor Dave Sylvester prays with believer Leanne Sedin after service.



Gloria and Randall McCracken, left, worship God at CC York as Phil Thwaite, right, leads worship accompanied by Dave.

faithful shepherds among their own people. Joining them to teach for a week was Bil's son, Scott Gallatin; Ken Ortize, CC Spokane, WA; Tom Stipe, CC Denver, CO; and Ken Lang, CC Syracuse, NY. Twenty-five men from the UK and Europe studied God's Word for six hours a day as teachers shared ministry experiences.

Grounded in the Word

British believers testify of God's faithfulness at CC York. Bill and Elsie Cochrane grew up in York and began attending soon after the ministry began. Elsie recalled, "We knew that the Lord was going to do a mighty work through the ministry here." Their son-in-law, Mike Salmon, is an elder at the church, also teaching and serving as college registrar. The Cochranes' daughter, Helen Salmon, has served as the church



Expecting her second set of twins, Joanna Bickersteth, left, enjoys fellowship with Elsie and Bill Cochrane after service at CC York, which meets in Fishergate School.



Christine Wilkinson captivates children during Sunday school at CC York.

and Bible College secretary for seven years. "When we moved churches, we were looking to hear the Word—and that's what we found in Calvary," Helen said. "I've seen people here grow so much from being washed in the Word."

The church body is made up mainly of York residents as well as university and Bible College students. "Surprisingly, many in this country haven't heard the Gospel," Dave said. "England evangelized the whole known world; now Islam is growing faster than Christianity." CC York often ministers at the local prison where many have been touched by Christ. Through these outreaches, God is impacting the close-knit community and beyond. ☞



The city of York is in the northern part of England, in the United Kingdom.

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Bible teacher Doug Keen, who is also planting a church in Hastings, sits with his daughters Chloe, front, and Grace during Sunday school as they watch a puppet show.