

“Following in the Footsteps of William Carey”

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**Carey Lecture
William Carey University
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It was our joy and honor to serve for more than three decades in the place where William Carey laid a strong foundation of Christian work. We were appointed for missionary work by the International Mission Board, SBC (then Foreign Mission Board) in 1964 to East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh in 1971. It was there that our two sons (David and Philip) were born. David is a proud graduate of William Carey. We saw God’s blessings on the land because of the witness that William Carey had given more than 200 years before.

Today I brought along my Bengali Bible that I used during those years. This is the edition of 1958; the Bengali Bible had been completed and published by William Carey in 1833, one year before his death. Also, I want to recommend a book for you, which you might already know about: *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* by Timothy George.

In our retirement, we had been invited to work with the Baptist Convention of New York. During our stay in the city, I had several delightful visits to the archives of the American Bible Society. The Curator brought out the 1800 edition of the New Testament, the 1802 Pentateuch, the 1803 partial New Testament, Job, and Song of Solomon, and the 1806 completed New Testament.

I am always inspired to visit your campus. From time to time I have visited your Museum and Research Center in the Donnell Hall. This Museum has received a “five-star” rating. There are more than three hundred visits per day at that website. It would be a tragedy for you to spend these years on campus and miss an opportunity of a lifetime to learn of one of the great persons of all time and the namesake of this University.

Have you noted the names of the streets around here? These have special significance for the life of William Carey:

Cobbler Corner—“The Cobbler” name for your student newspaper. The high school graduate William Carey made his living by making shoes. In this profession, with world map before his work table, he became convinced that God’s love was for everybody. He knew Hebrew, Greek and Latin and went on to become a professor of Sanskrit and Bengali.

Commission Drive—Christ’s great commission challenged him to give his life for India.

Widow Wallis Way—Mrs. Beeby Wallis had been a widow for five months when the group met in her home to organize the Baptist Missionary Society. There were twelve pastors, one layman, and one ministerial student. Of these there was only one of any means. Some of the detractors

said: “Are these the men and means with which the conversion of the world was to be attempted?”¹

Enquiry Avenue—In 1792, William Carey wrote *An Inquiry into the Obligation of Christians to Use Means for the Conversion of the Heathen*. This was a treatise that launched a modern missionary movement among Protestants.

Serampore Circle—Your drama team is named Serampore Players. Some of the characters in the Serampore Mission were William Carey’s three wives, two of whom died prior to William. They were Dorothy Plackett Carey (1756-1807), Charlotte Emelia Rumohr (1761-1821), and Grace Hughes (1777-1835), who outlived Carey by one year.

In 1812, fire destroyed Serampore Press with the precious manuscripts. Carey knelt in the ashes to thank God for the strength he would get to do the work again.

Joshua Marshman (1768-1837), and his wife Hannah, organized schools all over India.

William Ward (1769-1823) worked with Carey as the Serampore Press printer.

In 1818, Carey and his colleagues founded Serampore College. Dr. Lalchungnunga is the present principal of Serampore College, and his son Michael is a student here.

Krishna Pal Place—In 1800 Krishna Pal was the first convert and was baptized with Felix. Seven years of faithful service before one came to the Lord.

Indigo Way—William Carey worked in botany and gained international fame in this field. He became a professor at Fort William College.

There are two photos of William Carey. One was a drawing by a student showing his ill-fitting wig. He threw this overboard on his trip to India.

You can see that I have admiration and challenge for the life of William Carey. We reckon that we are the eighth or ninth generation to follow in his steps. During these years God continues to bless the witness that was generated at Serampore. The modern missionary movement counts William Carey as the organizer. Today churches all over the Indian subcontinent are testimony to a life well lived. The churches are strong, evangelistic and growing.

Moslems and Hindus in India and Bangladesh are turning to Jesus. In recent years, more than 500,000 Muslims have become Christ followers. There is presently a great ingathering of precious souls.

In our years, we often preached under a coconut tree, by the river, or in a simple thatched hut in an open rice field with framers day laborers. Though we did this for more than three decades, I

¹Timothy George, *Faithful Witness: The Life and Mission of William Carey* (Christian History Institute, 1998), p. 68.

never lost the sense of awe that God would allow a bare-foot boy from Lawrence County, Mississippi, to do His work.

There are some circumstances we would not have chosen: earthquake tremors, leprosy, robberies (three times), four broken bones, 291 country-wide strikes, 186 flat tires, frequent electrical failures, struggle with difficult languages, floods, cyclones, convulsions, one stabbing, famines, tidal waves, and droughts. However, “when He has brought out all His own, He goes on ahead of them and His sheep follow Him because they know His voice” (John 10:4).

William Carey wrote his own statement for his grave marker: “A wretched, poor and helpless worm on Thy kind arms I fall.”