

When did you arrive to Canada?

I came to Canada with my family in July 1982 when we moved from Britain.

Did you arrive to Canada from Egypt directly?

As I mentioned we came from Britain where we lived from 1975 to 1982.

Did anyone meet you at the airport?

We did not need anyone to welcome us on arrival and we were not aware of Coptic families in Saskatchewan.

How many families were there when you first arrived to Canada?

I am going to talk only about Vancouver because we knew only 2 Egyptian families in Saskatoon. When we arrived in Vancouver in September 1988 only 23 Coptic families were living in greater Vancouver.

Where was the church building?

We worshipped one Sunday in a rented catholic church in Richmond before a church was purchased by the pioneer Copts in Surrey. This church was a small wooden shack in Grovenor street surrey with an attached small social gathering building.

How were services run at the time? Liturgies? Making the Orban? Other?

In the beginning (since my arrival) we were served irregularly almost every other Saturday by Fr. Daniel from Calgary then on more regular bases by Fr. Angelos Saad who was serving the church in Seattle (driving distance from Vancouver).

During Christmas to the Epiphany "Theophelia" and during the Holy Pascha to the Resurrection we were served daily by an invited priest, monk or bishop as assigned by the pope or following intensive board of deacons communications with priests serving in the USA or Egypt (No priest, monk or bishop wanted to leave their churches during the feasts of the church).

An Excellent quality Korban maker may he RIP Mr. Frank Malek (an accountant who made the Hammal and a free one large korbana for each family every service day), a number of wonderful deacons headed by Mr Adly Tadros and George Habibe, and Sunday school was served by by Dr. Nagat Bissada who was helped by other ladies.

Was there sunday school?

Sunday school served by Dr. N. Bissada only on Saturdays.

How long did we stay in the Grosvner church?

Approximately we prayed 2-3 years in the Grovenor street church before renting the Catholic Church at the Carnarvon street in NWM.

What were some of the challenges faced by such a small community?

The small Coptic congregation church faced many challenges including break in of the poorly secured buildings, the limited space and the non Orthodox interior design of the small churches.

Do you remember any time period when the church families started growing rapidly? Any particular reason for the growth?

As expected once a priest was assigned to serve the church on regular bases in 1995, I noted a rapid increase in the number of families moving to Vancouver and attending the church on regular bases.

Who was the first priest assigned permanently to St. George's?

Father Bisenty Gerges as of 1995.

How did the service change since the priest arrived?

Indeed Abona Bisenty with the help of dedicated deacons as Mr. Adly, Mr. Yousef Awad and Dr. Mina Abdel Sayed educated the existing deacons and the newly ordained children/deacons to learn the Coptic language and memories responses and hems for Sundays and different church occasions including the lint, Pascha, Resurrection, Christmas and all other occasions and seasons.

Where did you go after Grosvner church?

We rented a Catholic church in Carnarvon street N.W.M.

How long did you stay in the rented church? What were some of the challenges which faced the church during that time and how were they dealt with?

Approximately 1 year in the rented Catholic church that was so small and poorly designed with stairs inside making the processions carrying Icons and candles extremely difficult.

An opportunity came with a decision that it was time to move into a more roomy building and the current church was offered for sale by the Baptist church owners. This corresponded with an offer from Pope Shenouda to contribute with a handsome lump some of money to buy this church.

When did we decide to buy the current church we are at?

My memory as it serves me and please correct me we bought the current church in 1996- 1997.

Who worked on renovating the church and building the internals? What are some of the challenges faced during the buying of the church?

Father Bisenty painted all the Icons of the Church. From the Structural point of view it was Mr. Safwat Tadros the most sophisticated and dedicated deacon who hired a professional carpenter to do fine art of the Iconostat.

So many deacons and members of the congregation worked non stop to bring the church interior to its current looks. I can not forget Mr. Seleem Nakhla who did all the carpets flooring of the sanctuary.

The board of deacons faced a lot of challenges with members who disagree with the sound system, many people disagreeing to buy what they called unnecessary "big" church that is now just enough for the growing number of the existing and increasing number moving to Vancouver families.

Finance was on and off difficult and and challenging.

How did you see God's hand in work in the church from the time you arrived till now?

All in all it was the hand of the LORD who built up his own house with the miraculous touch that was witnessed by so many of us.

After all the church is not a building as much as it is the believers who love each other and historically prayed in the mountain caves, the deserts and cracks around the rivers for their love of the king Christ.