

# Remembering Margaret Mellis Gauld, a Missionary to Taiwan

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It was raining gently in Boston the morning of May 2, 2002. At 8:30, the twenty of us from the Boston Taiwanese Christian Church left in two vans for Woodstock, Ontario, Canada, the hometown of the Rev. George Leslie Mackay (1844—1901). When we arrived at our destination at 7:00 in the evening, Elder John Chen was there to greet us. After we checked in our hotel, we had supper at a nearby restaurant.

After dinner we met at the commodious ground floor dining room to hear Elder Chen explain to us points of interest and other mundane matters. When his main talk was over, he produced an old 6 X 8 photo. “The lady in the center is Mrs. Margaret Mellis Gauld, and the young girl seated before her is none other than Mrs. Lai who is with us tonight.” I was in a rather relaxed mood while listening to his earlier presentation, but his words suddenly struck me. He was talking about me! Why did he decide to show us this old photo? I did not realize until later that the hometowns of Rev. and Mrs. William Gauld, the couple who followed Dr. Mackay to evangelize Taiwan, were also nearby. The photo had Mrs. Gauld and me in it, and it was quite a coincidence, so Elder Chen decided to bring it along. He said that the photo was found in the home of a grandson of Rev. Gauld’s younger brother. Seeing this photo brought back so many fond memories of Mrs. Gauld.

There were about 30 people in the picture. The lady seated in the middle had an imposing presence. Without a doubt that was Mrs. Gauld whom I visited often long, long ago when I was still in grade school and in the early part of girls’ middle school. The young girl with two ponytails indeed was I. That face was the face of a first year student at a girl’s middle school.

In those days, Mrs. Gauld lived in a two-story red brick building within the compound of Tainan Sin-lau Christian Hospital. Mrs. Gauld’s oldest daughter Gretta was the head of nursing at Sin-lau Hospital. I remember going through the gate, observing scattered hospital buildings and residences, and walking through the garden full of greenery to reach Mrs. Gauld’s home. (Today the ambience is no longer the same with the newly added modern buildings and wings.) The kindly Mrs. Gauld would welcome me and my piano lesson would begin. As I faced the piano, Mrs. Gauld would sit beside me at my left. This scene is still etched clearly in my mind, even after the passage of almost 70 years. The peaceful and sweet memory of my own childhood, that faded over the years, was suddenly revived as I looked at this picture.

The Rev. William Gauld, 1861-1923, was born to a farming couple in Ontario, Canada. His parents were both devoted members of the Presbyterian church. When Dr. Mackay returned to Canada for his first furlough, he gave two sermons at Andrew’s Church (Now, First Andrew’s Church) at his hometown of London, Ontario. The future

Rev. Gauld was inspired by these sermons. On the way home, the young William, then age 20, confided to his younger brother that he made a decision to follow in the steps of Dr. Mackay in the work of evangelizing Taiwan. He attended Toronto University and Knox Seminary, and in 1892 married Margaret Mellis, then 25, also a Canadian. A little over two months after their marriage, the couple arrived in Taiwan as missionaries. That was 20 years after Dr. Mackay came to Taiwan, and the church was moving from the era of pioneer work to that of building up and organizing congregations. In 1901, with the death of Dr. Mackay, Rev. Gauld assumed leadership of the entire Northern Church in Taiwan. It was a great responsibility. The couple spent a total of 31 years, evangelizing in the northern part of Taiwan until the death of Rev. Gauld in 1923.

Mrs. Gauld served the Lord with her God-given talent in music. With her strong sense of commitment, she diligently taught instrumental music and voice daily at Tamsui Middle School, Girl's Middle School and Theological College. She also taught in churches, accepted individual students, and her presence was noticed everywhere. On Saturdays and Sundays, she was with her husband to visit local churches followed by visits with individual church families. She always took part in improving the quality of church music wherever she visited. She gave everything she had to her work, never wasting time. In those days, the hymnal of the Northern Taiwan Church had words printed without music. Mrs. Gould rectified that. Under her leadership, musical activities of the Northern Church advanced very significantly. Choral groups became confident enough to tour central and southern parts of Taiwan, and then on to Japan. "Mother of Northern Church music," people called her. In many other respects, she was also a "mother" to many in the Northern Church. She provided for the poor, visited those who were sick, and gave spiritual and material support to those who toiled in the vineyard, all the while maintaining a modest lifestyle for herself.

It was a while after her husband's death, September, 1931 to be precise, that Mrs. Gauld came to Tainan, accompanied by her daughter Gretta, the head nurse of Sin-lau Christian Hospital. I was most fortunate to be able to receive piano lessons from Mrs. Gauld. I was very young, but she took me in. I am always grateful to her for her love that made it possible.

There were times the youth group from church congregated at her home while I was having my lesson. As a little girl, I had to look up to so many very tall young people in the living room. They were eating home made cookies, courtesy of Mrs. Gauld, with the unmistakable aroma of butter. Tasty cookies like these could not be found in the store in those days. Along with the fond memory of those cookies, nostalgically and affectionately, I still think of Mrs. Gauld.

Another memory flashes. Once in a while, during the lesson, Mrs. Gould would point upward and say: "Upstairs, the Rev. Barclay is asleep, so let us keep quiet." I realized that this very busy Mrs. Gauld was also taking care of the sick old reverend. Young as I was, I knew that was a good deed. I had heard from my parents who the Rev. Thomas Barclay was. He compiled the "Amoy Dictionary" and translated the Bible into the Taiwanese vernacular.

I remember seeing Mrs. Gould with a baton leading a choir. There was power and flexibility. She worked constantly. She was kind, compassionate and never given to anger. She was blessed with the love of God, and was able to envelope those who were near her with the same love of God. There are a number of hymns she wrote that are still sung in worship services in Taiwan such as Hymn 317 "In want, desperate that you may be," and Hymn 323 "Can there be peace when hardships are everywhere?"

Let us turn our story back to May 2, the time that we arrived in Woodstock. The following day, May 3, after breakfast, we visited a number of sites related to Dr. Mackay in his hometown, Zorra. This was followed by a visit to First Andrew's Church where Dr. Mackay gave his sermons that so impressed young William Gauld. It was a church with beige but almost golden color. The cross shone brilliantly over the church tower. We went on to Kippen, the birthplace of Mrs. Gauld. Sitting on a lawn across the street from the place where a post office managed by her father once stood, I shared with my fellow travelers my memory and impression of Mrs. Gauld.

Mrs. Gauld was born in 1867 and died in 1960. She had two daughters who had strong ties with Taiwan. I have already spoken about the older of the two, Gretta, whom I had the pleasure of meeting at Mrs. Gauld's home. The younger daughter Flora was a doctor and was married to Dr. John L. Little. Dr. Little served successively as president of Sin-lau and Changhua Christian Hospitals and Mackay Memorial Hospital. The Littles had two daughters. Jean is a well-known children's book writer. Her first book *Mine for Keeps* was published in 1962, and received the Little Brown Canadian Children's Book Award. Her books are well received in Canada and elsewhere. Patricia, like her aunt, is a nurse. Both of them are alive and well. Had my stay in Canada been a day or two longer, I might have been able to see them during our trip.

The photo that Elder Chen showed us was taken in front of the living room of my grandfather's house "Ho-yuan." In 1937, Gretta resigned from her head nurse position at Sin-lau Hospital to accept a post at Mackay Memorial in Taipei. Grandfather invited her mother, Mrs. Gauld, along for a send-off party. My grandfather, grandmother, father, mother, uncles, aunts, younger brothers and cousins were all in the picture. There was also Rev. Uemura Tamaki, the newly arrived head of Tainan Presbyterian Girl's Middle School.

How wonderful it was to be shown this very memorable picture on the occasion of our visit to the hometown of Dr. Mackay. It led us to find another significant event in the church history of Taiwan. I now have a far deeper understanding of the works of the Gaulds who followed Dr. Mackay to bring the good tidings of love through Christ to the Taiwanese people.

As I reminisced about Mrs. Gaulds, the memory of those most beautiful days of my childhood also returned. My heart is filled with joy and thanksgiving. I hope to keep this feeling forever. My heartfelt thanks go to Elder Chen for his kindness. (July 2002)

Translated from Japanese into English by Dr. David Lu.

