

Rev George Monro Grant
Minister at St. Matthews United Church
1863 – 1877

The ministry of Rev. George Monro Grant at St. Matthews, 1863-1877, is remembered by the historian R. M. Hattie as the second golden age of this church. Called in his late twenties to be minister at St. Matthews, Grant ministered to a congregation dominated by the “patricians” of the city of Halifax. In the Presbyterian church of his time, stewardship was an important virtue. Grant saw to it that this commitment bore fruit in the life of the church.

The Halifax of Grant’s time was a thriving port city with all of the social problems that came with the successes of Victorian imperial and colonial policies. Saint Matthews had no “comfortable pews” - even with the padding on the seats and doors at each end - when Grant was preaching from the high pulpit. Sometimes in the tone of a Charles Dickens, Grant, “preached frankly to his congregation of merchants and shipowners on the relationship of labour and capital and denounced men who made money by risking the lives of their crews in unseaworthy hulks or saw charity at home as a substitute for justice at sea” (Mack).

Grant's preaching on Christian stewardship led him to maintain a frugal way of life for his family and to a personal involvement in a whole range of institutions for the needy. We can catch the Victorian moment of his social concerns when we hear the names of the organizations which Grant supported with his time and remarkable talent: "the School for the Blind, the Halifax Institution for the Deaf and Dumb, the Children's Home and Child Immigration Schemes, the Old Ladies' Home, the Halifax Industrial School, the Halifax Dispensary, and the Young Men's Christian Association." (Mack)

Most important to St. Matthews and, no doubt to Grant, was the support both gave to the "North End Mission." In this era there was a shared evangelical effort made by Presbyterians, Methodists and Anglicans. Five missionaries supported inter-denominational missions in the north end of Halifax. In the words of our church's historians, joining the ecumenical team of male missionaries, were "female missionaries known as "bible women" all charged with saving souls on the disreputable streets east of Citadel Hill." (Townsend et. al.: 57-59) By 1871 St. Matthews had its own mission for which it raised the salary for the missionary in one Sunday!

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St. Matthew's mission and outreach continues to this day in the shared work of the peninsula United Churches at Brunswick Street Mission. (385 words)

Based on information found in:

Elizabeth Townsend, Laura B. Morgan, Judith Fingard and Graham Morgan *St. Matthew's United Church: A Sentinel on the Street, Halifax 1749-1999*. Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd. 1999.

D. B. Mack. "Grant, George Monro" in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*.
<http://www.biographi.ca/EN/ShowBio.asp?BioId=40870&query=george%20AND%20Monro%20AND%20Grant> (accessed June 27, 2007)