

Parchment, Earl Jennings (1919–1994)

ORVILLE PARCHMENT

Orville Parchment spent forty-two years in ministry in Canada and the United States. He has served as pastor, conference secretary and president, union secretary and president, and most recently retired as the administrative assistant to the president of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. Orville is married to Norma Jean Parchment and they have two sons.

Earl Jennings Parchment, pastor, evangelist, department director, and administrator, was born December 31, 1919, in the picturesque rural district of South Field, Saint Elizabeth, Jamaica. He was the last of seven children born to Ira and Earline Parchment.¹

From a very early age, Earl showed a keen spirit of determination and courage. His strong-willed nature caused him to push ahead in life to get an education, even though his parents did not have much money.

His parents did not have the opportunity to pursue an education beyond high school; but he was determined to go to college and also to university to equip himself with the necessary education and training to become a pastor. That was his ultimate aim in life.

In 1941 his dream came true when he enrolled in West Indies Training College in Mandeville, Jamaica. There he worked several hours per day while taking classes just to be able to finance his way through school. He graduated in 1945 with a bachelor's degree in theology and later a master's degree in theology.

On December 1, 1946, Earl married his college sweetheart, Linda Myers, from Costa Rica. They worked side-by-side as she often sang the appeal songs for his evangelistic meetings. Their union resulted in four children, Orville, Erlinda, Avonie, and Anthony.

Soon after graduating, Earl was invited to work in the West Jamaica Conference as a pastor-evangelist. He soon was very involved in his ministry, as reported in the *British West Indies Union Visitor*. "The St. James District of West Jamaica welcomes Pastor and Mrs. Earl Parchment to their midst. Elder Parchment is already holding evangelistic services in addition to his heavy duties as pastor of the various churches."²

His passion for mentoring the youth of the Church was born early in his ministry. Some administrators took notice of this, so in 1950 he was called to the Leeward Islands, and in 1952 to the Caribbean Union in Trinidad to serve as youth and personal ministries director. This was an exciting time for him because, in addition to being passionate about training the youth for service, he would constantly encourage adults to get involved in personal witnessing. These were the two areas of ministry that he excelled in. Many young people in the Inter-American Division knew Pastor Earl Parchment for the outstanding youth camps that he conducted, seasoned with his energetic song services and story telling. This was a trademark that many will remember him for.

Earl served in the Caribbean Union until 1960 when he was called to the British Guiana Mission as president where he served for three and a half years. In 1963 he accepted an invitation from the West Indies Union, headquartered in Jamaica, to return home and serve as missionary volunteer director and education secretary. Earl enjoyed holding youth week-of-prayer meetings. One such meeting was held at West Indies Training College in 1963. A student, C. S. Plummer, reported in the *West Indies Union Visitor*.

The 1963 Spring Week of Prayer was conducted at West Indies Training College by Pastor Earl Parchment, who is at present the Missionary Volunteer and Education Secretary of the West Indies Union of Seventh-day Adventists. He qualified as the guest speaker because of his deep spiritual conviction, buttressed by an inexhaustible wealth of experience acquired during seventeen years of successful ministry with over fifteen of these years having been spent working with and for young people. The Theme selected for the week was "Making Christ Supreme;" the Aim "To Live with Christ;" the Goal, "To be with Christ." The messages presented were simply stated and thus readily understood by all. The impact made upon the student body resulted in a spiritual awakening which can still be seen and felt on the campus.³

In 1966 Earl moved to Canada with his family to be the pastor of the Westmount Seventh-day Adventist Church in Montreal, Canada. This was a time when many West Indians were immigrating to Canada. Many, especially Haitians, settled in Montreal, Canada. During his time as pastor in Montreal, Pastor Parchment found time to take the youth to a camp in the beautiful province of Quebec, Camp Eben Eden. One camper, impressed with his leadership at the camp, commented: "Elder Earl Parchment of Montreal, was everywhere at once, helping in every department."⁴

After ministering for 12 years in Montreal, Earl was called to the Ontario Conference office to serve as sabbath school and personal ministries director. At this time both provinces, Ontario and Quebec, were part of the Ontario Conference. After ten years of ministry there, he accepted a call from the Atlantic Union in 1978 to pastor the Southampton Church in Bermuda where he energetically served until the Atlantic Union called him to the union office to serve as the lay activities (personal ministries) director. The many training programs that he conducted in the Atlantic Union exhibited his passion for encouraging every member to share their faith in Christ. In his own words, as recorded in the *Atlantic Union Gleaner*.

The Lay Activities Department is one department that tries to inspire every church in the Union and encourage every church member to develop a real concern for soul winning. When a church has laity who are active in soul winning that church grows not only in number but spiritually.⁵

This was his final official post before he retired in 1986. Even though Earl retired in 1986, he still wanted to continue to be active in ministry, so he agreed to pastor the Inverness Seventh-day Adventist Church in Florida on a part-time basis. He still felt that he had an abundance of energy and his drive to see individuals accept Jesus Christ caused him to work untiringly to further the gospel of Jesus Christ and to encourage individuals to

participate in sharing their faith.

It was not until Earl suffered a debilitating stroke in 1989 that he decided to fully retire and spend time with his family and pursue his favorite hobby, gardening.

Earl died on May 16, 1994. However, His supreme love for his Master, his quest for excellence, his passion for young people to be in God's kingdom, and his desire to see everyone involved in the ministry of Jesus Christ will always be indelibly stamped on the memory of his family and friends.

SOURCES

Atlantic Union Gleaner, May 26, 1981.

British West Indies Union Visitor, April 1, 1949.

Canadian Union Messenger, September 8, 1969.

Employee Service Record for Earl Jennings Parchment prepared by the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist. North American Division archives, Columbia, MD.

West Indies Union Visitor, May-June 1963.

NOTES

1. Dates and locations of service were taken from the Employee Service Record for Earl Jennings Parchment prepared by the North American Division of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.
2. *British West Indies Union Visitor*, April 1, 1949, 2.
3. *West Indies Union Visitor*, May-June 1963, 4.
4. *Canadian Union Messenger*, September 8, 1969, 332.
5. *Atlantic Union Gleaner*, May 26, 1981, 5.