

40th Anniversary Of The Evangelical Presbyterian Church

A Message for our Younger Generations here Today:
Beginning Of My Journey Within The EPC

In 1968 Libby & I were married by Pastor Rodman in St. Andrews Church Launceston. At that time we did not have our own Church Building at Talune Street Youngtown. We had decided that in our married life it was important that "Church" would be a part of it. Having only nominal church Backgrounds and no understanding of the Reformed Faith, it was our express intention to shop around for a church to attend. This would be very strange to hear for many of you attending today, especially if you have been brought up in a Christian Home. And if one was to say that today, quite rightly your Pastor would very quickly bring the Word of God to your attention and point out why we attend our particular church (The EPC). The most important reason being that the truth of God's word is taught by this church. And Furthermore we just don't leave a church because we feel like it, we want a change, or because of personalities. The only valid reason for leaving a church is to go to a more true church. Consequently in my/our particular case, Pastor Rodman saw that he had to faithfully bring the Word of God to us.

Pastor Rodman saw the need for teaching and that it was necessary for us to be taught the Truth. In the ensuing years, Pastor Rodman taught us carefully and caringly with much understanding by those Biblical principles of :- Line upon Line, Precept upon Precept.

Although we attended church regularly, it was still in my mind that at some time we would move on. But we soon learned, sitting under the True preaching of God's Word , attending Bible Studies, and Catechism Classes. There was really something of substance in the teaching of this Church (EPC). No longer we discussed or thought about moving on or going elsewhere. It was not an issue.

During this period I had also experienced a time overseas in the army in Vietnam. I believe it was during this time that the Lord really began to work in my heart. When times are difficult, and especially sometimes when we feel our life may be in danger, we call upon God for help. Often when all is well we can soon forget how God has preserved or helped us. I believe the important principle we all must learn from these experiences is our dependence upon God at all times. Every day I read God's word particularly Psalms 23, 91 and 121.

As we look back on our history we can see how the Lord in His providence has helped us as a Church & individually.

It is extremely important for our young people and all generations to come to see what a heritage they have, and what a privilege it is to be a member of a true Church and to hear and be taught the Truth of God's Word. Treasure & value your Christian family upbringing.

In 1977, I was ordained as a Deacon in Launceston to join Mr Bill Kuiper the incumbent Deacon at that time.

The Church had purchased our existing manse from Mrs House, a church member at that time. Pastor Coleborn a student in the ministry then resided in the flat at the back. Now as a Deacon, I was able to observe the wonderful hand of God upon us as a Church through the provision of His temporal blessings and many mercies to His people.

God's goodness became very real to me, and further developed through the work of His Holy Spirit, my outlook on life with respect to material matters. My awareness of the great commitment of our early Church folk, to build with God's help a church with foundation for future generations, became most evident.

Funds required to purchase our Manse were initially raised from personal interest free Loans. Committed to the purchase, people sacrificed many extras and so called luxuries in life, as they saw the great need to put God's work first; knowing clearly from His Holy Word that He would provide for their real needs and add the other necessary things thereunto.

A Message for our Younger Generations here Today:

Commit your support to the Ministry of God's Word and the temporal needs of His Church.

The nourishment of our souls from God's Word, is more important than heaping up our wealth upon earth "which moth and rust can destroy and man can break in and steal" We as the existing and future generations need to pick up the baton and continue the work that those before us commenced.

In those earlier years (1970's) our Launceston Congregation was about three times that of our current congregation. In fact sad to say, more than many people have passed through our congregation who no longer attend either a Reformed church or any at all. I can remember when the Church in Launceston was almost full at each Lords Day service.

One of the interesting regular attendees in the late 1970's, was a young lady named Helga Hollinger who had come from Holland. Helga attended for a period and then decided to leave and go overseas (we understand then to go behind the iron curtain). On her departure she left a considerable sum of money in the letter box for the Church. Furthermore, she left her personal goods toward raising funds for our Christian school, and her motor vehicle to be sold by us and the funds utilised for missionary work in Asia & Africa. A Trust fund of \$2500 was established for this purpose.

Some families in the late 1970's and early 1980's, became committed to the need to provide Christian Education. The Presbyterian Covenant School Launceston Inc. was established, and with the Lord's blessing continued with much commitment for 10 years. During this period with the absence of a permanent Pastor in Launceston, I believe the Lord used this work to maintain our Christian fellowship and bond our church folk together. Regretfully, the formation of the PCS was not without opposition.

Involvement in Family/Youth Camps and Church Activities has been an integral part of my EPC church life. Many wonderful and life long memories exist as a result of the fellowship with the church folk from our different congregations, at Bridport, Golden Valley, and Mt Tamborine campsites. Also look how the Lord has prospered and blessed in recent times our Youth Group in Launceston (30 plus). I can recall when the numbers in our Launceston Youth were so few it barely existed and then for many years was held together and taught by Elder Viv Connors.

How wonderful it has been for our Covenant Youth to have the opportunity to fellowship around Gods word and to enjoy Social activities together. We need to value our Christian brethren and make every effort to attend Meetings, Camps, and Activities that foster that Christian fellowship between us. Personally, I often wonder what it would be like not to have the EPC Church family. It is almost unimaginable how one would get along without them. What a joy to have true Christian friends.

In the mid 1980's we experienced great sadness within the EPC church with the doctrinal controversy concerning the Person of Christ, and ultimately ending with the Schism of 1986 when 2 pastors and other brethren left.

Pastor Rodman's preaching was questioned with respect to the Truth of Gods Word. At that time, as our Pastor & friend over many years, Libby & I believed that Pastor Rodman could not possibly be wrong, so we invited him to visit and explain his position. As a consequence of his visit and discussion, we had to tell him that we did not agree with him. This hurt us greatly but we learned a very important truth. We must never follow the person or man, but remain steadfast and faithful to follow the truth of God's Word. This was one of the great truths that Pastor Rodman had taught us.

During the difficult period prior to the Schism, many of our Launceston Congregation members were unlawfully excommunicated for their not attending worship. The major reason for their nonattendance was that the situation existing at the time was too distressing. Regretfully, at one point Elder Viv Connors and myself were the only ones attending of those that disagreed with the preaching, and the unlawful situation that then existed within the Launceston Session. We continued to attend so that we might see what was happening. We alternated week about for some time. This proved to be a very painful period in the life of our people.

Many people experienced much greater grief than others. Not only did the Schism split the EPC church, but it also divided very close families.

After the Schism, in God's providence the EPC church family regrouped. Looking back on this sadness we can see the Sovereignty of God as He refines His Church. "So often the darkest hour is immediately before the dawn"

He has established in His providence the EPC denomination as a light in the world, and we give thanks to God for this wonderful provision to us.

Various ministers supported us in Launceston during this post Schism period, particularly Pastor Burley from Winnaleah. After the Schism and loss of pastors and brethren, the EPC recognised its future need for young men in the ministry.

In the 1990's the EPC looked to the support of the PRC for the training of 2 students for the ministry, namely Chris Connors and David Higgs. Some members within the EPC were of the opinion that it was not right to send our students to the USA. They were concerned that our EPC distinctives would be lost due to the teaching they would receive.

But in the Lord's time and providence, we were provided with two successfully trained students for the calling to the ministry of His word in our denomination. Pastor Connors served at Burnie then Launceston, and Pastor Higgs at Launceston then Brisbane.

We now give much thanks to God, for we see the wonderful fruits of his provision to us.

In 1994, the Lord called me to Eldership within the Launceston Congregation. I count it such a blessing to have been called to work in the service of God for the oversight and care of His church and people. I believe it has been to my great

benefit and learning that the Lord has so graciously provided wise and experienced elders.

They have laboured tirelessly in the Launceston Congregation over many years, with much care and concern for the brethren; and their work within the EPC has been most admirable and beneficial to the denomination.

As an elder I have had the privilege of representing the congregation at Presbytery meetings, and also at various times to visit all centres where the EPC is represented.

Then in 1995, at the Lord's proposed time and as an answer to our prayers, He provided for us a settled ministry. Pastor Connors was called to Launceston with his family.

I have experienced and observed since Pastor Connors established himself, both a personal and congregational spiritual growth in the Christian life of our church in Launceston. Furthermore, as we have been provided with our younger men, we have seen many of our future generations, grow up spiritually and become members within our EPC church. One of the greatest joys in my life and for many others I am sure, is to see our children with Christian partners, living and growing up in the church and now being blessed with children.

I pray that all our young people will heed God's Word and Look for a Godly partner within the church. •Do not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.•

Remember, the Lord knows what you have need of, and He will supply your needs. Gods promises in His Word are sure and certain, and they will certainly come to pass.

The Lord is blessing us greatly as a denomination in Word & Truth. Often we may pray for growth in numbers, but we are impatient. People come and go. However hard this might be, from this we must learn, that the Lord knows what and when is best for us, and who should be hearing His Word. Let us be content with what the Lord has blessed us with.

I trust we give thanks to God today, for I see His wonderful provision to us as I look about and see so many young ones and children among us. My parents are over 80, and they would be among the youngest to attend their church. Our growth is currently and graciously provided from within, and I pray that as a denomination we may continue to experience the Lord's blessing in this way. On the other hand let us beware, as the greatest problems in a church normally rise up from within. May we give praise and thanks unto our heavenly father for His longsuffering to us over these 40 years, for we look back and acknowledge that we certainly have not deserved God's mercies.

My prayer this day is that each and every one of you may know the working of Gods Holy Spirit within your hearts and lives, to the end that we might daily walk according to His commandments, and ultimately inherit that heavenly rest He has purchased for us with His own blood.

Elder R.Davidson

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