

## **My life –My Faith**

### **St John`s Alexandra — Maurice Pawsey**

As the three speakers before me in this series have said , Father Paul presented us with quite a challenge. Linda talked about her faith in God being her rock in difficulties (the theme of the lesson that day).

I think we all see our faith as the underlying basis on which we as Christians cope with the ongoing daily difficulties and disasters we face.

In thinking about this talk , I have realised that our faith (Mari`s and mine) is not of doctrine or ideology, important as these are to many , but of our lifelong experience, prayer and learning from our human experience with many people, within and without the Church.

My journey in faith began in Coburg (as did Mari`s), at Holy Trinity Coburg, where my mother and father and some of their siblings were parishioners, members of the choir and father as secretary of the Trinity tennis club. Mari and I were both part of the Sunday School , when Trinity celebrated its centenary in 1948. It is a bluestone Church, alongside the former Pentridge Prison. Soon after this I was part of a group of CEBS leaders who executed a partial takeover of the vestry.

In 1954, soon after the arrival of new vicar William John Clayden (father of John – later rector of this parish), I found myself , as newly appointed Church treasurer , treasurer of a stewardship campaign (a full blown wells program). Contrary to many experiences this transformed the Church Suddenly we found congregations of 500 people over three Sunday services- many there for all three services, collections of 200 pounds –formerly 40 or 50 pounds, Sunday school, CEBS, GFS, CEMS, Mothers Union & Guild, YAF, youth group, all bursting with new membership and life. Trinity Tennis Club , of which I was now the secretary , with four teams (including Mari), also a cricket club which practiced alongside our tennis courts.

I would like to linger briefly on my life at this time. Apart from work at the ANZ bank) life became a constant jump from Church activities with a group of young people (including mari and my two brothers) – a number of whom are still amongst our closest friends. Supper after Church on Sundays (after escorting the day`s collection to the bank night safe), Church dances around the northern suburbs on Saturday.

Nights, youth group and CEBS, vestry meetings during the week, tennis on Saturdays. I still found time to play Basketball three times a week, plus training in the early mornings and become treasurer of the Victorian Amateur Basketball Association.

It was vicar Bill Clayden (Vicar or the “ Boss” to us), who formed my early views on faith and beliefs with his sermons and advice and gave me (and Mari) a faith which has grown with life and exposure to many other views, through the ups and downs of bringing up 4 children and seeing them set up their own families..

Inevitably, it was vicar Bill who married us in 1959 at Holy Trinity.(remarking that it was the first time he had been involved in celebrating the marriage of his churchwarden).

We lived for four years in Reservoir, still involved with Trinity, until we moved to East Doncaster in 1963. After meeting a former curate from Coburg (Jock Ryan)at service at Holy Trinity Doncaster , I found myself on the initiating committee for St Davids East Doncaster (a neighbour to Bulleen) our parish participated in a sharing in faith with the Doncaster Methodists –parted only by the formation of the Uniting Church. The act of separating was personally carried out by bishop Bob Dann.

We then established our Church on a new site in Doncaster Road and the Pawseys settled ourselves in East Doncaster for the next 26 years.

After a series of vicars, a locum arrived for some months – Andrew Schreuder, who I had known well in the CEBS diocesan office 20 years before. Andrew was to come into our lives again in Marysville and I believe has been another influence on my life.

We formed another group of friends here, some of whom we still meet regularly and share a lodge each year at Wilsons Promontory (where our group of families camped for 14 consecutive Januarys).

Can I linger again briefly here. - life in East Doncaster included Church activities – Sunday school, vestry and churchwarden, fetes etc. We helped to form a new primary school (Mari in charge of the school canteen myself as president of school council), scout committees, rotary etc.

Work by then was at the University of Melbourne and involved leaving home at 7am, return 7pm and much homework. This was another broadening of experience in meeting and dealing with academics, including the colleges and meeting a wonderful group of colleagues here and overseas.

I still found time to be treasurer of Victorian Basketball (for 30 + years) and Saturday involved swimming squads and coaching basketball matches for our children-sometimes 4 a day. As well as this Mari found time to work to put Mark and Cathy through residential Agriculture College, Russell through University and keep the home fires burning.

After my retirement in 1990, we moved to Southam Drive , Taggerty- purchased in 1989. This was within Marysville parish and we became parishioners at Buxton and Marysville. More time as churchwarden for Buxton and parish councillor. Our rectors George Edwards and Andrew Schreuder.

Southam drive was to prove fateful, because it was over the side fence that neighbour Danny Hogan invited me to join the Kellock Lodge board in 1991 and become chairman in 1996.

I also transferred from doncAster to Alexandra rotary club in 1990 and found a club very involved in the community and instantly we had another group of friends.

Of course after 14 years and the advancing years, came the move to Alexandra and a warm welcome to St Johns.

Our journey in faith has been a life long journey through three parishes, a succession of vicars and rectors, hundreds of parishioners , 60 years of vestries and parish councils, groups of wonderful friends, rotarians , work colleagues and others. One meets genuine and wonderful Christians (the majority) and some who cause you to have doubts.

I refer to Muriel Porter`s story in The Age about the experiences of our new women priests, if one seeks non-Christians within the Church.

From all of this you form your own Christian ethics, morality and faith. As I said at the beginning, I share in Linda`s view that faith is the rock on which you lean when all else fails.

One last point, I refer to Father Paul`s “ reflections “ last week, where do we find the proof of God`s love ?.

I envy those who seem to have that firm contact and no doubts. Some of us find the proof in tangible things, or in the results of prayer, others in the faith which comes from a life of experience with Christian people. And the recognition of the love of God for us all.

As Saint John tells us (1<sup>st</sup> John 4.7) “and God showed his love for us by sending his only Son into the world, so that we might have life through him.”

Amen

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