



Pastor's Page

Back to the Future

I woke early on my big day nervous and excited about all that lay ahead. As I scurried about checking the guest list and checking that my suit was still in fashion I told myself "There's no turning back now boy in just a few hours time you'll be making your public vows of commitment and entering into a life-changing relationship." I refer, not to my wedding day (you thought you'd missed something there didn't you?) but to my induction service 8 years ago here at Selly Park Baptist church (Yes, I was still in short trousers then!) As I enter into my ninth year as minister of this church I want to reflect on God's calling on my life.

Partnership with a Past. I'm very aware of my fondness for reminiscing and looking back which in itself is not a bad thing. However I have to guard against getting "stuck in the past" (I've only just thrown out my 1970s "Tank tops") Nevertheless there are many instances in the bible where God encourages his people to "review the past" (Isaiah 43:26) in order to understand the present better. My first sermon as Pastor of this church was Philippians 1:1-11. In this passage as Paul addresses the church at Philippi he refers to their "Partnership in the Gospel". (v5) This relationship is one with a history. Paul had planted this church 11 or 12 years earlier starting with the conversion of Lydia (Acts 16:11-15) The church met in her home and they had supported Paul ever since. He for his part had a great affection for these brother and sisters in Christ praying for them regularly (v3,7) We too have a 'partnership with a past'. For 8 years we have been serving God together here in the Selly Park area. We have seen many new people coming into the church, quite a few leave, and others going out into specific Christian service. We have also witnessed a few people coming to faith in Jesus. So as we look back a little we can thank the Lord for his faithfulness.

Partnership with a Purpose. When I was near the end of my training at Spurgeon's college one of the lecturers gave us prospective ministers some good advice. He encouraged us to ask the following question when we arrived at our respective churches; "Why has God brought us (church and minister) together?" I think we need to keep this question in mind as we explore the shape of the ministry that God has called us to here in Selly Park. I believe he wants to use our combined personalities and gifts to lead others to Jesus.

Partnership with a Promise. "He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus". There's an old song that says; *He didn't bring us this far just to leave us He didn't teach us to swim to let us drown He didn't build his home in us to move away He didn't lift us up, to let us down.* Considering 'God's call' I felt inadequate then and still do today. But as Paul discovered God's strength in his weakness he could proclaim; "when I am weak then I am strong". Hudson Taylor said, "God's work done in God's way, will never lack God's supply". So let's continue to do His work in this 'Partnership in the Gospel' and let's be thankful for the past, obedient in the present and excited about the future.

19th October 2008