

Alwyn Prescott an Obituary

Dear Friends,

Our dear Father, Alwyn Prescott, was "promoted to glory" on 11th July 2011. It was a peaceful passing and all "children" were with him in the days beforehand, and attended the service to celebrate God's goodness and his life.

The service was held at St. Clement's, Kingston, Tasmania on 15th July.

David spoke on "What my Father taught me". Jane spoke on life as a family, and I was asked to deal with his ministry before coming to Tasmania, then Pete spoke about the last 25 years in Tassie and Bp. Chris spoke about how Father was his mentor when he first was ordained.

Here's my bit:

Although our Father was born in Melbourne, his Father's railway engineering work took the family to USA and then to England.

It was as a 13 year old boy in England that Father decided to follow Jesus. His memoirs record it like this:

"Mr. Laing took me to his office for a chat. He asked me if I believed the Bible to be God's Word.

I said I did. He opened at Romans 3:23, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

"Do you believe that?" he asked.

"If it's in the Bible it must be true," I replied.

"Then this means you're a sinner." "Yes."

Then to Romans 6:23: "The wages of sin is death" so you deserve to die!" "Yes."

He then led me through a series of Scriptures showing that Christ dies for sinners and any who receives Him will have eternal life. He then challenged me, "Why not ask Him in now?"

I immediately made the excuse, "I'm only young – later."

He opened the Bible once more to 2 Corinthians 6:2 "Now is the acceptable time; behold now is the day of salvation."

"God says now," he said, so I knelt with him by his office desk and became a Christian."

His first witness was within his own family, and it was largely through this that his sister Margaret, who is with us today, came to know Jesus. Later his parents did, too.

As an engineering student and then a lecturer at Sydney University, Father was very active in sharing his faith through his church, the Evangelical Union, youth camps, CMS League of Youth, and a weekly beach service on Balmoral beach with CSSM.

In 1943 Father was ordained and served Christ and the church faithfully for the next 65 years in the parishes of Normanhurst, Austinmer, Moss Vale, Pittwater, Milsons Point and Battery Point.

He had a huge capacity for work. For example, he was asked to go to Moss Vale because he was a university graduate and the parish included two church schools. It also had 5 state schools, so Father taught 19 Scripture lessons a week. He took 5 services every Sunday which involved travelling between the 4 churches in the parish. There were 2 hospitals and a gaol to visit, other pastoral care needs and a youth group. During that time he also contributed to the diocese by driving to Sydney once a month to attend various meetings. In those days driving to Sydney took 3 ½ hours each way on narrow country roads.

A huge amount of committee work has been done over the years for synod, schools and various organisations. Many appreciated his ability to think clearly, analytically and Biblically. He could foresee future needs and to contribute to debates. As well he was reliable, prayerful, and committed to the various aims and tasks.

Mother has always been at his side caring for him and their family, as well as contributing to parish life in many ways, including women's guilds, Mothers Union, teaching young people, street stalls, and meetings and after church "sing-songs and suppers" at the Rectory.

Their partnership, both in marriage and in the gospel, lasted for 67 years, and some of you have told me how much you have watched and admired them in recent years.

Education was an important aspect of their ministry – in schools, youth groups, on school councils and in his clear, disciplined preaching week by week to his congregation.

When I studied theology I realised how thorough Father's coverage of the Bible was. A lecturer would say, "Has anyone ever heard a sermon on this?" and every time I had heard my Father preach on that topic. He never shirked the hard questions, but gave a reasoned answer. Sometimes it inevitably ended in "I don't know."

In 1985 Father gave a series of Bible Studies at the Dysart CMS Summer School entitled "Men of Faith". We have a copy of those talks for those of you who would like to take one to enjoy when you go home. (I've been listening to them as I drive around and think they're terrific! An unbiased opinion!)

Mother and Father had hoped to go to China as missionaries, but they couldn't because, as they said, "Mao got there first." (Mao Tse Tung.) Interestingly, about 40 years later he developed a bi-lingual service for a Chinese congregation in Milsons Point.

They always brought a world-wide perspective to their ministry and encouraged the support of people and projects outside the parish, especially through the Home Mission Society, Bush Church Aid, Church Missionary Society, Mothers Union, Bible Society and Scripture Union.

A number of people went to the ordained ministry and as missionaries from their parishes and this, as well as seeing people come to faith and grow in faith, gave Father and Mother great delight and satisfaction.

Joining a local community group outside of the church was a deliberate decision and at different times Father belonged to various groups including library and building committees, Rotary, Rostrum, and the restoration of a Sydney Harbour ferry here in Hobart – he loved being down in the engine room!

The love for taking the gospel to where the people are continued for 28 beach missions in camping areas. Before Beach Mission, Father would get out the portable pedal organ we used for beach services and make any necessary repairs. Then he would play "Turn your eyes upon Jesus." It sounded so beautiful to me as a child, and it was years before I realised that it was the only thing that he could play! Not only does it have beautiful harmonies, but the words have been a theme for his life:

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in his wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim

In the light of his glory and grace."

Ros will play it for us, and you can join in if you'd like to. (They did join in gently, and it was lovely and worshipful.)

Personal Bible reading and prayer were the foundation of Father's life and actions. He got up to do this early in the morning, before the day got under way, and used the Scripture Union readings from when he was 11 years old until very recently when he was no longer able to read. As a child it was a wonderful security for me to awake and know that Father was downstairs having his "quiet time."

Graeme and I were living in Taroona when Father hit the retirement age in Sydney.

We were having dinner with Peter and Ruth Atkins and Russell and Helen Carnaby when I told them how I thought it was ridiculous and sad that the teaching and preaching gifts of a man like my Father were lost to the body of Christ because of a retirement age. "It'd be better if older men became part of a team so that they could contribute what they do best, according to their energy."

The next day Peter Atkins rang me and said, "Do you think your Father would be interested in coming to Holy Trinity to preach and teach?"

I said, "I don't know. Why don't you ring and ask him?"

And that was the beginning of their ministry here in Tasmania. (which lasted 25 years.)

Love, Ruth.

(This is the content of an email from Ruth Butler (Prescott))