



Dear Friends,

I'm taking a few days off this week, and only occasionally popping into the office, but, after listening to Derek Bradshaw's excellent message last Sunday, I was reminded of the Sunday to Sunday I wrote in May 2022.

It touches on the story of Launceston Baptist, that Derek mentioned, but also on his challenge to be constantly thinking, "What does it look like for us to be the church in this place, to use this building, its assets and its facilities, and our time and our money to be the best reflection of the kingdom of God in this place?"

(May 2022) Would you sell this church building?

Three Sundays ago, at our church meeting, I told the story of our visit to Launceston City Baptist Church (after the Overland Track walk).

Aron and I dropped in to say 'hello' to the minister there, Rev Jeff McKinnon, who I know from the pastoral retreat group I've been part of for the last 5 years - a group especially formed for the pastors of 'city' Baptist churches.

As we admired Launceston Baptist's beautiful historic building, Jeff told me that the church had just sold it!

It was, he said, a very sad decision, but – but in the end – a very straightforward one! They knew that to serve the gospel in their city they needed premises with more direct street frontage, more multi-function use and less maintenance costs. For many years the focus of their ministry had been befriending people in greatest need - those in social housing, homeless people and new migrants - and, to continue this work, a different sort of building was required. They had also decided, as a church, to call two younger women onto staff!

Now – as I made very clear in the meeting – I am not suggesting we do the same thing! But I am saying that we need to go through the same kind of process. We need to be continually thinking about the ministry God calls us to and matching that with the resources we have – our buildings, our staff, and ourselves!

We have been through part of that process over the last 12 months and decided we needed new staff – and now Steve and Cecelia have joined us as our Community Leader and Youth Leader. *(Note: Steve had just been inducted two Sundays before.)* We have also started to think about our physical resources – just as Launceston City Baptist did – and wonder if they are suitable for the work we want to do over the next 20, 30 or 50 years. *(Note: At the time we were discussing the upgrade of the toilets. Now we are looking at a far more wholistic process with the Site Planning Task Group Report!)*

But we also need to keep thinking about how God is calling us – and our church as a whole – to keep doing the work God calls us to.

Before we have a new foyer or a new kitchen or a new toilet block (or all three – or something else entirely!) we need to have a shared mission – one that might require changes to our facilities – a shared commitment to that mission.

I keep thinking about that statement of G.H. Morling's I included in my sermon last Sunday. ***"The Spirit of God works firstly on our lives, then the Spirit works in our lives, and finally the Spirit works through our lives."***

Are we prepared to let the Spirit of God do that?

This morning at prayers we read Luke 1:35-38, the Annunciation, the angel telling Mary that she was the mother of the Messiah: *"The angel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be*

born will be holy; he will be called Son of God....” Then Mary said, “Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.”

Are we prepared to respond to God like that? “Yes! Let the Holy Spirit come upon me. Let the power of the Most High overshadow me. Let me be part of bringing to birth God’s life and work in this place.”

Are we prepared...as a church, to God like that? “Yes! Let the Holy Spirit come upon us. Let the power of the Most High overshadow us. Let us be part of bringing to birth God’s life and work in this place.”

Can I ask you, at this time, to pray about what God is doing in your life – and to pray about what God is doing and wants to do through us as a church community?

Grace and peace,

Belinda