



From the Methodist

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Dear Friends,

I suppose its my age, but more and more I find myself reflecting on times past, particularly since my father died eight months ago. And as I have done so I have come to realise what an important part the church has played in my life, and I don't mean in providing a home and a stipend for my family and me for the last 35 years. Let me share with you some of the reasons why I am grateful to the Church, MY Church, since I belong to it. You may well find echoes here in your own life.

- Before I was born the Church gave to my parents ideals of life and love which made our home a place of love, discipline, and security. The Church's influence on my parents made our home an extension of the Church's life, it was always an open home. And it was a place where as children we were introduced to the Christian faith and to Christian values.
- For taking me, in response to God's grace and the faith of my parents, and consecrating me to Christ and baptising me into his family.
- For patiently, and not without some difficulty, teaching me lessons of life in my early years, mainly through Sunday School and sitting in chapel with my parents and grandparents on Sunday evenings, which have contributed to my being what and who I am today.
- For helping guide me through my teenage years, mainly through Christian Endeavour, Youth Fellowship and a Mission Band, and for challenging me to make a

personal commitment of faith in Jesus Christ.

- For sanctifying and blessing my marriage and for supporting Merle and myself as we have sought to guide our own children in the Christian way.
- For loving and supporting us as a family through the difficult times which few families with children avoid.
- For confirming God's call to ordained ministry in the Methodist Church and for giving me the opportunity and privilege of working among people whose friendship and love, support and encouragement have been an inspiration and a strengthening, and something I cherish most dearly.
- For the richness of the different traditions to be found within the one Church of Jesus Christ which have helped nourish and shape my faith over the years, and for the wonderful privilege this has given me of sharing the journey with so many lovely people.

The Christian Church comes in for a great deal of criticism these days, but I believe that if we take time to stop and reflect, we shall find, in spite of the Church's mistakes and failures, many reasons to be grateful for all that she has done for us and means to us. Why not try it?

The Lord be with you,

John Bown

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This edition John Bown writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC