

## Speech Given By Mrs Betty McClure on 28 October 2011 to celebrate the role of the women in Immanuel over the past 40 years and beyond

In late spring when I first heard about the arrangements for tonight I thought what a great idea - a lovely meal and meeting with friends - until Tommy approached me to speak on behalf of the ladies of Immanuel. Then I wasn't so sure.

Psalm 145 v 3+4

Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, His greatness no one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another, they will tell of your mighty acts.

This is the story of Immanuel:

Lets go to the beginning, the Service of Union was held on Wednesday 13/10/71. I wasn't at the service as I was in the Royal Maternity Hospital. The first day of Immanuel was 14/10/71. Our son Philip was born 14/10/71 all 4lbs 90zs of him, so Immanuel and Philip share the same birthday. Also he was the 1<sup>st</sup> baby baptized in Immanuel. I have no problem remembering the date of the union.

When the 2 congregations amalgamated it was quite easy for the ladies to come together as quite a few of us were already friends so things went very smoothly as it did when we were joined in 2007 by ladies from Oldpark and also when others from Shankill Mission joined us.

40years a long time. There have been many changes in society but the ladies of Immanuel have been steadfast in their faithfulness and love of the Lord's work in this place.

At an anniversary memories come flooding back. I've been thinking of the ladies who were our friends and co-workers and who have passed on to higher service. I'd like to mention a few.

WINNIE CLOSE an unclaimed treasure as she called herself. Winnie loved the scriptures and for a lifetime taught bible classes including, Girl Guides, G.B. and ladies Bible Class. She also had a special interest in Missionary work. In the 50's in Bethany she wrote and produced several missionary plays. She held prayer meetings in her home. Winnie will always be remembered here as a true servant of God.

EDNA GRAY was a true friend and a great listener. We in P.W. will always remember her wisdom and humour. In PWA at each of our meetings she brought us Missionary News and always made this so interesting. Brenda took on Edna's mantle when Edna wasn't well enough to continue. Edna was the representative for the Leprosy Mission here in Immanuel.

Then we think of our dear friend Jean Beck with her beautiful singing voice and talent in playing piano and organ. Jean trained the choir for many years. We will never forget her lovely sense of humour. Jean was so talented and used her God given gifts to bring worship and praise to her Saviour.

There are just 3 of our late friends who served so faithfully here. There are so many others whom we will never forget.

Then there are some ladies who are now frail in mind and body and are in nursing homes.

EUNICE BEST none of us realised the amount of work Eunice did as Tom's wife when he was clerk of session until she wasn't able to carry it on. Eunice was treasurer in P.W.A and in that capacity she organized many events, Christmas Teas, Outings at which she never took her seat in the bus. She entertained us to Portrush, Enniskillen and Newcastle there and back, walking up and down the aisle of the coach. She made outfits for G.B.+ B.B. displays. Her talents were endless and she used them for the benefit of the people here in Immanuel.

MAY BRACKEN a gracious lady with a great love for childrens' missions such as C.E.F. and also the Irish Mission. A leader in Life Boys (Junior BB), a Sunday School teacher, and Childrens' Church Leader.

DOROTHY MCCLURE with her great love of childrens work, also a leader with Marion in Junior BB, was in charge of Childrens Church for many years and again with Marion, in later years visited shut ins of the congregation.

We continue to pray for all these dear ladies and other that they will know God's presence in their lives.

Just a mention of some of the faithful and hard working ladies of our congregation who have served in positions for a long time.

RITA HINDS Sunday School teacher in Jersey Street for 70 years, just retired.

HAZEL BECK Sunday School teacher in Jersey street for over 50 years.

MARGARET COOKE Has been G.B. captain for over 30 years.

EVELYN CAMPBELL Leader of the Bright Hour for 15yrs and also a former G.B. Captain.

Lovely to have Joy and Sadie, both former leaders of the Bright Hour with us to-night. HELEN HOUSTON Looking after League of Church Loyalty for almost 15 years. ROBERTA AND JANET Running Mother and Toddlers for 18 years.

Then there are all those who have served and some still serving as choir members. DORIS FITZIMMONS 62yrs, HAZEL MCLEARNON around 60yrs in Bethany, Agnes Street and Immanuel. Also ISOBEL BRACKEN, SADIE KIRKPATRICK. A well done to all the choir members for their loyalty. Just a mention for Karen Fitzsimons, now training the choir, a G.B officer, Sunday School teacher and children's church leader. Karen certainly puts a lot into Immanuel. Wonder what she does in her spare time?

Then as Tom has mentioned MRS LILY MARCUS. Some of us had the pleasure of attending Lily's 90<sup>th</sup> birthday in July. Lily was baptized in Bethany and has been a

faithful member there and in Immanuel ever since. Still attending morning service on Sundays and also P.W.

I would like to finish by mentioning Mrs Neilly who as minister's wife was a great friend to all. Although with her home to run, a full time teacher, looking after her extended family she still found time to care for the ladies of Immanuel. Just a personal experience I had of her love and care. I was in hospital 18yrs ago for an operation. As I waited to go down to theatre I was feeling frightened and unsure of the outcome of the operation. I looked down the ward and there was Mrs Neilly with a lovely bunch of flowers coming towards me followed by the porter to bring me to theatre. She gave me a great hug and whispered "remember everyone is praying for you." What reassurance that was. I have never forgotten this act of kindness only one of many.

Mrs Neilly was a greatly loved President of P.W.A. for many years. Thank you Mrs Neilly for all your care and concern.

When Mrs Patterson came she soon got to know the congregation and also served as P.W.A. President where she worked really hard and she also served on Committees in Church House.

Now Mrs Gamble is with us and has already shown great friendliness and we're enjoying getting to know her and having her in P.W. with us.

In Proverbs we read a virtuous woman is like a ruby. In Immanuel we have a treasure trove. I speak on behalf of all these rubies in Immanuel, G.B. officers, Sunday School teachers, Junior C.E. leaders, Childrens' Church and Crèche leaders, Choir members, Flower arrangers, all the faithful members of Bright hour and Presbyterian Women (and believe me they are so faithful and encouraging.) and all the ladies who help with catering- " All prayer warriors."

There are so many more ladies I could have mentioned by name but the Lord knows what you do for Him in this corner of the vineyard. It is an honour and a privilege for all of us to work for the extension of His kingdom in this congregation.

Well, ladies, I hope I haven't let you down in speaking on your behalf. I was honoured to be asked to do this.

Let me finish as I started with some scripture.

Psalm 103 v 1+2

Praise the Lord O my soul, all my innermost being, praise His Holy name. Praise the Lord o my soul and forget not all His benefits.