

**“... to give you a future with hope.”**

Rev. Geoff Ross. Given at the 170<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dinner on Sat., Oct 21<sup>st</sup>, 2017

170 years ago God had a plan for what became the Brampton area.

Throughout history God's people have put their hope, faith, and lives in the promises of God; promises of redemption, restoration, and resurrection: of provision, prosperity, protection. And the Good News is that our God is a steadfast God of promises kept. In times both good and bad generations of faithful have enjoyed God's grace and divine protection because God not only loves us but also longs for us to live in right relationship with Him. This is why God's promise through Jeremiah is one of the most powerful passages of the Bible:

*“I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”* (Jeremiah 29:11)

As Christians, this promise – the promise of ‘plans’ for us, our welfare, our future – seen through the birth, life, death and resurrection of Jesus, has been fulfilled. This is the Gospel: God's plan for our salvation has been won for us through God's grace. This was the Good News that moved the ‘saints’ before us who knew God's love to witness to God's glory by worshipping together: this too was God's plan.

*There [were] original[ly three] Brampton congregations, [two of which were] First and Knox, [that] were branches of rural congregations. First Presbyterian began as a branch of the Derry West, United Presbyterian congregation, in 1847. They worshiped in a school house on Queen Street, then built a church in 1848 on Church Street. Their first Minister was Rev. James Pringle.*

(Historical Sketch: PCC Archives)

So, in 1847, one of three congregations started out of a missionary zeal to boldly bring God's Word to a newly settled area of Southern Ontario, what was then known as First Presbyterian Church was founded.

Blessed by God's grace, *In 1877 what was then called Brampton Presbyterian Church, was established with the amalgamation of First Presbyterian Church (Brampton) and Knox Presbyterian Church (Brampton).* Out of these two congregations a, now untied congregation blessed by God's promises and provision, grew. Growing forward, new lands were found and bought for \$25,000 plans for a new, grander, Church were formed. In 1880 the cornerstone was laid, and by 1881 the new Church built for the cost of \$30,000 that we have inherited and enjoy, was opened. (Total debt was paid for 1896 – less than 15 years after the Church opened!)

By God's plan it was from these missionary beginnings that the congregation we know as St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton grew. (Story of name change –

happened in 1963 what was a ‘mistake’ when someone wrote “St. Andrew's” in the Baptism book: sounds like something God planned.)

According to that plan our founding sisters and brothers in Christ – and those who followed – witnessed to God’s love by loving their neighbours by inviting generations of our neighbours to come to know and follow Christ.

This weekend we are celebrating what God has done through the faithful who have worshipped in/through St. Andrew’s for 170 years but God’s plan/promise for St Andrew’s. The past has helped form our identity – we are a downtown Brampton Church to witness to God’s grace to Brampton, and we became St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton because God wanted to remind us that being ‘Andrews’ is also part of our identity.

Since our beginnings, we were a spirit created – and guided – community, and over 170 with God’s Spirit we have/St. Andrew's has labored to witness to God’s glory: it has struggled, its people sacrificed, but it – and they – also prospered: together through faith they built up a heritage of faith and a legacy of witness that has transformed our community and countless lives. This was because they strove for God’s boundaries – serving the community/who God placed/places around us.

As a people of God we are a people of the promise – of God’s vision/plan/purpose – always becoming/on the move between the now and not yet, loved and blessed by a God who chose us to do what we were created to do: be God’s people/witnesses/ambassadors to a world in need. And, as God’s people, we look forward to the finish line that God has for us as a people of faith. I pray that God will continue to bless St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church, Brampton as we seek in hopeful expectation to faithfully live out God’s continuing plan.

May all that we say and do in His name be to God’s glory!