

SEDDON CENTENNIAL

In 1999 Seddon celebrated 100 years since the first ballot of farm land the following is the address given in a special centenary service.

The soil I hold in my hand is the stuff that makes up the landscape we live within and love..When we look around at the vastness of the country in the Awatere, in a spiritual sense it indicates that God is all around us all the time & how in no way & in no fashion can we escape the presence of the father, Son & the HS.

Today as we gather to celebrate ` 100 years of Seddon we are mindful these 100 years are but a twinkling of an eye in comparison to the history that is contained in the landscape we stand on. This humbles us and reminds us it is God who gives us life and it is right to gather in worship and celebration of all that God has done for us and given us in the short space of time Seddon has been here.

The history of the church in the Awatere is long and rich. It is now over 146 years since the first clergy came with the gospel.However as with so often in NZ history, the Gospel probably preceded the clergy, as it travelled with the pioneering people & the Maori.Little has changed today, the prime, ministers of the Gospel are still ordinary people like you, as you seek to live out your Christian conviction and show the love of God to those you encounter.The first clerics who travelled through the district in 1853 & 1854 were Rev Dr Butt, Father Garin & Rev Nicholson. Over the years many clerics have followed.

As I think of them as I read the history book produced for this Centenary I am rather grateful for the many changes over the years and how I don't have to travel around the district in the horse drawn buggy as pictured.During the pioneering days of the district as it grew it was recognised that a place of worship was required, & it was the Presbyterians who were the first to secure a building. A thatched roof, loose box building at Taylors ford was acquired from the local inn keeper.

Spare a thought for those early church goers who gathered in this building, the congregation sat on rough planks supported by kerosene boxes and gin cases spread out over the clay floor. At the front the ministers table was fashioned out of a few boards on wooden boxes.

It was not until 1871 that the first purpose built church with seating for 50 people was opened.For some 20 years the Presbyterians allowed the Anglicans to meet in their building. Truly this shows the spirit of Christian cooperation that has been in the Awatere ever since.

The church has had some exiting history in which not only has God moved in mighty ways but also it's buildings.Both the Anglicans and the Presbyterians transported buildings to the new Seddon township area by traction engine from the Taylor's ford area.The Catholics where rather wise they met in the school house until the new town was mapped out before they began to build.

The Awatere churches have a rich and fascinating history which bears witness to the many people who have over the years laboured for the spread of the Gospel and in the power of the love of Christ in which they sought to demonstrate.

And so now 146 years after the first official arrival of the Gospel and 100 years after the beginning of Seddon we gather mindful of what God has done in the past and expectant of what God is going to do in our future in the Awatere.

As we look toward the future we must be mindful of those who we live in community with. We think of the things which bond us together. - the sad and the glad times and how these have shaped our inter-dependence on one another. .

As we gather it is good to look back and laugh and even shed some tears. Perhaps it is even a good time to question the long standing why's and take steps to mend and heal hurts. We need also to thank each other for the many ways our lives have been enriched by the gifts of love and acceptance we have received as part of this community..

No centenary is complete without looking forward where are we going in life? What are our priorities? As we think of the soil we must ask ourselves what is the very best gift or message we can leave behind us that will help those coming after us?

As we ponder that question it is good to remember where the soil comes from and look up The palmist said " I cast my eyes to the hills . Where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth". God who created everything around us is able to be relied on at all times. Generations come and go but the Living God remains constant and true.

So as we think about these things today

Lets pray

Eternal God we gather today as we remember and celebrate our roots, we think of those who have come before us those who are with us now and we dream of those who will come after us.

We share many experiences that have ties with this land. Of fun and laughter and the hard work that brought sweat to our brows. For these we thank-you.

As the district has grown and the pace of life has accelerated the links have been maintained by telephone and pen. And yet we are still a community

Forgive us when we think community and close relationships are a burden stifling our personal freedoms.

Strengthen our finest intentions and our richest dreams of commitment to those whom share life with.

May our community be surrounded by love and understanding that only you can bring This we ask in the name of our saviour who died and rose for us your son Jesus Christ