

IMPORTANCE OF YOUTH WORK

NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL FOUNDATION

No part of the work of the church called for greater faithfulness and greater efficiency than the work among children, said the Rt. Rev. James Baird, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, laying the foundation stone on Saturday for the new Sunday school and church hall to be built in Powderham Street, New Plymouth.

The very life of the church depended on it and it would die out if we were haphazard, complacent and perfunctory at the critical point of the religious education of youth, said Mr. Baird. Our children to-day were growing up in a pagan country and in a secular environment and we had to face the fact that the most effective witness and communication of the faith had to be provided for them.

"The church is not like a tree that grows," said Mr. Baird. "It has to be built and the foundations have to be laid anew in each coming generation. Christian faith is not inherited through the blood; there is not an automatic and spontaneous process by which faith is passed from generation to generation."

It was a life and death matter for the church to secure youths' allegiance to Christ and to build them up in their most holy faith. That meant that the Sunday school, which he would prefer to call the church school, must be taken with a new seriousness as the best place of Christian nurture, with all possible emphasis on adequate and congenial equipment and on the quality of the teaching.

Mr. Baird urged the need for the instruction of young people in the story of the people of God through the ages, thus stirring in them a sense of their great inheritance in the church. "In our youth work," he said, "we have a great deal to learn from the Roman Catholic Church. I think even a sketchy knowledge of the church through the centuries stirs the imagination, imparts transcendence to the mind and inspires loyalty."

HISTORY FOR YOUTH

Some effort should be made to make youth alive to the things that were happening in the church to-day. He was more and more convinced that in ignoring history in the youth programmes they were depriving themselves of one of the greatest helps towards capturing the vision and loyalty of youth.

The foundation stone was set high up on an unfinished excavation running back from Powderham Street between St. Andrews Church and the Trades Hall. It is hoped to let the contract before the end of the year so that building can be started early in the New Year.

The building will be constructed in reinforced concrete and will have two floors on the street frontage and one at the rear.

The architect's estimate for the work is £17,000, but it is expected the cost will be more than that. The church authorities already have £10,000 in hand towards the cost and further funds are being raised under a scheme that brings in at least £75 a month and possibly more than £100.

Commending the project as "a new foundation for the life of the church," the Mayor of New Plymouth, Mr. E. R. C. Gilmour, said the building, as a meeting place for the young men and women of the church, should ensure the opportunity for a wider life and harmony among the young people of the congregation.

The foundation stone inscription says: "St. Andrew's Hall. To the glory of God this stone was laid by the Rt. Rev. James Baird, B.A., Moderator of the General Assembly, on November 8, 1952. For the edifying of the body of Christ."