

Ask the elder

Name: Brian Copes

Age: 50+ (1 year older or younger than my brother David? You can try and work that one out!!)

Occupation: I own a small engineering business called B C Shutters & Doors which entails sales, manufacturing, installing and on occasions, sweeping the workshop floor!

Family: I was born in 1966, second of six children to William and Elizabeth Copes from Kilkinamurry between Kinallen and Katesbridge. We had a very happy upbringing on our Dad's farm. With three brothers and two sisters there was always someone to mess about with! Living on a farm there was always plenty of work to do. We always reckoned that my dad didn't get much sleep on a Friday night, thinking about all the jobs to give us on Saturday!

One night when I was out with my friends, I met the girl of my dreams, Jackie Shaw from Warrenpoint on her 18th birthday. We married seven years later and are blessed with three children, Jill (22), Philip (21) and Jamie (18).

Interests & Hobbies: I have always had a real interest in motorsports, right from I was eight or nine years old. We had a great neighbour, Matt Corbet who took me to many motorbike road races to watch The Dromara Destroyers Ray McCullough, Ian McGregor and Trevor Steel as they would race against Joey and Robert Dunlop and many other riders. Motocross was quite a popular sport in our area and at 20 I bought my first scrambler motorbike. A few friends bought scramblers too and we had great craic competing against each other at races. Another sport I love is golf. I am a member of Banbridge Golf Club and play most Saturdays.

How long at 1st Dromara?: We have been going to 1st Dromara for about 20 years. Growing up I went to Moneyslane Elim Church and Jackie went to Warren-

point Methodist. When we got married in 1993 we lived in Banbridge and went to Moneyslane Elim the odd time but we really didn't have the desire to go to church much at that stage.

In 1998 we started building works on a cottage in Carnew where my granny had been brought up. My sister Judith and brother-in-law Paul Reain on occasion invited us to 1st Dromara and then for dinner to their house afterwards.....who could refuse Sunday dinner!!

We really liked 1st Dromara and the minister Rev. Shaw Thompson - we were made very welcome and have been going ever since!

Becoming a Christian: I was very fortunate to have been brought up in a Christian home. My Mum, Dad, Granny, Granda and three aunties who came to visit every weekend were all Christians and had a huge impact on my life.

As well as attending Moneyslane Elim we were sent to Dromara CWU hall and Gransha Sunday School as well as many missions! We were taught from a young age that God was loving, kind and caring. We heard the gospel message by faithful pastors, ministers and Sunday school teachers. I went to Ringsend Good News Club, Drumgooland Badminton Club and their Youth club where I heard an epilogue every Saturday night. I enjoyed going to CEF camps in Kilkeel and Scripture Union camps in Scotland.

All of these outreaches gave me more knowledge of God and His word and what was required of me to get to heaven. My dad encouraged us to go to missions and back then they lasted four weeks. Although I wasn't that keen they had a real lasting impact on me.

The evangelists preached the gospel message very clearly with power and authority, that there was a heaven to be gained and a hell to be shunned and that I could have my sins forgiven through Jesus. I was chal-

lenged many times at these missions but kept putting it off.

It wasn't until October 2002, I had an accident while working with an angle grinder. I had quite a serious facial injury and was rushed to Daisy Hill Hospital and then by ambulance to the Ulster Hospital to be operated on.

While lying in Daisy Hill I realised that I could have been killed as I was cut close to my jugular vein. I realised God had protected my life. I had put off becoming a Christian many times and this felt like my last chance. As I lay there I asked Jesus to come into my life and take away my sins. I had a real peace knowing that God was now in control. Losing a number of teeth and having to get over 50 stitches around my lower lip and chin turned out to be the best day of my life!

I'd only told Jackie that I'd become a Christian, but the devil was busy trying to change my mind before telling anyone else.

The day after I got home from hospital, Rev Shaw Thompson came to visit me and I told him I'd become a Christian and he shared the scriptures with me and gave me great words of encouragement. On the Sunday morning my brother David rang to tell me that he had also become a Christian. I was really delighted. I was really encouraged by the people of 1st Dromara that Sunday.

Becoming a Christian has been the best and most important decision of my life.

What difference has it made?: Becoming a Christian has turned my life round for the better. I have an inner peace knowing that all is well with my soul, having God in my life leading and guiding me and the assurance of heaven one day. Becoming a Christian, I lost interest in doing things I knew were sinful and now really enjoy going to church, reading my bible and learning more about God.

Jackie became a Christian eight months later and growing up, our children attended all the different organisations in 1st Dromara.

Impact of 1st Dromara: At 1st Dromara I was greatly



encouraged by so many. I started attending the evening service and the midweek bible study/prayer meeting and a few weeks later was asked if I could help at the Youth Club on a Friday night. Little did I know that 18 years later I'd still be doing it!

It has been a real pleasure to be part of the Youth Club team. Seeing so many young folk each week enjoying themselves, sharing the gospel with them during our epilogues and working alongside a group of dedicated leaders has been a real blessing. Getting involved in different aspects of church life under the ministry of Shaw and now Scott, has really helped me grow as a Christian.

How long an elder: Eight years

Favourite hymn: 'It is well with my soul'

Favourite carol: 'O Holy Night'

Favourite verse: 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding and in all thy ways acknowledge Him and He will direct thy path.' Proverbs 3 vs 5 & 6

Something we don't know about you: In my late teens I played the drums for Gransha Pipe Band.