

EDITORIAL

John Profumo & Forgiveness

THOSE OF US who are old enough to remember the 1960s, will recall the horror which shook the nation - with the John Profumo scandal. It truly rocked the nation, for he was a Cabinet minister who lied to the House regarding his affair with the call-girl Christine Keeler and he eventually quit office.

I remember being at a prayer meeting when an elder began his prayer by saying 'O Lord, this evening, when we as a nation must bow our heads in shame....' The scandal did reflect the mood of the nation - we did have a sense of shame and disgrace at the time. Times, sadly have greatly changed. We can now have Cabinet ministers disgrace their office twice or more and still be re-appointed again. We have become 'conditioned' to such scandals and have become immune to the shock of government ministers falling from grace.

There are two important lessons we should learn for the John Profumo affair and his death at the beginning of March. The first lesson is that **humility becomes a sinner**. Profumo is an excellent example. Whether he did so from the saving grace of God I do not know, but he certainly, showed in an outward way the proper place a convicted sinner ought to take.

After resigning his post, John

Profumo spent the rest of his entire life (43 years), working for the poor, the drug addicts, the unfortunate, and the homeless at Toynbee House in the East of London. He was assisted by his wife who remained loyal to him until her death in 1998. Profumo withdrew from public life and went into obscurity. He asked to be stripped of his Membership of the Privy Council. When Harold Wilson visited Toynbee House he happened to notice Profumo working away in an obscure corner.

Profumo refused to speak about his affair. No one could get anything out of him about it. Reporters went after him hoping to get a book or story from him, but he refused every time. Recently one reporter felt he could get something from him. He received a courteous reply 'You know I have said nothing since it happened. You will excuse me, won't you, if I continue to have that privilege'. The only remark he was heard to say regarding the gossip was 'Oh, how it goes on and on!'

Profumo avoided anything that would raise the subject again. He refused the offer of a knighthood for his excellent work at Toynbee House on the grounds that it would 'Bring the whole thing up again, and it would be most unfair to my wife'.

Having being found guilty, Profumo decided to live a humble

life. This is commendable. He was a great example to our nation of someone who accepted his error and was willing to take the consequences of his sin and folly.

There are few who have shown such an excellent example of humility having fallen so far. He uncomplainingly and voluntarily took a humble place and did not seek to regain his high position - something uncommon these days. Profumo taught us that humility becomes a sinner.

The second lesson we learn is that **no amount of good works will redeem a soul**. Commendable though Profumo's later life was, it did not purchase eternal salvation.

Despite what Tony Blair said - 'he underwent a journey of redemption', and what Profumo's friend Lord Bill Deedes who signed the form that finally sealed Profumo's doom, said 'Profumo earned his redemption' and 'He atoned for his mistakes. The fact is, that what he did...a long stint of social work for the poor...if that isn't considered to be sufficient atonement for the mistake he made then there is no such thing as forgiveness...He has long since atoned' - such good works does **not atone** for sin.

Wonderful though Profumo's later life was, there is only forgiveness through the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul taught clearly *"Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through **this Man** is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; and by Him **everyone** who **believes** is justified"* [Acts 13:38]. It

is through 'this Man, Jesus Christ' alone that salvation is found.

Unless John Profumo knew Jesus as his Saviour, all his good works did not save his soul. Profumo did indeed pay his debt to society, and we are most grateful, but his debt to God is an entirely different matter. Nothing less than the blood of the Son of God will suffice. The Bible plainly says that Christ alone can pay the debt of our salvation - He alone can redeem us and is the only way of salvation, *"In whom (Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the **forgiveness** of sins"* [Col 1:14].

Sin needs atonement, and our good works makes no contribution towards that. The only atonement acceptable to God was the offering on Calvary's hill.

It is precisely because men do not see God that they think the good works that we do make full payment for wrongdoing. However, God is the one against whom we sin, and God requires payment - a debt we cannot meet ourselves. But thanks be to God, He has found a ransom, His own Son Jesus Christ. In him, we have redemption - full and free.

Our society is ignorant of God and therefore ignorant of salvation. It feels that if we make an acceptable payment for wrongdoing to society, then we have earned eternal salvation.

We need to return to a proper understanding of God and His holiness. We need to know why Jesus came - and why He had to die, and why He rose from the dead.

A Testimony

Paul Neilly, a surgeon in Northern Ireland, died in 2004 - here is a shortened account of his testimony, sent to us by our elder in Stornoway, Murdo Smith, and first appeared in 'At the Cutting Edge' and is printed here with kind permission

From Surgeon to Patient

Just over a year ago I had an article published in the Life Times Magazine. Unknowingly I was describing a medical condition that was to change my own life and perhaps also accelerate my promotion to a better place (Heaven). None of us know what the future holds and if we did perhaps we would not be so complacent about life, death and eternity. My desire is to tell you my story and hopefully by God's Holy Spirit to encourage you to reassess your position before God and ensure that you have made provision for the future.

Until this point in my life my daily schedule had been very busy and I, like others, had my fair share of frustrations. However, I was satisfied that I had arrived at where I wanted to be in life and had achieved most of my goals. I had a loving wife, three young children with a bright future, a career with many rewards and most precious of all I had the assurance of eternal life. Over recent months it has been my relationship with God that has been the pivot around which my life has rotated.

The Early Years

As a seven year old I couldn't have realised how important the decision would be to ask Jesus Christ to be my own personal Saviour (and Lord). Even at that young age I felt convicted of being a sinner and was convinced that I needed to ask forgiveness of my sins. I was persuaded that I needed to ask Jesus into my heart . . . I knelt down with my mother & prayed the sinner's prayer . . . I am grateful to both my parents for my Christian upbringing and the godly example they set. There were periods when only God knew how rebellious I was toward Him. Thankfully God remained faithful to me.

Education

It was not until I reached sixth form that I realised if I wanted to be the doctor in the family, which I believed was my calling, I'd better knuckle down . At last I started medical school in 1981, and there I met a lot of other people with the same aims in life. Most significantly I met many who had a love for Christ some of whom have remained dear friends . .

During my 5 years as a medical student I studied extremely hard but looking back on it I enjoyed every moment. My objective was not only to qualify as a doctor, which on its own was a daunting task, but also to become a surgeon. I reckoned the odds were stacked against me but, after 10 years as a junior doctor, I was one of three doctors in my year to become a general surgeon. I was finally appointed as a consultant General Surgeon with an interest in Colorectal Surgery to Altnagelvin Hospital on 1st February 2000.

Family

Along the way I met the girl who was to become my wife. She was a nurse, and a Christian friend. Married in 1989, Averil has taught me patience and the importance of taking one day at a time in our Christian walk with God. After setting up home initially in Glengormley we now have 3 children; Hannah, Matthew & Samuel.

Changing Circumstances

As a medical student & junior doctor, having cared for patients with terminal illness, it became my firm desire never to have cancer myself, and to die a peaceful death in old age. This hope extended to my wife and family but since the winter of 2001 we discovered that God had different plans. We were to experience problems that would turn our lives upside down. On 14th December after returning from a

pre-Christmas meal with friends, my wife developed excruciating abdominal pain and within 12 hours was on an operating table in Altnagelvin Hospital. She had a malignant ovary and although it appeared to be early disease the certainty of mortality was made that bit more real. She then required a further operation in March 2003 to try and prevent recurrence.

My personal hopes of a long cancer-free life appeared to be dashed on 25th July 2002. After several months of symptoms I eventually conceded to having investigations. This included a colonoscopy and as a colorectal surgeon I was accustomed to performing this test. Being on the receiving end was however a different matter.

I was given light sedation and was able to make the diagnosis of bowel cancer myself. To compound the issue I then had a CT scan which revealed multiple tumour deposits in both lungs. If ever I needed God - now was the time. Averil was unaware of the fact that I was having the test that morning. When she was called at home, being the astute person she is, she quickly came to the correct conclusion. The bottom had fallen out of our world. Both father and mother had developed cancer within the space of 7 months and the likelihood was that I would be dead within the next year. Naturally we were distraught but on returning home we turned to God's Word. Our text for that day was Daniel 12:13.

but more precious than the verse itself was the title in Spurgeon's notes: 'Nothing to alarm us'. We were obviously very alarmed but God was offering reassurance of His protection and indeed I am living proof that He has done so over the past year.

On Friday 2nd August I was lying in my own operating theatre, my name was on my own operating list as patient rather than the operator and I was having an operation that I regularly carried out for others. This would be defined as palliative procedure as I was, and still am, officially defined as being terminally ill. The primary tumour could be removed but the lung secondaries would persist. I was operated on by 2 friends, who were both Christian surgeons; my colleague Robert Gilliland and a consultant from Belfast, Keith Gardiner.

The Great Physician (the Lord Jesus) also played a part. This became particularly evident as, at one point, a stapling device failed but thankfully this was quickly recognised. If not, I would probably have required a colostomy. This, I believe, was an answer to the prayers of God's people. Not only were my family praying for me but also our Church, Limavady Baptist Church, had organised a special prayer meeting for the period I was in the operating theatre.

I was on a roller coaster with many ups and downs, both physically and emotionally. It was never a concern of mine as to why

we should have been afflicted like this but rather it was my desire to know what God was going to achieve through it.

I reckoned if anything was going to come of this I would have to survive long enough to at least regain some degree of good health. I felt compelled to tell others of God's mercy, not only by saving me, but also by promising eternal life to anyone who simply puts their trust in Him.

I was aware of Christian stalwarts and men of God in the Bible who actually thanked God for the suffering they experienced. I reckoned they must have been mad, but having experienced something of *"the shadow of death"* [Psalm 23:4] myself I now recognise *"the peace of God which passeth all understanding"* [Phil 4:7].

As a direct result of what we have been through we have been blessed. It would not be true to say that life is now simply beautiful like a bed of roses but, if so, there are the thorns, which can make life very painful at times. However, for those who have put their trust in Him we have many guarantees of God's provision for us. We have the reassurance that God is our refuge and strength in times of trouble and that, if we leave whatever is burdening us with Him, He will give us rest [Psalm 55:22] and [Mat 11:28].

At times I didn't know if I had any future left here on earth. Particularly as a result of the complications associated with

chemotherapy, I have often had the heartfelt desire to die.

On many occasions I have thought, as my namesake Paul the apostle wrote, that it would be better to be with Christ [Phil 1: 23 & 24.] However, God has given me more time to continue my responsibilities as a husband and a father.

New Opportunities

Much more important than this, God has given me a ministry which would otherwise not have happened. I have been able to return to work and can help my patients in a much more personal way than ever before. Having a worse medical condition than many of my patients I am better able to address, not only their physical, but also, their emotional and spiritual needs.

I know that many people have now heard my story and I trust that God will use this to His glory. It is my hope that my story will encourage you if you are walking on your own, to earnestly seek after Christ. The Bible tells that for those who seek Him they will find Him. [Luke 11:9] and that those who do not seek Him, the Bible tells us are fools who will ultimately be cast into hell [Rev 20:15].

One of the advantages of having cancer is that you often have time to prepare for eternity. However, many people die suddenly, nobody knows when the Lord Jesus will return to take those who trust in Him to their reward in heaven [John 14:3]. Paul in the New Testament,

warns us that now is the accepted time to make this decision for Christ [2 Cor 6 :2].

Have you turned to God and asked for forgiveness of your sin? Do you have the promise of eternal life? Not only that, but has He promised He will never leave you or forsake you in this life, as well as eternity? I pray that you will answer God's call and that you find Him as your own personal Saviour.

Since the above was written Paul wrote two further personal letters printed below.

Dear friends,

This is just a brief note - partly because I find it physically difficult at the minute to write and partly because of the news I am giving I want to keep it short and sweet I have been developing symptoms over the past 2 weeks which, for those of you who are medically minded, would be described as expressive dysphasia and dysgraphia.

Basically I have had difficulty with speech and writing. I was advised initially that this could be due to the treatment I'm on (Gerson Therapy). However I had my concerns that there was something more serious going on - those fears were confirmed today. I had an MRI scan of my head and there are multiple tumour deposits in my brain. Looking at the size of some of them I suspect they've been there for some time

In normal terms I know that this means I haven't very long for this scene of time. Please pray for my family and in particular the children. If this is the way God wants to take me so be it. I have gained some degree of dignity over the past few months having stopped my chemotherapy - please pray

that I will be able to die a dignified death.

If you can use this testimony in any way to advance God's kingdom please do.

*Yours in Christ,
Paul.*

Dear friends,

It is now near the end of January 2004 and I write from Foyle Hospice, which humanly speaking, should be my last port of call.

I arrived here via a short stay at Belvoir Park Hospital, where I had some Radio Therapy. Although Brain Metastases (advanced secondaries) have now developed, I thank God that, though weak in body, I am lucid in mind and reasonably so, in speech.

These past weeks have been an emotional roller-coaster, yet I have proved God's unfailing and loving presence. He has allowed me to see my young family saved, and to learn that. My story is being made known to a worldwide audience.

It is my prayer that it will be for His glory alone - and that many will come to know my Saviour through its challenge. Life is brief- it is time to seek the Lord, and there isn't necessarily time to prepare.

I know God can touch me in response to the earnest prayers of His people. However, He may wish to use me as a 'corn of wheat' [John 12:24].

Whatever, His will be done - I am content.

*Yours in Christ,
Paul.*

[Since the publication of this booklet many lives have been touched in a positive way. If you have been stirred by Paul's story please write and let us know. For more information on how to know Jesus . . . or if you would like additional copies of "AT THE CUTTING EDGE" please write Sanctuary Cottage, 40 Desertmartin Road, Tobermorey, Magherafelt, Co. Derry BT45 5QY]

A Prayer of John Calvin

"GRANT, ALMIGHTY GOD, that as thou dost so kindly urge us daily by thy voice, meekly and calmly to offer ourselves to be ruled by thee, and since thou hast exalted us to the highest degree of honour by freeing us from the dread of the devil, and from that tyranny which kept us in miserable fear, and hast also favoured us with the spirit of adoption and of assurance - O grant that we, being mindful of these benefits, may ever submit ourselves to thee, and desire only to raise our voice for this end and that the whole world may submit itself to thee, and those who now seem to rage against thee may at length be brought, as well as we, to render thee obedience so that thy Son Christ may be the Lord of all to the end that thou alone mayest be exalted and that we may be made subject to thee and be at length raised up above and become partakers of that glory which has been obtained for us by Christ alone, our Lord. Amen."

Outreach: Precursor to Evangelism

By Jamie Gunn © 2006. This is the second of three articles by a member in our Vancouver Congregation

IN A PREVIOUS article (APC NEWS, Issue 114, Nov/Dec 2005) I looked at five hindrances to evangelism that Reformed congregations often experience.

The purpose of the present article is to offer some suggestions as to how we might mitigate the hindrances. In addition, we will touch very briefly on some basic but profitable ways in which we can conduct outreach as communities of believers, in order to sow good will and to create a firm foundation for future evangelism.

Before proceeding though, let us just take a moment to reach a clearer understanding of the relationship between outreach and evangelism. For the purpose of this article, I define outreach as a set of various activities intended to help the members of one's extended community (especially the needy). In other words, outreach is simply anything we do to love our neighbour (*do* being the operative word). However, outreach is legitimately a kind of precursor to evangelism as well. If we believe that the proclamation of the Good News is the best way we can love our neighbour, then it behoves us to use

what means we have at our disposal to ensure that the elect in our communities have the opportunity to hear the gospel. Outreach helps that to happen.

However, *never* should we attach any strings to our outreach. We should never deny assistance, for example, because someone refuses to come to bible study or worship services on the Lord's Day. To do so would be tantamount to betrayal of trust.

To continue, let us look at what we might do to mitigate or counteract the hindrances in our congregations and how, in general terms, we might go about the task.

What we must do:

Hyper Calvinism: We must realize that while the gospel call goes out to all and sundry yet is efficacious for God's elect only, we do not know who are the elect, nor when they shall be changed by God's efficacious call. This realization will make evangelism possible, but not automatic. The only way to overcome this hindrance, therefore, is to understand God's heart for the lost and open ourselves up to His

love so that we too develop such a heart. It is also very important we understand that the term 'lost' is a relative one. That is, it describes both the unrepentant reprobate as well as one who is elect but not yet regenerated.

Covenant Succession: Once we realize the efficacious gospel call goes out to God's elect who are hidden *in the world* just as much as *in the womb* and so come to acknowledge the Great Commission, we are able to accept the necessity of evangelism.

How we might do it:

We might devote ourselves, either privately or corporately, to an extended time for the study of significant passages of God's word dealing with His love, mercy, and compassion for sinners. We should do the same for His Covenant; with the goal of understanding that the Covenant is a bond or relationship between God and His people in Christ, both the found and the lost (or the not yet found). A couple of passages concerning this and upon which we might study and meditate with profit are Luke 15:11-32 and John 17:20.

We should pray for God to demonstrate the truth and reality of His words in our hearts and minds.

Finally, through our faith, we must put to work our passion for and knowledge of the lost among us, as is spoken of by the apostle James, *"If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of*

you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also" [James 2:15-17, 26]. Hence the need and duty of outreach.

What we must do:

Shame or Fear: Again, having realized the nature of the gospel call and that we too are called to labour in God's harvest fields, we must encourage and exhort one another to do the will of God. Fear and shame may be ever with us but so too are God's love and comfort. Trust in Christ, His person, His promises for us and His finished work, is the way to overcome our shame and fear.

Lack of Ability: We counter this hindrance through the knowledge that it is the Holy Spirit who does the converting within the sinner's heart. In addition, having a clear and easily remembered presentation of the gospel can greatly help in this regard.

How we might do it:

The best way is to become involved together, as a community, helping each other, encouraging each other in our communal efforts [Ecc 4:9-12]. It is best not to try to overcome our fear and shame alone or to judge one another's efforts in

the area of personal evangelism or to set benchmarks or targets for ourselves (which will almost inevitably lead to failure). Rather, we might use one or more of the techniques for outreach discussed below as the means for us to overcome our own fear or shame and to edify and encourage one another as brothers and sisters.

What we must do:

Gathered Congregations: Members come from widely dispersed locations and communities, so it is more difficult to form relationships and to do works of mercy in the community where the church building is located.

However, this does not necessarily *prevent* members from doing outreach in the same community in which their building is located. And too, members can work with their elders and Pastor in their *home* communities. This could be done by the church offering support in any number of ways (see below) to the member in his or her community. In this way, the member's community becomes a kind of mission field and the member and his or her elders, the missionaries. Specific activities could be very similar to those in foreign mission fields.

How we are to do it:

To undertake successful local outreach and evangelism, it is important to have a permanent

address. When you begin creating outreach programs in a community, people will of necessity begin to rely and depend on you being at a known location. This is especially true for the sick, the poor and the elderly, who lack the means to be in control of their own lives. This obviously can be a problem for a congregation that is renting its space and facilities.

One way around this limitation is to maintain a travelling presence through the use of one or more vans. Using clearly marked vans (which ideally would be 'camperized') a congregation can go out into the community to do outreach. This is called the 'dispersed modal' of outreach.

It is vitally important at the outset of any outreach you do, to identify your congregation. By this, I mean of course getting the name and address of your church out into the community. Equally important though, is to build up recognition within the community of who you are and what you have to give others.

This is often described as 'raising your profile'. Are you a bunch of stuffed shirts that never say 'Hello' to people as they pass by your church on a Lord's Day after the service? Do you have greeters on the street inviting people in to your worship service? Do you show an interest in those you may see on your way into the church, those who may be washing their cars, cutting their grass or just hanging out in someone's front yard? If we want to do outreach, which as has been said

is the precursor to evangelism, we must show ourselves as caring and approachable people, willing to help as opportunity presents itself.

Specific Means and Methods

As I stated in my first article, 'It is not my purpose here to offer any particular strategies or methods. This is really a matter for each congregation to decide. There are as many ways as there are members. Many ways have worked as the means to build relationships and trust with unbelievers within a given community. It is really the time, energy, vision, ingenuity, talent, creativity and commitment of a congregation's members that are the limiting factors.'

It is also very important to remember that as Reformed Christians, we can do no better in trying to understand outreach 'what it means and how we are to undertake it' than to return to our Bible, the first and last word for our instruction [2 Timothy 3:16-17]. The gospels, for instance, are full of incidents of Christ doing outreach, although He would not have called it such.

Two examples that come immediately to mind are the two separate episodes of feeding the five thousand and the four thousand with nothing but a few loaves and fishes. Now to be sure, these two episodes are not merely about outreach or even evangelism. Nevertheless, if we accept the definition of outreach given earlier

'that it is demonstrating God's love for a lost world' then surely the feeding of hungry people must qualify. There are many other examples spread throughout the Bible. We only need to apply the definition as a kind of filter, and we will find all sorts of situations, especially in Christ's own ministry.

Nevertheless, I believe that in all of them the common denominator is the relief of suffering, which is nothing more than the active application of God's charity upon the object of that charity, suffering sinners.

Notwithstanding the above comments, there are different specific ways of presenting the message outside the confines of the worship service. Let us briefly look at a few, remembering these are suggestions only. We can do each of these activities in the church building or in each member's community (depending on the support required, or available from the congregation as a whole. Many of our smaller congregations will not have the necessary support structure or the financial resources to mount extensive projects).

Food and clothing collection and distribution: Can be a very effective means for later evangelism. It can also be combined with the distribution of tracts (as people come to collect food and clothing, see last point). This kind of service will require either a central storage (in the church building) or a distributed storage (food kept at the members' homes until called for

distribution at the church). Food and clothing distribution, if done on a regular and extended basis, give an opportunity for participating members to build personal relationships with clients over time, getting to know about their families, concerns and so on.

Education or public lectures: Various workshops or courses such as our own congregation's 'ROOTS' course. These may be similar to the popular Alpha program but obviously more biblically grounded and Reformed in theology. These work best when there is already a program of food and or clothing distribution in the congregation. The two types of outreach are mutually reinforcing. These types of programs are also more effective if a buffet style dinner is included. (Remember the thousands of followers who after being taught by Christ and had the word preached to them, were then fed with the loaves and fishes.)

Transportation services: While logistically difficult for small congregations, having a free way to get to a food bank, a doctor's appointment or to other social service agencies is of particular benefit to the elderly and the ill or otherwise home bound (such as agoraphobics). Giving someone a ride presents a wonderful opportunity to get to know that person a little better, discovering his needs and sharing your own testimony and of course the Gospel.

However, never make your care receiver think for a moment

that you have trapped him and are about to take advantage of his lack of control and his dependence on you.

Websites: The Internet and the Web are approaching ubiquity in North America and the British Isles. A congregational website should not pass up the opportunity to present the gospel (and its accompanying call to sinners). This can be in the form of simple text based content or in audio and streaming video clips. As well, there should be links to other sites and web resources for the visitor.

One obvious problem with the Internet and World Wide Web is the unfortunate fact that many people in society are unable to use this technology. Either they cannot afford a computer with an Internet connection or they do not know how to use the technology or both.

Information about the various outreach services provided by your congregation as well as a list of local social service agencies that operate in your community, could be provided on your website. This list does not have to be exhaustive but it should supply names, addresses, hours of operation and phone numbers for agencies able to supply assistance with such extreme needs as food, shelter and counseling that far too many people are in desperate need of in our society.

For instance, our own congregation (APC Vancouver) is starting an outreach ministry called *Highways and Hedges*, based on Luke 14:16-23. Part of this ministry will be a website with information about the services we offer, but also a

listing of selected social service agencies serving the community of Vancouver East.

Sorry We Missed You: A sign and a place to hold simple blank request forms could be very helpful to the needy who come by the church building 'after hours'. Most church buildings nowadays stand empty, unused and locked for most of the hours of a week. This is a shame, so having a way like this for people to contact you is worth considering. Once filled in, it is easy to slip through the mail slot.

Obviously having the name and phone number of the Pastor or another contact on a church sign displayed in plain view is a must, but giving strangers, who may be in need of specific help and unable to access a telephone, the ability to contact you in this way is a thoughtful alternative. An added benefit is that it helps portray your congregation as a caring one and puts a friendly face on the church which so often is viewed as cold, exclusive and hypocritical by unbelievers.

Others: Be creative. I recently read of one church in a large metropolitan area whose members, on cold winter nights, would use a van to deliver hot drinks and soup to patrons standing in a long line waiting to get into a movie! Two or three would take a tray of drinks up and down the line offering nothing more than the drinks; no message, no evangelism, just warm comfort on a cold night. When challenged by one annoyed

patron who accused the good Samaritans of manipulating people into coming to church, they simply told him that all they were doing was what he saw them doing: demonstrating God's love and compassion albeit in a small way. (It was because of this ministry that the writer started attending church and later came to know Christ as his Lord and Saviour.)

There was a 'sandwich ministry' in the church I attended before coming to the Vancouver APC. Once a month the Pastor would let the congregation know that he was looking for volunteers to come into the church kitchen, where they would make sandwiches from food donated by the local supermarkets and bought at a discount by the ministry organizers.

People would come to the kitchen and for about two hours on a Saturday evening would just make and wrap simple sandwiches. On the Lord's Day after the morning service another team of volunteers would load the sandwiches along with two huge containers, one of hot soup and one of coffee, into a van. They would then drive it to the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, the poorest and most drug-ridden neighbourhood in all of Canada.

There they would go to specific well-known locations and distribute the food. As opportunity presented itself, they would preach the gospel, pray, or otherwise bear witness. Did this ever bear fruit? In the two plus years my wife and I were members of this church we

never heard of one person coming to Christ. Yet I know that this ministry is still going on.

Distributing tracts, pamphlets: This is a tried and true method for evangelism, not outreach, which in the fast paced and wired world of today can still be effective. The key is in *regular* and *wide* distribution. To be evangelical, the tract must not present reasons for coming to church (such as the opportunity to attend bible study, fellowship with others, or being engaged in various 'works' activities).

Rather the tract must clearly explain the underlying predicament of the unsaved and the only solution, which is God's grace in and through Christ Jesus. I will have more to say about this in the third and final installment of this series.

These are but a few ideas. APC congregations in various locations are now undertaking these and other methods for doing

outreach, and perhaps for presenting the gospel as well. However, I cannot stress enough that we must not allow our outreach activities to be seen by unbelievers as merely a ruse or pretence for evangelism.

The Church is to undertake good works as nothing other than sincere and honest expressions of her own faith and compassion for those in need, as well as of thankfulness and gratitude to God for giving the gift of grace through Christ. Notwithstanding, our efforts at outreach must have a two-fold goal: to help those in need in their immediate predicament and to offer the hope of a complete, sufficient and permanent answer to all of their problems in life. This only the gospel is able to accomplish.

Eventually, all our outreach must culminate in the proclamation of the simple, unadorned gospel. That, as they say, is where the rubber hits the road.

Sent into the World

"MANY CHRISTIANS THROUGH THE CENTURIES have misinterpreted biblical holiness as 'being taken out of the world' - into a monastery or a Christian evangelical ghetto. Many would misunderstand holiness as 'having as little to do with the world as possible'. True holiness, however, is the opposite of withdrawal from the world; rather, it is being set apart by God for the very purpose of being sent into the world, to encounter the world, to mix with the world, in order to fill the world with disciples of Jesus. It is, in fact, the very thing Jesus was accused of by the religious people of his day - going to parties, mixing with sinners, eating, and drinking. It is in this context of going into the world that Jesus prays for us that we would be protected from the evil one. It is precisely because the church is sent into the enemy's domain that we need such protection".

David Devenish in 'What on Earth is the Church For?'

Congregational News

EDINBURGH

Dear friends, thank you for reading this and may it spur you on to prayer not only for the work in Edinburgh but everywhere else that God lays on your heart.

One of the most alarming things is that regardless of how ungodly a life some people lead, they say they haven't done anyone any harm and they have helped people along life's way and so they can expect God to be pleased with them. Pray for such, that they would see their own sin and selfishness to such an extent, that they would realise their only hope is Christ.

Another alarming thing is how people take great comfort and hope from religion regardless of Christ. Religion is only a false hope if Christ is not proclaimed as Lord and Saviour. It is not being religious that gets us into heaven neither is it by the many ways that people refer to as "spiritual" but it is by believing and trusting in the Lord Jesus that we are saved. This is the hallmark of the spirituality that saves. He will save the very worst who believe in Him. Total forgiveness, is for the worst of sinners who simply believe in Him. Pray that many in Burdiehouse and Southhouse would discover this most amazing truth for themselves.

We are very encouraged that Jo

Rose is leading a Pilate Christianity Explored course for young people in the shop on Mondays at 6.30pm. The first two sessions have been very well attended - please pray that this continues and that the young people would be converted. With God all things are possible.

Iain Penman the parish minister here has been advised to take time off. Pray that he gets much needed rest and restoration. He has done an enormous amount of work over the past ten years in a very difficult situation and it has taken its toll. Iain has been a great help and encouragement to us since we arrived here.

The three youngest in our family Graeme, Nicola and Melissa are preparing to sit Higher's and Standard Grades pray that they study and that it goes well for them.

The shop continues to be a source of encouragement and challenge. We have reduced the days we are open to three: Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, but if we get enough volunteers we will open more hours. Many people express great appreciation of the shop and we are thankful for this, but we long to hear them expressing interest and appreciation for the Gospel.

If I had written this article 24 hours earlier I would have said how the children and teenagers are pretty

settled at the service. However at the service held within the last 24 hours they were very difficult.

Notwithstanding this, four older teenagers came for their first time for the whole sermon and seemed to listen. The numbers attending were as good if not better than we've ever had but the distractions and number that left early were high. Thankfully this happens quite rarely.

Pray that our love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that we may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God [Philippians 1:9-11]. May God also enable us to pray for you.

JR

INVERNESS

The daylight hours are extending, and flowers appear on the earth, giving us another reminder of God's covenant faithfulness. How amazing to see beautiful white snowdrops emerging from hard, cold and dirty ground! How encouraging to see the splash of colour as the crocuses together remind us that our Creator God can cause what is beautiful to appear from what looks so unlikely. Is that not a picture of what the Lord does with people, both outside the church and in the church? I thank God for people - friendly, helpful and supportive of one another in so many ways - but that will not save them. I thank God for people who come to hear the word being

preached, because faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. As I urge the people hear to hear and believe, so I do to all who read these lines. There is nothing more important for you than to meet, know and have the Lord Jesus Christ. Have the word in your heart and pass it on to others. The CARE organisation held a meeting in Kingsview on 13 March, to help Christian teachers and encourage all present to pray for all who have the opportunity and responsibility of teaching young people. A small acorn can become a large oak, and such is the divine potential with the Word of God that a seemingly passing comment can be the catalyst for life-changing experiences. Our Prayer meeting time before the evening service is becoming the 'powerhouse' for the church fellowship. We are also changing the Wednesday evening meeting to spend more time in Prayer (since traditionally it has been called the Prayer Meeting anyway!) Thank God for prayer.

DUNDEE

Space is short this month - so just a few lines. We continue to spread the Word around our community. During March we had some American students from Texas assist us for some days (see cover photo). They helped Andy at the Club - some giving their testimony and one leader speaking on Jesus' words: *"I have come that you might have life and that you might have it more abundantly"*!

From the Moderator's Desk

Is Seeing, Believing?

Mr William Byers, Fearn

"Blessed are they which have not seen and yet have believed" [John 20:29] Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster? Well, although I had not seen it I believed in it for years, because I knew a few honest, Upright, Godly local people that said they had seen it, and they would not tell a lie about it, so I could take their word for it.

It was late in June 1967 on a Friday evening that we were motoring up the west side of Loch Ness towards Inverness. My wife and a friend were in the car with me and we all saw Nessie. We did not report it, but when we got home to Inverness we told my father and mother that we had seen it.

However, the next day the papers were full of it. Others had seen it too, at the same place and time and reported it to the press, so it was a confirmed sighting. I did not need that experience as I already believed that the Loch Ness monster existed. There is a saying that "seeing is believing" but is that true?

Jesus says to Thomas here *"Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed."* Again, we were talking with my sister two days ago and the

subject of a person having a double came up.

My sister said that she was sitting in her car one day, when she saw a man that she knew walking past, she would happily have gone on oath and sworn that it was this man, but she knew that he was sitting in a car behind her. She later asked her acquaintance if he knew that he had a double. Yes, he replied, he is from Aberdeen. As she said, 'the experience gave me quite a turn.' So I pose the question to you 'Is seeing believing?'

We are to walk by faith not by sight. The Lord has said it and that should be an end of all dispute or unbelief. We may have good reason to question someone's word at times. Another saying is, "If you believe all you hear you'll eat all you see". Do you believe in the Lord Jesus as your own personal Saviour?

If so, He has given you His Word and His Word is Truth. You also have the witness of the Holy Spirit in your heart and the witness of His people, all of whom say to you in one way or another. *"Is not this The Christ?"* You have not seen Jesus in the flesh, yet you trust Him as your Saviour and Lord. You walk by faith not by sight. *"Whom having not seen we love: in whom, though*

now we see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." [1 Peter 1. 8,9].

Do not be slow to witness for Jesus dear friend. However poor you may feel yourself to be, God can bless your witness and use it for His glory.

If you do not know Jesus, hear what His friends have to say about Him and get to know Him for yourself. The woman of Samaria testified of Jesus and said *"He told me all things that ever I did"* [John 4:29] and many from Samaria believed on Jesus because of her witness. [John 4.39].

They came to Jesus and heard Him for themselves. and said, *"Now we believe. not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed The Christ, the Saviour of the World"* [John 4:42]. It would have been more to God's glory if Thomas had believed in the risen Lord

without any sensible proof of His resurrection being necessary, *"blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed"*. Are we asking God for visions, signs and wonders?

Take God at His word dear soul. *"Be not faithless but believing"* [John 20.27]. Remember what Jesus said to the rich man who was in a lost eternity in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus. The rich man asked Abraham to send one from the dead to warn his brothers so that they might repent.

Abraham replied *"They have Moses and the Prophets: let them hear them. The rich man said, 'Nay father Abraham but if one went unto them from the dead. They will repent' Abraham replied 'If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one. went unto them from the dead' "* [John 18:29-31]. *"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved"*.

Darkness and Light

"DARKNESS DOES NOT EXIST. That may seem strange. You can turn off the lights in your room and there would be darkness, but not really. Actually a negative state occurs in which there would not be light. Light is a thing that can be measured. It has a speed of 186,000 miles per second, and it can be investigated in a number of different ways. It has physical properties. It does not have mass - you cannot hold on to it - but nonetheless it can be studied by physicists. It is really there. It is a real thing. Darkness on the other hand, is nothing. It does not exist. There is nothing to count, nothing to measure, nothing to evaluate. Spiritually you have this same curious situation. The darkness is the absence of light. God made a qualitative judgment about the light. The light is good [Gen1:4]. Spiritually, darkness is a matter of closing our eyes to the presence of God".

Harry Lee Poe in 'See No Evil'

UK: Persecution of Converts from Islam

BARNABAS FUND IS aware of a growing trend in the UK towards the violent persecution of Christians who have converted from a Muslim background. Threats are also made to those involved in bringing Muslims to Christ, and even to those involved in ordinary church ministry in Muslim areas of the country.

The following examples are all cases where Barnabas Fund personnel have had direct involvement.:

North of England: Pakistani-background convert family receiving threats and attacks to their home and car. Eventually had to move house.

North of England: Iranian background convert has front door glass repeatedly broken, 10-year old son repeatedly beaten by older Muslim youths. Eventually had to move house.

North of England: Two Pakistani teenage girls baptised in another part of the country for fear of Muslim community.

London: Turkish teenage female convert kidnapped, beaten and cut in attempts to make her return to Islam. Released after a few hours. Fled to another part of the

UK.

Wales: Iranian pastor receiving death threats because he is baptising Iranian converts from Islam.

The list could be extended much further if we included examples with which Barnabas Fund has had no personal direct involvement.

DISBELIEF

Many readers may not believe the above report. In 1989, when Barnabas Fund's research organisation began reporting on the persecution of Christians in Muslim countries, many people simply did not believe what we were saying. They argued: 'Things this terrible would have been reported in the secular media if they were true.' Thankfully, the injustice which Christian minorities face in so many Islamic contexts is now widely recognised, and it is only from some Muslims that we receive downright refusal to believe what is happening.

We are now getting exactly the same response when we report on violent persecution of Christians in the UK. 'I never read about this in the media. It can't be true.'

On the other hand, we are consulted discreetly by government bodies, security and the media

concerning the impact of Islam in the UK, who recognise our track record of research and expertise in this area both overseas and in the British context.

WHY SO LITTLE IN THE MEDIA?

Many of the victims of these threats and violence do not wish their case to be publicised and do not seek help from the police for fear of retaliation - either to themselves or to other Christians. Other victims avoid publicity because they hope to preserve good relations with the rest of the Muslim community.

Some incidents have been reported in the press or other media, but without hitting the top headlines. The editorial decision to downplay these stories is an interesting issue in its own right; could it be linked to the fact that most of the victims are non-white?

Several times Barnabas Fund have been approached by TV and radio seeking to make programmes about conversion from one faith to another. They say they have no trouble finding converts **to** Islam to appear on their programme but are puzzled that it is so difficult to find any converts **from** Islam who are willing to take part. There is nothing strange in this disparity. Converts to Islam face no physical danger and can be as public as they like about their decision. Converts **from** Islam (apostates condemned to death under classical Islamic law) put themselves in grave danger by making themselves known. Such

individuals are not likely to be given police protection for the rest of their lives after talking about their faith on the BBC, so it is hardly surprising that few are willing to come forward.

If the government's proposed new law on incitement to religious hatred is passed, it is likely that reporting of anti-Christian persecution will be reduced to an even lower level. For as the Bill is currently worded, reporting such incidents and their religious motivation could lead to prosecution of those responsible for the reports. (Ed: thankfully this Bill has now been radically altered and passed).

THE CHURCH

Perhaps the saddest aspect of the culture of disbelief is the resulting refusal by some church leaders to welcome or assist converts from Islam. One has to hope that this is due to ignorance of their plight, rather than to cowardice, callousness or because they value their relationship with Muslims more than the well-being of their fellow-Christians.

PERSECUTION OF CHRISTIANS IN THE WEST

The UK is far from unique in facing a rise in persecution of Christians. The same is happening in other Western countries, and again reporting is patchy.

Late last year in Australia there was international reporting of riots in Sydney between white youths and Muslim Lebanese-background youths. The less widely reported

response of the Lebanese was not to attack white secular targets but to attack Christian targets, including non-white ones. On 12th December shots were fired outside a primary school carol service. On 13th December a church was attacked with Molotov cocktails. On 14th December a church hall used by a mainly Tongan congregation was burned to the ground, and a church used by a mainly Chinese congregation had all its front windows smashed.

BARNABAS FUND'S MINISTRY

Barnabas Fund's ministry has always been to support Christian minorities where they suffer discrimination, oppression or persecution because of their faith. But the time has now come that Christians are suffering

for their faith even in countries where nominal Christians are a majority of the population. As we are able Barnabas Fund will assist all those who are persecuted for the name of Christ, and will continue to be a voice for the voiceless, making known their needs.

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Barnabas Fund is a charitable organisation set up to help and support Christians who are in a minority and suffer discrimination, oppression or persecution because of their faith. They may be contacted in the UK at:
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Registered Charity No 1092935

"IN MY ADVOCACY WORK on behalf of those suffering oppression in many parts of the world, I have the opportunity to speak in the British Parliament and other political arenas. I am deeply grateful to Barnabas Fund for its ministry in providing very accurate, sensitive and significant information relating to the religion of Islam and the growth of political militant Islamic policies nationally and internationally. I therefore highly commend the timely important work of Barnabas Fund as both the Christian church and democratic governments are able to use their well-researched material as a basis for developing appropriate spiritual and strategic responses".

The Baroness Cox, October 2005.

"The suffering of Christians at the hand of Islamic militants is a new and serious development in world mission, and I am thankful for the informed and flexible response which Barnabas Fund is making. Its work ranges from from organising a petition for the repeal of the apostasy law to caring for the victims of violence. I am myself an appreciative supporter of Barnabas Fund and find it very helpful to use their detailed prayer diary every day. Hebrews 13:3 gives us a sufficient motive to get involved "Remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering".

Dr John Stott, CBE, May 2005

FORGIVENESS

JULIE NICHOLSON WAS A PARISH PRIEST in Bristol who resigned her charge in March. The reason she resigned was that she could not reconcile her calling to preach 'the message of forgiveness' with her inability to forgive those who killed her daughter in the July 7th bombings in London. It was extremely honest of her to resign and it was consistent and very brave of her to resign. We sympathise with her. However, she also stated that she had no desire, and did not wish to forgive them for their awful deed.

In a recent book, 'After the Locusts', Meg Guillebaud, tells of the attitude of the Christians in Rwanda who experienced horrific murders and muggings during the 1994 genocide. The one great desire of many of the Christians there is to forgive those who cruelly murdered their relatives and friends. Here is one account: 'Deborah's son was shot in 1997. She reacted by praying for her son's murderer. Some three months later, a young man came to her. "I killed your son" he said. "Take me to the authorities and let them deal with me as they will. I have not slept since I shot him. Every time I lie down, I see you praying, and I know you are praying for me." Deborah replied "You are no longer an animal, but a man taking responsibility for your actions. I do not want to add death to death, but I want you to restore justice by replacing the son you killed. I am asking you to become my son. When you visit me I will care for you". The young man became an adopted son in her household, taking on the duties of a son.'

'After the Locusts', Meg Guillebaud, Monarch Books 12005

MEMOIRS OF A MUCK SHIFTER. - This unusual title belongs to an interesting book recently published to raise funds for Blythswood Care. The author, Hector MacKenzie, was born in Patagonia to which his father had emigrated from Ullapool as a teenage boy in the 1900s. From his own return to Ullapool as a three year old, Hector tells of an interesting life encompassing early days in Ullapool, service in the RAF, marriage to Rebecca, the birth of three sons and work as a "muck shifter" in Glasgow. West coast readers from Ullapool to Gairloch will recognise many of the personalities who feature in the book and many memories will be revived. In retirement Hector met the late Rev Jackie Ross and so began a new era of service for Blythswood which has taken him to several countries in Eastern Europe. He describes many adventures and nail-biting moments as he travelled thousands of miles taking aid to impoverished countries. His final chapter encourages the reader to consider the claims of Jesus Christ who has sustained Hector through many troubles. This attractive hardback book is available from Blythswood's shops. Supplied by KM

Notice to Congregations

MINISTRY TRAINING FUND

The sixth-monthly collection (April and October) is now due. Have you sent anything to this Fund recently?

In the past, the income for this Fund has not covered the expenditure. Can we expect God to raise up students if we are not preparing funds for them? Please give in faith, asking God to raise up servants in His Church

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