

Paul's Vision

MANY CHURCHES today have what is known as a Mission Statement. Some people think that both Christ and the Apostle Paul used one. The Saviour's words in Luke 4:18,19, that He was anointed to preach the gospel to the poor and was sent to heal the broken-hearted and to proclaim liberty to captives and announce the acceptable year of the Lord, was such a statement.

Again in Acts 13:47 when Jesus said to Paul, *"I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth"*, this, some say, was Paul's Mission Statement.

Whatever name we may give to our understanding of the task of the church, every church needs to know why it exists and what it is meant to be doing. In fact, as individual Christians, each of us ought to know our calling in the world and have some vision regarding our spiritual lives.

Paul certainly had a vision and objective in life, *"one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"* [Phil 3:13,14]. That ought to be every Christian's vision also.

Paul had a deep conviction of his

calling. Someone said that 'A belief is something you will argue about; but a conviction is something you will die for!' Paul died for his. Conviction is important.

People without a conviction of their goal in life, just follow the crowd. Many people do not know why they are here nor where they are going. They are in darkness. Christians need to realise their lives have been given to them as a gift so that they can glorify God in their own individual and respective callings.

We need to be convicted of our purpose in life in order to persevere. Like Paul, our eye must be on the goal ahead and we must press on, trusting in God.

Paul got his vision from God. It was actually God's vision - for Paul *"For the Lord has commanded us"* [Acts 13:47]. It wasn't something that Paul invented for himself after thinking about his future. He was given it. God stopped him in the tracks of his own vision - a vision to kill the Christians.

God has a vision for each of His children. He has a path for each of them to follow. It is the best vision for that person. The Psalmists could say *"You will show me the path of life"* [Psa 16:11], and plead *"Make me walk in the path of Your commands"* [Psa 119:35].

Although Paul's vision had great responsibilities, it was not a burden to him. The only way to avoid stress and being overburdened is to follow the Lord's will. To obey Him in all His leading and guidance means we can be assured of His support and provision. Jesus said *"My burden is light"* [Mat 11:30].

People can take on too many responsibilities while denying themselves legitimate rest and relaxation. Paul was careful not to ask too much of the Gentile believers after the Jerusalem Assembly *"it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things"* [Acts 15:28].

Paul's vision was to be *"a light"* to those who had never heard the gospel before. Notice God 'made' Paul a light - he wasn't a light by nature. But God revealed Himself to Paul and changed him. It was by personal experience that Paul knew about light. Only those who have a personal experience with Jesus can help others find the true light.

A light helps you see things more clearly. A light brings clarity to a subject. Paul certainly enlightened the Jews about the Messiah and the Gentiles about the mystery that was hidden since the world began - God planned the salvation of the Gentiles as well as Jews. We too must be clear about the gospel and bring clarity into people's understanding of the truth.

A light is something obvious - like a hill, it cannot be hidden. People can't help noticing it. Like a

hill, it 'sticks out' in the landscape. So should Christians 'stick-out' amidst the darkness of the world by their distinctive morals, values and lifestyles.

No amount of darkness can extinguish light. In fact the darker the darkness, the brighter the light seems to shine!

As Christians, we must be a 'light' to everyone we meet. We must be a bearer of good news to all who cross our path. Instead of bringing a message of bad news of doom and gloom, we must bring the good news of the gospel, and be healers of broken lives and broken hearts as much as our gifts will enable us.

Paul was also to *"bring salvation"* to people - people all over the world to the very ends of the earth! Paul was to bring the gospel to people.

There is an important lesson for us to learn here. The Church has to bring the Word to the people. We must not think that by having our church doors open we are fulfilling the great commission to go into all the world and preach the gospel. We need to go outside our church doors and bring the message of the gospel to sinners wherever they are.

To recall the conviction that Paul had of his vision, we need to remember what his parting words were to the elders he left behind at Ephesus *"I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me - the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace"* [Acts 20:24]. What a wonderful attitude to life!

He Has Blessed and I Cannot Reverse It

A Study in Numbers 22-25 by Revd Archie McPhail, Oban

ITS A familiar story of international conflict. Except that it took place several millennia ago, and one of the parties was a nation to whom God had made a commitment. He had made a covenant to be their God and to do them good. So when they were facing genocide in Egypt he rescued them and led them to the land he had promised their ancestor Abraham as a home.

Enter King Balak of Moab. He had a deep-seated hostility towards those people and their godliness. Hatred often breeds fear. And when they came near Balak's territory he decided they were a threat that had to be destroyed. They were under orders not to harm Moab, but that made no difference to how he reacted.

Fearing they were too strong for him he summoned an occult practitioner from his home near the River Euphrates. God warned Balaam not to go, but the lure of Balak's honours and wealth was too much for him [2 Pet 2:15]. Balaam tried to put a curse on God's people.

The relationship between the two men is fascinating (two wicked men blaming each other for their failure). So is the contrast

between superstition and godliness. But the main point of the story is the care God showed for His people when they were in danger. And that is its special relevance for us. The same covenant commitments God made to Abraham are the property of all who trust and follow Christ Jesus [Mat 28:19 and Acts 2:39]. We may expect him to take the same care of His people today as He did then.

A futile attempt

The story of Balaam exposes the weakness of every weapon the enemy may use. He tried to use the power of Satan, but could not. When Satan attacked Job he found his activity limited by God. 'Do not touch his life'. The powers of nature may seem threatening, whether climatic change or cancerous cells. But our Saviour is the one who stilled the storm and healed the leper. Other human beings may pose a threat; either outright enemies or people who act sincerely but unwisely. Sometimes the three come together. Satan may use a time of weakness to stir up an enemy against one of God's children. But God is sovereign. He had a purpose for Abraham's descendants.

Balak could not thwart it. And Balaam was compelled to bless the people he had tried to curse. *"No weapon that is formed against you shall prosper, and every tongue that rises in judgement against you, you shall condemn"* [Isa 54:17]. At last the enemy will say, *"How can I curse whom God has not cursed?"* [23:8].

A blessed people

Balaam said they were *"not counted among the nations"* [23:9]. There is a qualitative difference between God's people and society in general.

They are head and shoulders above the rest. From the mountain top Balaam could see the orderly camp of Israel, very different from the rabble they were thought to be. God's enemies portray his people as ignorant and his church as chaotic. But from the vantage point of Scripture we see a highly organised group whose activities are co-ordinated from heaven by Christ. Those activities transcend national and denominational boundaries, and take effect across the generations.

There is orderliness in their relations with one another. God's laws provide for happy and productive living, in contrast to the unfaithfulness and unhappiness that mar so many communities. First century society noticed that. Early historical documents record people's comments about this 'new' religion. 'See how they love one another!' If the church is weak and unsuccessful we should investigate whether we are keeping God's commands, including Jesus' command to love

one another. If not we have become like the world; no wonder we cannot overcome it.

God's people are 'alone' in the sense of being separated from the mass of fallen humanity and dedicated to God. The Bible calls this being 'holy'. Like the people of Israel in Balaam's time God's people are holy by divine choice, by being redeemed by Christ, by God's call to them, and by their own response to that. If we are God's people, are we conscious of our standing in relation to God and to society? Do we value the grace that loved us, the blood that bought us, and the Spirit who dwells in us? Do we take advantage of the resources available to us when we pray? Do we live to please our Father and Saviour?

Balaam realised the people were numerous. It is easy to underestimate the size of God's family. The numerical decline of the church in the west should not blind us to what is happening. Heaven's ranks are swollen by the hour. There are 'generations yet unborn' who will praise and magnify God [Psa 102:18]. And numbers are increasing across the world. It is estimated that in China approximately eight thousand people are converted to Christ every day. There are also 'hidden ones' who cannot make a public profession of their faith.

Balaam realised that God's people prosper even when they die. The early Methodists were often criticised by people who thought they were ignorant and foolish. One reply to that criticism was, 'Our

people die well'. When all is said and done what else matters? Balaam said, *"Let me die the death of the righteous and let my end be like his"* [23:10]. But he did not die the death of the righteous, for he did not live their life [31:8]. *"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"*

Their covenant God

Why were they so prosperous and safe? Because of the God who lived among them [23:21]. He had made a covenant, and he could not break it. If we join the covenant people through receiving Christ Jesus we too will prosper and be safe.

No matter how often Balaam tried to ignore God's purpose for them he always came up against this: *"God is not man that he should lie, or a son of man that he should change his mind"* [23:19]. No man or devil can reverse the blessing that God has covenanted to give.

He sees no evil in His people [23:21]. That does not mean He is unaware of their sins. But when there is no idolatry the relationship holds firm - no breach of faith on either side. More of that later. And He sees them represented by Christ Jesus, 'the righteous one'.

Balaam said, *"The shout of a king is among them"*; that is, the shout of a crowd when a monarch is crowned, or of an army when their trusted commander leads them into battle. Everyone knows the difference good leadership makes. It gives both dignity and confidence. When Christ is leading his people

"we may boldly say, 'What can man do to me?'" [Heb 13:6].

Balaam compared God's people to a lion at rest [24:9]. It is said that a lion will rest anywhere. It does not need a safe place, for no one will attack it. Similarly God's people will conquer till all their enemies are under their feet. And when Christ gives them rest no one will be allowed to disturb. *"He has laid a table for me in the presence of my foes"* [Psa 23:5].

Not only is there rest, there is great prosperity [24:3-7]. All we need is provided. We do not need to go short when love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control are there for the asking [Gal 5:22-23, and Luke 11:13]. We have a Father who answers prayer and who will beautify the meek with salvation [Psa 149:4]. In short, the picture is of a God who regards his people as 'the apple of his eye' [Zach 2:8].

But there is a sequel. Eventually Balaam advised King Balak to befriend Israel. The purpose? To inveigle them into worshipping Moabite idols. And when they did that God made his anger felt against his own people [Num 25].

So long as we keep faith with God nothing can harm us. But if we break his covenant it will be a different story. We must *"walk in the light"* by confessing our sin and believing God's gospel of salvation. The Apostle John ends his First Epistle with the words, *"Dear children, keep yourselves from idols."*

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

IN LIGHT OF the little notice headed 'Salaries, Faith and Prayer' in the last issue of the APC News, It is appropriate to proffer the following exhortation under the heading *"God loves a cheerful giver"*!

We read at 2 Corinthians 9:6-7: *"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver"*.

In light of these words of Scripture I want to urge everyone to do three things: 1) to give generously; 2) to give willingly; and 3) to give cheerfully.

1. Give generously - the more you give the more you receive:

"Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously [6]. The success of the harvest is directly proportional to the amount of seed sown. As Christians we are to sow the seed of the word individually and collectively. We are to give of

ourselves in the service of Him who loved and gave His life for us.

We are to give of our time, talents and resources; and this includes our finances to further the cause of Christ's gospel in our own locality, throughout our nation and to the very ends of the earth. We are not to squander our time and resources on peripheral things but give ourselves wholeheartedly to the things of God. Jesus Christ must have priority in and over our lives. Does He?

In Old Testament times the people of God were commanded by God to give a tenth of their income back to God for the provision, maintenance and perpetuity of the ordained ministry, the Temple and all things associated with administering God's ordinances. And this practice continued in many churches in the New Testament era.

New Testament believers, however, went a step further by giving sacrificially. They took the Lord Jesus at His word: *"Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you [Luk.6:38].* "Freely

you have received, freely give" [Mat 10:8]. As a result of their obedience and trust in God's word the church prospered through trials and tribulations and grew. Not because the early Christians gave of their material resources in a sacrificial manner but because this was truly a manifestation of their love for the Lord Jesus and of their dependency and trust in Him. It was a sign of their overwhelming compulsion to further the gospel and show forth His love, grace and mercy to others.

The early church turned the world upside down! If we want the Lord to bless us and use us today to bring light and blessing to others then we must follow their example.

There are many in our land at present that appear to think on the church as something akin to the old co-operative societies – a sort of insurance policy - you pay your occasional mite and the minister will baptise your children, marry you and officiate at your funeral. Such folks say they want to see God's cause maintained; they just don't want to contribute their time, talents and resources to His church.

God's word says to such: "*Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your panelled houses, while this house remains a ruin?*" Now this is what the Lord Almighty says: *'Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse*

with holes in it'" [Hag 1:4-6]. "*One man gives freely, yet gains even more; another withholds unduly, but comes to poverty. A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed*" [Pro 11:24-25]. Give generously of your time, talents and resources and God will prosper you.

2. Do not give grudgingly but give willingly: "*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion*" [7]. The matter of giving is very much between you and God: "*Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give*": Search your heart. Do you love the Lord Jesus? Is He your Lord and Saviour? Consider what He did for you in and through His life, death and resurrection. Consider what He continues to do for you as your Intercessor with the Father and will do for you as the Author and Finisher of your faith. Can you and I ever do enough or give enough of ourselves to Jesus!

We are not to give reluctantly or under compulsion. The church cannot force members and adherents into giving generously but I would remind you of the Apostle Paul's instruction to Timothy, the young pastor of the fledgling church in Ephesus: "*Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share*" [1 Tim.6:18]. Do you; are you willing to comply with God's word?

Our willingness to comply

with the above injunction is testimony to our being new creations in Christ. It is evidence that we have received a new heart from God. The Lord Jesus identified and condemned those fine religious folk in his day whose hearts were far from Him: *"Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence"* [Mat 23:25].

By contrast children of the New Covenant give willingly. We are to be like Jacob who says to his brother: *"Please accept the present that was brought to you, for God has been gracious to me and I have all I need"* [Gen 33:11].

God blesses those who give willingly: *"And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work"* [2 Cor 9:8].

3. Give cheerfully – as a witness

to your love for God: *"for God loves a cheerful giver"* [7]. C.H. Spurgeon once said: 'Get beyond the serf-like, slavish spirit. The slave brings his pittance, which he is obliged to pay, and goes his way in misery. But the child, pleased to give its Father what it can, beholds the Father smile, and goes its way rejoicing.' Let us all heed the words of 1 Chron 29:17: *"I know, my God, that you test the heart and are pleased with integrity. All these things have I given willingly and with honest intent. And now I have seen with joy how willingly your people who are here have given to you"* [1 Chron 29:17].

Do you desire to see the church prosper in our land? Do you want to be blessed, happy and content? Do you want to know and increasingly experience the love of God?

Put your trust in Jesus Christ and serve Him wholeheartedly. Give what you can of yourself, your time, talents, resources and do so cheerfully for God loves a cheerful giver.

GENERAL TREASURER'S POST

As the present APC General Treasurer would like to retire from the position, any person interested in undertaking these duties is invited to contact:

Kenneth MacLean, PO Box 2, Gairloch, IV21 2YA

either by letter or by e-mail for further information, at

kendunedin@aol.com

Assembly Sermon

Below are notes from the Address given by our retiring Moderator of Assembly, Mr Wm M Byers, on 17th May

“And let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap if we faint not” [Gal 6:9]

THE APOSTLE PAUL is here writing to the church in Galatia and we find our text among many other exhortations. The background to it is that many Judaizers rose up after Paul had planted this church and sought to enforce upon it Jewish ways and traditions such as circumcision, introducing a legal principle which undermined the doctrine of justification by faith.

Paul writes to encourage the church in the doctrines of free grace and to draw them away from this justification by works to the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

The two previous verses to our text speak of sowing and reaping. This verse is joined to them with the conjunction 'and', the following verse is also joined up with the sense of the matter presented.

We will notice as enabled:
(1) Why we are liable to be weary in well doing. (2) The exhortation given. (3) the reward promised.

1. Why we are Liable to be Weary in Well Doing. We are

prone to slackness and carelessness in serving the Lord because of the sin in our hearts. There is no sin in being weary. Even our beloved sinless Saviour Himself was weary, but never weary in well doing.

We live in a hostile world surrounded by sin, temptations pitfalls. Sin is still in the bosom of the Christian though in its death throws; certainly sin is in the world around the Christian. Satan is all too ready to tempt and distract the Christian from the path of duty, so that we are liable to say *“My lord delayeth his coming”*. As in nature, so in grace - there is a sowing and a reaping time.

The world, the flesh and the devil discourage the servants of Christ from their duty, just as Sanballat and Tobiah in the book of Nehemiah discourage the Jews from building the walls of Jerusalem, scornfully saying *“What do these feeble Jews?”* There are many such today. False prophets of doom who predict the demise of the Church of Christ in the next ten years. Wishful thinking, for Jesus has said *“I will build My church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it”*. God's people see the Church as a

handsome ediface, the fairest that this world has ever seen or shall see. It is the palace of the King of Kings, the habitation of Almighty God of which He has said 'This is My rest, here still I'll stay, for I do like it well' [Met Psa 132:14].

Are you discouraged? *"Be not weary in well doing"*. Are you meeting with difficulty, trial, temptation, enmity, scorn and derision? *"Be not weary in well doing"*.

2. The Exhortation

Given. This should stir us up to renewed activity, to follow the Lord fully like Caleb of old. Be weary of sin and self, weary of serving the world the flesh and the devil, but not weary in following the Lord Jesus Christ.

We may be tired and weary **in** the Lord's service but never tired **of** the Lord's service. Now is the time for sowing seed. Are we sowing to the flesh or to the spirit? As a follower of Jesus, persevere in the way of the gospel. Err not to the right hand not to the left. Let us cleave to Christ as our only hope. The next verse in the chapter tells us to *"do good unto all men"*. By our life, walk and conversation in the world, we are to set a consistent example by God's grace, of a

Christian life and so recommend His service to others.

3. The Reward

Promised. *"We shall reap if we faint not"*. This will come in due season - in God's time. 'That man who bearing precious seed, in going forth doth mourn; he doubtless bringing back his sheaves, rejoicing shall return' [Met Psa 126:6].

Do not faint in sowing the gospel seed. Preach the gospel to every creature. Sow in faith. The spirit shall work and who shall hinder it? The cup of cold water in Jesus' name, shall not go unrewarded. No man can truly care for the soul of his fellow and not have concern for his bodily welfare also. The Lord's time is best. His due season will come. Wait for Him, do not fret.

Go back then, beloved brother to your flock, your place of labour for your Master *"forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord"* [1 Cor 15:58]. *"Cast thy bread upon the waters; for thou shalt find it after many days"*.

What a Master we have. He is faithful that promised.

"Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we will reap if we faint not".

"Many people find the whole subject of war abhorrent. They think of fighting as wrong and sinful. We would all have great sympathy with that. But in the realm of Christian living and the spiritual powers of good and evil in this world, there is an intense battle raging which no Christian can avoid. We are urged to put on this armour of God in order that we may fight. We who follow the Lord Jesus, follow a Captain who leads us into the fight". DS

Loyal Address

To the Queen's Most Excellent Majesty

*The loyal and dutiful address to the General Assembly
Of the Associated Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Canada*

May it please Your Majesty

We, the General Assembly of the Associated Presbyterian Churches of Scotland and Canada, met at Inverness this 17 Day of May 2006, desire to make known our sincere devotion to Your Majesty's person and throne. Being subject to the supreme authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, we gladly and wholeheartedly express our loyalty to Your Majesty as Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

We recognise that our nation has, under Your Majesty's long and eventful reign been privileged to enjoy much civil and religious liberty. We thank Almighty God for the Christian and religious heritage this nation has received from past generations and how it has been instrumental in His hand as an influence for moral, religious and social good to many other nations both in the commonwealth and beyond.

We have all lived through years of dramatic change and challenge and need to relate to the world and generation of today in a wise way. We greatly admire the way in which your Majesty has walked with our Lord Jesus Christ in a steadfast manner despite the internal and external pressures to compromise. We took cognizance too of Your Majesty's speech at the opening of the eighth General Synod of the Church of England last November and were encouraged by its tenor. We do bear you on our hearts before our God in prayer and thanksgiving for His setting such a gracious sovereign over us.

We note with joy that Your Majesty has been privileged to see 80 years in this world. We rejoice to see, that like Moses of old 'Your eye is not dim nor your natural force abated'. How it gladdens our hearts to see you attend to the affairs of state with such resolve, determination, alertness of mind and physical ability, giving vent in our hearts to the prayer, 'long may She reign'. We feel constrained not only to express our loyalty to Your Majesty, but also our respectful love to our Queen who we know has earned it.

We are aware of the decline in moral standards in our society and grieve over them. The place of the Bible in our nation we feel is crucial to maintaining a proper balance of what is right and wrong. Our leaders in the Church and State must stand true to the Word of God.

Your Majesty. We are well aware of our own shortcomings and pray that we and all other churches in the land may have grace to follow the Lord Jesus Christ as our supreme example.

We engage to continue to pray earnestly for Your Majesty, His Royal Highness Prince Philip and all of Your Majesty's family. May they and we know more and more of Jesus and His love in our hearts and lives in this realm and nation in which we have the honour and privilege to be Your Majesty's most humble and devoted subjects.

On behalf of the Assembly,

Wm M Byers

Moderator

Congregational News

STORNOWAY

The congregation has had a very busy time over the Spring and early summer. Our May Communion was taken by Revd Jerrold Lewis from Vancouver and a Guest Service entitled: 'What is a Christian?' was held to co-incide with the end of session of the Good News Club. Several new faces appeared and we pray God will bless the venture.

A Day Outing was held on 03 June when over 40 gathered in Shawbost Community School for a time of recreation and to hear a talk from William Mackenzie of Christian Focus Publications.

At the time of going to press a special meeting on Thursday 22 June is being arranged to alert Christians to the dangers of the Da Vinci Code, a book which is having a great influence on the general public. The book casts aspersions on the validity of the Bible. The meeting is to be addressed by Dr Joseph Pipa, the President of Greenville Presbyterian Theological Seminary in South Carolina, USA.

LAIRG and ROGART

As a congregation we continue to look to the Lord to build us up and add to our number. The words of the psalmist surely reflect the earnest

desire of us all: *"Will you not revive us again, that your people may rejoice in you?"* [Psa85:6]. There has been little response as yet to our new Lord's Day service times and it may be that we will have to reconsider these in the future but time will tell. We are somewhat constrained at present by the age and size of our congregation but we trust the Lord will add to our number and bless the ministry of the word.

June proved a memorable month for Communion Seasons. It was my first in Lairg and I am grateful to my predecessor for taking the Friday night preparatory and the Lord's Day Communion Services which were much appreciated. Retirement! What retirement! It was also a real bonus to have Lairg Free Church join us on the Saturday evening - a first possibly! It was similarly a real privilege and joy for me personally to participate in the Helmsdale and Dornoch Free Church Communion Seasons as well as taking a preparatory service in Kingsview, Inverness. *"How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!"*

On Friday 30 June at 7.30pm I will give the first in a series of four lectures on the Scottish Reformation which we hope will generate interest and support throughout Lairg and the surrounding locality. To be sure,

we must not permit ourselves to become chained to and enslaved by the past but there is much that we can learn and apply from such a glorious revival of biblical Christianity. Methodology is subject to change for the culture we live in is very different from the past but the means and the message are immutable. It is my hope that historical/theological lectures will become a regular feature in our annual calendar. Watch this space please!

WP

DUNDEE

The congregation continues to be encouraged. At time of going to press, three people have come to worship for 3 weeks in a row at our morning services as a result of our Charity Shop contacts. Please pray for them. We also had an enjoyable communion with two new members by certificate - Paul and Isabella Scrimgeour. We welcome them and wish them every blessing in their time with us. They have come from the congregation in which Wayne Pearce our minister in Lairg/Rogart, ministered in when he was in Dundee. They have given us great encouragement.

There are new developments regarding our premises which are rather exciting - more details later. In the meantime please pray!

EDINBURGH

The shop continues to be an excellent contact with the community and an ideal place to have our

services. All our working hours could be spent in the shop. While it is a very worthwhile work to raise money for the poor and for Christian causes, this is not the primary reason why we are here.

We are here we believe to reach lost souls with the gospel. We would therefore appreciate your prayers, that we would know how much time to give to the shop and how much to reaching out in other ways and that we would be guided in all our contacts by the Holy Spirit.

One way that we have reached out, is by giving a DVD of the Jesus film to people, on the understanding that they answer a few questions once they have viewed it. About fifty DVDs have been given out. Only a small number of people have given us any feed back, so pray that all who have taken it would watch it and respond in such a way that it would lead to real opportunities to help them spiritually. God is in control in all these situations and he can make it very fruitful.

Jo Rose, the parish youth worker who has willingly helped us, has resigned from the work and her resignation takes effect from early September. She will be greatly missed as she did an excellent work. May the Lord guide her in whatever work she does in the future and bless her abundantly.

The Faith Mission Convention has just taken place and it was a great blessing to us and others who attended. Bruce Milne was one of the main speakers and preached in a very uplifting, imaginative and

edifying way.

He also gave a brief report from different parts of the world where he has had opportunity to minister. In Korea there are congregations where people go in relays of a thousand to early morning prayer meetings. In China he met a Bible scholar who teaches ministers and preachers who eagerly come to learn from him. Amazingly this bible scholar is eleven years old. In China, millions gather to worship the glorious Saviour of the world week by week.

Bruce Milne drew a contrast between the church shrinking in the west but multiplying in other parts of the world. It is encouraging to look at the wider picture and not measure everything by what we see close at hand.

If anyone is coming to Edinburgh to work or to study we will be delighted to have them worship with us regularly and we will be very happy to help them settle in to this great city and support them while they are here. Similarly anyone who is already here or a frequent or not so frequent visitor is most welcome to join us.

We have a very close contact with Eddie and Vilma Brito who are doing a vital work in the North of Mozambique in the Province of Tete in the village of Thoera. with orphaned children. Some of these children have lost their parents to Aids and others to Malaria. The poverty and deprivation that these children endure is very often terminal. The work that Eddie and Vilma do on their visits to

Mozambique is in an extremely isolated area and is exceptionally harrowing and lonely and the oppressive power of Satan and evil can be deeply felt. Eddie is there at the moment and no doubt will benefit from the prayers of God's children. Vilma is here in Edinburgh as it is her small wage that has been the main support of this work since it started five years ago.

Iain Penman, the parish minister here, hopes to be back to work by mid August. Please pray that this does indeed happen and that he comes back with his former vigour and vision. Many thanks if you have already remembered Iain in your prayers. This area is greatly impoverished when Iain is not there.

My wife Morag has been suffering from Poly Myalgia for the past two years. Our oldest son Jonathan is presently off work as a result of damaged tendons in his wrist. We would greatly value your prayers for Morag and Jonathan and indeed for us all.

Marshall and Kay Green from Linlithgow usually keep the shop open on the Wednesday and this is greatly appreciated and has lightened our burden and left us free to do other very necessary work.

Pray that Faith Mission Students, or others, who would have a burden from the Lord to spread the gospel in this very needy area would come to help us. *JR.*

INVERNESS/DINGWALL

The congregation had the privilege recently of three visiting preachers,

Dominic Smart, Wayne Pearce and Roger Carswell. Each was greatly blessed in preaching, and the congregation in the listening. One new member was added to the roll of members, and for that we thank God.

The Inverness building venue is being increasingly used. There has been a sizeable Youth Camp from Lewis encamped in the building for a long weekend, and we hope to host another one ourselves in August.

This first week of the School Holidays, we are running a Summer Holiday Club, helped by 5 students from America. Our little magazine, The King's View has been revamped and we have a larger print run, four times a year, instead of the previous run which we did ourselves every second month. If any readers are

interested in being put on a mailing list for The King's View, please contact us and we will arrange that for you.

We are currently doing a major overhaul of our congregation's web, so hopefully, we will be able soon to advertise it more widely. We are pleased to welcome new-born babies to the church family and we await the arrival of at least one more shortly.

The Clubs that usually run over the other parts of the year are put on-hold over the summer, but there still seems to be plenty of activity.

We thank God for the opportunity to work for him, and we cry to him that he would work as only he can do in mercy toward us and to his glory.

SING PRAISE TO HIS NAME

ON THE LAST SATURDAY of March, the Poolewe congregation, along with the Poolewe and Aultbea Free Church congregation, invited Highland Harmony Singers to Poolewe Village Hall for a Festival of Psalms. The purpose behind the invitation was to stimulate and encourage good Psalm singing. The choir that day consisted of sixty one members who sang both traditional and newer versions of the Psalms to old and new tunes - and even included a Gaelic Psalm precented. A Gospel message was given by Rev Roddie Rankin, Kyle of Lochalsh, himself a native of Gairloch.

The beautifully re-furbished Hall was comfortably full, and the large congregation were pleased to join in with some of the Psalms sung. It was a day of great praise to our Lord and Master. One local elder, from a non-exclusive Psalm singing congregation remarked: "That was one of the best things that has happened here - ever!"

Highland Harmony Singers continue to meet on the last Saturday of each month at 3.00pm until 5.00pm in the North Kessock Free Church. New members are always welcome. On the subject of unaccompanied Psalm singing, the following is an interesting comment from an elder in a Glasgow congregation attending the Church of Scotland General Assembly this year. The first thing he states in his report is "**Highlight:** Morning worship - 800 singing a metrical psalm unaccompanied gives a tremendous uplift each morning."

KM

Address to Other Assemblies

Mr R W M MacKenzie, Fearn

AS MODERATOR, appointed by the Associated Presbyterian Churches' Assembly at its meeting in Inverness on Wednesday, 17 May 2006, I have to willingly acknowledge my appreciation of the honour and responsibility placed upon me by this appointment. It is appropriate to ask for your prayers during the year of office for which I give thanks in anticipation.

Also it may be of interest to friends to hear that I have had the opportunity on the invitation of both the Free Church Assembly and the Free Church Continuing Assembly to address both their assemblies. It was useful to know that I had been assigned a maximum 10 minute slot, which I sought to adhere to. I was warmly received by both assemblies on Tuesday 23 May at 3.30pm by the Free Church at the St Columba's Church near the Castle, and on Wednesday 24 May at 10am by the Free Church Continuing at Viewforth Church, although not actually called to speak until almost noon!

The following is the prepared part of my address, which was given to both assemblies and while the actual delivery had some additions, which were of current

interest, but are not required to be included in this article, I believe the main part of the message is suitable for those who heard it first hand and also now for all of us who read it together.

"Although I have been an elder of some 33 years, it is amazing for me to be here this year as the Moderator of the Assembly of the Associated Presbyterian Churches, which is as you know a small denomination which has chosen in each of this and last year to appoint an elder as Moderator, perhaps to demonstrate the equality that should be apparent between preaching and ruling elders. It was interesting for me and also encouraging that my predecessor was my first cousin, William Byers, who worships in the same congregation as I do, (Tain and Fearn) and has been like an older brother to me all my life.

It is quite a thought to be asked to address a company of such experienced and educated men and in thinking of what to say I had many alternative start off points but, in view of the fact that thankfully I was given a timeframe I remembered with pleasure hearing of a friend in the Gideons who was invited to take a service at a Welsh Chapel, which he had not visited

before. Asking the elders at the door 'how long have I got?' he was informed 'you can have as long as you like sir, but we are leaving at 12 noon'.

A word of greeting. On behalf of my brethren in the Associated Presbyterian Churches, I am authorised to bring you warm greetings. As you are aware two matters loom large in our minds when we consider the origin of the APC, namely 'freedom of conscience' and 'communion of saints', the latter of which brought us to include the word 'associated' in the choice of name. Accordingly as I stand before you today, I am aware of the words of Philippians chapter 4 verse 21 "*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus*".

I remember well an old Christian gentleman who used to attend our Gideon meetings and would begin his welcome by addressing us in the words 'Good evening saints', not that we felt like saints but rather that we had been blessed by God and as such were saints. Accordingly I greet you all and wish you all God's blessing as you serve Him and I pray that we will all be continually aware of the following words as we do so. "*By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another*" [John 13:35].

A word of encouragement. You will all know how often the Word has been a blessing to you and how you have evidence to testify of its power in your own experience. Well some

ten years ago I spoke on the words of Isaiah chapter 25 verse 1 "*Oh Lord thou art my God, I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name for thou hast done wonderful things, thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth*".

Recently on returning to the verse in the NIV, I read that the verse ends in the NIV - "*you have done wonderful things, things planned long ago*". This has tremendous implications for us all as denominations and as individuals.

Just think of it, the Lord has done wonderful things and your list of wonderful things and mine would often converge and if we take notice of these wonderful things and are alert spiritually we might (almost) begin to shout Halleluiah!

Then think of it planned long ago! We are not here by chance as an assembly or as individuals but we are here according to the plan, planned long ago and you and I were in His plan long before we were thought of by mere man and remember the words of Proverbs chapter 8 verses 23 – 31.

"The Lord brought me forth as the first of his works, before his deeds of old; I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began. When there were no oceans, I was given birth, when there were no springs abounding with water; before the mountains were settled in place, before the hills, I was given birth, before he made the earth or its fields or any of the dust of the world. I was there when he set the heavens in place, when he marked out the horizon on

the face of the deep, when he established the clouds above and fixed securely the fountains of the deep, when he gave the sea its boundary so that the waters would not overstep his command, and when he marked out the foundations of the earth. Then I was the craftsman at his side. I was filled with delight day after day, rejoicing always in his presence, rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind."

Your Saviour and Father in heaven planned your salvation and our meeting today, long ago and long ago before the world began, he was delighting in mankind!

Finally a word of exhortation. I want to move to conclusion by repeating a story I read some time ago. It is as applicable to myself as to anyone else and I hope you will receive it in the spirit in which it is offered.

On the evening before the Battle of Trafalgar, Lord Nelson was

painfully aware of the fact that several of the captains of his fleet were not on talking terms with each other.

Therefore he arranged for his rowing boats to be sent out to bring the captains of his fleet on board his ship the Victory; and having fed them he took them up to the main deck, pointed to the horizon on which the masts of the enemy ships could be seen and said to them "Yonder, gentlemen, is the enemy". We all know that the following day the battle was won. We need to keep this in mind as we seek to serve Him and address the question as to why the church is not being more widely blessed than it is.

I conclude with these words; 'May the Lord bless you with His presence, enable you with His power, guide you with His spirit, motivate you by His love and make you positive in your expectations and remember the words "*Them that honour me, I will honour*", 1 Samuel chapter 2 verse 30.

We apologise for the difficulties some may have had getting on to our website. We are doing our best to rectify the matter and hope before long the problem will be overcome.

Please note that the APC website address does NOT have 'uk' at the end.

Also note that to contact our ministers by email from our website, please do not put the 'uk' at the end of the address. eg jsmith@apchurches.org

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Tribute - Mr William Taylor, Elder Wick/Strathy Congregation

THE SCOTTISH PRESBYTERY of the Associated Presbyterian Churches, met this day at Inverness, the 29 day of November 2005, desires to place on record its sense of loss at the removal by death on the 9 November of William Taylor at the good age of 87 years.

For forty years a member in the Church, thirty of these as an elder in its Far North congregations, William leaves a blank which will not easily be restored. Naturally reticent about his spiritual experience and, if you asked, for example, how he came to be saved, his sometime typical response was, --"Am I saved?!!" The answer, however, was there for all to see in a life of service to the Master.

He took a keen interest in Church finances both local and central. Pulpit supply in his area was a priority in which he took his share. His grasp in matters of order in doctrine, worship and practice was acute as his part in debate in the church courts evidenced. The Gideons was another field of service as as was collecting in the local auxiliary of the Trinitarian Bible Society.

To his grieving widow, two sons and three grandsons the Presbytery offers its heart-felt condolences and prays that their husband's, fathers' and granddads' God may be theirs. *"The memory of the just is blessed"* [Prov. 10;7a]

Dr HELEN ROSEVEARE

is speaking at the

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Before You Ask

HELEN ROSEVEARE was an English missionary from 1953 to 1973 in what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly Zaire). She used her skills as a doctor to minister to the many physical needs in a politically unstable country, founding hospitals and a medical school, while at the same time sharing her faith with people who had known great suffering.

Throughout her ministry Roseveare found herself in need of financial support to carry on her work. In spite of many pressing needs, early in her ministry she established the practice of tithing (giving ten percent) of any gift that came in, giving it back to God in faith.

One morning in her first year of clinic work, she slipped away to her house, hoping for ten minutes of quiet. She found on her doorstep a man with his wife and two small children. He informed her that he had been sent to her for work. She told him that she didn't have any work for him, and that he should inquire of the missionary down the road who might hire him. The man adamantly insisted that he would work for her, and informed her that he had been cooking for missionaries for eighteen years.

When Roseveare asked why he had left his previous employers, he

rolled up the sleeve of his shirt. Roseveare recognized at once that the man was infected with leprosy.

The young missionary doctor's heart sank. She felt a deep conviction that this man's coming meant God wanted her to begin a new work for the treatment of lepers. She was not afraid of leprosy, but the stigma the disease carried meant they would need separate facilities, costing more money and more of her already scarce time. Yet though she clearly could see the cost that this work would entail, Roseveare believed that if God wanted it to go forward, He would provide the resources. In faith, she hired the man named Aunzo to be her cook.

They built a small mud-and-thatch building to serve as a leprosy clinic, and sent off for medicine, bandages, and equipment. The supplies came with a bill for 4,320 Belgian Congo francs, money that Roseveare did not have. She prayed that God would provide the money, then slipped the bill into her Bible.

The mission had a strict policy that all bills must be paid by the end of the month. As the month's end drew near, Roseveare expected God to provide the needed amount, but no funds appeared. As the first day of the next month dawned, Roseveare went to work discouraged and confused.

At lunch time, Aunzo greeted her

with a large brown envelope. It had been delivered the previous day to a different missionary by mistake!

Inside the envelope was money that came to the sum of 4,800 francs. Roseveare quickly subtracted the tithe in her head, which left 4,320 francs, the exact amount needed to pay the bill for the supplies. She writes:

"The total was made up of three gifts, from an unknown couple in North America, from two prayer partners in Northern Ireland, and from a Girl Crusaders' Union class in southeast England.

The North American gift had been on the way some four months, transferred from our Philadelphia office to the London office, from London to Brussels, Brussels to Leopoldville (Kinshasa), and finally upcountry from Leopoldville to Paulis (Isiro). Every transfer involved a certain percentage cost. At the end, the three gifts had arrived together to make the exact sum needed, and two of the gifts were designated: 'for your leprosy work'—and I did not have a leprosy work when the money was actually given!"(1)

God does not always work so

neatly and obviously, but extraordinary provisions such as this one serve as a reminder that, "your Father knows what you need before you ask him" (Matthew 6:8). God had a leprosy clinic in mind long before Roseveare thought of it, and he put it in the hearts of his children to give the money for that work. In the days to come, days which would bring scarcity, hard labor, and very real danger, this was a promise that Helen Roseveare could keep close to her heart. Even as you read this, God is anticipating your needs and making provision for them. You can bring them to him with joyful anticipation that He is expecting you.

(1) Helen Roseveare, *Living Faith* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1980), 43.

06/20/06 Betsy Childs

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"Why did He who had no sin to confess, sometimes have to spend all night in prayer to God? Because the divine life had to be strengthened in communication with His Father. His experience of a life in which He took time for fellowship with God had enabled Him to share that life with us. God must have the first and the best of your time for fellowship with Himself.

Andrew Murray in 'Prayer Power'

The Deadly Denial

THE FALSE TEACHING THAT evil and sickness are illusions has appeared through the ages under different guises. Years ago, some of my ancestors, living in relative isolation in a rural area, were led astray by someone who passed through their town and taught a particular brand of this heresy.

They became convinced that true believers should not visit a doctor. To do so would be to acknowledge the reality of sickness; if they ignored it, they thought they would triumph over it and it would go away.

One family member adhered so faithfully to this belief that he lost his sight in one eye. A doctor could have saved the eye, but this man trusted that as long as he did not believe in the sickness, it could not harm him.

I believe that going to the doctor is a sign of health, though to say so may sound paradoxical. A healthy person takes note when something in his or her body has gone wrong, and they take the action to diagnose the ailment so that it can be cured.

In contrast is the person who tells himself that as long as he denies that something is wrong, nothing will be. Denial allows an illness to progress untreated.

Although a person with cancer may feel fine, the longer they let

their disease go untreated, the less chance they will have of surviving it. And though going to the doctor, being admitted into the hospital, and going through chemo and radiation may all make the patient feel sicker than they ever felt before visiting the doctor, these are actually steps back toward health.

The same is true of diseases of the soul. People who have avoided church for years fear that if they go back they will feel sinful. Of course, this isn't about church, but something much more personal.

As long as they can silence their conscience, they can sustain the belief that they are a good person. But if they allow their conscience to be awakened by the truth, they will have to face their own guilt. Yet just as the attempt to avoid illness by avoiding the doctor proves futile in the end, the refusal to face one's guilt and need will not make them go away.

Going to church or reading the Bible will not make you sinful, but they may make you realize that you are sinful. If so, you are not alone, for God's Word teaches that we are all infected with this cancer of the soul.

John, one of Jesus' closest friends on earth, wrote, *"If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us."* This may sound like bad news, but it is the

doctor's diagnosis before he recommends the cure. He goes on to write, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness" [1 John 1:8-9].

We can hide in the dark and continue to tell ourselves that all is well. Or we can step into the light and admit that we are dying, that we need something outside ourselves to give us life. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote, "The love of God is a holy love. It expresses itself not by condoning sin or compromising with it; it deals with it, and yet does so in such a way that the sinner is not

destroyed with his sin, but is delivered from it and its consequences"(1) As a physician, Lloyd-Jones knew that to treat an illness, one must not deny it. God is too kind to let us stay in our sin. To those who want to be well, He says simply, "Come."

(1) The Plight of Man and the Power of God.

05/30/06 Betsy Childs
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"THERE WAS A TIME when truth mattered. In fact, at times truth mattered so much that love was in short supply. Read some of the writings of the Reformers and you will be convinced that all too often truth eclipsed charity and being right was always more important than being kind. I have often wondered what might have happened if John Knox had shown Mary, Queen of Scots a bit more courtesy and compassion during his dialogues with her. We can't know, of course, but maybe here heart would have softened to the Reformed faith and the bitter conflicts might have become more charitable. We can say the same about the heated debate between Luther and Zwingli; and the rancour between Calvin and Servetus, who was burned at the stake in Geneva. A little understanding would have sweetened these conflicts.

"In our day we have drifted to the opposite extreme. Love has replaced truth, and, as for unity, it is more important than any doctrine - including the gospel. Better to tolerate heresy, the argument goes, than to risk looking unloving to the world. Thus under the banner of unity, almost any doctrinal deviation is tolerated, and breaches of morality are quickly forgiven. We might not always like the attitude of the Reformers, but their example is a necessary antidote to our permissive attitudes and lifestyles. They would tell us that no one has ever made it to heaven simply because he was loving; if one wishes to get to heaven truth is needed....Certainly we do not want to divide over non-essentials...but at the same time we must blow the trumpet; we must call the church to be distinct from the world. We must treasure and defend the truth, even when we have to risk being misunderstood or cause a break in personal fellowship."

Erwin Lutzer

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