

Holy Boldness!

IN ACTS CHAPTER 4, we have the Apostles Peter and John filled with the Spirit [v8] and preaching the gospel so that 5,000 men (plus women and children) are added to the church! This is because they have holy boldness.

Being filled with the Spirit does not mean we are uncontrollably excited or emotionally affected. It means that we are controlled by the Spirit - just as someone can be controlled by alcohol, so a Christian can be under the influence of the Holy Spirit. It will mean that we will be reliable and accurate in all that we say and do.

Anyone who is aware of the majesty of God and the human need for redemption by God, will be passionate about these truths to some degree, but being filled with the Spirit mainly means being controlled by, and being subject to, the Spirit of God.

The holy boldness of Peter and John was a result of their being filled with the Spirit. They were unafraid to speak the Truth - even although they knew it would offend their hearers and probably have severe implications for themselves - as in fact it did.

It was something which they were praying about *"And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to **continue** to speak*

*your word with all **boldness**"* [29]. It was their desire to lift up the name of Jesus among a throng who had despised Him. They desired it so much that they prayed for courage and strength to publicise that Jesus of Nazareth has risen from the dead!

They did not 'water-down' the reality and significance of the gospel for their audience. They chose a Scripture which their audience would have known very well, and used it in a context and for a purpose that must have horrified the hearers. Peter and John challenged them that they were the very people and generation about whom the Psalmist wrote so disparagingly about *"This is the 'stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone'"* [11] a verse from [Psa 118:22] which they would have sung at the recent Passover.

How true are the words of Scripture *"those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength"* [Isa 40:31] - the weak and timid Peter who was ashamed to own the Lord a few weeks before, is now bold and strong in the Lord and taking a risk with his life.

The Bible constantly asks believers to be bold and to take risks for the Lord in the way of witnessing for Him. The Old Testament saints were **weak** believers! Yet it is said of them *"out of **weakness** were*

made strong" [Heb 11:34]! They were weak but through their trust in God they received strength. Faith in God's Word **enabled** them to be strong.

Another wonderful and necessary aspect of their boldness was their bravery in declaring the **unique-ness** of Christ as the **only way** of salvation. They clearly said *"And there is **salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved**"* [12]! In our politically correct age, how much need there is for **this** kind of boldness!

Peter and John said this, not out of a sense of duty, but rather out of love to their fellow-countrymen. They could easily have 'got off the hook', but concern for the salvation of those around them strengthened their faith. They really did believe Jesus rose from the dead for our justification and that Jesus really was the **only** way of salvation. And the joy of salvation was real to them.

We learn three challenges from their holy boldness. One is that **suffering** may be an indispensable ingredient of holy boldness. The civil authorities became involved with Peter and John. Increasingly now we read in our newspapers of Christians being challenged for their beliefs. Free speech is truly under threat in the UK at the moment. The time may come sooner than we may imagine, when Christians will have to suffer for their faith. After the recent acquittal of the BNP leader for expressing his opinion, Gordon

Brown said that it may be necessary to adjust the law. If that happens the great fear will be that quoting from the Bible will be criminalised. It is not wrong to express an opinion on religion.

The second lesson from Acts 4, is that we need not be theologically trained to a high degree to be an effective witness. Peter and John *"were uneducated and untrained men"* [13]. But they had *"been with Jesus"* - and that is a most important principle. God uses those who are close to Him and those near His heart. Each and every Christian has the 'power' to be effective in their communities. The great need is for the heart and desire to be conformed to the heart and mind of Christ.

Even some great preachers did not have formal training, but God used them mightily. Billy Bray, DLMoody, Spurgeon, Campbell Morgan, Gypsy Smith, A W Tozer, did not attend university type training for their ministries - but they were called and gifted by God.

The third lesson we learn is that in the heart of every true Christian their ought to be a **compelling urge** to speak of the Lord which will be difficult to suppress *"For we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard"* [20].

We are challenged - what have we seen of the Lord's mighty works and what have we said about it to others? We must never suppress the urge to speak about the Lord Jesus to those around us. We must pray for holy boldness and take every opportunity the Lord puts our way.

Evangelism in Reformed Congregations

By James Gunn © 2006

A FAIRLY RECENT survey (released in April of this year) by the American Christian pollster George Barna, found that six out of ten Americans had shared their faith with someone during a given time span in the past. According to Barna, this ratio has remained constant over several years.

However, based on my own experience, I'd say that this result is misleadingly high. If someone should ask 'Are you a Christian?' and you say, 'Yes' this will not pass for evangelism. Yet this is how most people understand the question. Nor is evangelism simply giving a personal testimony of how God has made you a better person, or how He has solved all your problems.

We've all heard jokes that start out 'I've got bad news and good news. What do you want to hear first?' and then we're given the punch line. Evangelism is just like that. It has a 'bad news' aspect (the Law) and a 'good news' aspect (the Gospel).

Biblical evangelism is partially about our depravity, sinfulness and rebellion against God and His holiness; that's the bad news. The good news is that there is

someone who can save us from all the consequences of the bad news!

This article series has attempted to put evangelism into perspective and explore how we can begin with outreach and from there move into a more evangelical posture, engaging in it with increasing confidence and assurance in spite of obstacles that will inevitably come into play. It does not assume we will all be 'super-evangelists'. Rather, it assumes we will have difficulties of one sort or another. Encouragement, not judgment, is the goal here.

If you have read the last issue of APC News, you will recall the presentation of what we have come to call the 'Essence of the Gospel'. You will remember that the gospel consists of four essential components: a) The sovereignty of God and His purpose for man; b) the situation of Man, his predicament explained and its inevitable consequence; c) the person and work of Christ as the only answer to man's predicament; and finally d) the call for repentance and faith in Christ on the part of all people. We are able to summarize these elements further by the terms *Sovereignty, Sin, Sacrifice*, and

Surrender. If these four elements are missing when we engage with unbelievers then we are not really presenting the complete gospel.

Therefore, with that understanding in place, we now turn directly to the relationship that exists between the gospel and evangelism. We do so because we are convinced that the gospel lies behind evangelism, that the gospel is its core and substance and without the gospel, there can be no evangelism leading to repentance and salvation [Matt. 4:17; Rom. 10:14; 2 Cor. 5:20; Thess.2:14; 1 Peter 1:23].

So, what is evangelism? Evangelism is nothing other than the proclamation of the bad news of mankind's predicament (sin and condemnation) along with the good news of our redemption in Christ (repentance and salvation). Evangelism is in fact just another name for the gospel. Evangelism derives from the Greek *euangelion*, which is the 'good message', 'the gospel or good news' of the Bible.

If the gospel only consisted in the proclamation of our sinfulness and God's perfect holiness, there would be truth, but such truth offers no hope for reconciliation. It is because of God's redeeming love for His people, however, that we have not only truth, but also hope, a living hope [1 Peter 1:3-5]. Because this is so, we should strive to understand that the heart of evangelism is the gospel, but that the heart of the gospel is God's justifying love through the shed blood of Jesus

Christ.

At some point in the life of one of His elect, God will begin to contrive events and situations in order to draw the sinner, inexorably, to himself. This can be slow or instant; it can be unremarkable or cataclysmic; it can be easy and comforting or hard and painful. Regardless of how it happens, God is all the while working in the life of the fore-loved sinner in order to bring him to the gospel.

In the case of God's elect, hearing the gospel will eventually result in the new birth [Acts 16:14; 1 Tim 6:12] which is entirely the work of the Holy Spirit [John 3:3]. Through hearing the external or general call of the gospel, God's elect sinners will also hear the internal or effectual call [Matt. 11:15 et al.] to which they then give a willing response, sincerely repenting of their sins and placing all their trust and faith in Christ for salvation [Isa 55:6-7]. Those who are not God's elect will hear no such internal, effectual call. This is the essence of our evangelism. With these overarching thoughts in mind, let's look at how evangelism might be done in Reformed congregations. We consider first corporate and then personal evangelism.

For convenience, evangelism is described as belonging to two categories: *corporate* and *personal*. In turn, corporate evangelism has two aspects: the first is the formal preaching of the gospel within the confines of the worship service. The second is informal and

conducted by lay church members when encountering needy sinners through a congregational outreach ministry.

In the first, unbelievers come into the church for a variety of reasons (guilty conscience, tradition, curiosity, outreach, or desire, for instance). In the second, believers take some risk and go out into the community looking for opportunities to share the gospel in love and compassion, believing as they do that the Holy Spirit is leading them. Personal evangelism is somewhat akin to informal corporate evangelism in that the individual Christian seeks out and prays for encounters during everyday life, but outside the security of the sanctuary. He or she takes some initiative and is willing to 'step out' as it were, in order to engage an unbeliever in a dialogue that will eventually include an exposition of the gospel. (This gospel exposition usually proves difficult, in part because many Christians are unable to summarize the gospel in plain and simple language.)

We should realize though that, in formal corporate evangelism, the roles of pastor and elders are different from other members and loom large, especially over the long term. This is because there must be a consistent, underlying approach by the congregational leaders for the accomplishment of the third purpose of the Church (ministry to the world) if she is to be a means for the salvation of sinners. The role of the pastor is primarily,

but not exclusively, to preach the gospel, pure and unadorned. Within the worship service, the pastor must articulate the gospel in ways that all may understand. Whatever else of importance he may wish to speak on, there should be few messages from the pulpit that somehow do not include a brief exposition of the gospel in clear, plain and understandable terms.

I believe the message should also include a 'gospel call' or the invitation for sinners to repent and believe. Pastors have the responsibility of teaching the depravity and perdition of unsaved people but also the redeeming sacrifice of Christ on behalf of His people. A pastor preaches first the bad news and then the good news. He calls sinners to repent and accept Christ as their only and sufficient Saviour. This is the primary function of the pastor and special music, drama, 'liturgical dance' and all other such unbiblical contrivances will make no difference nor add any value to his message.

Concerning outreach and evangelism, the elders' main responsibility is to husband the various gifts and resources of church members to make outreach and evangelism not only possible but also normal. This means ensuring proper financial, physical and legal management to be sure, but it also means working with the pastor in order to discover and encourage the gifts of members within the congregation, and to find ways to put these gifts into service for the

Lord. This requires maturity and responsibility of course. It also requires dedication to a clear vision and deep understanding of and commitment to the purposes of the church, which include outreach and evangelism.

The pastor and his elders must share this vision and commitment if any progress is to be expected. Pastor and elders design and deliver bible study and other discipling activities of the church that incorporate a theological underpinning for evangelism. The pastor and his elders must be quick and eager to seek to inculcate an appreciation of the importance of outreach and evangelism in the members. Without a demonstration to the congregation of their own abiding belief in the work of the Holy Spirit to save souls through His chosen means, the Kirk Session will do a disservice to the Church.

Turning now to personal evangelism, we will find a model illustration by an individual in chapter eight of the book of Acts. It involves Phillip, not the apostle but rather the evangelist. It seems that Phillip was extremely adept at evangelism and partook of this gift of the Spirit in great measure.

The incident in view, in Acts 8:26-39, is a wonderful example of how personal evangelism can and perhaps should work. In this model example, God shows us yet again that He uses secondary means to accomplish His own good purpose. On the one hand, we have Phillip, a willing and committed disciple and

on the other, we have the court official of the queen of Ethiopia, and in whom God had apparently created a hunger and thirst after righteousness.

God brings both of these men together on a dirt road on the way to Gaza somewhere south of Jerusalem. In this encounter we see God's sovereignty at work, for He tells Phillip, by way of the angel of the Lord, to leave his thriving ministry in the city of Samaria and go down along the hot and dusty road and there, to do what? He does not say why He wants Phillip to go, He just says, 'Go' and Phillip obeys. Doubtless, as part of his ministry of outreach and evangelism in Samaria, Phillip was often praying for God to bring him sinners in need of salvation. In this particular case however, God brought not the sinner to Phillip, but Phillip to the sinner!

It was Phillip's initiative, his 'stepping out' in obedience to God's will, which enabled him to bring the court official to repentance and faith and to receive baptism. It is likewise that we should conduct our own personal evangelism. We should pray to God that He would bring us into contact with a needy sinner, someone who needs to hear the gospel. Nor should we apply qualifications or distinctions of any kind but be open and sensitive to those with whom we come into contact, trusting God to make use of us as He sees fit, for ultimately His elect must hear the gospel in order to be saved. So pray to God for opportunities to be His instrument

for bringing His elect into an engagement with the gospel. In addition, be sensitive to those around you who may be looking for just such a one as yourself.

In this, take the good advice of Peter, *"Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect"* [1 Peter 3:15, NIV, emphasis added]. You are not required to contrive artificial or insincere situations in which to engage or to challenge those around you. You need only develop a discerning sensitivity 'a kind of radar' for those whom God has filled with either a growing hatred for the world or a hunger for Him. More often than not such people are not even aware of their predicament at the point where you meet them.

While God has put a yearning deep in the hearts of His elect, that yearning may sleep on for many a year undiscovered. Yet in the fullness of time, it will awaken and at that point in their lives sinners begin the often long road home to the Father. Just as did the prodigal son of the parable, so too will they come to themselves, even though they be sleepy still, perhaps even defiant for a time. However, eventually each one will be encountered by the gospel and inevitably the sinner will repent and come home to his Father and his inheritance [Luke 15:18-24]. You may ask, 'In our personal evangelism, should we stress the bad

news or the good news of the gospel?' It is our belief that only those who have *"ears to hear and eyes to see"* will come, whether instantaneously or slowly, to a realization of their true predicament and so surrender themselves to the life-giving promise of salvation.

It is the good news, remember, that is the gospel. While there is an inevitable warning of condemnation because of our total depravity, the good news is the proclamation of salvation *through the perfect and finished work of Christ*. This is the promise of the gospel. This indeed is the good news! In His call to the world, we must see the truth that only God knows His elect. He knows them; we do not. We cannot tell by outward sign, lifestyle or by any other indicators who these people are. This is the reason behind the external or gospel call.

Remember Christ's words: *"Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"*. Were ever words of such love and tenderness spoken in this world? We think not. Even though only few are chosen, it is not for us to stop calling the many.

But can we talk about subjects that don't seem to have a direct bearing on God's sovereignty, mankind's sinfulness, Christ's sacrifice (and resurrection) and a sinner's need to repent and believe? Yes of course. You can use many techniques to create an interest in what you are saying. For instance, picking up a newspaper is often the

best way to get a conversation going. Simply asking the question, 'Why do you think people do this kind of thing?' in response to a story of crime or obnoxious or immoral behaviour is guaranteed to elicit some kind of response. That is all that is required. Now you have an opening.

Is this kind of thing dishonest or disingenuous? Not if your motives are pure. If your intention is to engage this person in a debate that could change a life for good in the most dramatic and permanent way possible and you decide to use the daily newspaper as your vehicle, you have done no wrong. We need only remember Whom it is we serve and to use our good sense. Share your testimony, do outreach, but when you do, keep the summary of the gospel clearly and firmly in mind: Sovereignty, Sin, Sacrifice and Surrender.

I believe that if our evangelism is to be successful, we must always start with trust in God and His sovereign ability to carry out His own good pleasure. It is our own part to be as capable as we possibly can be to carry out our commission; a commission He has set before every believer [Matt. 28:19-20]. However, let us not think that we must supply anything that He has

not already given us. We need only be still and know God, and then He will use us for His Kingdom in whatever way He sees fit.

I am convinced that the blessing and power of the Holy Spirit are what will make the difference in all our efforts to be profitable servants. Without the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, our own efforts will be, however well meant, paltry and insignificant. It is and always has been Christ's Spirit dwelling richly in His people who give them the power they need to do God's will. Without Him, all our efforts are ultimately doomed to failure.

Therefore, pray in humility and contrition that the Holy Spirit will overshadow you. Ask for His direction and blessing and, if what you do is in keeping with God's Word, He will give the strength, the power, the 'dunamis' without which we are as the flowers of the field and as chaff in the wind.

We must trust that the Holy Spirit will bless our work. The gifts and talents that He has given us as uniquely our own, these are what we use to carry out His will. Be open, be receptive, and be quick to see opportunities. This is all He requires of us. The rest He will accomplish on His own.

'Biblical truth has to be preached, and more particularly, the truth most adapted to awaken men and women.....Dealing with the conscience must come first, *"that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God"* [Rom 3:19]. This being true, the conclusion of J H Thornwell has to follow, 'The most successful method of preaching is that which aims at thorough and radical convictions of sin'. *Iain H Murray*

Congregational News

DUNDEE

From time to time our premises are used by other Christians from other denominations. Recently we had over 50 people from the Travellers' Church spend an evening of ministry for their children in our hall. It was most interesting to hear the testimonies of some of these people and we rejoice that we are able to help all of God's people in whatever way we can. This meeting is now to be a monthly meeting and we pray that the many people who attend will be blessed. The preaching we attended was certainly a totally Christ-centred ministry.

We continue to have several new people come to our own services - with the universities and colleges beginning a new year we have also had one or two students. Our church can be rather far away from some student quarters so distance can play an important part in students continuing to come.

We had Revd Ian MacNaughton of Day One Christian Ministries preach to us in October and we enjoyed his ministry. Ian is the new secretary for the Scottish branch (formerly the Lord's Day Observance Society). We had a most enjoyable and interesting time with him as he spoke to us about his work and helped us address the many

problems that arise in our culture regarding the Lord's Day. We pray for his ministry, and trust that he will find his work rewarding although in today's world there is a significant retreat from the traditional understanding of how the first day of the week ought to be kept. Our nation is not the better of its disregard towards the Fourth Commandment.

Back in April we received two new members by disjunction certificate from the Congregational Church in Dundee, Paul and Isabella Scrimgeour. We welcome them. Also in November this year we welcomed Wilma Hall into membership who has been transferred from a Church of Scotland in Dundee. We are thankful to God for these new members who have encouraged us.

We are enjoying the Praise Nights which we hold every second week. Almost everyone stays behind for a lovely time of fellowship. Sometimes one of us will give our testimony. Please continue to pray for us as we worship from week to week.

LAIRG/ROGART

Since writing for the previous edition of the APC News I have had the privilege of taking the Inverness and Oban Communion Seasons and as I write I'm looking forward to

ministering at the Tain Communion. Additionally I have been up in the far north getting re-acquainted with our congregations in Wick, Strathy and Kinlochbervie. Many thanks to all for making me feel so welcome and for your kindness and hospitality. Thanks to those who supplied Lairg/Rogart in my absence.

The final address in my series of lectures on the Scottish Reformation was given at the end of October. The lectures were well received by those that attended and the fellowship was a real bonus. It is hoped that we may be able to do something similar next year.

Our joint prayer meeting with Rogart Free Church on the 2th & 4th Wednesdays in the month is going very well and makes such a difference not only to our numbers but also to our prayers and worship. I have changed the time of the Lairg prayer meeting to 11am on the 1st, 3rd & 5th Wednesdays in the month for now in the interests of the few that attend.

I am thankful for the opportunity given to me to proclaim the gospel recently in the Lairg Community Centre at an event organised by the local Church of Scotland in aid of the Highland Hospice where we shared in the worship and witness of the Inverness & District Gospel Male Voice Choir. It was good for me personally to sing some old familiar hymns and to fellowship with some of our own men and meet others from outwith our denomination. The

choir provided me with a good illustration of the unity that God's people have in Jesus Christ; in spirit and in truth. Do pray that the proclamation of the gospel in word and song that evening would bear fruit throughout this locality and pray to that our God would continue to bless the labours of the Gospel Males Voice Choir.

It is so necessary that we impact our communities and do all to eradicate the perception that people have of us of being separatist in the wrong way!

With this in mind I'm preparing to welcome some of the local school children and their teachers from Lairg Primary School to our church building this week (Wed 8 Nov.) to show them round and explain what we do when we gather for worship! It is a sad but potent truth that we now live in an environment where the majority have little or no knowledge of the things of God and we must do all we can to be salt and light in an unsavoury and sin-darkened world.

(Wayne)

INVERNESS/DINGWALL

After the holidays, things are back onto track again. What we must avoid is the mental and social comfort of running in the rut. We have had the pleasure of seeing young lives being born into the fellowship, and of seeing their parents bring them to be part of the church family. Pray that, both parents and congregation will

recognise the privilege and responsibilities we have to teach the children and to set them a good example. Vows and promises are more easily made than kept, and we all need God's help to keep what we promise.

There has been a Sunday School running at Drakies for years now, and that calls for commitment from the leaders. We are thankful for how they prove it. The Friday Club for youngsters and the Lunch Club have also started up again. People from the church continue to visit Homes for Seniors to have worship with the residents on a regular basis. I mention these because they highlight both ends of the spectrum age-wise. None are too young to be brought to Christ, and none are too old to be beyond His reach.

The early Sunday morning Prayer-Time is a real 'power-house'. A disciplined prayer life is essential to Christian living and whatever we plan or scheme, if we are not a 'praying people' we are living on the strength of our own energies.

Ross and Amy McFarlane were away in Vancouver, where Ross was helping with the preaching services for four weeks. They are now back home to their home in Conon. We had the pleasure of Bob Hackett and family, with another friend, visiting Scotland for three weeks. They made their base in Inverness, from where they did the usual 'tourist things'. Bob, whose home is in Edmonton, is a Student for the ministry, and while in

Scotland, he preached very acceptably in Stornoway, Inverness, Dingwall, Fearn and Tain. They seem to have enjoyed their time in Scotland, and are planning a return visit. We enjoyed having them, and look forward to their return.

Kingsview Centre is being increasingly used as a venue for conferences, clubs and other meetings. We pray that the Bible verses posted on the walls will be a channel of blessing to both believers and non-believers alike who come through the doors.

EDINBURGH

We have confidence in what we are doing here, but it is hard and we need your prayers.

We are deeply grateful to anyone who has the work here on their prayer agenda. Only in heaven will we know how much we owe to them. Even if Edinburgh is not one of the places you target in prayer, but if your prayers are on the side of those who love the Lord – we give thanks for all such praying people. Don't you think Satan trembles, when he sees all who pray in the name of Jesus.

We trust that what follows will help you to give thanks and also to pray in more detail and with greater urgency. I'll tell you a little about some of the helpers we have, and the people we try to help in order to stimulate prayer and also encourage you.

About twenty years ago an older child was sexually abused in this

area. The other day that victim and the alleged abuser were in the shop at the same time. It was the first time the victim was ever in the shop. After the alleged abuser went out of the shop, a most interesting conversation took place between two of the helpers and the victim. The victim told how, on a previous occasion, when he met his abuser on a quiet pathway, he was on the brink of taking revenge by stabbing the man to death. He said he knew the exact spot on the man's body where he was going to stab him. The avenger's mobile phone rang as he verbally confronted his abuser, when he answered the phone there was nobody on the other end, but it gave him a vital moment to realise it is not worth going to jail for the murder of this filthy abuser.

This man who had been abused as a child, readily agreed that his own phone was used by God to stop him committing murder. Both helpers felt this man was telling the truth. We believe that these opportunities for conversation, most of which are much less dramatic, are helped to come about by prayer – thank you, and please continue to pray for all sorts, abused, abusers and everyone else. May we play our part in prayer for you, and be sincere and gracious in the work here.

Liz Stott, a teacher who has helped Scripture Union over the years, very kindly agreed to help with the children. It is quite remarkable that Liz was willing and able to help so soon after Jo Rose decided to go to South Korea. Over a

few Sundays, Liz told the children the story of Gideon and taught some songs with an excellent gospel message.

Mark Watts, a faith mission student has been helping with the children the past few Sundays. If he is not too overworked, we hope he will preach or us. Along with others from the college he preaches on the streets in Edinburgh. Faith Mission students have an action packed course and need our prayers as do all who prepare for Christian Ministry. Mark along with Jonathan, Graeme, Morag and Maggie help as doorkeepers. You need at least two people on the door, and it can be very challenging.

What we all need here, is that the Holy Spirit would be with us in gracious, power – whatever aspect of the work we are doing.

Very sadly, Linda Morrison the parish church officer died aged fifty four years. It was extremely hard for her family as they watched her health deteriorate so rapidly. It would be wonderful to see her husband and family, including the grandchildren, taking the place of Linda in the parish church. Linda was a very warm hearted larger than life character. As the minister said at the funeral service, she called a spade a spade. She was among the first from the parish to come to our services. She was an excellent singer and it was a real uplift to have her attending these first services. She often gave her support to the shop. The minister also said, that Linda struggled to accept that salvation

was a gift of God's grace. Like so many others she made a mammoth effort to work for it. He took great comfort from the fact that Linda said and did various things that indicated, that despite this struggle, she did in due time grasp that salvation is a free gift of God's grace for "all sorts of people."

Eddie and Vilma Brito have returned from their work in Mozambique, and are very encouraged, although they have many mountains to climb. Some of these mountains are the pervasive corruption, sometimes with government officials other times with officials in various organizations. Then there is the chronic lack of concern for these orphans.

Then it takes so long to get things done, not because the people you are looking to have their hands full, but because they are not making any significant effort. How important to

have Christians in the field who are honest and hard working.

Pray that God would raise up an army of workers from Mozambique and other countries, who would protect what is given for the poor, until it reaches them. This work needs much prayer. The powers of evil are working against children all over the world. For a great number of these children, there is neither African nor anyone else, that will care for their body and soul let alone adopt them into a family. Eddie and Vilma were delighted to leave eight tons of food with those in charge, this is enough to do the children until January.

Eddie and Vilma are also in the process of trying to establish a similar work in Malawi. Their charity is called "Healing every Nation". Blythswood have given them great support, for which they are most grateful.

JR

ATTENTION PRESBYTERY

DAY of PRAYER

It was agreed at the last Presbytery that each congregation should hold a
Special Day of Prayer
concerning the low moral and spiritual state of our nation and for the Church to play its God-appointed role in the nation

Each congregation should arrange which day of the
week beginning 3 December
will best suit their people

Time Flies!

Mr R W M MacKenzie, Fearn

TIME FLIES! Like a weaver's shuttle [Job 7:6]. Like a watch in the night [Psa 90:4]. Like the flower of the field [Psa 90:5]. Like a handsbreadth [Psa 39:5].

I remember how amused I used to be when young (a long time ago!), to hear so often from the older folk the words 'time flies' and now I am seeing it for myself and saying it as well! I can hardly believe that almost six months ago I took office as Moderator and in view of the fact that 'time flies', I thought I should share with you some thoughts that I had in that connection.

Let us give thanks to God for time, use our time well, and remember that a day is coming when for each one of us, time will be over and eternity will have arrived.

Enlarging on the giving of thanks, I thought I should just remind you of these quotes, which came into my mind:

"in everything give thanks"
[Philippians 4:6]

"thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift" [2 Corinthians 9:15]

"give thanks to God, call on His name" [Psalm 106:1]

"at midnight I rise to give thee thanks" [Psalm 119:62]

What does it mean to use the time well? For that, I have the following list of points, not at all exhaustive:

'Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever'
[Shorter Catechism, Ans. 1]

"Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near" [Isaiah 55:5]

"Hear and your soul shall live"
[Isaiah 55:3]

"I will confess my sins" [Psalm 32:5]

"Stand up for Jesus, ye soldiers of the cross" [Hymn]

"Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together"
[Hebrews 10:25]

"Praise the Lord Oh my soul and forget not all this benefits" [John 3:16]

"Bear one another's burdens"

[Galatians 6:2]

*"Love the Lord your God with
all your heart, soul,
strength and mind and your
neighbour as yourself"*

[Matthew 22:27-29]

*"Be as wise as serpents and
harmless as doves"*

[Matthew 10:16]

*"Walk in the light as He is the
light" – [1 John 1:7]*

*"Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ
and thou shalt be saved"*

[John 3:16]

*"Love the Lord your God with
all your heart, soul,
strength and mind and your
neighbour as yourself"*

[Matthew 22:27-29]

"Follow me" [Mark 1:17]

"Be glad and rejoice in Jesus"

It would be good to remember these daily.

We have to remember that time comes to an end. I remember hearing the story of the person who was asked – 'What are you doing?' 'I am studying in school.' 'What then?' 'I hope to pass my exams' 'What then?' 'I hope to do well and go to University,' 'What then?' 'I hope to get a good job', 'What then?' 'I hope to marry well'. 'What then?' 'I hope to have children', 'What then?' 'I hope to settle down and

have a good life'. 'What then?' 'I hope to prepare for retirement', 'What then?' 'I suppose I will die', 'and what then?' There was a pause and 'What then?'

The lesson of this story is to know that at the end of life there is eternity, time is uncertain, death is certain and where will we go at the end of life? For the believer, the future is secure, 'what then?' Is to be with Christ, which is far better. But for the unbeliever, if he continues to refuse and neglect so great salvation, 'what then' means to be with the devil and his angels.

Remember the importance of making your calling and election sure, for now is the accepted time and now is the day of salvation.

I remember many years ago, hearing an old friend singing gently and solemnly that little hymn that begins 'Be in time'. How important it is to be in time, to make our calling and election sure. Then we can have confidence that whatever the future holds our salvation is secure in Christ. I was greatly encouraged to hear Rev Sinclair Ferguson, at the John Murray lecture in Inverness on the 2 November, speak so clearly on the subject of assurance. Let us, therefore, value the time that we have been given.

God bless you all and thank you for your support and prayers and remember with awe the words of Isaiah 25:1 *"O Lord, you are my God; I will exalt you and praise your name, for in perfect faithfulness, you have done marvellous things; things planned long ago."*

APC Leadership Conference

On 9 and 10 October the APC held a Conference on Leadership - in the Home, in the Church, in the Nation Below is a short account of some of the main points

THE FIRST PAPER was by **Calum MacInnes**, Inverness entitled '**Leadership in the Home**' based on the life of Abraham. Here is a script of his paper.

Some homes are happy places, and some are very sad places. The happiness or sadness of the home is not determined by material things like the size of the television set, or the number of cars in the driveway. If God is excluded from the family life, all else is but a shell and life is only the living of a lie. Here are lessons from the Bible, from the life, marriage and family of Abraham.

The first lesson is about '**Abraham and his God**'. The most important thing about you is not your income, nor your social status, but your relationship to God. What was significant in the story of Abraham is that '*God spoke to Abraham*'. God's word begins to shape his life, as God called him to make a new start. After God spoke to him, Abraham did the only right thing to do – he obeyed God. You cannot expect God's blessing for yourself, or for your family, if you are careless about God's word in your life.

As Abraham journeyed, he had a public witness that he

believed in God and intended to serve him. He built an altar in each place as he moved along on the journey. It has been said that what characterised Abraham was "*a tent and an altar*". The old religious expression, the *Family Altar*, is not as commonly used these days, because it is to be feared that even in many 'Christian homes', these times of the family being together around the Bible and prayer are rare. Our society is the poorer for that. Reinstate times of Family Worship in your home if you want to have God's blessing in your family.

The second thing to think about is '**Abraham and his wife**'. The Biblical principle is that "*whoever finds a wife obtains the favour of the Lord*", and so Abraham knew God's favour. His wife was submissive to him as she moved around, going with him on the journey. However, Abraham failed as a leader when he gave her bad advice to save his own skin, while endangering her purity and damaging his own integrity. [Genesis 12:11].

How mercifully the Lord intervenes when husbands fail! God is the God who gives you, as a husband, another chance to get things right. A new situation

develops in the home. Sarah has no child and desperately wants one. Although God is the one who opens or closes the womb, Sarah has worked out her own plan so she can nurse a child. She tells Abraham to have a child by Hagar, the maid, and he goes along with the proposal.

It has been said that "No perfect feet walk the path of faith, and three things unite to bring about the birth of Ishmael. Sarah is barren; Hagar is available; and Sarah urged Abraham". This was originally her idea, but when trouble appears later, Sarah blames Abraham! No doubt feeling the domestic pressure, Abraham fails again. He gives the decision-making over to Sarah..

Too often women lead the family, because men fail to lead. Again God intervenes in the home. Men-folk, be thankful for God's patience and perseverance with us.

The third thing to consider is '**Abraham and his household**'. One of the most significant things in the Genesis story about Abraham is that the Lord continues to speak to him, making a covenant, and revealing to Abraham what his purposes are. Genesis 18, verse 17, unfolds to us some amazing riches. It tells us what Abraham would do as the head of the family, and also how God would work through Abraham's diligence, fulfil the divine promises.

Abraham becomes the one through whom God's promises will be kept to Abraham and his family. Do you want your family to be blessed? Do the things through which God will bless your family.

Take the 'leadership role' of calling the family together for prayer and Bible reading. Think carefully over the words of Richard Cecil: '*Let family worship be short, savoury, simple, plain, tender and heavenly*'. We do not do it perfectly, but do it we must if we want to see our homes as places where the Lord is loved and lived for.

Children have been known to have been converted to Christ in their own homes – how about your children and your grandchildren? They need Christ, they need you to help them find him, and God needs you to show that He saves those who trust in Jesus Christ.

The second paper was given by **Donald Macaskill**, Dundee, entitled '**Leadership in the Church**' based on the life of Paul. He focussed on what he saw as the current priorities for the APC leadership. He pointed out the responsibilities and accountability of leaders (elders). He pointed out the problems small denominations like ourselves had through the lack of manpower. To fulfil all the tasks properly was just not possible and it was necessary to say 'No' to the many calls to take a service from those who just did not have the time due to their prior responsibilities of attending to family and business duties.

He mentioned the priority in appointing elders. Zeal for **souls** (people) was more important than a full and comprehensive knowledge

of doctrine. Doctrine was important, but if there was not the love for souls and the willingness to make sacrifices in time to meet and discuss with people, that knowledge would remain dormant.

He also pointed out the danger of practical hyper-Calvinism, in the neglect of evangelising the lost and needy world around us.

The third paper was by **Lord MacKay of Clashfern** on '**Leadership in the Nation**' based on the life of Joshua. He provided a most interesting address drawing from his experience in parliament and his travels abroad. He began by reminding us of Joshua's early training - he was a slave in Israel and travelled through the wilderness under the direction of Moses. Being appointed one of the twelve spies, he experienced rejection - along with Caleb, his advice was not received

well by the people.

However, God purposes stand and when appointed to lead the Israelites into Canaan God encouraged him "*Be strong and of good courage...be not afraid*".

Lord MacKay showed how a nation may have a godly leader but that did not mean the nation were blessed in every way. At Ai and the example of Achan, proves that a leader's success can be undermined by the behaviour of those who they lead. The experience of the deception of the Gibeonites is another example of how things went wrong under good leadership.

When necessary, Joshua conferred responsibility to the people and called for them to make decisions saying "*choose you this day who you will serve*".

God's clear purposes were fulfilled in Joshua's leadership and any nation today can learn much from a study of his life.

NICK HOWARD, the son of Michael Howard the former Conservative Party leader, has been turned down for ordination by the Church of England because of his clear evangelical beliefs and 'unwillingness to listen' to other viewpoints. Mr Howard obtained a theological degree this summer when he completed his three-year training at Cramner Hall, a theological college in the University of Durham. However, in an interview he told 'The Mail on Sunday' that his strongly held beliefs on homosexuality and multifaith worship marked him out as a 'troublemaker' even though they reflect official Anglican doctrine. 'An ethics tutor at the college was saying publicly that you can be in a gay sexual relationship and follow Christ,' he explained. 'That is incompatible with the teaching of the New Testament'. He was also encouraged to accord equal spiritual value to Muslim, Sikh and Hindu religions in the name of 'multifaith ministry'. Mr Howard now works for the Association of Evangelists, travelling round the country giving talks to churches, schools and universities.

Evangelical Times

How Wise Are You?

By Wayne Pearce

PERMIT ME TO ask you a question. How many wise men were there searching for the Christ child? Did you answer three? Tradition has it that there were three and their names were Melchior, Belshazzar and Caspar!

I'm sure that most of you are familiar with the Christmas carol which runs 'We three kings of Orient are...' Three? Kings? See how easy it is to read into God's word things that are simply not there! And this danger is all the more pronounced at Christmas. It's so easy to get entangled and distracted by traditions and peripheral things that we miss the true significance and meaning of Christmas. 'Jesus is the Reason for the Season'. It is the glory of Immanuel that we celebrate and rejoice in - or should do!

What a wonderful opportunity Christmas presents to share the gospel with those who are still without Christ and without hope in the world! Let us therefore seek to ensure that Jesus Christ is and remains central to Christmas. We are reminded of this glorious truth in the example of the wise men. We read in God's word: *"On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshiped him. Then they opened their treasures and*

presented him with gifts of gold and of incense and of myrrh" [Mat.2:11].

Firstly see how the wise men's efforts were rewarded. We read: *"On coming to the house"*. Let us follow their example. Those who seek the Lord find Him. The Lord Jesus bids you come to Him that you might possess true peace and joy which is to be found in Him alone. *"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day"* [John.6:37-40]. Is it not glorious to be a recipient and afterwards a bearer of glad tidings!

Secondly, like the wise men, we must make the Lord the sole object of our adoration and worship. The wise men *"saw the child with his mother [and] bowed down and worshipped him"*. Jesus is the only begotten Son of God; the Word made flesh, the One who is full of grace and truth. The wise men worshipped the Christ-child not his

mother or anyone else for that matter. May you like Thomas, encounter the Lord Jesus this Christmas and fall down before Him and exclaim "my Lord and my God".

It is truly tragic that in our dark, degenerate and materialistic world that the make-believe figure of Santa Claus has eclipsed Jesus Christ in the affections of so many! Don't be deceived with a counterfeit! The real gift and giver is being freely offered to you: His name is Jesus and He is God's love gift to a perishing world. The gift is eternal life in Him. He was given the name Jesus for He and He alone saves His people from their sins!

Thirdly the wise men's gifts are a reminder to us of who Jesus Christ is and of what He came into our world to do! We read that they "presented him with gifts of gold and of incense [frankincense] and of myrrh". The gold reminds us of Christ's kingship. The wise men were searching for the king of the Jews and they found Him who is Lord of lords and King of kings.

The gold also speaks to us of the Ark of the Covenant which stood in the most holy place within the Temple in Jerusalem and more specifically of its pure gold mercy seat where the atoning blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement. These things were types which pointed to and found their fulfillment in the Lord Jesus Christ. The incense

or frankincense similarly reminds us of the Tabernacle or Tent of Meeting and afterwards of the Temple. "Then the LORD said to Moses: 'Place the gold altar of incense in front of the ark of the Testimony and put the curtain at the entrance to the tabernacle'" [Ex.40:5].

Incense symbolized the prayers of the priests who acted as mediators between God and His people in Old Testament times. Christ is our High Priest who not only offered Himself up for our sins but He is continually interceding for us before the Father and that is why we must pray in his precious name. Why not take some time to read through chapters 9 and 10 of the Letter to the Hebrews which focuses upon Christ as the Mediator of the New Covenant.

Finally, the myrrh points us to Christ's death. Myrrh was used for embalming. The Son of God came into our world to die upon the cross and give His life a ransom for many. "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God" [Eph.5:1-2].

How wise are you? Have you received Jesus Christ to be your Lord and Saviour? Then I invite you to worship the King and Saviour of the world this Christmas and always.

*"When Jesus came in the form of a servant, He was not **disguising** who God is. He was **revealing** who God is".* John Ortberg

Highland Year of Culture - Christian Witness

AS PART OF THE Christian contribution to the Highland Year of Culture 2007, Highland Harmony Singers decided to organise a Nationwide Festival of Psalms. One great aspect of Highland Culture, which was famous in the past, but is now sadly declining, was undoubtedly unaccompanied Scottish Metrical Psalm singing. The Festival, which will include some Gaelic Psalm singing and a Gospel message, will be held (DV) at 3pm on **Saturday, 1 September 2007**. This will be one of the few Christian contributions to the Highland Year of Culture and it would be wonderful to see it well supported. Please mark the day in your diary and keep it free if at all possible. It would be even better to take part in the Festival. If you are interested in singing and would like to support us in our Christian outreach, why not come to our monthly practices held from 3pm to 5pm on the last Saturday of each month (apart from December) in North Kessock Free Church? That is only two hours each month! The practices are held in a relaxed atmosphere and provide wonderful fellowship. Every encouragement and help will be given to new members. Prospective groups in other parts of the country, including the Islands, have also been invited to prepare for the Festival, and to join with Highland Harmony Singers for this special occasion. Above all else, please remember the Festival in prayer, especially as some people have expressed the opinion that they see no need for any religious (Christian) input to the Highland Year of Culture. And please pray for the Committee who are responsible for all the arrangements. For further information, including details of groups in your area, contact, either:

Kenny MacLean on 01445-712050 (kendunedin@aol.com)

Kathleen Nicolson on 01862-811388 (kathleen.slioch@uwclub.net)

Alistair Murray on 01463-230420 (am.murray@bopenworld.com)

CALVIN'S LAST WILL

WHEN JOHN CALVIN DIED at Geneva in May 1564, his entire estate consisted of a modest sum of money, a small collection of books, his manuscripts, and few pieces of furniture. In his will, written less than a month before his death, Calvin left these immortal words:

"I also embrace with my whole heart the mercy which he exercises towards me for the sake of Jesus Christ, atoning for my crimes by the merits of his death and passion, that in this way satisfaction may be made for all my transgressions and offenses, and the remembrance of them blotted out."

Calvin understood that mankind's greatest need, and God's greatest gift, were fulfilled when Jesus Christ died for the salvation of lost sinners.

Passion in the Church

PAUL POWELL WRITES, 'Do we have the passion to do what needs to be done?' Early in his pastoral career, Jonathan Edwards, who led the great awakening, said he had to grapple with what it would mean for his congregation to be revived. His church was solidly orthodox. They could rattle off the tenets of the Christian faith. But few of them cared deeply about Christ. They were absorbed and fascinated by business and everyday life, but they gave little attention to God.

Many of our churches are the same way. They like things as they are. They don't want change. They don't want to be revived. They are content to sit and sing 'Just As I Am' to one another. That's why they die. I remind you that one man with a passion is worth 100 men with just an interest. The church exists by mission like a fire exists by burning. When the fire stops burning it goes out. It dies. And when a church loses its sense of mission, then the church is dead even though it may continue to meet and have all the outward signs of life. . . .

Paul Harvey put it best, 'When small men cast long shadows, the sun is about to set.' This is no time for small leadership either in the pulpit or in the pew, in the staff or in the laity. We must rise to the occasion if we are to win our world to Christ.

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(They start in January for a year)
The cost is **£10** for the 6 issues,
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See page 24 for details

THE NEXT ISSUE **of APC News!**

It is due out on the

1st WEEK in FEBRUARY

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY CENSORS ITS CHRISTIAN UNION

FOLLOWING PRESSURE from a group of students, Edinburgh University has banned the University Christian Union from running one of its events on University premises. Pressure is principally coming from the Gay & Lesbian Society at Edinburgh University. The banned event is a course called PURE, which presents the Biblical basis of personal relationships. The University's decision is based on its belief that PURE is in breach of its equality and diversity policy because PURE claims that any sexual activity outside heterosexual marriage is not God-ordained.

This incident is an attack on freedom of speech in an institution where an open exchange of views and a search after truth should be strongly upheld. In this instance the CU is being denied freedom of expression because what they say and believe is uncomfortable for some groups in the university.

University and College Christian Fellowship (UCCF), who coordinate the work of university Christian Unions, have asked that as many people as possible write to the Principal of Edinburgh University expressing disapproval at this censorship. In your letter, please concentrate on the fact that freedom of speech and belief is being curtailed.

The Principal is: Professor Timothy O'Shea, Principal and Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh, Old College, South Bridge, Edinburgh EH8 9YL.

Please also pray for the CU President Andrew Hall and for Matthew Tindale, the UCCF worker in Edinburgh, that they might have wisdom beyond their years as they deal with this situation.

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
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