

Get a Life!

UNLESS THERE IS LIFE in us, that is, spiritual life, we are not saved. We will die - eternally. We may believe the truth but unless there is life as well, we will perish. The devils believe the truth, and believe it so much that they tremble at it, yet they do not have God's life within them.

Christ came to give us life. He said to His sheep *"I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly"* and *"I give them eternal life and they shall never perish"* [John 10:10,12].

Many people 'believe' what the Scriptures say and many people believe all the right doctrines and teachings but do not know the Lord - because they do not have His life within them. Paul spoke of *"Christ who is our life"* [Col 3:4] and John said that the Scriptures were written not only for us to believe, but that *"by believing you may have life in His name"* [John 20:31]. Unless we have this life, we will be miserable creatures.

It was this life that made life so enjoyable for Peter. He could say he *"rejoiced with joy inexpressible and full of glory"* [1 Peter 1:8]. It was no 'pretend' joy for it was real and effective. The life that Christ gives to His people is a life that changes everything. It changed Paul

so that he could say in all truthfulness *"I do not account my life of any valueif only I may...testify to the gospel of the grace of God"* [Acts 20:24]. All Paul wanted to do was to preach the gospel to others - because it made such a difference to him. It did not matter although he suffered for preaching the gospel.

The sufferings did not take away the joy of the gospel, for he said *"I consider that the sufferings of this life are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is to be revealed to us"* [Rom 8:13]. How many of us really experience this joy and assurance? How much are we prepared to endure for the sake of the kingdom of God? Is the joy we have in Christ worth more than gold, as the Psalmist proclaimed 'more joy thy testimonies way, than riches all me gave'?

When the Marquess of Montrose was sentenced to death for his convictions, it was said that the way he walked to the gallows, with ribbons on his shoes, his gloves in his hand, and his head erect and his face glowing, it did more good for his cause than all that was done in his life. Confidence facing death through the life of God within us, is worth more than all the wealth in the world. Paul McCartney can give

his estranged wife £70 million for a settlement, because he had £280 million, but if he does not have the life of God in him, he will ultimately have to leave everything he has, and what life will he have left? What does it profit a man if he has the whole world but has no life?

It is not money, it is not material possessions that brings peace and happiness, it is life, real life, Christ's life. People all over the world are seeking life but many are looking for it in the wrong places. God has no complaint against us seeking a good life - He wants us to have a good life, the best life. In fact He created us to enjoy life for ever! The complaint God has against us is not that we are seeking joy, but that we are seeking it in the wrong places. We think we know where happiness really lies - but we are deceived. We need to listen to God.

He challenges us: Why spend money for that which is not bread and labour for what does not satisfy? Listen to me. Delight yourself in rich food [Isa 55:2]. God wants us to have the best of fare and again and again calls on us not to waste our time, money, resources on useless unsatisfactory pleasures.

What kind of life do we have? Do we really enjoy life? When we waken in the morning, are we excited about the day ahead? Do we relish the future? If not, it is because we do not have a life that is worth living. We are missing out on something. And that something is the life of Christ. Christ came to this world to give us a better life.

Not only is the life of Christ better but it is longer - it is eternal life. The good life never ends. Paul confessed that if only in this life we have the joy of salvation, then we are more miserable than anyone [1 Cor 15:19]. The never-ending nature of the life of God is a singular quality. No other joy lasts for ever. All other joys vanish away.

Jesus has "*brought life and immortality to light through the gospel*" [2 Tim 1:10]. Christ not only restores the life that was lost in Eden but He added the dimension of immortality. The life of Christ lasts for ever.

Many people today are feeling insecure. World terrorism has unsettled many people. Environmental concerns frighten many people. Train, air, and automobile crashes, creates fear and anxiety, so that a life of security and peace is envied. Only the Christian, with faith and trust in the Lord of all the earth, and a heart and mind vibrant with the life of Christ within, can be settled and calm in such a climate.

Christ constantly warned His disciples not to be troubled by the cares of this life, or by world affairs and the doomsday prophets, but rather to "*come...and take the water of life freely*" [Rev 22:17]. The person who would love life, and wants to 'get a life' must realise that it is "*God that has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son*" and that "*He that has the Son has life, and he that does not have the Son does not have life*" [1 John 5:11]. Ω

Ministering in Malawi and Mozambique

Our Edinburgh minister John Ross, visits Africa - pictures on front cover

I HAD THE PRIVILEGE and pleasure of visiting Mozambique and Malawi for over three weeks in May. The purpose of my visit was to: encourage Eddie and Vilma Brito who head 'Healing Every Nation', a small Christian charity that brings material help to destitute children and seeks to evangelise and make disciples; encourage, direct and teach pastors; teach children and young people God's word; To proclaim the gospel and teach God's word to whoever would hear it; to get a better insight into the work of 'Healing Every Nation'; to see at first hand what things are really like in the places visited and to report back to people here who might be interested in helping this very noble work. It is a matter of great thankfulness that in some little measure, by God's grace, there was something done with respect to these aims.

If you want to get some insight into the poverty, hardship and suffering of these poor people, and what Eddie and Vilma are trying to do for them and what it means to these 700 + children, then read on. Blythswood Care has given great support to this work and this has been a huge encouragement to Eddie

and Vilma and such a blessing to destitute children. Blythswood, also very kindly, made it possible for me to go there.

From the outset it was very clear that Eddie and Vilma in all their human weakness, by God's grace, are eager to do a work that most people would be eager to escape from. If you like, they are running towards a situation that most people would run away from. To God be the glory.

They work in four different rural locations. Thoera, and Charre in the Tete region of Mozambique; also Tibuli and Njkasa in the Nsanje district of Malawi. To travel from the two furthest apart villages Thoera to Njkasa via Charre and Tibuli takes about five hours by car, canoe, bicycle and foot and requires prior arrangements by somebody who knows what's what. Otherwise you will be behind time and over budget. All these villages, and other vast areas in both countries, have been very adversely affected by the floods and drought this year, causing an extremely poor harvest, the effects of which are unimaginable to most of us in Scotland.

Food, clothes, shoes and school materials are given to the

children. Local churches and local volunteers do a huge percentage of the hard work. Under the Brito's encouragement and supervision.

Here are some of the challenges: roads that are often like very rough farm tracks that you wouldn't take a nice car onto even in good weather; chronic food shortage to the point of many people not having even one basic meal each day; telephone systems so inadequate, that you have to travel many miles before you can make a connection; from very poor to non-existent health care; for many people, no clean water unless you travel miles when you will run the risk of being very seriously attacked; (Little doubt but this is one of many factors in the Aids epidemic as is witchcraft ritual); Malaria, Cholera and all the other illnesses that can bring many early deaths to people who are severely malnourished. Corruption at all levels (but thankfully there are very noble exceptions); Constant begging – you have to decide not to help this poor man or woman because you are going to give what you've got to someone even more vulnerable e.g an orphan. Corruption and exploitation throughout society.

Why are there so many "orphans" and destitute children (many 100's of 1,000's) in Mozambique and Malawi. There are the above challenges, plus: the Aids epidemic and all the other illnesses you have in a third world country.

In the UK we say an orphan has neither Father or mother. In

Mozambique and Malawi they would include as orphans children who have only one parent. However, many of the children who have both parents in these countries suffer immensely because of the chronic poverty. How much worse is it not to have even one parent? Thankfully, there are those in these countries, who have a genuine heart for the poor and go many extra miles in their efforts to help. There needs to be many more such people.

In such situations it is important not to be overwhelmed by the immensity of the problem but be glad that at least some are being helped. Our Lord took it as low as "whoever welcomes a little child in my name welcomes me." I believe the singular is used because, we are so limited by resources and time and opportunity that we can often be in situations where the number may be very few or even just one. What a blessing for that one

Some would wash their hands off Africa and off the poor. The bible makes it very clear, that not to help a poor beggar, when you could, and only to wish him well is the hallmark of a dead faith! Look at [James 2:14-17]. So it should cause alarm bells to ring, when anyone who has the means to give, only produces excuses for not helping those in extreme poverty.

The most encouraging aspects of the trip were: the burden God has put into Eddie and Vilm'a heart to help these poor people; the heroic efforts the African's make to survive and provide for themselves;

their good humour in the face of great adversity; their willingness to listen to the gospel; the many opportunities to teach and preach and do good; the gratitude for help received; those who are already in the field helping; the stalwarts who persistently keep working for Africa and Africans in the face of a multitude of discouragements; the potential by God's grace for great blessing to come upon Africa, not just materially, but more importantly spiritually, and eventually to come from Africa to other parts of the world.

This would surely involve an enormous and costly spiritual battle, but would produce a harvest of righteousness that would bring a big smile to every right hearted person. Other encouragements: the crowds that can be seen going to church, more especially in Malawi; the African's who not only pray and long but also work hard for better days in every respect.

One field worker, with a very good reputation and working for an extremely large organisation, explained that when there is an 8 year old child with younger siblings and they have no parents or extended family, they would be put in a house by themselves. They would receive food, clothes, shoes and their school fees. A SW would try to call twice a week and another SW would try to call once a month. The school would see the children on school days hopefully, and if there are good neighbours, they also would keep an eye on them.

Can anyone imagine how an 8 year old is meant to manage in such a situation. One shudders to think how some older children, teenagers and adults would exploit them. But of course the alternative is to do nothing and abandon them to the streets and their own resources. Africa needs a vast army of bona fide helpers as do many other parts of the world. The churches need to hear that age old call, "Come over and help us." Are you willing? If you are may God graciously open all needed doors, for you to be a helper in whatever capacity.

Eddie tells Job's story.

Job is a 9 year old boy and comes from the village of Thoera. Job has no idea about the dates when his parents' died. Job came to our child centre in Thoera two years ago because he heard that we offer clothes at the Christmas celebration. He arrived on 25 of December 2005 at four o'clock in the morning after walking 18 miles. He was desperately ill, and looking for help. We took him to the hospital immediately, where they decided he needed several pints of blood.

The nurse said that Job possibly had mental problems. The hospital did an HIV/AIDS test on Job and he is not infected. Many times in the beginning Vilma and I needed to leave Job and he used to cry. He was so traumatised. He was still wetting the bed, but for sure he has no mental problem and is a very clever boy. Job gets two main meals each day and we also provided,

through the generosity of others, his clothes, health care and school support.

Job's health has improved. Emotionally he is much happier but he still needs to overcome his trauma. Pastor Miguel looks after Job under Vilma's supervision. Children like Job will move to the places where they can get more professional help.

Job's grandparents are also dead. He has no brothers or sisters. He tells how some people, when they get angry with me would say, 'Go and find your father even though they know I don't have one. Sometimes, when I go over to my friend's house to play, their parents would beat me and send me away because they thought I came to steal food. Sometimes people beat me and

I don't even know why'.

Job used to live with his uncle, who Job says, was not kind to him. He didn't always feed me. Sometimes I went hungry for days. At night I sometimes soiled the bed because I was too frightened to go outside. My uncle and his wife told me I had to stop it and would put fire near my private parts so I would stop. One time they burnt me. I ran away and I started to steal money and would run away every time I stole."

Many of the children are too traumatised to tell their story. Among the 700 + children that Eddie and Vilma give help to some will have a much worse story and thankfully some will not be quite so bad. Eddie says there are 100's of 1,000's like Job. Ω

The Problem of Injustice

"WE OFTEN ASK THE GOD OF JUSTICE to intervene in situations of injustice, considering that it is His business not ours. Yet He has chosen to work through His church. A Christian, in despair about some injustice, yelled at God at the Great Canyon, 'Where were you?'. The echo came back 'Where were you?'

Just as people hear the good news of the gospel because people preach it, or the hungry are fed and the sick are healed because men and women of compassion go in the name of Christ to feed and heal, so victims of injustice are helped because men and women are prepared to intervene, at times, even risking their lives.

Undoubtedly, God is passionately committed to justice so that humankind should no longer be oppressed; but he has left it to us, His people, to share that commitment, and to confront injustice wherever it is found. "The Lord looked and was displeased that there was no justice. He saw that there was no one, he was appalled that there was no one to intervene in times of injustice". He is still looking to His people to intervene in times of injustice".

Meg Guillebaud in 'After the Locusts'

Atheism - the Religion of Fools!

By Wayne Pearce

ISN'T IT REMARKABLE that atheists have their own holy day! It is 1 April better known to us as April fool's day. For God's word says: The fool has said in his heart, "*There is no God*" [Ps.14:1a]. Here in this article I want us to consider the supreme folly of atheism – the religion of fools. There are three things I want you to note.

First of all note the fool's declaration: "*There is no God*". The atheist speaks beyond his knowledge and hence his declaration is based on a warped kind of faith! His unbelief is the religion of secularism! "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction*" [Pro 1:7]. I recall hearing once a story about a young Christian university student who had regularly been the target of his atheistic teacher's ridicule and scorning on account of the man's faith. However, one day the teacher jokingly invited the young man to lead the class. He surprisingly accepted the professor's invitation and asked his assistance. The student drew a circle on the blackboard and told the professor that it represented all the knowledge that there is to possess. He then

asked the professor how much of the whole did he think he knew. The professor said 1-2%. The young man then turned to his teacher and said: "given your own acknowledgement that you are ignorant of up to 98-99% of all knowledge, how can you make the absolute statement that there is no God." The atheist was left speechless!

The atheist moreover thinks and speaks in spite of all the evidence to the contrary. While we appreciate that special revelation which is the word (Scripture), and Jesus (God incarnate), is foolishness to the natural man he is nevertheless left without excuse on account of natural revelation which declares the glory of God. Think on this for a moment: creation points to a Creator; design points to a Designer; conscience points to our Maker who is our Lawgiver and Judge; common grace speaks of the goodness of God; the external witness of the church and of individual Christians in the world visibly proclaim the existence of the one, true and living God who desires all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. The fool however suppresses the truth in his unrighteousness.

The fundamental problem for the atheist is not lack of evidence but his unwillingness to acknowledge God. He refuses to do so for he is spiritually dead in his sins and trespasses and at enmity with God. To acknowledge God would make him accountable and responsible to his Creator, Lawgiver and Judge. Atheism is thus not primarily an intellectual question as is often claimed but a moral one.

The atheist is first and foremost an anarchist and a rebel. Moreover the atheist will ever seek to give expression to his foolishness: The fool has said. He will ever seek to lead others into folly. He is the personification of folly. He is a living advert for foolishness. He is living testimony to the Fall of man!

Secondly let us note that the fool speaks from his heart: The fool has said in his heart. The atheist in other words has a terminal heart problem, again reminding us that the issue is primarily moral and not intellectual! God's word makes this all too clear: *"The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?"* [Jer 17:9]. *"But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies"* [Mat 15:18-19]. The heart here denotes the centre of our beings – the imagination, intellect, will, emotion and so on. Man is not so much rotten to the core but rotten from the core on account of his

fallen nature. Thus the fool needs a new heart! And this is exactly what God has promised in the new covenant; the covenant of grace. *"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them"* [Eze 36:26-27]. The fool needs to be born again or he will continue in his folly throughout his earthly life. And while we recognise that God is sovereign in the salvation of His people, He has appointed the means and calls on all men everywhere to repent and believe the gospel. The gospel is the only antidote and remedy for the deadly deceit of atheism.

Thirdly and finally therefore let us recognise that the atheist's supreme folly has grave consequences for both himself and those he leads astray! For the fool is without God and without hope in the world. He is cut off from the fount of all blessing and goodness. He is among the walking dead in the present and will stand before the judgement throne of God to be condemned for all eternity - no matter what he might believe and declare to the contrary in the here and now. He is no different to a person who declares that there is no such thing as gravity and who seeks to demonstrate it by jumping off a skyscraper! The fool has a date with God. He has rejected and poured scorn on His Creator and His

Gospel. He has loved his sin and the things of this world before and rather than God. God said to him, *“Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?”* [Luke 12:20]. The fool is speeding along the highway to hell. Lamentably he is ignoring all the signs to the contrary; he is pressing the accelerator, oblivious to reality, the warnings and his great danger. That is why the Scripture says: *“The wise in heart will receive commands, but a prating fool will*

fall” [Pro 10:8].

Let us seek then to share the gospel with and pray for all those who think and act like atheists. Let us beware of practical atheism as well as the intellectual variety for such may have received the sign and seal of the covenant and give intellectual assent to the truth of God’s existence but deny Him by their very lives. Let us pray that the Lord would show such their folly that they might repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ before it is too late. Ω

Church Unity

“THE MULTIPLICITY OF Presbyterian denominations today - 750 in Korea alone hardly confirms such an opinion [classic Presbyterian order is the way to wider unity. In the nineteenth century, James Hamilton, Presbyterian minister and friend of M’Cheyne, wrote a tract on Christian union that deplored what he saw in his own circles and beyond. It included this illustration:

“The more carnal the Christian is, the more sectarian he will be; and the more spiritual he is, the more loving and forbearing and self-renouncing are you sure to find him. And it is with Christian communities as with individual Christians. When the tide is out, you may have noticed, as you rambled among the rocks, little pools with little fish in them. To the shrimp in such a pool his foot-depth of salt water is all the ocean for the time being. He has no dealings with his neighbour shrimp in the adjacent pool, though it may be only a few inches of sand that divide them...when the tide is out - when religion is low - the faithful are to be found insulated, here and there a few, in the pools of water that stud the beach, having no dealings with their neighbours of the adjoining pools, calling them Samaritans, and fancying that their own little communion includes all that are precious in God’s sight. They forget for a time that there is a vast and expansive ocean’.

It is a spiritual change, not an ending of all denominations that is necessary to meet this failure which affects us all. Denominational distinctives, as such, need not prevent Christian unity...Whitefield’s societies and the Wesleyan Methodist societies of the eighteenth century for example, could not effectively work together although they sought to respect one another.” *“The Old Evangelicalism”, Iain H Murray, page 213*

How Prayer is Answered

A Christian periodical quoted: “A recent conference on the Muslim world heard that before the Islamic revolution in Iran you could almost count the number of Christians there on your hand. But since the Islamic state has been set up and ordinary people have experienced what that means, thousands upon thousands have turned to Christ in that land.”

A similar story could be recorded about the mammoth growth of Christians in China. It seems before it could take place, the Boxer Rising and similar movements had to ‘outlaw’ Christian teaching. God’s ways of doing things are not the same as ours (Isa 55:8). This is especially true with regard to the growth of the Church. Are you discouraged about praying for so long for revival in our nation and all that seems to be happening is the rise of Islam and an increase of opposition groups to the gospel? Perhaps God is answering your prayers. In Psalm 65:5 the Bible says God answers our prayers by ‘awesome deeds’.

We need to be constantly reminded that God’s will must be accomplished in God’s way. This was one of the lessons Moses learnt when he was sent to the Midian desert for 40 years training. Moses had earlier tried to lead Israel his own way, by killing an Egyptian, but he soon learnt that God’s will must be done in God’s way.

We all want revival and we

all pray for God to increase His church. But how does God do this? How has God done it in the past? Not the way we expected.

If we pray for something we must *really* want it. That is the meaning of ‘Amen’ at the end of our prayers. ‘Amen’ does not mean: ‘my prayer is now finished’ – it means: ‘I really mean what I say. I am deadly serious about my request. I am prepared to *suffer* in order for it to be accomplished!’

Prayer is a serious business. Prayer is not a method of getting God to do what we want. Rather it is a way of God making us conform to His will. Christianity is not a hobby or spare-time interest – it is a flesh and blood, life or death issue. Christianity is not really for the faint-hearted. Christianity is not a part-time activity. Christianity must be full-time or it is nothing. It is a body and soul, mind and spirit dedication to Christ and His way. There is no such thing as a ‘trial period’ of commitment to Christ. Commitment has to be our *all*.

We must ask ourselves do we really want God’s will done on earth or *our* will to be done on earth? Self-denial and absorption into God’s will is the nature of Christianity. Psalm 25:4-5 is a good prayer to learn: *Show me Your ways, O Lord; Teach me Your paths.*

Lead me in Your truth and teach me For You are the God of my salvation;

On You I wait all the day.

Ω

Vancouver and Edmonton

THE EDITOR WAS ASKED to visit our congregations in Vancouver and Edmonton, so on 29 August he and his wife flew off from Glasgow on the long flight to spend 3 weeks in this beautiful country. We are most grateful to all those who helped make this memorable trip possible. Hugh Fraser an elder in Vancouver, formerly in Toronto, met us at the airport and took us to our accommodation.

Vancouver is a lovely city, very cosmopolitan which surprisingly has a lot of rain! However, we had the very best of weather, the sun shining brightly every day. The congregation were so kind and hospitable.

The situation in Vancouver is promising. There is a good nucleus of Christians, of whom some have been there since many years. New folk have come to join them. However, there is a great need for a settled pastor who would go in and out among them and lead them forward.

At the time of writing, Ross MacFarlane has been called to be their minister and they are still waiting to hear from him. Please pray that God's will will be done and that His Cause would prosper amongst us in Vancouver and that Satan would not come in and scatter the flock. There is great potential for expansion and consolidation, and for others to join us who are looking

for our kind of ministry.

Edmonton is the other congregation in Canada that we visited. We had the pleasure of ordaining and inducting a new elder Mr Kevin Neumann. He is a married man with a lovely young family.

Our divinity student Bob Hackett is the senior elder there and is doing an excellent job in preaching regularly and keeping the congregation together. Having Kevin join him in the eldership will be a great help. There are many young couples with young families, and again there is great potential for the congregation to expand as there are other interested people. It is hoped that Bob's studies will be completed soon so that a pastor can be settled here also.

There is a definite interest and enthusiasm in the congregation to move forward and they have a strong sense of purpose and vision for the future.

Bob has organised a Conference in Edmonton and expects a fair number of people from various parts of Canada to attend. The main speaker is a well known preacher, Dr Ganz, from Toronto. Several from the Vancouver congregation are hoping to attend.

Please pray for the growth and development of this congregation. Both congregations expressed their appreciation of our interest and help to them. Ω

Congregational News

STORNOWAY

Around nine young people from Stornoway attended the APC Youth Camp on the first week of August and came back with an excellent report. As well as having a great holiday, the young people seem to have been greatly encouraged in spiritual things. So much so, that several of them have requested that they meet together, in the church, every fortnight, to have an informal bible study with one of the local leaders at the camp.

This is a great encouragement and we ask for your prayers that this interest in the Bible, generated at the camp, will continue and bring blessing to these young lives. Many thanks to Ross and Amy McFarlane for all the hard work they and all the many helpers put in to make such a time the success that it was.

The congregation had a Barbecue at the Manse where near forty enjoyed a good time together. At the time of 'going to press', the congregation is looking forward to having the Inverness minister, Revd Malcolm MacInnes to its August Communion.

Please keep praying for the Harris congregation, many of whom are still ill.

DUNDEE

The congregation have been encouraged by the induction of Paul Scrimgeour to the eldership on the 19 August. Paul and his wife have been worshipping with us for nearly two years and Paul has been the treasurer for the last few months. This now means that once again we have a quorum of elders in Dundee so we can hold Kirk Sessions, without depending on assessor elders from elsewhere. We thank God for this.

The congregation also held a Charity Sale in the church hall for 4 days on August and are happy to report that we took in nearly £900. We are thankful to God for this great help in our financial situation. Many thanks to all those who supplied the many items that were sold.

This exercise was not entirely for financial reasons but for contact with the community and also for evangelism. Every customer received a bag with a leaflet and a gospel message and an invitation to worship God with us on Sundays. Many people from around the church came into the building for the first time and some also came for the first time to a service in the church. May God work in their hearts so that they would come to the church to

buy without money and without price the most valuable gift of all. We also want to thank those who helped so much during the days of the sale by organising and giving of their time and talents and taking time off work in order to make the event such a blessing.

Our minister has been away for three weeks in Canada serving the congregations over there (report elsewhere in this issue), so we are grateful to those who supplied the pulpit and kept things going in his absence.

While we are encouraged as a congregation, we still long for a deeper work of God's spirit in our hearts and lives. We desire a greater knowledge of His ways and it is our prayer that He will be at the centre of our lives. As we go to print we look forward to our communion when we hope to have Revd Malcolm MacInnes from Inverness minister to us.

POOLEWE

The Revd Jeremy Ross, son of the late Revd Jackie Ross and Mrs Elma Ross, Lochcarron, was ordained to the ministry and inducted to the congregation of Poolewe and Aultbea Free Church, with whom the local APC congregation jointly worship, on Saturday, 1 September. The service was conducted by the Moderator of Presbytery, Revd Roddie Rankin, Kyle of Lochalsh - himself a native of Gairloch - who preached from Acts 18:1-18. Revd

John H MacLean, Kilmuir, Skye, addressed the new minister and Revd Donnie G MacDonald, retiring Interim Moderator, addressed the congregation.

At the 12 noon service on the Lord's Day in the Poolewe Church, Jeremy's uncle, Rev John Ross, Edinburgh APC, introduced Jeremy to the congregation.

Jeremy is married to Fiona from Kyle of Lochalsh, and they have three sons - Charlie, Iain and Robbie. We pray that the new ministry will be a means of blessing to the congregation and in the wider parish.

Some changes regarding times and locations of services have taken place. From 30 September, the services are as follows; Inverasdale (with Sunday School) 10.30am; Aultbea (with Crèche and Sunday School) 12 noon; Poolewe 6.00pm. APC pulpit supply on the fourth Lord's Day of each month has been discontinued as has the annual APC Communion. Instead, it is proposed that there will be four Communion services in the year, every third of which will have an APC preacher.

INVERNESS/DINGWALL

Church activities are getting back on track after the holidays. The Kingsview building has been busy with camps and Training Day sessions. We are thankful for the use of the premises by non-religious groups for training purposes. We

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The Difference Jesus Makes

Mr Kenneth MacLean, Gairloch

(Acts 4:8-13)

THE APOSTLES, Peter and John, were on trial here - they had to appear before the Sanhedrin: the council, the rulers, the elders and teachers of the law. Why? They were on trial for their faith. They had been used by God in the healing of the cripple beggar, an event which created awe and astonishment in those who witnessed the leaping, praising man. Peter had immediately addressed the crowd and testified to the saving and healing power of Jesus whom they had crucified.

As he taught the people of the resurrection from the dead many who heard the word believed. **What a difference Jesus made in the lives of those who believed** - their lives were transformed! They were made new creations in Christ Jesus - old things had passed away, all things had become new. They were given a new perspective and a new direction.

But the religious leaders were grieved and greatly disturbed by all this; they didn't like this preaching about Jesus - so they arrested the disciples. See the courage Peter had! He was filled

with the Holy Spirit and this is what gave him such courage. Christ, through the Spirit, gave him boldness and openness to speak with authority but also with due respect.

What a difference Jesus can make when we're in difficulty, perhaps falsely accused or threatened. His challenge to us is; *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!"*

Here were two innocent men arrested and called to give account because they had carried out an act of kindness to this cripple. They were well aware of their involvement in this miracle, but they did not look for credit: they gave the glory to Jesus [v 10] - and did so with uncompromising authority. Was this not just grace in exercise in their lives? **Jesus had made this difference**, granting them the grace of humility: they gave all the glory to Jesus; self was out!

The disciples preached Christ in the midst of this powerful confrontation, as Jesus promised: *"I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist"*.

Peter directed his accusers to words from Psalm 118 with which they were very familiar. But he made it **personal!** *“The stone which was rejected by **you** builders has become the chief cornerstone”*. He progressed then from the stone to the Saviour. He is the precious cornerstone and He is the only Saviour - none other name!

The beggar had been healed physically, but spiritually too - he praised God! Doctor Luke uses the same word to describe his physical wholeness as he uses for salvation. The message is clear - the saving of the soul is more important than the healing of the body. There is only one way of salvation; there is only one Saviour - Jesus of Nazareth, the chief cornerstone. Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, challenged the religious thinkers of his day. They marvelled when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, knowing that they were unlearned and ignorant men; how did they have such boldness, and how could they speak with such authority? **Who or what made the difference?** The Lord Jesus Christ did! It was evident that they had been with Him. They were Christ-like.

What lessons do we have to learn from this account? The first lesson is that the Lord Jesus Christ is able and willing to make a difference in the life of each one of us. The Scriptures tell us that He is waiting to be gracious - waiting to give His grace, by which through faith, guilty sinners are saved. For this reason He died that cursed

death on Calvary's Cross. His grace is **efficient** to save the greatest of sinners and **sufficient** to save a countless number of worlds. American preacher Philip Yancey has said: *“Grace, like water, always flows downward to the lowest levels.”* Is that not encouraging? Will we not allow it to flow into our hearts and into our lives? The second lesson is that when we are, and have been, in the company of Jesus, it *will* show; our family, friends and acquaintances will see that we “have been with Jesus”. But how can we be in the company of Jesus? We will find Him, who is the Word, in the Scriptures; we will discover more of His incomprehensible love as we seek Him in prayer; and as we worship Him with His people we will know the fellowship of His gospel.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said to His disciples: *“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden”*. Christianity is a reality and, just as a city cannot be hidden, neither should it be possible for a Christian to be hidden. Have we allowed Him to implant that light within us? If not, will we allow Him to do so? And, if He has already done this great work, are we allowing Him to kindle and re-ignite that light through His word, prayer, and fellowship with His people so that we may shine for Him in the darkness that surrounds us? **He, and He alone, makes the difference.** Is that difference evident in **our** lives? Ω

Semper Reformanda

By Revd GI Macaskill, Stornoway

MOST 'REFORMED' Christians have heard of the five points of Calvinism known by the acrostic 'TULIP': Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Invincible grace; and Perseverance. Similarly, most reformed Christians will be familiar with the five Solas of the Reformation: sola Scriptura (scripture alone), sola Christus (Christ alone), sola gratia (grace alone), sola fide (faith alone) and solo Deo gloria (glory to God alone). Sadly, however, not many are as familiar with another important principle of the Reformation period, namely, *semper reformanda* = '**always reforming**'.

Undoubtedly, the emphasis during the 16th century would have been on reforming moral and spiritual abuses of an extreme nature, but the principle also refers to doctrine and practice. We need in our day to look afresh at this principle as it applies to the church today in the 21st century.

At the personal level, 'reforming' is part of our sanctification. Sanctification implies change. We cannot become less and less like the world and more and more like Christ without some sort of amendment in our lives. It is impossible to 'improve' without

modification. Change is inevitable in the Christian life particularly in the sphere of becoming Godly. As we are never fully sanctified in this life, there must be continuous change and progression throughout our lives. The bible clearly says that one evidence of belonging to the ungodly is the lack of change [Psa 55:19]. Has it not been the teaching of reformed theologians for years that 'revelation' itself is something progressive and developing? If that is so, then surely the church and theology should be constantly reforming also.

Time changes, language changes, the world changes, but the word of God never changes. Therefore the church must adapt to apply to the new order of life. There are very distinct and definite dangers in doing this, but there are **greater** dangers in **not** doing it. An example would be the publishing of new versions of scripture, which has been compared to re-wiring a house with the electric power still on! Very dangerous indeed, but if the house is **not** re-wired, the house could eventually blow up! Whether we like it or not, the life of faith is a dangerous life if we are to be faithful to our times.

Part of the problem is that theology in the bible has not been

presented to us in a grid or database format so that we can simply use it as a sort of 'spiritual template' to evaluate a new theory or practice. By definition, theology is a deduction drawn from the study of certain data and the general principles of the bible. Therefore, as the environment in which the church operates is constantly changing, so too, the church needs to address these changing times.

The bible tells us there is another gospel that is really not another gospel [Gal 1:6,7]. We are urged not to be children in understanding [1 Cor 14:20]. We are to test all things [1 Thes 5:21]. We are warned that a time will certainly come when sound doctrine will not be endured [2Tim 4:3].

Now, what are the implications of these biblical challenges? Is it not that times will change and the church has a duty to be aware of the different forms in which error can present itself? For example, the new 'arminianism' is called 'open theism'; the denial of Christ's atonement is now couched in many vague terms culminating in 'cosmic child abuse'; and 'salvation by works' can easily be presented in various ways as the need to provide evidence of regeneration. For these reasons the church must keep alert and be aware that heresy changes its coat. It is essential that the church does not throw the baby out with the bath water by clinging to tradition and forms instead of identifying and putting emphasis on the real crux of the matter – bible truth.

If the church is honest, it should confess that it hates 'change' as much as the world hates it, and yet, the Reformation itself was all about change.

The complaint made against the 'reformers' was that they were 'modern'. We conveniently forget that both the reformers and the Puritans were 'modern' in their day. Now it is clearly wrong to advocate change for the sake of change, but we must remember that these reformers were not popular precisely because they promoted change. They were seen, at least to the church of the day, to be 'innovators' and their agenda appeared disruptive and to be quite unnecessary. Yet, they had the truth and fought against all their opponents to achieve the blessings which we have inherited.

This highlights the importance of ensuring we, today, are building on the truth of the bible, not just tradition and what our fathers did. As our culture changes, theological expressions are misunderstood by a secular and multi-faith society, and there is more and more need to express in contemporary language what the bible means by certain terms.

For example, the term 'born again' is much more likely to be understood as some form of rebirth similar to 'Karma'. For many teenagers 'atonement' is likely to mean what it means in the film: *The Atonement* – not what the Shorter Catechism says. In the film, the idea of 'atonement' is portrayed as just about the very opposite of what it

means in the bible!, as of course the word 'gay' has changed its meaning.

I believe the bible is relevant to every age; in every age and is for every age. If that is true, then the church has a duty to answer the questions which a new generation asks – not the questions which a

past generation found helpful. Our age has been conditioned by the values and definitions of humanism and postmodern philosophy and as a result it is not interested so much in the questions that our forefathers asked, but is concerned with an entirely different set of questions. Ω

Can you help?

At the last meeting of the APC Presbytery it was decided to set up a 'pool fund' to try to ensure that sufficient money is always available for the payment of salaries fully and on time each month. The necessity for this often arises when Gift Aid Tax quarterly repayments are awaited from Revenue and Customs.

Earlier in the day, the Business Committee discussed the continuing desire to pay more realistic salaries. The present APC annual salary for Ministers is £15,276. When this is compared to the salaries being paid to Ministers of other Scottish Presbyterian Churches - Free Church £17,500 and the Church of Scotland on average £24,000 - the desire of the Business Committee is put into sharper focus. Any person (or congregation) who can help with a contribution towards this fund is asked to get in touch with the General Treasurer; interest-free loans would also be appreciated. All contributions will be treated with the strictest confidence and will be acknowledged. With regard to normal contributions, while giving by Standing Order is greatly appreciated, it would be good if contributors (and congregations) could review the level of their givings and perhaps arrange an increase as the Lord enables. An increase of contributors using the Gift Aid scheme is something else that would help considerably, particularly as the rate of tax will drop next year. It would be good if this could be off-set by an increase in the number of people using the system.

Please consider these matters prayerfully. We know that the Lord is no man's debtor and we know that all belongs to Him - Psalm 50: "*For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills*"; but we also know that He gives us so much that we do not deserve. May we see our responsibility and give as enabled, in the perspective of the hymn-writer who, almost 200 years ago, wrote:

“We give Thee but Thine own,
Whate’er the gift might be;
All that we have is Thine alone
A trust, O Lord, from Thee”

Revd Alexander Murray
Kenneth MacLean

APC Conference 2007

THE 2007 ANNUAL APC Conference was held, as usual, in the Kingsview Christian Centre, and, as usual, was a most profitable and encouraging time of teaching and fellowship.

The conference theme was: *“Expecting Great Things from a Great God”* and the speaker was Hector Morrison of the Highland Theological College, interspersed with Psalm-singing sessions ably led by a group of selected singers.

In asking the question: “Is it appropriate to expect great things from a great God?” his answer was a resounding “YES”! This confident answer was based on God’s character, God’s actions in the past, and on God’s covenant promises.

Hector encouraged our hearts as he expounded from the first mention of the Abrahamic covenant in Gen 15:18 on how God’s abundant blessing to Abraham meant numerical growth and included all different types of people. Hector then went on to expound Isa 60:22 *“the little one shall become a thousand”* demonstrating how the innumerable number of saints all come from the one man referring to Isa 51:2 *“I called him alone”* and the ensuing command to the church in 54:2 *“Enlarge the place of your tent...”*

The message was most timely and heartening for many, but, wisely, Hector gave us a caveat – be

careful about the timescale! It would not happen overnight. There was to be 400 years before the promise to Abraham would even START!

The history of God’s people was long and very arduous, involving many a twist and turn. This was applied very appropriately to the church in Scotland, referring to the 1859 Revival when 10% of Scotland’s population became church members in one year!

We were reminded that God’s will was NOT done according to human timetables or methods, but to His own set-times and ways. Moving to Isa 66, the final instruction to the church was to *“Rejoice”* because of the comfort, the peace and the satisfaction that God would eventually bring with the glorious expansion promised. Hector concluded by saying: “Expect great things – yes!! – but be realistic about the timescale”!!

The Conference members enjoyed an excellent buffet between the two addresses and the Bookstall provided by Christian Focus Publications was well stocked and provided even further food for our souls.

The Conference was well chaired by its General Treasurer (and new Moderator) Mr Kenneth MacLean from Gairloch, and Revd Archie McPhail concluded with a most apposite summary. Ω

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord

(Sent in by a Contributor)

HALLELUJAH! PRAISE THE LORD!" Psalm 117

CAN YOU REMEMBER the last time you saw people queuing to get into Church? Well, this happened on Saturday, 1st September 2007, outside the Free North Church in Inverness,and the reason ?...More than 800 people coming to join over 90 HIGHLAND HARMONY SINGERS and 5 Gaelic precentors in a FESTIVAL OF PSALMODY, as part of the 2007 HIGHLAND YEAR OF CULTURE.

On entering the Church, everybody was given a souvenir booklet which, along with photographs of the Highlands, contained a detailed programme of all the items, and included the words of all the psalms, English and Gaelic, to be sung by the choir, precentors and congregation.

At 3pm prompt the choir stood up and unannounced (and without books) began the Festival with a stirring rendition of Psalm 117 to the tune Regent Square. This set the tone for the rest of the Festival.

Rev Douglas Horne (Tain), who was Chairman and Speaker, welcomed the large congregation and intimated that as everyone had a detailed programme the afternoon would flow without any further introductions. And "flow" it

certainly did!

The contribution of the HIGHLAND HARMONY SINGERS was outstanding, as was the lovely voice of Mairi Finlay, the soloist. There was an excellent and varied selection of congregational and choir pieces. The English and Gaelic congregational items were all well known psalms and tunes from the Scottish psalmody. The choir pieces were mainly psalms from "Sing Psalms" with a variety of tunes which were chosen to bring out the meaning of the words being sung.

Revds Tom Urquhart, Calum MacInnes and Fergus Robertson, representing various Inverness denominations, also took part, but unfortunately Revd John de la Haye, Wick, who was also expected to take part, was indisposed at home with a broken leg.

The contribution of the Gaelic precentors, Neil Shaw, Kenny MacVicar, Donald MacAskill, Angus MacKay and Kenny MacLean, was greatly appreciated.

The Gospel Message, given by the Chairman, was most appropriate and up to the high standard that we have come to appreciate from him. He encouraged the gathered company to seek the Good Shepherd.

The Festival finished as it

began with the choir, after the Benediction, raising the roof (and the congregation) with another heart-stirring rendition of Psalm 117, especially the last line which was sung with such feeling
“HALLELUJAH! PRAISE THE LORD!”

It was a wonderful Festival. It is almost certain that all those who

attended would agree with the words of a member of the audience who, when asked if he walked home, replied: “No, I floated!”

The singing was recorded on CD and on DVD. These will be available in due course - contact Kathleen Nicolson on 01463-798938 or e-mail kathleen.36@btinternet.com Ω

[continued from page 13]

pray that the Lord will bless to them the Scripture verses on the walls.

The Wednesday Lunch Club has started up again, and some new faces will hopefully appear with those who have become regulars. The Men's Breakfast Meetings and Ladies Meetings are in the programme. The APC Conference was held at Kingsview, and we had a great time around the Word.

The Dingwall part of the congregation meets in a home, Jason and Wilma's, for a Bible Study, led by Jason, on the third Tuesday of the month. That is proving to be both profitable and enjoyable. On the other Tuesdays, two men go from Inverness to the Dingwall meeting, to have fellowship with those who meet there. That too is proving to be an encouraging arrangement. Just recently we enjoyed the privilege of having Rev Dr Angus Morrison, from Stornoway, with us, to preach the Gospel and have the Lord's Supper with us. Although there were no new members, we did have a precious time around the Word of God, and thank the Lord for that. Ω

CAN YOU HELP?

On page 18
we have an article
Entitled 'Can You
Help'
which we ask you
all to read.

Please read
the whole article
and then
do what you can

Three Little Words

AS I MULLED over the title of this short article I wondered which *three little words* would spring into your mind as you read. Would you immediately assume that I meant *THE* three little words? Those powerful words that so many sinfully neglected wives (and often husbands) long to hear? The three little words that can shape a child's future, giving a deep sense of safety and assurance that all will be well? I mean of course the cherished words, *'I love you'*. Wonderful and powerful as these words are when spoken into a God decreed relationship, they were not the three little words that came into my mind.

I was thinking more of the wonder of the statement *'I forgive you'*. Now taken together, these *are* powerful words! Why do we find them so difficult to say when we are wronged, often over some triviality? Why will we allow a once happy and mutually productive relationship to sour because of our stubbornness to live out our lives as the Lord Jesus has decreed? His teaching is clear – forgiveness is not an optional extra of our faith! Angry words often spoken in haste should never be the catalyst to a broken relationship.

Imagine if you were faced with a situation where you had been robbed of all that you held dear. Imagine if your deepest, most meaningful relationship was torn apart by the actions of a third party. How quickly would the words *'I*

forgive you' make the short journey between our hearts and mouths? This is a difficult and thought provoking question, is it not?

The nation of Turkey and many commentators around the globe gasped as Susanne Geske, the wife of Tilmann Geske the Christian missionary recently martyred in Malatya along with two of his colleagues, Necati Aydin (35) and Ugur Yuksel (32), opened her mouth and her broken heart and pleaded on public television, *'Father forgive them'*. This was no empty rhetoric! This was a sincere act of forgiveness motivated by a deep and highly productive faith in, and relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet again her actions demonstrate the unquestionable truth that grace triumphs over evil. Darkness is most certainly defeated by light!

As a consequence of the outworking of God's grace which is so evident in her actions I think it safe to say that Mrs Geske would most likely bow her head in brokenness and humility were she to hear me thank her. Nevertheless, I do wish to thank her because she has demonstrated to a sin blinded world the power of those three little words that carry a knockout punch that is able to send darkness scurrying back to its master – *'Father forgive them...'*

Revd Malcolm MacLeod
The Voice of the Martyrs Canada

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Congregations are once again reminded of our
Fund for Divinity Students

This is normally collected twice per year in April and in October
However, it does not matter exactly when offerings are made
- as long as they are made

Please remember that this is an important Fund
as it indicates to the Lord our vision for the future
Please give generously in faith and hope

"How shall they hear without a preacher" [Rom 10:14]

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