

# The APC News

The Magazine of the Associated Presbyterian Churches in Scotland

## The Murray Building

**T**HE HIGHLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE which is based in Dingwall, and is part of the University of the Highlands and Islands, has reached a new stage in its development. Having started off in a two room wooden cabin in Elgin it has moved on to what are now very prestigious premises in Dingwall. Friday 22nd February, 2002, saw the official opening of the refurbished "front building".

This former bank building has been extensively modernised inside and presents a very impressive entrance to what is being increasingly recognised as a significant part of the University. The official opening ceremony was conducted by Colin Mackay, the Chairman of the UHI Board of Governors, who later in addressing the gathering emphasised the significant part that HTC is playing in the development of the University. He had been welcomed and introduced by Rev Alexander Murray who opened the meeting with prayer. After Mr Mackay had spoken, Dr Andrew McGowan expressed appreciation to all who had done so much to make the events of the day possible. He made specific reference to Rev Alexander Murray, Chairman of the HTC Board of Governors, and announced that the Board of Governors had decided to call the "front building" the Murray Building, in honour of Mr Murray's substantial contribution to the whole HTC project from its inception. We wish to record our best wishes to HTC for its future developments and also our congratulations to Mr Murray on his having this honour bestowed on him.



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*M MacInnes*

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**Mr D M Fraser,  
Publications Treasurer,  
'Stratharris',**

**Daviot, by Inverness, IV2 5XQ  
Telephone 01463-772253**

**Email:  
donald@stratharris.freemove.co.uk**

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Postcode.....

Tel No.....

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***Editor:***

**Revd Donald C Macaskill  
238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB**

**Tel 01382 451798**

**E-mail:  
dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk**

EDITORIAL

## Sharing Your Life - with Christ - and Plan 'B'!

**S**TUDENTS, PERHAPS MORE than anyone, know about the difficulties of having to share their lives with other people. They often have to share a flat with someone else including the kitchen, bathroom and bedroom. Quite a challenge - especially for the young and inexperienced!

When they invite a fellow student to share their accommodation, they are inviting change and transformation. It is almost impossible to live with someone you have not lived with before, and not have to adjust in some way. Sharing involves adjustment - in consideration of the other person.

That's the way it is for Christians. When we welcomed Christ into our lives, we invited change, transformation and adjustment. Life will no longer be the same. We have to share everything now - for Jesus is always around! We have to consider Him and His values and wishes.

Many a student did not realise what sharing meant. Many a Christian does not realise what sharing his life with Christ means either. The Israelites in leaving Egypt and following Christ did not realise what it meant to follow the Lord fully. Subsequently their lives were most dishonouring to God.

Paul, in warning the Corinthians reminds them of this by saying *"I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers...ate the same spiritual food, drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock which followed them, and that Rock was Christ. But with most of them God was not well pleased"* [1 Cor 10:1].

Sadly many Christians today need to **learn** how to share their lives with Christ. He has demands on us that ought to affect and influence our lives. The decisions that we make should be made with His wishes in the forefront. If we have been raised with Christ, then we ought to seek those things that are pleasing to Him.

As in any marriage, if we do not share in the interests and concerns of the other partner, we will grow apart. If we do not spend time with our partner, we will grow apart. We read about this every day in the press. The same principle applies in the spiritual realm - Christians can grow apart from Christ.

Some Christians do not realise their relationship with Christ is breaking up. It is not until things become desperate, do they realise the consequences of their behaviour and lifestyle. They have been living

apart from Jesus. They have been avoiding meeting Him and talking with Him and now the consequences are serious. A Christian must learn that he needs to be constantly in the presence of Christ, if the relationship is going to be successful. Believers need to be concerned about, and involved in, their partner's interests and wishes.

But so often, because of selfishness, sin and stubbornness, we are operating on Christ's second best for us - Plan B. Christ as the Head, has a wonderful plan for each of us, but if we refuse to follow His leading and go our own way, we will just have to live on God's second best for us. This is what happened to the Israelites, instead of going straight through to Canaan from Egypt, they sinned and rebelled, and were forced to wander in the wilderness for years.

We find some of the saints in Scripture also living in God's second best, Plan B, because of their pride or some other sin. Joseph refused to heed the warnings God sent through his father and brothers about keeping his dreams a secret. Instead, he carried on boasting about them, so God had to 'remove' him to Egypt!

The wonderful thing about Plan B, is that we can prosper there as well - if we repent. God is so ready to forgive. Joseph's folly was over-ruled and he learned the lessons of youth so that he became famous and faithful and an example to all.

Similarly Jonah, in running away "from the presence of the

Lord" [Jonah 1:3], was on Plan B during his sail on the sea. Even when the storm came, he was asleep when the mariners were very much alive to the perilous situation he was in! Jonah was not walking with God, he was avoiding God, as estranged couples can do. Jonah was not enjoying God's best.

Living with Jesus, and sharing our lives with Jesus, demands giving as well as receiving. Too many of us expect the relationship to be one way - always receiving from Christ and giving nothing in return. We need to realise that in the Christian religion that does not work. We are in a partnership with Jesus as far as our responsibilities are concerned.

Christ as the Head, has the agenda that is to be followed. He guarantees to support us in all our work. He will certainly play His part as the faithful, supportive Husband. Today, husbands are too often forgetful of their role of providing, supporting, and protecting their spouses, but Christ is not lacking in this respect.

The whole relationship depends on our willingness to share our lives fully with Jesus Christ. If we 'keep in touch' with Him, consult, and play our part, we will have an excellent relationship with Him. He will never ask us to do what is too much for us. "*God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape*" [1 Cor 10:13]. Christ is the perfect partner. •

## The Late Douglas Beattie

**I**T IS WITH SADNESS that we report the passing away of Douglas Beattie, at the age of sixty-seven after a prolonged period of illness. Douglas, whose family connections are in Aberdeenshire, moved to Ullapool as a young man in his twenties, to work as a telephone engineer.

He became a Christian in the mid-fifties and in 1958 he married Audrey, with whom he set up home in Ullapool. They had five children all of whom were born during the family's time there.

It was in the mid-sixties that Douglas began to study for the ministry of the Gospel, and having completed these preparatory studies he was inducted as minister of the Gospel in Plockton and Kyle, in 1971.

After a period of five years he moved, in October 1976, to become minister of the congregation in Vancouver, Canada, where he was the pastor



for over twenty-five years.

During his time in Vancouver he pursued further studies and eventually was teaching a variety of theologically related subjects at the Pacific Bible College. The five children, two boys and three girls, have all married, and live in and around the Vancouver area. The family circle was blessed with fifteen grand-children. We express our deep sympathy to them all and pray that the Lord will bless and comfort them in this time of sorrow.

We also remember and pray for the congregation over which Douglas was minister. May the Lord comfort, encourage, and bless them as they look to him for the future. The Lord Jesus has instructed us to pray that the Lord of the Harvest will send out workers because the harvest fields are large and there is much work to be done.

The richest contribution we can make to the lives of one another must begin with prayer, so we pray that the Lord will make his gracious presence known richly to the Beattie family circle, to Douglas' two remaining brothers in Aberdeen, and to the congregation in Vancouver.

*M. MacInnes*

# Lord Lester's Bill

Many Christians are not aware of how much the institution of marriage is under threat in our country. The Civil Partnerships Bill is a serious attempt to change public opinion about marriage. The following article comprises complete excerpts taken from The Christian Institute's booklet 'Counterfeit Marriage'. The bold emphasis are added. The booklet is recommended reading and has many more points for consideration and includes full references to all the quotations. Further details from: The Christian Institute, 26 Jesmond Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE2 4PQ. Tel 0191 281 5664, Fax 0191 281 4272, info@christian.org.uk www.christian.org.uk

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**L**ORD LESTER AND THE gay rights group Stonewall, are proposing what would surely be the most radical change to family law in English history.

According to Government statistics, same-sex couples make up only 0.2 per cent of all households. Yet under the Bill virtually all the legal rights and privileges of married couples are handed to homosexual couples who have lived together for six months and registered their partnership. Heterosexuals in a **temporary relationship** will also be able to register. The Bill makes civil partnerships indistinguishable from marriage in virtually all respects. Under the Civil Partnerships Bill, any couple who live together for six months can register their partnership.

Under Clause 32 of the Bill the partnership can be dissolved in **one month** where both parties consent, or nine months where one partner withholds their consent.

Homosexuals themselves are concerned about the Bill - why? Because many lesbians and gay men

do not want to be restricted to one partner! Terry Sanderson writes in the Gay Times "The fundamental advantage gay partnerships have over marriage is that we can tailor them precisely to our requirements. We can make it up as we go along, change with circumstances and go with the flow. We don't have to promise sexual exclusivity or to share our worldly goods if we don't want to".

Under present law individuals are, in general, free to leave their property to whom they will, with a **default** to their spouses or blood relatives on intestacy. Under Lord Lester's Bill this is set to change because, for the first time, there is presented the opportunity to acquire property of a non-spouse, non-blood related third party, simply by moving in with them and registering a relationship after 6 months.

If the Bill becomes an Act the following anomalies and Injustices will be created:

- Two spinsters live together for 40 years but are excluded from

benefit, on account of their unwillingness to register as a lesbian couple.

- The drug-taking heir of a wealthy industrialist is picked up at a gay nightclub by a man 20 years his senior, who takes him back to his flat. After six-months the older man threatens to kick him out unless they register. They do so. The young man dies of AIDS. His partner inherits the whole estate.
- Two women, Jane and Julie, live together for 5 years as a lesbian couple and register their partnership. Jane develops a terminal illness and is cared for by Julie until her death. Julie inherits Jane's property tax-free. This **could not** have happened if Julie and Jane were **sisters**.
- An elderly uncle moves into his niece's house. He is dependent on her for everything. The niece has a routine operation, but dies owing to the negligence of an anaesthetist. The uncle is unable to sue the Health Authority, because they were not in a registered partnership.
- A divorced Army wife is wholly dependent on the share of her ex-husband's pension received under a pension earmarking order. He dies leaving a registered partner, who inherits the full widow's pension leaving the first wife with nothing.

Fairness is the last thing created by the Civil Partnership Bill. For every case cited by Stonewall of hardship endured by a gay couple, there are thousands of other cases of

people not in a sexual relationship who experience the same problems.

According to Government statistics there are 100,000 homosexual people in same-sex households, but 3.4 million people who live with a friend, a brother or a sister, with elderly relatives, in an extended family or with another family. The Bill makes provision for the 100,000 but no provision for the 3.4 million.

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### **[Editor's Comments]**

It is time for the Christian sector to act. Our nation is fast losing all identity with our Christian constitution. God is being most patient with us. We need to assert our own beliefs and convictions more often than we do - but we need to do so graciously and lovingly.

Please write to: The Rt Hon Tony Blair, 10 Downing Street, Westminster, London, SW1A 2AA.

Keep your letter short but be polite and use your words. Remind him of the government's promise to support marriage as quoted by the then Home Secretary, Jack Straw who gave this reassurance "[Marriage is]...about a union for the procreation of children, which by definition can only happen between a heterosexual couple. So I see no circumstance in which we would ever bring forward proposals for so-called gay marriages". [The Times, 2 October 2000]. •

# Islam and Britain

The article below was taken from [The Washington Times](#) and reprinted with Dr Sookhdeo's permission. Dr Sookhdeo is director of The Barnabas Trust and last November received the Coventry International Prize for Peace and Reconciliation.

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**D**R PATRICK SOOKHDEO, International Director of Barnabas Fund, gave a talk recently in the USA and below are some notes of his address.

“I think we have a greater problem in Islam than we realize. Much as I understand why politicians in the U.S. and U.K. have made the kinds of affirmatory statements they have made, I think time will show they have made a mistake. In dealing with Islam, you have to tell the truth. And you have to meet it head on. It understands power and only power. And so you have to know how to exercise power.

I believe we face a much greater threat from Muslim communities within our own countries than we realize. What we are dealing with is the increasing radicalization of groups within our societies that would have their own Agenda.

The Muslim world sees itself as under threat. Far from being unified, it is heavily fragmented. But there are certain challenges they will face [together]. And that is Western globalization, which they blame for everything. Western

neo-colonialism arising out of old colonialism - that, too, they blame for everything. Their massive corruption of their own leadership structures, their autocratic leadership rules that exist - all of this has tended to create new forces within the Islamic world.

For a number of years, Christian communities have suffered excessive problems at the hands of Muslims. Generally, the Western nations have opted to deny the existence of such difficulties. They have oil interests, they have geopolitical interests and they are concerned with their bread-and-butter issues. Therefore, why take up issues relating to Christian minorities when there is nothing to be gained by it? We can rescue Kuwait because there is oil, but why should we want to rescue black Sudanese Christians? It is as simple as that.

And the church opted for inter-religious dialogue. They desperately wanted a relationship with the Muslims. So it meant the Christian minorities had to be sacrificed on the altar of community relations.

With the advent of Islam in the West, the Western countries have to come to terms with a minority and they didn't know how to do it because of civil liberties. We have got societies that are strong liberal democracies. Our own legal framework stops us from dealing with extremist religion.

Historically, Islam has never learned to live as a minority because its basis exists in power. Therefore, how does it reconstruct itself in Western societies? My own feeling is that what will happen in the British society - I am waiting to see whether it will happen in the U.S. - is Muslim societies will emerge within Western countries where they will develop their own patterns of social sharia [Islamic law]. In Britain today, where Islam controls the inner cities, we have major social exclusion and the development of sharia. We have had churches burned, Christians attacked and a mission center destroyed. The media has deliberately kept everything off the air. This plays into the hands of Muslims ultimately.

As for the church in the West, I see a real dilemma in that it works on the basis of pluralism. Difficulties arise in three areas. The first is the uniqueness of the Christian faith. Can we hold onto uniqueness in the context of pluralism in society? And what if government and church leaders say, just for the sake of peace in our society, Christianity must sacrifice

its unique role? That is an issue already in Britain.

Secondly, there is the question of evangelism. Will we have the right to evangelize Muslims? The Samuel Zwemer Institute [an American missions organization] just said that since September 11, more than 34,000 North Americans have converted to Islam. In Britain, phenomenal numbers are moving towards Islam. It seems strange that a religion whose followers could propound such a heinous crime has actually come out on top. That is unanswerable. Why is it that the church is losing ground and not Islam?

The third great question is conversion. Islam sees conversion as a fundamental attack against their religion. So will we have to deny that? Overall, I think we are going into very difficult waters. The question is what policies Western governments take vis-a-vis toward Islam? I think we must drive Islam to have a reformation, which is what Salman Rushdie is saying, that Islam unreformed will be brutal and barbaric. Its only future is in having a Martin Luther. But the question is: Who is going to be that leader? And will he be allowed to survive?

If all the West does is support conservative Islam, then they are actually simply putting off the evil day. The policy of the British government, the monarchy and the church has been to sell Islam. In fact, the most conservative, right-wing paper, the Daily Telegraph, did a 16-page supplement on how

wonderful Islam is. And everyone accepted the article. No one was allowed to criticize. I was one of the few that did. I was simply massacred. The only line permitted is that Islam is peaceful, it is tolerant, it is a wonderful religion.

If your president, your church - in our case the monarchy - if everyone sings in tune for the media, what is the average person in the street going to say? We have sold a lie and people have bought it. [British] Muslims realized at a very early stage [after September 11] they would capitalize on this. They sent out a Koran, and Muslim holy books to every member of the House of Lords, to every member of the House of Commons. They swamped the country and they succeeded. They then sent out their speakers. Muslims have approached all churches and said, 'Why don't we instruct you on Islam?' Now our government is considering creating a booklet on Islam for all institutes and structures to study.

Here I am highly critical of church leaders. I think they failed

their own country because they did not have the courage to break with what was going on and they did not have the insight to see what needs to be done. The Muslims found a very vulnerable people who were open to their ideas. Meanwhile, Christianity was painted in a particular light. Melanie Phillips, writing in Britain's Sunday Times, said that Christianity is the only religion that has extended itself through mission, colonialism and the Crusades. In other words, Christianity was conceived as a white man's religion - brutal, barbarous and evil whereas Islam is a noble religion based on peace.

If I say the history of the West has been infinitely superior to [that of] the Muslim world; that freedom, democracy, human rights and religious liberty have come out of Christianity and the West; that we have something to offer the Muslim world - that is viewed critically. How are we now going to educate the average person out there that there is something very good about the West and Christianity?" •

## A THORN in the FLESH

**T**HE MORE GIFTED YOU ARE, the more humble you ought to be. You must acknowledge that all you have, you got from God. Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to keep him humble. The first hint of pride and the thorn would jab. A thorn deflates you when you try to exalt yourself, and to take a compliment without being arrogant

In a sense it is not a thorn - it is a thermometer that regulates your attitude and keeps you on your knees to remind you that God is the source of all your blessing - and God alone. •

# The Olympic Games and the Mormon Church

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**D**URING FEBRUARY the Olympic Winter Games were shown on television. They were held in Salt Lake City, Utah the 'home' of the Mormon Church. More than ice-skating and skiing were being promoted.

The Mormon Church has 11 million members and valued at 25 billion dollars. Time magazine said "Mormonism is virtually synonymous with Utah, and the conservative religion has shaped the state politically, socially and culturally. But as the church changes, so does the state. Both have seized upon the Olympics...for highlighting these changes and recreating their images before the world".

Time magazine goes on to say "The image of Utah was briefly sullied by the revelation in late 1998 that members of the International Olympic Committee had accepted cash, gifts and college tuition for their children amounting to more than \$1 million in advance of awarding the Winter Games to Salt Lake... The hope is that by the opening ceremonies, the scandal will be largely forgotten".

During the weeks of the Games, attempts were made to represent Mormonism as Christianity. Mormonism is keen to give

the impression that it is Christian - it is not Christian. For example, Mormonism believes in many gods, not one living and true God. They believe that the god of this universe - like other gods in other universes - was once as we are now. But God 'progressed' in knowledge and **became** divine retaining his body. Man now is a potential god - just as God was at one time!

God is married to a being they call 'the Mother'. The 'Mother' is not the same person as Mary. The 'Mother' became impregnated by God physically. For Mormons, Jesus is God's son in a very different sense from which Christians believe.

Mormons believe Jesus Christ was the son of Adam but also the brother of the devil. They believe He was a polygamist having married both Mary and Martha at Cana of Galilee. Mormonism is an entirely different religion from Christianity. It does use the Bible, but the 'Book of Mormon' has equal authority as the Word of God. Revelation is continuing - such as given to Joseph Smith. For Mormons, the Holy Spirit is not the Third Person of the Trinity, but just an influence, a force, only conferred through the laying on of hands by their priests.

Good publicity is not always 'The Good News' of the gospel! •

# Congregational News

## **EDINBURGH**

### **Communion**

We had a wonderful communion in January and really enjoyed having Rev Ian MacAskill (South Uist) with us. A good crowd met in the manse on the Saturday night for a meal. Ian also shared his testimony and more about his work in the Uists. It was a good opportunity to get to know Ian better and we all felt challenged and encouraged by what he had to tell us. The Sunday service was also well attended with 16 taking communion and around 30 folk attending.

### **Sunday School**

The children we have worshipping with us are all pre-school and we have been keen to start a Sunday school for them. The 'Sunday club' (one or two of them weren't that keen on the idea of going to school at the weekend!) started two weeks ago and the children are all enjoying it. Special thanks to Ann MacPhail and Emma MacDonald for taking this on!

### **Church lunch**

Our next church lunch will be in early March with invitations being sent out again. This will be another good time of fellowship for the

congregation and hopefully we'll see some new faces joining us too.

Things seem to be turning around in Edinburgh but we continue to really need your prayers.

## **HARRIS**

The dates of the Harris Communion have been changed. These are now to be held on the LAST Lord's Day of APRIL and SEPTEMBER. Please take a note of these changes. Please remember to pray for Sam Morrison, the elder and also for the complete recovery of former treasurer Neil MacCuish who is recovering from surgery.

## **STORNOWAY**

The congregation were encouraged to have one new member by profession of faith at its February Communion. Revd Calum MacInnes from Inverness preached and enjoyed particular liberty on Sunday morning preaching from "*Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*". A sense of God's presence was felt over the whole weekend.

The congregation had its annual general meeting as usual on the last

Thursday of January when the financial statement was read.

The series of Parenting videos which are shown in the manse, are expected to finish during the month of March.

### **DUNDEE**

We continue to outreach the neighbourhood through the Saturday lunches and leafleting the area. Some local people have come to worship with us. It was also encouraged us that some of the children who came to our Sunday Club came to an evening service. Pray that what they heard will be blessed to them

David Dow continues to teach during lunchtime at a school nearby as well as our Sunday Club. David also contacts the houses around the church on a regular basis. He is organising Missions for April and July on the same basis as last year so please pray about that.

Our room at the rear of the hall is still used by several counsellors. We find that a call for post-abortion counseling is beginning to increase more and more.

The Wednesday night Club is going strong with the half-time 'Bible Lesson' becoming a little more meaningful to the children. Some of these children have ventured to the Sunday Club.

We now want to make an **appeal!** At our Annual General Meeting on Thursday 7th February, our financial statement was read out. It became very evident that we would be very short of funds if we were to continue with our present programme of events. We really do feel that God is honoured by what has been done over the last year. Our profile in the community has definitely been lifted. We do wish to continue with everything we are doing, but this can only be done if we receive more funding.

David Dow's contract finishes in June and we would love to extend it as he has been an invaluable resource. He is willing to continue at the same low rate of wages. We feel it would be a backward step if any of our present initiatives were to stop.

We do believe that prayer is a most important part. Some of us have 'covenanted' to pray daily about this. To continue what we are doing, we require 60 people to give £5 per month. All the better if that can be Gift Aided. We believe that this is achievable.

Letters are going out to friends and other sources of help. Please do make it a matter of prayer to remember us each day - and if at all possible to give. Donations can be sent to either Revd D C Macaskill, 238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB, or to our treasurer Mr W J Macaulay, 4 Lomond Drive, Carnoustie, DD7 6DN. •

# Living Truth in a Fallen World

This series is based on a seminar given at the Evangelical Alliance Assembly, Cardiff, 5-7 Nov 2001

In our last issue we published the first part on the subject of Truth. This issue the subject is God. The remaining two parts are: Jesus; Commitment



This article was first published on the Damaris website ([www.damaris.org](http://www.damaris.org)) and is reprinted here by kind permission

## God in the Bible

WHAT IS A biblical notion of God? No small question. Of the many answers we could give, ones that spring to mind most immediately are: Creator [Genesis 14:22, Isaiah 40:28, Matthew 19:4]; Preserver [Psalm 36:7, Psalm 119:40, Luke 17:33]; Lord of lords and King of kings [1 Corinthians 8:4, Revelation 17:14]; Incarnate in Christ [Colossians 2:9]; The one True God [Deuteronomy 4:39, 1 John 5:20].

In these Bible passages, eternal truths are expressed: God is the only True God, the Creator, Preserver and Governor of all things, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings seen in bodily form in the person of Jesus Christ.

From a Christian perspective, there is no other God that is worthy of praise and worship and no other God that more fully identifies with the state of a fallen world by choosing to take on the form of a man and live among his people. This God is a unique God, but it is not the image of God when

seen through the lens of contemporary culture.

## God in contemporary culture

How does the biblical ideal of God compare with those expressed in contemporary culture? We will look at two very diverse subjects, firstly the terrorist events of 11 September 2001 as reported by the news media and the book Bridget Jones Diary.

### 11 September 2001

11 September 2001 was one of those defining moments in history. As in the 60s, when most people of that generation could state where they were when President John F Kennedy was assassinated, so for this generation, we probably all know where we were when the twin towers of the New York World Trade Centre were impacted by hijacked airliners.

The fall out from that day is having a major effect on the West. All notions of security and democracy have been shaken. Going to work in a city means watching the skies. Paranoia reigns and religious

intolerance rises as some look for targets through which they can vent their anger.

A heartfelt question is of course 'If there is a God, how can he let this happen?' Others may look at the events of 11 September 2001 and wonder if they are under some kind of judgement. Indeed when yet another airliner crashed in the Borough of Queens, New York, two months later, the question was raised 'Why us, what have we done to deserve this?'

It seems that the events of September 11 could be a major barrier to understanding the nature of God. The fact that these crimes were carried out under the banner of Islam (rightly or wrongly) gives extra weight to the thought that 'God' is at worst an evil and vengeful deity or at best distant and uncaring.

The Times on 19 September 2001 reported, 'Britain's churches were fuller than usual yesterday as people gathered for Sunday services to remember those killed in the terrorist attacks in the United States.'

Some people going into a small chapel near Ground Zero were heard to remark, 'They have their faith, we want to show them that we have ours to.'

In fact, people are not looking for God in this necessarily, but for some source of comfort. When an overwhelming sense of hopelessness pervades, it seems that people either go under or look for something to hold onto.

Charles Kennedy, leader of the Liberal Democrat said:

'John Bright, speaking in very different circumstances in the House of Commons, once said there was a sense that the Angel of Death was floating above the chamber. I think that the Angel of Death is very much with us today.'

Instead of becoming an obstacle to a journey of faith and discovery about God, 11 September 2001 has in fact created an atmosphere in which spiritual questions have become the norm; prayer has ceased to be the domain of the super spiritual and the weak, but rather a cohesive force, which is helping to hold the New York community together.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, speaking to the Labour Party conference shortly after the attacks said:

'This is a moment to seize. The kaleidoscope has been shaken. The pieces are in flux. Soon they will settle again. Before they do, let us reorder this world around us.'

The obvious question off the back of that, and one that provides an inroad for the gospel is this: What new order does this world need and how are we to do it?' Mr Blair is thinking in terms of coalitions against terrorism, but surely a new world order where peace reigns and hatred has no place is more a description of the Kingdom of God, here on earth.

In the midst of the horror and the tragedy, people may look for some ways that they can help to 'reorder' the world. Karen Ponorovsky, a clinical social worker at the time of the 11 September 2001 tragedy said this:

'I am glad that, because I am a social worker, I have some place to go ... I think most people felt really lost. I think the lines for blood donation are evidence of that.'

Karen Ponorovsky points to an inbuilt need to care, to change society, to be of use and of people being 'lost'. After events like 11 September 2001, people may begin to question the purpose of life, whether it is worth spending every waking hour at the office bent over a computer, or whether in the great scheme of things that they can give more to their world. The Christian lifestyle and relationship with God offers answers to both those questions. Yes, life is more than work, eat, sleep and die and yes, you can change your world through relationship with Jesus worked out in practical care for mankind.

Time moves on, and the events of 11 September 2001 may have less emotional impact on people, but rather like the period following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the outpouring of public anguish and searching once again allows us as followers of Jesus to come alongside people in their pain and in their searching and to help them discover some answers to their questions.

11 September 2001, and indeed any tragedy can provide an opportunity for good news to get out, and certainly in these times, that is what people need.

### **Bridget Jones's Diary**

Bridget Jones's Diary by Helen Fielding was published in 1996 and released as a film in 2001.

The story is that of a 30-something single woman for whom everything seems to go wrong. Bridget finds herself on a doomed quest to find happiness and self-improvement. She is desperate to find a man who will be committed to her. She worries about being alone and dying alone as well as being eaten by alsatians. Bridget is obsessed with her weight and shape.

Some readers view the book as charting the demise of the nuclear family, whilst the cover notes describe it as the perfect zeitgeist of single female woes.

Here are a couple of extracts from Bridget's diary. This first extract is written in the context of a family Christmas. Bridget has tried to find a way of avoiding going home for Christmas, but now finds herself in the last place she really wants to be.

'Dear God, Please help me. I want go home. I want my own life again. I don't feel like an adult, I feel like a teenage boy who everyone's annoyed with.' (Bridget Jones's Diary, Picador 1997, p. 301)

Bridget's view of God is the Santa Claus mentality, (given the time of year, you could excuse that), she sees God as the ultimate Mr Fixit. She has a problem, God should fix it. Most of Bridget's references to God throughout the diary tend to be cries of despair or outbursts of frustration.

In the family situation, she feels that she has regressed to her childhood.

Perhaps this is the image of God that most people hold - a time when they might have said 'The Lord's Prayer' in assembly, cross-legged in the school hall and perhaps received some education regarding the Christmas story. Since then, it might appear that her image of God has not progressed very much. He still remains the tooth fairy deity; the Jim'll Fix It of the supernatural realm.

Bridget needs help, but she doesn't think that God can actually help her. In her searching and disappointments, she feels that the only way forward is to 'better' herself. She writes:

'Must centre myself more.  
Will ask Jude about  
appropriate self help book,

possible Eastern religion based.' (p. 27)

Bridget is looking beyond the Western view of church and wants to have a crack at something that seems to promise a sense of hope and spirituality. It would appear that Bridget feels that the 'Church' cannot give her what she needs, God is not the answer, time to look elsewhere. If Bridget Jones's Diary

truly is the zeitgeist for the single woman of the 21st Century, then it would be easy to become disillusioned and wonder how on earth could people like Bridget be helped to discover

**Romance passes, love does not fail. The best example of love is seen in the ultimate act of self giving as Jesus demonstrated his love for people just like Bridget by allowing himself to be put to death on a cross. Now that is love.**

something about the good news of God and perhaps begin to investigate His claims. The diary does provide some wonderful bridges to the gospel. In searching for happiness and love, (something extremely common to today's 'me' society), Bridget writes:

'It is proved by surveys that happiness does not come from love, wealth or power but the pursuit of attainable goals: and what is a diet if not that?' (p. 18)

Bridget is searching for that one elusive thing that will make her happy. Happiness is transitory and dependent on circumstance, hence

the attachment to a good diet, when the pounds come off, happiness reigns, when the pounds return, so do the blues.

Most people just 'want to be happy'. This is why DIY stores do such a booming trade in timber decking and so many people wash their cars on a Sunday. What we can get our hands on, what gives us pleasure will make us happy. But Bridget says that wealth will not do it, and even love fails.

People like Bridget need something better, something more solid and reliable than a diet and longer lasting than timber decking, and that is where God comes into the equation.

Bridget could find that God would provide something deeper and far greater than happiness, she could in fact discover 'joy' a state of the heart and mind which is dependant on the unchanging nature of God's goodness towards those he loves. Solid, dependable and fat free.

Bridget's view of love is developed further as she writes:

'Oh! Valentines day tomorrow. Why? Why? Why is the entire world geared up to make people not involved in romance feel stupid when everyone knows that romance does not work anyway.' (p. 49)

The world in which Bridget finds herself has bought into the Mills and Boon view of love. Love is pink and cuddly, laced with chocolates and covered in roses. You can almost imagine Bridget choking on the fluff and shallowness of another commercial Valentines day.

Bridget can obviously see through the veneer, though of course it is her bad experiences of relationships with men that colour her views on romance. Nonetheless, the difference between love and romance provides lots of room for exploration for those searching for love and meaning.

What is the difference between romance and love? Is Romance just a feeling that eventually fades? What about love? How do you define true love? Isn't love a choice that a person makes to favour someone else more than himself or herself?

Romance passes, love does not fail. The best example of love is seen in the ultimate act of self giving as Jesus demonstrated his love for people just like Bridget by allowing himself to be put to death on a cross. Now that is love.

Though the events of 11 September 2001 and Bridget Jones diary are so diverse, both can provide valuable bridges over which we can encourage people to cross to discover God. •



This article was first published on the Damaris website ([www.damaris.org](http://www.damaris.org)) and is reprinted here by kind permission

# Another Book Reviewed

The article below has been sent in by Mr William Taylor from Caithness

THE BIBLE HAS something to say about books: *“Of making many books there is no end; much study is a weariness of the flesh”* [Ecc 12:12]. Another reference is in the last verse of John’s gospel on the mighty works done by Jesus during the last three years of His ministry in this world: *“There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written”*. A striking statement that baffles the finite mind.

In that connection Bishop Ryle’s comments are apposite: “Of course we must not torture these words by pressing them to an excessively literal interpretation. To suppose that the Evangelist meant the world could not hold the material volumes which should be written, is evidently unreasonable and absurd. The only sensible interpretation must be the spiritual and figurative one”.

The most recent addition to my small collection is a book with an unusual title, ‘Heaven and Hell’. An awe-inspiring revelation of that awful place, hell, and the glory of that glorious habitation where we

are told *“There shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light, and they shall reign for ever and ever”* [Rev 22:5]. That’s heaven!

A very striking excerpt at the beginning of this book makes solemn reading: “Statisticians tell us that approximately ninety-five million people die every year. That means that every second, three human beings enter heaven or hell. Within the next hour, eleven thousand men, women, children will have gone for ever to a place of everlasting joy or a place of everlasting pain”.

The author of this book is Revd Edward Donnelly, minister of Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, Newtonabbey, and Professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological College, Belfast. It contains 129 pages, equally divided between the two subjects and is obtainable from The Banner of Truth Trust at a reasonable price of £4.95.

It should be read by every preacher in all denominations, and the themes enunciated proclaimed loud and clear. •

“The threat of eternal judgment now faces at least four to five billion people who are presently alive, which is why we need worldwide revival now, in this generation. We need more evangelism”. Gary North

# How an American Christian Judge Rules in Court!

Taken from WorldNetDaily website on 17th February 2002

*Friday Feb 15, 10:30 PM ET*

By PHILLIP RAWLS,  
Associated Press Writer

**M**ONTGOMERY, Ala. - In awarding custody of three teenagers to their father over their gay mother, the chief justice of the Alabama Supreme Court on Friday wrote that homosexuality is "an inherent evil" and shouldn't be tolerated.

The nine-judge panel ruled unanimously in favor of a Birmingham man and against his ex-wife, who now lives with her gay partner in southern California.

The parents weren't named in court documents to protect the identity of the children, ages 15, 17 and 18.

Chief Justice Roy Moore wrote that the mother's relationship made her an unfit parent and that homosexuality is "abhorrent, immoral, detestable, a crime against nature, and a violation of the laws of nature." Moore also quoted scripture, historical documents and previous state court rulings that he said backed his view.

Moore is known for his decision to place washing machine-

sized monuments of the Ten Commandments in the state judicial building after he became chief justice last year. He also fought to keep a Ten Commandments plaque in his courtroom when he was a district judge.

David White, state coordinator for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance of Alabama, said Moore's opinion reflected outdated thinking.

"It's unfortunate Alabama is going to be embarrassed once again by a religious fanatic in a position of power in Alabama," White said. "It's obvious he cannot judge a gay person fairly and he should be removed from office."

John Giles, state president of the Christian Coalition, said Moore's decision protected the institution of marriage and strengthened the traditional family.

The father had held custody since 1996, but the mother petitioned for custody in June 2000, contending the father had been abusive. John Durward, the father's attorney, said his client "is very relieved."

The mother's attorney, Wendy Crew, did not return a telephone call seeking comment. •

## The 'No-Excuse' Church

**A** CHURCH NOTICE-BOARD read "To make it possible for everyone to attend church next week we're planning to have: (1) beds for those who say Sunday is their only day for sleeping-in (2) eye-drops, for those whose eyes are tired from watching too much TV the night before (3) steel helmets, for those who say the roof will fall in if they go to church (4) blankets, for those who say the building is too cold and fans for those who say it is too hot (5) hearing aids, for those who say the pastor isn't loud enough and ear plugs for those who say he shouts too much (6) score cards, for those who like to count all the hypocrites (7) relatives, for those who say Sunday is their only day to be with the family (8) lunch, for those who say they can't attend church and make dinner too (9) trees and grass, for those who say "they see God in nature" - especially in golf-courses (10) Christmas poinsettias and Easter lilies, for those who wouldn't recognise the church without them".

Now listen to what David said about going to church: *"I love the house where You live, O Lord, the place where Your glory dwells"* [Psa 122:1 NIV]. Do you feel that way too? If so - see you there on Sunday!

[Bob Gass]

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## Chosen by God - Before the Foundation of the World

**W**HAT A PRIVILEGE to be chosen by God. We are not 'accidents' that happened by chance. We have all been created for a purpose. We are 'pre-cut' by a Master Craftsman to fit exactly the place no-one else can fill. Everything about us is known to our Maker - even our weaknesses. He has a plan for us - a plan that only we, no one else, can fill. We must stop trying to be like someone else. If we try to be like another person, we will become someone God doesn't want and never meant to be.

Regardless of what you think about yourself, you are precious to God - He made you for His own glory, just the way you are. You **can** glorify Him without becoming someone else.

It doesn't matter what other people think of you - the important thing is *"the Lord knows those who are His"* [2 Tim 2:19] and Jesus said *"I know My sheep"* [John 10:14] - what else matters. Stop looking at yourself to see if you are perfect. His choice of you has nothing to do with your performance for He chose you before you were born [Eph 1:4]! •

## TRAINING for the MINISTRY

**T**HE PRESBYTERY would remind congregations that Special Collections for the Ministry Training Fund are to be taken twice per year - in April and October, on whichever Lord's Day in these months suits the local situation. Please pray that the Lord would raise up, and equip, those who would go out to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Please also give as the Lord enables you.

*KM*

## BORED TRAVELLING?

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## NEXT ISSUE of APC NEWS

will come out on the

**Third weekend in April**

**The  
Next Presbytery**  
will be on  
**Wednesday 15 May**  
at 2pm  
**The APC Assembly**  
will follow at  
7pm  
**at St Stephens Church,  
Inverness**

## Looking to Him

**S**OME THREE YEARS ago, the Business Committee of Presbytery resolved to aim to raise ministers' and missionaries' salaries to more realistic levels, and, stepping out in faith, recommended a 5% increase in 2000 and in 2001. We are thankful to our people, but supremely to the Lord Himself, that we were able to honour these decisions. In February this year, again looking to the Lord, an increase of 6% was recommended, and this was accepted by Presbytery. We pray that we will again be able to fulfil this commitment, but, above all, that through the ministry of the Word, God will have all the glory, and that his Kingdom will be extended.

*KM*

## ADVERTISING RATES

Charges for advertising  
in this magazine are as follows

**Full Page      £30**

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**Quarter Page £9**

**Eighth Page    £5**

Contact: Donald C Macaskill

238 Arbroath Road,

Dundee DD4 7SB

Tel 01382 451798

[dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk](mailto:dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk)

## **Congregational Details**

### **ABERDEEN**

Interim-moderator: Revd Donald C Macaskill, 238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB Tel 01382 451798 Email: dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk

### **DINGWALL**

Revd Dr Malcom MacInnes, Drumalin, 16 Drummond Road, Inverness IV2 4NB, Tel 01463 223983, Fax 01462 226939 Email: mmacinnnes@btinternet.com Community Centre, Tulloch Street - 6pm, Tue 7.30pm in Free Church Hall. Treasurer: D M Macdonald, Scoraig, 8 Kinnettas Square, Strathpeffer IV14 9BD, Tel 01997 421847.

### **DUNDEE**

Revd Donald C Macaskill, 238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB, Tel 01382 451798, Fax 01382-451764 Email: dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk Dens Road Church - 11 Dens Road - 11am & 6.30pm, Thu 7pm. Treasurer: Mr W J Macaulay, 4 Lomond Drive, Carnoustie, DD7 6DN, Tel 01241 853621. www.apcdundee.org.uk

### **EDINBURGH**

Revd Roddy MacRae, 6 Frogston Grove, Edinburgh EH10 7AG. Tel 0131 445 3673. Email: roddy.barvas@blueyonder.co.uk. Viewforth Church of Scotland, 104 Gilmore Place - 12 noon & 6.15pm, Wed 7.30pm in manse. Treasurer: Mr A Cumming, 31 Doune Park, Dalgety Bay, Dunfermline, KY11 9LX Tel 01383 825637. www.welcome.to/edinburghapc

### **FORT WILLIAM**

Services held jointly with the Free Church, High Street, 11am & 6.30pm, Thursday 7.30pm. Contact: Donald MacNicol, 14 Altour Road, Spean Bridge, Inverness-shire PH34 4EZ, Tel 01397 712405.

### **HARRIS**

Contact: Norman MacDonald Tel 01859 530345. Seilabost School - 12 noon & 6pm Tue 7.30pm. Treasurer: John MacKinnon, 8 Stockinish, Isle of Harris HS3 3EN Tel 01859 530211.

### **INVERNESS**

Revd Dr Malcolm MacInnes, Drumalin, 16 Drummond Road, Inverness IV2 4NB, Tel 01463

223983 Fax 01463 226939 Email: mmacinnnes@btinternet.com St Stephen's Parish Church, Old Edinburgh Road - 12 noon & 6.30pm, Wed 7.30pm. Treasurer: Mr Kenneth Macdonald, 'Arnish', 16 Drumdevan Place, Inverness IV2 4DQ, Tel 01463 231364. www.apcinverness.freeuk.com

### **KINLOCHBERVIE**

Kinlochbervie: Conference Room, Harbour Offices, 11.30am; Treasurer: W D MacLeod, 114 Inshegra, Rhiconich, by Lairg IV27 4RH Tel 01971 521388.

### **LAIRG & ROGART**

Revd Alexander Murray, APC Manse, Saval Road, Lairg, IV27 4EH, Tel 01549 402176 Email: amurray@lairg.freesevice.co.uk Lairg Church - 11.30am, 1st, 3rd, 5th Weds 7pm; Rogart Church - 6pm. 2nd, 4th Weds 7pm. Treasurer: Miss Annie J Morrison, Woodlands, Lairg IV27 4DB; Tel 01549 402362.

### **LOCHCARRON**

Revd J W Ross, Highfield, Croft Road, Lochcarron, IV54 8YA Tel 01520 722680 Lochcarron Village Hall - 11am & 6pm, Wed 7pm; Kishorn Meeting House 3pm on 2nd Lord's Day of month. Treasurer: Mrs Alison Stewart, 13 Kirkton Gardens, Lochcarron IV54 8UQ, Tel 01520 722239 Email: ajs.kishorn@tesco.net

### **LOCHINVER & STOER & DRUMBEG**

Revd David Parker, Free Church Manse, Inver Terrace, Lochinver IV27 4LH, Tel 01571 844685, Free Church Stoer - 11am; APC Church, Drumbeg - 12.30pm; Free Church Lochinver - 6pm. Treasurer: Mrs E. MacKenzie, Church Road, Stoer, Sutherland, IV27 4SE, Tel 01571 855279.

### **OBAN**

Revd Archibald McPhail, Fernhill, Polvinister Road, Oban PA34 5TN, Tel 01631 567076 Email: amcphail@quista.net Campbell Street Church - 11am & 6.30pm, Wed 7.30pm Treasurer: N Matheson, Carnish, Glenmore Road, Oban PA34, Tel 01631 566259 and D Morrison, Glenstruan, Old Shore Road, Connel, PA37, Tel 01631 710226.

#### **PLOCKTON & KYLE**

Mr J van Woerden, 8 Bank Street, Plockton IV52 8TP, Tel 01599 544272. Plockton 3pm. Email: jan@vanwoerden.freeseve.co.uk

#### **POOLEWE**

Services held jointly with Poolewe and Aultbea Free Church - Poolewe 10.45am, Inverasdale 4.30pm, Aultbea 6.30pm. On 4th Lord's Day of month - Poolewe 10.45am and 5.00pm with APC pulpit supply. Treasurer/Contact: K MacLean, Dunedin, 42 Strath, Gairloch IV21 2DB, Tel 01445 712050. Email: kendunedin@aol.com

#### **SKYE**

Revd Angus Cattanach, APC Manse, 20 Glamaig Place, Portree IV51 9PJ, Tel 01478 613258 Portree APC Church, Staffin Road - 12 noon & 6.30pm, Thu 7.30pm; C of S, Dunvegan - 12.15 & 5pm. Contact: Norman MacKay Royal Bank House, Portree IV51 9BX, Tel 01478 612822.

#### **STORNOWAY**

Revd George I Macaskill, APC Manse, 36 Newvalley, Isle of Lewis HS2 0DN, Tel 01851 703217, Fax 01851 703775. Email: g.i.macaskill@btinternet.com 72 Keith Street - 11am & 6.30pm, Thu 7.30pm. Treasurer: Mr W K Macleod, 3 Oliver's Brae, Stornoway HS1 2SS, Tel 01851 703796. www.treetapesministry.org

#### **TAIN & FEARN**

Revd John Ross, APC Manse, 2 Cameron Gardens, Tain IV19 1NT, Tel 01862 892199. Email: revjr@talk21.com Tain Church, Upper King Street - 11.30am & 6.30pm; Hilton Church 11.30am and 5pm, Wed 7.30pm. Treasurer: Roderrick Mackenzie, Geanies House, Fearn, by Tain IV20 1TW, Tel 01862 871000. Email: cfp@geanies.org.uk

#### **WICK & THURSO & STRATHY**

Wick Church, Breadalbane Crescent - 11.30pm, alternate Wed 7.30pm; Thurso Church, Olig Street - 6.30pm; alternate Weds 7.30pm Strathy Church - 4pm Treasurer: Wick/Thurso: Mr D S Bremner, 'Camore', 34 West Banks Avenue, Wick KW1 5LU. Tel 01955 606099. Treasurer: Strathy: Mrs J Annal, 113 Strathy Point, by Thurso KW14 7RY, Tel 01641 541316.

#### **ABROAD**

##### **TORONTO, ONTARIO**

Church: 2712 Victoria Park Avenue, North York, Ontario, M2J 4A7 Canada. Tel 001 416 491 9778 11am and 7pm, Wed 7.30pm Contact: Mrs Wilma Kling, 52 Chestertown Square, Markham, Ontario L6C 2R2 Tel 001 905 887 2017

##### **VANCOUVER, BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Vancouver: corner 15th Street & Fraser Street - 11am, and 7pm (alternate Sundays) Wed 7pm Contact: Hugh Fraser 001 604 526 0431

##### **AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND**

Auckland: St Hilda's Church Centre, Young Road, Mount Wellington - 2pm Contact: Donald MacLean, Tel 649 524 5747

##### **CLERK of PRESBYTERY**

Revd A N McPhail, MA. Mth, APC Manse, Polvinister Road, Oban PA34 5TN Tel 01631-567076 Email: amcphail@quista.net

##### **ASSISTANT CLERK**

Revd G I Macaskill, APC Manse, 36 Newvalley, Isle of Lewis HS2 0DN Tel/Fax 01851-703217 Email: g.i.macaskill@btinternet.com

##### **GENERAL TREASURER of PRESBYTERY**

Mr Kenneth MacLean,  
PO Box 2 Gairloch, IV21 2YA  
Tel 01445-712050 Email: kendunedin@aol.com

##### **PUBLICATIONS TREASURER**

Mr D M Fraser,  
'Stratharris', Daviot,  
by Inverness, IV2 5XQ Tel 01463 772253  
Email: donald@stratharris.freeseve.co.uk

##### **EDITOR of 'APC NEWS'**

Revd Donald C Macaskill  
238 Arbroath Road, Dundee DD4 7SB  
Tel 01382 451798 Fax 01382 451764  
Email: dcmacaskill@apchurches.org.uk

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