

THE DOOR



YET HE COMMANDED THE SKIES ABOVE
AND OPENED THE DOORS OF HEAVEN PSALM 78:23

ASSOCIATED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES:
AUTUMN/WINTER 2019

FROM THE EDITOR

There is an international feel to The Door this season - not only do we have a feature from Cameron Fraser featuring South Sudan, Carolyn Poon who worships with her family in the Inverness Congregation introduces us to the Christian life in Singapore. The nations of The Netherlands, Scotland and Zimbabwe are combined in John Tallach's tribute to Jan van Woerden. Lord Mackay also gives an informative article on the current UK political situation, clarifying the basic facts while encouraging us towards prayer for our nation and its leaders.

*Catherine Mackenzie
Editor*

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JOYFUL ANTICIPATION

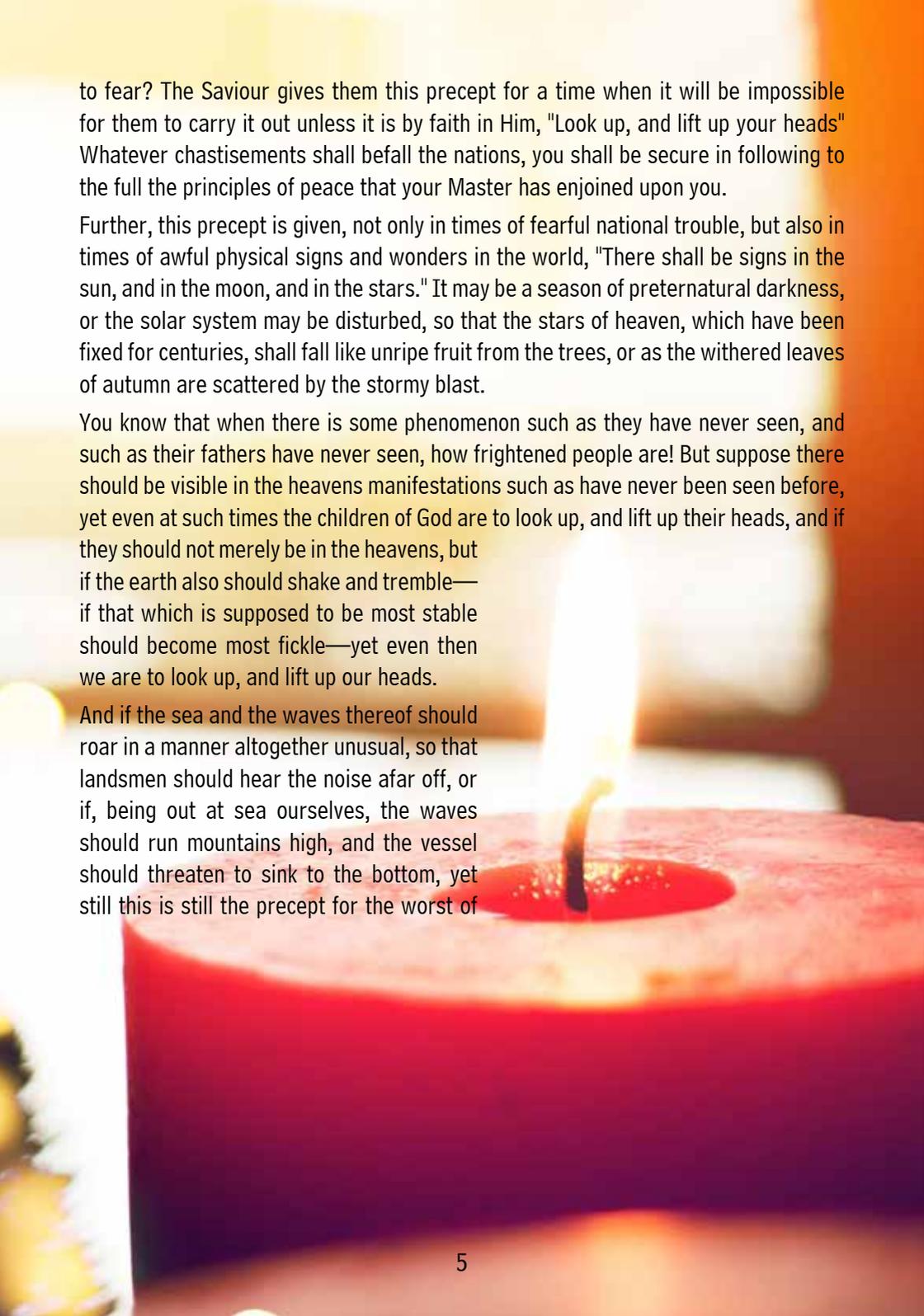
OF THE SECOND ADVENT – part 1 - C. H. SPURGEON

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Luke 21:28-31

"There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh."

Dear friends, we will consider, first, the terrible time in which this precept is to be carried out, secondly, the remarkable precept itself, and thirdly, the encouraging parable which is given in order to induce us to look up, and lift up our heads...

I. First, then, here is A TERRIBLE TIME, in which we are told to look up, and lift up our heads. It is evidently to be a time of fearful national trouble, and if such times should ever come in our days— if there should ever arrive times that are worthy to be compared with the destruction of Jerusalem—here is the Master's word to us, "When ye shall hear of wars and commotions, be not terrified: for these things must first come to pass; but the end is not by and by." Should great wars occur, as they certainly will, there is nothing, in them, to terrify the Christian. Should they even come to your own doors, it is not for believers in Christ ever to be the victims of a scare. Whatever may happen, what is there for them



to fear? The Saviour gives them this precept for a time when it will be impossible for them to carry it out unless it is by faith in Him, "Look up, and lift up your heads" Whatever chastisements shall befall the nations, you shall be secure in following to the full the principles of peace that your Master has enjoined upon you.

Further, this precept is given, not only in times of fearful national trouble, but also in times of awful physical signs and wonders in the world, "There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars." It may be a season of preternatural darkness, or the solar system may be disturbed, so that the stars of heaven, which have been fixed for centuries, shall fall like unripe fruit from the trees, or as the withered leaves of autumn are scattered by the stormy blast.

You know that when there is some phenomenon such as they have never seen, and such as their fathers have never seen, how frightened people are! But suppose there should be visible in the heavens manifestations such as have never been seen before, yet even at such times the children of God are to look up, and lift up their heads, and if they should not merely be in the heavens, but if the earth also should shake and tremble— if that which is supposed to be most stable should become most fickle—yet even then we are to look up, and lift up our heads.

And if the sea and the waves thereof should roar in a manner altogether unusual, so that landsmen should hear the noise afar off, or if, being out at sea ourselves, the waves should run mountains high, and the vessel should threaten to sink to the bottom, yet still this is still the precept for the worst of



times that are supposable, "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads."

Even in such a trying time as that, take up the language of the forty-sixth Psalm, and say, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof."

"Nature cannot rise to that height," says one. No, I know it cannot, but grace can. "I cannot rise to it," says one. Perhaps you cannot, but there is One who can raise you up to it, and it is He Himself who bids you to rise." Then, "says Jesus, "when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads." This terrible time which our Lord describes is a time of universal alarm, "Upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; men's hearts failing them for fear...: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken." You know that fear is contagious, when one person trembles, many begin to feel the same, and when all the people, wherever we shall go, at home or abroad, shall be in distress—when everywhere the hearts of men shall seem to die within them, or turn as it were to stone—if it should ever come to that, and there should be a general panic, then you who have Christ for your Master, God for your Father, eternity for your heritage, and heaven for your home, even then you may "look up, and lift up your heads."

You ask, "How shall we do that?" You cannot do it without your Lord. With God, all things are possible. In Christ, you can do all things, without Him, you can do nothing. If you live away from your Lord and Master, in those days of terror that are yet to come, your hearts will quail for fear, and you will be like other men. If you run with them, you shall fear with them. If your strength is where their strength is, you shall be as weak as they, but if you have learned to look up, why, even in those stormy times you shall keep to the habit of looking up, and if you have learned to lift your heads above the world, you shall keep to the habit of lifting up your heads. If your portion is in heaven, it shall not be shaken when the earth rocks and reels to its very foundations, if your treasure is in heaven, then your treasure shall not be lost.

If God is with you, you can stand between the very jaws of death, or in the center of hell itself, and feel no fear. With Christ by your side, you may be as calm amid the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, as your Lord Himself is in His glory. He can work even this in you if you but cast yourself on Him, and live wholly to Him.

Once more, the time when we are to be thus calm and quiet, and to look up, and lift up our heads, is to be at the coming judgment. Whatever I might say to you about the calamities that are yet to come upon the earth, whatever description I might give of wars, and earthquakes, and storms—if I were to make each word as black as night, and each sentence as sharp as a killing sword—yet could I not fully describe the final scene when the Lord Himself shall come in all the pomp and splendor of the last dread assize. No human tongue can tell, as no human heart can imagine, the terrors of that tremendous day, especially the sight of the once-crucified King when He appears seated upon His great white throne, and when the summons shall ring out— "Come to judgment! Come to judgment, come away!" when the grave shall not conceal the unnumbered dead, nor even the depths of the ocean suffice for a hiding place from Him that sits upon the throne, for all shall be gathered before Him, every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. You will be there, my friend, you will be there as certainly as you are here.

O you who are without Christ, all the fear and dread you have ever had in this life will be as nothing compared with the alarm and terror of that day! Your fears, when you have been laid low with fever, and have been near to death's door, will be but as child's play compared with what you will feel at that tremendous day which is soon to come. Yet Christ says to His people, concerning even that time of terror, "Look up, and lift up your heads."

There is nothing for you who have put your trust in Him, ever to fear. It is your Judge who is coming, but He comes to acquit you, and to exhibit you to the assembled universe clad in His own righteousness which you already wear. He who is coming is your Lord, your Friend, your Bridegroom, He who has sworn to deliver you is coming to call your body from the grave, and to raise you up to dwell together with Him forever. That day of Christ's appearing shall be to you a morning of the ringing out of harps, and a time of joyous shouts and blissful songs.

"There shall be weeping, there shall be weeping, At the judgment seat of Christ;" but not for you who are in Him, it shall be your joy day, your wedding day, the brightest day in all your history. "When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads."

"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

HIGHLAND THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

ACCESS COURSE - GERALDINE MACLENNAN

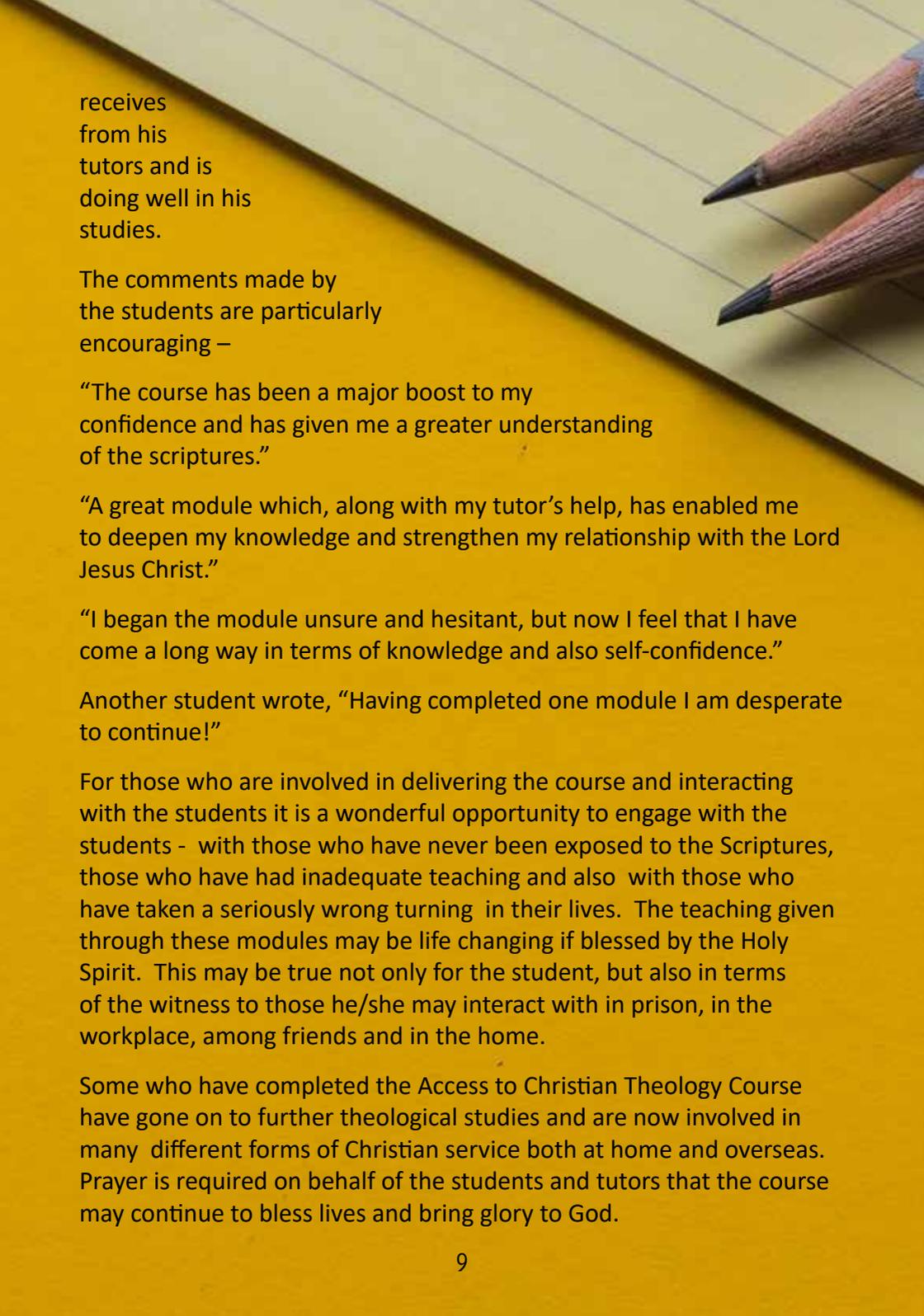
The Access to Christian Theology Course is designed for those who wish to learn about Christianity or to deepen their existing knowledge. It is delivered in 6 modules and covers– **Introduction to Studying Theology** (which gives helpful advice on how to study effectively); an **Overview of the Old Testament**; an **Overview of the New Testament**; an **Introduction to Christian Beliefs**; an **Introduction to Pastoral Theology**; an **Introduction to the History of Christianity**.

The way in which the course is presented and administered enables students to fit their studies around family and/or work commitments. There is no limit put on the time taken to complete the course unless the student wishes to go on to pursue further theological studies in which case the course should be completed over a 2 year period.

Over the years people from many different backgrounds have studied the Scriptures through the Access Course and have said that they have been encouraged and helped as a result of their participation in it.

Some who are involved in church activities have found elements of the course particularly helpful – for example, the Pastoral Theology module helps those who are involved in visiting those who are not able to get out to church because of illness or frailty or those who have suffered bereavement and other life-challenging issues. Others have found the teaching in the Old and New Testament and Christian Belief modules deepen their understanding of the scriptures and helps them if asked to give preaching support to their ministers or to take services in congregations where there is no minister.

There is also an increasing interest in the course from those who are for one reason or another in prison. At present, we have contact with students in 3 Scottish prisons. One of these students has worked through 5 of the 6 modules and will in time hopefully complete the course. Another, who started the course recently, has completed the first module very quickly and is working very enthusiastically through the second module. He expresses great appreciation for the help he



receives
from his
tutors and is
doing well in his
studies.

The comments made by
the students are particularly
encouraging –

“The course has been a major boost to my
confidence and has given me a greater understanding
of the scriptures.”

“A great module which, along with my tutor’s help, has enabled me
to deepen my knowledge and strengthen my relationship with the Lord
Jesus Christ.”

“I began the module unsure and hesitant, but now I feel that I have
come a long way in terms of knowledge and also self-confidence.”

Another student wrote, “Having completed one module I am desperate
to continue!”

For those who are involved in delivering the course and interacting
with the students it is a wonderful opportunity to engage with the
students - with those who have never been exposed to the Scriptures,
those who have had inadequate teaching and also with those who
have taken a seriously wrong turning in their lives. The teaching given
through these modules may be life changing if blessed by the Holy
Spirit. This may be true not only for the student, but also in terms
of the witness to those he/she may interact with in prison, in the
workplace, among friends and in the home.

Some who have completed the Access to Christian Theology Course
have gone on to further theological studies and are now involved in
many different forms of Christian service both at home and overseas.
Prayer is required on behalf of the students and tutors that the course
may continue to bless lives and bring glory to God.



SOUTH SUDAN

J. Cameron Fraser

In June 2017, I was a delegate to the annual Synod of the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRCNA). One of the highlights for me was meeting visiting brothers from different parts of Africa. One in particular was from the Reformed Church in the Sudan. At the last church I pastored in Lethbridge, Alberta, we were blessed at one time to have a number of Sudanese refugees worshipping with us. Among them was one of the so-called 'lost boys' who at the age of 12 walked from South Sudan to Ethiopia, then to a refugee camp in Kenya, risking dangers from wild animals, crocodiles and bullets, burying their dead along the way, drinking their own urine to survive. So, I had a particular interest in learning about the Sudanese Reformed Church. Their General Secretary, Patrick Jok, gave a moving PowerPoint presentation about the situation there.

For years, there was a civil war between Muslims in northern Sudan and Christians and animists in the south. When South Sudan became an independent nation in 2011, there was hope of relief from war, but the situation simply deteriorated into tribal warfare. Patrick Jok said 'My father grew up in war. I grew up in war. My son is growing up in war.' To date, more than 100,000 people have been killed. Millions more have been displaced, many becoming refugees in neighboring nations. Much of the population faces daily hunger. As reported in an article on 'Hope and Horror in South Sudan' by Clayton Libot that appeared in the CRCNA's July 2017 denominational magazine, The Banner:

The Sudanese Reformed Church has emerged and grown in the midst of this violence. The church began in 1992 with a single house church. Five years later, in 1997, it had grown to four congregations. By 2005, with 500 members, it was organized as a denomination subscribing to the Reformed confessions. In 2009, the Sudanese Reformed Church held its first synod. The church has now grown to 6,000 members. It has 12 ordained pastors and 20 evangelists.

This new church has grown largely without much in the way of outside support. It has been hard. In the ongoing civil war, the church has lost 27 members, two pastors, and five evangelists. Three church buildings have been burnt down. Seven properties have been looted. The leaders of this brave church have decided to stay. At a trauma healing conference sponsored by Christian Reformed World Missions in Nairobi, Kenya, the leaders decided to go back. They said, 'If we die, we die in the Lord.'

There are many needs around the world, especially in Africa, but South Sudan is a case by itself.'A representative of a Christian aid organisation who has travelled widely in Africa is reported to have said she wasn't prepared for the situation in South Sudan .

I committed myself to doing what I can to help and to raise awareness of the situation. In the summer of 2018, my Sudanese friend Daniel (the 'lost boy' mentioned earlier) visited his family in South Sudan for the first time in ten years. I asked him to visit Patrick. Daniel explained that he and Patrick were from different tribes and his tribes people might interpret his visit to Patrick as a betrayal. Then he added, 'But as believers, that is what we have to do!' His visit brought great encouragement and he came home with gifts of gratitude.

I was pleasantly surprised to learn that Patrick had visited a number of congregations of the Free Church of Scotland in May of 2018. A few congregations have sent support, but more is needed I would like to commend this needy ministry to the Missions Board and the people of the APC. The SRC is a member (as is the APC) of the World Reformed Fellowship. The needs are vast and yet a relatively little help can go a long way. More information is available on request. Meanwhile, I commend the situation there to your prayers.

J. CAMERON FRASER was born in Zimbabwe, grew up mostly in Scotland and was (among other things) a pastor in western Canada for thirty years. He took early retirement from pastoral ministry and now concentrates on writing and guest preaching.



SOCIAL WORK AND SINGAPORE

Carolyn Poon

CAROLYN WORSHIPS WITH HER FAMILY AT THE APC CONGREGATION IN INVERNESS.

Together with my family I was baptised in a Roman Catholic church when I was five years old. My parents were not regular church goers and soon my brother and I dreaded catechism classes and masses so we stopped attending. My father had problems with alcohol and both of my parents with gambling. I grew up seeing how miserable their lives were. Today I see so much bitterness in my father's life. It's my prayer that he comes to know the Lord and experience true joy in Him.

With parents who received a basic education and were working shifts, my brother and I had nobody to supervise our studies. It is solely by God's grace, I managed to enter a junior college and thereafter university.

During university days good friends invited me to their Christian churches which I started attending regularly. These were charismatic megachurches, which attracted many young people due to their upbeat worship and cohesive cell groups. Each service was like attending a concert with huge crowds and loud worship. However, I did not grow in faith and knowledge of God's Word; instead I started to feel uncomfortable with their teachings. I didn't know it then but they were proclaiming what I now know to be a prosperity gospel.

I came to know Sam, my husband, in university as we were both studying social work. I started attending his church which was a Chinese Presbyterian church. I started growing in God's Word and was baptised when I was 23. Thank God for his grace in my conversion.



During that period of time, I recall praying daily and fervently for my mum's salvation. I thank God that he answered my prayers. My mother started attending church with me and she was converted. I believe she has stopped her gambling now as well.

SOCIAL WORK - HOW PEOPLE NEED THE LORD

After I graduated from university, I worked as a social worker for 4 years. This job opened my eyes to the raw realities of life - broken families, broken marriages, poverty, joblessness, juvenile delinquency, mental illnesses, drug abuse, domestic violence, loneliness etc. I could clearly see how these people needed the Lord for all their problems.

My job included casework and counselling for people who needed help such as financial assistance, parenting issues and poverty. I also managed a youth club and organised activities (such as soccer, camps, sponsored excursions, tuition by volunteers) for children and teenagers who came from needy families. Another interesting feature of my job was conducting workshops for juveniles who had committed crimes on probation, family workshops for inmates in prison and premarital workshops for teenage girls who got pregnant under age 18. These young couples were required to attend these workshops before they were given a special license to marry.

At the age of 23, young and inexperienced, I was assigned to some difficult cases such as clients with chronic depression who were suicidal. Once I had a client who came to my office with a cut wrist. She often shared with me endless stories about her sorrows in life. One day, my colleague showed me a newspaper article regarding this client. I realised that she had jumped from her 9th storey flat and survived. The civil defence came in time, to place an air bag on the ground level to cushion her fall. I visited her at the mental hospital and reminded her of God's grace in sparing her life. On several occasions, I shared with her the gospel and I encouraged her to pray to God whenever she felt troubled.

I had another client who was in and out of prison several times for drug offences. Her life was in a mess. Her teenage son was addicted to games and refused to go to school. Once she shared that she wanted to end her life, but she became furious with me after I called the police who came to intervene. Sadly, one day her son informed me that he suspected his mother had jumped off their block because he heard a loud thump. I had to witness the aftermath of a suicide (from seeing a tent over the

deceased body to seeing her son shedding tears during the funeral). My heart sank and I couldn't sleep that night, thinking whether I could have done more and remembering her final call to me in the morning to help bring her son to the dentist. I prayed and God lifted me up from this deep sadness. Without Christ in my life, I wouldn't have coped with the broken lives of all these clients. When I started this job, it was very challenging. I kept worrying about many of my clients even after I ended work. But when I started to entrust all these burdens to Him, I was comforted. Being in a Christian agency, I took the opportunity to share the gospel with several of my clients and prayed with them if they allowed me to.

Four years in a job wasn't long; but sufficient time to reveal to me how broken people's lives are and how much they needed the Lord. Isaiah 9:6 describes Jesus as our Wonderful Counsellor. Unlike human counsellors or social workers who are limited and whose assistance might help only for a short term, Jesus is a wise counsellor who knows all our problems, Colossians 2:3 "in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", He knows how our sinful hearts needed the gospel, and He has promised to be there to help and guide us all our lives. Hebrews 4:15 "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin." God has graciously given us the Bible which has solutions to all our problems.

I wish I could do more but there is a limitation to what social work can do as we are bound by a professional code of ethics, e.g. no contact of clients outside of work. So, I prayed and asked the Lord to pave a way for a new career where I could do something more for people.

MOTHERHOOD - MOULDING JOURNEY

God did pave a new career for me – Motherhood. Sam and I got married and when I was pregnant, we both decided that I would be the main caregiver for our child. Being a stay at home mum, having to meet every need of my children daily is an important job 24 hours, 7 days per week, raising them to love and fear the Lord. Deuteronomy 6:7 "You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

Twelve years have passed. Being a stay at home mum has been more challenging than 4 years of being a social worker, more difficult than

those difficult cases I was assigned to. God knows me best - He knew that I needed more moulding in this journey of sanctification. Motherhood has revealed to me my various weaknesses and struggles and how I needed the Lord to help me be a more patient, loving and encouraging mother.

Parenting brings us to times of exasperation and to our knees for prayer. However, in such times, it reminds me again that I can never rely on my own strengths and abilities. The only way is to pray and trust more fully in our covenant keeping God.

“Parenting by God’s Promises” by Joel R. Beeke says “As a parent, I fell short in many ways. All of it was the grace of God. My only secret was to keep trusting in Him. ... It is important that our children know that ‘the abundance’ of their mother’s and father’s hearts is faith in Christ, love for Christ, and desire to live for Christ. In this way, they see Christ living in us.”

“You and I will never be perfect parents. Our children will always see flaws in us, no matter how hard we try and how seriously we take our calling. We are sinners, and they know that. So, we should let them see our tender, praying hearts and dependence on the Lord. They need to hear our prayers for help and see from our lives that we need God. That is extremely important. What a tragedy it is when children grow up without seeing the reality of a dependent life of faith in their mothers and fathers.”

Thank God that we have sufficient hope in our covenant keeping God who keeps His promises to help us in our parenting as we raise our children in the covenant of grace and bringing them to Christ daily. Despite my failings and weaknesses, 2 Corinthians 12:9 reminds me “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.”



JAN VAN WOERDEN

by John Tallach

HEBREWS 13:7 TELLS US, IN RELATION TO SPIRITUAL LEADERS WHO HAVE GONE BEFORE US, "IMITATE THEIR FAITH". THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE HIGHLIGHTS SOME ASPECTS OF THE LIFE OF JAN VAN WOERDEN, WHO DIED ON 25 JUNE, 2019. AS THE STORY OF JAN'S LIFE IS TOLD, MAY THE GENUINENESS OF HIS FAITH MAKE ITSELF FELT.



Jan was born in Zeist, Holland, on 16 June, 1927. He had an older brother, Cor, and a younger sister, Rie. Jan was twelve at the outbreak of the Second World War. During the war his family, in common with others, were at times reduced to eating things like tulip bulbs. And yet, from these dark days there are also testimonies to God's provision. Jan once met a godly man in Rotterdam who told him how God had provided for his family. Opposite the flat where this family lived there was a shop which sold vegetables. However, as the war went on, this shop was boarded up. Months later, the family of this man who lived opposite the shop had nothing to eat. One evening, this man's wife said, "It says in Psalm 37:25 that the seed of the just man have not been left begging for bread. The Lord will provide food". So saying, she took a bucket and crossed the road. Her children stood at the window in the flat and watched their mother, knocking at the door which had been boarded up for so long. Someone whom she did not know opened the door. She handed her bucket over, asking for potatoes. She was given what she asked for and was back home in no time. She never found out who this person was who had helped her.

Jan's father always prayed that, despite the shortage of food, God would feed his family. One dark night during the winter of 1944-45 ("the hunger winter") there was a knock at the door of their home. Jan went to the door and could just make out a figure standing there. This person did not say anything, but handed over a parcel and disappeared. This turned out to be a huge loaf of bread. Jan's family never found out who this person was.

After the war, Jan was called up to do his National Service in the Dutch army. Then, in 1949, he was transferred to London, where he had a job which was linked to the Dutch Embassy. Before Jan left Holland, his father pled with him to attend the services held by the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland in London. Jan's reaction was, "I can worship God walking through a wood as well as going to church to hear an old man mumbling".

However, after arriving in London, Jan did try to locate the hall where these services were held. It was not easy, but eventually he was walking along a road and saw the door of a hall which was partly open. He heard singing from inside. He looked in, and saw that a meeting was in progress.

At this stage his knowledge of English was poor, and Jan had no interest in the gospel. However, because the members of the F.P. Church in London were very kind to him, Jan continued to attend these services.

The minister of the congregation was the Rev J.P. MacQueen. When Mr MacQueen came towards the end of a sermon, he always quoted Isaiah 55; 6-7: "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him return to the Lord, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon." Jan began to think about these words in a deep way. As time passed, he came to realise that he was far from God. He then began to pray. However, he felt that there was a barrier between him and God because he had for years rejected the gospel. He could not see how it was possible for God to have mercy on him.

After some time, Jan began to think of visiting Scotland. Mr MacQueen supplied him with the details of various communions. (A "communion" is a series of services traditionally held in the Highlands in connection with the Lord's Supper.) So, in the early 1950s, complete with rucksack, Jan made his way north to Stoer and pitched his small tent in a field just 200 yards from the F.P. Church. When the time came for the first service of the communion on Thursday morning, Jan walked over to the church. The man at the door commented that Jan was nearer to the house of God than anyone else. Jan's reply was, "If you only knew how far from God I am!"

The service that day was taken by the Rev Fraser Macdonald. He was preaching from Ephesians 2:13-14: "Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ." It was while listening to this sermon that Jan first came to realise how utterly central the blood of Christ was to salvation. For the first time he came to have a firm hope of salvation through faith in Christ.

Jan decided to leave the work which was linked with the Dutch Embassy. He trained as a car mechanic. He then enrolled as a medical student. However, before this course began, Jan realised that he could not support himself through five years of study by working nights. He therefore trained as a nurse instead. Afterwards he did further studies at the London Missionary School of Medicine, funding this by working nights on a hospital ward. Both in his training as a nurse and as a student at the School of Medicine, he came first in his class.

Jan was now qualified as a mechanic and as a nurse. He was aware that the Free Presbyterian Church needed someone with medical knowledge to serve on their Mission in Rhodesia. Jan applied and was accepted. In 1957 he sailed out to Africa and joined the

staff of the Mission at Mbuma, a hundred and twenty miles from Bulawayo. Jan's work was, to support and develop the basic medical care at Mbuma from a small dispensary. However, Jan was soon asking himself how this medical work could be developed. Like the visionary he was, he began to dream of a hospital built in the bush.

In 1961, Jan appealed to the Foreign Mission Committee of the FPC to send someone out to help him develop the medical work at Mbuma. The FMC approached Margaret Finlayson and she agreed to return to the Mission (where she had already worked from 1956 to 1959). Jan's comment was that, after Margaret arrived, "something awakened in me". They were married on the 1st of December of that year by Rev Petros Mzamo, minister of the FP congregation at Mbuma. Psalm 23 was sung as part of this wedding service. Although the words of this psalm were so familiar, they now had a fresh significance. It seemed that God was speaking to Jan in a very personal way. God was promising to be with him throughout his life, and afterwards to take him to be with him for ever.

How could money possibly be found to turn Jan's dream of a hospital into reality? Back in Holland Jan's cousin, Mrs Mijnders, set up the missionary organisation Mbuma Zending. As time passed, significant sums of money began to be collected in Holland for the proposed hospital at Mbuma.

There were many positive aspects to Jan's time at Mbuma. That was when Hugo, Annamarie, Christina, and Bernhard were born. However, when Hugo was a baby, Jan contracted a combination of malaria, meningitis and secondary encephalitis, spending a long time in isolation in hospital in Bulawayo. He eventually recovered, but there was some long term loss. His ability to read music, for example, never came back. (Previously Jan had been able to play several musical instruments.) At a later stage, a neurologist in Holland took a scan of Jan's brain and told him that he must not put himself under any kind of stress. Jan used to laugh when he recounted this!

As time passed, differences arose between Jan and the Foreign Mission Committee of the church in Scotland. In the end Jan set up a new organisation - the "Ebenezer Scripture Mission". This involved literature evangelism, adult literacy, and Scripture correspondence courses. It also led, in 1976, to the opening of Thembiso in Bulawayo – a home for destitute children – at a time when there was no such home in the whole of Matabeleland. Various aspects of this outreach work were supported by a new organisation, set up in Holland by Jan's faithful cousin, Mrs Mijnders.



Jan and Margaret, along with their children, eventually returned to Scotland in 1977. Although there had been differences between Jan and the F.P. Foreign Mission Committee, Jan was still a member of the church and after his return to Scotland he served as an elder and a missionary in Plockton and Kyle.

In 1989, there was a division within the F.P. Church. A significant section of the ministers, elders, members and adherents left to form the Associated Presbyterian Churches. Jan joined the A.P.C. There were many times of prayer throughout that period. I remember Jan's own prayers, giving thanks to God for his faithfulness during that traumatic time.

In 2006, Jan and Margaret moved from Plockton to Inverness. As time passed, it became clear that Margaret's health was declining. On Sunday the 10th of March, 2013, she listened to a sermon by Rev Angus Cattanach on the words of Mark 10:32 (A.V.) "And they were in the way going up to Jerusalem; and Jesus went before them". Margaret listened to this sermon twice. The fact that Jesus was going before her became particularly meaningful to her on Friday of that week, when Jesus took her from this world to be with him in heaven.

After the interment at Fodderty Cemetery, Jan said two things. One was "Ebenezer". The thinking behind this, given in 1 Samuel 7:12 is: "Thus far has the Lord helped us". The other thing which Jan quoted that day, standing beside the grave in which his wife's body had just been laid, was from Genesis 22:8: "Jehovah Jireh". That means, "The Lord will provide". So, even on that sad day, Jan was looking back to the grace of God with gratitude, and he was looking forward in hope to more of the grace of God in coming days.

In the years that followed, Jan felt the loss of Margaret deeply. However it was still a positive experience to visit him. I was amazed that, when once reminiscing with him about the visit which Isobel and I paid to Zimbabwe in 1975, Jan was able to recall details which I had forgotten. As Jan's strength diminished, it became more and more clear that his focus was on another world.

Jan's mother had been a believer who did not enjoy much assurance of faith. When she was dying, however, she kept repeating the last verse of Psalm 17: "And I – in righteousness I shall see your face; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with seeing your likeness." (She actually added the words "Tell Jan," who was in Africa at that time.)

As Jan himself approached death, he also repeatedly quoted these words from Psalm 17 which had been a support to his mother at the end of her life. With his family around him and Anna in tears Jan asked, "Are you crying? But I am going home". He had a deep and God glorifying sense that the words which were so meaningful to him in the course of that wedding service in 1961 in Zimbabwe were soon to be fulfilled:

"Goodness and mercy all my life
shall surely follow me,
and in God's house for evermore
my dwelling place shall be."

How did Jan's faith, which we are called to imitate, show itself? He sought the glory of God, he prayed and worked for the coming of God's kingdom, and he reached out to others in love.

BOOK REVIEW: BEYOND THE BIG C - HOPE IN THE FACE OF DEATH BY JEREMY MARSHALL

A moving and hopeful book - Tom Goodenough, The Spectator.

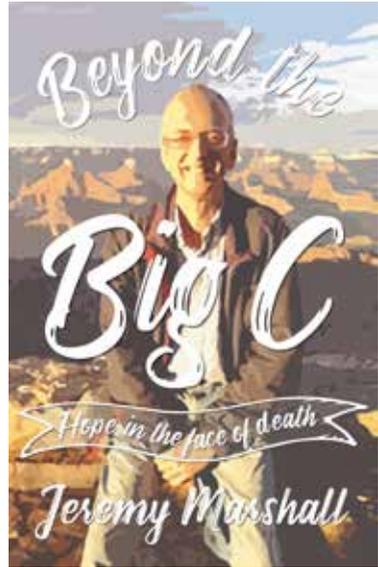
Jeremy starts his book with the words: *This is the story of my journey with cancer – but, as you’ll discover ... it’s not just about me ... I would like to introduce you to someone else – someone who has utterly transformed my life and someone without whom I couldn’t survive a single day in this messed-up world. Having incurable cancer seems a dead end. But I believe there is hope beyond the Big C.*

And this is what this book is about - the big H - hope. It is hope that is placed in another C who is bigger than the biggest cancer, the deepest care, the worst circumstance. Because Jeremy Marshall’s hope is in Christ.

The story of his cancer is frank and at times brutal as you realise the pain and fear that he has gone through. "...I am afraid, sometimes very afraid ... What have I found to be an answer to my fear? Fear not just of cancer but most of all, of death. I don’t see an answer to my fear if I look at the world around me. Nor do I find one if I look within. As I said at the beginning, this book isn’t just about me - it’s about someone else. And that ‘someone’ does have an answer to my fear. That ‘someone’ is Jesus Christ.

As Jeremy says in his book God does not promise us health. He offers us something so much greater - he offers himself.

Jeremy’s book is written in the thick of it - in the thick of cancer, in the thick of this world, in the thick of fear - but in the sure and certain hope that he has a Saviour and a peace, now and forever. And that hope is a loving saviour who says to all, "Come believe in me."



THE PRUNING KNIFE

Andrew Murray

ALREADY YE ARE CLEAN BECAUSE OF THE WORD I HAVE SPOKEN UNTO YOU. JOHN 15:3

What is the pruning knife of this Heavenly Husbandman? It is often said to be affliction. By no means in the first place. How would it then fare with many who have long seasons free from adversity; or with some on whom God appears to shower down kindness all their life long? No; it is the Word of God is the knife, sharper than any two-edged sword, that pierces even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and is quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. It is only when affliction leads to this discipline of the Word that it becomes a blessing; the lack of this heart-cleansing through the Word is the reason why affliction is so often unsanctified. Not even Paul's thorn in the flesh could become a blessing until Christ's word, "My strength is made perfect in weakness," had made him see the danger of self-exaltation, and made him willing to rejoice in infirmities.

The Word is God's pruning knife. Jesus says, "Ye are already clean, because of the word I have spoken unto you." How searchingly that word had been spoken by Him out of whose mouth there went a sharp two-edged sword, as He had taught them: Except a man deny himself, lose his life, forsake all, hate father and mother, he cannot be My disciple, he is not worthy of Me. Or, as He humbled their pride, or reproved their lack of love, or foretold their all forsaking Him. From the opening of his ministry in the Sermon on the Mount to His words of warning in the last night, His word had tried and cleansed them. He had discovered and condemned all there was of self; they were now emptied and cleansed, ready for the incoming of the Holy Spirit.



It is as the soul gives up its own thoughts, and men's thoughts of what is religion, and yields itself heartily, humbly, patiently, to the reaching of the Word by the Spirit, that the Father will do His blessed work of pruning and cleansing away all of nature and self that mixes with our work and hinders His Spirit.

Let those who would know all the Husbandman can do for them, all the Vine can bring forth through them, seek earnestly to yield themselves heartily to the blessed cleansing through the Word. Let them, in their study of the Word, receive it as a hammer that breaks and opens up, as a fire that melts and refines, as a sword that lays bare and slays all that is of the flesh. The word of conviction will prepare for the word of comfort and of hope, and the Father will cleanse them through the Word.

All ye who are Branches of the True Vine, each time you read or hear the Word, wait first of all on Him to use it for his cleansing of the Branch. Set your heart upon His desire for more fruit. Trust Him as Husbandman to work it. Yield yourselves in simple childlike surrender to the cleansing work of His Word and Spirit, and you may count upon it that His purpose will be fulfilled in you.

Father I pray thee, cleanse me through thy Word. Let it search out and bring to light all that is of self and the flesh in any religion. Let it cut away every root of self-confidence, that the Vine may find me wholly free to receive His life and Spirit. O my Holy Husbandman, I trust thee to care for me Branch as much as for the Vine. Thou only art my hope.

COFFEE WITH CALVIN

JOHN CALVIN was a French theologian, pastor and reformer in Geneva during the Protestant Reformation. He was a principal figure in the development of the system of Christian theology later called Calvinism, aspects of which include the doctrines of predestination and of the absolute sovereignty of God in salvation. Sit down with a coffee (or a tea) and read what Calvin had to say about life...

For he who has set the limits to our life has at the same time entrusted to us its care; he has provided means and helps to preserve it; he has also made us able to foresee dangers; that they may not overwhelm us unaware, he has offered precautions and remedies. Now it is very clear what our duty is: thus, if the Lord has committed to us the protection of our life, our duty is to protect it; if he offers helps, to use them; if he forewarns us of dangers, not



to plunge headlong; if he makes remedies available, not to neglect them... God's providence does not always meet us in its naked form, but God in a sense clothes it with the means employed.

Therefore, the Christian heart, since it has been thoroughly persuaded that all things happen by God's plan, and that nothing takes place by chance, will ever look to Him as the principal cause of things; yet, will give attention to the secondary causes in their proper place.

Gratitude of mind for the favorable outcome of things, patience in adversity, and also incredible freedom from worry about the future all necessarily follow upon this knowledge. Therefore whatever shall happen prosperously and according to the desire of his heart, God's servant will attribute wholly to God, whether he feels God's beneficence through the ministry of men, or has been helped by inanimate creatures.

He fearlessly dares commit himself to God. His solace, I say, is to know that his Heavenly Father so holds all things in his power, so rules by his authority and will, so governs by his wisdom, that nothing can befall except he determine it.

John Calvin's Institutes 1.17.4,6,7,11



CONGREGATIONAL AND OTHER NEWS

EDINBURGH APC (ARCHIE MCPHAIL)

For well over a decade Rev John Ross has worked in an area of Edinburgh that has long been known for its level of deprivation. In partnership with Blythwood Care and Bethany he and his wife Morag have ministered to local people. They have run a charity shop and food bank, have worked with children, and held services and Bible studies. Whether it is witnessing a person come to faith, or seeing God's children grow, there is deep satisfaction as well as serious challenge.

Any reader who has an interest in this work is free to make contact, using the email address apcedinburgh@gmail.com Please pray for wisdom and for God's provision as the needs of the area continue. This kind of work calls for Christians who live among the people. It takes manpower to establish and maintain local contacts in new-build housing as well as the original community. Giving at service times brings in less than a quarter of total income. Above all, we need the Lord's guidance for now and the future if the work is to continue long-term.

TORCH TRUST INVERNESS (CLARK WALLS)

Torch fellowship is a Christian organisation for visually impaired people from all backgrounds and as well as having meetings they can supply a range of large print and audio books. They meet on the last Saturday of most months at 2pm at Kingsview Christian Centre where they sing from the Mission Praise book, have a Bible reading, a prayer and listen to a speaker for about 20 minutes and finish with a cup of tea and some eats and a time to have a chat. The group are very blessed on having a good supply of speakers from various walks of life and on many topics. They had one new member join them this year and would welcome more members to join. Just phone Clark Walls on 01463 221597 and he would be pleased to give more details.

The Inverness branch celebrated their 30th anniversary this year which coincided with national Torch's 60th anniversary. They are looking forward to their Christmas lunch which is usually held in January and they have another outing in the summer when they go out somewhere for an afternoon tea. The group used to have the use of the Sight Action minibus for transporting the members to the meetings, but they are managing to get everyone who needs a lift thanks to a few helpful volunteers.

INVERNESS CONGREGATION (JOHN FERGUSON)

If you are in Inverness during the winter, please feel free to visit the church. We have services at 11am and 6pm on Sundays and there is a Bible study and prayer time at 7.30pm on Wednesday evenings. The church runs various activities throughout the week where we seek to provide a Christian witness in our community.

In December there will be a book table available at church from the 4th December – a perfect opportunity to buy gifts for friends and family. We plan to run kids' crafts groups on two Saturday mornings, the 14th and 21st of December and there is a light Christmas lunch at noon on 21st December. Each year we have a New Year's Day service at 11am and all are welcome to join with us then too. For further information call the church office (01463 716843) or myself at the manse (01463 419027).



These are some photos from the Inverness congregation over the last few weeks: The church lunch; the Blythswood Quiz and the autumn kids craft group.



INDUCTION at STORNOWAY APC

A seven year vacancy in the Stornoway and Harris congregation was filled on Thursday 29 August at 72 Keith Street, Stornoway when Rev Jonathan Baxter was ordained and inducted to the congregation. Little did the congregation know that when the previous pastor Rev George Macaskill, gave intimation of his intended retirement, that his successor was not yet studying for the ministry. Around the same time, while studying for a degree in aeronautical engineering, Jonathan Baxter began to feel called to preach the Gospel. He trained in Edinburgh Theological Seminary for three years before applying to the Associated Presbyterian Churches for admission to their ministry, and after a year's initiation and preaching in the denomination, he was formally called to be their pastor and is now settling in well to the encouragement of all. Our prayer is that the ministry resumed in the congregation will be anointed with a 'double portion' of God's blessing (2Kings 2:9).



Rev George Macaskill (Previous minister) Rev Jonathan Baxter (New minister) Stewart Wilson (Elder) Murdo Smith (Deacon)



Rev Philip Ross giving the address at the induction of the Rev Jonathan Baxter.

VANCOUVER CONGREGATION (NORMAN VAN EEDEN PETERSMAN)

The Vancouver APC gathers for Lord's Day worship, midweek Bible Study, fellowship meals, and outreach within the urban core of Vancouver, BC, Canada. We have been encouraged to see our congregation become a church home to numerous international students and regular visitors who share with us in the ministry of God's Word. We ask you to join us in praying for the Lord to bring us a few more core families who would share with us in reaching the lost in our city. We also pray for faithfulness and boldness to serve as witnesses of light in the midst of much confusion and darkness.

FUTURE MAGAZINES

It would be great to have more features like this in future newsletters. If you have any news you would like to share please get in touch with the editor. It could be a simple bit of news about a bible study or sermon you've enjoyed, an item for prayer or news of a baptism or wedding or other church news. Photographs also appreciated. They will need to be quite large or saved at a high resolution.

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE UNITED KINGDOM TO THE EUROPEAN UNION

Lord Mackay of Clashfern

The decision that the United Kingdom should join the European Common Market was taken by Parliament with a Conservative Government. When the Labour Government of Harold Wilson came in there was a feeling that the country was not completely happy with the decision and the Prime Minister decided to hold a referendum on the issue as there were differences within the parties on the issue. The result was that we should remain.

After forty years of membership of what was now, after changes, the European Union, a serious question arose on the issue of whether the country was content to remain in the Union. The treaties now contained a provision directing progression towards the creation of a United States of Europe.

To this, many took strong objection and the Prime Minister, Mr Cameron succeeded in securing an agreement with the European Union that the United Kingdom should not be bound by this provision. This did not resolve the issue and Parliament passed an Act to seek the advice of the people by casting their votes in a referendum on whether they were in favour of leaving or remaining in the Union. A document issued by the government indicated that the result of the vote would be acted upon. The referendum resulted in a majority for leave and Mr Cameron resigned.

In a treaty passed at Lisbon which came into force in December 2009 the European Union included Article 50 which provided that a member state could leave the Union by notifying the Union that it intended to leave the Union. The European Commission was then obliged to seek an agreement with the member state setting out the arrangements for its withdrawal, taking account of the framework for its future relationship with the Union. If no agreement were reached the leaving would take place two years from the notification unless that period was extended by unanimous decision of the European Council.

After court proceedings parliament passed an Act invoking Article 50 and the government, with Mrs. May as Prime Minister, negotiated a withdrawal agreement and political declaration relating to the future relationship of the United Kingdom and the European Union. After repeated failures to persuade the House of Commons to agree Mrs May resigned and the members of the Conservative Party elected Mr Johnson who negotiated a new version. Although it was supported in principle Mr Johnson concluded that difficulties were likely to impede further stages and after some negotiation parliament agreed that a general election should be held on 12th December.

There is no doubt that the country is seriously divided in the nations that make up our United Kingdom and also between them. Sittings in both Houses of Parliament begin with prayers. Surely all who love our United Kingdom should pray earnestly that our gracious God would lead us forward. In his first letter to Timothy Paul writes, "I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority." For an example of such a prayer, when his nation was in great trouble, we find Daniel, in chapter 9, confessing his own sin and the sins of Israel's kings, princes and fathers. However, he was also looking to the Lord God, to whom belongs mercy and forgiveness, for deliverance. In my view this is an appropriate example for us at this time.



PSALM 24:9
Lift up your heads,
O gates! And lift them up,
O ancient doors,
that the King of glory
may come in.

