

“For I rejoiced greatly, when the brethren came and testified of the truth that is in thee, even as thou walkest in the truth. I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth.”

3 John 3-4

Free Church **Witness**



MAY 2012 ISSUE



How Does the Church Show Caring Love Today?

Rev Richard Brooks



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Student Group at Covenant College

DeVries, Principal of Mukhanyo Theological College in South Africa, and his family. It will be such a blessing to open our home to these new friends. We are always happy to have company and hope that more of you will consider coming to visit!

Snakes

Some of you will have already heard that our colleague Marjanne was bitten by a small cobra. We have all been left shaken by this incident but we are very, very grateful that in the Lord's mercy it was not a fatal bite as it could well have been. Marjanne's foot and leg were extremely swollen and painful and she was unable to walk. Two days later, Nelson, the College cook, was attacked by a mamba in the College kitchen. Thankfully he was wearing very heavy boots and was not bitten even though the snake struck several times! This has been a sobering reminder of the dangers which surround us here and the lack of adequate medical care in the event of an emergency. Please be praying that our team would have wisdom as we try to take the necessary precautions against snakes and keep a close eye on our little ones.

Thanksgiving

Thank the Lord with us that we were sustained in health and strength during our four months of travel; for a safe return to our home in Zambia; for our healthy, happy daughter who is such an easy baby; for the privilege of opening another academic year at the College; for a smooth start to the semester; for six new students; for the invaluable provision and assistance of short-term lecturers; for the Lord's protection over Marjanne and Nelson; for the encouragement of upcoming visitors; and for continued opportunities to forge relationships with our students and surrounding villagers.

Prayer Requests

Please continue to pray that the Lord would guard and protect us in our daily labours; for our students and staff and their families; for an adequate rainy season and an abundant harvest; for the short-term lecturers who will be joining us throughout this term; for the teaching to impact not only our students' hearts and lives but also their congregations and villages; for safety from the dangers which are common here; for health and strength for David as he copes with a very heavy workload and a multitude of responsibilities all descending upon his shoulders; for health and strength for Katie as she manages the home and cares for the children; and for the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Covenant College Zambia Trust.

How to Help

We want to thank all of the individuals and congregations who expressed a desire to support and encourage our family and the College. While we were travelling through the UK and USA last year, many of you

inquired 'How can we help?' Shortly we will send a list of some practical ways you can consider helping the work of the College. As always your prayer support is essential to the blessings the College has seen and is appreciated more than words can express. We are blessed by the reminder found in Psalm 46: 'God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear ... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge'.

In Christ's Love,

David, Katie, Elijah and Ketzia Lachman



Katie and Elijah with Friend

Letter from Zambia

Rev David Lachman

Greetings to you all from a hot, humid Eastern Province. We are delighted to be able to send this update from our home here at Covenant College at the beginning of the new semester.

Travels

Since we last sent a newsletter at the end of December, David spoke at a few more churches, we packed our bags in the States, said goodbye to our families, received Ketzia's passport a few days before our scheduled departure, and arrived in Scotland on the 26th of January. The following ten days were an absolute whirlwind. We spent several days on the Isle of Skye visiting congregations – David even had an opportunity to speak at a local primary school – before we returned to Glasgow and had a few days to finish sorting out our luggage for another international trip. The Lord blessed us with a safe journey, as we flew from Glasgow, through Amsterdam and Nairobi, and arrived in Lusaka on 8th February after an 18-hour day of travel, with two very tired small children, all our baggage accounted for, and a few shreds of sanity remaining. Our first two days were spent in Lusaka, making logistical preparations for our return to Petauke. This included purchases of household things which are not available in Eastern Province. We drove the five hours to Covenant College on Saturday 11th February and were relieved and thankful to find that our house did not have occupants of the slithery or creepy-crawly varieties!

Settling In

We only had one week before the semester began. It was an unbelievably busy one. Since our colleagues hadn't yet returned and the College had been unoccupied since the beginning of the year, there was a lot to be done. We began by hiring men from the local village to slash the grass which had become very tall (it felt like we were living in a jungle). Seeing the wall of grass beyond the kitchen window made it feel like we were camping. David was the only one around to deal with the administrative duties of the College, so he had a lot of catching up to do! It seemed like there was always someone at our gate asking for 'the Reverend'. Some prospective students came during the week to apply, and David conducted interviews and checked their application letters. It is amazing how many other things came up that needed attention – install the new washing machine, turn the gas and water back on after our four-month absence, clean the cupboards, unpack, order furniture for our (virtually empty) house, repair the internet, and so on! We welcomed back our colleague Marjanne on the 16th of February, so now it does not seem so lonely.

College News

On 21st February, Covenant College opened for the first semester of the 2012 academic year. We received six new students this semester which brings our total student body

back up to 30. The student body is almost evenly divided into certificate and diploma streams. The certificate stream provides less advanced classes and a lighter study load for the benefit of our students who did not graduate from secondary school and who do not normally have very good English. Our diploma students have benefited from a better education and are able to cope with a more intensive course of study.

Lecturing

During this term, David is teaching one class (Worship) to all the students and facilitating another (Practice Preaching) for the certificate students. He is currently the only full-time lecturer here at the College. The other courses which will be taught to our diploma students are African Church History, Old Testament, Biblical Worldview, and Apologetics. Our certificate students will be studying Systematic Theology and Homiletics. We are so thankful that in the Lord's providence these courses are taught by a combination of our part-time local Zambian lecturers and visiting lecturers (from Zambia, South Africa, Scotland, and Malawi) who will be sent by other churches to fill in the gaps. At the time of writing our guest lecturer, here at the College for three weeks, is Rev Charles Zulu, a Zambian who is the minister of a South African Reformed congregation and also a College Trustee. Mr Zulu has applied for the position of full-time lecturer and his application will be considered at the annual meeting of the Covenant College Trust at the end of March.

Our Family

Katie sometimes finds herself outnumbered with the two little ones, especially when they practise their 'synchronized screaming'. She is thankful to have hired help in the house six mornings each week. Elijah is up with the sun every morning at 5:30 am, and growing by leaps and bounds – literally! He has no fear and no sense of his own mortality, so we have to keep a close eye on his escapades. We can tell that he is delighted to be back in his home, back to the dirt and the sunshine. The Lord has been good to our family and blessed us with new friends, and Elijah now has two little playmates (Asher and Nathan) who are our next-door neighbours. The boys play very happily together. Ketzia is also growing like a weed. She is a strong, active, happy and contented little girl, and an excellent sleeper too, for which we are immensely thankful. Katie and David are hoping to begin Nyanja language lessons once a week.

Upcoming Plans

We are furnishing our two guest rooms and are looking forward to hosting a number of people! Rev John Macleod (Retired, Tomatin) and his wife Mary will be joining us for nearly a month, arriving mid-March. Mr Macleod will be lecturing here at the College for a few weeks. During the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the College Trust at the end of March (29th-31st), we will also be hosting Dr Brian

The Christian Home

It used to be quite common for people to have a plaque hanging on their wall saying, 'Christ is the Head of this Home'. It sounded very good, but in many of these homes, one fears that Christ was not the Head. It is not what we say that matters but what we do. Let us beware of hypocrisy. Christ is the great King and one day every knee shall bow to Him. It is best to acknowledge Him now rather than be forced as rebels to bow on the Judgment Day. 'Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little' (Ps.2:12). God gave us His Bible to be the guide as to how we should live and we find there all the directions we need for a Christian home. Remember the Shorter Catechism. 'What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever'. What rule has God given us? 'The Word of God, which is contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, is the only rule to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him' (Cat. 1 and 2). 'If ye love me, keep my commandments' (Jn.14:15).

The Law of God

Some people think the commandments were only for the Old Testament. We, they say, are under grace or a new covenant. Yes, in one sense that is true. We are not under the Covenant of Works. That covenant was broken and there is no way that we can now keep it. It condemns us. We do not earn salvation by works. We are saved by grace through faith. Yet, having been saved by grace, the moral law is the standard for our lives. Spoken by God Himself from heaven, written in stone by the finger of God, it is an expression of God's character and God does not change. It was there in the Garden of Eden and will be there forever. Jesus said: 'Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled' (Mt.5:17-18). The Ten Commandments are still binding. They summarise God's law but the whole Bible is to be our guide.

Prayer

God has given us a great privilege in that we can come to Him as our Father in heaven and address our prayers to Him. Pray for all your needs. Also pray for guidance. At times, pray on your own in secret. Jesus said: 'When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly' (Mt.6:6). Pray in secret and you will be rewarded openly. But also pray with your wife or husband. There is an old and true saying, 'Families that pray together stay together'. Whatever the crisis or trouble in which you find yourself come to God in prayer. In the marriage service couples seek God's blessing, but it is not just once you are to do that. Seek it every day. 'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth;

and to him that knocketh it shall be opened' (Mt.7:7-8).

Family worship

When we study the Old Testament we see families worshipping God. To begin with there was no organised church. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob worshipped as families. When Israel began as the Old Testament church, though they had the tabernacle and later the temple, there was still much religion to be practised in the family. For example, the Passover was eaten by the whole family behind closed doors. Children were to ask, 'What mean ye by this service?' (Ex.12:26) and fathers were to instruct their children. There were other feasts and festivals in which the family shared too. As well as secret prayer, be sure to pray as a family and to read the Scriptures together. If you can sing praise to God, do so. In the home in which I grew up, morning and evening, from childhood we had family worship. That used to be the practice in many homes. I practised it in turn with my own family. Our children learned the Scriptures as we worshipped together. They also learned to sing the Psalms. Many times we have read through the whole Bible. What a blessing! Pray together and sing Psalms to God. If we had guests or even just neighbours in the home we still had family worship. It was a good witness and showed what was vitally important to us as a family. This is an excellent Puritan and Highland tradition.

Quarrels

Where people are, there will occasionally be disagreements. Even in the most loving homes and between devoted husbands and wives, sometimes there will be quarrels. We are all sinners and make mistakes. Paul lays a duty on us, 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord' (Rom.12:18-19). We are to strive for peace. We must not be sulky or seek revenge. 'Let not the sun go down upon your wrath' (Eph.4:26). Before nightfall make peace. This is vitally important in a marriage and will guarantee no lasting resentment. Come to God with your quarrels and seek peace. When you pray together to God about an argument you have, it tends to disappear under the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

Work

Work is a good thing and is an institution of God like the Sabbath rest. We are meant to work. It can sometimes be hard to obtain a job, yet all have a duty to try. Even if we cannot get paid employment we should still work and employ ourselves in helping others. Paul instructs us to seek work: 'For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread' (2Thes.3:10-12). There were

some who thought the end of the world was about to happen and had wrongly given up their jobs. 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might' (Eccles.9:10). It is good to be busy, but not so busy as to find no time for our soul or other duties. We should have a concern for others. 'Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth' (Eph.4:28). Some despise the idea of making money but the Scriptures commend it as a way to help others.

Living within our means

It is not good to get into debt if at all possible. Be careful with money as it is a bad witness to live beyond our means. Jesus tells various parables about debtors. They warn us of the evil of getting into debt. It is a real danger. In a sense those in debt who do not repay their debts are living off other people's money and in fact are stealing. Jesus warned us to carefully plan any outlay to be sure that we can meet it: 'For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish' (Luke 14:28-30). 'Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law' (Rom. 13:8). Money is at the root of many problems in marriages.

Tidiness

There was an old English saying 'Cleanliness is next to godliness'. There is a grain of truth in this. While we must not be house-proud, yet it is important to keep our house clean and tidy. It is a good witness. Let us show that conversion makes a great difference. The world has often noticed how conversion has affected even the appearance of a home. Laziness is sinful: 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man' (Prov.6:6-11).

Hospitality

Hospitality is pleasing to God. We should be friendly and have an open home. We ought always to be ready to welcome especially the Lord's people. 'Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares' (Heb.13:1-2).

Elderly

One of the sadder things that has happened in our Western society has been the decreasing care for older members of the family. Children happily put their old parents into homes when it would be possible for them to look after them in their own homes. This is sad, but especially so if the people concerned profess to be Christians. 'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (1Tim.5:8). Our duty to care for the old and the disabled is not optional but laid upon us by the Lord.

Helping others

Jesus said 'For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good' (Mk.14:7). They are a constant responsibility to us. James warns, 'If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?' (2:15-16) When Paul was sent out as a missionary he was reminded to care for the poor: 'Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do' (Gal.2:10). Tithing is an important duty and it means that the church will have money to help the needy. Through Malachi God says: 'Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it' (Mal.3:8-10). We all have a duty to look out for the poor and needy and to seek to help them. The role of the deacon is to care for the poor.

'But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel' (1Tim.5:8). Our duty to care for the old and the disabled is not optional but laid upon us by the Lord.



soldier received a free pardon; 'So', said Robbie, 'he got his life, and I lost my legacy, for a testament is not of force while the testator lives. He must die to give effect to his will. And', said Robbie, 'our great Testator is dead, we know that He died, they nailed Him to the cross; therefore His will stands good, let us go and take the legacy bequeathed to us. But', added Robbie, 'that story is not enough to set forth Christ's death for us'. Some time after, another friend left me a legacy, and he did die. There were some lawyers who got hold of the money, and Robbie never received a penny of the legacy. He said, 'If my friend had been alive, I should have got it; that is to say, if he could have died, and then afterwards have been alive again, he would have seen that I received the legacy'.

So, the first time I lost my legacy because the friend who left it to me did not die, and the second time I lost it because the friend who left it to me did die, and did not rise again. 'But', said he, 'see the glorious safety of the believer's legacy from his Lord. He who died and so made the will of effect, has risen again, and He will see that no lawyer, honest or dishonest, shall ever interfere with the legacies that He left to His people. Not even the devil himself shall prevent the heirs of everlasting life from obtaining the heritage which Christ has left them in the new covenant which He has sealed with His blood'.



C H Spurgeon

The Messenger, Sept/Oct 2011

Congregational Remittances - March 2012

	2012 Mar	2012 Total	2011 Total to Mar
Presbytery of Inverness			
Aberdeen	3,268	5,068	4,674
Duthil-Dores	3,123	5,279	7,428
Inverness	2,000	6,000	6,000
Kilmorack & Strathglass	2,110	4,110	5,750
Total Inverness	10,501	20,457	23,853
Northern Presbytery			
Assynt & Scourie	631	631	700
Brora	1,936	4,336	5,644
Kiltearn	907	1,907	3,000
Tarbat	2,940	4,940	2,784
Total Northern	6,414	11,814	12,128
Southern Presbytery			
Arran	1,272	2,486	2,554
Ayr	1,515	2,730	959
Dumfries	0	0	0
Edinburgh	5,126	7,626	12,255
Glasgow - Partick	6,302	10,302	12,084
Glasgow - Shettleston	5,018	7,118	8,225
Glasgow - Knightswood	5,754	7,254	8,874
Rothsay	130	130	0
Total Southern	25,118	37,647	44,951

Outer Hebrides Presbytery			
Cross	0	3,773	6,172
Harris - Leverburgh	2,496	4,846	5,044
Harris - Scalpay	4,132	7,732	7,748
Knock & Point	1,273	3,573	4,990
North Uist	1,219	3,219	4,501
Stornoway	4,000	16,617	20,959
Total Outer Hebrides	13,120	39,760	49,414
Presbytery of Skye & Lochcarron			
Bracadale	2,361	4,361	3,112
Duirinish (Waternish)	500	1,500	1,215
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	2,339	4,939	2,600
Lochalsh	995	2,643	2,679
Poolewe & Aultbea	1,901	3,301	3,513
Ullapool	51	51	48
Portree	4,541	7,341	3,600
Snizort	4,088	6,488	6,687
Strath	320	920	148
Total Skye	17,095	31,544	23,602
Total Congregations	72,248	141,222	153,947
Other Donations	3,404	12,199	10,441
Legacy	0	0	0
TOTAL	75,651	153,420	164,388
Including Gift Aid	45,171	45,171	46,890

Obituary

Rev Roderick Macleod

Rev Roderick Macleod passed away to be with the Lord on 31st January 2012.

Roderick Macleod was born into a crofting family in Ardersier in 1929. He left school at the age of 14 and began work as a chain boy on the construction of a dam in the Highlands. He enlisted as a Police Cadet in the City of Inverness Police. He was called up for National Service in 1947 and was discharged from the army as a Lance Corporal with an exemplary disciplinary record.

He returned to the Police service as a Mounted Police Officer with the City of Edinburgh Police. It was during this time of his life that he was converted to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. While serving as a police officer in Stornoway he met Miss Etta Morrison who was the district nurse in Point, Lewis. They were married in 1960. For a number of years he had felt a call to the Christian ministry. While under the ministry of the Rev Kenneth MacRae of Stornoway Free Church he applied for admission as a candidate for the ministry and subsequently studied in the Free Church College in Edinburgh.

On completion of his studies he was inducted to the charge of Knockbain in 1966. He was called to the charge of Dundee (initially in the Wellgate, but subsequently located at St Peter's) in 1972. He retired from Dundee in 1991. He had an active retirement and was regularly invited to officiate at Communion Seasons and also provided supply in various congregations.

During his retirement days he and his wife lived in Inverness and, as long as Mr Macleod was physically fit, they worshipped in the Inverness congregation of the Free Church (Continuing). Roderick Macleod was a lover of Reformed theology and was enthusiastic for the heart-religion which for so long had been the hallmark of the best Highland preaching.



Although after a serious stroke he was confined to his own home, he was lively in his soul and loved to speak to his house-visitors of Christ and of His glorious redemption. Into this glory his soul has now entered, and our loss is sweetened by our assurance of his gain.

Our sympathies are extended especially to his beloved widow who nursed him with exemplary attention in the last days of his life; and also to his three sons, Ian, David and Rory, and their families.

'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain'.

Rev Maurice Roberts

Christ's Death and Resurrection

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834-1892) preached a sermon at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, on 5th April, 1888, in which he referred to Robert Flockhart (1778-1857) who was converted while serving as a soldier in India. Flockhart, who returned to Scotland and became a fearless street preacher, once told two stories to illustrate the truth of the words: 'For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of

force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth' (Heb.9:16-17).

I had a friend in the army, and he committed some offence in war-time for which he was condemned to be shot. So he said, 'Robbie, I have to die tomorrow, and as I have a little money, I have made my will, and left it to you'. 'Thank you', I said. The next morning, instead of being taken out to be shot, the

Therapeutic Praise

Rev David Murray (Grand Rapids)

Despite hundreds of new Christian songs, of every possible genre, being composed every year, the ancient Psalms are experiencing somewhat of a revival in various places. Why?

I believe a great reason is their therapeutic value; in a day of so many disordered emotions, worshippers are discovering how the Psalms minister so powerfully to their emotional lives.

The Psalms balance divine revelation and human emotion

Some Christian songs are emotionally stirring, but have little theological content; the heart is engaged, but not the mind. Over-reacting to this, some have composed songs that are full of theological facts, but don't engage the worshipper's feelings. They are more like sung sermons. The Psalms strike an inspired balance of doxological theology and theological doxology; they combine the objective with the subjective in perfect proportions. Time and again we read, 'Praise the Lord for...' followed by reasons and motivations for this praise. God is declared and described, but always to stir up our hearts and interact with Him through His self-revelation.

The Psalms express the full range of human emotions

The Psalms contain an incomparably rich mixture of extreme and varied emotions: grief and joy, doubt and confidence, loneliness and fellowship, despair and hope, fear and courage, defeat and victory, complaint and praise, etc. Is it any wonder that Calvin called the Psalms 'an anatomy of all parts of the soul?' As he explained: 'There is not an emotion of which anyone can be conscious that is not here represented as in a mirror. Or rather, the Holy Spirit has here drawn to life all the griefs, sorrows, fears, doubts, hopes, cares, perplexities, in short, all the distracting emotions with which the minds of men are wont to be agitated'.

The Psalms paint a realistic portrayal of Christian emotions

The Psalms do not portray the Christian life as victory upon victory. Derek Thomas has pointed out that because a lot of contemporary worship is upbeat and positive, and therefore at odds with what Christians experience in the rest of their week, it sometimes produces a disconnect that eventually leads to cynicism and a loss of assurance. But when we turn to the Psalms, we find bold and bald honesty. Although the strong expressions of stark reality can initially jar our refined ears, we are soon relieved to find kindred spirits who helpfully express what we often think, feel, and experience in our messy daily lives.

The Psalms open a welcome outlet for our painful emotions

Have you ever sung about assurance while being full of doubt? Have you ever sung about joy when feeling depressed? Me

too. And it's horrible isn't it. Why can't

I sing what I really feel? With the Psalms you can! Some allow us to express doubt and even despair (e.g. Ps.88); others help us describe our struggles with providence (e.g. Ps.73); still others guide us in explaining our battles with depression (e.g. Ps.42). The Psalms open the pressure valve of our hearts and direct us how to articulate our most painful emotions. We don't need to bottle them up or deny them. Instead God has inspired songs to admit them and let them out. As someone said: 'What a relief! I can sing what's really on my mind and heart, and God provides me with words to rightly express these emotions. The Psalms reach in to find these emotions and then reach upwards to God with them'.

The Psalms call for the transformation of our emotions

The Psalms not only permit us to 'vent' our emotions, but also call for their transformation. We are not left to wallow in our feelings, but are shown how to move from fear to courage, from sorrow to joy, from anger to peace, and from despair to hope. The painful starting point is legitimate; but it's only a starting point. The end-point of emotional healing must be kept in view, and moved towards with the help of the Psalmist's guiding hand.

The Psalms summon us to sympathetic emotion

As a rebellious teenager, I often sat in my Psalm-singing church wondering why I was singing words that had no relevance to me whatsoever. Why sing about sorrow, when I was perfectly happy? Or, some Sundays, why sing about joy when I felt so depressed about my life? Well of course, such is the mindset of a self-centered teenager. But when God saves us, we begin to look a little beyond ourselves and to realize that while I may not feel these things, others certainly do. The Psalms call me to weep with those who weep, and to rejoice with those who rejoice, no matter if I feel exactly the opposite. They remind me of the emotional diversity of the body of Christ and invite me to share in the sufferings and successes of others. They turn me inside out.

The Psalms supply an emotional stimulus to righteous living

I've been trying to emphasise the emotional engagement and stimulus of the Psalms. However, ultimately, the Psalms use the emotional energy they generate to stimulate practical obedience. Notice how many 'wisdom' Psalms are interspersed throughout the Psalter, setting forth the path of obedience for the stirred up and energised worshipper. Emotional transformation must result in life transformation.

Originally published in January 2012 issue of [Tabletalk](#).



A Personal Summary of the Reformed Faith

Benjamin B. Warfield (1851-1921)

Professor in Systematic Theology in Princeton Theological Seminary

1. I believe that my one aim in life and death should be to glorify God and enjoy Him forever; and that God teaches me how to glorify and enjoy Him in His holy Word, that is, the Bible, which He has given by the infallible inspiration of His Holy Spirit in order that I may certainly know what I am to believe concerning Him and what duty He requires of me.

2. I believe that God is a Spirit, infinite, eternal, and incomparable in all that He is; one God but three persons, the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost, my Creator, my Redeemer, and my Sanctifier; in whose power and wisdom, righteousness, goodness, and truth I may safely put my trust.

3. I believe that the heavens and the earth, and all that in them is, are the work of God's hands; and that all He has made He directs and governs in all their actions; so that they fulfil the end for which they were created, and I who trust in Him shall not be put to shame but may rest securely in the protection of His almighty love.

4. I believe that God created man after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, and entered into a covenant of life with him upon the sole condition of the obedience that was His due, so that it was by wilfully sinning against God that man fell into the sin and misery in which I have been born.

5. I believe, that, being fallen in Adam, my first father, I am by nature a child of wrath, under the condemnation of God and corrupted in body and soul, prone to evil, and liable to eternal death; from which dreadful state I cannot be delivered save through the unmerited grace of God my Saviour.

6. I believe that God has not left the world to perish in its sin, but out of the great love wherewith He has loved it, has from all eternity graciously chosen unto Himself a multitude which no man can number, to deliver them out of their sin and misery, and of them to build up again in the world His kingdom of righteousness; in which [kingdom] I may be assured I have my part, if I hold fast to Christ the Lord.

7. I believe that God has redeemed His people unto Himself through Jesus Christ our Lord; who, though He was and ever continues to be the eternal Son of God, yet was born of a woman, born under the law that He might redeem them that are under the law. I believe that He bore the penalty due to my sins in His own body on the tree, and fulfilled in His own person the obedience I owe to the righteousness of God, and

now presents me to His Father as His purchased possession, to the praise of the glory of His grace forever; wherefore renouncing all merit of my own, I put all my trust only in the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ my Redeemer.

8. I believe that Jesus Christ my Redeemer, who died for my offences, was raised again for my justification, and ascended into the heavens, where He sits at the right hand of the Father Almighty, continually making intercession for His people, and governing the whole world as head over all things for His church: so that I need fear no evil and may surely know that nothing can snatch me out of His hands and nothing can separate me from His love.

9. I believe that the redemption wrought by the Lord Jesus Christ is effectually applied to all His people by the Holy Spirit, who works faith in me and thereby unites me to Christ, renews me in the whole man after the image of God, and enables me more and more to die unto sin and to live unto righteousness; until, this gracious work having been completed in me, I shall be received into glory; in which great hope abiding, I must ever strive to perfect holiness in the fear of God.

10. I believe that God requires of me, under the gospel, first of all, that, out of a true sense of my sin and misery and apprehension of His mercy in Christ, I should turn with grief and hatred away from sin and receive and rest upon Jesus Christ alone for salvation; that, so being united to Him, I may receive pardon for my sins and be accepted as righteous in God's sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to me and received by faith alone; and thus only do I believe I may be received into the number and have a right to all the privileges of the sons of God.

11. I believe that, having been pardoned and accepted for Christ's sake, it is further required of me that I walk in the Spirit whom He has purchased for me, and by whom love is shed abroad in my heart; fulfilling the obedience I owe to Christ my King; faithfully performing all the duties laid upon me by the holy law of God my heavenly Father; and ever reflecting in my life and conduct, the perfect example that has been set me by Christ Jesus my Leader, who died for me and granted to me His Holy Spirit so that I may do the good works which God has afore prepared that I should walk in them.

12. I believe that God has established His church in the world and endowed it with the ministry of the Word and the holy ordinances of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and prayer; in order that through these means, the riches of His grace in the gospel may be made known to the world, and, by the blessing of Christ

spiritual problems, contrary to Scriptural teaching that materialism is symptom, not cause. Hope is found in ecocentric lifestyles, self-servingly presented as sacrificial: 'How could I become more like Jesus – more meek, humble, compassionate, thankful, forgiving, and loving? Clearly, I needed to scale back my lifestyle'. The end result is that carbon-sensitive behaviours, geography and nature become critical for a proper relationship to God. Though sounding noble and humble to serve and sacrifice for the planet, is this not precisely the bondage Paul warned against in Colossians 2:18-23, where narcissistic austerity replaces a sincere love for God displayed in obedience to His commandments, which, unlike Sleeth's, 'are not grievous' (1Jn.5:3)?

Sleeth's 'gospel' invites a tumble into errors characterizing the unbelieving Jews of Jesus' day: having a zeal for righteousness, they sought it not by faith but by law keeping, and so did not get it, because no works of the law can justify us — but the believing Gentiles, not seeking righteousness by the law but by faith, found it (Rom.3:20; 9:30–10:4).

There is a genuine spiritual danger that in replacing the emphasis on Christ we find to our dismay that the 'gospel according to the Earth' leads humans to worship or serve the creation, instead of the Creator.

Dr James Wanliss, (Greenville, Associate Professor of Physics at Presbyterian College, Clinton, SC)

The Select Practical Writings of John Knox

Banner of Truth Trust
hbk, 295pp, £16

The publishers describe this as 'a rare and precious book'. God raised up some giants in those days, and John Knox (1514?-1572) was certainly one of them. It can fairly be said that Knox wrote chiefly to warn and to comfort, at a time when both warning and comfort were needed (and they still are). An introduction to Knox and his writings and a timeline of his life open the book.

First off is a *Treatise on Prayer*. This includes a delightful description of what prayer is: 'an earnest and familiar talking with God, to whom we declare our miseries, whose support and help we implore and desire in our adversities, and whom we laud and praise for our benefits received'. Without listing them all, further items include an exposition of Psalm 6 (*A Fort for the Afflicted*); letters to 'the faithful in England' and 'his brethren in Scotland'; *A Most Wholesome Counsel, Touching God's Holy Word*; a *Sermon on Christ's Temptation in the Wilderness*; and a sermon on verses from Isaiah 26, as a result of which he was forbidden to preach for a season. The volume concludes with fifteen pastoral letters, twelve of them to his mother-in-law.

The work has been re-typeset, and a considerable number of footnotes have been supplied to explain the meaning of unusual or obsolete words. I felt throughout that I was handling important material, but I did find that some (though not all) of it made for rather laborious reading. This may restrict its readership, but it is timely that these writings of Knox are available again.

Richard Brooks

Summer Conference

The young people in Glasgow have arranged a conference for all ages to be held on the 9th of June 2012 in
Partick Free Church (Continuing),
29 Crow Road, Partick, G11 7RT.

The speaker DV will be the Rev Donald Macaskill, APC, Dundee. The first address will be at 11am, lunch at 12.30pm, and the second address at 1.30pm, finishing by 3.00pm.

All Welcome!

Gospel Basics: Trusting, Following, and Winning Christ

Andrew A. Bonar
Banner of Truth Trust
pbk, 184pp, £6.50

This reprinted edition of Andrew Bonar's spiritual classic *Gospel Truths*, now re-titled *Gospel Basics*, is still a useful book for the 21st century reader.

As the title indicates, the subjects dealt with are the basic truths of the Gospel. The chapters are short and concise and could well be used as a part of daily devotions. Therefore this book may be particularly useful to those seeking Christ or to those who are young in their faith. Topics dealt with include heaven, hell and judgment, coming to Christ, the Holy Spirit and assurance. The emphasis in these discussions is personal and practical, as Bonar himself comments: 'Doctrine must be turned into experience ... we speak much of Christianity and Christians; but union to Christ by faith is the root of all'.

This book deals with the central issues in conversion and the Christian life and guides the reader to a greater understanding of God, and the central truths of the Gospel, and particularly how the individual personally relates to these things. Bonar challenges: 'Never rest till the Holy Ghost has in your eye so glorified Christ who drank the cup, that you see in Him your salvation and God's glory secured beyond controversy, beyond even Satan's power to question or assail'.

I would recommend this book for addressing the entitled topic. However, the subjects dealt with in the last six chapters are not so focussed towards the stated theme of the book. These chapters cover interesting practical themes, but seem to be disjointed from the main focus of the rest of the book. Some subjects covered appear rather randomly selected: an exposition of the cloak left at Troas, the consumption of alcohol, tithing and fasting. They are not fundamental truths, so to retain the focus of 'Gospel Basics' it might have been better to exclude this material from this particular publication altogether.

Overall, this is a useful book which explains the Gospel for needy souls, in a clear and accessible style. Well-read believers may not discover much that is new in this publication, but the reminder of the central truth of the Gospel should be beneficial for all.

Esther Macleod (Inverness)



Books

The Gospel According to the Earth: Why the Good Book Is a Green Book

Matthew Sleeth
HarperCollins
hbk, 209pp, \$22.99

Matthew Sleeth's *The Gospel According to the Earth* teems with practical advice tethering spiritual profit with green ethics, offering religious insights skilfully woven with intimate stories.

Filled with voluminous, therefore occasionally overwhelming, planet-saving tips, the tone encourages positive behaviour changes, rather than bouts of guilt. Perhaps because of his perfect bedside manner and hundreds of yearly lectures at churches, Dr. Sleeth's message is significantly impacting evangelicals.

We are grateful for Sleeth's recognition that, alone among the creatures, humans are created in God's image; Christians should excel at hospitality; we should not make idols of material things; the prosperity gospel is a counterfeit; technology is not 'inherently evil', and we should observe the Sabbath. Hugely to his credit, Sleeth makes extensive Scriptural references.

Yet defence of vital truths compels one to address faults. We must pay careful attention to the gospel of God's Word, that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose again (1 Corinthians 15:1-4), and calls us to repent of our sin (including the self-righteous sin of thinking we can save ourselves by works) and trust in Christ, on His terms. Sleeth's 'gospel' uses, but distorts, precious Biblical language, asking and answering the question, 'How would Jesus save the earth?' teaching that it will be through *our* sacrificial actions. 'I believe', Sleeth writes, 'that humanity stands at a great crossroads. We hold the fate of God's creation in our hands'.

We must live less affluent lives, Sleeth argues, for 'simplicity as a way of life brings

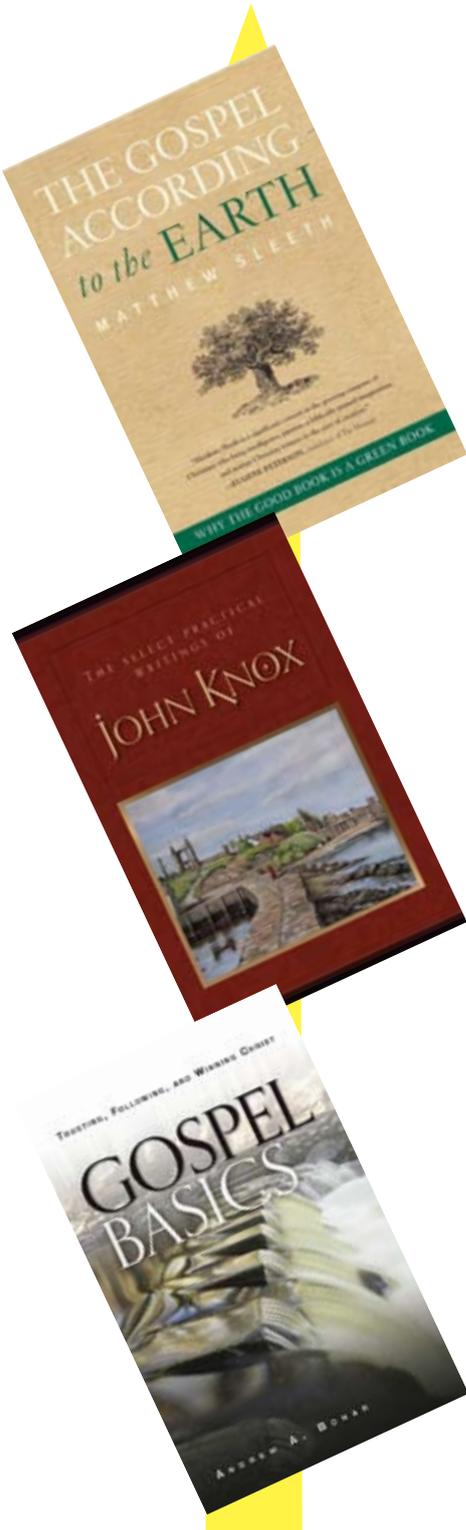
us closer to God. It is a means of receiving God's grace as He transforms us. Simplicity helps us disconnect from the worldly concerns that destroy God's creation and, instead, engage in redemptive actions that heal.... If simplicity brings us closer to God; consumerism draws us to the devil'.

God's main concern, Sleeth contends, is to save the planet ... from us. He claims that human actions, like consuming 'meat, food out of season, and food from exotic places has a detrimental impact on the health of ourselves and the planet'. He does not say, so much as imply, that these behaviours are sinful, thus encouraging a sub-Scriptural view of sin and mankind. It does not occur to him that the definitions of 'sins' he invents may come from poor science, economics, and Scripture twisting.

Downsizing does not answer gluttony or avarice, yet Sleeth says 'the less we fill our homes with material things, the more contented and spirit-filled our lives will become'. Godly Abraham and Job were wealthy, Lazarus was a beggar, yet the Bible exalts them all, like glittering jewels, for our consideration.

Portraying downsizing as virtue is as mistaken as portraying wealth as virtue, neither being virtuous nor vicious. Laziness leading to poverty is sinful (violating the Fourth Commandment's requirement to work six days a week), and theft leading to wealth is sinful (violating the Eighth Commandment), but neither poverty nor wealth is sinful, Paul advising contentment in either (Phil.4:11-12). There is something abortive with a 'gospel' that misunderstands sin and misinterprets God's law, leading to conclusions defining as sin what Scripture defines as God's blessing—like wealth from diligent labour (Prov.10:4; Deut.28:8), or large families (Ps.127:3-5; 128:3-4).

Sleeth's green 'gospel' masquerades in Christian language, distracting attention from the real crisis of sin and separation from God, towards imagining '[t]he world is dying'. Materialism, he teaches, births



and the working of His Spirit in them that by faith receive them, the benefits of redemption may be communicated to His people; wherefore also it is required of me that I attend on these means of grace with diligence, preparation, and prayer, so that through them I may be instructed and strengthened in faith, and in holiness of life and in love; and that I use my best endeavours to carry this gospel and convey these means of grace to the whole world.

13. I believe that as Jesus Christ has once come in grace, so also is He to come a second time in glory, to judge the world in righteousness and assign to each His eternal reward. I believe that if I die in Christ, my soul shall be at death made perfect in holiness and go home to the Lord; and when He

shall return in His majesty, I shall be raised in glory and made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Encouraged by this blessed hope, it is required of me willingly to take my part in suffering hardship here as a good soldier of Christ Jesus, being assured that if I die with Him, I shall also live with Him; if I endure, I shall also reign with Him.

*And to Him, my Redeemer,
with the Father,
and the Holy Spirit,
Three Persons, one God,
be glory forever, world without end,
Amen and Amen.*



How does the church show caring love today?

Rev Richard Brooks (Minister, The Dales Evangelical Church, Matlock, Derbyshire)

The essence of an address given at the School in Theology in 2011

How indeed? The short (though true) answer is this: in the same way that it has always done. And what is that? According to the Scriptures. In the precise manner laid down in the Word of God. But we need to say more. Our brief is to answer the question of our title from

Romans 12-16, majoring upon the mutual love of the brethren, but addressing also the overflow of Christian love to those who do not belong to the church of Christ. In the interests of article space, I would invite readers to have their Bibles to hand, in order to look up the references as we go along.

Caring love should always be a badge, a mark, an adornment of every Christian and every church. This is no optional extra. We are at the heart of Christian life and testimony. This is a holy exercise.

I The doctrinal foundation of showing caring love

This is given to us in Romans 12:1-2: 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God'. The apostle's choice of verb ('I beseech you, appeal to you, exhort you, urge you') carries a mixture of both apostolic authority and apostolic passion. Here is a man ablaze *with* Christ and ablaze *for* Christ. Four things strike us from his words:

1 The mercies of God. The previous chapters of Romans have dwelt much upon the divine mercies (the word here is in the plural). They constitute one of the strongest motives to us to live to God's glory. So what Paul says is this: as you live as converted people, sinners saved by grace – as you work out your Christian faith in both general and detailed practice day by day – as you function as congregations of God's whole church, always keep God's mercies in view. Reflect continually upon how God has dealt with you, and deal with one another and others accordingly.

2 Living sacrifices. This is what our bodies (standing here for our whole beings) are to be, because all we are and have belongs to God. We are not to be half-hearted, two-timing or insincere. Christ lives in us and we live in him.

3 Our 'spiritual worship' or 'reasonable service'. The call is to wholehearted devotion to the Lord. Anything less would be totally inadequate and (worse still) dishonouring and disobedient to God, and falling far short of how we should be, live and love as Christians.

4 Transformed minds. How important our minds are as Christians! They are totally renewed and increasingly transformed by the Holy Spirit, and so captive to the Word of God. An inward change has taken place which issues in outward action.

2 The practical expression of showing caring love

Here is a series of concrete examples in their order of appearance in our Romans chapters.

1 A sober view of self. With this attitude and outcome: always being ready to take the lower place. 12:3 is the key verse here: 'For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith'. This ties in absolutely with Christ's own teaching in passages such as Mark 10:44f and John 13:16. High-mindedness, thinking well of ourselves, promoting our own interests, conceit, jealousy, walking over all others in order to draw attention or praise to ourselves, is the very opposite of what befits a Christian as a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let there be, in the church of Christ, no seeking of the personal pre-eminence, but a readiness and willingness to be the servants of all.

2 Mutual prayerfulness. The appeals of 12:12: 'continuing instant

in prayer', and 15:30: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me', ring out loud and clear. The call is to persistence in prayer – not only for ourselves but for one another as brothers and sisters in the body of Christ. We shall never love one another as we ought if we neglect prayer for one another. And put it this way as well: if we pray for one another, how can we not love one another? It will be all the more difficult to fall out with, despise, or wish or do ill to one another, when we have got up from our knees having prayed for one another. Mutual prayerfulness is a valuable guard for Christian love.

3 Meeting temporal necessities. We must not miss 12:13a: 'Distributing to the necessity of saints' – a relief ministry, so that there are not those in the fellowship who are in great need and so experiencing distress when we have it in our means to help them. Such a ministry (whether it shows itself in cash, kind or 'helps') will not be done condescendingly or patronisingly, nor to put someone in debt or obligation to us, but solely to the glory of God. The (genuinely) poorer saints are the special care of the church. The particular Christian virtue on display here is generosity – highly appropriate in those who have received and do receive all that we have from our exceedingly generous God.

4 Practising hospitality. This occurs in 12:13b: 'given to hospitality', and is something to which we are to be 'given', something which we are to set about and to look for opportunities eagerly. It is a matter of obedience to God. But it need not involve great labour and expense, especially on the Lord's Day, a day which should not revolve around the kitchen. Let it be simple, genuine and unhurried; and let it involve that Malachi 3:16 sort of fellowship, where we speak together of the things of the Lord and join together for family worship. How important are our Christian homes!

5 Mutual rejoicing and weeping. 12:15 is a famous verse in this connection: 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep'. What is envisaged here is a genuine entering into each other's joys and sorrows, with no ulterior motive and no unwarranted intruding into *one another's* business which is none of *our* business. Caring love will never stand aloof from or be unobservant of our brothers' and sisters' joys and sorrows. And of absolute importance in this regard is the strict keeping of confidences.

6 Our attitude to the weak. Here 14:1: 'Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations', and 15:1: 'We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves', are the key texts. How are we to treat the 'weaker brethren' (however their weakness manifests itself)? We are to welcome/receive/accept them – not cut them off, look down on them or be dubious about them, but include them, be warm towards them, take time and trouble with them, bear with them, and seek to do them good. They are to be welcome in the fellowship and welcome in our hearts. We are not to quarrel with them, or forever be bringing up and arguing about the things we see differently. Intense mutual patience is required, something which is a ripe fruit of the Holy Spirit and not that which grows naturally in the garden of our heart.

7 Not being stumbling blocks. Observe 14:13: 'Let us not therefore judge one another any more: but judge this rather,

Sri Lanka Mission Report

Rev Shanmugam Partheepan



Dear Friends,

I greet you in the name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ! We are very thankful that God has showed His mercy and grace to us in Sri Lanka during these last months. By the grace of God my wedding went well and it was a very blessed occasion to us. I am sure many of you will have heard about it through the *Witness* magazine. I am really appreciative and thankful for your faithful prayers. May the Lord bless you all.

My Family

My wife, Dinogee, and I are very thankful that the Lord has called us to serve in the land of Sri Lanka (SL). We struggled to have a clear view of what God's plan was for us in our future ministry in SL. By the grace of God we are ready to move to Vavuniya (North Central) as soon as possible. God gave us a wonderful time to study the Word together. We are studying *Aspects of Holiness* by J C Ryle (Tamil). It is very good. I am studying Spurgeon's *Lectures to my Students*. There are very heart-moving thoughts from Spurgeon. In our family devotions from the Psalms, we have received very personal, divine encouragements. We have many good Tamil translations of Reformed books in SL and I am sure these books will be of good use in helping us to grow in the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's Ministry

After my wedding we moved to Jaffna (very north of SL) and stayed in my sister's house. They showed great generosity to us. We worshipped with Trinity RP Church in Jaffna. A very young pastoral trainee looks after the church; he is a very good preacher and a good pastor as well. I am encouraging him to start a Youth Fellowship once a month, and promised to help him until I leave Jaffna.

I have been invited to one of the Baptist churches to preach. It is Bible-believing, and they are very thirsty for Reformed teaching. I have been there twice, and each time I could see their willingness to learn sound, biblical teaching. I would like to mention one particular time – February 12th (the Lord's day) – when I preached one sermon, held two Bible studies, preached another sermon at their Mission Station (a 25 minute motorbike ride from the church). I was exhausted! But they were not! They kept asking more and more questions. I am very thankful that the people of God are keen to know the truth, and it was very refreshing to me as well.

I have visited Vavuniya, and am looking for a possible place for the future ministry. There are many villages which have no churches and the people's lives affected by poverty, with no education for the children. I am very thankful that the Lord has shown us these places to serve Him (if He has called me to this place). These villages are very far away from the town. Recently, I went with a friend and a local person to see some houses in Vavuniya. We visited many places but it proved very difficult to find a reasonably-priced suitable house in the town. Nowadays there is a lot of development in the area and many NGOs (Non-Governmental Organizations) are paying lots of money and renting houses, thereby making it very difficult for

locals to find affordable houses. We believe if God has called us to this place He will provide a suitable house for His ministry. We are continually looking and trying to get a house through friends and personal contacts.

In the town itself there is not even one single Reformed or solidly evangelical church. The charismatic churches are as numerous as the shops, and the lives of the church pastors are generally very ungodly. Some people I know there have welcomed me to Vavuniya and they have promised me to support the ministry. So there is a very good opening and an encouragement to us to start a new work.

Psalms

The translation work of the Psalms is in progress. Some people have promised me that they will put 20 Psalms into verse form for singing before the month of May. This is not an easy job to do! I find that this is a very hard target for me to meet.

Plan

My plan now is to go to Vavuniya as soon as possible and to start an evening worship service at my house in the town with the aim of a morning service in one of the villages. This will hopefully be followed by a programme to facilitate education for the children who are in the villages, and then later we could start a Sabbath school, and then progress, in the Lord's will, to start Bible studies in the villages.

Prayer Requests

1. Pray for my wife and me as we move to a new place – that we would find favour in the sight of God and men.
2. Pray for the new work – that God's hand would be upon His ministry.
3. Pray for a suitable and safe place to stay.
4. Pray for a faithful co-worker – which is very important for the new work.
5. Pray for psalm translation work.
6. Pray for conversion of souls – the revival of this place.
'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. He that is our God is the God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death' (Psalm 68:19-20).

Thank you very much for your support.

In His Service,

Parthee

We welcome the support for marriage but are saddened at the undermining of this by the Government's support for 'Gay Marriage'.

Nigeria – More Persecution

Barnabas Fund

A second church in the central Nigerian city of Jos has been hit in a suicide bombing in the space of two weeks; at least ten people were killed in the blast and violent aftermath. The attack at St Finbarr's Church happened on Sunday 11th March at around 10.40am, ten minutes into the second service of the morning. It comes just two weeks after four people were killed in a suicide bombing at the Church of Christ headquarters in Jos. The bomb, which was in a car, was detonated just outside the gate of St Finbarr's after the vehicle was prevented from driving into the church premises. The blast shook the building and caused the ceiling to fall in and the glass to shatter. Three women, one of whom was pregnant, were among those killed. Surrounding buildings were also damaged. The Anglican Archbishop of Jos, the Rt Rev Benjamin Kwashi, said: 'It is worrying that two bombs have gone off within the space of two weeks, and many are fearing a third. Most importantly, a palpable terror is being unleashed on Christians so that Sunday is transformed from a day of worship into a day of fear. We are appealing to the church worldwide to pray without ceasing, and to members of the international community to speak up and take action on our behalf so that we are able to enjoy full religious freedom and worship God freely and without fear'. Two men, one dressed in female clothing, approached the gate of St Finbarr's in a car. A guard at the gate said he needed to check inside the vehicle's boot, but they refused to open it and detonated the explosives there. In the aftermath of the blast, there were clashes involving the security forces and youths, which left at least three more people dead. And later on, gunmen ambushed Christians in Chugwi village, south

of Jos, killing three and injuring another three. The victims included two brothers, aged 25 and 30. The attackers took their victims' mobile phones and called the deceased's relatives to claim responsibility for the murders. Three other people at the nearby hamlet of Dogo Garba were injured by the same gunmen. The shootings are not thought to be linked to the church blast.



Anniesland Reformed Baptist Church, Glasgow

Glasgow Branch of SRS

A Glasgow Branch of the Scottish Reformation Society has been formed. They announce their first public meeting will take place DV on Friday 25th of May 2012. It will be held at the Reformed Baptist Church, 4 Herschell Street, Anniesland, Glasgow, G13 1HR, commencing at 7.30pm. The speaker will be Rev Alan J Macgregor who will give a talk on a Reformation related topic (topic to be confirmed).

Western Isles Bible Conference

Rev Graeme Craig



troubles there. He has also lectured extensively in theology, especially in Eastern Europe. A warm welcome awaits all. Anyone requiring further details or accommodation should contact Donald MacDonald on 01851 704039.

The annual Western Isles Bible Conference takes place DV from Friday 8th to Sabbath 10th June 2012 at Stornoway FCC. In all there will be five addresses. The speaker expected is Rev Prof Robert Rodgers from Northern Ireland. The theme of the Conference will be *Biblical Designations of the Church* and it is expected to consider various names given to the church including 'The Israel of God', 'The Bride of Christ' and 'The Temple of God'. As well as serving in the pastoral ministry, Mr Rodgers was for some time Governor of the Maze Prison in Northern Ireland during the

that no man put a stumblingblock or an occasion to fall in his brother's way'. It is to be a rule with us to seek at all times not to put hindrances in brethren's ways, nor yokes around their necks, nor burdens upon their backs. Our guiding thought must be: how may I most and best glorify my Lord and Saviour in dealing with this and that person and handling their case? We are not in the Christian life to please or gratify ourselves (15:1 again), but to do one another good in the gospel, to build one another up in Christ and the Scriptures.

3 The logical extension of showing caring love

Here we turn to consider the matter in relation to those outside the church, remembering as we do so the Galatians 6:10 principle that the caring love which begins within the church will not stop there. What begins inside carries on outside. Ensuring first that all is well 'at home', how may we show caring love to those outside as well? Again, we shall take some examples in their order of appearance in our Romans chapters.

1 *Showing hospitality.* 12:13b again: 'given to hospitality'. The Christian home can have a vital role in this, with its opportunities for genuine 'people time' and the showing of friendship. Valuable fruit can follow. Moreover, quite apart from many useful conversations which may ensue, this may be the first sight an unbeliever has ever really had of a Christian home, marriage and family life.

2 *Gracious responses.* Note carefully 12:14, 21: 'Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not... Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good'. We need not restrict 'persecutors' to those who literally do that; rather, for our purposes, it may include opponents, detractors, and (at its widest) those outside the kingdom of God. Our Christian love is challenged greatly here. We must never underestimate the power of loving those who do not love us. At its simplest, it can give them a complete surprise (if not a shock!), for it is the very opposite of what they are used to and might dole out themselves. This is part and parcel of what is meant (in the best sense) by the 'victorious life' and being 'more than conquerors'.

3 *Mutual feeling.* 12:15 again: 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep'. What an opportunity is given in such circumstances to show the grace and compassion of our gracious and compassionate Saviour. Sometimes, as Christians, we find that unbelievers come to us at such times, instead of going to their regular worldly friends; and let us be ready ourselves to make the first move when we hear of needs arising.

4 *Practical helps.* 12:20: 'Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head', is the overflow of our ministry to

the saints in 12:13a: 'Distributing to the necessity of saints'. Again, this may well surprise them. The 'burning coals' signifies either/or, both/and, of two things: deeds of actual kindness, and causing our 'enemy' to be filled with shame for his poor treatment of us. The two will often go together. Go the extra mile(s).

5 *Exhibiting honesty.* Pay attention to 13:7-8: 'Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law'. In all things – domestic, financial, business – part of our loving our neighbour is seeing love as a 'debt' we owe, an obligation we have, not an option we are just left to choose when it appeals to us. It is a significant commending of Christ and the gospel for Christians and churches to be known, without question, as faithful and true, reliable and dependable, honest and straight. When this is not the case, great damage can be done to the Lord's cause.

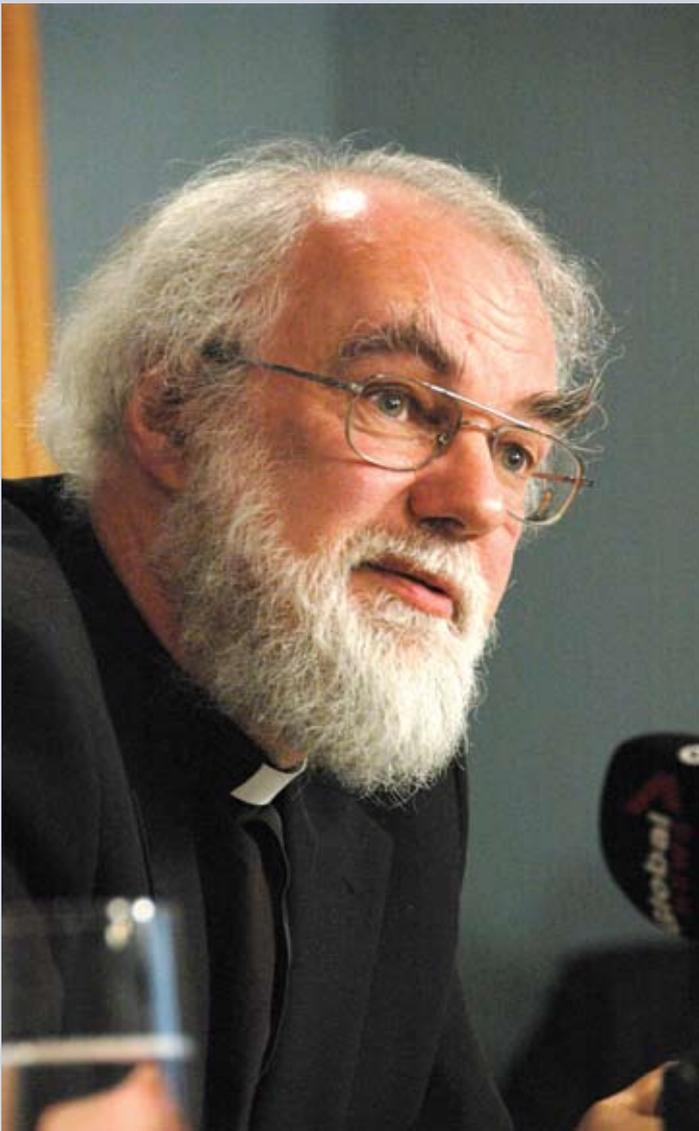
6 *Positive kindness.* In 13:10: 'Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law', we have an example of what is called, grammatically, 'litotes': a negative expression which implies a strong affirmative. In this case: love does not do wrong, harm or ill (far from it); what it actually does is good, benefit and right. The examples Paul gives from the moral law (adultery, murder, stealing and coveting) will all do great harm, each in obvious ways – whereas the Christian's responsibility always, in loving our neighbour, is to seek their best and highest good. Such 'love is the fulfilling of the law', and this commandment should not be burdensome to us.

7 *Soul concern.* We finish with this, and (of course) ultimately this is the most important way of all in showing caring love to unbelievers. Note 15:21: 'But as it is written, To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see: and they that have not heard shall understand'. Here is Paul the evangelist and missionary revealing his heart, which is so very much also the heart of the Saviour who absolutely *delights* to save sinners as well as being wonderfully *willing* to do so. Delight – willingness; willingness – delight. Is there any higher desire we can have to do them good than this – the eternal welfare of their eternal souls? In this connection, the importance of offering the Lord Jesus Christ as freely and as widely as possible whenever we have opportunity (whether preaching indoors or outdoors, or in personal witness and testimony) is to be emphasised and insisted upon. And to encourage us in this we are given in Scripture every possible incentive and encouragement we could wish for, in terms of the divine statements and invitations to sinners, including the joy there is in heaven over sinners who repent. May our heart of love towards unbelievers never be in doubt.

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News



Rev Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury

Resignation of Archbishop of Canterbury

Christian Concern

General Synod member and Christian Concern CEO Andrea Minichiello Williams has called for the Church of England to move decisively after

Rowan Williams announced his resignation as Archbishop of Canterbury. She said: 'There are many issues confronting our nation at the moment, which have raised the question of the place of Christian faith in British society... For too long the Church's voice has been muddled, indecisive and confusing to the public on the critical issues of our time, especially the protection of life, the redefining of marriage and the place of Jesus Christ in the public square. Our country needs a Church leader who will contend for biblical truth in every area of life, commend Jesus Christ as foundational to addressing these many issues, providing direction for our society and

a point of unity for the Anglican Church both here and abroad'.

Dr Rowan Williams revealed that he will step down from his role at the end of the year. His decision comes after 10 years in the post and after accepting the

position of Master of Magdalene College, Cambridge. The Crown Nominations Commission will consider 'in due course'



Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone

the selection of a successor.

When will we see godly men who love the truth in the leading positions in the churches in our land?

Redefinition of Marriage

Christian Institute

Although the Government is now asking the public's opinion, the Equalities Minister Lynne Featherstone has said marriage will be redefined whether the public likes it or not. The Government's position is astonishingly undemocratic and high-handed. But it's also an attempt to scare off any opposition. The essential (and rather hopeful) message is 'resistance is futile, so don't even bother'. The Government is trying to demoralise those who support the current definition of marriage. But it will only make us more determined to show that we care about marriage and its place in our society. Public opinion is moving in our direction, and there is all to play for.

This refers to the rest of the UK. A

Desk



similar consultation has already taken place in Scotland. God instituted marriage and therefore He alone has the right to define it.

Warning from Homosexual Politician

Christian Institute

People who believe in traditional marriage could find themselves accused of 'hate crimes' if marriage is redefined, UKIP's openly gay London Regional Chairman has cautioned. David Coburn, who is also a London Assembly candidate, also warned that rewriting the definition of marriage would represent an 'unnecessary victory roll' by homosexuals. Writing on a homosexual news website Mr Coburn said that UKIP 'thoroughly supports equal rights for same sex civil partnerships'. But he warned that the Party did have a problem with the Government changing the meaning of the word 'marriage'. He said: 'If the government does legislate in this way UKIP believes that any criticism of same sex marriage which may be expressed by someone on the basis of their faith could be classified as a 'hate crime'. 'That would be a grotesque assault on peoples' freedom of conscience. As we all know these things tend to be the thin end of the wedge once the Government's ludicrous overpaid/over-pensioned thought police get on the job'.

Ben & Jerry on Gay marriage

Christian Institute

Ben & Jerry's ice cream has waded into the redefining marriage debate by symbolically renaming one of its ice creams in support of gay marriage. Ben & Jerry's has teamed up with Stonewall, a homosexual lobby group, and is renaming



Telegraph journalist Will Heaven

its apple pie flavour ice cream 'Apple-y Ever After'. According to the company's website, the stunt is an attempt to 'raise awareness' about the issue. But Will Heaven, an assistant comment editor at *The Telegraph*, criticised the move, saying: 'Reading that PR announcement made me want to bulk-buy Häagen-Dazs. Why? Not because I'm a crazed homophobe, but because I'm so irritated by my food telling me what I should believe'.

God gave marriage. He is the King who must be obeyed. His judgment will come on those who undermine marriage. Our society is already suffering because of rampant immorality. Christians should make their views known and should also boycott such products and organisations as set themselves against God and His institution of marriage.

Government Support for Marriage

Christian Concern

Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith has launched his Social Justice Strategy Paper spelling out the Government's support for the institution of marriage. The strategy paper states that marriage provides

the most stable environment for bringing up children and that it should be supported and encouraged by the State. It reports that children who are raised by two married parents are most likely to get a good education and a job, which benefits society as a whole. It states that the breakdown of marriages

however can have 'devastating' long-term consequences. 'When families are strong and stable, so are children', Iain Duncan Smith said. 'We know that children raised by parents reporting high relationship quality and satisfaction tend to have higher levels of wellbeing, while intense conflict between parents has been shown to be detrimental to children's outcomes'. Iain Duncan Smith also launched the 'Early Intervention Foundation' in order to raise millions of pounds from private investors to help disadvantaged children.

The paper will encourage those who have been attempting to get Prime Minister David Cameron to keep his promise of a tax break for married couples. The Coalition agreement explicitly vows to recognise married couples in the tax system, but Chancellor George Osborne has infuriated Tory MPs by refusing to introduce the measure anytime soon. Mr Osborne also plans to remove child benefit for high income couples. The results of such a change could mean that in some cases it would be more profitable financially for parents to get divorced than to stay married.