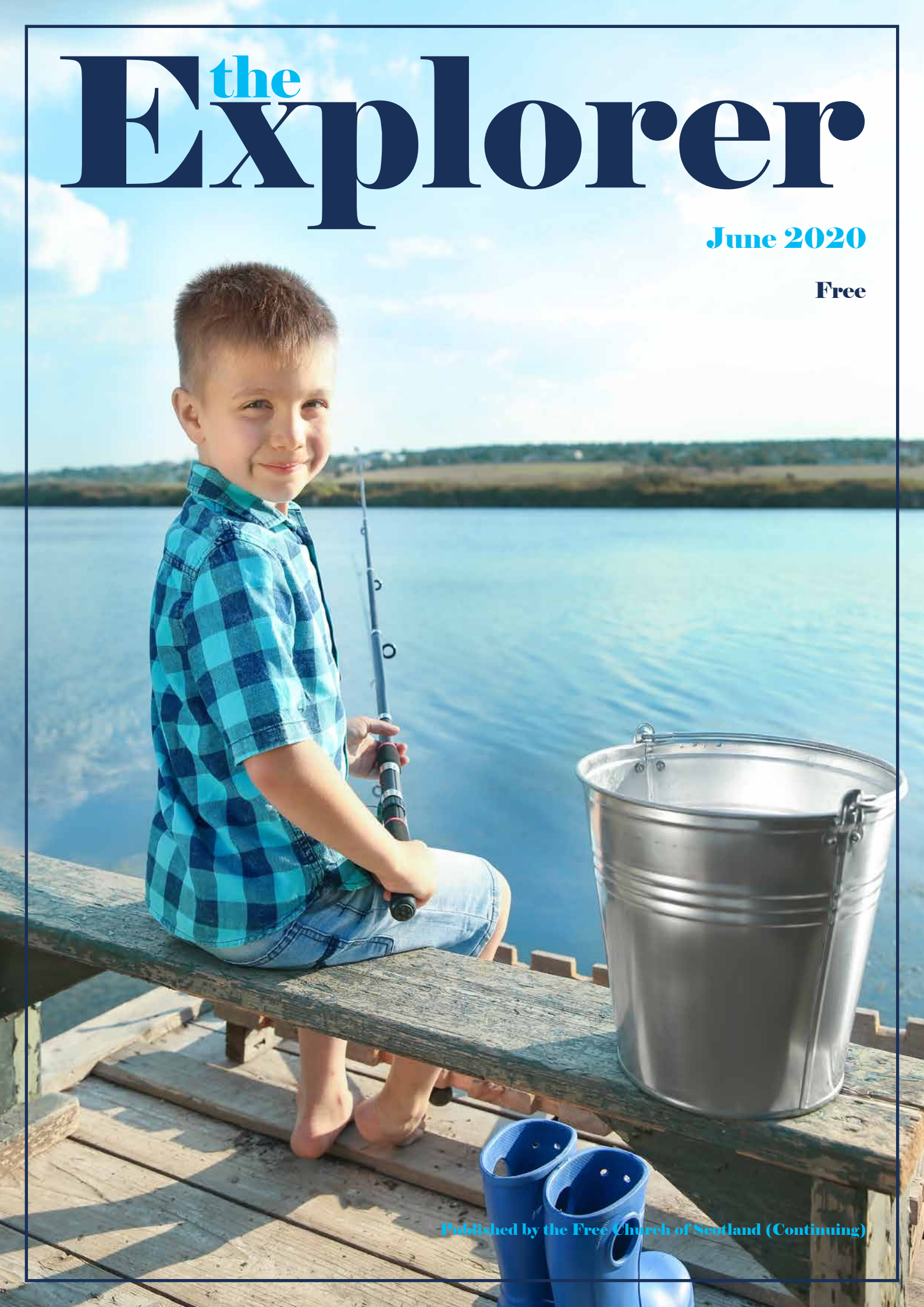
the Explorer

June 2020

Free



Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)

Subscription Details

The Explorer is published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing) and is supplied free with the Witness magazine which is published monthly. The subscription rates for 2020 are:

U.K.	**£27.50**
Europe (Airmail)	**£30.00**
Overseas (Airmail)	**£35.00**

Congregations ordering the Witness are encouraged to make bulk orders at the reduced rate of £24 per subscription per year. The Explorer, being free, may be ordered separately for Sabbath Schools.

Subscriptions and orders should be sent to:
Mrs Isobel McQueer
The Manse, Tordarroch, Farr,
Inverness-shire IV2 6XF
Tel: 01808 521474
Email: **subscriptions@fccontinuing.org**

Puzzles

Young folk are encouraged to complete the various puzzles in the magazine and send them in to:
Miss Anne Macaulay
30 Mackenzie Place,
Maryburgh IV7 8DY
Email: **macaulayanne@hotmail.co.uk**

Younger readers who find the questions too hard may like to do a drawing based on one of the articles and send it to the same address.

Contact the Editor

Rev. Murdo A N Macleod
Free Church Manse, Skeabost Bridge,
Isle of Skye IV51 9NP
Tel: 01470 532725
Email: **explorer@fccontinuing.org**

Design by: **Donald Smith Graphic Design**

(Unattributed articles ought not to be considered the work of the Editor)

Website:
freechurchcontinuing.org

Facebook:
facebook.com/fccscot

Twitter:
@fccscot

SKIPPER AND THE LIVE BROADCASTS

I have no idea what the situation will be by the time you read this article but as I sit here writing Scotland is still in 'lockdown' due to the coronavirus Covid-19. This means that we are only allowed to leave the house for essential business or periods of exercise. I know some of you who read the Explorer live in other parts of the world but most likely it will have been very similar with yourselves too. Skipper of course has no idea what all of this means or that it is even happening. All he knows is that we do not go out in the car except occasionally to pick up groceries from the 'click and collect' or very occasionally we drive just about half a mile to a path which we can take to the river which is one of his favourite walks. Our next door neighbour who is very fond of him takes him out now with her for a walk in the wood about once or twice a week. He really loves heading off with her. This means that we can get on with cleaning the house without Skipper attacking the vacuum cleaner and trying to bite it! He still hates anything with a long stick.

Sadly all the churches in Scotland are closed due to Covid-19. What a solemn thing that is! There has probably never been a time in the history of the nation when every church building was closed and no Gospel preaching could take place in the usual way. It has also meant that communion seasons have had to be cancelled and that means that the Lord's death is not being remembered in that special way at the moment. We refused to keep the Lord's Day but now shops are shut and the Sabbath is not being broken as it was. The Lord is showing us that he is the ruler and the governor of the whole world.

Thankfully many of our congregations are still able to worship together with live broadcasts or pre-recorded services on the internet. We wondered how this would work with Skipper. Normally when we take worship in the house Skipper gets naughty and tries to attract attention to himself by dropping a toy in your lap and he does not like to be ignored! We were not sure what he would do when we sat down on the Lord's Day mornings and evenings to listen to the services or how he would cope with the prayer meeting which we have on 'Zoom'.

Skipper's Tales

Much to our surprise as soon as we sit down and get ready for the services he just lies down and falls asleep for the whole service! On Wednesday nights as the prayer meeting is being broadcast he sometimes hears a voice he knows and will try to jump up to see them but he soon lies down quietly as if he knows not to interrupt. We are very thankful for this and no doubt the Lord is at work; all the creatures of the earth are under his command.

It is good to be able to worship along with others but it is important to remember that even although we are just gathered with our own families it is still the worship of God and that is why it is a blessing that Skipper is quiet during these services. We are not able to gather in the church but we should try and keep things as close to the way we do it in church as we possibly can. God has given us the way to worship and we keep to these ways because they are God's command. It would be very easy at this time to become careless and sit in the service eating and drinking but just as we wouldn't do that in church we don't do it during the live broadcasts either.

We trust that one day this will all come to an end and we will be able to gather again for public worship. In the meantime I hope you all keep well and that you are listening well to the services if you are able to join in with them.

From the Editor

Have you ever heard the saying that 'The grass is always greener on the other side of the fence'? It means that often we look at things we don't have, or can't get, and they look much better and more attractive than those things which we do have. You've probably seen a little child quickly become bored and unhappy with the toy they are holding. They see another child with a different toy which appeals to them and soon they are trying to pull it from the other child's hands. And, of course, it is not only very little children that behave like this!

The other day two of my sheep decided, quite literally, that the grass was greener on the other side of the fence. They managed to get to the other side where fresh green grass was growing. Sadly this put them in great danger. They were now by the side of a busy road with cars whizzing by. A kind friend spotted them and alerted me. We were able to quickly get them back to safety and I immediately fixed the hole in the fence.

We have rules and boundaries all around us; at home and in school. It is very important that we obey the rules even when 'the grass looks greener on the other side of the fence'! It may seem a good idea to ignore the rules and, like the sheep, cross a boundary, but sooner or later it will always lead to trouble. God has given us rules; we find them summarised in the Ten Commandments. Because we are sinners we always want to break the rules and escape from the boundaries God has wisely and lovingly set for us. He knows better than we do that outside these boundaries lies terrible danger. Like the sheep we think we know best and everything will be all right but God's Word warns us again and again against thinking in that way. We need to repent of our attempts to escape God's boundaries and ask the Lord to change our hearts so that we will come to appreciate his laws and want to obey them.

Murdo A N Macleod

THE BOOK THEY LOVED THE MOST

What is your favourite book? Maybe there is one you have read many times but you still go back and read it again. During the lockdown that came with the coronavirus Covid 19 maybe you have had more time to read than usual. I wonder if the Bible is your favourite book?

There has probably never been a book in the whole world so hated by its enemies and loved by its friends, as the Bible. In Psalm 119 the Psalmist mentions time and again how precious God's Word was to him. For example in verse 97 he writes, "O how love I thy law!" Later he describes God's Word as sweet to his taste, "yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103)

God's enemies, on the other hand, hate his Word and have gone to extraordinary lengths to destroy it. It is not enough for them to ignore it themselves; they also want, if at all possible, to have every trace of it removed from our daily lives. Down through history wicked people have banned the Bible and burned the Bible and often at the same time godly people have shown great courage in defending and saving God's Word from the hands of those who hate it.

This was especially true at the time of the Reformation. The Reformers wished to have the Bible translated into the language of the people rather than the old Latin. They wanted to see the people able to read the Bible for themselves. Many of these Reformers were persecuted, imprisoned and even put to death. They were willing to suffer and even, if necessary, die because they had come to love the Lord and love his Word.

Have you ever heard of Alfred the Great? He was King of the Anglo-Saxons from 886 to 899 A.D. He is said to have been a good king who spent years fighting against Viking invasions. He also loved the Word of God. In his day there were no copies of the Scriptures as we have them. What was available was written out by hand. Alfred found special help in the Book of Psalms and copied out the entire Book by hand. He always carried this copy with him. At times he would get up at night and spend a long time reading God's Word, and praying to God that he might be able to understand it more. He loved it so much and found so much comfort in it, that he wanted his people to become acquainted with it; and he actually began a translation of a part of the Bible into the Anglo-Saxon language, the English of that day, but he died before he was able to finish it.

Many centuries later, Lady Jane Grey was very briefly Queen of England and Ireland. She was executed on 12th February 1554 before she could do much to help the work of the Reformation. She also loved God's Word; she lived by it and died trusting in it. Rather than deny the Bible and the great truths that the Reformation had re-discovered, she was ready to give her life. Like other friends of the Bible, she proved her love for God's Word. Many others have given up houses, lands, relatives and friends rather than give up the Bible.

Many years ago an English ship was wrecked at sea. A Christian sailor on board that vessel had to choose between saving his money or his Bible. He took his Bible, and left the money. He clung to the wreck till all but himself had died. Then, tying his Bible round his neck with a handkerchief, he floated off on a broken piece of the wreck till he was picked up by a passing ship. While drifting about on that fragment of the wreck, he found in reading his Bible, a comfort which all the silver and gold in the world could not have given him.

During a time of cruel persecution, a Christian man was put in prison. It was a horrible dungeon in which he was kept a prisoner; very little light ever entered his dark cell except when the jailor brought him his meals. Instead of using that light to eat his food he used it instead to take a few moments to read his Bible. And when he was asked why he did so, his reply was, "I can find the way to my mouth in the dark, but I cannot read the Bible in the dark!"

Two young brothers in London lost both their parents. One of them was about eleven, and the other thirteen years of age. They set off on foot to their uncle who lived in another city many miles away. They carried their little bundles on their back and also took with them a Bible from which their parents used to read to them. Their parents loved God's Word and it seems that the boys did too. One night they went to a lodging-house for warmth and shelter. Sadly they did not have enough money to pay for the room and the man who owned the lodging-house offered to buy the Bible they were carrying. He was surprised when the boys refused his offer and increased the price he was willing to pay. But with the same firmness, they clung to their Bible. "We will not sell it," said they, "it has been our support and comfort all the way from London. Often when we are hungry and tired, we have sat down by the roadside, and read in our Bible, and it has seemed like meat, and drink, and rest to us." The man who was speaking to them was so impressed that he gave them lodgings for whatever few pennies they could afford.

Later that same man asked the boys what they would do if their uncle refused to help them at their journey's end. "We'll trust that to God," said the younger of the two, "for in the Bible it says 'When my mother and father forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.'"

All the people in this article lived very different lives and had very different experiences but they all had one thing in common: they loved the Bible. Do you?

FAVOURITE PSALMS (4)

One of the early Psalms we learn as children is Psalm One. "That man hath perfect blessedness who walketh not astray in counsel of ungodly men, nor stands in sinners' way". (Metrical Version verse I) For this reason it often remains a favourite as we grow older. There is a good reason for this Psalm being at the very beginning of the Book of Psalms. In many ways it introduces and summarises a great deal of what follows later in this book.

In this Psalm we see two ways of life; the godly and the ungodly. They are very different and they end in two very different places. Psalm One is a picture of life in this world where there are two very different groups of people; those who love the Lord and those who don't! Those who are on the Lord's side and those who are not!

THE IMPORTANCE OF RIGHT CHOICES

In the first verse of the Psalm we see wise choices and decisions being made. It warns us against becoming involved with sin. We are not to walk "in the counsel of the ungodly". This has to do with certain ways of thinking. We meet many people who think very differently from us. They have no thought of God and no interest in God or his law. They could not care less about bad language or the Lord's Day. That is how they live their lives and we have to be careful that their way of thinking, in school or in our circle of friends, doesn't start to make us think in the same way. We might think that would never happen but it is astonishing how quickly we can change under pressure from other people. Everyone wants to be popular and no-one wants to be the odd-one-out. Solomon says "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." (Proverbs 1:10)

Further on in verse one we see precisely the way in which this sort of danger affects us. It warns us not to stand "in the way of sinners" or sit "in the seat of the scornful". We can find ourselves drawn into bad things and becoming more involved with people who are not a good influence on us. We can find ourselves standing with them and eventually sitting amongst them. We do not change them for the better but they begin to change us slowly but surely. As we grow up there are many important choices we have to make and the choice of our friends is one of the most important. Psalm One with its good advice is an excellent psalm for young people.

THE PLEASURES OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Many people think the Christian life has no pleasures at all but the true believer knows this is not the case. In verse two we see the happiness of the Christian. He has found a "delight" in the Word of God and is at his happiest in the worship of God and the fellowship of God's people. As we struggle with conflict between God's ways and those we meet out in the world who want to take us in a totally different direction, the Word of God is very important. It constantly warns us to be careful and it is full of promises of God's help in the middle of the struggles. "In God have I put my trust: I will not be afraid what man can do unto me." (Psalm 56:11)

In the next verse the Christian is compared to a healthy tree, well watered and fruitful. Do you want to live a useful God-honouring life? If so the only way in which you can is by coming to the Lord and through the miracle of the new

birth being changed in your soul. Then you will also be like this tree. At times the tree will be blown by the strong winds of trouble but if we are rooted in Christ we have promises that we will be able to withstand whatever difficulties come our way.

LOOKING AHEAD TO THE END

The Psalm ends on a very solemn note; it looks ahead to judgement and only the Christian will be able to stand on that day. The first word in the psalm is "Blessed" and the last word is "perish". No matter how popular or successful we have been, unless we are like the tree in the third verse, rooted in Christ, we will be like the chaff blown by the wind. The picture is of the farmer's pitchfork scooping up and throwing the grain in the air and the wind blows the light chaff away. Jesus said, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it". (Matthew 7:13-14) The words of Jesus in that passage send us the same message as Psalm one.

In 1627 Hugh Binning was born in Scotland. From an early age he chose a good path in life; seeking the Lord and turning away from sin. He lived a very short life: he died at the age of 26 years but these years were useful and worthwhile and left blessings for the church in Scotland which we still benefit from today. Hugh Binning was like a tree planted by a river, who bore fruit to the glory of God. About three hundred years later an American called Jim Elliot would also choose the best path when he was young. Along with four other missionary friends he would attempt to reach the Huaorani tribe in the Ecuadorian rain forest with the good news of the Gospel. All five of them were killed by people from the tribe, but these sad events opened up the way for the Gospel to come to the tribe and many of them were wonderfully converted. In his diary Jim Elliot wrote these words, "He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose." That is also the message of Psalm One.

I don't know if Psalm One is a favourite of yours but we should all learn the words of this Psalm and learn the lesson it is teaching us.

Christ Will Come Again

Finish the quotations below by placing the words in the clouds in the correct space. Some of them will need only one cloud whilst others will have space for two or more.

Behold he cometh _____

_____

Revelation 1 v7

I will come _____

_____

John 14 v3

Our God shall come _____

_____

Psalm 50 v3

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming

_____

James 5 v7

Behold, I come _____

_____

Revelation 3 v11

Latest entries

1st prize: Seumas Grant - **Knockbain Free Church**

Runners up:

Ayr - Sarah Craig
Lochgilphead - Emily Craig
Smiths Falls - Eliana Kok
Partick - Kenny MacKinnon
All Saints Presbyterian Church - Elijah Richards, Lois Richards
Culloden Baptist - Micah MacDonald

Name: .....

Age: .....

Congregation: .....

Address: .....

.....

.....

Published by the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing)