

FREE PRESBYTERIAN VISION



THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ULSTER

REFORMATION 500



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Youth Focus



A Word to Women



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Editorial

Quincentenary. Not the sort of word that features in a regular, everyday conversation.

It signifies a five-hundredth anniversary. I predict we will hear it often in the lead-up to October this year, when Martin Luther's historic protest will be commemorated. Believing that event to have lasting significance, our denomination plans to mark it throughout the year. This publication will play its part, every issue focussing on a particular aspect of Reformation history, and giving readers the opportunity to read Luther's own words. But what is the message of the Reformation for us in 2017?

It is, of course, the message of the Gospel – of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. That message needs to be heard plainly right now. It must be sounded forth, for 'how shall they hear

without a preacher?' (Romans 10:14) By our words and our walk, we must present Christ to a lost world.

The message of the Reformation is also one of courage to stand for right, and against wrong, even if it seems that all the world is against you. Such courage is needed today. To declare Christ, to resist the errors of Romanism and its apologists, and to bring a truly Christian perspective to the great issues of the age – well, such voices are generally drowned out, inevitably vilified, and even criminalised, the Ashers' verdict a case in point. But we are to continue in the things we have heard, and not to be ashamed of expressing them.

Luther was no perfect man. He had his faults. But, five hundred years on, the stand he took is a challenge to his successors. And it is a test we cannot afford to fail.

✉ Timothy Nelson, editor@fpvision.org

WALK WISELY

“SEE THEN THAT YE WALK CIRCUMSPECTLY.”

EPHESIANS 5:6

The righteous have a new name, *‘one that is written among the living in Jerusalem’* (Isaiah 4:3). The Lord knows them and has put a difference between them and others. They are *‘the apple of his eye’* (Zechariah 2:8), even His *‘jewels’* (Malachi 3:17). Though precious in His eyes they are undervalued and despised by the world. Yet their privilege and duty is to walk wisely and to witness effectively for Christ in a polluting and defiling worldly age.

At all times, therefore, they must *‘with purpose of heart....cleave unto the Lord’* (Acts 11:23) in order to keep God’s ways – whatever comes and whatever the cost. Assured that *‘He will keep the feet of his saints’* (1 Samuel 2:9), they must often choose the pathway of affliction for Christ’s sake rather than shun the way of the cross. Compromise with truth is not an option. There is to be no selling of any part of divine truth even if life itself will be forfeited! Guarding against all sin and especially the prevailing sins of the age means diligence and watchfulness. Opposition to them and testimony against them are hallmarks of the children of light. Their character is like that of the three Hebrews (Daniel 3) who chose to ‘burn’ instead of ‘turn’. It is comparable with Moses when he ‘forsook Egypt not fearing the wrath of the king’ (Hebrews 11:27), *‘choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward’* (Hebrews 11:25,26). Moses, like all true saints, viewed Christ as exceedingly precious and did *‘count all things but loss for the excellency*



of the knowledge of Christ Jesus [his] Lord’ (Philippians 3:8).

Christ is the way into which we enter, by faith. Being united to Him we must, still by faith, make daily use of Him. Paul expressed this when he said *‘the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me’* (Galatians 2:20). It is faith in His promise that *‘the way of the Lord is strength to the upright’* (Proverbs 10:2), and faith too, in the testimony of the Psalmist’s words *‘I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved’* (Psalm 16:8). To have Him in constant remembrance in every place, in every condition and in every company

throughout the year is to walk wisely with heavenly enlightenment.

When the Lord is in view through the eye of faith, heart desires go out to Him and a constant prayer is offered *‘hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not’* (Psalm 17:5). Our steps in His steps, bring obedience to His command *‘thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand or to the left’* (Deuteronomy 28:14).

∴ **Rev Leslie Curran**, Associate Editor, is the Director of Let the Bible Speak radio ministry in N Ireland, and a regular preacher on its worldwide network of broadcasts.

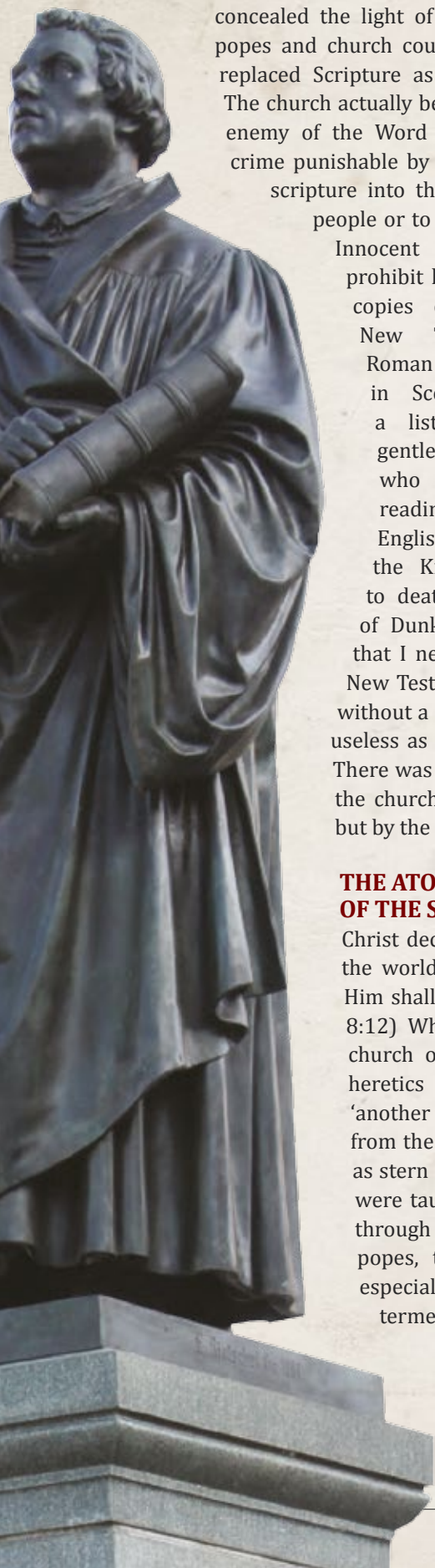


The Darkness before the Dawn

How many consider the Protestant Reformation to be just an unfortunate breach in Christianity brought about by arguments over minor points of doctrine! Advocates of this view have no concept of the condition of the Roman Catholic Church in the early sixteenth century. By then, it claimed to be the only true, and therefore, pure church. In reality, it had become the false and corrupt church of Antichrist. Instead of upholding New Testament Christianity, it had set up a system of doctrines that were in direct contradiction to the Gospel of Christ. Its power, built up over the centuries, relied on the ignorance and superstition of the people. Services were conducted in Latin, a language not understood by those who attended. These deluded souls were taught that they could only get to heaven through the church.

To grasp the condition of the pre-reformation church, one must have some understanding of the rise of the papacy. By 1500AD, that institution controlled church and society. Roman Catholic historian Lord Acton, commenting upon the moral corruption of the popes of that period, coined the famous saying "Power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely." Corrupt popes presided over a corrupt clergy and a corrupt church. While Lord Acton was right in his evaluation of the papacy morally, he failed to recognise that the moral corruption was the result of spiritual corruption. The period from 500AD to 1500AD is known as the 'Dark Ages'. It was very dark spiritually because, instead of holding forth the light, the church wilfully obscured the light and replaced truth with falsehood.





THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

God's Word is to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. And it is the entrance of God's Word that gives light. (Psalm 119:105, 130) But the church concealed the light of Scripture. The authority of popes and church councils in matters of doctrine replaced Scripture as the infallible rule of faith.

The church actually became the greatest enemy of the Word of God. It was a crime punishable by death to translate scripture into the language of the

people or to even read it. Pope Innocent III decreed, "We prohibit laymen possessing copies of the Old and New Testament." The Roman Catholic Church in Scotland presented a list of 720 earls, gentlemen and artisans who were accused of reading the Bible in English and petitioned the King to put them

to death. George Crichton, Bishop of Dunkeld, boasted, "I thank God that I never knew what the Old and New Testament was!" It was a church without a Bible and such a church is as useless as a lighthouse without a light. There was darkness spiritually because the church was ruled not by scripture but by the papacy.

THE ATONEMENT OF THE SAVIOUR

Christ declared that He is the Light of the world and that those who follow Him shall not walk in darkness. (John 8:12) While claiming to be the only church of Christ, Rome was, as the heretics of Paul's day, preaching 'another Jesus'. The church hid Christ from the people. Christ was pictured as stern and unapproachable. People were taught they had to go to Christ through intermediaries such as the popes, the church, the saints and especially the Virgin Mary, who was termed 'the ladder to heaven'.

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While Scripture clearly presents Christ as the only mediator between God and men (1 Timothy 2:5), the popes set themselves up as mediators and usurped Christ's offices of Prophet, Priest and King. Pope Pius IX said, "I alone... am the successor of the apostles, the vicar of Jesus Christ. I am the way, the truth,

and the life..." ('Vicar' = 'in place of'). The pope claimed to be prophet to the Church, speaking infallibly and authoritatively. Everyone was required to submit to him as King. He was declared to have universal power in the care of souls, and must therefore be obeyed. And the self-proclaimed 'successor of Peter' claimed to be a sacrificing priest. The central message of the Bible is that remission of sin is through Christ's once for all sacrifice for sin. The church contradicted this by turning the Lord's Table into the Mass, in which the pope and his priests claimed to re-sacrifice Christ for the sins of the living and the dead. Instead of preaching the work of Christ at the cross, Rome professed

to repeat that work. According to that church, Christ's work was not sufficient to atone for sins!

THE ASSURANCE OF SALVATION

In a denial of Scripture (1John 5:13), Rome taught that no-one could possess the assurance that his sins were forgiven or that he enjoyed eternal life. The church's teaching provided no comforting light in the valley of death. Salvation was seen as a process that depended upon one's obedience to the church. The pope alone had access to the treasury of grace, which could be used by the church to grant remission from sins to those who obeyed. However, even if one diligently observed church rituals and obtained the sacrament of the last rites from a priest as he came to die, he was assured of no more than purgatory. There, in the flames of suffering, he would, over time, be purged of his sins and obtain repose for his soul. Of course, a loved one could pay for the priest to say a mass, or purchase an indulgence, to speed the process. The consequence of these man-made fables was that the individual could never have assurance of salvation. The peace arising from forgiveness of sins was unknown. In fact, the church even pronounced a curse upon any who presumed to say that he had assurance of salvation, or that the whole punishment for sin is forgiven.

SPIRITUAL DARKNESS, MORAL DARKNESS

As shocking and unbelievable as it may seem, many popes were guilty of committing every crime in the catalogue of atrocious sins. Roman Catholic writer Peter De Rosa, in his book 'Vicars of Christ: The Dark Side of the Papacy', refers to the popes of the period under consideration as the most evil monsters who walked the face of the earth.

When Martin Luther was just 9 years old, Rodrigo Borgia became pope and took the title Alexander VI. He was described as evil personified. He stole from the funds of the church to provide wealth and estates for his many children. The name Borgia has become a synonym for moral corruption. Savonarola condemned publicly the immoral vices of the pope and his fellow churchmen. He was put to death.

Popes endorsed massacres, atrocities, torture, imprisonment, and inquisitions against those whose only crime was that they would not acknowledge the pope as head of the church or that they had a Bible. Many faithful Christians who sought to raise a lamp of witness for Christ suffered horrendous deaths. The sheer number of people imprisoned by

the church, and the hideous tortures they endured, are mind boggling. It is claimed that in one day the pope of the age was responsible for the death of more people than the total number executed by pagan Rome during the early centuries after Christ.

The power of the Roman Catholic Church reached its zenith in the 12th through 15th centuries. However, its open corruption and wickedness brought it into increasing contempt among the common people.

The light of Gospel truth had almost been extinguished by persecution and false teaching. However, it is often said that it is darkest just before the dawn. The dawn was about to break over Western Europe. That dawn came on October 31st 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses against Indulgences on the church door in Wittenberg. And the rest, as they say, is history – glorious history.

A DIFFERENT CHURCH?

Ecumenists, and sadly some evangelicals, will argue the Roman Catholic Church has changed since the medieval era. All churches, therefore, should now unite. On 31st

October last year, Pope Francis joined Lutheran leaders in Sweden to mark the beginning of the 500th anniversary year of the Reformation. One aim was to forge closer links between the two churches.

**THE LIGHT
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It is correct to state that the Roman Catholic Church has changed since medieval times, but not for the better, rather for the worse! The chilling fact is that the Roman Catholic Church still holds to the same doctrines, but popes have added even more unscriptural, anti-Christian dogmas.

For example, in 1950, the papacy pronounced the 'bodily assumption' of Mary. This doctrine asserts that her body did not see corruption but ascended to heaven. Today, there is more Mary worship in the modern Roman Catholic Church than at any previous time. However, that church is unable to dominate society as it once did. And we still enjoy the civil and religious liberties won for us at the Reformation.

∴ **Dr Ron Johnstone**, minister of Newtownards Free Presbyterian Church, is the Convenor of the Presbyterian Reformation 500 Committee.





MARTIN LUTHER SPEAKS:

GOD'S WORD

// The Holy Scriptures are full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the heathen taught nothing of faith, hope or charity; they present no idea of these things; they contemplate only the present, and that which man, with the use of his material reason, can grasp and comprehend. Look not therein for ought of hope or trust in God. But see how the Psalms and the Book of Job treat faith, hope, resignation, and prayer; in a word, the Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials. It teaches us to see, to feel, to grasp, and to comprehend faith, hope, and charity, far otherwise than mere human reason can; and when evil oppresses us, it teaches how these virtues throw light upon the darkness, and how, after this poor, miserable existence of ours on earth, there is another and an eternal life.

// We ought not to criticise, explain, or judge the Scriptures by our mere reason, but diligently, with prayer, meditate thereon, and seek their meaning. The devil and temptations also afford us occasion to learn and understand the Scriptures, by experience and practice. Without these we should never understand them, however diligently we read and listened to them. The Holy Ghost must here be our only master and tutor; and let youth have no shame to learn of that preceptor. When I find myself assailed by temptation, I forthwith lay hold of some text of the Bible, which Jesus extends to me; as this: that he died for me, whence I derive infinite hope.

// Let us not lose the Bible, but with diligence, in fear and invocation of God, read and preach it. While that remains and flourishes, all prospers with the state; 'tis head and empress of all arts and faculties. Let but divinity fall, and I would not give a straw for the rest.

// Oh! How great and glorious a thing it is to have before one the Word of God! With that we may at all times feel joyous and secure; we need never be in want of consolation, for we see before us, in all its brightness, the pure and right way. He who loses sight of the Word of God, falls into despair: the voice of heaven no longer sustains him; he follows only the disorderly tendency of his heart, and of worldly vanity, which lead him on to his destruction.

// No greater mischief can happen to a Christian people, than to have God's word taken from them, or falsified, so that they no longer have it pure and clear. God grant that we and our descendants be not witnesses of such a calamity.

⋮ Selected by the Editor from 'Martin Luther's Table Talk

WELCOME TO ENNISKILLEN



Bethel Free Presbyterian Church held two special services last September – for Mrs Arlene Gray who retired after 13 years as Child Evangelist, and for her successor Miss Gillian Gillespie. Mrs Gray saw many children converted and the work expand to include meetings in local schools, where a large number of children are now reached each week with the gospel. Dr John Douglas, guest

preacher, spoke on “Finishing with Joy.” Clerk of Session Mr Stanley Chartres paid tribute to Mrs Gray, and gifts were presented from the Church, the children’s workers and children.

Meanwhile Miss Gillespie was welcomed to the congregation by Rev Gray and presented with a bouquet of flowers by Mrs Gray. Gillian gave an overview of the working of God in her life, and

Mr Gray related how the Lord had been preparing the way for her to come to Enniskillen.

Gillian is settling well into life in County Fermanagh with the Lord blessing her ministry among the children. Her new address is 80 Loane Drive, Chanterhill, Co Fermanagh BT74 4EG.

Our picture shows Gillian and Mrs Gray.

FAREWELL IN PORTGLENONE

On Friday 21st October Portglenone Church hosted a farewell service for Mr Stephen and Mrs Ruth Miller, missionary candidates for Uganda. Rev D Stewart conducted the service with contributions from Rev D Priestly (Mrs Miller’s father), Rev Gordon Ferguson (Whitefield College Principal), Rev I Harris (Mission Board Chairman) and Rev R McKee. Mr Stewart made a presentation on behalf of the congregation, and a special offering amounted to £1200. Mr Miller addressed the large congregation speaking of his call to Uganda and expressing thanks to the church family for all its help and support.

The meeting concluded with Rev Stewart, the Portglenone session and participating ministers praying for the Millers.



50 YEARS IN MONEYSLANE



The 50th Anniversary of Moneyslane Free Presbyterian Church was marked by a dinner on Friday 30th September 2016. Harvest Thanksgiving Services followed and Dr John Douglas

reminded the congregation of the commencement of the work and of the move of God that was in the Province at that time. Other previous ministers Rev R Johnstone and Rev M Patrick ministered on subsequent evenings.

Top: Rev W McDermott with the Moderator, and other guests.

Right: Other guests included two former elders, now serving in Banbridge Church, Mr Jim McElroy, MBE, and Mr Ivor Parke, with their wives.



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PART TIME STAFF REQUIRED

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CHILDREN'S CORNER



J.O.Y

Have you ever heard of **J.O.Y**? We know it spells the word joy, but it also stands for **J**esus first, **O**thers second, and **Y**ourself last. The Bible teaches us to put the Lord Jesus first, others second and ourselves last. Matthew 6:33 says, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." If we put God first, then we will always receive His blessing and never lose out. And by putting others before ourselves we bring honour to God's name and His blessing upon us. (Mark 9:41)

Back in 1924 a man called Bill Haven dropped out of the U.S.A. Olympic canoeing team because his wife was due to give birth to their first little baby. Bill's wife insisted that he should go. She knew how he had trained, and that competing in the Olympic Games was his lifelong ambition, but Bill said, "No" and that was that. Well, Bill's stand-in and the other members of the team each won a gold medal. His wife was also late in giving birth to their

child, so late in fact, that Bill could have competed and been back home again with plenty of time to spare. Many thought the way things turned out was an awful pity for the Haven family. Bill, however, had no regrets and was glad to have put others first. It's always better to say "No" to something that you simply want, in order to say "Yes" to something that really matters. Bill Haven got it right. He took his God-given duties as a husband and a father very seriously. He knew what was important in life.

I wonder, do you have a measure of this same wisdom? Do you realise the importance of putting the Lord **J**esus first, **O**thers second and **Y**ourself last? I hope you do, because if so you will have the key to unlocking real and lasting **J**OY throughout life's journey.

By the way, Bill's story had an interesting ending. The child born was a little boy called Frank. Twenty-eight years later, he won a gold medal canoeing in the 1952 Olympics... for his dad.

Quiz:

Add the number of Old Testament books there are in the Bible to the number of the disciples that the Saviour had . Take this number and multiply it by the number of days Jonah spent inside the belly of the fish . Then take away the number of chapters there are in the book of Mark . Add on the number of windows in the Ark . Add on the number of words found in John 11v35 . Finally add on the number of the Commandments . Finally, what book in the Bible has the same number of chapters as your answer?

Answer:

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

Matthew 6:33

PRIZES!

Are you 12 or under? Send your answer, name, address and church to:

Rev. Stephen Pollock

Email: answer@fpvision.org

15 Fernagreevagh Road, Loughgall, Armagh, BT61 8PN

£5 WINNERS LAST TIME:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
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(Tandragee) |
| » David Preston
(Ballymagerney) | » Joni Cully
(Portavogie) |
| » James Cassells
(Portadown) | » Lucy Cunningham
(Mourne) |



EVEN IF YOU DIDN'T WIN THIS TIME, PLEASE
KEEP TRYING - MAYBE NEXT TIME!

WORTH?



What's in it for me?' is a question that shows the carnality of the natural man. 'If I do this, what do I get in return?' Such a mind-set undergirds the question the unconverted may ask: 'Why would I want to be a Christian?' We must answer the question faithfully, considering the Word of God. Despite the false teaching of some, following Christ does not bring guaranteed health, wealth and prosperity. When someone becomes a Christian, he gets a cross to bear and becomes the object of the hatred of the world (Matthew 16:24, John 15: 18+19). There is a cost to be counted in following Christ

Yet, we may also respond to the question by stating that trusting in Christ brings everything any sinner could ever need. The Bible is plain in the encouragements it presents to the sinner. When we take Christ, we gain everything. The benefits of becoming a Christian are beyond measure, no matter the cost. Paul encourages the believers in Corinth: 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' (1 Corinthians 1:30) The believer, by faith, is in a living union with the Saviour. The Saviour is everything

we need. In Him we have these blessings which summarise the benefits of being a Christian.

» **Wisdom.** By nature, we are marked by spiritual foolishness. Though we may have a high IQ we see the gospel as foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18). Study 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 and you will discover that Christ is the revelation of the wisdom of God. In and of ourselves we cannot grasp the benefits of the gospel (v9). We cannot understand the spiritual (v14). But, in Christ, through the work of the Holy Spirit we come to see the wisdom of God in Christ. We come to see our sin and we come to see the Saviour as our only Lord and redeemer. We gain true wisdom as we take Christ.

» **Righteousness.** Paul tells us 'there is none righteous, no, not one' (Romans 3:10). By nature and practice all mankind is guilty before God. Thus, to be right before God we need a perfect righteousness. We cannot provide that. God has provided a righteousness that is not our own. Christ is that righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). He lived a life of perfect and complete obedience to the law of God, fulfilling all righteousness (Matthew 3:15). He takes our sin on His body to the tree and when we take Christ we receive His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 10:4).

The Christian message offers Christ to the sinner and every benefit comes with Him. We'll see more next issue but for now, very simply, take Christ and know the greatest gain! Samuel Rutherford wrote: 'They lose nothing who gain Christ.'

FROM THE OLD TO THE YOUNG

'The lawyer can deliver his client but from strife, the physician can deliver his patient but from sickness, the master can deliver his servant but from bondage, but the Lord delivereth us from all.' - Henry Smith, quoted in A Puritan Golden Treasury



THE PAST -

FOR THE PRESENT

AND THE FUTURE

The extra day of the leap year of 1528 was marked by the courage and conviction of a young Scotsman. Aged 24, Patrick Hamilton had been condemned as a heretic for holding to Lutheran doctrines. The previous year he had published 'Errors and Absurdities of the Papists, Touching the Doctrine of the Law and the Gospel.' The title itself indicates the Protestant nature of the content. A section within the writing

was entitled: 'A Disputation betwixt the Law and the Gospel.' In it Patrick wrote:

'The Law saith,
Make amends for thy sin.
The Father of Heaven is wrath
with thee.
Where is thy righteousness,
goodness, and satisfaction?
Thou art bound and obliged unto
me, to the devil, and to hell.

The Gospel saith,
Christ hath made it for thee.
Christ hath pacified Him with His
blood.
Christ is thy righteousness, thy
goodness, and satisfaction.
Christ hath delivered thee from
them all

Such Protestant doctrine was heretical to the Roman Catholic authorities and so Hamilton was condemned to die for the faith of the gospel. The scene was set in St. Andrews, February 29, and Hamilton was given the opportunity to recant. Rather, he boldly stood for the Saviour he loved: 'As to my confession, I will not deny it for awe [fear] of your fire, for my confession and belief is in Christ Jesus.' His death was particularly gruesome as the Scottish wind kept putting the fire out. Rather than seeing

this as God's providence staying their sin, the authorities persisted in their cruelty until Hamilton died, after suffering for 6 hours.

This year marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation and many inspiring stories of faithfulness and fortitude will be readily available. But why should young people study church history and be encouraged to know of the past? The word 'history' for many is associated with words like 'boring' and 'irrelevant'. Sadly, history can be taught and communicated in such a way, but true history is relevant because true history is the story of God in this world.

Let me offer some reasons why you should study church history:

1. Church history reminds us that Christ's church will never be defeated

The Reformation arose out of the darkness of the Middle Ages. In such times the errors of Rome had almost extinguished the light of the gospel. But the light still flickered until God came and fanned the flame into the conflagration of the Reformation. Today some live in fear. Secular society promotes an agenda opposed to the Bible. Legislation is advanced to destroy biblical marriage and to destroy the unborn. Islam appears to be on the increase all around. Materialism dominates our land. Will the church of Christ survive? Of course it will! Church history gives us an encouragement that that is so. Christ will keep on building His church. God continues the work of saving a multitude that no man can number.

2. Studying Church history helps us to see the need to learn from the past

Most of us remember our teenage years when we were reluctant to learn from

our elders, be they parents, teachers or pastors. There is an independent streak in the young that needs to be checked. The discipline of studying the ways of God throughout the ages is a helpful means of reminding us that we are not the first to live on this planet! The faithfulness and the mistakes of others can teach us many vital lessons of Christian discipleship. Studying those has a humbling effect, encouraging us to learn from those who have gone before. Martyn Lloyd-Jones once declared that every "Christian should learn from history... it is his duty to do so."

3. Church history demonstrates what God can do in the life of a young Christian

Stories of courage should inspire us all to do exploits for God. It is remarkable to observe the effects wrought by the bravery of young saints. John Knox comments on the impact of Hamilton's death: 'So, within short space, many began to call into doubt, that which before they held for a certain verity [truth].'

We should not think that only older saints can be used of God. But we also must never think that we can do great things in our own strength. What enabled the saints of old to face the fires of martyrdom? Only the strength that comes by the grace of God. The Apostle Paul suffered much for his devotion to Christ but testified of the sufficiency of God's grace. He describes his labours as a "striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily." (Colossians 1:29) The heroes of history did not do what they did because of their stubborn personalities. They took the stand they did and performed the works they did because of the power of God in their lives. Today, it can be difficult to witness for Christ in an increasingly hostile environment. But

as we read history and read of how the grace of God sustained men and women of old we are encouraged that the unchanging God is able to sustain us in our day.

4. Church history furnishes us with biographies of young heroes of the faith

Hamilton was only 24 years old and he is only one of many who, despite their youth, chose to die rather than deny the Lord. These heroes are a challenge to us all. We would rather deny Christ than endure the scoffing of our friends or the mockery of our enemies. There is no fire involved but the cost of owning Christ is too much for too many. These historical figures remind us what is involved in being a Christian: "*And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.*" (Matthew 10:38-39) No matter how young, we must not be ashamed of the Saviour.

YOUNG
PEOPLE OF OLD
DID EXPLOITS BECAUSE
THEY LOVED THE LORD
MORE THAN ANYTHING ELSE,
SACRIFICING COMFORT AND
POPULARITY BECAUSE OF
THEIR DEVOTION TO
HIM.

These stories challenge our hearts as to the level of our love for Christ and the gospel. Young people of old did exploits because they loved the Lord more than anything else, sacrificing comfort and popularity because of their devotion to

Him. They "*loved not their life unto death*" (Revelation 12:11) because they loved Christ more than life. "*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*" (Matthew 10:37)

If studying church history does nothing more than challenge us as to our love for Christ, it's been a valuable pursuit. We should read of Hamilton and others and cry with the hymn writer: 'More love to Thee, O Christ, more love to thee.'

DELEGATES MEETING

Monday 20th Feb, Venue: Ballymagerney FPC

CASTLEWELLAN CHRISTIAN RETREAT

Fri 28th April – Mon 1st May 2017

Age: 16-28

Check fpcyouth.org for booking details

SUMMER CAMP

**SHANNAGHMORE OUTDOOR
EDUCATION CENTRE**

31st July – 4th August

Age: 12-18 Cost: £155 (£40 deposit)

See fpcyouth.org for application forms

SPRING RALLIES

Friday 10th March, 8.00pm

Ballymena, Banbridge,
Dungannon & Mount Merrion

Theme: Why was the
Reformation needed?

EVENINGS OF PRAYER

GREATER BELFAST & NORTH DOWN

Portavogie FPC, 10th Feb,
Rev S Murray

MID DOWN

Dromore FPC, 10th Feb,
Rev I Kenny

SOUTH DOWN

Moneyslane FPC, 10th Feb,
Rev W McDermott

MID ULSTER

Portadown FPC, 17th Feb,
Rev D Abernethy

SOUTH WEST

Aughnacloy FPC, 24th Feb,
Rev G Abraham

WEST

Kilskeery FPC, 10th Feb,
Rev L Power

NORTH WEST

Londonderry FPC, 13th Feb,
Rev J Patterson

NORTH & SOUTH ANTRIM

Randalstown FPC, 24th Feb,
Rev G Goodes

YOUTH COUNCIL EVENTS

TRAINING WEEKEND

Date: 31st March - 1st April,

Theme: 1. Theology of Evangelism
(how to testify, defend the faith and more)
2. Bibliology (the Bible as the word of God,
inspiration, inerrancy, canonicity and more)

Speaker: Dr Alan Cairns

Check fpcyouth.org for booking details.

A WORD TO WOMEN

A New Year: No better time to turn our thoughts to the very first woman! Most of us cherish a very close bond with our mothers. Eve had no such bond, no other woman to turn to for advice or friendship. Yet she had blessings that we cannot have on this earth. Created perfectly sinless, she had perfect fellowship with the Lord. Sadly that life of unmarred bliss would be shattered by the action of our first mother!

Eve was the last creature to be created by the Lord. The Lord made Adam out of the dust, breathing into him the breath of life. The name Adam simply means man, and woman is the feminine version of Adam (Genesis 5:2). Of all God's creation, mankind was uniquely made in the image of God, with a spiritual dimension, a soul (Genesis 1:27). Matthew Henry observes, "The woman was made of a rib out of the side of Adam; not made out of his head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved." Eve was to be the perfect companion to Adam. She was beautiful and Adam recognised her as part of himself (Genesis 2:23). This relationship between husband and wife typifies Christ's relationship with the Church (Ephesians 5:28,29).

Life could not have been better for Eve. However, while alone, she encountered an alluring creature, and she entered into conversation without realising she was exposing herself to danger. Satan blatantly contradicted God's word and subtly accused God of denying

mankind something beneficial. Eve looked with longing at the forbidden fruit. Reckoning that the fruit was nutritious and desirous for wisdom, she took it, later giving it to Adam also. Both discovered that Satan is a liar while God is truth. New emotions assailed our first parents: shame, guilt and sorrow. Fellowship was broken and joy gone. Temptations

will come to us in similar ways, when, like Lot, we might ask, "*Is it not a little one?*"


(Genesis 19:20) Sin is sin and will always have consequences. It will hinder our fellowship with God and may cause others to stumble. God always provides a way to escape. Let us use that escape and save ourselves much shame, sorrow and pain.

GOD
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MUCH SHAME,
SORROW AND
PAIN.

Aware of their nakedness Adam and Eve tried to cover themselves with fig leaves sewn together. Warned that death would result from disobedience, immediately they saw the finger of death and decay enter the fallen world. How thankful we are that the Lord is a "*God full of compassion, and gracious, longsuffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth*" (Psalm 86:15)! He graciously sought out Adam and Eve. The Lord dealt justly with each offender and gave the first promise of the Saviour – the One who would bruise the serpent's head (Genesis 3:15). He also shed the first blood so that Adam and Eve could be clothed in skins. That bloodshed must have reinforced the dreadfulness of their sin. We likewise should attempt to grasp the cost of the remedy for our sin (1 Peter 1:18, 19). Only the blood of God's sinless Son can atone for our sins.

Adam named his wife Eve; she would be the mother of all mankind. Motherhood would bring joy, but later acute pain when one son murdered the other. Life will bring us joy tempered by sorrow but we look for "*new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (2 Peter 3:13).

∴ **Olive Maxwell** lived and worked for over twenty years in the city of Cork. She and husband Colin continue to serve with the Mission Board focusing primarily on the Republic of Ireland.



CONGREGATION CALL: CARRYDUFF

Carryduff Free Presbyterian Church commenced 40 years ago as an extension from the Martyrs' Memorial congregation. The present building was originally Killynure National School. Built in 1817 by public subscriptions, the school existed until 1968 when Carryduff Primary School was established. In the spring of 1976, Dr Ian Paisley and Mr Robert Lowe crawled through a broken window in the now derelict school house and prayed that God would start a Free Presbyterian work in the locality. Later that year, Mr Lowe obtained approval to establish a Free Presbyterian Sabbath School.

Before this new Sabbath School commenced, the trustees, with the help of Mr Wilfred Crawford (a local building contractor), carried out a major renovation of the interior and

exterior. This included the construction of a new pulpit. On the completion of this essential work, a three-week Gospel Mission was organised, the main speaker being Dr Paisley, and souls were converted.

For twenty years after this first Gospel Mission the work on the Killynure Road remained as an outreach from the Martyrs' Memorial congregation, with a weekly afternoon Sabbath School and an evening service at 8:30pm. However, with the passing of time, and the conviction among some families that what was needed was the formation of a new congregation in Carryduff, the Church was officially constituted on 18th February 1996. Three years later, Rev David McLaughlin was ordained and installed as minister of the fledgling congregation.

Presently there are over 50 in regular worship on the Lord's Day. The Church holds three weekly prayer times, including the Prayer and Bible Study meeting every Wednesday night. It also has a regular Sunday School with 13 in attendance, a Junior Bible Class, a Children's Meeting, and a 'Teens and Twenties' meeting on a Friday night.

2016 was an important year for the Carryduff congregation. In February, the church held a special 20th Anniversary of Constitution Service. Rev McLaughlin presided, the Lisburn Men's Choir sang, Mr Sammy Davidson testified, and the Rev David Priestley (a former member of the Martyrs' Male Witness) preached. Mrs. Eileen Lowe, on behalf of her late husband Robert, unveiled two anniversary stones. These stones will eventually be placed in the new church building.

A special offering raised £1100 for the Building Fund. Another milestone was reached with an historic Foundation Stone Laying Service on Saturday 29th October. Rev Thomas Murray, Moderator of Presbytery, and Rev David McLaughlin, laid foundation stones in the partly constructed building. Some 200 people packed into the main auditorium for this special occasion, with local people and visitors in attendance. The scripture texts on the two foundation stones set the tone for the church's witness to the wider community:

"For the Word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 1:9

"Though thy beginning was small, yet thy latter end should greatly increase." Job 8:7

Rev McLaughlin welcomed everyone and thanked all who helped in the preparations for the day. Rev James Beggs led in prayer and assured the Carryduff congregation of his prayerful support for its Gospel witness throughout the district. Rev Garth Wilson brought greetings from the Sandown congregation, and read from 1 Peter chapter 2:1-12. Miss Ruth McMillan sang, and her father, Rev David McMillan, who was brought up overlooking the church, told of his conversion through the witness in Carryduff. Rev Thomas Murray preached a powerful message on, "The Lively Stones". Rev McLaughlin announced that the offering totalled £17,665.67. The overall building fund offering for the month of October reached a staggering £28,535.80 with gifts from other Free Presbyterian congregations. Rev Thomas Martin



closed in prayer and gave thanks for the supper provided by the ladies of the congregation.

The 40th Anniversary of the founding of the congregation during November marked another milestone in the history of the church with 5 special services conducted.

Some 15 years after the purchase of the site, despite many problems, setbacks due to plan changes, and other difficulties encountered along the way, the church is delighted to announce that the superstructure of the main church building has been erected and paid for in full. By August 2016, the church had spent £354,000. This includes sorting out the church deeds, purchasing the site, excavation work, architect's fees, and laying

the manse and church foundations. The construction of the new church superstructure itself cost £188,408.00. The congregation had at 31 October 2016 £89,000 in its building fund account. To complete the project structurally and internally, another £120,000 is needed. Mr McLaughlin constantly encourages himself in the work by asking, "Is anything too hard for the Lord...?" (Genesis 18:14). He is reminded of the saying of the late Hudson Taylor, "God's Work done God's Way never lacks God's Supply".

It is anticipated that the opening date for the new building could be in the autumn of 2017 to coincide with the 500th Anniversary of Luther's protest. Rev. McLaughlin asks, "Wouldn't it be a fitting and wonderful testimony to the glory and provision of God, that during this major anniversary within the Protestant and Reformed tradition, we were able to open the main church building free of debt?" His constant prayer is that it may please the Almighty to send forth a mighty revival of true religion within the province and beyond, according to His Sovereign purpose and power, Psalm 85:6!



∴ Rev David McLaughlin

KILSKEERY

As part of an investigation into the events of 1966, pupils and staff visited the Crumlin Road Gaol, where Dr Paisley and Revs Wylie and Foster were imprisoned. Rev Foster, school founder, and the only surviving prisoner, accompanied the group with Mrs Foster.



MOURNE

The school's 'Walk for Water' initiative to raise money for new durable water tanks for Emmanuel Christian School raised £1930.75. Miss Lydia Kyle, a trainee teacher, has been helping at the B.C.F.C. School in Kenya for four months.



CLOGHER VALLEY



Mr Stephen Millar and his wife Ruth, a past pupil, were guests at the school's Annual Prize Giving Service. Mr Millar spoke of his visit to Uganda and future work there. To commemorate Reformation Day the school had a series of special assemblies – and quizzes – based on the reformers after whom the school 'houses' are named: Luther, Calvin, Knox and Zwingli.



BALLYMONEY



Above: The school welcomed Miss Margaret Russell to its annual Harvest Service. *Below:* Pupils enjoyed a 'behind the scenes' trip to their local supermarket!



PORTADOWN



Above: Rev D Abernethy (School Administrator) completed the Ben Nevis Challenge and presented £800 to Principal, Mrs Diane Haffey, and the pupils. *Below:* Pupils received prizes at the Annual Prize Giving and Harvest Service.



BANGOR



Above: Key Stage One and Two pupils took part in a traffic survey making use of the new school entrance and ICT room to count vehicles passing on Clandeboye and Rathgael Roads. *Below:* New Year One pupils Hannah, Ruby, Amber and Julia.



NEWTOWNABBEY

To mark 25 years of teaching in Newtownabbey, Principal Mrs McClung was presented with an inscribed silver plate, gift vouchers, flowers and an anniversary cake by Mr Ronnie Semple & Mrs Joanna Brown.



At the Prize Giving David Woods, received the Cranston Examination Shield; Christopher Orr, the Dennison Cup of Achievement; Mark Woods, the Poetry Cup; Phebe Brown & David Hanna, the Science Cup; Zara Brown, the Spelling Proficiency Shield; Phebe Brown, the Language Cup. Mark Woods, Zara Brown, Caleb Clarke, Phebe Brown, Grace McClung, David McClung, Lydia McKeown & Jemima Woods, all shared the Scripture Recitation Shield. Rev A Patterson preached, and the offering realised £4,360.



HILLSBOROUGH GOLDEN ANNIVERSARY

A 'March of Witness' through Hillsborough on Sunday afternoon 25th September marked the 50th anniversary of the Hillsborough Church. During a Praise Service the previous week, David Williamson

MBE (Clerk of Session) and his wife Emilene were presented with gold watches to mark fifty years of service to the church. Special meetings were convened, and a two-week mission with Rev W McCrea followed.





MANY CHALLENGES



I am very thankful for my time spent in Ulster, for the opportunity to renew fellowship with you all, and for the hospitality and support of the churches. I am also thankful to the Lord for enabling my return to the field, and for the renewal of my entry permit for another 3 years. Do pray for strength, wisdom and blessing on this term of service. Back in Kenya I was faced with the reality that things will be different for various reasons, but I am confident that the Lord is in control and that, 'he abideth faithful; he cannot deny himself.' The challenges are many.

I think of the the Christian Academy, with Noreen McAfee moving to Uganda, the finance required, and the academic and spiritual needs of students and staff. We have ten months in another new school year to teach the Word of God. Pray that the precious seed will germinate and bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

I think also of the Bible Christian Faith

Church and its pastors. The men on the ground preaching, teaching and evangelizing need your continued prayers and support.

I am also grateful that the FPC Mission Board and Missionary Council have enabled me to assist many needing emergency and specialized medical care, and poor children and young people needing help with education and other essentials. Your generosity is a vital element in this work.

Remember the Sunday Schools of BCFC as I seek to delegate and to encourage Kenyans to shoulder responsibility in 30 locations. I trust that this term, with God's help, I will see the visual aids and lessons for the curriculum finalised, printed, and in the hands of many Kenyan teachers.

The Free Presbyterian Church Mission Society Africa needs to comply with new regulations placed upon all organisations by the Kenyan government.

We look to the Lord to see the expansion of the work in new areas as we follow up contacts and requests made over recent months. We need wisdom, and labourers to respond to these calls.

Remember Kathy Walker in the bookshop at Kakamega. Pray that God will use the printed page to enlighten darkened souls and edify believers, and indeed use the shop as a point of contact for many who need to hear the Gospel.

It is our desire to see a Bible College opened where men will receive systematic teaching. Then, through them, New Testament churches may be established and the Gospel preached in Kenya and beyond in obedience to Matthew 28:19. To do all of this, we are looking to the Lord. And we depend on the support of the Lord's people, ever seeking those who will hear the Macedonian call: 'Come over and help us!'

✚ Margaret Russell

MISSION BOARD: ANOTHER YEAR IS DAWNING

AS 2017 OPENS UP BEFORE US IN THE MISSION BOARD, THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR FULFILLING THE GREAT COMMISSION ARE VAST AND DIVERSE.

We are but a small Reformed Evangelical witness, and yet we are heartened by the doors that God has opened. In 2016 God gave us new openings both in Uganda and Kenya. These come with heavy responsibilities for our missionary team and the national believers. This is a missionary enterprise that is for the long term – a unique, God-given opportunity to help equip another generation to serve the Lord.

New contacts have also been made with believers in other parts of the Lord's vineyard, and we are seeking to encourage them in the things of God. Our field of service is the world, and where God leads there are no limitations. Constantly the call comes ringing, 'come and help us'. It is a call we cannot ignore.

While the New Year is dawning, the old problems still confront us. *"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few"*. The Lord's answer is for us to pray. (Matthew 9: 37-38) This has prompted the Mission Board

to organise special times of prayer and fasting to seek the Lord for Divine intervention. We rejoice that God has already answered, and has met very specific needs. May it please Him that lives in complete surrender to His call will be raised up to say *"Here am I, send me."*

Last October I had the privilege of visiting the work in Spain. It was a joy to be with Rev and Mrs Boyd as they marked thirty years of service in that land. At the Easter Convention this year (DV) we will mark forty years of the Hanna family in Spain. This is the Lord's doing and is marvellous in our eyes. We look forward to hearing Rev Hanna preach on Easter Friday. Last year, in conjunction with the Youth Council, we organized a very successful Youth Missionary Trip to Spain. We hope this year to send out a team to where Rev Boyd ministers in Cortijos Nuevos. If you are interested please contact the Mission Board and check the website for further details.

On behalf of the Mission Board, and all on its many fields of service, I want to thank you all for your prayerful and financial support. We are labourers together with God. How amazing are those words of Paul in 2 Corinthians

6:1 *"We then, as workers together with him"*. There is work for everyone to do, that the His harvest will be gathered in.

Keep holding the ropes for us. May 2017 be a year especially owned and blessed by Him!

THERE
IS WORK FOR
EVERYONE TO
DO, THAT THE HIS
HARVEST WILL BE
GATHERED IN.

*"Another year of service,
Of witness for Thy love;
Another year of training
For holier work above.
Another year is dawning:
Dear Father, let it be,
On earth or else in heaven,
Another year for Thee."*

Rev I Harris

MISSIONARY COUNCIL REVIEW



Missionary Council representatives with Rev & Mrs Boyd

We have a deep sense of gratitude to Almighty God who has provided the finance for the ministry of the Missionary Council during another year. Missionary Council funds are a lifeline to those who serve God on the Mission Field as they make up 30% of salaries. Your contributions go a long way to sustaining the Lord's servants in their various fields of service.

We want every congregation to be represented on the Council. Each session has the responsibility to appoint representatives from their congregation to serve in this capacity. Representatives play a major role in reporting news from the mission field to their churches, and are placed by the Lord to encourage prayerful and practical support in the churches they represent.

We now have over 20 missionaries directly supported by our funds, and we have been able to assist financially in different projects and outreach programmes. I'm sure we've all been greatly encouraged in recent times by the move of God in our missionary endeavour. New fields have opened, some missionaries have been redirected into new and challenging areas, others have been called and sent out, or are in the process of being commissioned.

Looking to the future, keep up the good work in supporting the monthly Missionary Council offering in your church. As you do so, remember that you are furthering the cause of Christ's Kingdom in many parts of the world.

Rev D Park

UPDATE: MALCOLM & ALISON PATTERSON

Alison is due to complete her course of treatment by 21st December and has managed quite well for which we thank the Lord. The main side effects should dissipate 4-6 weeks thereafter, but a further period will be needed to build up her strength and immune system.

Malcolm himself plans to return to Kenya after the ministers' week of prayer for 3 months (DV), returning for Alison's scans which are due April /May. We appreciate very much the support of God's people and continue to value your prayers as we enter into a new year.

MISSIONARIES ON DEPUTATION

Joy Gillespie (Nepal)

Andrew Foster (Uganda)

Rev Ralph Hall (Tasmania)

Rev Philip Gardiner
(Perth, W Australia)

Home Missionaries can
be contacted via
Mission Board Office.

MISSION BOARD DETAILS

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DATES FOR THE DIARY

JANUARY

15th-20th MOURNE 50TH ANNIVERSARY BIBLE WEEK,

Time: Sunday, 7.00pm
Mon - Fri, 8.00pm,

Speaker: Dr J Douglas

Theme: Practical Implications
of the Second Coming

27th-29th ANNALONG, YOUTH WEEKEND

Time: Fri & Sat, 8.00pm
Sunday, 7.00pm

Speakers: K Boyd, B Lorimer
M Higgins

FEBRUARY

12th-17th ANTRIM, BIBLE WEEK

Time: Sunday, 7.00pm
Mon - Fri, 8.00pm

Speaker: Rev T Nelson

Theme: Reformation Reflections

MARCH

3rd-5th ANNALONG, LADIES RESIDENTIAL WEEKEND

Venue: Lodge Hotel, Coleraine

Speakers: Mrs A Stewart,
Mrs V Dawson

Details: Mrs L Harris,
028 437 68040

10th MARKETHILL, CHURCH RE-OPENING

Time: Friday, 8.00pm

Gospel Meetings: 12th-17th

Time: Sunday, 7.00pm
Mon-Fri, 8.00pm

Speaker: Rev T Martin

CONSIDER CHRIST

Saturday Outreach Days, 2017

- 21st January - 11th March - 13th May
- 5th August - 30th September - 25th November

UNITED CHILDREN'S CAMP 2017

HUMPHREY'S AT RATHMORE, LARNE 31ST JULY - 4TH AUGUST 2017

- Ages 8-12, Cost £120 inclusive, Limited Places

- Various Activities & Visits

- Application Details, www.fpcmission.org

- Send to: Rev Harris, 23a Moneydarragh Road, Annalong, BT34 4TY

