

# FREE PRESBYTERIAN VISION



THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ULSTER

## THE TRUTH ABOUT TRANSGENDER



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The Message: Justification



Congregation Call: Dungannon



The Craigs Conventicle



John & Noranna Hanna:  
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### Editorial

**O**nly a heart of stone could be unmoved by the pictures of famine victims in Yemen, Somalia, and South Sudan. To gaze on the emaciated frames of little children, and the empty eyes of despairing parents, prompts questions that are not easily answered. And it elicits outrage too, when we hear of corrupt regimes whose leaders misappropriate resources to fund foolish conflicts or to increase their own fortunes. They are blind to the plight of their beleaguered citizens, and often wilfully so. Christians cannot and must not ignore the plight of the suffering. We are to help those in need, primarily our fellow-believers, but not exclusively. (Galatians 6:10)

The Bible speaks of another famine. "I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord." (Amos 8:11) Thus the Lord pledged to

deal with Israel, judging her in kind – as she turned away from His Word, so now that Word would be taken from her. What a catastrophe! Martin Luther imagined such a predicament in his day: "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."

Luther's prayer must be ours. But how do we preserve this precious inheritance? By giving it due place – prizing it, studying it, preaching it, obeying it, living it. Like the Psalmist, we must express the conviction that God's Truth is of more use to us *"than thousands of gold and silver"* (119:72) – and we must mean it.

∴ Timothy Nelson,  
[editor@fpvision.org](mailto:editor@fpvision.org)





# THE THRONE OF GRACE

**G**od's throne of grace, unlike earthly thrones, is established in perfect righteousness. It is built on the foundation of justice satisfied and judgment executed.

The Psalmist declares: *'justice and judgment are the habitation (establishment) of thy throne'* (Psalm 89:14). His justice demanded that the law be honoured and its penalty endured. Our glorious Surety, who fulfilled all righteousness, magnified the law and made it honourable. His priestly work is its very foundation, and since He has an unchangeable priesthood (Psalm 110:4), the foundation is totally secure. Such a foundation was necessary, so *'that grace might reign through righteousness'* (Romans 5:31) - the very righteousness Christ wrought for us by His doing and dying. This is the *'throne of God and of the Lamb'* (Revelation 22:1). The Lamb in the midst of the throne (Revelation 7:17) reminds us of His exalted position. So, knowing that all power in heaven and in earth is His, we may *'come boldly unto the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need'* (Hebrews 4:16). He is there to hear and plead our cause. He is an ever-ready Advocate, never absent, continually appearing in the presence of God for us.

Coming to His throne is an inward matter. It is when the heart goes unto God in Christ for grace and mercy, that there is a real coming to the throne of grace. God would have His people come with confidence and expectation, for He is *'a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat'* (Isaiah 25:4). All the grace and mercy in the heart of the Saviour is

ordained and secured for them by the blood that He shed. When He says, *'Seek ye my face'*, let your heart's response be *'Thy face, Lord, will I seek'* (Psalm 27:8).

We know that mercy and truth are before His face (Psalm 89:14). It is mercy connected with and conveyed in a word of truth since *'Mercy and truth are met together'* (Psalm 85:10). When at the throne of grace, we claim mercy on the ground of the promise or covenant established in Christ.

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The Spirit of Christ as *'the Spirit of grace and supplication'* (Zechariah 12:10) guides; fills our mouths with arguments; and *'helpeth our infirmities'* (Romans 8:26). Whatever comes from this throne is all of grace, otherwise it is not suited to the nature of the throne. Grace is written on its every step, and from it the God of grace gives liberally. His treasures are inexhaustible and never impaired by such giving. However much grace has been given, there is as much as ever still to give. The voice of prayer has

a sweet sound in God's ear at this throne for He says, *'Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely'* (Song of Solomon 2:14). The prayer of faith is the appointed means for receiving the promised mercy and grace.

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∴ **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 MESSAGE: JUSTIFICATION



**W**ith the most acute insight, Martin Luther declared that a church's doctrine of justification indicated whether that church was standing or falling. He was right, and his observation is in keeping with the inspired words of Galatians 1:8-9: "But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

Here, in the context of presenting the centrality of justification in the Gospel message, Paul pronounced a Divine anathema on anyone, even an angel from heaven, who would deviate from God's way of justifying sinners. The inescapable conclusion is that to err on this doctrine is to contribute to the eternal damnation of souls! The church must be right on justification; this doctrine lies at the very heart of Divine revelation concerning the salvation of men.





# ATION

What is this justification? How are we to understand it? It would be difficult to better the definition of the Westminster Divines: “Justification is an act of God’s free grace, wherein he pardoneth all our sins and accepteth us as righteous in his sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and received by faith alone.” Put simply, it is the establishment of the sinner in a standing of righteousness before God. The New Testament verb translated ‘justify’ means ‘to declare or demonstrate to be righteous’. A careful and honest study of this term will reach the conclusion that it has a purely legal connotation. Therefore, justification is God’s action in declaring sinners ‘righteous’ and placing them in a state of legal perfection before His law (Luke 18:14).

## FOUNDATION

Scripture shows that God’s pronouncement of a sinner to be righteous is not arbitrary. It has a clear foundation. When God justifies sinners (Romans 8:33), He does so on the basis of a perfect righteousness freely provided in Christ (Romans 5:19). The obedience mentioned by the apostle is the perfect obedience of Christ to the law – given in His sinless life to the law’s precept, and in His atoning death to the law’s penalty – thereby providing a perfect righteousness for sinners. For this reason, Scripture portrays Christ as our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). In a

nutshell, God, through the obedience of Christ, has provided a perfect righteousness for sinners, a righteousness whereby they may be justified (1 Corinthians 1:30). And so He may freely justify the sinner without compromising His own holiness (Romans 3:26). Then, as the sinner trusts Christ for salvation, His perfect righteousness is credited to that sinner’s account before God, and he receives the forgiveness of his sin and full acceptance before the moral law (Romans 4:6-7, 5:1)

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## FEATURES

The primary feature of justification is that it is an act of God (Romans 8:33, cf Luke 18:13-14). Luke’s account depicts the publican, by faith alone, crying to God to “be merciful” to him. The word he used means ‘to be appeased toward’. And the immediate result was that the publican was able to return to his home “justified” – where the tense of the verb denotes a completed act that is neither reversed or repeated, an act that cannot be supplemented or diminished (Romans 8:30, Hebrews 10:2). It is entirely the act of God’s grace (Romans 3:25).

A further key characteristic of justification is that it is legal or forensic in nature. As a result of Christ’s righteousness, many shall be made righteous (Romans 5:19); but it should be noted that the word here translated “made” is indicative



of a legal act. It means 'to appoint' or 'to constitute'. It defines the place of legal acceptance possessed by the sinner through faith alone, by grace alone, in Christ alone. In his first epistle, John sums up this acceptance in the thrilling statement, "*as he (Christ) is, so are we in this world*" (1 John 4:17).

### FALSEHOOD

Despite the clear and unambiguous teaching of Scripture in respect of this vital doctrine, confusion has prevailed and error has abounded. Very often, these developments have been the outcome of failure to understand and appreciate the legal nature of justification.

Before the Reformation, justification was almost invariably confused with regeneration and sanctification. The renowned scholar Thomas Aquinas taught that the first element of justification was an infusion of grace – on the basis of which the second element, forgiveness of sin, was given. And so, from this perspective, the foundation of Roman Catholic teaching on justification by baptism (when grace was infused) was laid. This was developed further with the assertion that the justification so received could be increased or diminished or even lost depending on one's actions. The ultimate conclusion of this line of teaching is the notion that justification rests upon the personal merit of the individual.

It must also be observed that Roman Catholicism confuses justification with sanctification. It teaches that as a result of the grace infused at the moment of baptism, the subject is enabled to obey or conform to particular rites and ceremonies of the church, and thereby become holy, and so find a degree of favour with God. This is to place sanctification before justification. And it results in justification being viewed as a process – a blatant contradiction of Bible teaching, for justification is at once complete, and irreversible.

The teaching of the Roman Catholic Church on the subject of justification was formally endorsed by decrees adopted and promulgated by the Council of Trent (1545-63). This council was convened specifically to counter the teachings advanced by the Protestant Reformation. It affirmed that justification consists of the two elements already highlighted – the infusion of grace by the act of baptism, and the forgiveness of sins. But it is vital to note that, for Trent, the first of the two elements was the crucial one, with the second being merely supplemental. For Roman Catholics, what matters is the baptism and the grace it allegedly brings, enabling the individual to partake in the rites and rituals of the church, confirmation, confession, penance, et al. And, of course, only as one performs these works, is there the possibility of the forgiveness of sins – only the possibility, for no-one may ever be assured of possessing that blessing.

Neither must it be assumed that, five hundred years on, the Roman Catholic Church has changed. It has not. This teaching on justification remains, being clearly documented in many writings recently receiving the imprimatur of 'Mother Church'. Thus, to determine present day official teaching, one needs only to turn to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (1994). Here, in paragraphs 196-7, the Roman Catholic Church affirms that "by baptism the Christian participates in the grace of Christ". This element of 'baptismal grace' is as much evident now, as it was back in the sixteenth century!

Once more, the Catechism promotes the unscriptural view that the sinner can merit salvation and eternal life: "Moved by the Holy Spirit and by charity, we can then merit for ourselves, and for others, the graces needed for our sanctification...and for the attainment of eternal life."

Since the attitude to the doctrine of justification indicates whether a church is standing or falling, there can be no doubt that the Roman Catholic Church was, and is, fallen! It fails the test. It will bring inevitable reproach upon us to say so, but, on the basis of Biblical considerations, that Church cannot be deemed truly Christian. This is why we respond to it as we do. With such a Church, there can be no fellowship. To enter into communion with a body that embraces and propagates the most glaring heresy, and pronounces anathemas on those who declare and defend the truth, would be a gross betrayal of the Gospel. Many with a mind to pursue an ecumenical agenda will follow such a path, but the true Christian must stand apart. He cannot lend credence to a body that has long flouted Scripture, and that has hounded those who dared believe the simple truth of justification by faith alone. He must stand where Luther stood – He can do no other.



∴ **Rev John Greer** is Minister of Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church and Lecturer in Systematic Theology in the denomination's Theological Hall. This article is adapted from one first published in 2010 to coincide with the Papal visit to the United Kingdom.



# MARTIN LUTHER SPEAKS: Justification

**//** All heretics have continually failed in this one point, that they do not rightly understand or know the article of justification. If we had not this article certain and clear, it were impossible we could criticise the pope's false doctrine of indulgences and other abominable errors, much less be able to overcome greater spiritual errors and vexations. If we only permit Christ to be our Saviour, then we have won, for he is the only girdle which clasps the whole body together, as St Paul excellently teaches.

If we look to the spiritual birth and substance of a true Christian, we shall soon extinguish all deserts of good works; for they serve us to no use, neither to purchase sanctification, nor to deliver us from sin, death, devil, or hell.

Little children are saved only by faith without any good works; therefore faith alone justifies. If God's power be able to effect that in one, then he is also able to accomplish it in all; for the power of the child effects it not, but the power of faith; neither is it done through the child's weakness or disability; for then that weakness would be merit of itself, or equivalent to merit. It is a mischievous thing that we miserable, sinful wretches will upbraid God, and hit him in the teeth with our works, and think thereby to be justified before him; but God will not allow it.

**//** Even so God deals with us; he is loving unto us with friendly and sweet words, promises us spiritual and temporal blessings, though everlasting life is presented unto those who believe in Christ' by mere grace and mercy, gratis, without any merits, works, or worthiness.

And this we ought to teach in the church and in the assembly of God, that God will have upright and good works, which he has commanded, not such as we ourselves take in hand, of our own choice and devotion, or well meaning, as the friars and priests, teach in Popedom, for such works are not pleasing to God, as Christ says: 'In vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men', etc. We must teach of good works, yet always so that the article of justification remain pure and unfalsified. For Christ neither can nor will endure any beside himself; he will have the bride alone; he is full of jealousy.

**//** Desert is a word nowhere to be found, for Christ gives a reward by reason of the promise. If the prince elector should say to me: Come to the court, and I will give thee one hundred florins, I perform a work in going to the court, yet I receive not the gift by reason of my work in going thither, but by reason of the promise the prince made me.

**//** Whoso can say from his heart: I am a sinner, but God is righteous; and who, at the point of death, from his heart can say; Lord Jesus Christ, I commit my spirit into thy hands, may assure himself of true righteousness, and that he is not of the number of those that blaspheme God, in relying upon their own works and righteousness.

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



## NEW ELDERS FOR CARRICKFERGUS



**J**ohn Connor and Allan Smyth have been ordained to the eldership in Carrickfergus before an overflow congregation. Rev S McCrea conducted the service, with contributions from Revs B McClung, I Harris, I Brown and

Moderator Rev T Murray who preached from Daniel 6. Our picture shows Messrs Connor and Smyth (front right and second left respectively) with Rev McCrea and elder Samuel McNeilly (senior elder David Neill was absent ill), and with participants.

## REFORMATION 500 COMMITTEE

**T**he Committee continues its work. The special CD of Reformation themed hymns was released at Easter and has proved popular – testimony to the hard work of all who contributed to the project. Copies should still be available from your local congregation. Meanwhile the

province-wide distribution of a Reformation themed Gospel booklet is scheduled for September. The Committee is grateful to churches and individuals who have supported this venture, but there is the need for others to help. Please give what you can to further the spread of the Gospel in this anniversary year.



# FULL ATTENDANCE AT LISBURN SUNDAY SCHOOL



Pictured are Dr J Douglas, Jonathan Edwards and Rev T Martin. A presentation was made to Jonathan for full and unbroken attendance at Sunday School, 2003-2016

## DR BRIAN GREEN

**D**r Brian Green, pastor of Calvary Free Grace Baptist Church, Feltham, London (formerly Zoar Strict Baptist) for the past 55 years, was called home on 4th March at the age of eighty-one. The Editor had a conversation with Dr Green just the previous day at a wedding in County Antrim.

Brian Green was a close friend and colleague of Dr Paisley, often joining with him at protests home and abroad, and being a regular preacher at the Easter Convention. Many readers

will remember his challenging Friday evening messages. He established the High Leigh Holiday Bible Conference in 1988 – at which a number of our ministers have spoken – and it continues to this day.

The Free Presbyterian Church was represented by Deputy Moderator Rev K Elliott at the funeral in Feltham. Our sincere sympathy and prayerful remembrance is extended to Dr Green's wife Pat and to the entire family circle.

# CHILDREN'S GOORNER



## Abraham Manygoats

Abraham Manygoats was a Navajo Indian. He was the medicine man in his tribe. His life was full of sin, dances, dark ceremonies, drinking and fighting. At the age of fifty-four he found the Saviour. From then on he was able to say, "I once was a medicine man and very deep in sin, but now I am a child of God, saved, and kept by His power."

Like everyone else who has ever put his trust in Jesus, Manygoats felt a great struggle in his heart at times. Whenever he wanted to do what was right, he found that there was a strong desire to do wrong. Then, after having read Colossians 3:9-10, he discovered that he had within him two natures, an "old man" that loved to sin, and a "new man" that hated sin.

Manygoats was asked to tell of his experiences with regard to these two natures. He simply answered that before he became a Christian a black dog lived within his heart. Then having heard about and trusted in the Lord Jesus, a white dog came into his heart. Thereafter the two dogs often fought with each other. The only way to overcome the problem was to feed the white dog and starve the black dog.

Boys and girls, I hope you realise that you too need Manygoats' Saviour if you are ever to be forgiven from your sins. However, if you are a Christian, then always try to starve anything that will cause you to sin and keep you back from God's blessing in your life.

Compiled by  
Robert McConnell

"Seeing that ye have  
put off the old man  
with his deeds;  
and have put on  
the new man."  
Colossians 3:9-10

## PRIZES!

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

Rev Garth Wilson  
Email: [answer@fpvision.org](mailto:answer@fpvision.org)  
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### £5 WINNERS LAST TIME:

- |                                    |                                    |
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| » Benjamin Carriek<br>(Tyndale)    | » Josh Cassells<br>(Bethany)       |
| » Becky Robinson<br>(Kesh)         | » Lydia Moore<br>(Ballynahinch)    |

## Quiz:

This is a quiz about opposites. Match the items in the left column with their opposite words found in the Bible references in the right hand column. There will be one Bible reference left over: That will be your answer.



**Bitter**

**Jacob**

**Day**

**Old**



John 9:4

Exodus 15:25

Romans 9:13

Hebrews 13:8

Genesis 22:19

Answer:



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





# STAND – UP

## STAND UP FOR JESUS

**2017 marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation.** It is right and proper that we should mark this historic milestone. But perhaps you might be asking, what impact does an event that occurred so long ago really have on my life today?

The Protestant Reformation was one of the greatest times of revival and blessing in the history of the Christian Church, and we do indeed benefit from it to this day. While beginning on mainland Europe, it spread rapidly across the continent, and eventually reached our own shores. So, to no small degree, the Gospel liberty we enjoy right now can be traced back to the time when Luther, Calvin and the other Reformers were willing to take a stand for the Lord.

One striking feature of this mighty work especially relevant to young people is the fact that many were so willing to stand up and be counted on the side of the Lord. For Martin Luther and his co-workers and successors, it was not about keeping silent and tolerating error for the sake of a quiet life – it was about being true to the Lord, separating themselves from error and sin, and standing up for what was right.

Today, there is a pressing need for all of God's people, but particularly young people, to stand apart from the things of this world and not to be taken up with its errors, its fashions, and its opinions. Are you willing to stand out and stand up for

the Lord? It is not easy, and it will cost – it may cost friends, it may cost acceptance with others, but separation from the world and identification with Christ always leads to God's blessing. He promises, *"Them that honour me, I will honour"* (1 Samuel 2:30).

ARE YOU  
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In the spring of 1858 a revival broke out in Philadelphia. Rev. Dudley Tyng, a young Episcopalian minister, soon came to be recognized as its leader. One day while studying at his home he went out to the shed to check on his mule, which was driving a machine that shelled corn. As he patted the animal, the sleeve of his shirt caught in the cogs of the machine, and his arm was severely injured. The wound became infected, and Dudley Tyng fell ill and died a few days later. Before he died, however, he was asked by his friend George Duffield, if there was a message he wanted to pass on to the generation coming after him. Tyng responded by saying "Tell them, let us all stand up for Jesus." It was this message from a dying saint to those coming after him that provided inspiration for the composition of Duffield's hymn 'Stand up, stand up for Jesus'.

Young person, determine before God that you will stand up and stand out for Him in your generation. As you do, may your life tell for Christ, showing to others something of the glory of the Gospel!

# THE TRUTH

SIN IS ALWAYS  
SIN, NO MATTER  
HOW YOU  
DESCRIBE IT  
OR DRESS IT UP.

**I**n modern society it is impossible to read a newspaper, or listen to the news, without meeting the acronym 'LGBT'. It covers a range of so-called lifestyles, all of which are contrary to the nature and the law of God. The **L** is for lesbian; the **G** for gay; the **B** for bi-sexual; and a more recent addition, the **T** is for transgender. Lesbian, gay and bisexual are terms with which most are familiar, together with the Scriptural position

on them. But what is the truth about transgender?

## WHAT IS TRANSGENDERISM?

This is a term given to those who wish to change their sex because they "feel" they are in the wrong body. They are male and want to be female, or vice versa. Transgenderism, or transsexualism, manifests itself in cross-dressing (transvestitism), using hormone treatments, and in



some cases seeking radical gender reassignment surgery.

This definition would have been sufficient up until a few years ago, but now the picture is even more complicated. Rather than being male or female, with a desire to change, there is a growing movement to look on sexuality as a continuum (gender fluidity), where you can choose to be one or other or anywhere in between; and it is your right (we are told) to do so. It is not uncommon for young people to describe themselves as “non-binary,” that is, neither male nor female. Modern medicine has ‘medicalised’ the sin and given it a name: “gender dysphoria”. But sin is always sin, no matter how you describe it or dress it up.

### WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

Transgenderism has its basis in a deep-seated desire for self-determination, without regard to nature and, in particular, God’s design in man’s creation. The Scriptures are absolutely clear on the matter of sexuality and gender. As far as God is concerned, there are only two genders, male and female. Genesis 1:27 declares that “*God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them.*” But He goes further and instructs that there should be a distinction between the sexes. “*The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman’s garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.*” (Deuteronomy 22:5) Underlying all of this is a discontentment with, and a rebellion against, God’s order for mankind.

One of the most worrying aspects of this matter is the proposal to allow children to choose their gender and sexual orientation. ‘Let them be what they want to be.’ In some schools, the terms “boy” and “girl” are banned. And some parents opt to bring up their children “gender-neutral”. This is a recipe for chaos, both in the lives of the children concerned, and in society generally. Man is born sinful; left to himself, he will always choose the path of sin.

Essentially, it would be no different to bring up children allowing them to choose whether to steal or not, or to kill or not. Given the choice, they will choose to sin. God’s Word affirms that children must be taught the right way to live and behave. “*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*” (Proverbs 22:6)

### IS THERE A GREATER SIN?

Many argue that the sins of sodomites and transsexuals are greater than any others. The Bible, however, does not support this notion. While describing these sins as ‘abominations’, yet the sin of rejecting Christ far outweighs these evil practices. This is made abundantly clear in Matthew 11:23-24: “*And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: ...it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.*” What a sobering thought for self-righteous unbelievers who, like the Pharisee of Luke 18:11, so often pride themselves on the fact that they are not as sinful as others!

### WHAT IS THE ANSWER TO TRANSGENDER?

This is, surprisingly, the easiest question to answer. Transsexualism is a sinful practice, condemned by Scripture; but “*the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin.*” Christ is the answer. Sin against God and His order for mankind inevitably brings discontentment and distress – the answer can never be more sin. Following the Lord’s pattern for living is the key to having the happiest, most contented life that it is possible to live. “*I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.*” (John 10:10) Gender reassignment surgery is not the answer. The Johns Hopkins Hospital in Baltimore, USA, where sex-change surgery was pioneered, stopped performing the operations in 1979 – it found that patients were just as troubled after the surgery as they had been before.

One survey found that a staggering 41% of those who underwent gender reassignment surgery have attempted to commit suicide. Christ really is the only answer, and He will receive all who call upon Him.

### WHAT SHOULD OUR ATTITUDE BE TO THE TRANSEXUAL?

It is abundantly clear that transgenderism is sin. We have already shown that, but the question is, how should we treat such people? Just because they are sinners, does that give us a licence to mock them, belittle them or jeer at them? Are they not souls, “*dead in trespasses and in sins*”, souls “*taken captive by the Devil at his will*”? And is it not the case that there, but for the grace of God, go you and I?

In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Paul mentions these sins and then announces that some in the church in Corinth had themselves been delivered from such by the power of God: “*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? ... neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind... And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.*” So then what should our attitude be? Jude puts it well in verses 22-23 of his epistle: “*And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh.*” Is this group of sinners any less deserving of the Gospel than ourselves?

Sin should never be condoned. But ‘speaking the truth in love’ to sinners, and bringing them to a knowledge of the Gospel, is no less than the fulfilment of the Great Commission. The message of Christ is to be proclaimed to ‘every creature’.

¶ Dr Lindsay Wilson, an experienced GP, is the minister of Castlederg Free Presbyterian Church.

# CHAPLAIN INTERVIEW



**Rev Stephen McCrea,** minister of Carrickfergus, who serves as Free Presbyterian Chaplain at Ulster University, Jordanstown, has been interviewed by Students' Union President Colum Mackey.

The interview was published in the magazine that is freely distributed on the Belfast and Jordanstown campuses. Please pray for him – and if you are a student (or know someone who is), why not contact him at [s.mccrea@ulster.ac.uk](mailto:s.mccrea@ulster.ac.uk).

# YOUTH COUNCIL EVENTS

## FERMANAGH OPEN AIR

**Date:** Wed 12<sup>th</sup> July

**Time:** 1.00pm

**Location:**

Garden/Driveway of  
14 Enniskillen Road,  
Mullybritt, Lisbellaw,  
BT94 5DF

**Preacher:** Rev Larry Power

## PORTRUSH OPEN AIR

**Date:** Sat 15<sup>th</sup> July

**Location:**

Assembling at Ramore Head  
Car Park at 6.15pm for March of  
Witness. Open Air commences  
at Amphitheatre at 7.00pm

**Speaker:** Rev G Lucas

**Singer:** Jenna Malcomson

**Testimony:** David Laverty

## SUMMER OUTREACH

**LEWES, ENGLAND**

**12<sup>th</sup> - 21<sup>st</sup> AUGUST. COST: £230**

It has been 17 years since the Youth Council sent a team to Lewes. On that occasion, Patrick Baker, now minister of our Church in London, was converted. With this encouragement, we return to Lewes. If you are looking for an opportunity to serve the Lord this summer we would be glad to have you on our team.

## NEXT DELEGATES MEETING

**22 May, Portglenone FPC, 8.00pm**



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# A WORD TO WOMEN

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**R**ebekah was a woman who showed early spiritual excellence but finished her life in a disappointing way – an example to follow early on and a warning not to let our spiritual walk drift in later years

Abraham did not want his son, Isaac, to marry a Canaanite. He commissioned his faithful servant to seek a bride for Isaac among his kindred. This was an arranged marriage – but one that was arranged in heaven. The servant met Rebekah as she came to draw water from the well. Asked for “a little water”, she went the second mile, meeting not only his need but the needs of his camels also. Again, when asked about lodging at her father’s house, she displayed a generous spirit and ran to tell her family of their approaching guest. We may not have the outward beauty of Rebekah but we can have her inner beauty by spending less time in outward adornment and more on caring for *“the hidden man of the heart ... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.”* (1 Peter 3:4)

Rebekah could not have imagined the far-reaching consequences of her encounter with Abraham’s servant at the well. Within less than twenty-four hours she was leaving home and family to travel many miles to meet and marry a man she did not know! Gifts were given by the servant and all agreed that the Lord had guided, and that Rebekah should go to be Isaac’s wife.

However when Rebekah’s family tried to delay her departure the decision lay with Rebekah. *“Will you go with this man?”* Unequivocally she answered, *“I will go.”*

Isaac had gone out into the field to meditate at the end of the day. It was there he met his modest bride. A happy Christian marriage must have the Lord at its centre. Isaac and Rebekah began well and for many years continued to walk with the Lord. When their marriage remained childless, Isaac wisely prayed about the matter and the Lord answered. It was not an easy pregnancy and Rebekah sought help from the Lord. The Lord told her that she was having twins and that the oldest twin would serve the younger.

To this point Rebekah shines out as an example of a godly woman. She was ready to leave family and friends to follow the clear leading of the Lord. She was a faithful spouse to a praying husband. However the arrival of Rebekah’s sons seems to have brought division rather than joy, especially as the lads grew to adulthood. Esau and Jacob could not have been more different. Esau loved to be outside hunting. Jacob preferred to stay close to home. Isaac enjoyed eating the produce of Esau’s forays, while Rebekah enjoyed the company of Jacob. This favouritism led to heartache. Rebekah used her influence to trick Isaac into giving Jacob the patriarchal blessing. It was Esau’s by right, but Isaac seemed prepared to ignore that fact. Rebekah should surely have reminded Isaac, and failing that to have sought the Lord for His help and guidance. Instead Rebekah connived an elaborate plan. Jacob got the blessing but had to flee from home to preserve his life. He would be gone for many years and Rebekah would not enjoy his company again. To further add to her sorrow Esau married heathen wives. Rebekah fades from the pages of our Bibles a shadow of the vibrant young woman who began life so well. Let us take heed.

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¶ 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.

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# CONGREGATION CALL: DUNGANNON



**S**cripture declared that the 'Jubilee' was to be commemorated in Israel every 50 years. That commemoration was to be launched by the sounding of silver trumpets to mark the commencement of a year-long celebration. Throughout those twelve months particular practices were to be observed. For example, the fields were not to be cultivated, certain groups of slaves had to be released from their bondage, and lands that had been purchased were returned to previous owners. The whole year was to be marked by great joy, as God's people acknowledged His provision, goodness and care.

But the 'jubilee' was much more than a reminder of material favour – it was also spiritual in its teaching. It not only looked backwards at what the Lord had done – it caused the people to look forward to the great work of redemption

through the person and ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ. The fiftieth was also known as the year of 'liberty', picturing the setting free of sinners from the captivity and bondage of sin. It is no wonder then that the arrival of that fiftieth year was to be commemorated as a momentous and notable event. The Jubilee bore testimony to the Lord's *physical* and *spiritual* provision.

Similarly, this year, 2017, is significant in the history of the Dungannon church. It marks the fiftieth anniversary of the formation of the congregation, and in Dungannon we can rejoice in the Lord's blessing both physically and spiritually.

In the physical sense, the congregation traces its official commencement to

Lord's Day 24<sup>th</sup> September 1967, when fewer than 40 people met in an old tent to constitute the work. That inhospitable location was home to the congregation in its infancy. Later a wooden hall, which became known locally as 'Paisley's Hut', was purchased and erected as a more welcoming building.

In January 1968, Mr John Long was placed as student minister in the church. December 1970 saw Mr Long ordained and installed in Dungannon, and he oversaw the construction of the first permanent

building, officially opened in June 1972 at a cost of £17,000. That building served the congregation for almost forty years.

Following Rev Long's ministry, Mr Hillis Fleming became student minister

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Rev Armstrong and members of Committee



Rev Armstrong with members of Session

in 1975. During his three years in Dungannon, improvements were made to the interior of the building. November 1979 saw the ordination and installation of Rev Trevor Baxter. The congregation continued to flourish in a physical sense, and a new Sunday School complex was added in 1988.

After 18 years in Dungannon, Rev Baxter was succeeded by Rev Paul Fitton. During his ministry, the congregation embarked upon the erection of a new church building. A structure pleasing to the eye and practical in meeting the needs of a growing congregation was opened in November 2011. When Rev John Armstrong arrived in July 2015, the decision was taken to build a new church manse. That new home is currently under construction.

From humble beginnings, the Lord has *physically* progressed the work in Dungannon. *Spiritually*, the same also

might be said. Salvation and spiritual growth through the preaching of Christ have been the primary objectives in the work.

The seeds of that spiritual work were sown in 1964 when Dr Paisley was invited to conduct a Gospel campaign at Laghey, Killyman, and almost 100 souls professed faith in Christ. In August 1967, a further tent mission was arranged, this time at Stangmore on the outskirts of the town. A six week period saw many more converted to Christ, and an increasing desire for a strong, separated witness in the area. In the years since, many Gospel missions have been conducted, many souls have been delivered from the consequences of sin, and many others have heeded the call to separate from religious apostasy.

In 2017 the congregation continues to progress with all our members and friends catered for spiritually. We have

a busy and thriving congregation with a full diary of events each week. The Lord's Day services are well attended. The Gospel is preached, as it has been for the last fifty years, proclaiming salvation and spiritual growth in Christ.

The Ladies' Fellowship, attracting almost 60 women and meeting on the third Monday of each month, has just celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. An annual Ladies' Conference in September usually has 250 in attendance.

Two children's meetings are held each week, one in the church, the other in Derrylee just outside the town. The annual Holiday Bible Club in July attracts a large number of children and provides spiritual instruction, fun and fellowship for all. Our Tumble Tots group, aimed at pre-school children, meets each Friday morning and offers simple Gospel instruction in child friendly surroundings for around 20 children and their carers.

The Young People's Fellowship and Senior Youth encourage friendship and spiritual training for teens, twenties and older. Sunday School affords sound Biblical teaching in a safe Christian environment. The Adult Bible Class has for many years been a source of key spiritual instruction, where members are encouraged to read and study the Word of God. The church choir provides fellowship and the opportunity to sing the Lord's praises. The place of prayer remains central to the life of the congregation. Our weekly prayer meeting is well attended by Christians with a burden for the Lord's work and the conversion of sinners.

Our motto text for 2017 contains some words from Acts 14:27, where the Holy Ghost records that Paul and his companions, 'rehearsed all that God had done with them'. In this year of 'jubilee' for Dungannon, we can certainly rehearse with thanksgiving all that the Lord has done both physically and spiritually. And just as Israel was to look forward in her jubilee, we too can anticipate what the Lord will yet do!

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∴ Rev John Armstrong



# THE CRAIGS CONVENTICLE

**M**any of our readers will be familiar with the term 'conventicle'. For them, it will ever be associated with a particular period of Scottish church history. Seventeenth century Stuart kings believed in the Divine right of the monarchy, and that they were legitimate rulers in the church. For the Covenanters – signatories of the National Covenant of 1638 – there could only ever be one head of a truly Christian church, Jesus Christ Himself. The battle lines were drawn, and so severe was the ensuing persecution of Covenanters that the next fifty years became known as 'the killing times'. Estimates of those martyred or banished for the faith approach 20 000, with hundreds of Godly ministers ejected from their pulpits. As a result, believers took to the fields and to the moors, often assembling in their thousands to attend upon faithful ministry. These gatherings were known as 'conventicles'.

Three centuries on, in an area with strong ties to Scottish Presbyterianism, another conventicle was established. The townland of 'Scotch' Craigs – so-called because many of its residents are descendants of the Scottish settlers of Plantation times – lies some eight miles north of Ballymena. And it was here, fifty



Section of the crowd in 1969. Mr Albert McAuley (Ballymoney) is standing to the left of the loudspeaker he provided.

years ago, on 9th July 1967, that the 'Craigs Conventicle' was inaugurated. The decision to organize this open-air witness grew out of a conversation between two men associated with the local Mission Hall. Stewart Logan and George Wright had a vision to have Dr Ian Paisley preach in Craigs. Such was his popularity

at that time that only an open-air venue would accommodate those expected to attend, and a suitable location was secured on the property of Mr William Selfridge just south of the Craigs crossroads. This natural amphitheatre hosted the Conventicle for its first eleven years. A series of other fields was employed, before





Dr Paisley at Cullybackey Mart

extremely wet weather necessitated removal to the firmer ground of the Cullybackey Livestock Mart in 1985.

At first the meeting was simply styled the 'Craigs Open Air', but a comment by Dr Paisley in 1977 caused the adoption of the term 'Conventicle'. Dr Paisley was the designated preacher for all but two of the annual gatherings – Revs T Baxter and W McCrea deputising when he was out of the country – and he presented the Gospel faithfully and winsomely, in his own inimitable manner. Rev James Beggs was present at many of the meetings, and he remembers the preaching: "By the time Dr Paisley came to read the Scriptures, he had the rapt, full and undivided attention of every person present. There was no restlessness as the clear Biblical message of Christ and Him crucified was faithfully presented. With what authority and faithfulness did God's servant preach the Word! It was fully evident that here was a man filled with the Holy Ghost and power. Enabled by God Dr Paisley ensured that no one left the field without knowing they were sinners and in need of Christ and His wonderful salvation." Mr Beggs is convinced that "we will not hear preaching of this spiritual calibre again during this generation."

From the first the congregations were large, numbering many hundreds, and sometimes over a thousand. Most were from the locality, but others travelled considerable distances. The holiday month often attracted those who were visitors to the province, and these came from the mainland and much further afield.

At the outset, it was never envisaged that the 'Conventicle' would become

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an annual event, spanning over three decades – but that is how it turned out. A special presentation was made to Dr Paisley in 1991, marking the twenty-fifth anniversary of the event. The last conventicle was held in 2000.

Many believers testified to the blessing of God received at Craigs. Only eternity will reveal how many were re-born at those gatherings, as God's servants heeded the commission to 'go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature'. To Him alone be the glory!

*\*The Editor acknowledges Mr George Wright, a member of the Reformed Presbyterian Church, as the source of much information included in this article. George has compiled a very interesting written and pictorial record of the Craigs Conventicle. Anyone interested in purchasing a copy may contact him on 028 9446 0412. Co-founder of the Conventicle, Stewart Logan, is a long-standing elder in our Portglenone congregation, featured in the last issue. Many members of Portglenone were stalwart supporters of the Craigs meeting. A current photo of the congregation, omitted last time, is included here.*



Portglenone FPC Congregation



# BALLYMENA FAREWELL FOR FORMER ASSOCIATE EDITOR



The Pollock family

**A** special 'sending forth' service was held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March in Ballymena for Dr Stephen Pollock, former Associate Editor of this magazine, and his family. Rev J Greer convened the meeting and preached from Ephesians 3. Also contributing were Revs J Armstrong, P Baker, I Brown, L Curran and T Nelson. Minister Emeritus of Ballymena, Rev J Beggs, led in a special 'sending forth' prayer, commending the Pollocks and Stephen's 'old' and 'new' congregations, Ballymagerney and Malvern respectively, to the Lord.

⋮ Editor



Rev Nelson with Dr Pollock



Participants at the meeting



Section of congregation





Mrs Glenda Graham

## ALL CHANGE IN THE MISSION BOARD OFFICE

**G**eorge McConnell has retired from his full time work as Presbytery Missionary Officer, a position he held since 2000. Serving as Board Treasurer from 1991, George was also Missionary Council Chairman, 1970–2012. A Council delegate since 1967, he has been involved in missionary work for fifty years. George's full time role included keeping accounts and presenting reports, representing the needs of the Mission Board and our Missionaries, and raising funds for various projects. The first port of call for those in difficulty, he helped in many emergencies over the years.

George was also responsible for the publication of 'Harvest Times', informing congregations of various prayerful and financial needs. In his office, where challenges came in on a weekly (sometimes daily) basis, he was able to record with thanksgiving the wonderful provision of Almighty God.

Part of George's remit was to visit the field. These visits were eagerly anticipated by both missionaries and nationals with whom many friendships

were formed. His ability to communicate despite language barriers and to reach out in love won the hearts of young and old alike. Many weary pilgrims were helped onward to Zion.

Thanks are due also to George's wife Jean. When George 'disappeared', she knew he would be at the office – when he would return would be another matter! When George was abroad she was left to hold the fort. George could not have served as he did without one whose heart was so devoted to the work.

There is a unique joy in serving God, and that is reward enough. There is also a day of recompense when even the cup of water given in His name will not be unrewarded. (Luke 14: 12-14) We all owe a singular debt to George for a job done unstintingly as unto the Lord. We wish George and Jean every blessing in the years ahead.

Mission Board has appointed Alastair Hamilton, a Missionary Council representative on the Board, as its Treasurer. Pray that the Lord will bless him in this new role. Glenda Graham

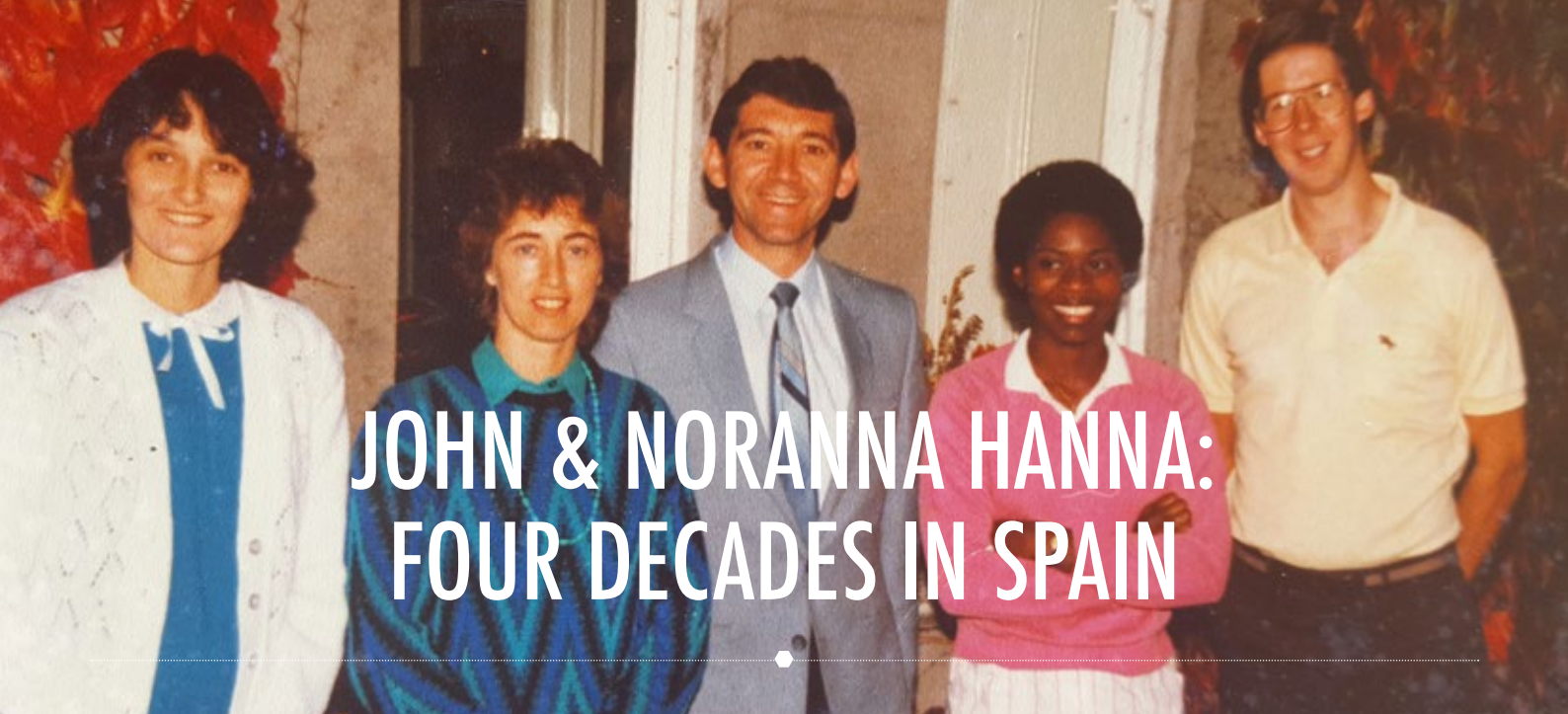
from Mourne church has also agreed to help us. She takes up the story...

*I have been working with George McConnell for a few hours every week for several years. Mission Board Chairman Rev Harris asked me to consider continuing in the office, but on a more permanent basis with added responsibilities, in view of George's imminent retirement. It was a big decision – I did not want to make the wrong one, as I had another job which I'd have to give up. Taking advice from George, Rev Harris, and my minister Rev Patterson, I prayed that God would lead me. Through 1 Corinthians 15:58, then Joshua 1:5,9, in my own personal Bible reading, I realised that this post was not just a job, but God's call to serve Him by taking on an administrative role in the Mission Board Office.*

Please pray for Glenda. Mourne church has kindly agreed to continue to allow us use of office space in its Sunday School Complex. The Office opens Mon – Friday, 9am – 1pm.

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∴ Rev Ian Harris



# JOHN & NORANNA HANNA: FOUR DECADES IN SPAIN



LOOKING  
BACK OVER THESE  
40 SHORT YEARS, IT  
IS APPROPRIATE TO  
RECORD OUR **HEARTFELT  
GRATITUDE TO THE LORD**  
FOR HIS **FAITHFULNESS**  
TO US EACH STEP OF  
THE WAY.

**L**ittle did I know that winter night fifty years ago, when God in His grace brought me to the cross, what He would have in store for me. I could never have imagined how that incident would change my entire future.

God burdened me for His service, and after completing four years of study in our church's Theological Hall and ministering for three years in the Castlederg congregation, Noranna and I set off for Spain under the auspices of our Mission Board on April 13 1977. The importance of this venture was obvious: We were the first missionaries sent out by our Mission Board. Our arrival in Spain, just after Franco's forty-year dictatorship, coincided with a time of instability and change in the country, yet there was the promise of new liberties, not least the freedom to preach the Gospel.

We went to Spain without knowledge of any Reformed separated works. In the providence of God, in our second year we made contact with a Presbyterian church in Alcorcón, a town of about 200 000 people, 15 kilometres south west of Madrid. The Lord was already preparing the way for this to become the basis for our future in Spain.

Our first years were a real struggle, learning the language, and adapting to a new culture – everything entailed in becoming Spaniards. We owe a great debt to God's people in Alcorcón for their untiring help and constant encouragement, and to our home churches who prayed so faithfully for us. In

February 1981, our future in Spain was suddenly in jeopardy, due to a military coup led by an old ally of Franco. Only afterwards did we realise how mightily the power of God had acted in answer to the fervent prayers of God's people.

Looking back over these 40 short years, it is appropriate to record our heartfelt gratitude to the Lord for His faithfulness to us each step of the way. We are grateful for the wise guidance received from our Mission Board and the tireless support of our Missionary Council. Also to the thousands of members of our various churches who have stood faithfully by us through the rough and smooth of these years. Thanks to their sacrificial giving and perseverance in prayer, we can testify that we *"continue unto this day witnessing both to small and great"* (Acts 26:22). Truly, *"This is the Lord's doing and it is marvellous in our eyes"* (Ps.118:23).

⋮ Rev John Hanna





**I**t is a privilege to be able to acknowledge the very important milestone of 40 years of faithful ministry of Rev John Hanna and his wife Noranna in the land of Spain. We truly appreciate their friendship and encouragement throughout these many years, as well as their words of counsel and advice.

It was through John's preaching at a deputation meeting in Lurgan Free Presbyterian Church that the Lord spoke to Heather and myself and called us to the mission field in Spain. We visited for a couple of weeks the following summer to see the work at first hand, and the following year we left the shores of Ulster to join the Hanna family in the work. In those early months, we appreciated Noranna's cooking on the Lord's Day, and many other times as well!

It has been a great joy to see how the Lord has blessed the work year after year in Alcorcón, and supplied another minister for the church in the person of our brother, Angel Álvarez. We pray that the Lord would continue to bless and raise up others to preach the gospel to this dark land, and that John and Noranna may enjoy many more happy years in the land of their calling.

∴ Rev Lyle Boyd

**T**his is a time to celebrate the special leaders Rev John Hanna and his wife Noranna have been for us. It is also a time to note that an important cycle for the church in Alcorcon is coming to an end. The words of Hebrews 13:7 are true of John Hanna, who has been a faithful man of God, having always spoken the Word of God, whose faith has always been an example to all, and whose conversation and conduct have always been an encouragement to follow Christ. And behind a great man there is always a great woman; this is the case with Mrs Hanna. Noranna has always been a good helpmate to John and a true example of piety and humility to the other women in the congregation in Alcorcon.

I think it says it all when a congregation does not only thank their man for his ministry, but they turn to the Lord with thankful hearts for giving them such a man for such a time. We can say nothing more than that the future absence of such a man could not be replaced by anything else but God's peace and His grace.

May the Lord spare him many more years, so that the generation that saw him come from Ulster to Spain will continue to be blessed by this pillar of the congregation in Alcorcon; so that he will see his spiritual sons grow and mature in the faith; and so that he will have Christ's joy fulfilled in himself as he sees the Lord our God showing mercy unto them that love Him and keep His commandments, fulfilling His covenant of grace with the third generation of our congregation as well.

I have very little space to say all that I could say about John and Noranna. Perhaps it could be compared to those most blessed words they will hear from the lips of the Lord Himself, when their good fight will have been fought, their course will have been finished, and they will have kept the faith: *'Well done good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'*

∴ Rev Angel Alvarez

## MISSION BOARD DETAILS

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# DATES FOR THE DIARY

## MAY

5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup>

### GARDENSTOWN, SPRING CONFERENCE

Time: Fri & Sat, 7.00pm  
Sunday, 11.30am & 6.00pm  
Speaker: Rev M Watts

10<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup>  
+ 14<sup>th</sup>

### RASHARKIN, REFORMATION RALLIES

Time: Wed-Fri, 8.00pm  
Sunday, 12.00 & 7.30pm  
Speakers: Revs T Murray, N Hughes,  
D Linden, D Creane, G Wilson

12<sup>th</sup>

### LISBURN, YOUTH PRAISE SERVICE

Time: Friday, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Mr J Moffatt  
Special Singing

12<sup>th</sup>

### MAGHERAFELT, LADIES CONFERENCE

Time: Friday, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Gillian Gillespie

14<sup>th</sup>-26<sup>th</sup>

### GILFORD, GOSPEL MISSION

Time: Sunday, 3.30pm  
Mon-Fri, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Mr R McLean

19<sup>th</sup>

### LURGAN, MISSIONARY CONFERENCE

Time: Friday, 8.00pm  
Speakers: Revs G Ferguson, D Park, Mr C Killen

21<sup>st</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>

### BALLYNAHINCH, TENT MISSION

Time: Sunday, 3.30pm  
Mon-Fri, 8.00pm  
Speakers: Revs S Murray, T Nelson

## AUGUST

5<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>

### ENNISKILLEN, ANNUAL CONVENTION

Time: Nightly, 8.00pm  
Sunday, 12.00 & 8.00pm  
Speakers: Revs J Douglas,  
C Mercer  
T Murray

## SEPTEMBER

16<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup>

### BALLYMENA, REFORMATION CONFERENCE

Time: Saturday, 7.30pm  
Sunday, 11.30 & 6.30pm  
Mon - Fri, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Rev J Wagner

## OCTOBER

4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

### PORTGLENONE, REFORMATION RALLIES

Time: Wed - Fri, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Rev J Greer

15<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup>

### SANDOWN, BIBLE CONFERENCE

Time: Sunday, 7.00pm  
Mon-Fri, 8.00pm  
Speaker: Rev T Nelson

27<sup>th</sup>

### MARTYRS' MEMORIAL, PRESBYTERY REFORMATION RALLY

Time: Friday, 8.00pm

## FREE PRESBYTERIAN INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

PHILADELPHIA, USA

30<sup>th</sup> July - 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2018 DV

Further Details to Follow

