

Free Presbyterian VISION

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ULSTER

The Relevance
of the
Reformation

The
Diet of
Worms

70
Years Ago

Remembering the Past:
Addressing the Future

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Editorial

It is important to remember and retell the mighty works of God. Throughout history, God has providentially ordered all things for His glory and the good of His people. Nothing happens accidentally; therefore, there is much to rejoice in as we survey the past. This year marks the 500th anniversary of Martin Luther's appearance at the Diet of Worms and the 70th anniversary of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster's formation. Although separated by centuries, these two events continue to confirm the Biblical truth, "If God be for us, who can be against us?" The raising up of the reformers and the formation of the Free Presbyterian Church were works of God that have resulted in great blessing. We must not forget them.

Forgetting God's mighty works not only dishonours God, but it also does a disservice to present and future generations. While we must not live in the past, we can learn much from the past. This year, with its notable anniversaries, provides a suitable platform to affirm our historical Protestant position. As a denomination, we must maintain a Christ-exalting preaching ministry and adhere to the practice of Biblical separation. The religious world is marked with compromise and confusion, and therefore there is an urgent need for people, at home and abroad, to hear the unmistakable sound of the Gospel trumpet. We have much to thank God for concerning the past and much to seek God for concerning the future. The youth in our churches need our prayers, and we long to hear of families united in Christ. God, who moved across Europe in the sixteenth century and Northern Ireland in the twentieth century, has lost none of His power. He is unchanging and unchangeable and has pledged to be ever mindful of His people. We have every reason to look to Him to bless His work and establish the work of our hands. ■

✉ Editor
editor@fpvision.org



“The Lord used a twenty-one year old Luther and many other young men and women to turn the world upside down. Believers, young and old, who were taken up by our great God and made sharp threshing instruments in His mighty hand.”

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Comfort in the Lord



“The Psalmist received great comfort through the many ups and downs of life by lifting his eyes of faith to the Lord. Whatever may be the trial or the trouble and however great the darkness, find comfort in the Lord.”

We are often conscious of our need for comfort. The word comfort has been upon our lips again and again as we have been in most challenging times. However, we need comfort throughout our lives, for there are always many uncertainties to face and difficult paths to navigate.

When the apostle Paul wrote his second letter to the church at Corinth, he said, “Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). The words comfort or consolation are repeated ten times in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians 1. We must not think of comfort only in terms of “sympathy”, because sympathy can weaken us instead of strengthening us. God does not pat us on the head and give us something to distract our attention from our troubles. No, He puts strength into our hearts so that we can face our trials and triumph over them. The English word comfort comes from two Latin words meaning “with strength.” The Greek word means “to come alongside to help.” It is the same word used for the Holy Spirit - the Comforter - in John 14-16. The Lord draws alongside to help His children in their times of great need. He gives strength when we need it most, and grace for every trial. Our Lord assured Paul, “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

God often encourages us by His Word and through His Spirit, but sometimes He uses other believers to give us the encouragement we need. Consider the instruction to encourage others in 2 Corinthians 2:7, 8 and the example of Titus, who comforted those who were cast down (2 Corinthians 7:6, 7). I remember a colleague explaining that a word of encouragement, from a lady going out of a prayer meeting, was used to lift his drooping spirit when he was amid deep despair. God has a Barnabas here and there, and He uses these “sons of consolation” to help us through the dark periods of discouragement that we face.

When you feel discouraged because of difficult circumstances, it is easy to look at yourself and your feelings and focus on your problems. However, we must take the first step to look by faith to the Lord and realize all that God is to us. The Psalmist said, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:1, 2). The Psalmist received great comfort through the many ups and downs of life by lifting his eyes of faith to the Lord. Whatever may be the trial or the trouble and however great the darkness, find comfort in the Lord. He is “...our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). ■

✍ Rev A Symlie,
Ballygowan Free Presbyterian
Church.



70 Years Ago

In 1949, Mr George K. Gibson of Crossgar approached Rev Ian Paisley, on behalf of the Crossgar Mission Hall Committee, to conduct an old-time Gospel campaign in the town. After prayerful consideration, they set a date for February 1951. To have as commodious a meeting place as possible, the Campaign Committee decided to ask the Kirk Session of Lissara Presbyterian Church to use the church hall. The request was granted unanimously.

On Saturday 3rd February 1951, a march of witness was arranged before the commencement of the mission, but when the people reached the church hall, they found the building closed. The decision to shut the doors of the church hall was taken one-and-a-half hours before the first meeting of the mission was due to commence. The Down Presbytery called a special meeting of the Kirk Session that afternoon and stated that the church hall would not be used for the Gospel mission. They further noted that Rev Paisley, and those with him, including their church members, should be kept outside. Two elders, Mr Hugh James Adams and Mr George K Gibson, refused to obey this ruling and were suspended.

The Gospel mission commenced the next evening, 4th February, and continued until 25th February in Crossgar Mission Hall. God worked mightily, and ninety-four people came to Christ.

On 5th February, the Down Presbytery called a meeting of the congregation to revise the poll list to call a minister. This was contrary to church law. However, there was a determination to prevent a call to an evangelical minister. Mr Gibson wrote a letter of protest to Lissara Kirk Session. He received a lengthy reply from Rev Bailie, the convenor of the vacancy in Lissara. The anti-evangelical and dictatorial actions of the Down Presbytery caused much heart-searching amongst the



☒ **Far left:** 17th March 1951 Back row (L -R) Messers J Gibson, C Harvey, W Emerson, J Morrison, G Gibson and W Miscampbell, (front Row (L - R) Mr G Hutton, Rev I Paisley, Rev G Stears, Mr H Adams.

☒ **Above:** Protesters at Crossgar (1951)
 ☒ **Circle:** Rev Ian Paisley

congregation's evangelical members. As the mission continued, there were conferences, and prolonged seasons of prayer, asking God for grace and wisdom to know and do His will. A special day of prayer and fasting was held in Ravenhill Evangelical Mission Church, and at the conclusion, the way of God was plain: a new church, the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster, would be formed.

A public meeting was held in Crossgar on Lord's Day 11th March 1951, which included an announcement concerning the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster's formation and constitution. A copy of this manifesto was sent to all Lissara congregation members and the ministers of the Down Presbytery. It set forth the

reasons for the secession from the Church which had betrayed the faith and informed them that a congregation of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster would be formed in Crossgar on Saturday 17th March 1951 in Killyleagh Street Mission Hall. The hall was extensively renovated to serve as a temporary place of worship. Five members of the Lissara session were installed as the first session of the new Church, and the first services, including Sunday School, were held on Lord's Day 18th March 1951. The five session members' names were James Morrison (Clerk), William Miscampbell, Hugh James Adams, Cecil Harvey, George K Gibson (secretary). Mr William Emerson was also ordained



and installed as an elder in the new Church. All the Sabbath school teachers joined the new congregation. Rev George Stears, of the Presbyterian Church of South America, who was ordained to the ministry in Rio Grande del Norte in May 1935, was inducted as minister pro-tem of the new congregation. Rev Paisley ended his sermon at the opening of the new Church on 17th March with these prophetic words: "Just as the Free Church of Scotland grew in strength till it was almost as large as the church it left, so I believe that this Church, with the blessing of God, will go forward till all Ulster rings with its teaching." ■

☒ **Adapted by the Editor**

Old Time Gospel Campaign
 CONTINUES IN
CROSSGAR MISSION HALL
 (Please note change of place owing to Down Presbytery's over-riding of Session's decision for use of Church Hall)
NEXT SUNDAY NIGHT at Eight p.m.
Special Subject :
'The Liquor Traffic—that Hell-sopped Business'



Preacher: Rev. IAN R. K. PAISLEY.
 Mr WM. MORGAN, M.P. (Oldpark), will give testimony.
 MISSION CONTINUES WEEK NIGHTS 8 P.M. (D.V.)
 ALL NIGHT OF PRAYER FRIDAY commencing 11 p.m.
 CHRISTIANS PRAY FOR REVIVAL.

☒ **Above:** Advert for Crossgar Mission

“As the mission continued, there were conferences, and prolonged seasons of prayer, asking God for grace and wisdom to know and do His will.”

Remembering the Past Addressing the Future

The Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster celebrates its 70th anniversary on 17th March 2021. The history of the church has been recorded in various ways at various times. In this article, Dr John Douglas recalls God's blessing in the formative years and provides timely counsel for the present.

ED: When and how did you come into contact with Rev Ian Paisley?

JD: Following the Second World War, my family moved from Ballygowan to Belfast. It was 1946, and my mother wanted to send her children to Sunday School. She thought all the local Sunday Schools were good but chose one convenient to where we lived as it was within walking distance. The Sunday School she decided on was part of Ravenhill Evangelical Mission Church's ministry, and the newly ordained minister was Rev Ian Paisley. I heard the gospel in that Sunday school, and God spoke to my heart in those classes. Mr Paisley led me to Lord. I remember distinctly his strong emphasis on the words of the Saviour, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). He used to say often, at later times, that I was the first person he led to the Lord in the course of his ministry in Ravenhill.

ED: What do you recall of the lengthy prayer meeting where God answered prayer powerfully?

JD: Any discussion of these prayer meetings would have to begin with mention of a young man called Bob Scott. The Lord saved Bob in March 1949. Shortly after his conversion, his mother who had prayed for him for years, advised him, "There is a young



☒ **Above:** Pictured at the opening of a portable hall, (L – R) Dr Bob Jones III, (Greenville SC), Revs J Douglas, I Paisley, I Foster, A Cairns, and W McCrea.

man on fire for God down the Ravenhill Road ... a young minister called Ian Paisley. You need to go there and hear him." Bob had heard Ian Paisley at Orange rallies and band parades. Ian Paisley's preaching gripped him, and so he sought out the church where Ian Paisley preached. Although he was older, Bob and I became friends. Bob was burdened for open-air preaching and thought of preaching to a captive audience in Corn Market, Belfast City Centre. He mentioned this burden to Ian Paisley, who said, "You cannot go without prayer. We will pray about it." Thus, prayer meetings began on a Saturday night in August 1949. They

continued each week. In September 1949, Ian Paisley sensed that God was at work and urged, "We need to pray through the Saturday night". The meetings were thrown open to the men, and there were all-nights of prayer. The first weekend in October was a special time. Mr Paisley said, "We will have to pray on until God blesses; until God sends Revival." There had been a half-night of prayer arranged for Friday, but it stretched through to Saturday and beyond. I returned to Church that Monday evening as soon as I could. When I entered, Mr Paisley and Bob Scott greeted me joyfully, saying, "Revival has come! God has

answered.” The prayer vigil had ended with assurance and victory. And God did send revival blessing. There is no question that those prayer meetings changed everything.

ED: Please sketch the details of the Crossgar controversy.

JD: The Crossgar controversy was neither sought for nor desired. No one had foreseen any possible problem arising in the Lord’s work. Mr Paisley had an extraordinary mission in Rathfriland during November 1949 when 186 people professed faith in Christ. The next year saw memorable campaigns in Ballymena and Lisburn. He received an invitation to conduct a mission in Crossgar in March 1951. Elders from Lissara Presbyterian Church were responsible for the invitation, and use of the church property was granted for the mission. Then the Down Presbytery sprang a surprise, and with short notice, decided to forbid the use of the church property for the mission. The elders and others in the Christian community were shattered. The elders had been sorely frustrated for several years. They had a strong desire to see an evangelical minister come to pastor their church, and it seemed to them, the Presbytery had done more to frustrate their efforts all along, particularly in this respect. The withdrawal of permission for the mission was the last straw. The elders decided to run a public protest with Mr Paisley and others in attendance. The elders were suspended from office for holding the protest. They responded by praying, and after prayer, decided the mission should proceed in the local Mission Hall, in Killyleagh Street. They agreed to form a new church under

 **Below:** Advertisement for Gospel Mission in the 1950s.



God, a church where the gospel would be freely preached. It would be called Crossgar Free Presbyterian Church. Nearly all the elders transferred and a considerable number of the Lord’s people, Sunday School teachers among them.

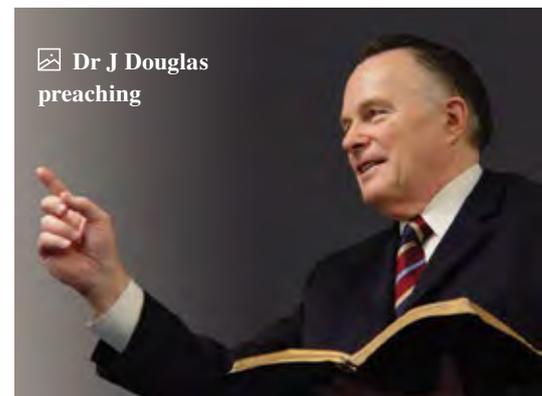
ED: What theological issues lay at the heart of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster’s formation?

JD: This newly formed church took a vigorous stand and held to the Westminster Confession of Faith with the Catechisms. The Presbyterian Church in Ireland held membership in the theologically “vacant” World Council of Churches and had been strongly affected by the notorious teaching of Professor J. E. Davey. Although some activities were secret, the Ecumenical issues that flourished came to be known as “The Romeward Trend.” The theological poison of “modernism” had blunted the Presbyterian Church’s ministry, and the Free Presbyterian Church sought to create an awareness of the pernicious influence of Modernistic teaching. It warned of apostasy and highlighted the World Council of Churches’ compromising membership and the ecumenical movement’s treachery.

ED: Can you describe the formative years of the Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster?

JD: In many ways, the events of 1966 established, in a human sense, the Free Presbyterian Church. Before those times, some churches struggled, but all were resolute in their places, endeavouring to fulfil their desire to walk with God. They maintained the witness, preached the Word, and continued in prayer. In several areas, we had great prayer warriors, men of character and not a few with a vision. Some churches held missions or arranged an annual week of meetings.

In our earnest endeavours, we were thoroughly evangelistic. The whole burden of the preaching was to seek God earnestly for a word in season, to preach Christ in all His fulness. The personal impact of the atonement procured through the shed blood of



Calvary’s cross, and the proper handling of the living and life-giving Word were the objectives we kept in mind. We were not perfect by any means, but we did strive to reach the mark set before us. In the early days, there was also a common interest among the churches.

ED: What advice would you give to young Free Presbyterians today?

JD: I cannot stress too much the immense importance of seeking the Lord early in life. The Scriptures which either the child or youth may learn are likely to stay with them all their days. Set Matthew 6:6 before you with resolve. Take time to meet with God in private. Many meet with God in public worship, and this is both desirable and wonderful, but there is also a necessity to set a time apart when you can regularly meet with the Lord alone.

ED: Have you any closing comments on your Christian experience in the Free Presbyterian Church?

JD: I owe everything under God to Dr Paisley. He led me to Christ and was an enormous help to me and many others in the ministry. Dr Paisley inspired the churches with his leadership.

I believe he set out to be steadfast, unmoveable, and always abounding in the work of the Lord (1Corinthians 15:58). He was a great example in evangelistic preaching and intercessory and prevailing prayer. He made it his practice unflinchingly, both privately and publicly, every time before he preached, to pray for God to fill him with the Holy Spirit. Let us pray, each one, ever so much more, for the work of the Holy Spirit of God in our lives and our churches and this land. ■

Clogher Valley Anniversary

On Lord's Day 13th December 2020 Clogher Valley FPC concluded its 50th Anniversary Year with the launch of a commemorative publication entitled "Solid Ground" and special presentations. Mrs Ingrid Irwin was recognised for fifty years service as Church Organist with William Jay's Morning and Evening Exercises inscribed, and a bouquet of flowers. All the Office Bearers who have served for at least 25 years were also recognised with inscribed presentation Bibles:

- » **Mr John Irwin** (*Elder*); 50 Years an Office Bearer, Secretary 1970-2013.
- » **Mr Jeffrey Condell** (*Elder*); 50 Years an Office Bearer, Treasurer from 1996.
- » **Mr Wills Robinson** (*Elder*); 44 Years an Office Bearer, Christian School Secretary 1986-2003.
- » **Mr Jim McClung** (*Elder*); 35 Years an Office Bearer, Clerk of Session from 2002-2018.
- » **Mr David Hetherington** (*Deacon*); 29 Years an Office Bearer, Assistant Treasurer from 1996.

The special guests were Rev and Mrs Michael Patrick. Rev Patrick, first minister of the congregation, received John Bower's two-volume work "The Principle Documents of the Westminster Assembly", to mark the 50th Anniversary of his ordination to the Gospel Ministry. Rev Patrick ministered in the morning on "Stand Fast" (Philippians 4:1) and brought his testimony in the evening. ■



Photo 1: Back row (L – R) Rev Michael Patrick and Rev Peter McIntyre. Front row (L-R) Messers D Heatherington, J Condell, W Robinson and J Irwin.



Photo 2: Rev P McIntyre is pictured with Mr J McClung.



Photo 3: Mrs Ingrid Irwin is pictured receiving a presentation from Rev Peter McIntyre.

Elder Ordination in Portavogie FPC

Mr Adrian Coffey was recently ordained as an elder in Portavogie Free Presbyterian Church. The picture shows (L- R) Rev J Greer, Mr S Beattie, Rev J Armstrong, Mr A Coffey, Rev S Murray and Mr J Adair. ■



Letter from Mrs Cairns

A very sincere 'Thank You' from my heart to the many people around the world who so kindly sent cards, letters, emails, text messages and phone calls to me when Alan was called Home to his Saviour. I am so sorry for not replying to you personally. I am sure you will understand.

The outpouring of sympathy was overwhelming! This, and the sudden, unexpected illness and death of Alan, just put my mind in a fog. These days without him have been very hard, but the Lord always encourages me each day through His Word. He truly is a shield and buckler, and He is a very present help in trouble.

Alan's work on this earth had finished, and so the Lord took him home. In my Bible reading recently, I came across three points in a message that Alan preached on Romans (his favourite book) chapter 1, verse 16, on 'Commitment.' His three points were, 'To Christ,' 'To the Gospel,' and 'To the Church.' That summed up his ministry. To God be the glory!

I also thank our son Frank and his wife Whitney, for their love and kindness. It was so sad that they could not travel over for the funeral, but their thoughts and love were with me, and I am so

grateful. Also, I want to thank Alan's nephew Kevin, his wife Julie and daughter Norah who constantly keep in touch from Ohio.

I would like very much to thank the Rev. David Park and his wife Susan for their kindness and love to us both since we first returned to Northern Ireland. I thank them from my heart for their kindness, particularly when Alan took ill and was in ICU. Those were difficult days, and David was a tower of strength, and Susan was so kind in providing meals each day.

There are two ladies whom I must thank who were an immense help and strength to me, Miss Sadie McAuley and Mrs Cathy Atkinson. It would be impossible to repay such kindness.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the ministers who officiated at the funeral under the difficult government restrictions. I thank Mr Park for arranging all details of the funeral and his tribute to Alan; and the Moderator Rev John Armstrong, Rev Ian Harris, Rev Leslie Curran, Dr John Douglas, Dr Stanley Barnes and Rev John Greer for taking part, either at the graveside or Hebron. My thanks are also due to the funeral directors, Andrew McMullan, Kenneth McAuley, and their staff for

their sympathy and kindness.

A sincere thank you is due to Stanley and Ina Barnes, and their family particularly, for adding us to their family over these many years.

I would also like to thank the elders, deacons and congregations in Faith FPC, Greenville and in Hebron FPC, Ballymoney. Your love, friendship and respect, not only these last weeks, but also during the years when Alan ministered to you, and then latterly when he sat in the pew at Hebron, create precious memories which I will treasure. I will continue to uphold you in prayer.

I acknowledge the help and encouragement of Mr Steven Lee, his lovely tribute to Alan, and his great work on Sermon Audio. Thank you, Steven.

Finally, I express my gratitude to everyone in all our congregations wherever you may be; I am grateful for your prayers and fellowship.

I write these words on behalf of Frank, Whitney, their three little girls and, of course, on behalf of Alan's sister Betty.

The Lord bless each of you and reward you for your kindness, generosity and love. ■

Mourne Presentation

📷 A presentation was made recently to Mr George McConnell on behalf of the congregation of Mourne Free Presbyterian Church. Mr McConnell has served as church treasurer from 1967 to 2010, and also school treasurer from 1988 until 2020. The photograph shows (L to R) Mr R Ward, Mr and Mrs G McConnell, Mr G Weir, Rev A Patterson and Mr R G Graham. ■



New Address:

Rev and Mrs Raymond McLernon
126 Monree Hill,
Donaghcloney,
Craigavon.
BT66 7GZ



“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

High Visibility Coats

Back in 1933 in the basement of their home in California, brothers Bob and Joe Switzer came up with an invention that was one of their “brightest ideas” ever. Experimenting with various paints, they invented a brand-new colour called “Fire Orange” which actually glowed in the dark. They then came up with the idea of putting this colour onto clothing and the rest, as they say, was history. Not only did the high visibility coat come into existence, but it was also a great success.

In the Bible, there are lots of stories about coats and the people who wore them. The most obvious person that would spring to mind would be Joseph and his coat of many colours. However, I want to look at three very important coats in another Old Testament character’s life: Samuel.

The coat of care. This coat is found in 1 Samuel 2:19. This verse records that Samuel’s mother, Hannah, came to visit him every year. She always brought a coat that she had made especially for him. No doubt as she stitched and sowed everything together, Samuel would have been consistently on her mind. This coat was prepared with great love and care. What a reminder this is of the great love and care that God has for us. We were on His mind whenever He set forth the plan to send us His own Son as a sacrifice so that we might be saved and clothed in the garment of his righteousness.

The coat of conflict. We read of this coat in 1 Samuel 15:27. On this occasion, Samuel was questioning Saul. Saul had disobeyed God by not destroying everything that belonged to the Amalekites. Knowing he was wrong and afraid that Samuel, and worse still, God would leave him, Saul grabbed and tore Samuel’s coat. As quick as a flash, Samuel said, just as you have torn my coat, God will tear the kingdom from you. I wonder if you have ever worn the coat of conflict. Whenever you see wrongdoing, do you speak out for the Lord, even if you know that it will cause the wicked to tear at you?

The coat of character. In 1 Samuel 28:14 when he was with the witch of Endor, Saul recognised Samuel from the very coat he was wearing. I wonder today, having been clothed in the coat of Christ’s righteousness and then being willing to wear the coat of conflict for the Lord, do you have the characteristics of a godly person? Do you stand out in a world full of sin and darkness? Are you like the high visibility coat, easily spotted for what you are? A child of God. ■



Look up the Bible references to help find the answers to these questions on the sun. Using the letters in the highlighted boxes, make up the second part of this word.

What sort of coats did God make for Adam and Eve? (Genesis 3v21)

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Joseph had a coat of many colours, but who gave him that coat? (Genesis 37:3)

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He had a helmet of brass, but what sort of coat did Goliath have? (1 Samuel 17:5)

--	--	--	--	--	--

The Saviour’s woven coat was without something? (John 19:23)

--	--	--	--	--	--

ANSWER: A

--	--	--	--	--

COAT

PRIZES!

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

Rev Garth Wilson
Email: answer@fpvision.org

70 YEARS ON...

WHAT NOW?

This month marks the seventieth anniversary of the founding of our denomination. As a child, I grew up in the Free Presbyterian Church, the Omagh congregation being my home church. I have been a Free Presbyterian for all of my life, by birth and now also by conviction. As a minister in our denomination, it is my privilege to serve and work alongside God's people. While I don't count myself as old, I don't think I could get away with being called a young minister anymore. As students, I always smiled when we went around the various churches on deputation and as we sat in prayer meetings and heard people pray for these young men and women (meaning the students). Some of my fellow students used to love giving me a dig in the ribs every time people prayed for the 'young men' – they thought I didn't fall into that category!

Regardless of my age, I am a Free Presbyterian. I have only heard and read of the early days of the Free Church, days of great blessing and the experience of God's power. As a child, I can vividly remember sitting under Dr Paisley's preaching and couldn't help but notice his power and ability in preaching. Yet, I have never experienced the days of revival power. Yes, I know there were difficulties, but the very evident blessing upon our denomination in the formative years cannot be denied and can only be a

move of God the Holy Spirit. Now that we have reached this milestone in our denomination history, where do we go?

One thing we must not do is applaud or puff ourselves up. All that our denomination accomplished down through the years has been of God, and all glory must go to Him alone. However, where now? Where now, especially for a younger generation in our congregations? What should we do to mark this seventieth anniversary? Let me suggest some ways we can celebrate this anniversary.

We must PERSEVERE in our WITNESS
Sadly, our nation is not in a good place spiritually, and if ever there was a need for the church of Christ to press on and persevere in our witness for God, it is now. We must continue to declare the Gospel of saving grace; preach it and proclaim to all. God still has a people to save, and the people of God must persevere in reaching out to our communities. We must continue to be evangelistic, even though we may not see much happening. It is getting harder to get people into the church and Gospel missions, but we must persevere in our Gospel Witness.

We must also persevere in prayer, especially times of collective prayer in our local churches. I would encourage our young people, especially to get to the mid-week prayer meeting in your local church. Listen and learn from others who pray and get involved in prayer.

We must PRAY for more WORKERS
We have quite a few vacant churches, both at home and on the mainland. We also have a great need for more missionaries to fill the gaps in our mission stations, so we must pray that the Lord would call men and women into His work full time. It is the Lord's work, and we must be faithful

FORWARD!

in praying that the Lord would call more workers into it.

We must PLEAD for God to WORK
One thing that the covid-19 pandemic has reminded us all is that man does not have the answer. Therefore, we must plead for God to step into our land and across our nation. Yet we must plead for God first of all to work in our own lives individually, that He would forgive us of our sins and our barrenness, and that God would be pleased to renew and revive us individually.

Having worked in us, may God be pleased to work through us, and may we see days of the right hand of God. How I long to experience days of revival; not merely to read about them or hear about them, but to live through them! Yet our God is still able to do greater for us than what He has already done.

We thank God for the past seventy years, but with greater energy and enthusiasm let us all go forward in God's work because there is still much ground to be gained, still much blessing to experience and still many souls to be reached. Where do we go from here? Let the Lord provide the answer...

"And the LORD said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward". ■

✍ Rev G Wilson,
Sandown Free Presbyterian Church.



Who would have thought that a Protestant Reformer born over 500 years ago would become Playmobil's bestselling toy of all time? Evidently, Playmobil recognised that Luther and the Protestant Reformation have significant relevance today.

Martin Luther was a determined, bold and brave twenty-one year old, who was reduced to a trembling coward when a bolt of lightning struck nearby while returning to university after visiting his parents.

Filled with fear, he cried, "Saint Anne, help me! I shall become a monk". Although St Anne could do nothing to help him, the King of Kings was at work drawing this darkened Roman Catholic to the light of the gospel.

True to his word and driven by fear of judgment, Luther became a monk and concentrated on pleasing God. He punished himself with beatings and hunger while living in a cold cell in a monastery. He believed that these acts of penance, together with multiple visits to the chapel and lengthy confessions to a priest, would make him acceptable to God.

As Luther's introspection grew, he became more frustrated at his

sinfulness and inability to know when he had done enough to please God. Then another bolt of light struck him: this time, it was the Gospel. He read, "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:14). Luther realised that God did not require him to make himself righteous; rather, Christ has provided perfect righteousness.

Luther found that God not only punished sin but was also kind, loving, and generous. This was revolutionary for Luther, who went on to say, "Sinners are attractive because they are loved; they are not loved because they are attractive." Luther was

converted to Christ when he was in his twenties; and when he was thirty-five, he nailed his now famous Ninety-Five Theses to the doors of the Wittenberg chapel.

In 1521, Luther received a papal bull giving him sixty days to recant or be excommunicated. He burned that papal bull and thus truly ignited the Protestant Reformation. In response, the Roman Catholic Church's hierarchy brought him before the Diet of Worms, an assembly of the Holy Roman Empire. However, Luther refused to recant, uttering the words which are now permanently linked to him: "Here I stand, I can do no other, so help me God. Amen." In a most dramatic turn of events, Luther was smuggled away to Wartburg Castle. While he was there, Melancthon encouraged him to translate the Bible into vernacular German. The translation was another of Luther's momentous achievements!

Luther was God's man to accelerate the Reformation which had been simmering for decades, a Reformation that radically affects both young and old to this day.

SCRIPTURE

The impact of Luther's work is felt whenever people encounter the Bible in their language. He was not the first to translate the Old and New Testaments into a language other than Latin. However, Luther was the first to look to the original Hebrew and Greek in his work rather than Jerome's Latin Vulgate. Luther recognised the priesthood of all believers. It was his conviction that they all should have ready access to God's word. Among the people influenced by Luther's translation was the English reformer William Tyndale, who likewise wanted to produce a Bible in his people's language.

The Reformation benefited from rising literacy in the 1440s. Johannes Gutenberg's invention of the printing press played a large role in this. It is estimated that 20% of all written documents, at that time, were authored by Luther. Luther's writings went viral!

SERMONS

Pre-reformation religious services had removed preaching from its rightful place at the centre of a worship service. Luther was mostly responsible for breaking that tradition and placing the Word of God as the central part of a church gathering. The Reformation also recovered the Biblical mandate of the preacher. For centuries individuals gathered together and went through unintelligible rituals and murmurings. Following the Reformation, pastors and preachers would proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, leading men to the true King and only Head of the Church. Luther said, "When I preach, I adapt myself to the circumstances of the common people. I don't look at the doctors and masters, of whom scarcely forty are present but at the hundred or the thousand young people and children. It's to them that I preach, to them that I devote myself, for they too need to understand. If the others don't want to listen, they can leave... We preach in public for the sake of plain people. Christ could have taught in a profound way, but He wished to deliver His message with the utmost simplicity in order that common people might understand."

SINGING

The priesthood of the believer is a doctrine that affirms that all believers are priests and therefore have direct access to God through Christ. They have a right to read and interpret the Scriptures. Contrary to this belief, the medieval church had a priestly class who would mediate between the people and God. This, in turn, led the church to manipulate the truth to gain power. Luther's rediscovery of the priesthood of the believer not only meant that everyone should have the Scripture and sermons in their common language but also that congregations should participate in lifting their voices to God in song. Luther's love for singing is evident:

"Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. No greater commendation than this can be found — at least not by us. After

all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music."

SERVICE

The idea of a ploughboy ploughing and a milkmaid milking being work and service for God was radical thinking in the 1500s. Luther said, "If you ask an insignificant maid-servant why she scours a dish or milks the cow, she can say: 'I know that the thing I do pleases God, for I have God's Word and commandment...' God does not look at the insignificance of the acts but at the heart that serves Him in such little things. God is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid."

He added, "The works of monks and priests, however holy and arduous they be, do not differ one whit in the sight of God from the works of the rustic labourer in the field or the woman going about her household tasks, but that all works are measured before God by faith alone... Indeed, the menial housework of a man-servant or a maid-servant is often more acceptable to God than all the fastings and other words of a monk or priest, because the monk or priest lacks faith".

The Lord used a twenty-one year old Luther and many other young men and women to turn the world upside down. The Reformation's relevance is seen in how different our world is today because of believers, young and old, who were taken up by our great God and made sharp threshing instruments in His mighty hand. Some were preachers, some were wives, others milkmaids or ploughboys, but all lived and died to uphold the lovely name of Christ. As they sit with Him now in glory, not one of these champions of the faith regrets a life spent in service for Christ. ■

✘ **Rev D Brown, Larne Free Presbyterian Church.**

YOUTH COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

“ TO EXTEND CHRIST’S KINGDOM AND DEVELOP CHRISTIAN CHARACTER AMONGST THE YOUTH. ”

ONLINE NATIONWIDE RALLY

FRIDAY 12 MARCH

Online at 8.00pm

Rev Paul Foster

This special Youth Rally will include a report from Chris Killen on latest project; interviews from young people involved with the youth council, and the introduction of the new Youth Council President, Rev Paul Foster.



Broadcasting online via Facebook or YouTube.

SUMMER CAMP

GREENHILL YMCA

NEWCASTLE

9 - 13 August

Cost: £195

Further details on these two events as well as the annual Training Weekend, Castlewellan Retreat and Summer Outreaches will be posted to our website and Facebook page.

Keep up-to-date and visit

[fpcyouthcouncil](https://www.facebook.com/fpcyouthcouncil)

fpcyouth.org

FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH YOUTH COUNCIL PROJECT

Teaching the Truth

BOOKLET SERIES **CHRIS KILLEN**

Young people today face an ever increasing number of sinful temptations, the majority of which will seriously harm the individual's physical and mental health. The consequences of such sin will be lasting for the individual and the sorrow it brings to the hearts of family and friends will be severe.

This series of booklets will address these issues in a proactive and Biblical way; educating our youth to the reality and risks of giving in to such temptations, and better equipping them to avoid them in the first place.

Teaching the Truth: Drugs

Teaching the Truth: Alcohol

Teaching the Truth: #online

"...the truth shall make you free."
JOHN 8:32

Youth Council
Free Presbyterian Church

FPCYOUTH.ORG

For further information contact the Youth Council Treasurer, Mr Andrew Duanne: treasurers@fpcyouth.org - www.fpcyouth.org

STAY UP TO DATE AT



FPCYOUTH.ORG



A Word to Women

Mary Slessor

1848 – 1915

continued

Mary Slessor, a ‘wild lassie’ from an impoverished background, was transformed by God’s grace and, immediately, wanted others to share in the great mystery of God’s love for fallen man. Who better to reach the youth and mothers of the abundant slums than one who lived among them, and who better to travel to the dark and needy shores of Africa with the same message of hope?

In September 1876, Mary Slessor arrived in the Calabar (Nigeria). Ravaged for centuries by slavery, it was a place of gross immorality and cruelty. Thirty years of mission work had seen a strong base established at the coast, but little progress at moving into the dark interior where tribal warfare, disease and pagan practices were rampant.

Initially, Mary taught in the mission school and visited local people in their homes. Able to identify with the poverty and suffering of the people, she gained acceptance quickly and mastered the local language. Local lads accompanied her as she trekked to the villages. The basic social unit of the villages comprised of a chief ruling over his wives, slaves and related families. The chief’s word was law and he could sell or kill anyone under his jurisdiction. Outside the villages, a secret society, known as the Egbo, both terrorised and protected the people.

After furlough in 1879, Mary was given oversight of the work in Old Town and its three small outstations. Mary had a home built of wattle and mud, whitewashed inside, with a mat roof. She chose to eat only the simple, local food, so that she could send much of her salary home to support her mother and sisters. Ever private, even her colleagues didn’t realise why she chose this simple lifestyle.

Mary was always busy – teaching, visiting, comforting and dispensing medicine. She joined the battle to prevent infanticide and the murder of deceased chief’s wives. Twins were deemed to be monsters and spawned by evil spirits.

They were murdered and left for the beasts of the jungle. Mary rescued these children, caring and providing for them. When she suffered no evil effects, eventually superstition began to be conquered.

In 1886, Mary gained permission from the Mission Committee to pioneer work further inland. The people inland were even more morally degraded and their justice was barbaric. Liquor and guns fuelled disputes and bloodshed was commonplace. Chiefs allowed her to build a house and gave land for a schoolroom in various villages. Mary was involved in local courts called ‘palavers’. Gradually, she saw cruel punishments reduced and lives saved. Palavers could last days and, to keep calm, Mary would sit and knit. She appeared fearless, even in the presence of heavily armed men, making them lay aside their guns before negotiations could take place. The British Consul-General recognised Mary’s unique influence and empowered her to organise and supervise courts. Her courage and unique, practical way of dealing with the African people won her their respect and gradually opened up the interior for the gospel. Indigenous churches were established, where sin had abounded. In 1913, Mary was honoured by King George V for her work, but she gave God the glory for anything she had been able to accomplish.

On 13th January 1915, after thirty-eight years devoted service in Africa, Mary Slessor succumbed to fever. A fellow missionary and five of her girls were with her as she passed to her eternal reward.

Mary Slessor described herself as, “An insignificant wee auld wifie.” Like John the Baptist, she realised that Christ must increase and she decrease, if God was to be glorified. ■



✍ **Olive Maxwell**

lived and worked as a missionary in Cork for over twenty years. She is married to Colin who serves with the Mission Board, mostly in the Republic of Ireland.

Martin Luther

The Road to the Diet of Worms

The word, 'Protestant', is one that is often misunderstood greatly. It literally means 'to raise a witness for the truth', and therefore, those who have sought faithfully to make a witness for the truth of God's Word have been termed Protestants. In the early sixteenth century, Martin Luther was raised up by God to make such a witness, which led to the great events of the Protestant Reformation.

LUTHER'S LIFE CHANGES DIRECTION

When Martin Luther was studying at Erfurt University in Germany, his life changed direction. When he first went to university, he was studying law; his father wanted him to become a famous lawyer. But he decided to give up that subject and he started to study theology; a decision that made his father very unhappy! There were two events that caused him to make that decision: one was the death of a friend, and the other was that he was almost killed by a bolt of lightning that struck the ground just in front of him. Both of these events spoke to him about his soul and the need of salvation.

THE SCALA SANCTA

When Luther became a Monk, he did everything that he could to obtain salvation by his own efforts. He went through every religious ritual and ceremony possible. In 1510, Luther visited Rome and went up the Scala

Sancta – or the Holy Stairs – on his knees, kissing every stair as he ascended. Luther once said of himself, "If ever a monk were to get to Heaven by his monkery, it would be I.... I should have killed myself with vigils, prayers, recitations and other work."

LUTHER'S CONVERSION

One of the things that Luther liked the most, at the close of a day's activities, was to go into the library and to read. On one of these visits to the library, he found – for the first time – a complete copy of the Bible! He was surprised how big it was, but he started to study it carefully. In the Autumn of 1515 – in what has become known as his 'Tower Experience' – Luther was studying the book of Romans, especially the words of Romans 1:17. It was then that the light of the gospel at last dawned on his soul. He read the words, "The just shall live by faith." That verse of Scripture was used of God to bring him to Christ in salvation.

THE SALE OF PAPAL INDULGENCES

Luther was opposed strongly to the sale of Papal Indulgences, and he raised his voice strongly in opposition against this evil practice. An Indulgence was a certificate you could buy that declared your sins had been forgiven, which also included the forgiveness of sins in the future, as well as the sins of those who were dead already. These Indulgences were sold all over Europe by the Pope's representative, John Tetzel, and the money was mostly used to rebuild Saint Peter's in Rome, which, at that time, was in disrepair.

THE BIRTH OF THE REFORMATION

Luther's opposition to Indulgences came to a head on 31st October 1517. The reason this date is so important is that it is the day that Martin Luther nailed his ninety-five theses – or heads of argument – against Papal Indulgences to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany. It was that event that marked the birth of the great Protestant Reformation that shook Europe in the 16th Century.

WHY 31ST OCTOBER?

The reason why Martin Luther chose 31st October to nail his theses to the church door was because the next day was 'All Saints' Day', which was a church feast and a public holiday. That meant that everyone would be in town and most people from the area would read his message. The church door was chosen as the location because, in those days, it was like the town notice board. If you wanted something to be made known in town, you nailed it to the church door. The ninety-five theses that Martin Luther wrote proved clearly from the Bible that Indulgences were a false hope for salvation.

THE REFORMATION SPREADS

Inside two weeks, copies of Luther's theses had spread throughout the whole of Germany. In addition, Luther's writing circulated widely, reaching France, Switzerland,

England, and Italy as early as 1519. In addition, many students flocked to Wittenberg to hear Luther speak. It was at this time that he published his famous commentary on Galatians and his works on the Psalms.

LUTHER AND CARDINAL CAJETAN

At first, the Pope treated Luther's ninety-five theses lightly, but he changed his attitude quickly when he realised how great was the threat to his authority, and the doctrine of the church from what Luther was teaching. The Pope sent Cardinal Cajetan to Germany, and, when Luther appeared before him, he demanded Luther retract his erroneous teachings. Luther replied, "That what the Cardinal called errors were the Truths of God's Word." Cajetan's final ultimatum to Luther was, "Recant or do not come into my presence again." The Cardinal secretly gave orders that Luther must be taken captive, but Luther received a warning of what was being planned and was able to escape capture.

THE LEIPZIG DISPUTATION

The Roman Catholic theologian, Doctor John Eck, was determined to expose Martin Luther's doctrine in a public forum. In June and July of 1519, Eck held a Disputation or Debate with Luther's colleague, Andreas Carlstadt. The Debate was held in the great hall in the Pleisenburg Castle at Leipzig. Luther was invited to speak at the Debate, which covered many Roman Catholic doctrines. Luther declared boldly that the Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura) was the basis of Christian belief, and that the Pope had no power, as he was not mentioned in the Bible. Because of his bold witness, Luther was branded by Eck as a 'new John Huss'. This was a reference to the Czech Reformer who had been burnt at the stake by Rome in Constance,

Germany in 1415. It was as a result of the Leipzig Disputation that Dr John Eck devoted himself to defeat Martin Luther and all that he taught.

BURNING OF THE PAPAL BULL

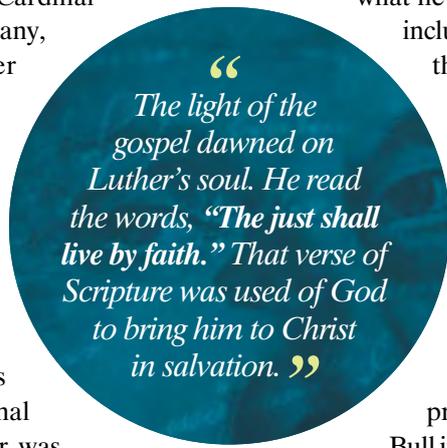
Luther's circumstance became more serious when, in June 1520, the Pope sent Luther a Papal Bull. This was a letter from the Pope with his official seal upon it. In the Bull, the Pope warned Luther that he risked excommunication from the Church, if he did not recant within sixty days of what he taught in his writings, including his ninety-five theses. The Bull also condemned Luther and his teaching and ordered the people not to listen to Luther's preaching and to burn his writings. During that Autumn, Dr Eck proclaimed the Pope's Bull in many of the German towns. Luther's response was to denounce the Papacy, make a bonfire and burn publicly the Pope's Bull, under an oak in Wittenberg. The oak tree became known as 'Luther's oak'.

LUTHER'S EXCOMMUNICATION

This led to Luther's irrevocable break with the Roman Catholic Church. The Pope issued another Bull in which he excommunicated Martin Luther formally. This took place on 3rd January 1521, and, despite an ecumenical agreement in recent years between the Lutheran World Federation, Methodists and the Catholic Church, this excommunication has still not been lifted by Rome.

Up until this time, Luther had expected to remain within the Roman Catholic Church and to reform its corruptions from within. Now, he realised that this would be impossible. Therefore, the Church of the Reformation was born. ■

✍ **Rev D McMillan,**
Armagh Free Presbyterian Church.



The Diet of Worms



Never had man appeared before so imposing an assembly. The Emperor Charles V, whose sovereignty extended over great parts of the old and new world; his brother the Archduke Ferdinand; six electors of the empire, most of whose descendants now wear the kingly crown; twenty-four dukes, the majority of whom were independent sovereigns over countries more or less extensive, and among whom were some whose names afterwards became formidable to the Reformation – the Duke of Alva and his two sons; eight margraves; thirty archbishops, bishops and abbots; seven ambassadors, including those from the Kings of France of England; the deputies of ten free cities; a great number of princes, counts and sovereign barons; the papal nuncios – in all, two hundred and four persons; such was the imposing court before which appeared Martin Luther.

With such precision did the renowned historian Merle D'Aubigne describe that august assembly before which Germany's greatest son appeared on Wednesday 17th April 1521. We know it as the Diet of Worms. It was the backdrop to a critical episode in the Reformation story.

HISTORY

It was a first for Charles V - the first time he would chair a gathering of the most powerful forces in Europe. As well as matters of state, where

important decisions had to be made, there was the pressing issue of what to do with the troublesome monk from Wittenberg.

The young Emperor was involved in serious disputes with the Papacy, but he remained a faithful member of the Roman Catholic Church. As such, he had no time for Luther or his 'novelties', which he viewed as a threat to the ascendancy of 'Mother Church' and to the peace of the empire. In the early days of the Diet, the Pope took the initiative, issuing a fresh

condemnation of Luther and directing his excommunication. Immediately, the Emperor moved to implement the Bull, but resistance from delegates who opposed the tyranny of Rome forced a rethink. Finally, on 6th March, Luther was ordered to appear before the Diet, with the promise of safe-conduct.

When the appointed day arrived, the crowds in the city streets were so dense that Luther and his guards had to pass through houses and gardens to reach their destination. As he proceeded into the presence of the assembly he

was buoyed by the words of an aged knight, George of Freundsberg, “If your cause is just, and you are sure of it, go forward in God’s name, and fear nothing! God will not forsake you.”

The session began with Luther challenged to own his authorship of a collection of books laid out on a table and urged to repudiate their teachings. To the first request he acceded without delay; to the second he undertook to respond after a period of reflection. He was granted one day.

The records of the Diet describe the spirit of Luther’s reply: “Dr Martin Luther replied in the most submissive and humble manner. He did not lament, or speak with violence, but with decency, mildness, suitability, and moderation, and yet with much joy and Christian firmness.” After outlining the substance of what he had written, he declared that he could not retract. He spoke in German, and then, since the Emperor had difficulty understanding the language, repeated his submission in Latin. Challenged once more by the Chancellor of Trier, Luther’s reply has become one of the seminal utterances in all human history: “Unless...I am convinced by the testimony of Scripture, or on plain and clear grounds of reason, so that conscience shall bind me to make acknowledgement of error, I can and will not retract, for it is neither safe nor wise to do anything contrary to conscience. Here I stand. I can do no other. May God help me. Amen.”

Subsequently, Luther refused further opportunity to recant. The Emperor resolved to “take action against him and his followers for their wilful disobedience, and by every means calculated destroy them.” However, the princes of the German states demanded that the pledge of safe-conduct granted to Luther be honoured, and Charles was compelled to dismiss Luther, sending him back to Wittenberg under orders not to teach his ‘heresies’. He was soon ‘abducted’ by his friends and carried to the safety of Wartburg Castle. There he spent some months in confinement,

engaging in writing and translation projects, before finally returning to Wittenberg in March 1522.

LEGACY

Luther’s courageous stand at Worms represents a critical moment in Reformation history. But what is its meaning today? Five hundred years on, does it have any remaining relevance? There can be no doubt that the episode has abiding significance, and that this is so on many levels.

We marvel at the providence of God in ordering and overruling the most unlikely of situations for the advance of the Gospel and for the emboldening of those who adhered to it. Many of Luther’s confidants had urged him to reject the Emperor’s command to come to Worms. They recalled the burning of John Huss – despite his receiving a promise of safe conduct. It was a perilous course indeed, and difficult to see any positive outcome. Yet Luther was determined. “I will go to Worms in spite of all the gates of hell, and the prince of the power of the air”, he affirmed, purposing to go “to Worms if there were as many devils there as tiles on the roofs; if Huss had been burned, the truth had not been burnt with him.” Luther’s resolution, so bravely carried through, was all in the providence and plan of God to forward His work. And it is yet in the power of our sovereign Lord to employ the most unlikely of circumstances to speed His cause!

We remember that prayer for the Lord’s intervention is a mighty weapon against the strongest of foes. When Luther retired on the night of 17th April to consider his response, suddenly he felt forsaken and alone, overcome by a sense of his own weakness. In that state he cried to God, and his words have been preserved. Among those words were these petitions, “O God! Help me against all the wisdom of the world. Do this. You should do this... you alone...for this is not my work, but yours...” Luther’s prayer was heard. And the Lord will yet hear the prayers of those who recognise their own weakness, and who labour in the

“ Prayer for the Lord’s intervention is a mighty weapon against the strongest of foes... the Lord will yet hear the prayers of those who recognise their own weakness, and who labour in the knowledge that it is not their work, but the Lord’s. ”

knowledge that it is not their work, but the Lord’s.

We acknowledge that, in witness for the Gospel, there are some things that are plainly and permanently non-negotiable. When Luther was questioned initially concerning his teachings, he would not affirm them without a period of reflection. “Seeing it is a question which concerns the salvation of souls, and in which the Word of God is involved, and there is nothing greater in heaven or on earth...I beg your Imperial Majesty, with all humility, to allow me time, so I may answer without offending the Word of God.” Luther’s consideration of the matter did but confirm what he knew in his heart already – that he had written truth, because his teachings were merely a restating of a higher truth, the truth of the Word of God, and it was not his to sell or to sacrifice on the altar of self-preservation.

In all matters that impinge upon the heart of the Gospel, the Reformer’s conclusion must be ours too. Whatever the pressures heaped upon us in an age when Scripture is scorned and side-lined at will, we must have the courage of our convictions, determine to contend earnestly for the faith, and to do so with Luther’s watchword on our lips and in our hearts: **Here we stand. We can do no other. May God help us!** ■

✍ **Rev T Nelson,**
Ballynahinch Free Presbyterian Church.

Report from Nepal

Our missionary in Asia kindly agreed to answer the following questions concerning her work in Nepal.

Ed.

“ THERE IS GROWING OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL IN THE POLITICAL WORLD; THERE IS ALSO PERSECUTION FROM EXTREMIST HINDU ELEMENTS. WHEN PEOPLE TRUST CHRIST, THERE IS A LOT OF OPPOSITION IN THE FAMILY AND THEIR COMMUNITIES. ”



ED: How did you sense the Lord’s call to missionary work in Nepal?

A: I can remember hearing about what God was doing in Nepal and it touched my heart to pray and to follow the reports about the work. Then, in 2012, a friend and I were talking about where we would love to visit if we could and both of us said together, “Nepal!” So, we started to plan a trip for the following Easter. However, situations changed and neither of us were able to go, but the desire to pray and my interest in the work never left me – but intensified. In October 2015, the Lord opened the door for me to visit Nepal and, during the visit, Paul extended an invitation to come over and work with the Nepalese church. One of the main verses that God used to speak to me concerning the land of Nepal was Isaiah 30:21: “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This *is* the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left.” I returned to Spain burdened greatly for the land and its people. During the next weeks, God confirmed His call to me to leave Spain. Although it wasn’t an easy thing to do, as Spain had been my home for over 18 years and the ties with the people there were very strong, I realised that God had been preparing me for this move for some time. God had issued His call to come over and help, and I needed to obey Him.

ED: What is life really like for a Christian in Nepal?

A: The short answer is very difficult. Christianity is a new and strange religion for Nepalese people to comprehend. The majority of people know little about Christianity, therefore it is a new religion to them. This has caused enormous fear among people in general. In the 2001 census, only 0.5 % of the people were Christians. Now, 20 years later, that percentage has risen to 10% (approximately 3 million people). That’s an incredible increase, but such a sharp increase has caused many problems. There is growing opposition to the gospel in the political world; many politicians wish to bring the country back to be a Hindu nation, thus reversing the freedoms that were won during the civil war. There is also persecution from extremist Hindu elements, who would wish to stop any form of preaching of the Word of God and close down all churches. It is a strange religion for the people because they follow a polytheism belief system, where the worship of many gods is practiced. The Hindu religion of Nepal has over 33 million deities of varying levels of importance. Therefore, to start believing in the one true and living God is very confusing and difficult for the people to grasp. When people trust Christ, there is a lot of opposition in the family and their communities. In rural areas, many people have had to

MISSIONARY VISION

leave homes and jobs as a result of trusting in Christ. There would even be a reluctance to hire Christians in certain circles for fear of them sharing the gospel with fellow workers.

ED: Please describe the missionary work you do in Nepal.

A: The work I do is a teaching and encouragement ministry. It is illegal for anyone to proselytise in the country, so it is not possible for me to be involved in open evangelism. However, I am involved with the Sunday School work through teacher training classes. I endeavour to encourage the teachers concerning the importance of reaching their own children and those in their towns and villages. I supply them with materials for stories and pictures, along with some teaching and doctrinal books, to help them understand the scriptures better and, therefore, be able to reach the children more effectively.

I am also involved in teaching the catechism in the Young People's meetings and encouraging them to learn one each week. The catechism is an excellent tool to help people understand the fundamentals of the gospel, especially when most haven't grown up in a Christian home. God willing, we will soon be able to recommence this ministry. I am involved in the ladies' meetings, speaking in our own church regularly and holding one day conferences for ladies in the churches outside Kathmandu. I also have the opportunity to write an article in a weekly newspaper. This has been a wonderful door of witness as, even in the lockdown, I have continued with it. Those who read the article write regularly to me and it's wonderful to explain more the truths of Christ. Please pray for this valuable door of service that God will continue to keep it open.

ED: How are the local pastors and congregations in the Nepal Free Presbyterian Church?

A: In Kathmandu valley, there are about 5 congregations of varying sizes – from about 35 members upwards. The



majority of the pastors were converted to Christ from a Hindu background and then, they started talking and witnessing to family, friends and neighbours. It is from these small beginnings that the churches have been formed. Some of the churches meet in their own buildings and others rent or have the services in the pastor's home, but all have a love and zeal to see the church of Christ grow.

ED: What outreach opportunities are there at present?

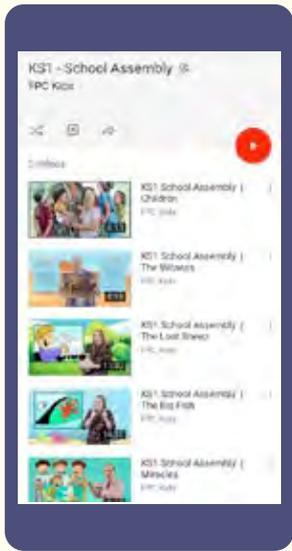
A: Outreach opportunities are restricted in Nepal – things like tract distribution or open-air meetings are forbidden. Personal witness is dangerous but, over the years, it is what God has used to bring men and women unto himself. However, Nepal Free Presbyterian Church does have a very extensive radio ministry covering nearly all of Nepal and into the borders of China and India. These broadcasts have continued throughout the lockdowns and I would ask you to pray for the preached word – that this door of opportunity would continue unhindered. Many of the churches, over the years, have commenced as a direct result of the radio ministry. At present, the churches are still closed in Kathmandu, but some restrictions have been lifted in the last week. In some areas, this has allowed small groups of people to meet together for fellowship in the city. ■

Prayer Requests

Firstly, I would thank God for the continued opportunity to write in the local newspaper and pray that God would open the eyes and understanding of those who read the articles regularly. Pray, too, that the readers will come to know that Jesus is the only door for salvation (John 10:9). Please pray that churches across Nepal will soon be able to open again, without restrictions on any of the meetings.

We ask that God continues to bless the radio ministry and the faithful word preached by the ministers and, also, the evangelists, who travel to the different villages to follow up on the contacts made through it. Remember the children's home, the staff and children that they will know the presence of God in their midst. Lastly, pray that God will keep the door open for the preaching of the gospel in an increasingly hostile environment. ■

FPC KIDS



📌 Above: FPC Kids playlist
📌 Top: FPC Kids recording

FPC Kids was set up in March 2020, during the first Covid-19 lockdown, as an online outreach for boys and girls. In the past year, there have been many videos produced, including 'Bible Corners', 'Wee Words', along with Summer and Winter Holiday Bible Clubs. These Bible lessons have been taught by Robert McConnell, Joyce Walsh and Christina Logan. Important technical work is done by Alastair Hamilton, Kathryn Kane, who records and edits, and Glenn Hamilton, who looks after the Facebook page and YouTube channel. We are thankful that these videos have been used by the Lord to speak to children about spiritual matters.

Another aspect to FPC Kids is the school assemblies which have been produced for primary schools to use as, due to Covid-19, we are unable to take assemblies in schools. These assemblies are available on YouTube for schools to use. There have also been assemblies recorded for secondary schools by Jonny Smith, Noel Shields and Colin Maxwell. We would ask you to pray that God would use these assembly recordings to speak to children and young people, and they will open doors into new schools. We appreciate your prayers and support greatly, as we continue this work among the children and young people. ■

📌 Christina Logan

New Opportunities in Australia

A new ministry opportunity has opened up for our Australian churches. A fifteen-minute radio broadcast is being aired each Lord's Day morning in the Philippines, as well as a 15-minute broadcast in a rural district of New South Wales. It has long been the desire of the Australian churches to see a radio witness commenced, but our requests for airtime have been refused. We rejoice that the Lord has opened a door in His perfect time, in a way we had



📌 Pastor Dennis Kablingue and family

not anticipated. The three Australian ministers share in the preaching for these messages, and we are also receiving help from a brother in the Philippines, Pastor Dennis Kablingue, who is recording some messages for us.

Please pray that people will listen regularly and will contact us desiring further information on the way of salvation. ■

📌 Rev Philip Gardiner, Australia.

New Sunday School in Kenya

“ PRAY THAT OUR LABOURS
WILL YIELD MUCH FRUIT FOR THE
KINGDOM OF GOD AND THAT THESE
CHILDREN WILL KNOW CHRIST. ”



We are thankful to report that we started Kakamega Sunday School at the apartments. We were allowed three rooms with seats and small tables. Currently we are utilising only two classes. With three teachers available, my wife Gladys, Ben and myself, we can only handle two groups. This ministry started towards the end of 2020 and there are 43 children attending. There are so many children, but we are restricted to a controllable size. We are hoping to involve a few more students in the work and already two of them have developed an interest. Pray for these students and the rest of the team.

Before Sunday School commenced, we visited homes around the apartments to request parents to send their children. We took precautionary measures as required by the government for such meetings. We provide water and soap for washing hands and masks. Some children find it strange wearing the masks, but we try to encourage that.

During the lessons, we realised that about 70 percent of these children have never been in a Sunday school class. They say that they attend church with their parents occasionally. For this reason, we teach basic things and try to teach in the simplest way possible to help them relate. We do provide them with juice and biscuits after class.

Pray that our labours will yield much fruit for the Kingdom of God and that these children will know Christ and take Jesus with them to their homes. They may well be the gateway to their parents with the gospel. Who knows? Pray with us for God's blessings upon this work dear friends of the cross! ■

✍ Pastor Patrice Akali

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Footprints of Faith



The essence of true religion is to love God with our whole being and our neighbour as ourselves. Paul states that to love our neighbour as ourselves fulfils the whole law (Gal. 5:14).

In Romans 10:1 the great apostle tells us what his hearts desire was. It was to see his kinsmen saved by the grace of God. In the previous chapter he said, I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh (Rom. 9:2, 3). Paul's heart ached with sorrow and a loving desire. He sorrowed at the prospect of his kinsmen going to hell, and he passionately longed that they might turn to Christ and be saved.

Here in Philippians Paul weeps as he warns against following the examples of seducers and evil teachers (Phil. 3:18-19). Many who profess Christ's name in reality are the enemies of the cross of Christ, for though they claim a saving interest in Christ, their sinful and idolatrous lives are a flagrant denial of the true faith. Paul does not mince his words when it comes to defending the purity of the gospel. He is perfectly right to denounce false teachers whose religion will take souls to hell rather than heaven.

Like his Master, the Lord Jesus, who wept over Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37), Paul longed to see people saved and nurtured in the truth. Such should be the heart desire of all Christians. Are you burdened for others? ■