

Free Presbyterian VISION

THE OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF ULSTER

The Benefits of Gathering Together

**Margaret Russell,
Missionary to
Kenya Retires**

**The
Atonement:**
Christ's Active and
Passive Obedience

JULY
2021
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Editorial

Samuel Rutherford of Anwoth, Scotland
Once said:
*O, if one soul from Anwoth
Meet me at God's right hand,
My heaven will be two heavens
In Immanuel's land.*

The burning desire of the famous preacher's heart is conveyed in these few lines. Rutherford prayed and preached for the salvation of sinners. He recognised the value of a soul and set forth the unsearchable riches of Christ in his quest to win them to the Lord. Over recent months, there have been reports, from some of our congregations, of men and women of varying ages calling upon the Lord for salvation. These mercy drops are tokens of the Lord's blessing and provide a great encouragement to pray on for showers of blessing. God has not only ordained those who will believe, but also the means by which they will believe. We are reminded by Paul, "...it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe" (1 Corinthians 1:21). Prayer and preaching go hand in hand. Church history reveals that when God's people place a premium on these twin aspects of ministry, they can expect to experience times of refreshing. Every believer has a part to play. Not all are called to preach; but preachers need the prayers of God's people and are greatly encouraged when pews are filled for both the Lord's day services and on prayer meeting night. The pandemic has presented challenges in the Lord's work. However, God is still on the throne, and Christ's church continues to be built. These are days of opportunity, and we are exhorted to redeem the time because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:16). Let us not be found wanting in our congregations. There is much to do, and time is short. When Nehemiah set about to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem, the people had a mind to work. May that be true of God's people throughout this summer and the latter months of 2021. ■



“Every diligent preacher will see and sense the strivings of God in the hearts of people as they sit, in person, under his ministry. The same cannot be said when there is an unreasonable absence from God's house.”

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During recent months, parts of New South Wales have experienced a plague of mice. I don't suppose any plague is pleasant, but for someone like me, who has never been a great fan of mice, I have found the pictures from that plague very disturbing!

Under the Levitical law, mice fell into the category of unclean creatures (Leviticus 11:29). Mice remind us of sin. It doesn't take a very large opening for mice to get into your home. So it is with sin. The devil is always looking for a small opening to bring destruction. Though the opening may be small, the havoc that follows is great. We must always be on the lookout to seal up the little openings.

The New South Wales experience is a reminder how quickly mice can breed and multiply. We are reminded that sin left unchecked grows and grows with devastating consequences.

In the early chapters of 1 Samuel, the ark of the Lord was stolen by the Philistines. When the Philistines placed the ark before their idol Dagon, the image fell twice before the ark, indicating that everything and everyone must ultimately bow to the greatness of Almighty God.

When the ark was being sent back to Israel, the Philistines sent something of a compensation offering which included five golden mice. The explanation given was that mice had "[marred] the land" (1 Samuel 6:5). Evidently, during the time the Philistines had retained the ark, there had been a plague of mice on the farmland, causing great havoc. In this case, the mice were an image of the wrath of God – the punishment reminding them of their own uncleanness. Dagon was

“ The only offering that will appease the just wrath of God towards sinful man is the offering of Jesus Christ, the One who is “holy, harmless and undefiled”. ”

regarded as the god of grain and crops. His failure and impotency were demonstrated in that he could not protect the Philistines from the wrath of God.

We are reminded that man has sinned and his life is unclean. Everything has been contaminated by sin and uncleanness. As a result of sin, the wrath of God is against man. The only offering that will appease the just wrath of God towards sinful man is the offering of Jesus Christ, the One who is “holy, harmless and undefiled” (Hebrews 7:26). The only One who can cleanse us from our uncleanness is the sinless Lord Jesus.

Christ was lifted up as the brazen serpent (John 3:14). The sin of His people was imputed to Him and He bore the curse that they deserved. Though He had no personal sin, He took the sins of others and, through His sacrificial and substitutionary work, made a full atonement.

“For he hath made him *to be* sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). ■

✉ **Rev P Gardiner,**
Perth Free Presbyterian Church.



The Benefits of Gathering Together

‘God moves in a
mysterious way,
His wonders to perform’

William Cowper’s well-known words have often formed the prayer of many a saint. Undoubtedly, years from now, Christians will be able to trace back the providences of God during the Covid-19 pandemic and understand some of these ways. However, this does not mean that we cannot learn in our present day. For example, much discussion has arisen surrounding the importance of public worship and the benefits which attend it.

Does this mean that there are no benefits in providing an online ministry? Of course not. Long before lockdowns, many of our churches had in place similar provisions; for those who in their homes were unable to

attend church in person due to old age or sickness, these provisions were crucial. Would these dear saints rather have been in God’s house, among the saints, and singing praises as part of the congregation? Yes, they would have; but their inability to do so, due to sickness or age, did not reflect a lack of spirituality or love for God.

Therefore, in recognising the legitimate concerns of many who have shielded during the pandemic, there is also a need to refresh ourselves with the benefits and blessings which attend the public worship of God. Remaining in our homes on the

Lord’s day, when there is no justifiable reason to do so, instead of assembling ourselves together in God’s house, is not honouring to God. Let us consider some of the reasons why.

OUR GATHERING TOGETHER GLORIFIES GOD

The first Q & A in the Westminster Shorter Catechism is well known: Our chief end is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. It goes without saying that this must be a daily thing. Glorifying God and enjoying Him is not reserved to a couple of hours each Sunday. However, assembling in God’s house constitutes something of an apex in this determination to

glorify Him. King David knew a lot about being away from the tabernacle. There were times when he was in exile or in battle – circumstances that could not be helped – however, even in those times he longed to be in the house of the Lord. David’s longing and love for the public worship of God is seen throughout the Psalms. Consider what he says in Psalm 27:4, *“One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple.”*

OUR GATHERING TOGETHER ESPECIALLY MANIFESTS THE PRESENCE OF GOD

One of the immeasurable blessings which has been bestowed on the church over the last number of decades has been the ability to listen to recorded sermons. The number of lives which have been impacted by such a means is impossible to calculate. Yet, there is common agreement, rooted in the Word of God, that nothing compares to those seasons of refreshing which have so often marked the assemblies of the saints. It is one of the many reasons that *“the LORD loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob”* (Psalm 87:2). One of the most striking New Testament examples which highlight this point is found on the very day our Lord Jesus Christ rose from the dead. On that day, the remaining disciples were assembled together. While it appears that fear of persecution thrust them together; yet, no doubt, they also met to discuss matters and to pray and strengthen one another. Our Lord Jesus Christ honoured this occasion with His own presence. He stood in the midst and spoke peace unto them (John 20:19). From this moment on, we not only discover the setting aside the first day of the week as the Christian sabbath but also the singular blessing which attends this physical coming together. This is further illustrated by how Thomas’ absence from them the first week is contrasted with his presence among them a week later. We can only speculate why Thomas was not there on the first occasion, but there

is no speculation surrounding the immeasurable blessing he knew when he was present the second time.

OUR GATHERING TOGETHER MAKES POSSIBLE WHAT IS NOT POSSIBLE IN PRIVATE

Baptism and the Lord’s Table are the only two sacraments commanded in Scripture. Fundamentally, they can only be observed in person. These sacraments have rightly been referred to as our means to ‘see’ the Bible. They engage our senses. These, together with the preaching of the Word, results in God addressing our entire being. In the days of the early church, the saints *“continued steadfastly in the apostle’s doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers”* (Acts 2:42). Such was only possible as they gathered together.

It is also vital to remember that preaching yields its choicest fruit when before the assembly of the saints. Again, this is not to denigrate preaching through an online means. We all know that a purpose has been served through this method, but it must always remain a secondary option, not our primary choice. There are a multitude of reasons why this is so, but leading the way is the power of personal connection. Most of us in every-day life much prefer face to face communication than conversations over phone or text. So, too, with the preacher and his congregation. Not only are there far less distractions in public assembly compared to watching at home, but there is also the unique advantage of the preacher being able to see the people. Every diligent preacher will see and sense the strivings of God in the hearts of people as they sit, in person, under his ministry. The same cannot be said when there is an unreasonable absence from God’s house.

OUR GATHERING TOGETHER DEMONSTRATES THAT WE ARE MEMBERS OF ONE BODY

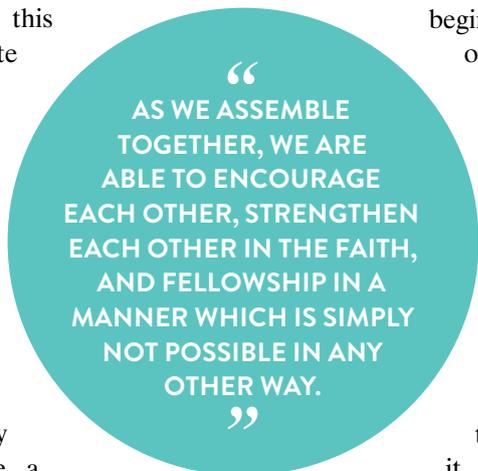
Peter writes about believers as “lively stones” and built as a spiritual house (1 Peter 2:5). While it is correct to say that the physical building is not the church itself, yet the church, or the body of Christ, does not exist on an individual level.

“The body is one”, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 12:12, “and hath many members”. As we assemble together, this glorious reality is represented time and time again. As we assemble together, we are able to encourage each other, strengthen each other in the faith, and fellowship in a manner which is simply not possible in any other way.

Gathering together is also used by God as a means to preserve our walk with God. It should not go unnoticed that, when an individual Christian begins to backslide, one of the first signs is an absence from the house of God. Attendance at God’s house and drinking in the Word of God is one of the Lord’s ways to uphold us. If Hebrews 10 teaches us anything, it reminds us that a wilful forsaking of public assembly, with no proper reason to do so, should not be true of any genuine Christian. Rather, in that same chapter we are urged: *“Let us draw near...let us hold fast...let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works”* (Hebrews 10:21-25).

Tragically, the pandemic has forced many to remain alone and solitary but in ordinary situations this must not be the case. God’s people are referred to as a body, a building, a flock and a holy nation. If we are able, then let us assemble together. ■

✍ **Rev P Baker**, South Grove Free Presbyterian Church, London.



A large, stylized red thorny branch graphic, resembling a crown of thorns, is positioned behind the title text. The branch starts from the top left, curves down and across the top, then curves back up and across the right side, ending at the bottom right. It has several sharp, pointed thorns extending from its main stem.

The Atonement:

Christ's Active and Passive Obedience

We often sing, “Christ has for sin atonement made: What a wonderful Saviour!” This is Biblical truth. Scripture reminds us that we “... joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:11). A detailed study of the Christ’s atoning work is a huge undertaking and includes the inseparable connection between the perfect obedience of Christ and the atonement. Indeed, Christ’s obedience is the only basis for an atonement that fully atones for sin.

Scripture speaks clearly of the obedience of Christ, and this obedience can be defined as His filial submission to the will of the Father. Christ’s submission entailed becoming

subject to the moral law that sinful man had broken, in order to satisfy both the precept and penalty of that law. To that end, Christ became man and fully embraced all that was involved in being subject to the law (Galatians 4:4). As the impeccably sinless Son, Christ was qualified to give this perfect obedience. He perfectly and vicariously fulfilled the law’s legal demands and yielded up Himself to suffer temptation and to endure the law’s penalty in body and soul for the sake of His people. The result was the provision of a perfect righteousness.

It is through the imputation of the full merit of the obedience that Christ gave in life and death that guilty sinners are freely, eternally, and irreversibly justified.

Philippians 2:8 presents two definite aspects of Christ’s obedience. In the first place, He became obedient unto death or up to the point of death, which is commonly described as His active obedience. Secondly, there is His obedience in death, described as “the death of the cross”. This is often referred to as His passive obedience.

Christ’s active obedience entailed His fulfilment of the law in His sinless life, discharged by Him as the mediator of the covenant of grace. As mediator, Christ stands in Scripture as the last Adam in contradistinction to the first Adam. Christ assumed the federal position that Adam, in his state of innocence, occupied within the covenant of works. Consequently, as mediator, Christ placed Himself under that covenant (Galatians 4:4). He undertook to give the perfect obedience to the law that Adam had failed to give, in order to merit eternal life for the sinner. Christ, in His life, actively obeyed the law for His people

(Matthew 5:17-18). In this sense, He is our righteousness (Jeremiah 23:6). By His active obedience, Christ has secured for His people eternal life, the adoption of sons, and an eternal inheritance (Galatians 4:4, 5).

This biblical detail stresses that Christ's life of obedience was vicarious in nature. He lived in active obedience to the moral law on behalf of His people, securing a perfect righteousness for them. Thus, Christ's life of obedience was a vicarious life. There are two important observations to make in relation to Christ's perfect obedience.

Christ's active obedience gave acceptability to His passive obedience. It was on the basis of this perfect, active obedience to the moral law that Christ's suffering was a sweet savour to God. Indeed, it was utterly necessary for it to be demonstrated that Christ had given this perfect active obedience. His life was seen to have reached the standard of the just demands of God, so He could proceed to make atonement in His blood-shedding for sinful men (Leviticus 17:11). It is because of Christ's obedience that the Father's estimate of the sufferings of His Son differs from His estimate of the sufferings of the lost. The perfect obedience of Christ gave such value to His vicarious sufferings that, though short in duration, those sufferings provided the satisfaction of divine justice, which the personal sufferings of the damned provide but only through endless punishment.

If Christ had suffered the law's penalty but had not given this perfect active obedience, then His people would have been left in Adam's pre-fallen condition. That is, the elect would still have been confronted with the task of obtaining eternal life by way

of obeying the precept of the law. But the merit of Christ's active obedience provides a perfect righteousness for His people. Christ has given that obedience on their behalf, as well as enduring the penalty they owe to the law.

**CHRIST STANDS
IN SCRIPTURE AS
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CONTRADISTINCTION
TO THE FIRST ADAM.
HE UNDERTOOK TO
GIVE THE PERFECT
OBEDIENCE TO THE
LAW THAT ADAM HAD
FAILED TO GIVE, IN
ORDER TO MERIT
ETERNAL LIFE FOR
THE SINNER.**

With respect to His passive obedience, it was again as mediator of the covenant of grace that Christ entered into His passive sufferings in His death to pay the law's penalty, discharge the debt of His people, and make atonement on their behalf. His passive obedience is taught in Scripture (Isaiah 53:6, Romans 4:25, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18).

Christ's sufferings were judicially laid upon Him as the representative of His people. In nature, they were penal sufferings. Death, in essence, is separation from God. By his sinful disobedience, the first Adam separated himself from God; and therefore, death, including judicial or eternal death, was the awful consequence. While the last Adam was not guilty of sin personally, yet in becoming surety of the covenant, He took on Him the guilt of His people. In so doing, He became liable to judicial punishment, entailing His passive obedience in His suffering and death. He was counted with the transgressors and condemned as a criminal, though He Himself remained impeccably sinless (Isaiah 53:8). His agonies on the cross can only be explained by the fact that He bore the infinite wrath of God against sin and endured the penalty of the law. The sinner must die, or one divinely appointed must die in his place. Christ is that appointed

One. On the cross, He fully satisfied the penalty of the law. He perfectly satisfied divine justice, and, in doing so, made atonement for sin.

The atoning value of Christ's sufferings flows from the following facts. They were borne by a divine person. Only Christ, by virtue of His deity, could bear the penalty to its full extent and exhaust it of its full force. Thus, He and His people in Him become free from the penalty (Hebrews 9:11-14). Moreover, because of the infinite value of Christ's person, in His passive obedience His penal sufferings satisfied the justice of God completely and eternally. This satisfaction was manifested by the resurrection of Christ from the dead. His resurrection was the sign and seal that the law's penalty had been satisfied. Consider the words of Hebrews 13:20, "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." The verb in the original translated 'brought again' signifies the release of a prisoner (Acts 16:39). Therefore, Christ was brought again from the dead because He had endured the full extent of the law's penalty.

It is by Christ's active and passive obedience that He has made the atonement, by which God is infinitely, eternally and unchangeably satisfied.

Therefore, He freely and justly forgives sin, removes its guilt, delivers from the curse, and perfectly justifies the believing sinner by clothing him in His spotless righteousness. Thus, we joyfully sing – "Christ has for sin atonement made: what a wonderful Saviour!" ■

**THE SINNER
MUST DIE, OR
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HIS PLACE.
CHRIST IS THAT
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CROSS, HE
FULLY SATISFIED
THE PENALTY OF
THE LAW.**

✍ **Rev J Greer,**
Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church.

From the Principal's Desk



‘Strange times’: These words, or something akin to them, have been spoken on innumerable occasions over the last fifteen months. The Coronavirus pandemic has impacted all of our lives in ways we could never have envisaged. That has been so in church work – and in the programme of the Whitefield College of the Bible. We have not ‘pulled down the shutters’ and embarked on an extended holiday, but neither has it been College as we know it.

September 2020 found us back on site at the Martyrs Jubilee Complex with all required safety measures in place. We completed most of the first term and pre-Christmas examinations as planned. However, with the seasonal relaxations, it was no great surprise that January ushered in another lockdown. This meant that College classes were delivered by Zoom until Easter. There were some teething problems, a variety of challenges and, in truth, a growing weariness with the whole procedure. Nevertheless, we are thankful for the technology that enabled us to keep courses on schedule. After Easter, classes resumed in Belfast, and we were able to meet ‘face-to-face’ – though that expression may not be entirely appropriate since we were generally masked! As I write, students are on their study week before the end of year examinations and the conclusion of this unprecedented year in mid-June.

It would not have been possible for us to get through this traumatic year without co-operation and assistance from many quarters. I pay tribute to our students, who have faced the uncertainties with flexibility and resilience, and who have continued to display the commitment required of those called to serve the Lord. Our lecturers have adapted well to changed circumstances and have continued to deliver courses despite all the difficulties.

Our administrator has laboured on in the background, and the overseeing committees and their convenors have been unfailingly helpful and supportive. We are thankful for the help received from those friends at the Martyrs Memorial Church when we have been on site. I know many have been praying for us, and I appreciate this more than I can say. Most of all, I acknowledge the faithfulness and goodness of the Lord, who has brought us through this most challenging of years.

The close of this year (DV) marks the completion of four years in college for three of our students. Simon Anderson and Stephen Nelson are candidates for the Free Presbyterian ministry, and Jonathan Wilson, from England, is an external student. We wish them well for the future, trusting that the Lord will open doors of service for them. And we remember other recent graduates, praying that they too will know the Lord’s leading.

May I urge you to continue to remember the Whitefield College? Your prayerful and practical support is vital – not least as we continue to progress towards the establishment of new premises in Tandragee. Please pray for guidance and grace in this exciting project and in all areas of the work. ■

✉ **Rev T Nelson,**
Principal, Whitefield College of the Bible.

“ I PAY TRIBUTE TO OUR STUDENTS, WHO HAVE FACED THE UNCERTAINTIES WITH FLEXIBILITY AND RESILIENCE, AND WHO HAVE CONTINUED TO DISPLAY THE COMMITMENT REQUIRED OF THOSE CALLED TO SERVE THE LORD. ”

📷 **Photo:** Rev T Nelson is pictured with 4th year students Simon Anderson (left) and Stephen Nelson (right). Mr J Wilson is absent.



Lisburn Shorter Catechism Presentation

Anna McIlroy was awarded a certificate for successfully answering all the questions in the Shorter Catechism. She is pictured with her minister, Rev Roger Higginson. ■



Presentation to Two Lisburn Sunday School Teachers

Presentations were made to two Sunday School teachers from Lisburn Free Presbyterian Church. Mr Andrew Irwin (left) is commencing studies in the Whitefield College of the Bible and Linda Foster-Wilkinson is retiring after 30 years of faithful service. They are pictured with Daniel Hamilton Sunday School Superintendent. ■



Clogher Valley Presentations

Two senior pupils in the Clogher Valley Free Presbyterian Church Sunday School have successfully answered all 107 questions in the Shorter Catechism. On Sunday 6th June, Laura Robinson and Anna McIntyre were presented with a certificate and a copy of the Scriptures to mark their achievement and the conclusion of their time in Sunday School. ■

📷 Photo: (L to R) Rev McIntyre, Anna McIntyre, Laura Robinson, Ian McClung.



COMPILED BY
ROBERT MCCONNELL



"...the blood of
Jesus Christ his
Son cleanseth us
from all sin."

1 John 1 v 7

From about mid-March, and right throughout the summer months, many of the hedge rows across our country are covered in a bright yellow blossom that is found on what is known locally as the "whin bushes". I want to look at some things with regards to this plant to warn you about some of the dangers of sin.

Whin bushes are known for their rapid spread and growth. They will outgrow all the other plant life around them. They can grow up to three metres high in poor soil and survive on very little water. **Sin is the same.** Left unchecked, it will spread very easily into every part of your life; and what is more, it doesn't take very long for this to happen.

Whin bushes have a very attractive yellow blossom. From a distance, it is very appealing to the eye. However, whenever you get a little closer you will soon see, or perhaps feel, the thorns under the blossom. The thorns cover the branches from top to bottom. **Sin is the same.** From a distance, sin can look so attractive and appealing. Sadly, however, that same sin always brings hurt, pain

and even tears to all those who come too close to it.

For many years, before the introduction of chocolate eggs covered in colourful tinfoil, children would gather the yellow blossom from the whin bushes and use it to dye eggs. The yellow blossom stained the shell of the egg. The children would then roll the dyed eggs downhill at Easter. Again, **sin is the same.** Like the whin blossom, sin also leaves a stain on people's hearts and lives.

Whin bushes do, however, have one weakness, and that is they are easily burned up. What a reminder this is of those who remain in their sin. Isaiah 66:24 speaks of those who transgress against God ending up in hell where the worm shall not die, neither shall the fire be quenched. Thankfully, there is a remedy for all the stain and sorrow that sin brings. The Bible says that "...the blood of Jesus Christ his (God's) Son cleanseth us from all sin." I trust that if you have not already done so, that you will come to the Saviour and know the joy of this wonderful cleansing in your life, even today. ■



QUIZ

There are many trees, bushes and other plants mentioned in the Bible that have connections with different people. Look at the list below and draw a line between the people and the plant life they are associated with. The name that is left over is the answer to our quiz.

NATHANAEL
JONAH
ZACCHAEUS
JOSEPH
MOSES

BUSH (Exodus Ch.3)
SYCOMORE TREE (Luke Ch.19)
GOURD (Jonah Ch.4)
FIG TREE (John Ch.1)

ANSWER:

PRIZES! Are you 12 or under? Send your answer, name, address and church to:
Rev Garth Wilson Email: answer@fpvision.org

My Favourite

Hymn

Hymns
of Faith

Without any hesitation, I would say that my favourite hymn is 'Majestic Sweetness'. Penned by Samuel Stennett (1727 – 1795), the hymn 'Majestic Sweetness' is a wonderful song of praise that focuses upon the person and work of Christ. Stennett, who was a Baptist Pastor as well as a gifted hymnwriter, composed some thirty-nine hymns. One of his most recognised hymns is 'On Jordan's stormy banks I stand'.

'Majestic Sweetness' is probably a hymn that many Vision magazine readers are unfamiliar with as it is not found in our Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster hymnal. I first heard the hymn 'Majestic Sweetness' when I was a young convert. On that occasion it was sung to the tune of Psalm 40, and the words of Stennett's hymn really gripped my heart. For me, the hymn encapsulates who Christ is and what He has wrought on our behalf. The original version of the hymn comprises nine stanzas (verses) in total; however, the following are the six most well-known:

*Majestic sweetness sits enthroned
Upon the Saviour's brow;
His head with radiant glories crowned
His lips with grace o'erflow.*

*No mortal can with Him compare
Among the sons of men;
Fairer is He than all the fair
Who fill the heav'nly train.*

*He saw me plunged in deep distress
And flew to my relief;
For me He bore the shameful cross
And carried all my grief.*

*To him I owe my life and breath
And all the joys I have;
He makes me triumph over death
And saves me from the grave.*

*To heaven, the place of His abode
He brings my weary feet;
Shows me the glories of my God
And makes my joys complete.*

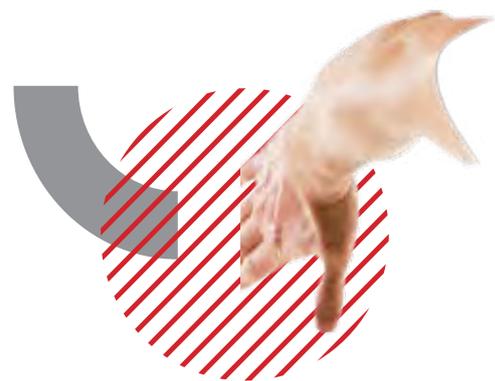
*Since from his bounty I receive
Such proofs of love divine;
Had I a thousand hearts to give
Lord, they should all be Thine.*

There is none like our Blessed Saviour. He truly is the Fairest of the Fair and is the One who alone is worthy of all our praise and adoration. The words of the fourth stanza are especially poignant as I consider the mercy and grace of God towards me. My life's testimony verse is Psalm 30:3 "O LORD, Thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: Thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit." Time after time, the Lord has spared my life; and I owe absolutely everything to Him.

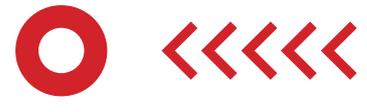
The life of every Christian should be marked out and characterised with praise and thankfulness to the Lord. All that we are, have and ever will be, is solely due to God's grace. It is therefore with an overwhelming sense of gratitude and appreciation that I frequently sing this hymn and lift my heart to the Lord.

"Had I a thousand hearts to give, Lord they should all be Thine." Child of God, you and I do not have many hearts or lives to give to the Lord. We have just one brief, short life to live. Let us make it count! ■

✉ **Mr C Killen,**
Free Presbyterian Mission Board.



CHALLENGES I FACE WHEN RUNNING THE



Christian Race



In Scripture, the Christian life is often likened to running a race. The Apostle Paul urged young budding Christians who were suffering from severe persecution in an attempt to turn them away from following Christ, “run with patience the race that is set before us” (Hebrews 12:1). He also used the image of a runner reaching and straining for the finish line when he wrote to the Philippian believers. On that occasion he spoke of the Christian life as “reaching forth unto those things which are before” (Philippians 3:13).

While in school, I had a strong interest in sport and more particularly football. I had a friend who took a great interest in competing in athletics and particularly one event known as the steeplechase. The steeplechase is quite a unique race. It is not a straight, short or long distance run on a running track. It is a race comprised of different barriers, obstacles and water

jumps, which the runner must overcome to eventually be crowned the winner. Athletes usually compete in the steeplechase at either two or three thousand metres. When we think of the Christian life, especially for the young Christian, it is perhaps more like a two or three thousand metre steeplechase, as opposed to a one or two hundred metre sprint. There are plenty of barriers and obstacles to be met and overcome on this long race.

If we choose to ignore those obstacles, or hope we never face them, then we are naïve and unprepared. Paul reminds us “... we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Corinthians 2:11).

However, an unhealthy focus upon the devil's devices is not a healthy mindset. A balanced awareness of some of the challenges, as well as how to overcome them, is both helpful and necessary in seeking to be overcomers and champions in running the race

SELF-ACCEPTANCE

A big issue we face as young Christians is self-image and self-acceptance.

This issue is heightened with the various social media platforms that are available today, such as Instagram, Facebook and Tik-tok. As we make the transition from childhood to adulthood, we begin to understand more of ourselves as individuals and become more aware of our similarities as well as our differences with others. Questions

begin to pulse through our minds: Who am I? Why am I here? Or even, why did God make me the way that He has? At such times we must remember that God has made us unique and with a purpose. Adopting the mindset of Psalm 139:14 where the psalmist said, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made," is a good spirit to adopt. Renowned Bible teacher Stephen Olford was once quoted as saying, "*God does not deal in duplicates; He only makes originals.*" Whenever we struggle as young Christians with self-acceptance, it is good to remember that we are all different and uniquely created by God in His image for His own purpose and glory.

DECISIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE

Another challenge faced by young Christians is that we are making life-altering and life-changing decisions at quite a young age. After completing GCSEs, the question is often asked, "What next?" Should a young person go to a technical college, seek employment or pursue

further education; and, if so, what should be studied? Sometimes it seems as though no matter how hard we try, we can never know the answer to these questions! At these crossroad moments in our lives, the first thing we should do is pray about the matter and ask the Lord to guide us. Consider the words of Psalm 37:5 "Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass." And the well-known words of Proverbs 3:6, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." The Lord has promised to help and guide His people.

Another helpful point to remember is that God gives us different talents to use as well as passions and desires. Whenever we are deciding what to do with our future, it is good to take time and think about what God has actually given us an interest in and ability and passion to do. Whenever we come to understand this, then we must use what God has given to the best of our ability: "As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another" (1 Peter 4:10).

We do, however, need the opportunity to use those gifts and talents and pursue these different avenues. This is something which a sovereign God, who is in control of every detail of our lives, gives to us. If it is God's will for you to pursue a certain occupation or avenue, then He will give you opportunities to do so. If He doesn't present the opportunity to do so, then it may be that it is not His will for you at this particular time. An example of this may be that you desire to pursue a particular course of study, but either don't receive a place on the course or the grades necessary to enter that course of study. This is God opening and also closing doors for us. The Apostle Paul was able to say in 2 Corinthians 2:12 that "a door was opened unto me of the Lord."

TEMPTATION

Temptation is another obstacle we meet as young followers of Christ. Sometimes we can feel that everywhere we turn we are tempted by

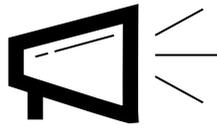
something or someone. While it comes in different forms we are surrounded by temptation. Whenever we are tempted, it is good to remember that many of the young people of the Bible were also tempted. When Daniel moved to a new country with a new culture and customs, he was tempted. Yet, in Daniel 1:8, we are reminded that "he purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself..." Similarly, when Joseph lived in Egypt, he was morally tempted by Potiphar's wife. Yet, he too responded by exclaiming "how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9). Moses also made the decision as a young man in Egypt, "to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:25).

FRIENDS

One of the key obstacles or hurdles we meet as a young Christian is the issue of friends. When God created the first man, He said, "it is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). God has made us as social creatures, and therefore having good friends is important as well as Biblical. Bad company will have a bad influence upon us: "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). As David had Jonathan to rely on as a friend during his battles with Saul, and as Peter and John prayed, witnessed and even ran to the tomb with each other, so we should seek out those spiritual friends who will be a source and strength and encouragement to us.

The apostle Paul knew what it was to face difficulties and obstacles. Yet, as he listed many of them in Romans 8, he did not focus on or be overcome by them. He triumphantly concluded by stating in Romans 8:37, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." As we run the steeplechase of life, with God's help we can overcome each hurdle we face! ■

✉ **Rev J Patterson,**
Ballymagerny Free Presbyterian Church.



YOUTH COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS

CASTLEWELLAN WEEKEND

30 JULY - 2 AUGUST

Who? Ages 15-28

How much?

£89 for *ages* 15-18; £95 for 19+

SUMMER CAMP

9 - 13 AUGUST

Where? Greenhill YMCA, Newcastle

Who? Ages 12-18

How much? £195

SUMMER OUTREACH

7, 14, 21, 22 AUGUST

Where? John Knox Memorial,
Belfast

Who? 16+

How much? Free

NATIONAL RALLY

10 SEPTEMBER, 8:00PM

Where? Magherafelt FPC

Who? All Youth Fellowships

INFORMAL BIBLE STUDY & FELLOWSHIP NIGHT (BI-MONTHLY)

25 SEPTEMBER, 27 NOVEMBER

Where? To be confirmed

Who? Ages 16-29

Why? Give young people the opportunity to study specific subjects in the Bible together while enjoying fellowship and discussion.

Some of these events will not be able to take place if restrictions such as social distancing do not ease. Notice will be given if events are cancelled and, if possible, refunds will be given.

STAY UP TO DATE AT



FPCYOUTH.ORG



Miss Edna Elizabeth Weir

1937 – 2003

In 1 Corinthians 15:58, we are exhorted, “...be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord”. Edna Elizabeth Weir, known lovingly throughout Fermanagh as Aunty Edna, was obedient to this exhortation. Edna was the second of four girls born into a Christian home in rural Fermanagh. Both her parents and grandparents were active in various forms of evangelical outreach. It was not until Edna was seventeen that she repented of her sin and trusted Christ for salvation. Knowing that we are saved to serve, Edna soon was involved in Sunday School work.

From her earliest days, Edna was a gifted designer and seamstress. Not being allowed to use scissors didn't hinder her making beautiful dresses for her dolls! Starting her working career in a local drapery shop, Edna went on to work in a factory where she honed her skills in sewing and design. Her talents took her to London; and undoubtedly Edna could have had a very lucrative career had she stayed in the clothing trade.

God had been speaking to Edna for some years before she applied to the Emmaus Missionary Training Centre in Hollywood in the late 1960s. Students attended various churches on the Lord's Days. Edna's sixth Sunday found her in Ravenhill Free Presbyterian Church. Edna recognised that this was a church committed to the uncompromising preaching of the Gospel. Shortly afterwards Lisbellaw Free Presbyterian Church opened, and Edna became a member.

In 1972, the new church opened in Enniskillen (Bethel FPC), and there after the tenth annual Missionary Council Rally Edna was sure of God's call to “fulltime” Christian work. She had been helping in various organisations but felt that her ministry was to be in a separatist work. She did not hesitate when invited by Rev Ivan Foster to become a child evangelist for Bethel. In January 1975, Edna put her hand to the Gospel plough and never turned back.

Edna believed 2 Corinthians 9:6, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth

bountifully shall reap also bountifully”. Edna sowed and reaped bountifully. Nine regular meetings were held in various halls or homes from October through to May. An annual picnic with activities, food and a faithful message was held for the children. In June, several children's missions were held; and, in August, Edna had five daily children's open air meetings in various housing estates.

Homes or garages were made available when the rain threatened to stop open air meetings.

Edna visited extensively in preparation for children's meetings and being local knew everyone. She had a natural rapport with young and old, making each feel valued.

Edna was keen to train helpers, often without them realising. Taking the roll, teaching a memory verse, sitting among the children or teaching a lesson was readily shared with a band of helpers.

Never critical, Edna encouraged others and had wise words for those who sought her advice.

One of the meeting halls was in poor condition. The edge of the floor had rotted, and Edna painstakingly packed it with tightly crumpled newspapers. When a hole in the ceiling revealed a bat in the roof space, silent prayer was offered that it would not decide to fly during the meeting. On another occasion as Edna stepped down from the platform the floorboards gave way and Edna's foot went through!

Edna took ill, but from her hospital bed she gave instructions for the annual picnic. On the picnic day, 10th May 2003, Edna went home to be with the Lord. Edna laid a solid foundation and built with gold (1 Corinthians 3:11,12). Mrs Arlene Gray and now Mrs Gillian Moore continue to build on that foundation. ■

✍ 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.





The Importance of the Law of God in Society

“ THE UNGODLY ARE OBLIGED TO OBEY THE DICTATES OF THE CREATOR WHO IS THEIR MAKER AND GOD OVER ALL, BUT THOSE WHO ARE HIS BY COVENANT, BROUGHT INTO A SPECIAL, PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM, HAVE A GREATER RESPONSIBILITY LAID UPON THEM TO OBEY HIM AND CONFORM TO HIS HOLY LAW. ”

We are living in an immoral and decadent society. Recent debate and legislation in our country regarding abortion, same-sex marriage and conversion therapy endorse the fact that we are continuing to slide into the abyss of degeneracy and licentiousness. The laws of God are constantly disregarded, despised and defamed.

Solomon wisely stated, “Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Proverbs 14:34). True righteousness to govern a nation can only be found in the righteous God who has given His Word by divine revelation and inspiration.

In Exodus 20, we discover the Ten Commandments as God spoke them upon Mount Sinai. It is one of the most remarkable portions of Scripture in the Old Testament, and as relevant for New Testament times as it was in the days of Moses. The Decalogue, as we sometimes refer to it, has never been abrogated or abolished. It is as binding today upon mankind as it was in ancient times.

Our love to God is expressed and exhibited in keeping the commandments. Solomon, the royal preacher, teaches us that it is our duty to adhere to the commandments of God: "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecclesiastes 12:13). John wrote: "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments: and His commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

The Ten Commandments need to be proclaimed and emphasised in this generation. These Commandments constitute the moral law of God. Forty or fifty years ago there was a certain regard and respect for spiritual and sacred things, but not so today. Individuals have shunned the commandments; families have failed to uphold and implement them in their homes; and those in high places of authority have disregarded them. As a result, society is in a mess spiritually, and the population is openly sinning more and more against a holy God. Every commandment is breached and broken in the modern world.

There is need, therefore, to re-emphasise and declare that which God Almighty has spoken in His moral law. In Reformation times, the Reformers instigated the practice of displaying the Ten Commandments in a prominent position, so that they would be kept before the people.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS CAN BE OBSERVED IN THE OPENING LINE OF EXODUS 20

"And God spake all these words." These are laws of God's making. They are made and ordained by God who is infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Out of infinite wisdom He gave these commands. They are wise, good and for our benefit. The Lord never gave anything in vain. These are also the laws of God's speaking. God spoke them directly, word by word, line by line, to His servant Moses. Matthew Henry said, "God has many ways of speaking to the children of men;

(Job 33:14) once, yea twice, by His Spirit, by conscience, by providences, by His voice; all which we ought carefully to attend to; but He never spake, at any time, upon any occasion, so as He spake the Ten Commandments, which therefore we ought to hear with the more earnest heed."

The law of God had been given before. It was written in man's heart. Adam knew from the beginning what was expected of him. But sin had so defaced that writing that it was necessary, in this manner, to receive the knowledge of it.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DECALOGUE CAN ALSO BE OBSERVED IN THE PREFACE:

"I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage" (Exodus 20:2).

These words emphasise **God's authority**: "I am the LORD". The word Lord (Jehovah) reminds us that the Lord is the self-existent, independent, eternal Fountain of all being and power. This is a phrase which appears over 157 times in the Old Testament. The significance of the title is: He that always was, that always is, and that ever is to come. It points us to the only true, eternal and living God. Because it is the LORD, the eternal and absolute God, He has a right over His creation, and especially those who are His own. He is God supreme; God Almighty; God infinite, eternal and unchangeable. Therefore, when He sets forth the Ten Commandments, all mankind is obliged to submit under His authority.

Furthermore, the preface underscores **God's affinity**: "thy God." To His people, He is more than merely the supreme and eternal God. There is a personal identity and affinity which is enjoyed by those who are His. The ungodly are obliged to obey the dictates of the Creator who is their Maker and God over all, but those who are His by covenant, brought into a special, personal relationship with Him, have a greater responsibility laid upon them to obey Him and conform to His holy law.

Exodus 20:1 stresses **God's mercy**: "I....have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." This was a mighty deliverance wrought for Israel, which should never be forgotten. Due to this marvellous salvation wrought for them, they were obligated to the Lord and bound by gratitude to obey Him. The Lord had shown such mercy and demonstrated such kindness by bringing them out of misery, hardship and slavery into freedom and liberty, that they were constrained to hear and obey what He would say in His moral law.

We ought to feel our indebtedness too. Surely there is a constraint laid upon us in our obedience to the Lord. A consideration of His mercy, love and kindness should be a motivation in our obedience to His commandments.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE DECALOGUE IS ALSO DISCERNED IN THE FACT THAT CHRIST PUT HIS SEAL UPON IT.

(Matthew 22:37, John 4:24, Matthew 5:34, Mark 2:27, Matthew 15:4-6, Matthew 5:21, 28, Matthew 15:19, Matthew 12:34-37, Matthew 5:28). The Ten Commandments are for the Christian today, just as much as for the people of ancient times.

We need to take heed to God's laws in this generation. We are living in the last days. One of the signs to be observed before our Lord's return is found in 2 Thessalonians 2:7, where Paul speaks of the mystery of iniquity. The Greek word for 'iniquity' is 'anomos' which means, no law. Hence, as the end approaches, the 'mystery of lawlessness' will be seen more and more.

So, if ever there was a need to proclaim God's moral law, it is today in this age of lawlessness. We need to get back to the holy commandments of God and have them imprinted again upon our minds and hearts. ■

✍ **Rev D Park,**
*Hebron Free Presbyterian Church,
Ballymoney.*

Conversion Therapy



The Westminster Government and the Northern Ireland Assembly are planning to ban practices that seek to change someone's sexual orientation or gender identity. Relevant debates took place on Monday 8th March in Westminster and on Tuesday 20th April 2021 in Stormont on a proposed ban on conversion therapy. Prior to both debates, the Government and Morals Committee of Presbytery and the Christian Institute encouraged people to contact their MPs or MLAs asking them to oppose the respective motions. Tragically, in both instances, the proposal to ban conversion therapy passed.

Our opposition to conversion therapy is not an endorsement of gruesome practices that have come under this term. Rather, our opposition flows from the fact that the term 'conversion therapy' is deliberately undefined, and, in the minds of many, includes prayer, preaching and pastoral counselling that emphasise biblical conversion.

Should anyone doubt that the intention of many is to include prayer and evangelical conversion in the ban, consideration should be given to the situation in Australia. The Australian state of Victoria has a conversion therapy ban that

criminalises churches that pray or give advice that fails to be LGBT affirming when dealing with these issues. The state Attorney General of Victoria said church ministers will be "re-educated by the state" to prevent them breaking the law. Offenders face up to ten years in prison and a heavy fine. A founder of the 'Ban Conversion Therapy' campaign is reported as saying, "Spiritual guidance' is really just religious speak for conversion therapy." Then he added, "The pernicious power of prayer must be dealt with."

Further evidence occurred on the Nolan show on BBC Radio Ulster on 22nd April. Host, Stephen Nolan, got very frustrated with SDLP councillor, Séamas de Faoite, because, despite asking him numerous times to state whether his party believed that prayer should be banned in a conversion therapy ban, he would not give a straight answer. Eventually, after being pushed, Séamas de Faoite said of prayer to change someone's sexuality, "I don't believe it's legitimate. I believe that it is coercive and I think that it puts LGBT people in a very dangerous position."

Many liberals within the church have also used this debate to attempt to settle their arguments with evangelicals over these issues. Rev Steve Chalke of the Oasis Trust claims a ban must cover pastoral care of those with same-sex

attraction. He asserts informal prayer and sermons that do not affirm LGBT identities are damaging and require Government intervention, alleging these are 'safeguarding' issues. He said of evangelicals, "...they teach extremely negative messages in sermons, Sunday schools and youth groups which create a sense that LGBT people are evil, disgusting or even demonic..."

Church of England Synod member, Jayne Ozanne, sits on the Government's LGBT Advisory Panel. She has claimed that church prayer ministry is conversion therapy and attacks churches for teaching that homosexual behaviour is "sinful". She wants conversion therapy to be made a criminal offence. The liberals want to enforce their view about homosexuality by law.

The Westminster government seems to be aware of the danger that legitimate church activity will be brought under this ban. They have, therefore, given some limited assurances to Christians. Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, told Members of Parliament, "It is not the place of Government to dictate what is legitimate spiritual guidance, but . . . we will not tolerate the use of harmful, coercive practices under the guise of spiritual support." The Prime Minister said, "I do not want to see clergy and church members criminalised for normal, non-coercive activity."

In Northern Ireland, the majority of MLAs rejected a DUP amendment,

which would have included protections for "legitimate religious activities such as preaching, prayer and pastoral support."

This amendment was lost and the original motion which does not define conversion therapy was passed by 59 votes to 24. The fact that the Assembly voted so definitely not to protect religious activities is evidence of an antagonism towards evangelical Protestantism by many MLAs.

The proposed conversion therapy ban is not just a matter of concern for the church, but for the family. The Westminster Government says its ban will cover transgender identity. This could make it unlawful for a parent to try to dissuade his or her troubled son or daughter from taking irreversible 'sex change' drugs. Urging them to live as their biological sex could be criminalised. Young people will be put at risk of life-changing medical transitions they may later regret. Parents who complain against a school for confusing their child by teaching gender ideology could also fall foul of this law.

Under the guise of a ban on conversion therapy and using past practices, that no evangelical would want to be identified with, as levers to put their case, the LGBT lobby have Bible teachings about their practices and the traditional ministry of the church in their sights. They want to criminalise those who would say what the Bible says about homosexual sin and who

“ Pre-eminently we need to pray for the intervention of God. When a land comes to the point where it starts to persecute and criminalise those who believe what the Bible says, then we are in a very dangerous place indeed. ”

would want to pray with someone with same sex attraction, even if they have asked for prayer.

The LGBT lobby fear what they call "the pernicious power of prayer." The God to whom we pray is real. And conversion is real. The new birth is real. There are many stories of LGBT people who have been truly converted. They have forsaken their sin and turned to God and they have become new creatures in Christ. Their stories are being suppressed and have been ignored to such an extent that even some of God's people are beginning to doubt if a homosexual can be changed. 1 Corinthians 6:11 provides wonderful encouragement. Paul listed a number of sins including homosexual sins and said of the Corinthian Christians, "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." There will be government consultations on these matters, but pre-eminently we need to pray for the intervention of God. When a land comes to the point where it starts to persecute and criminalise those who believe what the Bible says, then we are in a very dangerous place indeed. ■

✓ Rev G Dane,
Crossgar Free Presbyterian Church.

“ The LGBT lobby have Bible teachings about their practices and the traditional ministry of the church in their sights. They want to criminalise those who would say what the Bible says about homosexual sin and who would want to pray with someone with same sex attraction, even if they have asked for prayer. ”



Margaret Russell, Missionary to Kenya Retires

Monday 31st May 2021 marked a historic date in the Free Presbyterian Church Mission Board with the official retirement of Miss Margaret Russell from the work in Kenya. Margaret is one of the longest serving missionaries under our Board, having completed just under thirty-eight years of faithful service for the Lord. She commenced after graduating from the first intake of students in the Whitefield College of the Bible and, having been accepted by the Mission Board, she arrived in Kenya in July 1983.

TRIALS AND TROUBLES

Those early years had many challenges. Bible Christian Faith Church (BCFC) operated initially without official government registration. During that time, the churches were physically closed by the authorities and the leaders arrested. It was a time of great uncertainty and testing. It was thirteen years before BCFC would obtain registration under the government. As her sponsor, this also impacted Margaret's work permit application to live and work in Kenya. God overruled wonderfully and the door was kept open for Margaret to continue her missionary work. Margaret acknowledges the encouragement she received, in those early days, from the Kenyan Christians and particularly from Rev Nathaniel Kendagor and his family. Lasting friendships were formed in those difficult days. In 1994, tragedy struck when Rev Kendagor's sister, Ruth, and his nephew, Biwott, were murdered in his home at Lityei. Their deaths were the catalyst for starting the Christian Academy at Lityei. Both young people are buried in ground adjacent to the school. Their graves are a constant reminder to the students of the brevity of life.

PROGRESS

The Lord burdened Margaret to establish a Sunday School ministry in BCFC. A curriculum of Bible lessons, memorisation and catechism was put together. This, together with annual training for the Sunday School teachers, saw thirty-six Sunday Schools established with some 2000 children in attendance. Margaret worked alone up to 1995 until Miss Gillian Gillespie joined her. Subsequently, the Harris family arrived, and, afterwards, Miss Noreen McAfee, Miss Kathy Walker, Rev David DiCanio and Rev and Mrs Malcolm Patterson. Over the years, many visitors were welcomed as were short-term workers. There is nothing quite like mission field work for meeting life in all of its wonderful variety.

BOOKSHOPS

Under the auspices of BCFC, Margaret was instrumental in opening the Armstrong Evangelical Bookshops which have had a definite influence in the lives of many in Kitale and Makutano over twenty-two years. Miss Cherry Dale managed the bookshops initially. The support received from Northern Ireland, via the Mission Board and Mr George McConnell,

who kept supplies of books coming, was a lifeline to this literature and book ministry. George was a regular visitor to Kenya, and a great encourager and supporter of the work.

Church Planting requires men to be trained for evangelism and the pastorate. Under the auspices of the Church Council of BCFC, a Bible College was established in which Margaret taught for some twenty-five years. It is heartening to see those who were trained still in the work of God and serving God in local churches.

CHRISTIAN ACADEMY

In 1998, the work took a significant step with the establishment of the Christian Academy in Lityei. From a fledgling nursery school, the work grew into a fully operative Primary and Secondary School, with over 600 pupils enrolled at its peak. Margaret had the onerous task of managing the school for twenty years. The number of children and young people whose lives have been touched and influenced by the gospel in the Academy could not be estimated. Special prayer is requested that God would preserve the Christian Academy for future generations.

MISSIONARY VISION

Our own Mission Board registration in Kenya was eventually secured in 2014 with the establishment of the Free Presbyterian Mission Society Africa. Margaret has been the local Kenyan administrator of the Society until 2021. The Mission Board is indebted to her patience in processing all the legal paperwork and local administrative duties involved with FPMSA. We would not be where we are today without her involvement.

BATTLES

Missionaries, like all other believers, are soldiers in a spiritual battle for biblical truth. When asked about those major battles in Kenya, Margaret outlined some of the following major ones. They are a warning to the church at home which faces the same battles, as well as a training manual for would-be missionaries in the days ahead.

From her experience, Margaret advises that missionaries must learn to cope with the multi-layers of government bureaucracy in whatever country they serve. In dealing with government officials, grace and wisdom were needed daily in Kenya.

The spiritual battle to maintain a reformed and separated witness was a constant feature of her time in Kenya. It took constant vigilance on behalf of the church to maintain scriptural worship against the overpowering influences of contemporary and Pentecostal worship in schools and churches in Kenya. These issues also challenge us at home!

Margaret also highlighted the need for the church in Kenya to maintain scriptural church leadership and exercise proper spiritual governance. The complex strands of maintaining good relationships with the national church was also emphasised.

ENCOURAGEMENTS

Over the years, there have been many disappointments for Margaret, especially seeing those, who once professed faith, turn back and walk no

more. This was the hurt of the Apostle Paul, when he spoke of Demas having forsaken him, and of the Saviour, when He asked His disciples, “Will ye also go away?” (John 6:67). Despite those times of trial and disappointment, Margaret records some of the many encouragements of being involved in the Lord’s work in Kenya: souls which have been reached with the gospel and brought to saving faith in Christ; many youths taught in the ways of truth and who have gone on to become adult members of the church in Kenya; and, souls persevering in godliness, even though they battle with difficult circumstances in life.

Reflecting on her years of service under the Mission Board, Margaret was quick to acknowledge that anything accomplished was not done alone, but in conjunction with many others who worked with her as a team.

FAMILY

Missionaries on the field can be burdened greatly, particularly due to ageing parents at home which can result in a feeling of guilt or divided loyalties between work and family responsibilities. Margaret did not experience that to any great degree and acknowledges the sacrificial spirit displayed by her late mother, in that, while she looked forward to her visits home, she never asked or intimated that she should come home or not return to the field. Margaret has always enjoyed the support of her siblings and their families, but she did experience, what she classes as, the “phone call that missionaries dread,” when she received tragic news of the untimely death of her late brother, Jim.

APPRECIATION

Special appreciation is given to all her faithful supporters and to the Mission Board for sending her to Kenya, and prayerfully and financially supporting her. The loyalty, fellowship, and friendship of Margaret’s home church in Tandragee have been such

a blessing. Tribute is paid by Margaret to all the Kenyan national Christians. On the field she said anything that was accomplished could not have been achieved without the Kenyan ministers, pastors, elders and Sunday School teachers in the BCFC and, latterly, in the Glory Bible Church.

FINAL REMARKS

The final remarks I leave for Margaret: *“All my thanks go to God, who saved me, called me, gave me the health, strength and safety to live and work in Kenya for 37 years. Apart from bouts of malaria and typhoid, particularly in the earlier years, I have enjoyed good health, though over this last year and a half, I have struggled after an injury sustained in January 2020. But God has been so gracious to me. I trust I have been a good ambassador for Christ in Kenya and, even as I retire, I will seek to still be so, especially for the teaching of the truth to the children in Kenya. Having lived nine years longer in Kenya than I did in Ulster I can’t imagine that I will ever forget the life and the people of Kenya. I value your continued prayers for this new chapter of my life that I have now commenced – that God will still use me and that I would see my own family circle won for the Saviour.”*

The Mission Board places on record its gratitude to Almighty God for all that Margaret has been enabled to accomplish for the Lord in Kenya. She has been a faithful ambassador for Christ, and a powerful advocate for the work in Kenya. We wish her God’s richest blessing in her retirement. We are glad she had agreed to continue in a supervisory, voluntary role in continuing to finish her update of the Sunday School curriculum.

Acts 26:22: “Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.” ■

✉ **Rev Ian Harris,**
Chairman of FPC Mission Board.

Memorial Service for Rev Wesley Graham

“Well done, thou good and faithful servant!”



☒ Above : (L to R) Rev J Moffat, Rev J Creane, Rev I Harris, Mrs C Graham, Rev D Park and Rev M McCaughey



☒ Above: Members of the Graham family who attended the memorial service

Just over a year ago, on Tuesday 17th May 2020, the Lord in His sovereign mercy called our dear brother, Rev Wesley Graham, into His immediate presence. On that day, his fight for the cause of the Gospel was completed. He had finished his course and kept the faith. He went home to his eternal reward in Heaven to be with Christ, which is far better.

Two days before he passed away, Rev Graham wrote his final entry in his diary: *“We are justified by free grace. All our merits before salvation count for nothing. All our merits since salvation count for nothing.... We have Christ’s merit until we die – praise His name. We never die, but we begin to live when we die (John 1:26; John 13:1; Philippians 1:21). To die is gain - what a gain!”*

A memorial service was held on Friday 28th May 2021 in his home congregation of Bangor Free Presbyterian Church. His life and ministry were celebrated by family and friends, as honour and praise were given to God, who made him an able minister of the Gospel and missionary of Christ. In the last ten years of his life, after a faithful ministry in Bristol, Wesley served the Lord, with his dear wife, Carol, as a pioneer missionary in Nepal.

There, in the shadow of the spectacular Himalayan mountains, with the summit of Everest towering in the distance, Wesley enjoyed mountain-top experiences with God. In the hands

of the Great Master, he was used as a father figure to establish the fledgling Nepali Free Presbyterian Church and to coordinate the ordination of over twenty pastors at an historic meeting in 2013. He saw many church buildings opened to the glory of God and the new Precious Children’s Home built. The Bible College, for the training of men for the ministry, was started and established under his leadership. He was a friend, mentor and encourager to the Moderator, Rev Paul Thapa, and all his colleagues. He organised the funding to train Sarita as a medical doctor, an outstanding young lady who was like a daughter to Wesley and Carol. Only eternity will reveal the full extent and impact of his ministry.

At the memorial service, Rev Joshua Moffatt, minister of Bangor, welcomed the congregation and many online listeners, and paid tribute to the life and service of Rev Graham. Rev David Park, chairman of the Missionary Council, led the service, reflecting on Wesley’s visits to the missionary weekend in Ballymoney and how he was a great inspiration and encouragement to those in attendance. Correspondence was read from Rev Gordon Ferguson and Rev Paul Thapa.

Close friends, Rev Jonathan Creane and Rev William McDermott, opened and closed the service with prayer. Hymns which emphasised Christ in His righteousness, sovereignty, mercy, and providence were chosen

specially by the family, culminating with Mrs Cousin’s hymn: “Immanuel’s Land”. The Brown family – Wesley’s grandchildren – sang and his son, Timothy, brought a fitting tribute. A video presentation, entitled, ‘A Memorial Tribute,’ narrated by his wife was shown, outlining highlights of Rev Graham’s ministry. Rev Maurice McCaughey, Wesley’s son-in-law, read the Scriptures before the preaching of the Word.

Hearts were warmed and stirred as Rev Ian Harris, chairman of the Mission Board, preached from Acts 13:36, “For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell on sleep, and was laid unto his fathers, and saw corruption...” highlighting King David’s epitaph in the New Testament. Rev Harris likened this little review of David’s life to Wesley Graham’s life, drawing attention to David’s salvation, service, season, submission and sleep.

The memorial service was a wonderful time of reflection and challenge, when the presence of God was known and His Word applied with sweet blessing. We trust that the Lord will continue to uphold Carol and her family by His sufficient grace, and we know that Wesley “being dead yet speaketh” (Hebrews 11:4) for His labours of love for Christ will live on and continue to bring forth fruit unto God. ■

☒ Rev D Park, Hebron Free Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney.

Emergency Aid Fund

Update

- 📷 **Below:** Aid distribution in India
- 📷 **Bottom:** Aid distribution in Pakistan



The humanitarian crisis that flows directly, and indirectly, from the COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a severe impact on the lives of many Christians and church-connected families around the globe. When we launched the Emergency Aid Fund in 2020, we did so anticipating that we would provide support for those directly connected to our mission work for just a few months.

We were touched by the generosity of God’s people, as significant funds were raised and distributed to provide basic food essentials to thousands of families in Africa, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Philippines, Brazil, Lebanon, and Spain. A video of the work in 2020 can be viewed at the Gallery section of our website – www.fpcmission.org

However, with the impact of a second wave and more deadly variants in the past few months, we have all been touched by the fragile nature of the healthcare systems in some of our mission fields. We have also seen the financial difficulty that has flowed from the lockdowns in areas where there is no local support. For many, the loss of work has plunged families into great hardship, with many struggling to provide the basic daily food for survival.

We have therefore reopened the Emergency Aid Fund and ask for your help to again provide essential food supplies to the families connected to our missionary work around the world. We have already provided some support this year to those in Pakistan and India, where there are great challenges, and have received requests for help in other areas.

You can support this work by donating to the Emergency Aid Fund – by bank transfer to the Mission Board account, by cheque payable to FPC Mission Board, through your local church or by card online on the “Donate” tab of our website.

“Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble” Psalm 41:1. ■

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Whitefield College of the Bible

Graduation and Commencement Service

Monday 20th September 2021 at 8.00pm
Bethany Free Presbyterian Church, Portadown

Preacher:

Rev John Armstrong (Moderator)

Everyone Welcome

Free Presbyterian Church Mission Board



Official Retirement Service for Miss Margaret Russell

After 38 Years of Service for the Lord in Kenya

Tuesday 21st September 2021 at 8.00pm
Tandragee Free Presbyterian Church

Preacher:

Rev John Greer (Clerk of Presbytery)

Please come and join us for this historic meeting.

All Welcome

Free Presbyterian
VISION

