

the monthly record

the magazine of the Free Church of Scotland ♦ March 2004 ♦ £1.00



THE DEATH OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND?
BIG FORGIVENESS
ANDALUCIA—THE MISSIONARIES' GRAVEYARD?
COLE ABBEY INDUCTION



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Cover: Melrose Abbey
Photograph: The Editor

COMMUNION DATES

April

- 4th Glasgow – Govanhill; Knock; Uig; Strachur; Carbost (Bracadale); Dores; Fort William & Kilmonivaig; Stoer; Kilwinning (evening)
- 11th Point; Park
- 18th Callanish; Burghead; Dingwall
- 25th St Peter's Dundee; Wick; Fortrose; Glenshiel; Lochgilphead; Coatbridge; Ayr Martyrs; Nairn; Strathpeffer; Inverness – Free North

Change

We are passing through crucial times for the Free Church in general and for many congregations in particular.

Not only is there a hugely important Court case hanging over us this year, but also we have to decide how we are going to manage change. For many these issues have got tangled up. They think that because the Court case will revolve around the Constitution of the Free Church, we cannot change *anything*. Of course that is nonsense. At one level we must continue as normal. We must sell redundant buildings and build new ones. We must link congregations where necessary and plant new ones. We must practise the New Testament teaching concerning the role of women in the Church. We must seek and obtain degree validation for the Free Church College. We must produce new versions of the Psalms in the vulgar tongue.

All these we have done to some extent. And all these involve change. Where there is life, there is change and movement. Where there is no life, there is immobility and inflexibility and stagnation.

Of course, most of those who left the Free Church in 2000 were against most of those things—including degree validation, *Sing Psalms*, modern translations of the Bible, church planting and Free Church Camps. This sometimes makes some of us look over our shoulders at them and worry if we are acting in an “unconstitutional” way! This is wholly unnecessary. None of these things is prohibited by our Constitution! In fact the very reverse. For instance, the Confession teaches us that the Scriptures should be translated into “the vulgar tongue”.

However, this still leaves us with the problem of how to manage change. Strange though it may seem, I can understand those who are wary of change. (You see, I am well over 50 now!) For instance, at one level I would much prefer to sing Psalm 116 in the familiar Scottish Psalter version. It has resonances and associations for me that the new version can never have. The new version can never remind me of my father singing Psalm 116 to the tune Ericstane.

But the Church doesn't exist for me. The Church exists to be the witness of Jesus Christ to a lost world. The student from China and the homeless from Edinburgh don't have my associations with Psalm 116. What matters to them is if they can understand the words and if they can sing the tune.

At one level, I would much prefer to stick to conducting two traditional Sunday services—that involves much less thought and effort from me! But I know that if I am going to connect with the unchurched, the interested inquirer and the unbeliever, I must do guest services and Christianity Explored courses, and I must be ready to innovate and try new approaches to preaching the gospel (Jesus didn't always use the same approach). Sometimes these will fail, but he who never made a mistake, never made anything. Sometimes we are so afraid of making a mistake, we never change anything or try anything new. Let it be my epitaph: He was never afraid of making a mistake!

Not all change is good. But when the Church is being ineffective or declining, change is necessary. Let us seek to ensure that the changes are Biblical and effective. And let us not be afraid!

Hutton

Before he published the results of his enquiry, Lord Hutton was the epitome of integrity and independence. At least so the BBC told us. Astonishingly after he published the results, he was an “establishment” man. Or so the BBC told us. It was one of the most remarkable changes of identity we have ever witnessed. What had happened to the man?

Or perhaps the man had not changed. Perhaps what had changed was the BBC's perception—like the change in the footballer's opinion of the referee before and after he gets sent off.

The BBC (and many others in the media) fell into the trap—with which some of us are all too familiar—the confusion of testimony with judgement. Some people think that because their point of view seems strongly expressed by the testimony of some, the judge must find in their favour. Not so! And it was certainly not so in this case.

What are the lessons to be learned? First, don't believe everything the media says. But do we really need an enquiry to tell us that? So much that passes for news is really opinion. If the Hutton enquiry achieves anything, let it be a sobering effect on the quality of the reporting of news.

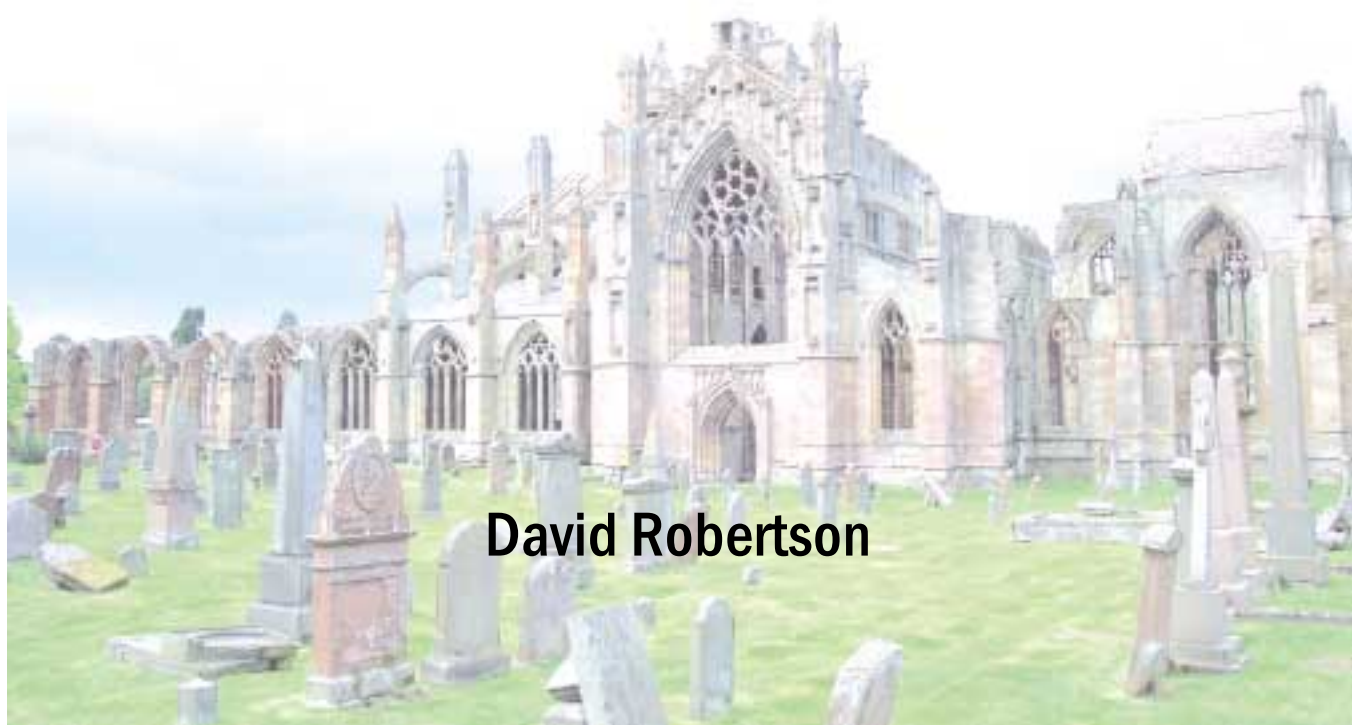
Second, although the death of Dr David Kelly was a great tragedy, it was clear that although he had talked freely to the media (while not authorised to do so), he could not live with the consequences.

Third, although the Government were shown not to have placed reliance on intelligence they believed to be false (the “45 minutes” use of WMD), questions do need to be asked about the policy that put so much reliance on WMD. The overwhelming case against the regime of Saddam Hussein was based not on their possible future use of WMD, but on their past failure to meet their obligations under the treaty that brought the Gulf War to an end.

What everyone (apart from possibly George Galloway) seems to be agreed about is that they are not sorry to see Saddam brought down. Who can forget the pictures of the once arrogant tyrant brought low? Not Gaddafi, it would seem. The Libyan leader has seemed positively cooperative with the rest of the world of late. Could there be some connection?

My problem is not that those who hold world power (the UN or the USA or whoever) intervene militarily to bring an end to tyrannous regimes, but that so often they don't. One day the rulers of this world, who are all God's servants, will have to give an account of their service to him. Not only will they have to account for their abuse of power, but they will also have to account for their non-use of power—their non-use of power to help the weak and the oppressed and the persecuted. One day the rulers of the UN and the USA and the UK will have to explain why they did nothing about Sudan and North Korea and Iran. And we who have the democratic power to influence our leaders will also have to give an account. We will also have to explain why we think it was it all right for us to achieve our liberty in the past by force of arms, but not for force of arms to be used to free the oppressed today.

the Church of Scotland



David Robertson

How are things in Mother Kirk?

David Robertson, minister of St Peter's, Dundee, takes a look.

One of the sad things in the Christian church is that sometimes we define ourselves by what we are *not* and what we do *not do*, rather than by what we *are* and what we *do do*. We see this especially in groups which have broken away from larger groups and seek to justify their own existence by continually demonstrating why the parent body is corrupt etc. In that sense those of us in the Free Church of Scotland have to be careful that we do not define ourselves by the fact that we are *not* the Church of Scotland. And we have to be careful that we do not regard its current decline and troubles with anything other than regret and sorrow. So I thought it was about time that we considered the current state of the Church of Scotland. I do so not out of a desire to criticise, nor to justify my own existence outwith that august body. I do so because I have a great interest in the Church of Scotland. I want to belong to the Church of Scotland and I think the Church of Scotland is vital for the spiritual well-being of Scotland. So how are things in Mother Kirk?

At first glance they do not appear to be good. The curve of decline is steep, membership is almost in freefall—with 20,000 members leaving per year, churches closing left, right and centre, a ministerial shortfall of over 200, and Callum Brown's prophecy that there would be no Sunday schools left by 2011 not likely to be seen as too pessimistic! Only the wilfully blind would allow the exceptions of local successes to obscure the

wider picture of a decline that appears terminal. Now of course it will not be terminal—because the Church will be able to survive on the assets of the past for well beyond our life time and the politicians and bureaucrats within it will be able to write their reports, appear on their committees and play the game that somehow the church is of significance in Scottish life. But in reality, in this worse case scenario, any idea of the Church of Scotland as a living and dynamic part of the body of Christ will be long gone.

Of course that is not the whole story. There is another side. In the post 1940's there were, outside the Highlands, a handful of Church of Scotland ministers who could be described as Reformed Evangelical. Then came Eric Alexander, Willie Still, James and George Philip and who can calculate the positive effect they have had upon the situation? Literally hundreds of men have gone into the ministry because of these men and as a result at least one third of the Church of Scotland ministers would today profess to be evangelical (400 out of 1200). Furthermore at least one hundred of those would be Reformed and Calvinistic. Although these older leaders have now left active ministry through death or retirement, their legacy remains. Is there a finer preacher in Scotland than Martin Allen (Glasgow)? A better intellectual apologist than Dominic Smart (Aberdeen)? Who would not want Philip Hare (Edinburgh) as their pastor? In my own city it is a joy to work

with men such as David Scott and David Clark, both having effective and important city centre ministries. Which is to say nothing of the many unsung heroes scattered throughout Scotland who week in and week out preach faithfully the Word of God and the Good News of Jesus. The Crieff Fellowship (of which I am part) continues as strong as ever and there are some more encouraging signs in the wind—Andy McGowan (principal of the Highland Theological College and a Church of Scotland minister) now has a regular column in *Life and Work* where he ably presents the biblical position. In fact it is clear that in many areas of the Kirk the establishment are making room for the evangelicals at the table.

However that also is not the whole story. Whilst room is being made at the table there are conditions attached and my fear is that the establishment has decided that since they cannot knock out the evangelicals they will neutralise them by absorbing them—whether this is a deliberate policy or an accidental one does not really matter, the result is the same. I have evangelical friends who are delighted that they now have a ‘seat at the table’. But what table? And at what cost? Is it on condition that the *status quo* is not challenged? Just before the Disruption, McCheyne commented on a similar situation: “It is confessed that many of our ministers do not preach the gospel—alas! Because they know it not. Yet they have complete control over their pulpits, and may never suffer the truth to be heard there during their whole incumbency. And yet our church consigns these parishes to their tender mercies for perhaps fifty years, without a sigh! Should not certain men be ordained as evangelists, with full power to preach in every pulpit of their district—faithful, judicious, lively preachers, who may go from parish to parish, and thus carry life into many a dead corner?” Sometimes the Lord’s people in the Church of Scotland are being left to starve, as they are either fed meagre rations or, worse still, poison from the pulpit. No Christian should ever acquiesce in such an arrangement.

When one looks deeper into the overall picture amongst evangelicals in the Church of Scotland the picture is not a universally healthy one. Firstly whilst there may be 400 evangelical ministers there is nowhere near that number of evangelical congregations—in fact outwith the Highlands the numbers may be counted on one’s fingers and toes! Scotland desperately needs more congregations like Newmilns, the Tron and Holyrood Abbey—but where are they? I suspect that one of the major reasons for the increasing number of evangelical ministries not resulting in more evangelical congregations is that ministers move on so quickly. It can take decades to transform and reform a church. Secondly, the evangelicals have sold the pass on the question of women’s ordination. This is more serious than it sounds because it is a lot more than a question of ecclesiology—it is a question of scripture and its sufficiency and authority. Whereas the original act of the General Assembly re the ordination of women was permissive—*allowing* congregations to have women ministers and elders—now, by fiat of the Assembly Clerk, it has been declared that it is declarative—in other words it is the law of the Church of Scotland that in order to be an office bearer within it you *must* agree to women being ordained. A significant number of evangelicals were prepared to go along with this. Others thought that it would not affect them and that they would be left alone—the Tron, Holyrood Abbey

and the whole Lewis Presbytery, for example, do not have women elders. However, the number of such churches is getting smaller and smaller and they are being worn away by a war of attrition. Now that Sinclair Ferguson is gone, will the Tron be able or willing to resist an insistence from the Glasgow presbytery that they obey the law of the Church and ordain women?

Of course there are evangelicals who will say this is not the issue on which to make a stand. Which leaves me wondering just what exactly that issue might be? Women’s ordination is not the problem—the church overruling scripture is. Having sold the pass on this the evangelicals do not have a leg to stand on (unless it is a homophobic one) when it comes, as it will do, to the question of homosexuality and the church. And this is rapidly turning into the crux issue. Not because the evangelicals want to make it such. In fact the running on this issue is being made by the ‘liberals’ or ‘pseudo-evangelicals’. The Christmas address of the Moderator—in which the Rev. Prof Iain Torrance attacked the church’s stance on the issue—was indicative of what is wrong with the Church. The *Press and Journal*, amongst others, praised him for his ‘honesty and courage’ in tackling the subject. But it was neither honest nor courageous. There was no courage involved. Torrance’s remarks did not involve any risk to himself—he was bound to be praised by the press and could dismiss any criticism as unloving fundamentalist bigotry. And it was dishonest. He managed to convey the idea that the reason that gay men were far more likely to have sexual disease was because of the bigotry of the Church of Scotland—or at least some within it. He arrived at this conclusion by a marvellous twist of logic whereby he argued that because the church is homophobic it is frightening gay men so that they did not go to health clinics for help. The fact that the prevalence of sexual disease amongst gay men has more to do with sexual promiscuity than it does with evangelicals oppressing gays, seems to have conveniently escaped his notice and his speech. He also performed the quite disgraceful verbal trick of raising the issue and then complaining that the church was obsessed about it! As far as I am aware there has not been a rush by evangelicals to go into print or to the media trying to explain the Bible’s position on homosexuality. But we keep getting pushed. We are asked for our opinions and then we are condemned for stating them. So the Moderator of the Church of Scotland goes to the secular press and explicitly tells them that the Church of Scotland evangelicals are obsessed with homosexuality and that the intolerance of the Kirk is harming gays. It sounds very humble of the Moderator to confess the sins of his own Church, but of course he is not doing so. He is confessing the ‘sins’ of the evangelicals—or at least of those who will have the real courage and honesty to stand up for what scripture says and refuse to be bullied by accusations of homophobia and intolerance and refuse to go along with the agenda of the culture around. The irony here is that Torrance comes from a dynasty which is supposed to be sympathetic to evangelicals. With friends like that.....

So where does that leave the Church of Scotland? It is certainly in decline. The evangelicals are not as strong as we might sometimes like to think. And it can ill afford to lose the likes of Sinclair Ferguson (returning to the US) or Ian Hamilton (now in England). There does appear to be a lack

of leadership and one wonders where the men to replace the Philips, Willie Still and Eric Alexander are to come from. There is the additional danger of evangelicalism being seen as acceptable in the establishment—as long as it is an evangelicalism which recognises that there is room for liberalism within the Church. Loyalty to the Kirk will be the only prerequisite.

Now of course all the above is hopelessly generalised and even worse—it is the hopeless generalisations of an outsider. I do hope that my friends in the C of S will forgive me for any inaccuracies or misconceptions in my comments. But I am truly concerned for the Kirk. I wonder if it has a future? As I do about the Free Church. Which brings me on to the next question.

What about the Free Church and the Church of Scotland?

The Free Church must never lose its desire to return to the national church. We quit a vitiated establishment and we will gladly return to a pure one. And by pure we do not mean perfect—but we do mean one where biblical church discipline is practiced and where the doctrine of the Bible is upheld and proclaimed. There is no question that Scotland needs the evangelicals in the Church of Scotland and the Free Church to work together. How we do that is another matter. The first problem is that there are many evangelicals within the C of S who regard the Free Church with little more than bemused patronage—to them we are an irrelevance that has little to do with modern Scotland—a quaint Highland reminder of a dim and distant past. To others we are a threat. We are taking away people from their church and we ourselves come across as purist and hypercritical. On the Free Church side there are those of us who do not share the vision of a national church which is part of our *raison d'être*, and we too can often allow petty jealousies and personality issues to get in the way. The first step towards working together then is surely mutual repentance and mutual recognition.

After that there are various options. The first is that the evangelicals will realise the game is up and leave the Church of Scotland to form a new denomination together with the Free Church. We would have to give up our insistence that they should sing unaccompanied scripture only, but that would be a small price to pay for unity. Of course such a vision is very unlikely. There are those in the Free Church who have so lost sight of our tradition and foundations that they think that psalm singing is the be all and end all of what we are. They like being a small purist denomination and they do not particularly care about the decline in the national Kirk. By far the bigger problem however is the fact that there are very few evangelicals within the C of S who would leave—over any issue. Even if they were prepared to do so it is highly unlikely they would be able to take their congregations.

The second option is that the evangelicals will grow so strong that they will be able to take over the church. Whilst this is not impossible, and indeed we have seen similar things occurring in Australia and Northern Ireland, it does appear to me to be highly unlikely. Many evangelicals have already bought into the line that they are just a part of the church. Many have accepted the concept of 'fishing within the boat' rather than fishing from it. And many just do not have radically taught congregations who will support them in this struggle.

We will wait a long time for the Reformation and Renewal of the Church of Scotland. We pray for it and we must seek to help our brothers who are working for it. But we cannot put all our eggs in that basket.

The third option is the most likely. It is that a renewed and revitalised Free Church would work together with the evangelicals within the Church of Scotland to establish and provide good evangelical, reformed churches throughout Scotland. In other words we need to work in partnership and not competition. What would this mean? We must have a better distribution of resources. I can think for example of one parish of 1,000 people. The Free Church has a congregation of 100 plus and the majority of the people would profess to be Free Church. The Church of Scotland a congregation of some 30. Both ministers are solid, good evangelical Reformed men. Why do we have two men in such a situation? Given that this is the age of the motor car and that there are several C of S's within 15 miles of this community—why not just have one church in the parish?

Would the C of S men be willing to give up the outdated notion that they must have a minister in every parish—even when that minister may not be a Christian? And would the Free Church be prepared to trust our like minded brothers in the C of S to provide in parishes where we could not? There are many Highland communities where the Free Church and the Church of Scotland could alternate. Of course we would want to ensure that the Gospel was being proclaimed and practiced and I would suspect that they would want to ensure that the Free Church was open enough to include people of other persuasions. Like wise in church planting—we should have a programme of church planting throughout Scotland where we should support and help one another.

Internal Church politics has meant that there has been a *de facto* ban on evangelicals in St Andrews—so let the C of S evangelicals support the Free Church plant there. And likewise the Free Church should encourage the work of people like Martin Allen in Glasgow. Not only should we not compete but we should actively support good men who are seeking to do a biblical work in areas that we do not touch. Let me say this to my Free Church brethren, if we are not prepared to work with our like-minded brothers in the Church of Scotland, then what are we going to do to reach the hundreds of thousands in Scotland's sprawling urban housing estates? Perhaps one day we will be able to put a church into every mega housing estate in the land—but given the furore whenever it is suggested that we plant even one church, that seems highly unlikely. Therefore we need to support our evangelical brothers who are working in these situations.

It may be that the Church of Scotland will collapse. That is not something we should rejoice in. It is something we should mourn over. Meanwhile we need to do what we can to help strengthen what remains. Remember Knox's great battle cry—'give me Scotland or I die!' Are we really wanting to exchange that for the petty parochialism which seems to determine so much of our strategy and thinking? As Chalmers famously put it: 'Who cares for the Free Church compared with the Christian good of Scotland?' And who cares for the C of S compared with the Christian good of Scotland? For a moment let us forget our respective denominations and dare to ask—what would be best for the spread of the Gospel in Scotland?

Norman Cunningham

Adherent, saint and servant

One April Sunday in 1958 a tall, spare, lithe figure drew a deep breath and stepped out for the first time towards the high, ornate pulpit of Free St Columba's, carrying the large pulpit Bible and followed by the minister, the late Reverend G.N.M. Collins. For months, Norman Cunningham had resisted pressure to become the Church Officer. He had no reluctance to serve, but that very public, ritualistic walk from the vestry to the pulpit terrified him. If he did it wrong he would ruin the whole service.

Now he had done it; and he would do it, with few interruptions, every Sunday for the next forty-five years. The building would be his life: every stone, timber, slate and pipe a personal acquaintance and friend.

Norman was eighty-five when he died last September and it is easy for those who knew him only in his later years to define him by his age, his accent and his job. He was old, he was Gaelic and he was on the door at St Columba's. But he wasn't always old and his life wasn't always staid. In peace and war he had faced peril on the sea, and seen and done enough to satisfy any craving for adventure. Too much, sometimes, and better veiled.

Norman Cunningham was born in Scalpay in 1917, one of a closely-bonded family of eight children. Scalpay meant sea. Whether you loved it or loathed it, it was your life and by the time he left school Norman was already an experienced fisherman. But the outside world beckoned. His first job was in Southampton, as a crewman on a yacht. On the outbreak of War in 1939 he was among the first to be called-up and served in the Royal Navy for its entire duration, mainly on submarines.

When the war was over, he returned briefly to Scalpay, crewing the family fishing-boat along with his brothers. In 1951 he came to Edinburgh. He never intended any permanent exile from an island whose people, religion and culture he loved and whose waters he knew like the back of his hand. But there in Edinburgh he would spend the next fifty-two years, and there he would die. Only in death would Harris reclaim him.

There is no sea in Edinburgh, only buildings, and it was as a builder that Norman spent the rest of his life, until a late retirement. He was as strong as an ox, as nimble as a monkey and as brave as a lion. He loved roofs, and as he looked at them you had the feeling that he was hoping against hope that he might see a missing slate just so that he could go up and replace it. Once up, he was in his element, walking erect on pitched roofs as if they were kitchen floors and leaning out over the edge as nonchalantly as I might pore over a book.

His skills and his love of buildings saved the Church a fortune. There wasn't a day but the Assembly Hall was checked for leaks or broken glass or blocked gutters or choked drains or fused bulbs or missing slates; and any repair or replacement was attended to immediately, without fuss and without report. And all this on top of a back-breaking day-job, six early starts a week.

During the week of the annual General Assembly Norman kept in the background. The Assembly had its own Officer and Norman was spared the kind of ceremonial duties he hated. But he was still responsible for the building, and his work began the moment the Assembly finished for the night. In the old days, that might have been twelve midnight, or even one o'clock, but whatever the hour the hall had to be cleaned inch by inch and

seat by seat. Every morning the returning commissioners witnessed a miracle: the hall was spotless. An angel had cleaned it during the night.

But there was another passion, too: the Lord and his gospel. Norman Cunningham was never made an elder. In fact, he was never even a church member. He was an adherent. The curious thing is that it was hard to ask him why. With other men it was relatively easy to enquire why they had never gone forward, but not with Norman. There was an aura about him that made you feel that he had his own reasons; and if they were his reasons they must be good reasons. He talked little of his spiritual experiences and left you with the impression, in any case, that most of his talking was done to God. Sometimes a spiritual fact or suggestion would evoke a sigh from the core of his being; sometimes light up his whole face. In the vestry, before you preached, he'd ask you to pray. He stood, silent, but God was with you.

And if his place in church was never empty, then neither was his home. He and his wife, Mary Anne, provided not only a haven for students who couldn't find digs, ministers attending committees, commissioners to the General Assembly, friends with relatives in hospital, but a drop-in centre for those thousands of people who develop sudden urges for a cup of tea. Many's the hour (including the small hours) that Norman spent sitting at the edge of Christian gatherings in his own home, listening as others far junior to himself discussed the great themes of the Bible and the lights and shadows of Christian experience. His own piety savoured of a bygone age, deep in source, rich and full in flow. It was a piety of the fear of God, in the best sense. In his later years, it was no longer fashionable, but it stood there as an outcrop of heaven, testimony to a higher power and a reminder of a better age.

Norman's Cunningham roots were in Ayrshire. Maybe that's why I think of him as of one of the saints of the Covenant. He took, uncomplaining, whatever the Lord sent. He would have stood firm.

Donald Macleod

Calling all Ladies!

West Highland Way
10 mile sponsored walk

WFM project 'Secure the Future'
HIV/AIDS work amongst young people in South Africa

Starts 11 am Saturday 27 March, Drymen to Milngavie
bring a packed lunch – be prepared for all weather conditions

Contact Olwen Ford for more details
Tel: 0141 578 6748 Email: olwen.ford@ntlworld.com
sponsor sheet at www.greekthomsonchurch.com

CAMPS TRAINING DAY

Saturday 20th March 2004

Perth Free Church
10am-3pm

For Leaders, Cooks and all interested in camp work
Bring a pack lunch, tea and coffee will be provided

Big Forgiveness



Come to Simon's place and make the big discovery.

Big sin. Big forgiveness. Big love.

I want you to come to a meal tonight—to a dinner party. It's at Simon's place. Now to get there, you can't just get in a taxi. We've got to travel through time. So come on! Let me be your guide. Travel with me back to the year 28, to Simon's house in Roman-occupied Israel.

Now Simon is quite well off, he has a big house and he can throw a big party. Tonight is one of these. There are invited guests, but it's also open house. Even the poor—the down-and-outs and beggars—are invited. I suppose it's sort of part of the social security system of the day. So anyone can get in, as long as you sit quietly at the back away from the table where the invited guests recline.

There's something else you'd better understand, before we go in. Simon's very religious. He belongs to one of these really strict organisations—some sort of Middle Eastern fundamentalist group—Pharisees—very strict. So don't say anything out of place, OK? Don't speak to the guests at the table.

And another thing—only men will be at the table—no women. Now, don't make a fuss about it—it's just a different culture, OK?

Which reminds me, there's a special welcome for guests. They get their feet washed, get some moisturiser on their faces and are greeted with a kiss. But not for us, OK? We're just the riff-raff.

Oh, and one last thing—there's a bit of excitement tonight. They're expecting a special guest—some sort of religious guru. No, not like Simon. In fact I'm surprised that Simon's invited

him. There are all kinds of stories going around about him. Seemingly he's an amazing speaker. He gathers crowds wherever he goes. And he's got some kind of gift of healing. But he doesn't please a lot of the religious people—like Simon. Doesn't keep up the standards. Mixes with the wrong kind of people—“drunkards and sinners” (they're always calling people sinners). And he makes big claims for himself—claiming things they say are only true of God.

What's he called? Joshua—Joshua Davidson, some call him—although you may know him by his Greek name—Jesus, Jesus from Nazareth. OK let's go in.

Right, there are the people getting their feet washed. OK, now we're in. There's Simon, our host. Just bow to him, don't say anything. Look, there's the table. It's low. Positively groaning with food. A lot of guests already reclining. Let's get a seat on the floor here beside this pillar, and have a look round. Nearly everyone is here. But no sign of Jesus. I wonder, is he going to come?

Everyone's gone really quiet. Wait a minute ... there he is, just coming in. Yes, he's really quite ordinary looking, until he looks you in the eye, then ... well, you'll see. Dear me, he's looking rather dusty and dishevelled. They can't have washed *his* feet, or anointed *him*—and he's not complaining! If it was one of these priests, they would kick up a real fuss! But he's just smiling and saying hello to people. Look, he's coming over to sit there in front of us.

You see what I mean? When he looks at you, it's as if he sees right through you. No, not right *through* you, but right *into* you ... knows what you're thinking ... makes you feel you should be a better person ... Well, that's what I felt anyway. What did you feel?

Everyone's talking again now. Jesus is just sitting down. Look he's right opposite Simon. Did you see that little smile Simon gave to the person beside him? Looks like they think they're going to have some fun at Jesus' expense tonight.

I'd better be quiet now. Simon's getting up to make a speech and then they're going to serve the food.

Well, that was a rather good first course, don't you think? And everything's been very quiet so far.

Wait ... what's everyone looking at? Oh no! Not her! That's all we need!

Who is she? Can't you tell just by looking at her? The long hair uncovered, the heavy make-up. Well, it's usually heavy, but there's definitely something different about it tonight. Her mascara's running. She's been crying.

There's going to be a scene. Simon's going to have her thrown out. Wait a minute, she's coming over *here*... Do *you* know her? No? No, she's going straight to Jesus. She's going down on her knees right at Jesus' feet. There's definitely going to be a scene! This is really embarrassing!

She's not saying a word. She's just sobbing her heart out! Look at those tears! I never knew so much water could come out of anybody's eyes! She's made Jesus' feet all wet! Oh no! Now she's wiping his feet with her hair! And kissing them!

And here comes the perfume! That's expensive stuff! I wonder which of her clients gave her that?

And all the time Jesus is looking down at her. He's not angry. Not embarrassed. It's definitely a smile. But he looks sort of sad and kind at the same time.

Simon and all these religious people are not going to approve! They're going to make a real meal out of this. Look at the smile on Simon's face. Rather different from Jesus' smile. You can just tell what he's thinking. He wouldn't be seen dead letting a woman like that anywhere near him!

Now Jesus has turned to look straight at Simon. Did you see how the smile froze on Simon's face and he had to look away? Quiet now! Jesus is talking ...

"Simon, I want to tell you something."

"What do you want to tell me?" Simon is asking, looking rather uncomfortable.

You can hear a pin drop! Jesus is going to tell one of his famous stories ...

"Two men owed money to a certain money-lender. One owed him £50,000, and the other £5,000. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he cancelled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon relaxes. This is easy. Money he knows about, although he finds it difficult to get his head round the idea of cancelling debts!

"I suppose the one who had the bigger debt cancelled."

Oh, Simon, don't you see? Jesus is getting at you!

"You have judged correctly," Jesus says, and he turns towards the woman and says to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came

into your house. You didn't give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You didn't give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, hasn't stopped kissing my feet. You didn't put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet."

Simon is flushed—I don't know if it's with anger, or embarrassment or perhaps a mixture of both! Boy! I wouldn't like to be in his shoes! ... But, you know, come to think of it, I feel I am in his shoes ... you know what I mean?

Wait, Jesus is speaking again. This is the punch line ...

"I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."

Then Jesus looks straight at the woman and says to her, "Your sins are forgiven."

Well! That really sets the cat among the pigeons! Everyone starts talking at once. But it's all variations on the same theme: "Who is this who even forgives sins? ... Only God can forgive sins ... And then only through a priest performing a ceremony. Who does he think he is?"

I don't know about you, but I think they're all missing the point—launching into their religious arguments.

I'll never forget the look I saw on that woman's face just now ... when Jesus said, "Her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much", and "Your sins *are* forgiven."

She knew that Jesus understood. She loves him, because it was from his lips she first heard that there's forgiveness for someone like her—big forgiveness—forgiveness that would wipe away every stain and make her clean again—forgiveness that only Jesus could give.

She knows she can never pay off her debt to God. She doesn't know how the debt can be cancelled—Jesus will take care of that—all she knows is that she loves him. That's why she did what she did tonight. I don't think it was premeditated. But when she saw how disrespectfully he was treated by Simon, she wanted to show there was someone who loved him.

But she was so overwhelmed with a sense of her own unworthiness, she sobbed her heart out. She was so sorry. And yet Jesus accepted it all as the offering of a loving heart. Big sin, big forgiveness, big love.

Well, that's what I think anyway—I don't know about you?

But wait, the woman's leaving and Jesus is saying something else to her—"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Well, she certainly has faith in Jesus—to come in here in front of all these people and do what she did! He's no ordinary man and he prompts no ordinary reaction. Who *can* forgive sins, but God?

And see that look of peace on that woman's face! Her face is a mess, with all the crying and her make-up running and everything, but I'd give everything I had to have peace like that. I don't know about you—what do you think?

Now read Luke 7:36-50 to get the real story

Something very similar to this was recently delivered by the Editor during a guest service in Buccleuch.

Image: www.pics.am

Some final year students at the Free Church College

Daniel Sladek

Daniel is married to Marion and their son, Conrad is 1 year 9 months.

A brief history of life

I grew up on a farm in Iowa (USA), the youngest of four children. At university I studied ecology and French, spending a year in France. I then returned to Iowa for several years during which I was active in the equivalent of Christian Union and also in my church. I then moved to California to study theology. As part of my course, I did a placement in Cole Abbey Free Church in London, where I met Marion. We eventually got married and lived in London for a year. While there, I became a member of Cole Abbey and was accepted as a candidate for the ministry. We then moved to Edinburgh, Marion's hometown. I worked full time at the Edinburgh Festival, and then began my course at the college nearly two years ago.

How I became a Christian

I grew up in a family that regularly attended church. I would say that I always accepted that Jesus was the Son of God, but hadn't understood the Gospel. I believed that on the Day of Judgment my fate would be decided by the life I'd led, but this only filled me with dread and doubts as to whether I had been good enough. While living in France, a number of my friends were Muslim. In talking with them, I came to realise that although I believed Jesus had been crucified, I had no idea why. It was through this, and conversations with other friends who were Christian, that God brought me to know why he had sent his son: I now realised that I could have forgiveness of sins, not because of what I had done, but through what God had done for me through the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Call to the ministry

Since my conversion I have had a desire for others to know and believe the Gospel which was such a joy to me, and thus have been active in various types of church work. Eventually I decided to study theology as preparation for some type of fulltime Christian ministry. I am thankful that along the way I have continued to be encouraged by the church and take this as confirmation that I am following the right path.

Interests

I enjoy swimming and cooking. I like to read and have an interest in languages.

Vision for ministry

Acts speaks of believers devoting themselves to teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer. I would like to see the congregation growing in all of those areas, so that people within it felt that they were part of true community where people knew and cared for one another, and encouraged each other to grow in their faith. I would also like the congregation to be active in the local community, reaching out in different ways depending on the gifts of the people in the church. I would see my own role to be in teaching, setting an example, and leadership, particularly encouraging the other elders and the deacons, and then all the congregation, in the development of their gifts.

Alasdair MacLeod

A brief history of life

I grew up in Bayble, a village about 7 miles from Stornoway. After secondary education in the Nicolson Institute I went to the University of Paisley to study Civil Engineering in 1995. After graduating from Paisley in the summer of 1999 I started work in Inverness working for Halcrow Consulting Engineers, primarily involved in water and wastewater engineering. In September 2001 the next destination was Edinburgh and the Free Church College

How I became a Christian

It was at a Free Church camp at Middlewich in 1994 that I was converted. It became clear to me that week that I could die at any moment and without knowing Jesus as my personal Saviour I knew where my eternity would be spent. As usual the devil tried his hardest to convince me that all my opportunities were gone and that there was no hope for me. After speaking long into the night with the camp leader Iain MacLeay (Rosskeen) I asked Jesus to have mercy and forgive me and save me. There were then no great flashing lights in the night sky but that night was the beginning of the Christian journey.

Call to the ministry

Shortly after being converted I remember reading Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 9:16 and getting very worried. I spoke to a friend about these words and he assured me that it was normal for a young Christian to want to be preacher. The problem was I had absolutely no desire to preach, in fact I could not think of anything I would rather not do than be a minister. As far as I was concerned my life was planned my way: finish school, study civil engineering in university, then get a design job in a consultancy, settle down etc.



The ministry? Never! Worried thoughts of the ministry grew over the next few years until I started to grow disillusioned with engineering in my final year in university. All I could think of was the people in my year dying without the Lord. These thoughts became more and more forceful. It got to the stage when walking into the town centre of Paisley one Saturday I stood in the middle of the crowds and never felt so alone, as if I was the only person who knew about Jesus and they were rushing into a lost eternity. I had to get out of there and went straight back to my flat. Eventually after many sleepless nights and worried days I told a friend of mine who just laughed at me when I told him. I was gutted, but his laughter was not over my thoughts of the ministry but that it took me so long to admit it! My first sermon was preached in Paisley in December 1998. When I moved to Inverness, and with the vacancies created by the Secession, I had the opportunity to test my call to the ministry over the next two years by preaching round various churches in the Highlands. When I could run from the call no longer (with my 'dream' career giving me no contentment or satisfaction whatsoever) I offered myself to the church for the ministry and was accepted.

Interests

Football, Current Affairs, History (especially Church History and Military History – what a combination!)

Vision for ministry

To be used in bringing the glorious message of Good News to the people of Scotland, showing their desperate need of a saviour and pointing them to the awesome, loving provision made for sinners in Jesus. What better news to give?

Impressions of the College

Enjoyable but extremely intense!

Dan Peters

A brief history of life

I spent the first 18 years of my life in Thirsk, North Yorkshire, where my father was an independent minister. Having completed A-levels, I went on to study English Literature for three years at Aberystwyth University. It was during that period that Hannah and I met, and we married the summer I graduated. The following month we moved up to Falkirk, and a few weeks later I began at the Free Church College.

Call to the ministry

I believe that it was during my time at university that God called me to the ministry. There I received my first opportunities to speak at Christian meetings, mainly in a Christian Union context, and these led to both an increasing desire for the ministry, and encouragements from others to pursue that route. These were, and in fact continue to be, the two main elements in my call.

Interests

My hobbies are mostly of a sporting kind. I am particularly keen on football, both playing the game and pursuing the fortunes of York City F.C. I enjoy running, although I do it much less frequently than I used to.

Impressions of the College

The College provides, I think, a very useful training for the ministry. A healthy emphasis is placed upon the biblical languages, so that students are equipped to exegete Scripture in a competent fashion. It is also good that the lecturers are equipped with past experience of the ministry, but able now to devote themselves full-time to theological education. The food is excellent.



Cole Abbey Induction

On Saturday 25 October, 2003, in the Church of St Botolph's Without, Aldersgate, in the City of London, Rev. David T.A. Strain was ordained to the Ministry of Word and Sacrament and inducted to the charge of Cole Abbey Presbyterian Church.

St Botolph's, which is leased from the Church of England by the Cole Abbey congregation, has a long and distinguished history going back 1,000 years, surviving both the Great Fire in 1666 and the Nazi blitz of the early 1940s. In the late 18th century the building was substantially rebuilt in classical Georgian style. A modern stained glass window commemorates the arrival of James I of England arriving from Scotland in the early years of the Union of the Crowns, riding on horseback down Aldersgate. In addition to the king who gave the English speaking world its most famous version of the Bible, one of the great preachers who expounded that Bible—John Wesley—is also honoured. It was in a house opposite St Botolph's that Wesley's heart was 'strangely warmed' and a window depicts him preaching nearby in the open air.

Thus it was with some sense of history that the congregation met on 25 October with the Free Presbytery of Edinburgh, gathered around the Word of God, for the installation of its new minister. Rev John M. MacPherson, Moderator pro tem—and the previous minister of the congregation—preached from Jeremiah 1.4-19 (the call of Jeremiah) on 'The Contours of Christian Service', and presided at the ordination by the laying on of hands. Rev Fergus Macdonald, who had served as interim-moderator during the four-year vacancy, addressed the new minister from Psalm 40.6-10, and Mr MacPherson encouraged the congregation with a message of exhortation.

After public worship the congregation walked a few blocks to the halls of the City Temple for the reception. During the reception Dr Colin Dow, the recently inducted minister of St Vincent Street-Milton Free Church in Glasgow and a fellow student of David Strain, and Rev Kenny Boyd, the Strains' minister in Govanhill and a former Assistant Minister of Cole Abbey, both brought greetings to the congregation



Photograph by Juan Silva

and prayerful good wishes for the new ministry just begun. Peter Fraser, Session Clerk, warmly welcomed Mr Strain and presented him with a gift on behalf of the congregation. He was followed by Nancy MacLeod, widow of the late Rev Murdo MacLeod—who had served the congregation for many years first as minister and then as elder—made a presentation to Sheena Strain and little Ewan.

Mr Strain, in thanking the congregation for these gifts, expressed his delight at having become their minister and shared his sense of prayerful expectation as he looked forward to serving them in the ministry of the Word. The congregation's thanks to the interim-moderator were conveyed verbally and tangibly by Angus Martin, one of the elders, and Mr Macdonald, in reply, thanked the congregation not only for their gift, but also for the wonderful way they had maintained harmony throughout the vacancy. Finally, Fenna Fraser expressed the thanks of all to Ruth Nichols and Daphne Colpman for the superb repast provided.

May the sovereign Lord who so blessed the King James Bible over the best part of four centuries and who so used John Wesley in his generation to bring revival to the church and renewal to society, use the ministry of David Strain to extend and build up the Kingdom of God in and beyond the City of London!

FM

Blythwood Care is a Christian charity committed to care projects in Eastern Europe, to international aid, and to the distribution of Christian literature.



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Sing Psalms Music Editions

On Friday 19 March at 7.30 pm in St Columba's Free Church, Edinburgh, the official launch of Sing Psalms in both the staff and solfa music editions will take place.

The meeting will be chaired by Rev Alex MacDonald, Moderator of the Presbytery of Edinburgh and Perth. The main speaker will be Professor John L Mackay of the Free Church College. Professor Donald Macdonald, Convener of the Psalmody Committee, and Mr Evan Macdonald, vitally involved in the project for many years, will speak respectively on the development of the Sing Psalms project, and on the musical aspects of this new version.

Dr Donald Mackay will lead a small group of singers who will present some of the less well-known tunes in the Sing Psalms collection. There will, of course, be an

opportunity for congregational participation, focusing on better-known tunes.

An exhibition, featuring many different aspects of psalmody as well as this particular project, is being prepared. All the different items, produced by the Church over the years, in order to encourage the praise of God through psalm singing, will be on display along with the exhibition—psalters, manuals, cassettes and videos. Refreshments will be served at the close of the meeting in the church hall.

It is hoped that during the year further presentation/promotional meetings will be held throughout the country, with the support of local presbyteries. Although the Edinburgh meeting is the official launch of the music editions of Sing Psalms, the Psalmody Committee trust that there will

be considerable enthusiasm and well-attended meetings all over the country.

The books themselves have been available since the beginning of February. The sales of the words only edition were very encouraging, the combined 1650/Sing Psalms version being already into its second printing. Now that the music editions are available, the Committee are publicising Sing Psalms as widely as possible, and are encouraged by considerable interest from outside both the Free Church and Scotland.

Most of all, the Psalmody Committee's desire is that Sing Psalms and all the meetings that will be held in connection with it, will enable more and more people to "worship the Lord with gladness and come before him with joyful songs."

John M MacPherson

New Church Building for Sleat & Strath

A congregation of close to 140 well-wishers, friends, and supporters of the Sleat and Strath congregation on the Isle of Skye assembled for the opening service of the new Church building in Sleat on Saturday the 24th of January. The service was opened with a prayer of dedication by the Reverend Murdo Macleod (Duirinish, rtd) which set the tone of the service. The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Free Church of Scotland, the Reverend Ronald Mackay (Inverness Free North) preached from Ezekiel 1:1 a most appropriate and powerful sermon to the assembled congregation and the presence of God was felt by many. Among other things he said that Jesus is the Awesome God of the Bible. He calls the millions of stars by name, every one (Psalm 147:4). If this new Church building is to be blessed, people must see the awesomeness of God.

After the service the congregation had arranged a function at the Sabhal Mor Ostaig Gaelic College, which is about a mile and a half from the Church. This was enjoyed by all, the ladies of the congregation



having prepared a sumptuous spread for which we thank them, and which brought to a close a most enjoyable and notable occasion in the history of the congregation.

Yet all this was made possible by God in most remarkable providences and indeed what we could only describe as direct helps. Consider the long and wearisome process of investigating renovation of the old building, before finally application was made to Clan Donald Trustees for a plot of land beside the manse, and the answer coming back "take as much as you need as a free gift from us".

Then consider the way in which God brought us a buyer for the old Church

buildings firstly to rent our cottage and then to make a very acceptable offer for the whole property when it was put up for sale. And this buyer was prepared to let us use the Church hall for services and to wait for months until our new Church building had been erected!

Then there were the planning permission problems to overcome, a tender price to be obtained which we had a hope of meeting, and finally hearts to be opened to help and assist us in our endeavours. And God met them all. Yes we have an awesome God, who is able to do much more than we can think or imagine. Blessed be His name.

W K Stewart

Women's Conference

Saturday 8th November 2003 and St. Columba's, Edinburgh, was the location for a women's conference focussing on teaching and fellowship. The inspiration for its inception came from the hugely successful WFM Away Days which happen every two years. Well, why should we have to wait two years to meet and enjoy each other's fellowship? So along came this day full of great speakers, good coffee and excellent food (we ate at the Apex International Hotel). Around 120 women were present and came from all over the country: Aberdeen, Stornoway, Lochgilphead and even from London!

The day was entitled *Our Identity in Christ* and this was the theme that *Ann Allen* (C of S Chryston) took. In the morning, she challenged us by suggesting that our most important role as Christian women was not as wives, daughters or mothers but rather as children of God. Often, she said, women hide behind these titles and forget that as Christian women our identity is to be found completely in Christ. She looked at the women Jesus involved himself with in the

Bible and drew encouraging lessons from these. In the afternoon she spoke from Ephesians 1 about *Our Empowering by Christ* and how we as women are called to contribute to God's praise and glory. God's power has been given to each believer and in Him we have all the resources that we could ever need. She concluded by exhorting us to pray dynamically, witness faithfully, and nurture the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

The seminars augmented the main sessions perfectly helping us to envisage practical ways of working out our faith. *Debbie White* spoke from personal experience about *Friendship Evangelism* and the responsibility we have to the unique circle God has placed us in. She spoke very movingly about her recent serious illness and how so many of her non-believing friends responded to that. She gave us many ideas on how to make friends amongst non-Christians and encouraged us above all to find someone to regularly pray with for them.

Ishbel MacLennan's seminar on *Identifying our Gifts* also resonated with many. (Surely,

we're not all gifted at making tea?) Christian women are part of the body of the Church and as such have responsibility towards its growth in Christ.. Although our role is not in the pulpit ministry, this does not exempt us from actively contributing to our churches and our communities. As Christian women, we have a responsibility to ask God to reveal our gifts to us (again it was suggested through good friends and prayer), and then to use these gifts to increase Christ's kingdom. No more hiding behind excuses!

The day as a whole was enjoyable and inspirational. The worship was beautifully led by a number of students (and one older lady) from St. Columba's. Along with the relaxing two hour lunch break and tremendous teaching, we were all left asking why we hadn't done this before and when was the next one?

Thanks are due to the Presbyteries of Edinburgh & Perth and Glasgow for their support.

Louise MacMillan

All Peoples, Sing!

This recording was made at the Festival of Psalms held in the Free North Church, Inverness, on 6th September 2003. Some of the Psalms are sung by the 98-strong choir and others by the congregation of around 700. All 21 Psalms are taken from *Sing Psalms* and are sung to a wide variety of tunes from different eras of metrical Psalm singing.

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Day=24 hours?

I write in response to William A. Forbes to invite him to consider questions relating to the use of the word 'day' in the early chapters of Genesis. I totally accept the six-day revelation of the first chapter of Genesis, but would question what he means by 'literal 6 day account'. If he is saying that the Genesis days have to be of 24-hour duration, does Scripture demand that?

There is no doubt that it is totally within God's capacity to have created the universe and the earth on which we live in six days of 24 hours. There is no limit to the power of God.

The word 'day' is used in different ways in chapters 1 and 2 of Genesis:

- a) light before the creation of the sun (Gen. 1:5)
- b) the overall process of time for each of the creation of light (Gen. 1:5), the heaven (Gen. 1:8), the earth and seas, and plants (Gen. 1:13)

c) light from the sun, of approximately 12 hours' duration (Gen. 1:16)

d) a 24-hour day related to day and night as we know it (Gen. 1:18)

e) the whole process of creation (Gen. 2:4)

If the word 'day' is to be restricted to just one of these uses, a 24-hour day, for the sake of consistency does that not mean that in Genesis 2:2 we have to say that God rested for 24 hours? Do we really know that?

The first chapter of Genesis is not an account of a process which was observed by human beings. Moses was guided to write it by the Holy Spirit in the same way that he was guided to write of the coming of the Messiah. It is a prophetic revelation, and an accurate summary of all that God did to prepare for the coming of man, of His powerful care and love for those who would be the crown of His work. To attempt to impose a specific time-scale on that process without adequate support from revelation is unwise.

The Westminster Confession refrains from any attempt to define the length of the days of creation and uses the Scripture description as that which expresses the purpose of God. The Scripture references given in the Confession take us to the heart of the matter:

Heb. 11:3 – "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God; so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear."

Col. 1:16 – "For by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him."

Acts 17:24 – "God, that made the world, and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands."

(Rev) W M Mackay
Edinburgh

The Instructor Writing Competition

The competition is divided into three classes:

- 1) FOUR fictional stories for 5 – 7 year-olds (each story 600 – 625 words long), the stories to be unconnected with each other.
- 2) ONE fictional story for 9 – 11 year-olds (divided into 4 – 8 parts, each parts 440 – 460 words long). Part two and following should be twenty words shorter to allow for a brief synopsis.
- 3) The biography of a famous Christian told in 4 or 5 parts (each part 440 – 460 words long). Part two and following should be twenty words shorter to allow for a brief synopsis.

Note: the word counts *must* be observed as they reflect the number of words that can be used on a page of The Instructor.

Some points to note:

- a. Before thinking about what to write read several back issues of The Instructor to see the style of writing required, the tone of the magazine, the length of sentences and kinds of words used for different age groups. Back copies of The Instructor are available

from Free Church Offices—or from a windowsill in your own church building!

b. When Christian teaching is to be included in a story if at all possible it should come as a discovery by a child in the story rather than an adult teaching or telling it.

c. Write for real children and about real children. Remember that the readers are real children. They use ordinary words, not 'holy' words and expressions.

d. When aiming a story at 5 – 7 year-olds the children in the story should be a little bit older than that, similarly with 9–11 year-olds. Always write up an age rather than down an age.

e. Do not use fantasy or speaking or reasoning animals.

f. The biography class—Christian Focus has produced a series called Trailblazers, biographies of famous Christians. You may want to base your biography on one of them. If you wish to enter the biography class please write and tell me who you intend writing about before starting. In order that entries of a suitable standard can be used in *The Instructor* it is important that the same person is not written about twice!

Bible quotations should be taken from the New International Version, and the divine pronoun uses a lower case 'h'.

Please don't let all these notes put you off entering!

Entries should be with me by the end of April. They will be judged by the editors of *The Monthly Record*, *Free* and *The Instructor* along with a professional writer from outside of the Free Church.

Prizes will be awarded to the best three entrants, rather than one per class. They will not be given as a First, Second and Third. Prize winners will be notified by the end of June.

The Prizes will be a one year membership of the Scottish Fellowship of Christian Writers and the fee for one of the Fellowship's Day Conferences. These are held on the second Saturdays of May and November each year at Stirling University.

While suitable entries may be used in *The Instructor*, entering the competition does not guarantee publication.

I look forward to receiving your entry, and I hope that the competition will lead to some new writers helping with *The Instructor*.

Editor of *The Instructor*

Irene Howat

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From the Frontiers

“Insulted for the name of Christ...” (1 Peter 4:14)

For most of the readers of this article persecution is, thankfully, something we only hear about happening to other people—Christians in far off places who live under harsh anti-Christian regimes of one kind or another.

In such places the name of Christ is often despised and certainly those who seek to follow him as the divine Lord and only Saviour are called infidels and are indeed “insulted for the name of Christ”; many are persecuted severely.

Sadly in our own country the name of Christ himself is so often despised and all things Christian become fair game for shameful mockery. We are free to object to such maligning of Christ's fair name. We are free to practise our faith and to propagate our faith. But how concerned are we for those who are converted

to Christ from backgrounds which are hostile to the Christian faith? Such converts are insulted for Christ's name.

In the January/February issue of *Barnabas* the magazine of the Barnabas Fund, Dr Patrick Sookhdeo writes about the plight of converts from Islam who find it difficult to be supported in our “politically correct” society. He says; “Converts have become the unmentionable subject. It seems that those who choose to become Christians are anathema to a pluralist society which has no place for those whose conscience leads them to change their faith. Equally they are an embarrassment to a Church that emphasises tolerance, accommodation and compromise. The convert is often isolated and alienated, belonging nowhere.”

Let these words sound as a challenge to us to keep our hearts open and prayerful on behalf of those who are ‘insulted for the name of Christ’ and let us be sure to welcome any such people into our fellowship, rejoicing in the Lord's grace given to them and ministering to their needs if they have been isolated from their previous ‘roots’.

Here & there

Miss Anna Sutherland

The death occurred in Edinburgh, on 22nd January of Miss Anna Sutherland, from Brora. Anna endeared herself to all who knew her. After her training and service with the Faith Mission Anna continued in the Lord's work with Christian Witness to Israel. From 1971 to 1989 she served in Glasgow where she made many lasting friendships within the Jewish community. Her colleague in Glasgow, Mr Ray McCabe, recalls one incident which illustrates quite beautifully the gracious Christian character that was so evident in Anna. On one occasion Anna was helping a Jewish lady to do some housework because the Jewish lady had a back problem; Anna was washing the kitchen floor for her and the Jewish lady commented, “Anna, I think Jesus would have done this.”!

Rev Alex. Cowie, a colleague of Anna for many years confirmed this opinion of Anna as a ‘Jesus person’. “Her ministry to the Jewish people was in the Spirit of the Master - ‘I am among you as one who serves.’”

Anna's funeral was held in the Free Church, Brora on Wednesday 28th January, a bitterly cold and stormy day. In spite of that the large attendance in these circumstances was a great tribute to her memory. The service was conducted by Rev Ken Hunter. Rev David Paterson, Rev John Ross, formerly the General Secretary of CWI and Mr Ray McCabe, formerly of CWI (representing the General Secretary, Mr Mike Moore) and a member of the International Missions Board of the Free Church all took part in the service paying tribute to the life and the fragrant ministry Anna exercised among the Jewish people.

Our sincere sympathy is extended to Anna's brothers, William George and Alexander and to their loved ones.

What wonderful kids we have!

Mrs Irene Howat, Editor of the Instructor, has sent the following news about the 2003 Free Church Youth Project:

“In 2003 the Free Church Youth Project set out to raise money for two causes. Half went to the Church's Disaster and Relief Fund to be sent to TEARFUND when disasters occur. The other half went direct to TEARFUND to assist in the current famine situation in some parts of Africa. As usual the children responded with great enthusiasm. The most raised in a Project so far is £10,000 and I wondered if we would ever reach such a dizzy height again. It was therefore thrilling that Project 2003 raised an absolutely magnificent £11,238.34. Much of the money was gathered in jam jars in 1p and 2p pieces! I hope that the Free Church will be encouraged by their children and young people, and will pray that their early interest in the Lord's work will go with them into adult life.

“The Youth Project only works because of those who support it. I would like to thank Sunday School teachers and superintendents who encourage the children throughout the year, the volunteers who send out the Project Factsheets to Sunday Schools for eight months of the year, and Mrs Sandra Mackenzie of Tarbert who organises the distribution of the Factsheets. Most of all I want to say thank you to the children themselves. You did brilliantly!”

And so say all of us! And a big cheer for Mrs Howat, the moving spirit' behind it all!

Happy Birthday!

The Dumisani Theological Institute and Bible School was 25 years old last month. Starting life as the Dimbaza Reformed Bible

School, it opened its doors in February 1979, at that time concentrating on basic Bible teaching through the medium of Correspondence Courses and other Bible related literature in Xhosa. We give thanks to God for the way he has helped the Bible School to develop and to continue its ministry.

Colegio San Andres

Presenting the Annual Report of the School for the first time, the recently appointed Headmaster, Mr Donald Macaulay, paid tribute to his immediate predecessor, Rev Marcos Florit. The School had an enrolment in 2003 of 542 pupils; 38 in the Preschool, 250 in Primary and 256 in Secondary. It was also announced that the Graduating class of 1983 had a special Assembly on the 12th December when they announced the translation into Spanish of the book, *At the Roots of a Nation* by Rev John Macpherson. The book, narrating the history of the School up to 1993 will be published this year. Among the several distinguished visitors to the School over the past year (including the Editor of the Monthly Record!) was Mr John Mackay Metzger, grandson of the founder of the School, the late Dr John A. Mackay. The Headmaster also reports that three new Christian teachers have joined the staff for 2004. Two short-term workers in the Colegio returned home at the end of the year, Joel Somerville from Northern Ireland and Donald McIntosh from Aultbea.

Plans are under way for a group of 10 Colegio students to come to the UK for 3 weeks in July and August. Rev Tim Donachie reports that they have already selected the students who will travel - six girls and four boys. They all hope to attend Camp and spend some time in Scotland and possibly Northern Ireland.

Outward Bound

Rev Dr David Ford left for Peru on 27th of last month. Mrs Olwen Ford plans to go after Easter. The Fords were 'farewelled' at a meeting in St Vincent St./Milton Church, Glasgow on 20th February. We pray that they will indeed fare well in their new ministry, which will take David to Colombia as well as different areas of Peru.

Photographs:
Left—David and Olwen Ford; Right—Joan Cameron



Preparing for Homecoming

As we mentioned in last month's magazine, Rev Kenneth and Mrs Joan Cameron are coming to the end of their time working with the Free Church in South Africa. As things stand at present their farewell in Transkei is planned for 8th May and they will be coming to the UK at the end of that month. Following a time with their family in England they will spend time in Edinburgh before deciding where 'to settle down'.

Joan Cameron writes:

I am taking this way to thank everyone, far and near, old and young, for your wonderful support since 1993 of Inasmuch, I have tried to thank personally all those whose names were given, and now I say a special thank you to those who've wished to remain "Anon". Your gifts and donations were very much appreciated too.

The good that was done

I can account for every penny, Rand and cent received, over the years and if you could visit us in the Transkei, I could show you 20 homes build from scratch and others repaired or extended. You would meet many young people whose education and school uniforms you have bought, and 6 who have passed through tertiary education, two at university gaining degrees, three at technicon studied engineering and one successfully completing an 18 month diploma course in Management, Secretarial and Computer Studies. All of these are free Church attenders in their early 20's now and we are praying that very soon they will find employment - perhaps not here, maybe in Johannesburg, Cape Town or Port Elizabeth. None of this would have been possible were it not for your kindness, thoughtfulness and caring love for the many so poor that often they are malnourished. This is where there is no breadwinner, perhaps a widow with six -to eight children, perhaps a young couple with children dependent on grandparents monthly old age pensions of R720.00 = £60.00 for food and clothing.

The on-going work

Inasmuch at the moment is regularly feeding five families, while helping others occasionally. We encourage those with gardens



("yards") to plough and plant miellies, potatoes, cabbage, pumpkin etc, but in these past two Springs and early Summers the drought has been so severe that even the keenest "farmers" couldn't plough the rock hard ground (still often done with oxen- drawn ploughs) far less sow seeds or plant vegetables. With the continuing rise in the price of food and none home grown, many of our families are hungry and children are mal-nourishes, When illness strikes and often visits to traditional healers and/or poorly equipped rural clinics, our own doctor diagnoses and successfully treats all those whom we hear are ill and who are more than ready to "see anyone who will help" You should see the surprise on a Mama's face when she says she's better after two days!! instead of suffering from a variety of mild illnesses, aches and pains for weeks and "no one helped me." G.P.s charge for consultations and medications and there's many of our people who can't afford them and Inasmuch (you friends of) have paid many doctor's bills.

"Colourful ladies!"

Before the clothing and textile industry forced the government to ban all imports of used clothing, blankets, blanket squares etc, we received several consignments of these. I think every old Mama in the church district has a shawl or blanket from knotted squares sent by groups and stitched by me.

The future

We expect to leave here by the end of May this year. We just wish we were younger and could stay here. With our departure Inasmuch in the form that I've used, will cease. One has to be very careful when helping the needy, so much so that nothing can be given in public—not even a R10.00 note in a handshake. We hope to leave some money in "trusts" for the non-income orphaned families.

Should anyone wish to send any further gifts for Inasmuch those sent to the Free Church Offices after 1st March 2004 will not reach here till about mid-June, by which time we will have left. Any gifts sent to Thurso Bank of Scotland Inasmuch Account reach us at each month's end. The best and quickest way is to send a cheque to us payable to Rev. K. Cameron NOT to Inasmuch (the local Bank's preferred method). Mid April would be the latest date any gifts should be sent to be in time to be used as described above, before our departure,

Please accept poor families overwhelming gratitude as well as ours for all your kindness and I'm sure your prayers for them all.

Disaster relief

Following the terrible earthquake in Bam, Iran, £4,000 was sent from the Disaster and Relief Fund to help Tearfund's relief work there and £2,000 for Blythswood's work.

One Christian Iranian has said, "We have lost a large number of believers... So we pray and ask the Lord that he would enable those who have survived the calamity to recover and move on with their lives. Perhaps the Lord would touch the hearts of some through this event and bring them to himself."

Lima Evangelical Seminary

The new term at the Seminary is due to start this month with a series of faculty meetings and the admissions process. With a view to attracting more students, the Seminary has opened a new office to promote its programmes in Peru and improve relations with the churches and para-church organizations.

We hope that, under God, this will indeed bring more students to the Seminary and prepare them to be worthy ambassadors of Christ in their needy country and beyond.

EEFC

The camps programme for this summer has been confirmed as noted below. We pray for God's blessing to rest upon all the necessary arrangements for these camps—arrangements which need to be made both 'at home' and in the countries where the camps are held. Andrew Burrows, Dumfries, arranges the camps and he deserves to be in the prayers of the church for all the work he puts into this important ministry each year. As usual helpers are needed for these camps. For those interested and needing more information get in touch with the EEFC secretary, John Johnstone at jwjohnstone@o2.co.uk

HEJCE, Hungary

Bible/English Language Camp 16 – 24 July 2004

HODMEZOVASARHELY, Hungary

Bible/English Language Camp 24 – 31 July 2004

NAGYDOBRONY, Ukraine

Bible/English Language Camp 31 – 7 August 2004

MAHANAIM, Romania

Bible/English Language Camp 31 July – 7 August 2004

BUCSIN, Romania

Bible/English Language Camp 7 – 14 August 2004

BEREKFURDO, Hungary

Bible/English Language Camp 7 – 14 August 2004

All camps (for EEFC teams) begin on the EVENING of the first date and end at LUNCHTIME on the last date.

Uganda in the limelight!

An after-church fellowship in Buccleuch and Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh, on Sunday 11th January, welcomed Marsali Campbell, AIM missionary, and her Ugandan colleague, Mrs Rita Nkemba. Friends from all three Edinburgh congregations came together for this meeting and were presented with a vivid picture of the highs and lows of ministry to the street children of Kampala, Uganda. Mrs Rita Nkemba, a delightfully outgoing and deeply committed Christian lady shared her vision which has given rise to the *Dwelling Places* ministry in Kampala, a ministry for street children, abandoned babies and high risk slum families. Marsali Campbell, a nurse, is the health worker with *Dwelling Places* and it is obvious her heart and Christian love have gone in to all she does with the children.

Currently, *Dwelling Places* is catering for 106 children in a Transitional Rehabilitation Home, 24 family units with their 60 children in the slum area of Katwe in Kampala and 18 needy family units with 36 of their children from the local community.

The vision of *Dwelling Places* is that all children in Uganda are raised in God honouring family settings that are able to afford a basic standard of living. Rita Nkemba with a team of 35 staff (33 national staff and 2 missionaries from Africa Inland Mission), serve tirelessly to ensure that the needs of these children are met holistically.

Marsali Campbell, from Smithton-Culloden Free Church, is presently on furlough and will be speaking at several other venues during her time at home. Mrs Nkemba has had to return to her home, her husband and family, and to the work that the Lord has given her and for which he has so very obviously equipped her.

We pray the Lord's blessing on these good Christian servants and the great and needy work they are doing.

Christian Teachers Required

This is an opportunity to be involved in supporting the Church in a Muslim country. A school set up for the children of Christian workers has a number of vacancies for the new term starting in September 2004. At the moment their needs are:

2 upper elementary teachers (Grade 3, 4 or 5)
Special Education Teacher (Kindergarten to Grade 8)
ESL Teacher (K to Grade 8)
Mathematics Teacher (Grades 6 to 10)
Science Teacher (Grades 6 to 10)
Physical Education Teacher (K to Grade 10)
Art/Crafts/Drama Teacher (K to Grade 10)

Applicants would need to raise their own support. However good furnished accommodation is provided free of charge and costs for work permits are also met by the school. In that area, monthly living costs for a single person would be around £350.

For more information and details on how to apply, please contact Calum and Liz Ferguson on 0131 664 7567. E-mail: calumandliz@blueyonder.co.uk

Andalucia – the missionaries' graveyard?

Situated in the mountainous south of Spain, Andalucia impresses upon the visitor a sense of history. This is the region of the last of Islam under the Moors and of their defeat by the Catholic monarchs Isabel of Castille and Ferdinand of Aragon in the late 15th century. Today's towns still have a military appearance—at times situated in well fortified positions on pinnacles of high hills with houses built into clefts on the rock faces. From the outside, the Catholic churches also look like fortresses, and inside, the large wrought-iron gates serve as a symbolic separator of the faithful from the infidel.

North African workers

The irony is that thousands of Muslims reappear every winter time for several months to work the lucrative olive harvest. Gangs of Arabs from North Africa wait in the main squares looking for offers of employment and make passers-by feel somewhat threatened.

'Hard going for evangelicals'

It would be difficult not to have the greatest admiration for evangelical missionaries working here. They live amongst entrenched catholic fundamentalism which shares the Spaniards' lives with the multicoloured approaches of post-liberalism. TV soaps from Latin America dominate the living room and in the outside world, the state church represents an essential part of life. While other Spanish speaking countries have experienced considerable evangelical church growth, the prayer of those working in Spain can be summed up with the Psalmist, 'How long, O Lord'. For example, it is estimated that Peru has an 8.5% evangelical population, whereas Spain's is 0.4%.

The four weeks I spent in Andalucia were given to conducting prayer meetings, Sunday services, preachers' classes and teaching English in a large town with no Protestant church. Two days were also spent on the building site of a Christian conference and training centre in La Mancha, of Don Quixote fame. The Spanish Gospel Mission, with whom I worked, had suffered a number of set-backs in the past year with the death of two of their key workers, the departure of another two to new pastorates and then in November the wife of the remaining missionary was diagnosed as having cancer. So the Mission and its associated churches were and continue to be in need of our prayers and support.

The evangelical church

Where today's reformation cause has taken hold, the evangelical church has maintained a strong testimony. Villanueva, Santisteban, Sabiote, Chiclana and Aldea—place names familiar to Mission supporters—all have congregations of committed Christians. It is estimated that the village of Aldea has the highest percentage of evangelicals in all of Spain. Entering the village one is immediately confronted with information signs pointing the visitor to the evangelical church.

Changing demography

The demographics of Spain have changed radically in the last decade. In 2002, 550,000 Latin Americans entered Spain on tourist visas, but only 86,000 of these subsequently left the country. The increase in ex-patriot Colombians, Ecuadorians and the like has notably increased the level of prostitution in the principal cities but has also strengthened the evangelical church.

In Andalucia missionary work involves considerable travel as typically it takes about 45 minutes to journey from one church to another. Distances are not great but the roads are those of the car adverts: narrow, winding and snake-like with spectacular views of the Sierra Nevada and no-one else on the road. The mission were kind enough to lend me a little red van, Postman Pat style, which was just as effective and much cheaper than a sleek, silver speed machine.

Numbers attending services in the different congregations vary from about 5 to 35. Such missionary activity aims to encourage the believers to continue in the faith, and help them use their gifts in the witness of Christ's church.

I never received anything but kindness from Spaniards and missionaries alike. It was one of those short term experiences that will not be forgotten easily both in one's mind and prayers. The apostle's words, 'I will go to Spain' (Romans 15:28) now evoke deeper emotion.

David Ford

An adapted form of this article was first written for Spotlight on Spain, the magazine of the Spanish Gospel Mission. More details may be obtained from Rev Matthew Hill, 286 North Wingfield Road, Grassmoor, Chesterfield S42 5 EP



TURAS TRON FHÀSACH



Photograph: www.bibleplaces.com

Nuair a bha mi air tìr-mòr o chionn ghoirid, bha mi a' coimhead nan càraichean air na rathaidean mòra 's iad uile a' siubhal aig astar. Bha an fheadhainn a bha aost', neo dìreach a' gabhail air an socair, ann an aon shreath agus bha an fheadhainn a bu luaithe ann an sreath eile, 's iad a' gabhail seachad air gach carbaid a bha gan cumail air-ais. Bha iad sin glè thrìc le einnseanan mòra cumhachdach, 's iad cuideachd nan càraichean ùra.

Smaoinich mi gur ann mar seo a bha an cinne-daonna air fad—feadhainn a bha briste, leagte sìos, air an sàrachadh le iomadh gnè buairidh, ach feadhainn eile agus a' chùis a' dol leo, 's iad a' gabhail an rathaid le cridhe làidir fallain, 's abair gu bheil spionnadh annta.

Ach ged a chì sinn seo airson ùine, biodh sin fada neo goirid, 's ann anns a' chiad shreath a tha an saoghal gu lèir.

Uair neo uair-eigin, thig briseadh air slàinte neo eadar dàimhean, agus tha gach mac màthar fosgailte do gach nì sàraichte a tha a-bhos an seo.

Mar sin shaoil mi, ged a tha na càraichean a' siubhal ann an sreathan eadar-dhealaicht', tha seo gu math meallta. Fhads a tha sinn air talamh tròcair, bidh sinn a' cur feum air cuideachadh, coibhneas agus misneachadh. Chan eil a-rèist san t-sreath eile ach mealladh agus breug. Uair neo uair-eigin fàsaidh gach nì ùr aost', feumar coimhead ri einnseanan a bha iomadh bliadhna math gu leòr leo fhèin.

Nach sinn a bu choir a bhith iriosal oir ged a bhiodh duine a' seòladh gu math àrd, tha sàrachadh gu leòr anns a' bheatha—sa airson osann fhàsgadh bho chridhe.

SEANFHACAIL

Cha tig osann tric bhon chridhe shunndach.

Is iomadh rud buidhe 's chan e an t-òr,
is iomadh rud còir a bha dubh.

Bidh mi ag iarraidh oirbh pìos beag sgrìobhaidh a chur thugam agus tha mi a' toirt taing do gach caraaid agus bana-charaid a tha a' dèanamh seo. Cumaibh oirbh oir tha feum anns gach nì.

Chuala mi na facail-sa an toiseach ann an eaglais Shiaboist, agus b'ann aig an t-Urramach C Macmhathain nach maireann a chuala mi iad. Sgrìobh mi iad air pìos pàipeir agus abair gu robh mi toilicht' nuair a thàinig iad thugam air a' phost o chionn ghoirid. Seo an tiodhlac a leugh mi.

'Bho chionn deugachadh bhliadhna thar fhichead, leugh mi na facail a leanas ann an seann leabhar. Chan eil cuimhn' agam dè an t-ainm a bha air an leabhar neo cò a sgrìobh e, ach bha an t-ùghdar a' dèanamh iomraidh air duine sònraichte a thug mar theisteanas air a bheatha fhèin na faclan seo:

Fàsach de dhuine, ann am fàsach na beatha

A' fòghlam, 's a' sìor fhòghlam, cìod e crìoch àraidh an duine.'

Tha rud-eigin tùrsach mu dheidhinn nam faclan. Tha "fasach" a' ciallachadh àite lom, tioram far nach eil dad a' fàs. Agus tha na faclan "sìor fhòghlam" a' toirt dhuinn faireachdainn air strìth neo spàirn nach eil a' tighinn gu ceann.

Tha Leabhar Aithghearr nan Ceist ag innse dhuinn gur e Dia a ghlòrachadh agus A mhealtainn gu sìorraidh crìoch àraidh an duine, agus tha mi cinnteach gu robh am freagairt sin aig an duine seo air a theanga, dìreach mar a bha aig iomadach duine a chaidh tro sgoil Shàbaid anns na làithean a dh'fhalbh. Dè a-rèist a bha e a' ciallachadh leis na facail seo?

Nuair a bha mi fhìn òg, bha mi a' smaoinichadh gur ann air deireadh beatha an duine a bha a' cheist a' bruidhinn. Bha mi a' smaoinichadh gur anns na nèamhan a bhiodh duine a' glòrachadh agus a' mealtainn Dhè. B'e am facal "crìoch" neo "end" (mar a tha e air a chuir anns a' Bheurla) bu choireach ri sin. Cha robh mi a' tuigsinn aig an àm sin gur e "adhbhar" a bha am facal a' ciallachadh anns a' cheist agus anns an fhreagairt. 'S ann a tha a'cheist a' faighneachd dè am prìomh adhbhar airson na chruthaich Dia an duine. Ach is eu-coltach inntinn leanabh ri inntinn inbhich.

A' tilleadh chun nam faclan a thog mi às an leabhar, bu chaomh leam ceist neo dhà fhaighneachd mun duine-sa. Saoil an e duine math a bh'ann? Mas e, an e seo dha-rìreabh fèin-fhiosrachadh mac an duine anns a' bheatha seo? No, an e seo duine a tha air sealladh a chall air saors' an t-soisgeil?

Aon cheist eile: A bheil fios aig duine den luchd-leughaidh cò mu dheidhinn a tha na faclan sgrìobhte?

Chaidh iarraidh oirbh freagairtean a chuir thugam fhìn a tha a' deasachadh na duilleig' agus gu cinnteach tha mi a' smaoinichadh gum bi deagh bheachd aig gu leòr agaibh.

Cha leig sibh a leas eagal a bhith oirbh gum bi bhur n-ainm ris na sgrìobh sibh!!

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Rev. Kenneth I Macleod — "Christian Exercise"

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1 – 31 January 2004

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Anonymous £100

The General Trustees acknowledge with grateful thanks the following legacy:

Miss Jessie Coghill, Keiss £3,692.65
International Mission Board

PRAYER DIARY February

O Lord my God... Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray... And when you hear, forgive.

1 Kings 8:30

- Mon. 1 In February we prayed about our Church Finances which were giving cause for concern. Now we lift up our hearts in thanks to God, for the news that this year we have no deficit. Our needs have been met. Praise the Lord!
- Tues. 2 By March the congregation of Cobham, near London, hoped to have a new leaflet of introduction ready to distribute round the homes in the area. They feel they are so unknown so this is an important beginning. May the Lord bless and use every leaflet and each member.
- Wed. 3 In Edinburgh today the Standing Committees of the Church and the Commission of Assembly meet. They will be dealing with many important issues. Pray for the Spirit's wisdom on every decision made.
- Thurs. 4 The last of the series of Lectures on the Christian Faith will be held tomorrow in Falkirk. The subject is: 'The Narrow Gate'. Pray for deepening of spiritual lives through this whole series.
- Fri. 5 Tonight the ladies of Golspie Free Church host the East Sutherland Ladies Meal. The speakers are to be Calum and Liz Ferguson (speaking about Turkey). Pray for a time of fellowship and of blessing.
- Sat. 6 A Psalmody Workshop is planned in Kirkcaldy today for precentors and those interested in psalm singing. Evan Macdonald will lead the session.
- Sun. 7 Pray for rich blessing on North Tolsta congregation today as they hold their Communion service. Rev Donald Macdonald, Kinloch and Rev Iain Beaton, Lennoxton are invited to assist.
- Mon. 8 Pray that many young people will book up for Camp this year and for Mhairi Mackintosh, the Administrator, as she deals with bookings at this time. Pray too for Sandy Finlay Camps Supervisor.
- Tues. 9 This evening the Church hall in Lochgilphead will be open for teenagers. The response so far has been discouraging. Do pray that the Lord will draw some young folk to come in tonight and that He will be there to bless.
- Wed. 10 The teachers give thanks for the enthusiasm of the Sunday School and Bible Class in Duthil and Dores and pray for blessing through the church children's address, memory work and Bible Study. Pray that initial contacts with local children will bear fruit.
- Thurs. 11 The teachers also give thanks for their young people who attend Campaigners and Youth Fellowships in Inverness. Pray that these would support them in their lives in school and home.
- Fri. 12 Pray for some of the young people from Downvale who go into the city centre on Friday nights to do outreach. May the Lord bless them and use them in this service.
- Sat. 13 The Downvale congregation gives thanks for the many students and young people who attend the services. May they come to know and love the Lord and be used in His service.
- Sun. 14 Pray for blessing in Lennoxton congregation as they meet around the Lord's table today.



Mon. 15	Graeme Scott from Aviation Fellowship will address the Campbelltown and Tarbert ladies today. Pray for blessing on them all.
Tues. 16	The Western Synod meets today at Ullapool Free Church. Pray for encouragement and good fellowship and wisdom in all decisions.
Wed. 17	Candidates for the post of Chief Administration Officer for the Free Church of Scotland will be interviewed this month. Pray for the Appointing Committee as they make their decision.
Thurs. 18	Pray for the Inverness Free North Campaigners as they introduce a new programme as part of changes being made by the Movement. May the Lord give wisdom to those who are preparing the resources.
Fri. 19	Tonight the new music edition of our psalmody, <i>Sing Psalms</i> , is being launched in Edinburgh. Pray for much blessing in congregational singing.
Sat. 20	Today a Camp Training Day is being held in Perth Free Church for those who will be involved this summer. Remember all who will speak and pray for safety in travel and much blessing on them all.
Sun. 21	Pray today for your minister and office-bearers, your Sunday School teachers and children, and for yourself that God may have all the glory as you worship Him in church today.
If you have any request for prayer or praise for the MAY Prayer Diary please send by the end of this month (March) to: Elizabeth Graham 0131 336 4071, e-mail: w.d.graham@btinternet.com	
Mon. 22	Killearnan congregation ask prayer as they seek to provide a new Church building nearer the heart of the community. Since the sale of the old church, they worship in the village hall.
Tues. 23	Pray for Rev Douglas and Katie MacKeddie as they plan the Adult Holiday to be held this year in Skelmorlie. May it be a time of blessing and relaxation to all who attend.
Wed. 24	Burghead Free Church will be meeting tonight for Prayer and Bible Study at 7.00 p.m. May they feel the Lord's presence to revive them and bless them.
Thurs. 25	The children of the Church have collected a record amount of £11,238 for Tear Fund and our Disaster Fund. Pray for blessing to those who will receive help AND on our children who gave their money.
Fri. 26	Remember the Professors and lecturers and all the staff in the Free Church College. May they impart vision and inspiration to the students.
Sat. 27	Last minute preparations for the three church conferences planned for next month will be being made now. Pray for the organisers and any problems they may be facing right now.
Sun. 28	Pray for the congregation of Portree today, now settled with a pastor, Rev D.G. Macdonald. May the Lord bring blessing to his folk here, and give them a vision for the future.
Mon. 29	For 6 weeks in Jan/Feb the Free North, Inverness, did a course on Christian Foundations as a follow-up to Christianity Explored. They ask that the Lord would reveal Himself to those who are searching.
Tues. 30	Today the Northern Synod meets at Golspie Free Church. Pray for good decisions and a time of blessing and fellowship.
Wed. 31	Remember the editors of our monthly church magazines, as they prepare the May editions now.

Free Church Bookshop

15 North Bank Street
Edinburgh EH1 2LS
0131 718 4141

Nothing Else to Fear. Holding fast to God in tough times. David Ellis. Monarch £6.99. David Ellis and his family, missionaries in Indonesia, encountered the horrors of political violence and turmoil. In the many terrifying events that befell them, they found out that if they held fast to God there was nothing else to fear.

The Skye Revivals. Steve Taylor. New Wine Press. £6.99. In 1842 it was reported that: "There are few families in the whole Island of Skye, containing a population of 25,000 souls, where there has not been one or more individuals seriously impressed." This book examines these revivals which subsequently transformed society, shaped a culture and had an astounding effect far beyond the shore of Skye.

Out of the Deep. The Runcie Family Devastated By Drugs Delivered by God. Ambassador. £8.99. The Runcie family live in Fraserburgh and it was there their three boys became heroin addicts. Why was this all happening in their family? Could God not deliver them from their addiction? Yes. He could. And He did, intervening in each life in a different way, but with the same result. This is an inspirational story of deliverance, and of hope. Having read this myself and having four boys myself I would add that this book should not to be read by parents of a nervous disposition!

Search the Scriptures. The study guide to the Bible. New NIV edition. IVP. £12.99. Edited by A. Stibbs. This book provides a systematic course of daily Bible study. Provides a concise introduction to each book of the Bible. Brings out the content, meaning and application of the daily passage. Covers the entire Bible section by section.

Psalms for People Under Pressure. Jonathan Aitken. Continuum. £7.99. Jonathan Aitken knows a lot about being under pressure. In the mid-1990's his world fell apart when he was caught telling a lie while under oath and was sent to prison. On his journey through prison he became committed to a deep spiritual faith. While in jail, and afterwards, Aitken studied the Psalms and discovered in them what he calls 'deep gold gems of ancient wisdom for coping with the pressures of modern life.'

Presbyterian Beliefs. A brief introduction. D McKim. Geneva. £7.99. This book introduces the major beliefs of Presbyterians. It is written non-technically to provide readers with a clear discussion of what Presbyterians believe about key theological topics.

BOOKSHOP MANAGER: Charles Douglas

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CONGREGATIONAL REMITTANCES

Amounts received by the General Treasurer towards Congregational Target Figures.

The first figure is the total for 2003 (these may be adjusted since last month) and the second is the total for 2002.

NORTHERN

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Assynt	8,587	6,393
Clyne	14,059	13,739
Creich	14,700	15,000
Dornoch	22,573	20,001
Fearn	19,054	18,308
Golspie	17,650	15,225
Helmsdale	15,875	15,225
Lairg	10,000	10,326
Lybster	4,800	4,700
Olrig, Watten & Bower	15,884	9,466
Rogart & Eddrachillis	16,000	16,000
Rosskeen	61,584	45,940
Tain	32,253	24,997
Tarbat	0	0
Thurso & Reay	20,000	18,800
Tongue	2,980	3,887
- Farr	2,240	2,380
- Strathy	504	937
- Halladale	2,818	2,810
Wick & Keiss	15,875	8,505
Total	297,437	252,639

GLASGOW & ARGYLL

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Arran	3,770	4,069
Ayr	24,530	25,748
Bishopbriggs	18,000	17,000
Campbeltown, Tarbert & Islay	18,287	16,500
Coatbridge	19,050	18,072
Cumbernauld	20,500	18,500
Dumbarton	18,000	16,800
Dumfries	11,500	10,000
Dunblane	19,500	15,008
East Kilbride	13,039	12,400
Glasgow		
- Dowanvale	85,210	75,266
- Govanhill	21,580	27,477
- Partick	35,400	28,700
- St Vincent St	42,927	38,000
- Shettleston	0	0
Greenock	2,650	2,650
Dunoon	4,854	4,241
- Strachur	1,700	1,610
Kilwinning & Saltcoats	16,551	18,440
Lennoxtown	16,400	15,550
Lochgilthead & Lochfyneside	12,550	13,417
Mull	5,225	5,011
Coll	1,666	1,951
Oban	20,629	20,259
Paisley	12,600	15,637
Rothsay	368	401
Total	446,486	422,707

INVERNESS, LOCHABER & ROSS

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Acharacle & Strontian	3,412	3,038
- Ardnamurchan	5,875	5,786
Burghead	19,929	16,000
Dingwall & Stathpeffer	48,386	50,231
Duthil Dores	17,002	17,005
Elgin & Forres	17,201	16,489
Fortrose	25,000	21,500
Fort William	15,876	15,230
Glenurquhart & Fort Augustus	13,500	11,000
Inverness		
- Free North	112,513	102,865
- Greyfriars	37,543	32,729
Kilmallie	24,727	25,865
Kilmorack & Strathglass	378	411
Kiltarlity & Kirkhill	12,500	6,500
Kiltearn	0	0
Kingussie	10,025	6,718
Knockbain	33,059	28,961
Maryburgh	16,266	15,529
- Killearnan	10,373	10,456
Nairn, Croy & Ardersier	6,337	9,976
Resolis	13,391	10,706
- Urquhart	17,250	15,637
Smithton-Culloden	72,306	50,000
Urray & Strathconon	39,016	35,832
Total	571,864	508,464

WESTERN ISLES

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Back	94,994	91,534
Barvas	32,400	30,078
Callanish	44,515	37,400
Carloway	27,612	23,990
Cross	55,853	48,121
Harris	14,070	18,197
Kinloch	45,226	40,301
Knock	50,000	45,000
Lochs	44,301	42,890
North Tolsta	26,533	22,650
North Uist, Grimsay & Berneray	17,859	17,326
Park	24,572	21,008
Point	29,438	26,841
Scalpay	19,300	19,000
Shawbost	38,046	33,750
South Uist & Benbecula	14,409	13,500
Stornoway	250,068	232,790
Uig	1,876	8,000
Total	831,073	772,376

EDINBURGH & PERTH

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Aberdeen	86,945	83,166
Dundee	24,051	20,122
Edinburgh		
- Buccleuch	74,000	53,020
- St Columba	17,000	15,786
Falkirk	23,140	17,500
Kirkcaldy	16,000	14,588
Leith	27,897	25,000
Livingston	20,685	19,654
London		
- Cole Abbey	52,079	54,832
- Cobham	8,350	7,800
Perth & Pitlochry	23,970	20,092
Total	374,116	331,560

SKYE & WESTER ROSS

	Total 2003	Total 2002
Alligin & Diabaig	668	266
Applecross	2,340	3,300
Bracadale	18,475	18,002
Coigach	4,876	4,576
Duirinish	16,911	16,990
Gairloch & Kinlochewe	15,659	16,731
Kilmuir & Stenscholl	21,496	22,344
Lochalsh, Glenshiel & Glenelg	9,454	9,175
Lochbroom	20,484	18,108
Lochcarron	18,362	18,562
Plockton & Kyle	24,130	23,150
Poolewe & Aultbea	27,234	24,606
Portree	29,283	21,841
Raasay	2,045	1,821
Sleat & Strath	14,685	15,025
Snizort	6,294	3,962
Total	232,395	218,459

Private Donations etc.

Toronto	0	3,280
Livonia	0	1,216
Private Donations etc.	46,850	19,526
Ev. Presb. Church	15,100	14,000
Total	2,815,323	2,544,227

GRAND TOTALS

2003	2,815,323
2002	2,544,227
% increase	10.66%

Women for Mission

Golspie

After sixty-five or more years the Golspie WFM (formerly WFMA) is still going strong! It has been good over recent months to read of what other groups around the church have been doing. We hope that, as we share with you something of our programme here in Golspie, it will be interesting and encouraging to you.

We meet monthly from September to April usually in the evening, but sometimes in the afternoon.

This Session's Speakers

September: This first meeting will always be remembered by us as our speaker that evening was **Anna Sutherland** for many years with CWI. She spoke to us of the 'Role of the Jewish Mother'. On that evening, as so often before, when we heard Anna speak we were so aware of her great love for the Jewish people and for her Messiah whom she longed they too would come to recognise and trust. None of us imagined that this would be the last time she would share with us. As this is being written, we have just heard that she has gone to be with the Lord she loved so much and served so faithfully. She will be greatly missed by her friends throughout the world and nowhere more so than here in East Sutherland where she spent her few happy years of retirement in her native Brora.

October: **Carene Ross**, a local teacher showed fascinating slides of a Trek she made with others across the Sahara Desert in aid of the Maggie Centre, a cancer support charity.

November: At this meeting we were joined by the ladies of St. Andrew's Church of Scotland Guild for a Tearcraft Evening when Morag MacLean came all the way from Skye with her selection of crafts to sell in support of Tear Fund's work.

December: This is a more informal get together when we meet in the Manse, enjoy our mince pies and Christmas cake and allocate the money we have raised to various missions. This year we were again invited to share with the Guild ladies in their evening of Christmas readings and praise.

January: Again our friends from the Church of Scotland came along, this time to hear **Colin MacPherson** speak and show slides of the work of the Emmaus Road Trust. Colin gave us an interesting and challenging account of how the Lord is prospering the work of Christian publishing in Eastern Europe.

February: We look forward to having **Cathy Ross**, a trained masseur from the Rogart congregation, come to give us advice and hands-on hints for relaxing and preparing for spring. We will also be preparing for the next month's meeting, one of the 'big' occasions in our programme.

March: **Calum and Liz Ferguson** are planning to be with us for the East Sutherland Ladies' Meal. For several years now Golspie WFM has hosted this meal and we look forward to welcoming ladies from the surrounding congregations.

April: After all the activity of the session, on this evening we take time to reflect and to share with one another portions of Scripture or other writings that have helped or encouraged us over the months.



Anne McDonald

Golspie WFM Mission Gift Day

From small beginnings many years ago this is now a big day in our calendar. Although organised by the ladies of the WFM it involves the whole congregation, including the children. On that day we donate our gifts for the work of mission. We give our money, our time and our skills. Golspie congregation's range of baking, plants and crafts of all kinds is renowned around the district! And, all our friends from the village and other neighbouring congregations who support our Gift Day also enjoy a very special afternoon tea! Over the years we have been able to contribute much to the work of missions by this event.

Golspie Craft Group

For the past three years this group, which includes friends from outwith the congregation, has worked alongside the WFM. The ladies who participate enjoy making a range of crafts—cards, jewellery, knitted goods, glass painting, decorative boxes and lots of other items. The money raised from the sale of these goods is contributed to the WFM Projects and to other worthwhile causes.

Golspie Ladies' Bible Study

Throughout the winter months around a dozen ladies meet weekly in each other's homes to study God's Word together. This session we have been looking at the life of Joseph. This is a very special time of learning, sharing and praying together. In this group, and indeed in all our activities as the women of Golspie Free Church, we value the fellowship and friendship with which the Lord has blessed us.

Ladies' Day Away

On the past two occasions, ladies from Golspie have enjoyed being at this day in Coylumbridge and we are looking forward to meeting with many of you again on Saturday, 25 September as we all think about 'Open Heart; Open Home' with Joan MacDonald and Catriona Lamont.

We thank Anne McDonald, who is the Treasurer of WFM, for this report and we look forward to hearing from other groups.