It is a pleasure to have my wife share in the writing of this front page article. I had been appointed by Presbytery to represent them at the meetings convened by our Mission Board in relation to Miss Russell’s thirtieth anniversary in Kenya, and it was good to have my wife travel with me. The forty-member party also included Alastair Hamilton, member of Presbytery Mission Board and Missionary Council, along with his wife Jenni and son Connor, Cherith Brown and Dr Sam Lynas. I thought it would be appropriate to have Joan pay a personal tribute to this dear friend and faithful servant of Jesus Christ, Miss Russell.

Many services and special events were packed into the time that we spent with the missionaries and the brethren of the Bible Christian Faith Church. The details are too numerous to include in these lines; but, in a few weeks, you will be able to see some footage of the trip at a Tuesday night prayer meeting. It is sufficient to remark that the Lord is blessing our Kenyan missionaries. For many years, you, as a congregation, have supported the ministry both prayerfully and financially. It is a joy to report that the Lord is answering your prayers and is using your generous giving to His own glory. Continue to stand with Christ’s servants in Kenya; and, together with them, you will one day hear Christ’s “well done” and rejoice before the Lord of the harvest.

When Margaret felt the Lord calling her to missionary service, she met the challenge with a willing heart. However, she had to bear the trial of a spinal injury—very possibly sustained during nursing duties, which caused much pain and frustration. With great courage, she faced surgery; and, in God’s plan, the outcome was successful. Margaret did two years of study at the Whitefield College of the Bible and then went to Kenya in the summer of 1983, just a few months after we left these shores for the USA. Our paths have crossed a number of times in the past thirty years. Margaret visited us once in the USA, and I have now had the privilege of visiting her twice in Kenya. For this recent trip, I am indebted to the session and committee of our church in Ballymena, and I wish to thank them for their kindness.

The thirtieth anniversary visit to Kenya was a great blessing to my soul. I observed that Margaret’s attitude to God’s work has not changed with the passing of years. Her fervour and courage are still as vibrant as they were in earlier days. When we travelled in a bus for many hours as it bumped over the roughest of roads, I rejoiced that Margaret’s back was enduring it better than mine. When we fellowshipped under a tree in a very remote region and heard Margaret translate, I rejoiced that God had given her many gifts. When we sat in the school assembly hall and heard the senior choir sing ‘His Robes for Mine’ with beautiful harmony and evident feeling, I rejoiced that God had enabled Margaret to play such a large part in giving these dear young people a Christian education.

The words of Romans 12:11 are a very fitting tribute to Margaret, and we pray that God will give her many more years to demonstrate their meaning—‘Fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.’
Philippines

Paul McIntyre

On the 26th October, a team of seven went out to the Philippines to serve alongside the missionary Noel Stevenson. When we set off on our journey, we didn’t know what to expect, but we were very excited to see the work that the Lord has called Noel to. Our prayer as a team was that we would be a help to Noel and that we would get the chance to evangelise in the area where we were staying.

Each day started and finished with devotions and prayer with team members taking their turn. As we went around the streets, Noel would just have said ‘stop here’, and the children all flocked to us. We did open air meetings, with the children sitting round as we sang choruses and told a Bible story. This was a great opportunity to not only reach the children but the many adults who stood and listened too. We also gave out many “John’s Gospel” and tracts to the people as we walked around the streets and at the schools. They were so willing to receive them; we saw many reading as we gave them out.

We spent a lot of time with the people from the church where Noel is Pastor, especially the young people; and they were such a blessing and encouragement to us. We were able to help out in a youth camp during one of the weekends, and we really got to know these young people. They are on fire for the Lord, and they only want to talk about the things of God. They love to sing and just sit in a circle and start singing hymns.

Please pray for these young people that they would continue to grow in grace and see many people saved. They couldn’t believe that our mums, dads, brothers, cousins, etc. were all Christians, as many of them were the only Christian in their family.

It was a privilege to worship with these people on the Lord’s day. The second Sunday we had a very special meeting when the Lord really came down, the young people sang, and Colin Tinsley preached. We witnessed these young people and other church members weeping before the Lord for the souls of their families and the Filipino people.

Please pray for Noel. He is God’s man in the Philippines and has won the respect of these people through his work. As uncle Noel would always say - “Say amen!!!”

Liberia

Ian Dougan

On the 6th of November I had the great privilege of travelling out to Liberia, along with my work colleague David Hall, who attends our Carrickfergus church. We had offered our help to fit a kitchen for the North American Mission Board.

Whilst there we stayed with the Rev DiCanio and his new guard dog Bentley. We were very well looked after by the Rev DiCanio and Joanne and enjoyed a great time of fellowship with them both. We were encouraged and blessed to see the work coming on so well after the set back of the robbery.

The security at the compound has been stepped up to a high standard and with the security walls being made higher and the builders now working on the guard tower, I must say we felt very safe during our stay.

For the first few days of the trip our time was taken up with the fitting of the kitchen in the Rev DiCanio’s home. Once this work was complete, we spent the remainder of our time being shown around the area of Monrovia and getting an idea of what life was like for the local people.

On Sunday, we travelled with Joanne to the Paynesville church and sat in with her as she conducted the Sunday school. As we pulled up to the church, the children were all eagerly awaiting Joanne’s arrival. There were over twenty-five children in attendance that morning, and each one was keen to participate in the class. The time spent here was a real highlight of the trip and a blessing for us.

We had a fantastic time in Liberia and were very sad when we had to pack up and head home. Please pray for the continued work on the compound. There are problems with the electric and the generators - pray that these will soon be resolved. Also pray that the work will soon recommence on the second house for Joanne, as this is much needed for her.

‘Showers of Blessing’ at Youth Mission

Jane Witherspoon

The Youth Mission was held from November 17th to 22nd, and the Evangelist was Rev T. Laverty. Being well attended by both our own Youth Fellowship and visitors, the meetings were a testament to God’s answering prayer for a blessed and fruitful week. Rev Laverty spoke on the need of salvation at every meeting, and brought clear messages from God’s word.

On the closing night, he spoke from Revelation chapter 14, entitled ‘When it’s all been said and done, there’s only two.’ He made the point that when death comes, there are only two groups of people: those who are saved and those who are lost to a relentless hell.

Rev Laverty challenged the young people as to which group they would belong.

Speaking after the closing meeting, Rev Laverty said: “The Lord’s presence was evident and clearly felt throughout, plus there were signs of blessing following the preaching of the Word every evening.” He wished to thank everyone who attended and prayed faithfully for the meetings throughout the week.
The bi-monthly work of the “Consider Christ” outreach into the Republic of Ireland, continues to be a blessing. For some time now, the Ballymena church has sent a team to help in this outreach. The team meets early on a Saturday morning and make its way to the assembly point, where we meet with others, usually over 100 people.

Each team is allocated an area to visit. We knock the doors and invite people to a Gospel service which is to be held the following week. In the past, many good conversations and contacts have been made; and best of all, souls have been saved. Before returning home, the combined outreach teams meet in a nearby hotel for a meal, which is very welcome. We are thankful that the Lord has opened this door in a Roman Catholic country.

Pray for this ongoing work, that God would send more labourers into this harvest field.

Joshua 1 v 11 “…go in to possess the land, which the Lord your God gives you…”
I am thankful to the Lord who, by His mercy and grace, has saved my soul and given me a testimony. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast” (Ephesians 2 v 8, 9).

It wasn’t until I was in my early twenties that I started to come under conviction of my sin. At this time a Christian man, with whom I had worked, spoke to me on a number of occasions regarding the Gospel message, and encouraged me to read the Bible. As I started to read the Word of God again, I genuinely realised that whilst I was what people perceived to be a “good” person, I had much sin in my life and it had been there from the moment I was born. I knew that my sin separated me from God, as the Bible says in Isaiah 59 v 2 “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”.

Over a period of months, I became increasingly troubled about my sin. I found it difficult to sleep, as I kept thinking that if I were to die that night, or if the Lord were to return before I died, I would not be prepared to meet Him. I also noticed that for the first time in my life I was really troubled when people took the Lord’s name in vain. I spoke to another Christian friend regarding this and she advised me that she thought I was under deep conviction of sin. At this time a Christian man, with whom I had worked, spoke to me on a number of occasions regarding the Gospel message, and encouraged me to read the Bible. As I started to read the Word of God again, I genuinely realised that whilst I was what people perceived to be a “good” person, I had much sin in my life and it had been there from the moment I was born. I knew that my sin separated me from God, as the Bible says in Isaiah 59 v 2 “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear”.

After my conversion, I wanted to worship and learn more about my Saviour. I returned to my local Presbyterian church, where I was able to serve the Lord within some of the organizations and tell others the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Last December, the Donnelly family, who had guided me and prayed for me whilst I was under conviction of sin, invited me to the Free Presbyterian Church in Ballymena. I initially started to attend the evening services and was greatly blessed by hearing the gospel message. This is so important as “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10 v 17). After attending a number of services, and after much prayer, I really felt that it was the will of God that I should join the church. I truly have a thankful heart that the Lord, who changes not, has guided me to where I am today.

As a Christian, I really give thanks to the Lord that he pulled me out of the miry clay and has set my feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. I am thankful that the Lord has rescued me and that each day He guides me and is my strength and my hope. If there are any who are reading this, and as yet are unsaved and not ready to meet the Lord, I would encourage you to consider seriously your relationship with the Lord and obey His command - “Repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1 v 15).