A Word from our Minister

For two weeks in October, my wife and I had the privilege to return to the United States. I had a long-standing invitation to preach in a number of churches; thus, it was a joy to be able to have my wife with me on the visit. The weather was beautiful and warm, though in the final few days we encountered some turbulent weather when ‘Hurricane Sandy’ made land-fall about an hour north of where we were staying.

Our first stop was at Philadelphia, where I preached for three nights from Wednesday to Friday to the congregation at Malvern. We stayed with the pastor and his wife, Dr and Mrs Mark Allison, and enjoyed good fellowship with them. The Lord blessed the meetings, when, as well as the Lord’s people in the Malvern church, a number of visitors were also in attendance. It was nice to stay in the manse where we as a family had lived during the final part of my ministry in the United States and also re-visit some of the places that we used to frequent so often.

On Saturday 20th October, after the close of the Malvern meetings, we flew down to Columbia, South Carolina to be with Rev. John Wagner and his wife. The meetings with Mr Wagner’s congregation commenced on Sunday, both morning and evening, and then from Monday through to Friday. The Lord certainly was in the midst and blessed His Word to the hearts of His people.

The Wagners have been very faithful in their labours for Christ, experiencing various trials, yet persevering in the cause of Christ. They need our constant prayer support.

While in Columbia, we were able to meet up with Rev Colin Mercer and his wife when they travelled down for two of the services. It was nice to see them both again.

The following Saturday, we travelled back up north to be with Dr John McKnight and his wife, whom we had with us here in Ballymena in February 2011. Dr McKnight is a faithful man of God, who takes a strong stand for Christ and His cause. His church is strong, having attached to it a Christian School with about three hundred and fifty students in attendance. The church is an independent work located in a rural part of the state of Maryland. I had been asked to preach Reformation messages; thus, from Sunday 28th to Wednesday 31st, I sought to bring messages on that theme. The people attended faithfully and showed a great interest in the Word.

Please pray for Christ’s cause in the U.S.A. Both in our sister Free Presbyterian Church of North America and among others like Dr McKnight’s congregation, there is great need for the moving of the Spirit of God. Our brethren and their churches serve Christ in a nation that, like our own, has drifted far from truth, with all of the results of apostasy evident on every hand. Nothing else but a gracious breath from heaven will bring the change that is so desperately needed.

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Missionary Council Anniversary

Jim Houston

The Free Presbyterian Missionary Council was formed on Friday 27th April 1962, and was attended by two delegates appointed by the Session of each Free Presbyterian Church. The purpose of the Missionary Council was to stir up and maintain a missionary vision in each congregation, to bring the prayer needs of the missionaries to the attention of the home congregations and to raise much needed financial support. During those early days, there were no missionaries in the field under the auspices of the Free Presbyterian Church. There were, however, those connected to our congregations who were serving the Lord on the mission field and who deserved our prayerful and financial support. These were people like Bill Ballee.

In 1970, a significant development took place as Presbytery appointed George McConnell, an elder from our Mourne congregation as the new Chairman of the Missionary Council. This was a position which George would hold for the next forty-two years and to quote Dr Alan Cairns, ‘his cool, able leadership has won the confidence not only of the entire council but of all our missionaries. In many ways, he is the Free Presbyterian Church’s Mr. Missions.’

Ballymena FPC has been a Church with a keen missionary interest and was ably represented on the Missionary Council for many years by Alex McCosh, John McDowell and William Wilson. For the last ten years Alastair Hamilton and I have been privileged to carry out this role.

On Friday 16th November, 2012, Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church was filled to capacity for the Missionary Council 50th Anniversary Rally. This was an important opportunity to take a look back and give God thanks for all His blessings and provision, yet also an opportunity to look forward to even greater times ahead.

A Word from Rev Tom Laverty

It was on the 28th September 1998, in Ballee Mission Hall, that this sinner found mercy for his soul. The Lord gave me great assurance that my sins were all forgiven and I was on my way to Heaven. Having been converted to Christ, I returned again to the Presbyterian Church where I had been brought up. Unable to settle because of the stand of that particular denomination, I felt the Lord lead me from Gen 12 v 1 to separate from the on-going apostasy. I am thankful that the Lord brought me to the Free Presbyterian Church and the faithful pulpit ministry of Rev Greer.

It was in 2008, being called of God into full time work, that I commenced my studies in the Whitefield College of the Bible. In my fourth year, I was placed in the Ballymena congregation to gain experience in the pastoral work of a church.

Shortly after Rev Greer was made Moderator of Presbytery, I was approached by the session to consider becoming a Licentiate Assistant in Ballymena. I was deeply humbled to be asked, but the very thought of it filled me with fear and I knew if the Lord did not lead in that direction, I must turn it down. The Lord turned my thoughts to the words of Exodus 3 v 12, the verse that He, in His mercy and love, had given me when He called me into the Christian ministry, “And he said, Certainly I will be with thee: and this shall be a token unto thee, that I have sent thee: When thou hast forth the people out of Egypt, ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” This time my thoughts were turned to the final words of the verse - “ye shall serve God upon this mountain.” As Moses was here receiving God’s call to service, the Lord was telling him that he would serve again at this place, after he had brought the people out of Egypt. The Lord gave me other Scriptures, almost on a daily basis, to settle my heart. On 30th September, I met with Ballymena Session and was able to share with them how the Lord had led and guided, and so, with fear and trembling, I accepted the call as Licentiate Assistant.

I would like to thank you all for the lovely Bible I received at my Welcome Service and thank everyone who worked so hard on the night. I was very touched by the kindness of God’s people, and to you all I say a hearty thank you. I value your prayers more than anything as I go in and out among the people, and to you all I say a hearty thank you. I value your prayers more than anything as I go in and out among the people.

Il Cor 13 v 14; The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen.
A special Welcome service was held on Sunday evening, 25th November, for Mr Tom Laverty who has joined the Ballymena Church as Assistant Minister.

In welcoming Mr Laverty, Rev Greer told the congregation how Tom had started to attend the Ballymena church approximately twelve years ago and had come “as a breath of fresh air”, quickly showing his zeal by becoming involved in the work. Over time it was not surprising that he felt the call of God to enter full time service; Mr Laverty entered the Whitefield College in 2008 and graduated in autumn 2012.

To mark the commencement of Mr Laverty’s ministry in Ballymena, Rev Greer presented him with a copy of the Scriptures from the congregation and invited him to say a few words.

Mr Laverty began his comments by giving honour and praise to the triune God who had saved him and called him into the gospel ministry. He recounted to the congregation how the will of God became clear to him through Exodus 3 v 12. He had a definite leading to return to his home congregation and serve there as assistant, and so he accepted the call on 30th September 2012. He thanked his parents for a godly upbringing, Rev Greer for his leading and guidance, and his home congregation for their prayerful and practical support. He said he counted it an honour to serve the people of the Ballymena Church.

Rev Greer brought the closing message on the role of the preacher from Romans 10 v 9. He said that God had ordained preaching as the means for the saving of souls. Paul’s preaching was (a) borne out of prayer and (b) blessed in proclamation. Referring to Mr Laverty’s ministry, he paid tribute to his prayer life; he was a man who spent time in prayer, and also to his preaching; it had been blessed in the saving of souls. Finally, he brought a clear gospel message through the text and showed the sinner confessing, the sinner convinced and the sinner comforted.

A time of fellowship followed in the church complex with refreshments for everyone and a special cake to mark the occasion.
Testimony of Sammy Coulter

Eph 2:8-9 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.

That is all I am - a sinner saved by grace, and this is my testimony. I was born on the third of November 1960 the youngest of four children. I did not have the privilege of being born into a Christian home, nevertheless I was sent faithfully along to the local Presbyterian church with my two brothers James & George, and my sister Sandra. Here I attended all the meetings and it was at the Saturday night youth that I met my wife Lucinda.

One of my childhood memories was attending open air gospel meetings which were held on a patch of grass in the middle of our estate. There were no tents or marquees, just a blanket laid down on the grass. One of my favourite hymns was “Jesus loves me”. Even while attending such meetings however, I had very little grasp of my need to be saved. When I left school and started to work, I craved more and more the pleasures of the world. I stopped attending church and had very little time for God’s house or God’s people, as was said of the prodigal in Luke 15:13 “And took his journey into a far country, and there wasted his substance with riotous living”. I brought much heart-break to my parents and others who loved me dearly. When I think of the years I wasted, I thank God for those Christian friends who were holding me up in prayer before the throne of grace. I must mention a dear saint of God by the name of Mrs Rosetta Lorimar. This godly woman would visit our home when I was a child and she was very fond of me. Before she would leave our home, she would always say “God bless you Samuel.” You could tell by her countenance that she was a woman of prayer; sadly, she never lived long enough to see her prayers answered.

On December of 1981, Lucinda and I were married in First Ballymena Presbyterian Church, and we moved into Lettercreve and settled down. The Lord blessed us with two sons Paul and Philip. I was into sport in a big way, first football then golf. I played golf with many of my work mates, and it was by the faithful witness of my friend Norman Mellon that I learned of my need to be saved. I remember him telling me how the Lord had saved him. At first I didn’t believe him; but when I noticed the change in his life, I realised that he had something that I didn’t have. He had the Lord.

If Cor. 5:17 “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.”

The Lord started to convict and convince me of my sin. I started to seek after the things of God, asking many questions and listening to gospel sermons. I spent many a sleepless night with the uncertainty of where I would spend eternity if, without warning, I should die. I knew that the life I was living was not pleasing to God. One day, Norman and I were traveling to Dublin; I asked him if he had any music tapes in his car. His reply was to look in the glove box. There I found a sermon by the Rev Sammy Workman. I put the tape to play, sometimes listening, sometimes not; then I heard the preacher quote from Genesis 6 v 3 —“And the Lord said my spirit shall not always strive with man". This really troubled me, and I realised that there would be a time in the life of a sinner when the Lord would withdraw His Spirit and leave them without any hope of salvation. The terror of Hell became a reality. In April 2000, in the home of Rev Sammy Workman, I came to trust the Lord Jesus, as the old hymn says;

“I came to Jesus as I was, weary and worn and sad; I found in Him a resting place, and He has made me glad.”

I cannot comprehend why God chose me in Christ to know the joy of sins forgiven and peace with God, fellowship with Jesus Christ, indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the hope of Glory. The only answer that I can come up with is that Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.”

Do you know the joy of sins forgiven and peace with God? Have you been to Jesus for the cleansing power, are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? If not, sinner friend, it is my prayer that by God’s grace you will flee to Calvary today and by faith rest on the finished work of the Saviour.

**Financial Update**

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**Contacts**

Church website [www.ballymenafpc.org](http://www.ballymenafpc.org)
Cornerstone email cornerstone@ballymenafpc.org
Rev. Greer email j.greer@ballymenafpc.org

**Dates for your Diary**

- Tuesday 11th Dec - Rev D Brown, LTBS Deputation
- Sunday 23rd Dec - Annual Family Services
- Monday 31st Dec - Annual New Year’s Service
- Tuesday 22nd Jan - Miss Joy Gillespie, Spain.