

THE CORNERSTONE

"Behold, I lay in Sion a chief corner stone...."

THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF BALLYMENA FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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A Word from our Minister

While the Lord has said that He will bless His work and build His church, yet He encourages His people to seek Him for what He has promised. He says through Ezekiel, with respect to what He swears to give His people, "...I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them," (Ezekiel 36:37). God's promises of blessing, when properly understood, do not engender slothfulness but incite prayerfulness in the hearts of the saints.

Thus, one of the salient marks of the New Testament Church is gathering to seek the Lord at the throne of grace. I thank God that He ever brought me into a fellowship that believes fervently in prayer and has seen the Lord answer prayer throughout its history. I speak of

the denomination as a whole, for it was born in the midst of great seasons of prayer and has sought to maintain that focus ever since. At the local level, the emphasis on prayer and the Church prayer meeting was one of the most impressionable and outstanding features of the ministry of Mr. Beggs, an emphasis that by God's grace has been maintained to this present day.

As arranged by the Kirk Session, two weeks were given to prayer during March. They were truly blessed weeks, convened against the backdrop of answered prayer in the form of the dealing that the Lord took with various individuals. When the Lord is at work, the saints must pursue prayer with renewed effort, and it was

encouraging to see this happen. Good attendances and fervent pleading at the throne of grace clearly marked these two weeks. New voices were heard, something that is always a great encouragement to God's people in general; and many were the pleas that went up to the Lord, especially on behalf of lost ones in the families of the congregation.

Now that these special seasons of prayer have concluded, we wait for the Lord's answers. But we must also continue instant in prayer! It is asking, seeking, and knocking of an incessant kind that obtains answers from heaven. Let us not be weary in this form of well-doing – for we shall reap if we faint not.



Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting took place on 25th March, 2014. Special reports were brought for the various aspects of the work in Ballymena. These included Treasury, Missionary, Sunday School, Children's Work, Outreach Work, Youth Work, and Internet Ministry.

A special presentation of watches was made to David and May Wilson by Rev Greer to mark the retirement of David from the Treasurer's post. In thanking the congregation, David paid great tribute to his wife May for her invaluable help over the years and thanked the congregation for their support since he took up the post in 1996.

Another presentation of watches was made to Derek and Jacqui Douglas to mark the retirement of Derek from the Friday night Children's Work. Derek had worked in this field for eighteen years; and, in thanking the

congregation for their kindness, he expressed his encouragement at hearing of the continued blessing and growth within this work.

The guest preacher was Rev. Gordon Ferguson, who, as Principal of the Whitefield College of the Bible, came to tell of its work. He used the text in Exodus 2 v 9 *"And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the women took the child, and nursed it."*

With great effect, he explained the work of the Whitefield College through this

text, referring to the special nature of the child, the godly nature of those to whom the child was entrusted, the nourishment they gave to the child, the task assigned by royalty, and the reward given. He finished by challenging our young people to consider their futures and be open to the call of God to study at the College.



Special Missionary Rally

Jim Houston

Friday, 28th February, 2014, saw a large crowd gather for the special Missionary Rally held in Ballymena. The rally was convened by Presbytery to focus on two very significant events which took place in 2013. The first of these events was the thirtieth anniversary of Miss Margaret Russell serving the Lord in Kenya and the other was the establishment of the Free Presbyterian Church of Nepal. These historic occasions were worthy of us gathering together to offer thanks to Almighty God for every blessing He has bestowed on us as a denomination.

The Rev. Ian Harris, Chairman of the Mission Board, presided over the meeting, with the Rev Austin Allen opening in prayer. Reports were then brought by Mrs Anne Davidson from Ardarragh FPC, who was part of the

group that travelled to Kenya to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary with Miss Russell, and also from Miss Noreen McAfee, Principal of the Christian Academy in Kenya, who was home on furlough.

After the Ballymena Men's Choir sang, a report was brought by Rev. Wesley Graham, who has been a missionary in Nepal since 2010. This report focused on the establishment of the new



Presbytery in Nepal and the ordination of ministers. Mr Glenn Owens from Ballymoney FPC also reported on the needs of the Precious Orphanage, which must re-locate to provide much needed space for the children who are cared for by Rev. Paul Thapa and his wife.

The Rev David Park, Chairman of the Missionary Council, brought a DVD presentation on both Kenya and Nepal before outlining the Special Projects which the Mission Board and the Missionary Council have launched. These projects range in size to allow individuals, families, or larger groups to contribute according to their means.

The Launch of the new Free Presbyterian Missionary website was then announced by Alastair Hamilton. This website is well worth a visit and will prove to be a very useful means of reporting on the work and witness of our Missionaries, both at home and abroad, and will enable you to receive up to date information and prayer requests directly from the mission field. The address is www.fpcmission.org

The missionary challenge was brought by our own minister, Rev John Greer. He spoke from John 4 v 34 -42 where the passage presents the missionary burden of the Lord Jesus Christ as He brought the Gospel to the needy people of Samaria. As they heard the Word of God, many of the Samaritans of that city believed on Him.

The Persecuted Church

Jane Witherspoon

In Northern Ireland we have the relative freedom to worship

God in public; however, many Christians around the world are not afforded the same grace. Jesus says in John 15 v 20: *"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you."*

Persecution for professing faith in Christ is as old as Christianity itself. Often associated with ethnic violence and geo-political conflict, it can range from verbal harassment to death. In the past century alone, more Christians were murdered for their faith than in any other century in human history, with an estimated 200 million people being killed for their belief in Christ. From Indonesia to the Horn of Africa, believers are marginalized, denied education, tortured, raped, imprisoned or murdered for their faith. The oppression is limitless, and usually unseen by the rest of the world.



A recent example of extreme persecution took place in Kenya. The Free Presbyterian Church has an established work and witness in Kenya where they have relative freedom to preach the Gospel; however, two weeks ago, a Christian church in that land had a very different experience. On Sunday March 23, a gunman stormed the morning worship service of the 'Joy in Jesus Church' Mombasa, and indiscriminately opened fire on the

worshippers. Two people died at the scene, and the death toll has risen to six, while a further eighteen people have been treated in hospital including a 12-month-old baby boy who has a bullet lodged in his head. Such a terrible story surely grieves the soul, and we must pray that God's hand will be upon this grave situation.

North Korea has the highest rate of Christian persecution in the world. Anyone discovered engaging in clandestine religious activity in that land may be subject to arrest, torture or public execution. Currently there are 50,000 to 70,000 Christians imprisoned in labour camps in North Korea. Muslim Somalia is also dangerous, where the militant Islamist group al-Shabaab targets Christians. China, Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Saudi Arabia rank next for extreme Christian persecution.

However, the Bible teaches that Christian persecution is not something new. In 1 Samuel 19, we read how Saul persecuted David; and, in Daniel 3, the king Nebuchadnezzar condemned Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to a burning fiery furnace when they refused to worship his golden image. Meanwhile, in Acts, Stephen was stoned to death for his strong faith. However, Jesus comforts the persecuted Christian in Matthew 5 v 10 when he says: *"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness sake: for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven."*

God Answers Prayer

Jonny and Naomi Logan

In February 2013, during an antenatal scan, we were given the devastating news that one of our twins had a very serious condition. Our consultant's diagnosis was that he would either die during pregnancy or at birth. He explained that there were a couple of medical procedures available to try to alleviate the problem but warned that there was no medical evidence of success and there was risk to the other twin.

We arrived home that evening heartbroken, and our first thoughts were to seek the Lord for His grace and strength for the days ahead. Unknown to each other, we sought God, asking direction and guidance as to what we should do concerning the suggested medical procedures.

I remember asking God - should we STAND STILL and leave the whole situation in His hands or should we do what we physically could to try and save our child's life. I continued in my consecutive readings from Ex. 13, and even before I began to read, I remembered the words of Moses in Ch 14 v 13, "Fear ye not, STAND STILL, and see the salvation of the LORD...". I had asked God if we should stand still,

and here He was using those same two words to confirm His will for this situation. Then as I read v14 - *"The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace."* any doubts were banished. God was clearly showing me that we were to stand still and hold our peace.

Later that night, I told Naomi what had happened, and she said that God had clearly brought her to Psalm 46 and in particular v 10 - *"BE STILL and know that I am God.."* Over the next few weeks, this same verse was brought to her attention on a number of occasions, along with the verse in Ruth 3 v 18, *"SIT STILL my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall..."*. What specific answers to prayer we had received, so with confidence we were able to be still and wait upon the Lord, knowing that He would do all things well.

Throughout the remainder of the pregnancy and to date, God has continued to answer prayer in many amazing and wonderful ways and on the 16 July 2013, He did *"exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think,"* when he spared Noah's life.



Sandra Wright When I was approached to write an article on "God answering prayer", my mind went immediately to my daughter Joanne's conversion to Christ.

After a long absence from God's House, the Lord answered prayer by bringing Joanne back in again under His Word. For two years, she came habitually under faithful preaching. One night, Rev. Greer spoke on the text *"How long halt ye between two opinions"* (1 Kings 18 v 21), but even though she was under conviction of sin, she went out the way she had come in.

The next morning, in my quiet time, I brought this text back to the Lord and my concern for her soul. In His great mercy, He led me to Zephaniah 3 v 19, *"Behold at that time I will undo all that afflict thee: and I will SAVE HER THAT HALTETH."* What a covenant promise! For fourteen months, I prayed over that promise both privately and in the public prayer meeting. On 17th August, 2008, the Lord fulfilled His gracious covenant promise to me and saved my daughter after a Sunday evening service - Halleluia!

All godly parents desire to see their children saved. I leave you with this promise in Proverbs 10 v 24, *"The desire of the righteous shall be granted."*

100th Birthday

Mrs. Agnes Ross celebrated her one hundredth birthday on the 8th March 2014 in Craigdun Nursing Home, Cullybackey. Mrs Ross and her late husband, Hugh, began attending our services on the Waveney Road around 1970 and were faithful to the Lord's work until old age and frailty prevented their attendance. We rejoice with her in her arrival at this grand age!



New Baby



Lucy Faith Maternaghen

Special Youth Meeting

Friday 25th April
Guest Speaker - Rev Ian Brown



All young people welcome

Dates for your Diary



- 11th - 13th April - Youth weekend
- Tuesday 15th April - Mr Jonathan Smith Deputation
- Thursday 17th April - Senior Citizens Dinner
- Tuesday 13th May - Rev W. Irwin Deputation
- Saturday 17th May - Children's Workers Seminar
- Friday 30th May - Sunday School BBQ

Internet Ministry

	Audio Down loads	Video Down loads	Webcast Viewers
Feb	4138	1143	2419
Mar	4915	1492	3127

Saved by Grace

Mr Andrew Davidson

Mr Alex McCosh, in the Cornerstone Feb 2013, quoted the following - "Say much of what the Lord has done for you, but say little of what you have done for the Lord."

I was born and raised in Gracehill, the youngest son of a family of two. My parents were God-fearing people; and from an early age I and my brother Francis were sent faithfully to Sunday school in the little Tabernacle on the Waveney road. As both parents didn't drive, we were always reliant on the kindness of those who attended the church, and I would like to give a special thanks to those who, over the years, kindly gave me and my brother a lift each Sunday morning.

I can still remember old Mrs Paisley standing at the front of the church teaching us about the love that Christ had for us all. I really enjoyed the interactive singing (Deep and wide etc), and then we would finish up by going into our Sunday school classes where we were taught the Gospel. Even at such an early stage in life, I was made aware through the teaching of Rev Beggs and those Sunday school teachers, that Christ had died for me at Calvary and I needed him to be my personal Saviour.

By the age of 18, however, I was being drawn into the things of the world, and I was drifting away from anything to do with the Gospel and church. I started to go out to the clubs on a Saturday night; and though at first I resisted the temptation of alcohol, the desires of the flesh were strong and soon I began to sample the 'delights of alcohol and all

that goes with it'. I knew I was doing wrong; I was breaking my parent's hearts, and I was doing everything against what I had been taught in Sunday school.

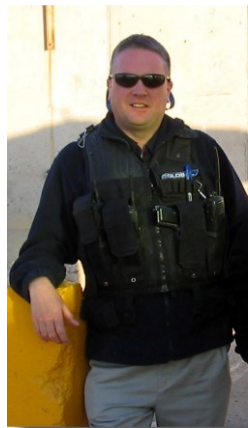
In 1984, I joined a local flute band, and it was while in this band that two friends of the family took me one night to Magherafelt FPC to hear the Rev William M'Crea. I can't remember what he preached on, but I came under a terrible conviction, and I asked to speak to him after the service. It was in his study that he led me to the Lord. On our journey home, I felt a great sense of peace knowing that my sins had been dealt with there and then.

But, the devil went into overdrive. I was still in the band, and I liked being in it. I didn't want to give it up and even after a saved family friend tried to tell me that I needed to leave it, I thought I knew better. I stayed in the band, as I thought I could be saved and be in this band, but how wrong I was; before long, as well as being a fool, I was also a backslider.

Eventually, I left the band, and joined the RUC in 1985. I met my future wife in 1986; and in 1988, Kathleen and I were married. While on duty at Crumlin RUC station one Saturday morning in January 1989, I and my two colleagues actually witnessed two IRA terrorists plant a bomb behind our main gate in the hope they would kill us on our return from patrol. These people were arrested at the scene and eventually jailed. My wife was three months pregnant at the time with our first child (We now have four - Jonathan, Emma, Christopher and Amy). If they had succeeded, my wife would have been made a widow within our first year of marriage, and my son would never

have known his father.

In 2003, I resigned from the police and went to work in Basrah (Iraq), then in 2004, to Afghanistan and then from 2005 to the present, at Baghdad International Airport. While working at the main checkpoint at the airport in June 2005, a suicide bomber blew himself up about 200mtrs from me but thankfully no one else was killed.



During one of my home leave visits in Sept 2008, the Rev Greer was holding a mission in Ballygelly Orange Hall, and my brother invited me to attend it with him. As Rev Greer was closing the service, he made an appeal to the unsaved and I came under a terrible feeling of guilt. On my way out I asked to speak with Rev Greer. He took me into

the back office; and, after talking and reading a passage of scripture, he led me back to Christ.

I started this testimony with a phrase quoted by Alex McCosh, and I want to tell all who are reading this what a wonderful Saviour I have. God would have been fully justified in casting me adrift, but instead He has protected me and been faithful to me, when I have been so unfaithful to Him. He is a wonderful and loving Saviour, and I give Him all the glory and praise for being with me over the years.

Hebrews 7 vs 25

'Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them'.

Financial Update

	Average Weekly Offering	Home & Foreign Missions	Repair Fund	UK Fund	Special Offerings			
Feb	£ 4945.48	£ 1423.00	£ 634.00	£ 179.20	McDowells - Philippines	£ 2000.00	Kenya	£ 1000.00
					Joanne - Liberia	£ 628.00	Nepal	£ 50.00
Mar	£ 5070.73	£ 1486.00	£ 1709.00	£ 233.15	Nepal Orphanage	£ 1000.00	Joanne Greer	£ 150.00
					Gift in Lieu of flowers	£ 180.00	Brian Lorimer	£ 150.00
					Liberia Building fund	£15000.00	Kenya	£ 110.00
					Recording Ministry	£ 2275.70		



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