

# GOOD NEWS

From the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland | August 2023



An Aging Society

Pages 3-4

A Multi-National Mission

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rpchurchscotland@gmail.com

Editor – Rev. Stephen McCollum, Airdrie RPCS  
Website – [www.rpcscotland.org](http://www.rpcscotland.org)

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# EDITORIAL

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Dear readers,

Welcome to this summer issue of Good News! As a denomination we are delighted to have a newly organised congregation in the Gambia. It was a real privilege to have been able to hand deliver the last edition to them when Peter and I went out in May. This edition has a Gambian focus - considering our multi-national mission to take the Gospel to the nations and interviewing Daniel Moore after his recent Short-Term Service in the Gambia.

Since we are constantly trying to address societal issues from a Biblical perspective, I hope you find the articles helpful which address our interactions with the elderly, climate change, and practical apologetics. We are called to be salt and light. Why not use these topics to start some discussions?

We are reprinting two articles in this edition: one from a Scottish RP minister and one about the Scottish RP Church's history. Rev. Thomas Martin's Prize Catechism is a helpful question and answer textbook. In June 1853 "three prizes of £25, £5, and £3 each, were offered for the three best Catechisms on the Principles and Position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland. The competition was open to the entire membership of the Church." The remainder of the catechism is easily found online. The article by Rev. Knox Hyndman originally appeared in the Reformed Theological Journal and is reprinted here with kind permission. I'm sure you will find the topic interesting, and we should be led to pray that the Lord of the harvest will raise up labourers to go out into the fields for His kingdom.

I want to thank all the authors for what they have given us. A special thanks to Peter, Jimmy, and Beth for their contributions for the youth. I know my children enjoy the children's pages. Let me encourage all parents and grandparents to encourage your children to make use of them.

Every blessing,

Stephen





CONTEMPORARY ISSUE  
DR TIM DONACHIE

## How should we view an aging society?

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Many people in 21st-century society only view the aging population as a problem to be solved, whether the problem is financial, medical, or social. There is little doubt that the increasing longevity of the population raises issues that must be faced and when that is allied to the undoubted discrimination that still exists, in spite of legislation to minimize it, many older people feel that they are undervalued, unappreciated and a burden on family and society!

The advancements in healthcare, nutrition, and living conditions mean that many people are living to a much older age than was the case in previous generations and that can bring with it new opportunities and, for many, a rich and fulfilling later life and greater participation in their community. Nevertheless, changing family structures have often led to older people being separated from their families and thus losing the kind of familial support structures relied on in the past. This can lead to social isolation and loneliness especially when coupled with the loss of friends and family. When such social isolation is

accompanied by financial difficulties it can have a serious impact on mental health

Although it should not exist in the 21st century, it would be foolish to assert that ageism is not present in society. Discrimination or stereotyping based on age continues to be an issue. Many older people would like to continue to work past the statutory retirement age and those who lose their jobs in middle age find it difficult to find new employment even though they have the requisite qualifications and competence. An article in the Daily Express published on 12/06 this year cites a survey of 1,000 older people which found that 86% had experienced negative attitudes because they were older. It appears that the worst offenders were the NHS and the banking and insurance sectors - 'alarmingly, 63 percent have experienced discrimination in the NHS while 85 percent have when dealing with banking and insurance'. It may be that the older person is talked down to or patronised or it may be by the all-pervading expectation that all transactions be performed digitally. Commenting on the

survey, Caroline Abrahams of Age UK says, "Ageism is so firmly embedded in our culture it often goes unnoticed - though not by older people, who can feel personally diminished and devalued as a result."

If this is the view of old people in society in general, is this attitude reflected in the Church of Christ? As with everything else, the view that the church takes must be informed and regulated by the teaching of the Word of God. The Bible is not silent when it comes to how the elderly should be viewed and treated and offers various perspectives on aging and old age. The central teaching which is repeated in different passages in the scripture is that old age is to be respected and honoured. Leviticus 19:32 puts it like this; 'You shall rise before the grey-headed and honour the presence of an old man, and fear your God: I am the Lord.' To respect and give honour to the elderly is an evidence of the fear of the Lord. Thus it is clear that if the elderly are disrespected or marginalised within the fellowship of the church, it is a sign that there is a lack of the fear of the Lord!

The Bible also draws attention to the fact that the passage of time brings with it the lessons learned through various experiences and the wisdom and knowledge gained through them; Job 12:12 says, 'Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding'. As one commentator puts it 'The Bible acknowledges that older individuals have gained knowledge and insight through their years of living and encourages younger generations to learn from their wisdom'. This is a necessary corrective in a society that venerates and exalts youth and dismisses wisdom gained from years of experience. Even within the Church, there can be an overemphasis on youth and an underestimation of the value of those of more mature years. Some denominations set a mandatory retirement age for ministers and also set an age limit in the criteria that they have for calling a minister, thus depriving a congregation of decades of ministerial experience and wisdom. It is of course not wrong to set an age at which a minister may retire, but to make it mandatory, irrespective of the health and competence of the minister, is surely not demonstrating the value of older men to the church that is highlighted by the words of Proverbs 16:31 'The silver-haired head is a crown of glory, if it is found in the way of righteousness.' For the one who seeks to walk in the ways of God, aging is a demonstration of the mercy and goodness of the Lord and is to be honoured and respected.

Scripture teaches the concern and care that the almighty God has for the elderly. Isaiah 46:6 says, 'Even to your old

age, I am He, and even to grey hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; Even I will carry, and will deliver you'. Elderly saints can be assured that God remains faithful and takes care of them when faculties decline and when physical and mental strength are not as they were, as the psalmist says in Psalm 92 'Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.' The psalmist could confidently seek God's blessing in old age so that he could continue witnessing to the greatness of the Lord, Psalm 71:18 'And even when I am old and grey, God, do not abandon me, Until I declare Your strength to this generation, your power to all who are to come.' This verse highlights the enduring faithfulness of God and the purpose that older individuals can continue to fulfil.



If God has such an interest in and care for the elderly, it should be obvious that believers should have also. I Timothy 5:8 stresses the importance of caring for relatives when it says, 'But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.' This is obviously referring primarily to the immediate family, but by extension, to the family of the church. The local church body has a responsibility to care for those of more mature years within its bounds, whether that care be physical, spiritual or social.

A congregation that has the privilege of having mature and experienced saints should be thankful to God for this precious resource and should be seeking ways in which to use the experience and wisdom gained during a long life of walking with the Lord. Young people can be helped and guided by more mature believers and can, perhaps be saved from committing mistakes as they learn from those who have walked the same path before.

Overall, the Bible teaches that old age should be respected, and the wisdom and experience of older individuals should be honoured and used. It also encourages believers to trust in God's faithfulness throughout all stages of life and to care for the elderly among them.



# APOLOGETICS: PUTTING IT ALL INTO PRACTICE

Rev. Mark Loughridge  
(Milford RPC and New Life  
Fellowship, Letterkenny)



We've covered a lot of ground in the last three articles. We've talked about worldview—that's really just a way of describing how we all see life, the universe and everything. The aim is to help us understand the world around us, and to understand the story of the Bible itself and why it is so gloriously relevant to the 21st century world.

But how do we actually use all this when talking to people?

## Be your Worldview

If a worldview is the story of everything, then how we live our lives should be noticeably impacted by the better story we belong to.

In an earlier article I quoted Stephen McAlpine's book *Being the Bad Guys*. In it he describes how Christians used to be considered the good guys, but now we are emphatically considered the bad guys. Our views are not simply wrong, they are wicked and damaging.

So what are we to do? McAlpine writes, "*Be the best bad guys you can be—live holy, happy, loving and joyous lives that compel as many people as they repel.*" That's a cracker of a concept.

If they are going to see us as the bad guys—be the best bad guy they know. Live out the implications of your worldview, the Bible's story. Other people mightn't read the Bible, but they should be able to see its contours in us.

**Creation**—Show that when we disagree with people we still treat them with dignity—we don't demonise or demean—because our Story reminds us that everyone is valuable, made in the image of God. We will see their identity as located in God's handiwork even if they choose to get their identity from elsewhere.

That includes avoiding memes which mock and demean people for their beliefs. Or when we refer

to "LGBT" not making some snide comment about adding other letters of the alphabet. You can't talk about treating people with dignity whilst deriding them.

Refuse to join in simplistic, polarising, divisive ways of thinking and speaking.

**Redemption**—In a world that doesn't forgive, be forgiving. In a world of us and them, be gracious and caring to those who stand for the opposite. Seek them out, care for them. You have a Saviour who sought you out.

In a world of loneliness and fractured communities find ways of introducing people to the community of Christians—the church—so that they can see acceptance, love, grace, and service in action. Make churches the richest places of loving community.

**Restoration**—Live with hope and without despair or pessimism because you know how the story ends. Live like your greatest treasure isn't in this world. Live like this when trouble, trial and illness hit. We believe that one day justice will be done and everything will be made new.

What says to the people around you that you live in a better story?

Stephen McAlpine writes: "*It's first of all confusing ('How can they be so loving when they reject the idea that love is love?'); then it's intriguing ('I don't agree with how intolerant they are supposed to be, but they welcomed me in'); next, it's attractive ('It looks and feels and sounds better than what I'm currently doing'); and finally, it's compelling ('I think that this might just be where true life is found').*"

Be the best bad guys. Live out your worldview.

## Hear their Worldview

Often when we think of evangelism we think of us speaking and needing to have all the answers. But what

if we did a bit more listening, and asked a few questions?

After all, the person in front of you isn't a cardboard cut-out, but a real person. And so a 'one size fits all' approach doesn't work. Taking time to listen and to explore what someone thinks does them the honour of recognising that they are a unique human being.

Someone may go religiously to church, chapel or mosque because they are desperately trying to impress God, or because they are driven by a sense of guilt, or to maintain a cultural identity. It's good to know which, for we would approach each differently.

Someone says, "I don't believe in God"—do you launch into a spiel on the proofs of God's existence? What about asking, "What's this God like that you don't you believe in?" You might find that you don't believe in that 'God' either. It might be an inaccurate caricature of the God of the Bible—one born of immense hurt—and there's no point defending something until you know what they mean by their words. Or maybe ask, "What convinced you of this?" or "What brought you to this point?"

Or it may be as you talk with someone their worldview isn't so much a set of beliefs, but a story of hurt and pain. How you present the help and hope of the gospel needs to reflect that. I think of an atheist friend whose experience of religion would put anyone off it. He doesn't need to hear arguments for God's existence—he needs to see that I'm outraged at what he went through, and more importantly he needs to see that the Bible is outraged too, and that one day wicked men will have to answer to the God they claimed to serve.

We need to show that we care. The apologist John Stonestreet says, "*People don't care what you know, until they know that you care.*" This is deeply true. People need to see that we care about them and want to understand them. We are not simply doling out pre-packaged truth. We are aiming to win people not arguments, and to woo them to Christ and eternal life, not to 'our team'.

### Share your Worldview

So often in evangelism we talk about sharing our story—meaning our own personal journey to Christ. That's a great way to do evangelism. But there is another story we need to share—the big story: God's Story.

I want to suggest a few ways of using the bigger and better story when we are talking to people.

#### a) Ask them to consider "What if there is a better story?"

I came across an interesting comment in a book called *The Data Detective* by Tim Harford—a book on statistics of all things! The author said, "*A surprising statistical claim is a challenge to our existing world-view. It may provoke an*

*emotional response—even a fearful one. Neuro-scientific studies suggest that the brain responds in much the same anxious way to facts that threaten our preconceptions as it does to wild animals that threaten our lives. Yet for someone in a curious frame of mind, in contrast, a surprising claim need not provoke anxiety. It can be an engaging mystery, or a puzzle to solve. A curious person might, at this point, have some questions.*"

His point was that brute facts can be threatening, especially if they involve a change of worldview—but if we can provoke curiosity that's the way to move forward. There is a power to "What if...?"

I've seen it in school—presenting armloads of evidence causes many to simply argue more dogmatically as they feel their position is under threat. On the other hand I see an openness when I present a 'what if' scenario. I've been asking my classes to consider "What if there is a better story?"

What if there's a better story that...

- gives meaning and significance?
- deals with shame and guilt?
- bears better fruit?
- promises justice?
- offers hope?

#### b) Set their story in the bigger story

Each of our lives is a story—a little micro story that fits into a macro story. We are all storytellers and seekers of meaning. But the bigger story of life and meaning which we set our little story in will dramatically affect our little story.

We often look for meaning and solutions in all the wrong things. I want people to see how meaning, hope, significance, value and dignity don't grow on the tree rooted in a 'no-God' universe. I want them to see how all those things come from the Bible's bigger story. And if they locate their micro-story inside that macro-story then all the life and help and hope flows into their story.

You may be talking to someone whose life has been ruined by others. They feel the desperate unfairness of it all—and you can point them to a God who steps into the brokenness to rescue and restore, a God who will one day deal with all injustice, and a God who will one day give a new life which will never be ruined.

Have confidence in the big story.

#### c) Set their objection/question in the bigger story

Or maybe someone is asking you a question about some moral or ethical issue. If we believe God's ways are best and his commands are good, then we need to show how and why that is. At one level, it is not simply enough to say "God says", we need to show why God might say such a thing. One of the easiest ways to do



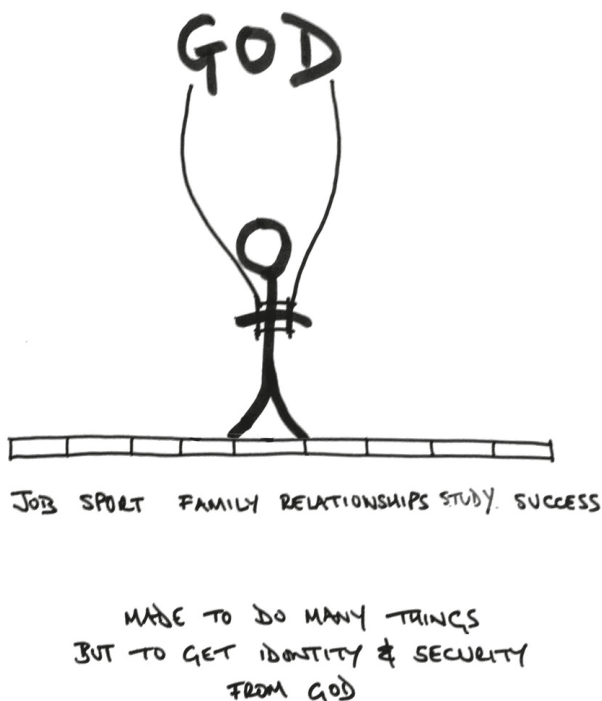
that is to set the question in a bigger framework.

Tim Keller talked about floating the 'B doctrine' on the 'A Doctrine'—like building a raft of logs to float a boulder across a river—using truth they readily agree with to support an idea they are struggling with. It is often truth from the big story that enables us to do this.

(I dealt with this a little in the second article, so I won't repeat those examples here.)

On the issue of sexuality, rather than turning to Leviticus 18 or Romans 1, I want to go broader. Sexuality is an issue of identity not simply activity, so that puts it in the categories we find in Genesis 1. There I find my 'logs'.

We were made to know God and enjoy him—to get our sense of meaning, purpose and identity from him. This gives security because anything else can change, disappoint or be taken away. But not him.



But since we have done away with God, we have turned to what we do or how we feel to get our identity. And we have reduced it to one aspect—our sexuality—all our identity centred on one feeling.

We are left like a man on a tightrope with no safety harness. This is why the whole discussion on sexuality seems so fraught. When the Christian says that a particular sexuality is wrong it feels like a cutting of the tightrope, plunging people into freefall. It seems cruel. But actually, we were never meant to be standing on a tightrope. We weren't meant to get our identity from any one thing—be it sexuality, success, relationships, or whatever. We were made for something much more stable and secure—getting our identity from God. The worldview that reduces the richness of a human being to one narrow aspect is what is cruel. We are gloriously more than that.

I'm trying to set their question in the bigger framework of creation and identity, so that they can see that the problem isn't so much the issue of sexual behaviour, but of where we get our identity. God's way is different because it is richer, better and safer.



SEXUALITY

## THE CRUEL REDUCTION

### d) Show how their fruit comes from our story

Glen Scrivener in his book *The Air we Breathe* unpacks how our current values of equality of sexes and people, compassion, consent, science, freedom and progress all come from a Christian heritage. The very air we breathe is Christian air.

We might say something like, "I love that you value X or Y. One of the things I hadn't realised was that these things weren't common in history until Christianity came along. They grow out of a Christian view of life and people. Had you thought of that?"

### e) Show how Christ is the heart of Better Story

We'll come back to this another time. But all the parts of the bigger and better story find their proof and truth in Jesus Christ. He's the one we want ultimately to get speaking of when we are witnessing.

When he was on earth Jesus displayed in his miracles that he was the Creator, and by his work that he was the Rescuer and Restorer. He treated with dignity and honour people who were despised and marginalised. He gave significance to those regarded as nobodies. He restored the broken and brought help and hope. He dealt with sin and guilt and shame. And he promises to bring justice to bear. The better story isn't a pious fiction—we have seen the first instalment in history, and we know it to be true.



# A MULTI-NATIONAL MISSION

Rev. Stephen McCollum

Airdrie RPC



With the organisation of Brikama Reformed Presbyterian Church we are now a multi-national denomination. The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland will continue to support and oversee the congregation in Brikama, praying that some day in the not-too-distant future we will see the constitution of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of the Gambia. That denomination will hold to the same theology as we hold and will be witnessing for Christ's crown and covenant in its own context.

We can take some encouragement from Jesus' parting words to His apostles: *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

## 1. An Important Doctrine (v.18)

*"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth."*

How can authority be given to the Divine Son of God? Was He not already King? Here we see that Jesus is the Mediatorial King, in other words because of His suffering and death (perfectly satisfactory to His Father) He must now be highly exalted and have the pre-eminence as the God-man Mediator. His supremacy over all things as Mediator is His glorious reward and in the exercise of this Kingship He is focused on His mediatorial work – to save the elect and to subdue the enemies of the Gospel. As we see in Ephesians 1:22, this Kingship is universal in its extent and it is spiritually-focused in its nature.

Therefore, as Reformed Presbyterians we stand for Christ as only King of the Church – not an earthly king or pope. King Jesus has the authority to tell us how the church ought to run in its doctrine, worship, government, and discipline. Even children can

understand this important point – why do we sing the psalms, have elders, etc? Because King Jesus says so!

Our denomination also stands for the recognition of Christ's preeminent position as the only Governor among the nations. His Kingship is over civil society, governments, and constitutions. Every nation should serve the Mediator, entering into covenant alongside the church to form an alliance that works for the glory of God, the establishment of the Reformed Church, and the support of the Gospel witness. We want to see Adama Barrow, the National Assembly, and the Gambian Constitution all recognise Christ's rightful authority. That is one of our major goals, just as we want Humza Yousaf, Rishi Sunak, and King Charles III to do the same in the UK. Doesn't King Jesus have the right to this crown?

## 2. An Important Command (v. 19)

*"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you."*

Verse 19 follows verse 18 – an obvious point, and yet one we can miss. It is connected with a "therefore". Because Jesus is the great Mediatorial King with all authority and worthy of supreme recognition, then we must go and make disciples. It is the church's mission.

This task involves witnessing – neighbours in Scotland and in the Gambia are going to a lost eternity. What can we do to arrest their attention to see their need of Christ?

This task involves teaching – converts must be taught sound doctrine. We shouldn't just teach the basics but "all things" that Jesus has commanded.

Sometimes churches tend to one or other of these tasks but find it hard to do both well. Some churches are very evangelistic, but light on substance. Others are very deep



theologically and yet don't reach out to the unchurched who are without Christ and without hope. King Jesus has commissioned us to do both, not make a choice.

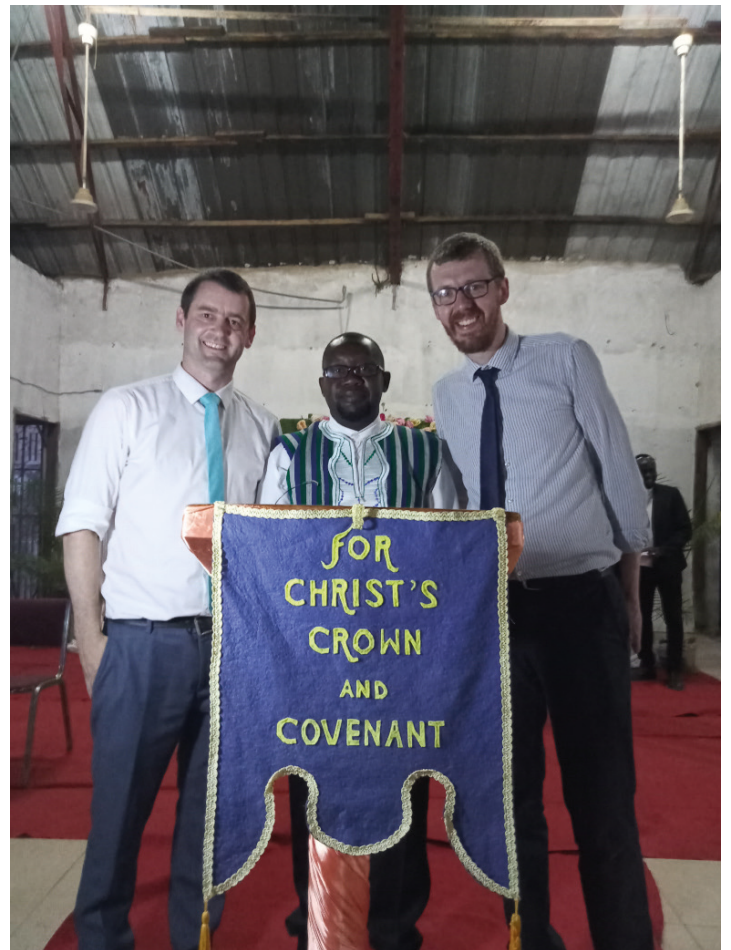
Today, the Gambia is being disciplined by our congregation there. The Scottish Presbytery must keep this work in our prayers. Likewise, we encourage our Gambian church to remember us diligently before God's throne of grace. King Jesus has a multi-national kingdom, but we are all to be disciples of Him.

### 3. An Important Promise (v20)

*"Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."*

How can we attempt a mission that is too big for us? Take heart from the Divine presence. By His Spirit, Jesus is with His Church and for His Church. Can you do anything without Him? Can you have success in your own strength? But Jesus with us – what a thought! Jesus with us in the Gambia and Jesus with us in Scotland. May He bless us that all the earth may fear Him!

Please note one final and memorable thing – the use of the word "all". The important doctrine is that all authority is Christ's as Mediator. The important command is to disciple all nations and teach all things. The important promise is the presence of Christ with us always.



## November Presbytery Collection

The Presbytery has appointed the third and final collection for 2023 to be for building a temporary structure on the Presbytery-owned land in Brikama. At the moment the congregation can only meet for morning worship on the Lord's Day. This building will enable the congregation to worship and have other meetings at times that are more suitable to them, enabling them to more easily keep the whole Lord's Day holy. Presbytery anticipates that a more permanent structure would be built in the future, God willing. Further details, including costings will be sent to the congregations beforehand by the Brikama Session.

## RPCS Reformation Tour - Edinburgh

For the congregations of the Presbytery and friends  
Saturday 2nd September 2023, God willing.  
Further details to follow online and in pulpit  
announcements.





DEVOTIONAL

## PSALM 22:30-31

Ian Gillies, Glasgow RPC

Psalm 22 is a solemn and sobering Psalm, as it so clearly prophesies what the Lord Jesus Christ would suffer upon Calvary's cross. From the very first words of the Psalm, we hear the voice of Christ in the dark depths of His humiliation, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' (Ps. 22:1).

Nevertheless, as one moves through this Psalm it becomes apparent that as much as this inspired song is solemn so too it is sweet. For not only does it proclaim how Christ would suffer but also why he would suffer and what would flow from His suffering. Not only does the Psalm prophesy our Saviour's humiliation but also His exaltation.

Following His death, Christ would rise from the grave, as fulfilled 2000 years ago. He then ascended to the right hand of the Father in Heaven and, ever since, people of all nations have been drawn unto Him for the salvation of their souls and for the glory of His name. This provides great comfort to the people of God, especially in a day of small things, namely the comfort that God will always have a people for Himself. He will never retire His remnant. As Psalm 22 so wonderfully closes, 'A posterity shall serve Him.' Not *may* serve, but *shall* serve.

The great prophet Elijah doubted this promise. In a time of severe discouragement as he fled from his persecutors, he concluded that he was the last man standing of the people of God, 'I alone am left; and they seek to take my life' (1 Kings 19:10). Would his death mean the death of the people of God? Never. The Lord has His remnant, and so the Lord responded, "I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal (1 Kings 19:18).

The promise at the close of Psalm 22 is a promise of an

enduring posterity, future generations who will not serve the Baals of this world but rather the Lord who made the world. And this promise of a people serving, generation after generation, is so sure and so certain because of the One whom we serve.

The Hebrew word translated 'posterity' could also be translated 'seed' or 'descendant.' Christ Himself is referred to as a seed in the Scriptures, the promised Seed, from as early as the third chapter of Genesis. As God cursed the serpent Satan, He spoke of a Seed to come, descending from Adam and Eve. This was the first pronouncement of the gospel as God declared that this Seed would come to serve and, through His service, would crush Satan's head (Gen. 3:15). We read of this great Servant in Psalm 22 and the great suffering of His service upon the cross. But we also read of the crushing of the serpent's head through the Servant's death and the resurrection that followed.

In John 12, Christ speaks of Himself as a seed in a different sense, namely a seed or a grain of wheat. He states that when such a seed falls to the ground and dies it produces much fruit (John 12:24). Through Christ the Seed's death and resurrection, many souls dead in sin have been made alive, are being made alive, and will yet be made alive. For as long as the earth endures, there will be a people serving this Suffering Servant and Promised Seed. But how will they serve? How should we serve? As the Psalm goes on to say, by 'recounting of the Lord to the next generation,' by 'declaring His righteousness,' by testifying to what He has done (Ps. 22:30-31). All the while with the hope that those yet to be born will yet be born again.

Praise God for our Saviour and praise Him for this promise. As we read in The Westminster Confession of Faith 25:5, "There shall always be a church on earth to worship God according to His will."



**Faith engages all that is in God,  
to be employed for his people,  
and whatever is theirs.**

**James Guthrie**



## Character and Duties of Church Members

Taken from: Jesus "Crowned with Glory and Honour" - Prize Catechism on the Principles and Position of the Reformed Presbyterian Church (1854)

Rev. Thomas Martin  
(Strathmiglo RPC)



### **125. Of whom does the visible Church consist?**

Of all adults professing the doctrines, submitting to the institutions, and obeying the precepts of Christ, with their children.—(Doct. Test. xii. 4.)

### **126. By what outward act is the Church membership of children formally recognized?**

By their being baptised.

### **127. Is it not the duty of every one in early life to connect himself with the Church, by uniting in her fellowship?**

It is: Acts ii. 47.

### **128. On what principle should an individual proceed in determining with what church he shall unite himself?**

He should set himself to discover what community adheres most closely to the Scripture rule, and give his accession to that which he judges to be the purest.

### **129. When any one, in making his choice, is influenced merely by the consideration that it is the Church of his fathers, that it is the most conveniently situated, that it enjoys the largest amount of popular favour, or that it will impose the least restraint upon his manner of life, may he expect spiritual prosperity?**

No: Christ has said, "Them that honour me I will honour, but they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

### **130. At what age should individuals unite in the fellowship of the Church?**

No particular age can be specified; but so soon as they are capable of judging and acting for themselves, they should

profess their faith in Christ, and openly avow themselves to be on the Lord's side.

### **131. What is necessary in order to dutiful membership in the Church?**

Faith is necessary. They deceive themselves who seek admission into the fellowship of the Church, without have believed on Christ to the saving of their souls.

### **132. What ought the rulers of the Church to demand as indispensable in order to admission?**

A profession of faith in Christ, and such an outward deportment as evidences this profession to be sincere.

### **133. Do Church rulers who grant easy or indiscriminate admission act the part of kindness or fidelity?**

No: in doing so they are likely to cherish dangerous delusions in the parties admitted, to corrupt and disquiet the Church, to make religion and its ordinances despised by the world, and they prostitute the most solemn institutions of the Redeemer

### **134. What is required in those who have become members of the Church?**

That they walk in all the statutes and commandments of the Lord blamelessly.

### **135. What are the personal duties of such?**

To devote time daily to the reading of the Scriptures, to secret prayer, to religious meditation, and to self-scrutiny, Acts xvii. 11; Mat. vi. 6; Ps. i. 1; 2 Cor. xiii. 5.

### **136. Ought Church members to worship God with their families?**

It is expected and required that they do so daily. There



may be Christians in a family where there is no family worship, but no family is entitled to the character of a Christian family in which it is neglected.

**137. What duties are the members of the Church required to perform towards their children?**

Industriously and prudently to provide for them, to see that they are properly educated, to converse with them about the interests of their souls, to train them to the habit of doing what is right; to endeavour, by warning, by reproof, and even by correction, when indispensable, to dissuade them from what is evil; to place before them an example fit for their imitation, to engage them in some lawful calling, to have family worship at such a time as they can conveniently wait upon it, and to require their presence; to habituate them to attendance on public worship; and to see that they religiously observe the Sabbath.—In one word, to labour in preparing them for serving God here, and in fitting them for glory hereafter.

**138. What is their duty towards their servants?**

To treat them with kindness and equity, to instruct and counsel them, to allow them time for attending to their religious duties, especially to grant them the rest of the holy Sabbath, and, as far as possible, to see that they spend it in a dutiful manner.

**139. What is their duty towards members of the same Church?**

To cultivate friendly acquaintance with them, to seek opportunities for Christian converse and fellowship, to be ready in performing offices of kindness, watchfully to avoid occasions of offence, prudently to seek the removal of misunderstandings where they have arisen, readily to forgive wrongs that may have been sustained, faithfully to admonish when any thing is done amiss, and to warn when danger may threaten.

**140. What is their duty to the particular congregation of which they are members?**

To acquaint themselves fully with its circumstances, to attend conscientiously its meetings, for consultation and business, cordially to take part in planning and executing its necessary undertakings, liberally to contribute to its funds, and to pray for its purity and prosperity.

**141. What is their duty towards their ministers?**

To pray for them, to encourage them, to receive and obey their message, to wait punctually on their ministrations, to bear with their infirmities, to train their families to respect and love them, and to aid in providing them with the means of decent and sufficient maintenance as a

matter of right, and not of charity.

**142. What is their duty towards surrounding society?**

To place daily under their notice a living, practical exhibition of the purity, the peacefulness, the benevolence, the industry, and the sagacity which the grace of God teaches; to stand resolutely aloof from the evils which prevail; to aid vigorously in their exposure, correction, and removal; to be forward in helping every measure which tends to elevate, purify, and bless the community in which they live; and specially to seek that it may be pervaded and regulated by the truth of God.

**143. What are the duties towards the world at large?**

To acquaint themselves with its condition; to endeavour to realize the benighted state in which a large part of it still remains, with its fearful results; to pray much for the promised enlightenment and happiness of the nations; to take an affectionate interest in the efforts that are being made for the conversion and civilization of heathen lands, more specially in the missions of their own Church; and to shew that their interest is real and intense by helping liberally with their worldly substance.

**144. What is their duty in regard to the Sabbath?**

To own it as of perpetual and universal obligation; to cease on that day from conducting or arranging worldly business, from carnal conversation, from pleasure-seeking, from ordinary visiting, from all political and non-religious reading, and from indolent inaction; to accept it joyfully as a precious season for quiet meditation, for religious reading, for domestic instruction, and for waiting upon public worship; to stand aloof decidedly from the various modes in which it is desecrated; to plead its claims and promote its sanctification among all classes; and to unite with the friends of religion in protecting it against the attempted inroads of its enemies.

**145. Can there be a vigorous and successful performance of relative duties where there is not a habitual attention paid to the cultivation of personal piety?**

It is impossible.

**146. May those who care exclusively for their own things, while they decline any effort or sacrifice for the good of others, and for the public interests of religion, expect much spiritual prosperity to their own souls?**

No: "the liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

## The Society People: When Covenanters Had No Ministers

Taken from the Reformed  
Theological Journal (1999)  
Rev. Knox Hyndman (1943-2018)



In common with those churches which subscribe to one of the Reformed Confessions of Faith, Reformed Presbyterians place a high value on the office of the minister. Entry into this office is carefully guarded and training is carefully given. Since Reformed Presbyterians have such a high view of the minister's office how would they cope if no men were available to exercise this ministry? Would it prove to be an insurmountable obstacle to the work of the church? Would it threaten the very existence of a local congregation? For Reformed Presbyterians these were crucial questions that had to be answered not in a detached way, but in the crucible of testing circumstances. In this period without a regular ordained ministry the church continued to live and work through what became known as the Societies.

### The Emergence of Societies

In the period following 1680 in Scotland there was an absence of an ordained ministry. When episcopacy was established by law in the land, Presbyterians found themselves in a dilemma. Was it possible for them to continue their ministry? The only way they could legally do so was by signing the Indulgence. Several forms of this were presented and each one was rejected by Covenanted ministers. In June 1679 a third indulgence for ministers had been published following the battle of Bothwell Brig where Covenanters had suffered a crushing defeat. Two of their ministers John King and John Kid had been hanged and around twelve hundred were barbarously treated and confined in Greyfriars Churchyard.

Not surprisingly these Covenanters were not inclined to accept the Indulgence published by the Government, especially as there were conditions attached which, if accepted, would have meant a compromise of their firmly held biblical convictions.

### The Indulgences

Charles 2nd issued three and James 2nd issued four

Indulgences. The first was issued in 1669 and all had a basic similarity. Under the terms of the Indulgence some ejected ministers were granted permission to return on condition that they obtained recognition from the patron and the bishop.

The basic opposition to the Indulgence by the Covenanters was that they proceeded from the king's alleged supremacy over the church. To accept the Indulgence then would, they believed, have meant accepting that Erastian supremacy. This was not just a Covenanters' perception, but was in fact a condition of the Indulgences. The very first one in 1669 insisted that the minister must not preach against the doctrine that the king is supreme in all ecclesiastical causes. Since Covenanters could not sign such an indulgence the church went underground. Alexander Peden's famous description gives us the Covenanted view at the time 'Where is the church of Scotland at this day? It is not amongst the Government clergy. I will tell you where the church is. It is wherever a praying young man or young woman is at a dykeside in Scotland; that is where the church is'.

It was at this time that the Covenanters became known as the Society people. These Societies were groups which met each week under the leadership of gifted and godly men for fellowship and worship. Societies did not however immediately burst into bloom. The root of the Societies lay much deeper. Thomas Houston sees their origins as being in the memorable period of the First Reformation. From the death of Patrick Hamilton till the organisation of the Church under John Knox, believing men and women being without a faithful ministry met together in fellowship groups. So roots can be traced back to 1556 when a number of Christians in Scotland met together for religious conference, the reading of the Scripture and prayer. This might be said to be the beginning of the evangelical church in Scotland. These groups however were not loosely formed. They were not left open to the danger of conflicting powerful personalities who

might appear within them. Nor were they a vague kind of democracy where strong willed individuals could dictate to all the rest of the members. There was to be an orderliness in the Society as in church.

Dr. McCrie in his 'Life of John Knox' says 'Convinced of the necessity of order and discipline in their Societies, and desirous to have them organised so far as within their power, agreeably to the institution of Christ, they proceeded to choose elders to whom they promised subjection and deacons for the collection and distribution of alms to the poor.

Then a little later, during the lengthy persecution which followed the adoption of the Perth Articles in 1618, people again met in Societies for mutual support and encouragement. So Societies formed in the period after 1680 were following a pattern established many years before. We would say of course that they were putting into practice principles taught clearly in the Word of God where believers are exhorted to encourage one another, build one another up, pray for one another, stimulate one another unto love and good works.

The existence and value of Societies did not mean that Covenanters were losing their desire for ordained pastors. 'We will hear all ministers, whether in houses or fields, who will preach according to the Word of God, our Covenants, Confession of Faith and Catechisms Shorter and Larger'. No ministers accepted this call. Accordingly the Quarterly meeting in 1682 decided to educate four young men for the ministry. Among them was James Renwick who was to be the last Covenanting martyr. In 1683 Renwick having returned from Holland accepted the call from the Societies and became their pastor. At the time of his martyrdom in 1688 James Renwick was heard to say 'Farewell sweet Societies'.

It may seem that the position maintained by the Covenanters had been vindicated at the Revolution Settlement. In some ways that is true, but the Settlement itself was a disappointment to them and Covenanters remained outside the Revolution church. For a further sixteen years they were without a minister and organised into numerous societies with a total male membership of seven thousand. In 1706 Rev J MacMillan joined from the Church of Scotland. He accepted the appointment as minister to the scattered Covenanting Societies and was their only pastor for the next thirty seven years.

In Ireland, too, Societies had been formed. These Irish Societies kept a close link with their Scottish brethren and in the period 1679-1681 they had the assistance of Rev. Alexander Peden in Kells and Glenwherry.

### **The Organisation of Societies**

The Societies adopted a strict list of rules drawn up for the purpose of guarding entry and for assessing the attitude of those who wished to join.

Some of those rules were an evident reflection of the

spirit of the age and of the issues which Covenanters identified as crucial. No-one could be a member for example, who 'took any of the bonds tendered by the Government, paid cess, locality or militia money to the civil authority or stipends to the curates or indulged clergy; made use of a Government pass, voluntarily appeared before any court of law, supplied commodities to the enemy, allowed another to do any of these things in his name, or who in any form recognised the ministry of the indulged or silent Presbyterians'.

This makes the Societies sound like a political pressure group. Certainly they were censured for exclusiveness but as J. D. Douglas comments this 'also shows their determination to have nothing to do with those who for other than religious reasons might have a grudge against the Government'. They were not a collection of disgruntled men and women.

Spiritual concerns were always at the heart of these Societies. This is well illustrated when we consider just a few of the questions which were to be put to those who applied for membership.

1. Everyone shall be required to declare the ground, causes and motives which induce him to join your fellowship.
2. That he be required to declare what moved him to separate from those with whom he formerly associated.
3. If he is a stranger, that a testificate be required of him, from the Society to which he formerly belonged or due enquiry made and satisfaction got of the soundness of his principles and uprightness of his conversation. That no person who maintains errors or is chargeable with any scandal may be admitted.

The applicant was then asked to give his judgement on several issues covering both doctrine and practice, concerning the work of reformation, the Prophetical, Priestly and Kingly offices of Christ.

The purpose of the Societies was stated to be 'the glory of God, the exercise of our duty according to His commands, increase of knowledge and growth in grace and edification of one another's souls'. 'We betake ourselves to God and seek unto Him relying on Him alone for support. So we frequently apply ourselves to Him in the Name of Jesus Christ both publicly and privately'.

A long list of commitments was made including those to make Scripture the only rule of life; to attend on public worship; to see unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace - 'we will not entertain in evil in our hearts nor take up groundless prejudice against one another. Neither falsely to accuse nor rashly to give ear to reports and misrepresentations of any of our number till trial be made in a Gospel manner'. 'Better to speak to a Christian before their face than to speak of a Christian behind their back'. There was also a commitment to help financially and practically any who were in poverty.

Missionary vision was not lacking within the Societies.



Walter Smith, executed in 1681, drew up a set of rules for Society meetings. 'Rules and directions anent Private Christian meeting for prayer and conference to mutual edification and to the right management of the same'. Rule 23 stated that members should 'pray for Israel that the promised day of their ingrafting again by faith may be hastened, that the Lord's written and preached Word may be sent with power to enlighten the poor pagan world living in bleak perishing darkness without Christ and the knowledge of His Name'. J. G. Vos rightly comments, 'The times and circumstances forced them to stress their testimony against particular evils but behind all this was true Christian faith and unfeigned piety'.

### **Practice within the Societies**

The Societies followed a simple form of worship comprising praise, reading and prayer. In 1782 the Reformed Presbytery in Scotland prepared a document entitled 'A Short Directory for Religious Societies'. The direction given in this document was received and practiced in Ireland too. Adam Loughridge points out that 'the strength and continuity of the RPC in the 18th century depended largely on the Society meeting and the Presbytery adopted a list of rules for the guidance of leaders and members of the Society'.

A Society could exist with only two or three members but the directory suggested that eight to twelve was a suitable number. Children were to attend and special attention was to be given to them 'by catechizing and special instructions adapted to their capacity'. Members should regard the time set apart for this ordinance as sacred. They were to attend punctually and discover during the exercises deep, heartfelt interest in the proceedings. The length of time spent was not to exceed two hours. When members came in they were not to engage in what was described as 'common niceties of conversation'. They were to settle down and not look around with curiosity to see who was there.

As well as devotions the meeting itself was to include discussion of a 'subject of religious converse'. These were to be wisely chosen on the basis of both doctrine and practice. The subject should be proposed in the form of a question at one meeting and discussed at the following meeting. Each member, male or female, had the privilege of submitting such a question. 'The subjects should be selected to promote godly edifying not to indulge curiosity or strife'.

Remember that those who formed these Societies were Presbyterian by conviction and so Societies did not see themselves as isolated bodies nor as independent. There was a sense of mutual care and responsibility. Societies in a district had delegates who met together. If one Society found there was an issue raised which it could not answer it was able to seek counsel of a neighbouring Society.

In 1681 Societies were united in a 'general correspondence' with a delegated meeting to be held four times yearly. This served as a substitute for church organisation for the Covenanters from 1681-743 when the Reformed Presbytery was organised.

### **The Legacy of the Societies**

William Hetherington speaks enthusiastically about the place of Societies in the life of the church. 'During the period of lengthened persecutions they adopted no extreme or heterodox opinions. They maintained pure evangelical truth and preserved strict discipline, thus affording a striking instance of the value of associating in private prayer meetings'. Adam Loughridge concludes that 'These Societies were the root from which the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland grew'. After the death of David Houston in 1696 Covenanters in Ireland maintained their distinct organisation and found spiritual encouragement through their Societies and there was frequent contact between Scotland and Ireland. The Societies in Ireland were represented at some of the most important gatherings in Scotland including the Covenant renovation services. Apart from a brief period in 1707 when Rev John McMillan visited Ireland, Covenanters in Ireland crossed to Scotland for baptism and marriage and to participate in services of communion. However as the church increased and regular ministry came into being the local society Meeting was retained and used mainly for spiritual edification.

J. C. McFeeters comments, "In these meetings the elders became as ministers in the knowledge of Christ and the people became like elders. When social worship of God characterises the church the people will take on strength and be able to stand amidst the spiritual landslides and general defection that characterizes the times in which we live'.

R.J. George addressing the first International Convention of Reformed Presbyterian Churches in 1896 makes this perceptive comment, 'There are no people in the world that honour their ministers more than do Covenanters, nor are there any people more independent of their ministers' service. In the prayer meeting the minister takes his place as one of the brethren. He presides over it when it is his turn. The meeting goes on when he is absent just the same as when he is present. This characteristic is a noble one. It has been stamped upon the Covenanter Prayer meeting by its history'.

Reformed churches around the world should demonstrate two vital characteristics. There should be clear and faithful preaching of the whole counsel of God combined with warm and loving fellowship among the people. The legacy of the Societies is that they impress on us the importance of both.



## AN INTERVIEW WITH DANIEL MOORE (LISBURN RPC)

What made you decide to do Short Term Service (STS)?

It was actually my pastor, Robert McCollum, who suggested short-term service and introduced me to the Scottish work in the Gambia. Beforehand I had wanted to take a gap year before university to do some volunteering, hopefully with a Christian charity, and hopefully in Africa. I hadn't considered STS. I hadn't considered mission work or serving in that way. I didn't think I necessarily had the gifts either. However, my pastor thought it would be suitable for me to do STS and suggested I consider the Gambia and contact the Mission Committee. After considering it further I sent off an application. Of course, I was in contact with the Gambian session as well, Pastor Konteh, and you Stephen, and had conversations about my potential trip. Around December 2022 everything fitted into place at the same time. The Mission Committee got back to me and Scott and the Gambia Partnership who were also giving advice due to their own close involvement in Kabekel and with the Brikama church. They seemed supportive of the idea as well. So all of those 3 things fitted in at once, and within a few weeks I was on a flight.

Were there any culture shocks going to the Gambia?

I feel I had been quite well prepared in terms of going to a foreign country and a new culture. It certainly was different than what I was expecting. But because I was expecting things to be so difficult and for me to have to accommodate so many changes, it was actually easier for me to integrate than I was expecting. The culture shocks came later on when I had been there for a longer time and I missed some things about the UK. I missed my family of course, but also cultural things in the UK which I had taken for granted. I was staying in a Jola village called Kabekel. Their culture is quite strong compared to other tribes in the Gambia, with lots of distinct traditions and customs. Through their way of

doing things I suppose various culture shocks came in along the way. But on the whole, I actually integrated quite happily.

What was your role in the Gambia?

I was acting under the Gambia Session for STS. That included a quite broad swath of different activities and duties. I was teaching in the two different primary schools connected to the church. One is located in Kabekel where I was staying and the other is much closer to the Brikama church and is actually run by the wife of Pastor Sylvester, Johnette. I split my time teaching English, Maths and Christian Religious Knowledge in the mornings. Two afternoons a week I'd spend evangelizing with Emmanuel Coron. Once a month, I would also lead our weekly Bible study in Kabekel for some of the village people there and then teach Sunday school. There were also other smaller projects like setting up a church library and supporting people who are setting up small businesses. I also started a Kids' Bible Club on Saturday afternoons for Christian children in the neighbourhood, which was great fun.

What experiences did you find spiritually enriching?

The experience I found the most spiritually enriching was the evangelism with Emmanuel. We would walk around particular areas of the city, door to door, or mango tree to mango tree really, and sit down with families and have conversations about the gospel. We would present the gospel, first the bad news, and then the good news. Pretty quickly into the conversation we would have back and forth questions and answers. I found that incredibly encouraging, not only to hear the proclamation of the gospel, which is good for believers to hear regularly, but to give a reason for our hope. It's incredibly encouraging to hear what Christ has done to the church, but also, to have interaction with people. Most people were quite

ignorant of the essential gospel truths, but also polite, interested and willing to learn. I found that incredibly enriching. It's very interesting. I think the main other thing I found really encouraging were church services. Public worship on Sunday was brilliant because it was reformed in the way it was done, but at the same time there was an enthusiasm and a zeal for worship, which I think I would love to see more of. Just exploration of Biblical truth in an obviously fresh way. And so that was really, really exciting to see how the congregation was reacting to things like perseverance for the saints or the sovereignty of God. Truths which have been neglected perhaps in the African church as a whole, but make such a difference in your everyday walk as a Christian. Realizing that God will never let you go, or that God is in complete control over what can be a very chaotic life in that part of the world. So that was great. Pastor Konteh's sermons were very encouraging to me personally. And then also the fellowship afterwards, when we would not just talk about the weather and how we were, but also really get deep into the scriptures and to discuss them beyond the sermon. It was like an extra Bible study after the service.

Is there anything you found challenging?

Well, I was particularly challenged by several of the members' commitment to the church. Commitment to proclaiming the gospel to people and the urgency and dedication of that. Prior to STS in the Gambia, witnessing to strangers was not something that I had taken very seriously at all. I had done a lot of leafleting but very few conversations with people on the street about where they go after they die and who God is and how they're saved. It was something I had not taken seriously before. But observing Emmanuel and Pastor Konteh and some of the other members going out in the hot sun, day after day, week after week, reaching people that they've already reached many times before. They didn't give up on lots of people as well. Sometimes we feel satisfied that we've done our part and we can write people off and we move on to the next house. But I found it very challenging how we would go back to the same houses again and again. And we actually saw progress and some people who were just bored or polite at first eventually would even come to church, but they never would have come to church after our first time evangelizing. So I suppose the dedication and the commitment serving the local area and the community in that way was the thing I find most challenging.

How did you find it being there for the ordination and the organization service?

It was really nice to see a congregation which I had

got to know quite well over two or three months become properly and officially integrated into the wider reformed church. That gives the church a lot of security and a lot of encouragement as well, knowing people that are praying for them and caring about them thousands of miles away. I think that was maybe the most encouraging thing, but it was also encouraging to see how the church, and particularly the reformed church, was growing. Everybody was encouraged to see Pastor Konteh be authorised by the Scottish church. It was amazing to see so many baptisms over just two days. There was a lot of build-up and preparation for weeks beforehand to organise everything, so it really did feel like a high point of my trip. I personally enjoyed having the delegation of Peter and Stephen over, it was a good break from the intensity of the pressures of the culture and my duties there.

Would you recommend STS in general and STS in the Gambia in particular?

I would recommend STS in general, 100%. I think it's potentially a great thing for every Christian, especially young people if you have the time and are considering it. Please take the opportunity seriously. It is an amazing opportunity to serve the church in a way that you can maybe do only once in your life. Being involved in church work six days a week is really special. Being connected to another congregation is great as you have a chance to get a real insight into the wider church. You also have the opportunity to develop your own set of gifts in service, which I think can't be replicated in shorter Go Teams or larger groups. It even helps your own church to go into another church and experience how things are done there, and then contributing to your home congregation when you come back. You learn how the church is far bigger than your own congregation, or even country! I think the skills that we develop as part of STS would be hard to replicate in another environment. It's also an opportunity to deepen your own faith. I have realised that God calls us to follow him in every aspect of our lives and we are to give our gifts and our time completely to his service. In terms of STS in the Gambia, that's a more difficult question. Just because of the practicalities, it's a different culture and further away. It's a strange environment for someone from the UK. However, I think if you have a desire to serve the church in another country and you're adaptable culturally, if you are enthusiastic for it, I would say push the door and see where it leads. I'd love more young people to experience what I have experienced. It has been an incredibly encouraging time for me, and it's shaped how I see the church family and service in God's kingdom.



# PRESBYTERY NEWS



## PRESBYTERY

A public meeting of Presbytery was held in Glasgow on Friday 16th June. The delegate from the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America brought greetings and we were encouraged to keep our sister church in prayer. The clerk, Rev. Peter Loughridge, gave an overview of the work of Presbytery over the past year, particularly focusing on the recent trip of a Presbytery commission for the purpose of ordaining and inducting Sylvester Konteh to the Brikama Reformed Presbyterian Church. The moderator of Presbytery, Rev. Stephen McCollum, preached on Revelation 12:11, demonstrating that we are a witness bearing church. A recording of the meeting may be found on the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland YouTube channel.

In response to the sudden invitation for the public to take the Oath of Allegiance at the King's coronation, the Witness Bearing committee of Presbytery prepared a statement counseling our members and others to beware of rash vows and protesting against various ungodly elements of the oath itself.

## AIRDRIE

Our annual Go Team and Mission took place in April. We had four people on our team who, along with the congregation, distributed almost 15,000 invitations to our services. Rev. McCollum preached on the theme "Is this as good as it gets or can we hope for more?" using five different parables from Luke's Gospel. We

were thankful to have some people come along to the services and pray that there may be lasting fruit to the glory of God.

In June and July, the congregation hosted the RP Mission Team, made up of five young people from USA. The team helped us distribute 4000 parish newsletters to the immediate area around the church, ran a Holiday Bible Club, engaged in some street evangelism to invite people to an evangelistic service, and undertook many practical jobs around the church building and manse. We were very thankful for the team's maturity and diligence in their work. Looking back on their time with us we see that so much has been accomplished.

On 22nd June, Elizabeth Shaw, wife of Ian (one of our elders) passed away. Elizabeth was baptised into the congregation, professed faith here, and was married in the church. She had been a communicant member of the congregation for over 63 years. She was much loved by our congregation. Although we miss her, we rejoice that she is now free from all the pain and suffering that she experienced in her later years.

Over the summer months we have enjoyed fellowshiping with various visitors who are taking part in Reformation Tours with Jimmy and Helen Fisher. It is encouraging for us to see the number of tours increasing again after being suspended during Covid.

On 2nd July the Session organised a conventicle at Bothwell Bridge. We count it a duty to remember what the Covenanters stood

Scotland learn little, if anything, about them at school. Rev. McCollum preached from Revelation 2:10, one of the texts found on the monument, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life." We were encouraged to have a number of visitors joining us on the occasion.

months, and the likelihood of visitors, we are conscious of a more pressing need of extra space and would value prayer either for a suitable plot of land on which to build – or house a temporary place of worship – or a suitable building. The minister has had opportunities to speak at the local Day One Rally as well as the Gideon's Rally and



Glasgow Brunch

## GLASGOW

On Saturday, 10th June, Glasgow RPCS held a congregational brunch, which was attended by a good number from the congregation. They enjoyed breakfast rolls, home baking, and a time of fellowship.

## NORTH EDINBURGH

From Wednesday 21st to Wednesday 28th June, the congregation enjoyed the visit and the help of this year's RP Mission Team. God blessed us with lovely weather to enjoy a barbecue together at Forthquarter Park on Saturday 24th June.

One of the team's main responsibilities was distributing flyers in our community, inviting people to three nights of simple Gospel preaching. Peter preached on the theme 'Hope When It Hurts', based on three Psalms: Joy for the Shamed (Psalm 32), Peace for the Stressed (Psalm 4) and A Clean Slate for the Guilty (Psalm 51). We thank God for unbelievers who were in attendance each night and ask you to join us in continuing to pray to God for their salvation.

## STORNOWAY

We continue to be thankful in Stornoway for a significant increase in attendance on the Lord's Days as well as at our Thursday prayer meeting. As we move into the summer

has also produced a booklet containing four addresses on the theme of worship which is being distributed gradually.



North Edinburgh barbecue

## STRANRAER

We chose one Lord's Day in May as an opportunity to make a particular effort to invite people along to our services. We made up invitation cards for the congregation to give out to their friends, advertising the sermon titles: 'The World's Broken' and 'Christianity: Power for Good or Force for Evil?'. It was encouraging to see the congregation inviting their friends and to have visitors at both services.

At our monthly church lunch in June, we had a Sabbath School prize-giving, with the pupils singing one of the Psalms they had been learning and reciting a memory verse. Sadly their teacher (Amy) is moving back to





Stranraer Sabbath School

Northern Ireland to take up a new job there after seven years in Stranraer. She will be sorely missed, and we are praying that God will send us someone to replace her!

of Kabakel. The Friday that Stephen and Peter were there 100 children showed up, so they took the children outside and did an impromptu Kids Club with them while the others had a Bible study inside. They taught them a Psalm, Bible verse, and story.

## BRIKAMA, THE GAMBIA

From the 5th-15th May, Rev. Peter Loughridge and Rev. Stephen McCollum were in The Gambia representing the Scottish Presbytery. The purpose of their trip was to ordain Mr Sylvester Konteh as a minister within the RPCS and to organise Brikama RPCS. During their time there they also were able to participate in the various activities of the church.

On Saturday the 13th was the ordination and organisation service. Sylvester Konteh was ordained as a minister in the RPCS, four adults were baptised, the members took their vows of membership, and the church was organised as Brikama RPCS. Rev. Donald Macdonald, Rev. Stephen McCollum, and Rev. Stephen Steele are interim elders on the Session. You can watch the ordination and organisation service on the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland YouTube channel.

Brikama RPC meets in a covered veranda attached to the house in a family compound where one of the congregation lives. The children in the congregation will sit under the mango tree by the veranda. Because the property is used by others in the family compound later in the day, they are only able to have a morning service. Presbytery has purchased a piece of land off a main road in Brikama, and the hope is to build a church and manse on that property. The first Lord's Day that Stephen and Peter were there, there were around 60 in attendance.



Ordination

Sylvester's wife, Johnette, runs a primary school on their property with 150 children attending. Most of the children are Muslim or Roman Catholic. Peter was able to teach one of their classes on Christian Religious Knowledge during the week. Of the 8 teachers for the school, three are Roman Catholic. On Friday afternoons the teachers have a Bible study together, and Stephen and Peter helped lead that when they were there. As part of the organisation of the church, four adults were going to be baptised, and the Lord's Day following the organisation service, 14 children were going to be baptised. So, Stephen and Peter met with those being baptised and their parents to explain more to them about what baptism is and the vows they would be taking. Every week people in the church will do evangelistic work – visiting people in their homes and seeking to tell them the Gospel. On Fridays the church has an evangelistic outreach in the neighbouring village



Brikama RPC





# GLOBAL NEWS

## AUSTRALIA

For many members and friends of the RPCA, the annual Fellowship Camp is one of the most highly anticipated events of the year. Held at the presbytery's beloved Dixon's Creek campground over the long April weekend, Fellowship Camp provides opportunities for all ages to deepen friendships, grow spiritually, and enjoy the beauty of Creation.



Dixon's Creek

a separate denomination forming the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Canada. The meeting was held in the Ottawa RP Church building. There were over 100 people in attendance from the Russell, Almonte, Ottawa, and Kitchener congregations. Additionally, there were another 50 families watching via livestream from various places around the world!

## IRELAND

The closing meeting of the Reformed Theological College was held recently in Dromara RP Church. Prof. Stephen Neilly opened the meeting with worship and then Rev. David Fallows brought the Convenor's Report. Mr Fallows commended the two students, Mr Kenny Stephenson and Mr Jonny Fitzsimons, for their hard work and for their success in the recent exams. He asked for continued prayer for the men as they undertake their summer placements in Dromara RP and Cullybackey RP during the months of May and June.

## CANADA



RPC of Canada

Vancouver APC joined the RP Church on the 14th April. At a special meeting of Presbytery on Friday May 12, the Canadian Presbytery of the RPCNA formally became



Closing Meeting

The 212th Synod of the RPCI took place in Trinity RPC, Newtownabbey from 12th - 14th June. Some notable highlights were hearing of one young person completing short term service, and another man signed up for this year; the mission committee's calling Rev



Vincent McDonnell to an exploratory church planting work in Limerick, and Rev David Sutherland being appointed to chair of pastoral theology and homiletics at the theological college (following the retirement of Rev Robert McCollum).

was minister of Rose Point RPC, Quinter RPC, and Topeka RPC and participated as stated supply in numerous pulpits of the Irish RP church.



RPCI Synod



Rev. Gordon Keddie

## JAPAN

The Mukonoso church has seen a need to do some church renovations. The purpose of the renovation is to widen the sanctuary. as the congregation has grown by God's grace, and also to fix up a lot of places that are very worn. In particular, the roof and the floor need to be replaced. For the expansion, walls will be taken down, and the staircase to the second floor will also most likely be moved. Overall, it will be a fairly extensive renewal of the building.



Rev. Bob McFarland



Mukonoso RPC

The RP Church of San Antonio was organised as a congregation and two local elders ordained on the 19th May.

Rev. Jon Sturm was ordained and installed as Associate Minister at the RP Church of Lafayette, Indiana.

The 191st Synod of the RPCNA took place in Marion, Indiana, from Tuesday 20th to Friday 24th June. Many sober discussions were held, and weighty church discipline matters voted on, but there was also great joy in hearing of progress in the mission fields.

## USA

Rev. Gordon Keddie, a minister in the RP Church for over 40 years, went to be with the Lord on Friday, May 19th, at the age of 78 after a long struggle with prostate cancer. He served as stated supply in the Glasgow and Wishaw RP churches in Scotland and as minister at North Hills RPC, State College RPC, and Southside RPC.

Rev. Bob McFarland, a minister in the RP Church for over 60 years, went to be with the Lord on the 23rd May. He



RPCNA Synod



# Should climate change be one of our main concerns?

Peter Loughridge  
North Edinburgh RPCS



I'm going to answer the question more broadly – in terms of the environment, not only climate change – and set out some Biblical principles that should shape our view of the environment. Then I'm going to let readers apply those Biblical truths to the specifics of climate change for yourselves.

Like in so many areas of life and faith, we need balance when we think about the environment and our responsibilities. There are opposite extremes to be avoided, including among Christians. One extreme viewpoint is to be too obsessed with the physical creation. This creation is a beautiful and precious gift from God, but the creation is not God! This world will pass away and it is dangerous that millions in our world today give more thought to this planet than to their souls, which live forever.

However, another extreme viewpoint to be avoided – and a trap that's easily fallen into in response to the excessive environmental focus just described – is to shrug and to fail in our responsibility to properly care for and care about the creation God has put mankind in charge of.

The Biblical balance is in between both these extremes – that mankind (and only mankind) has been made in God's likeness and part of our God-given duty is to be good stewards ruling over the rest of His magnificent creation. Genesis 1:26 says – Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion ... over all the earth ..." Psalm 8:6 says – You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet ...

One online article by the Christian organisation Answers in Genesis highlights four truths that will help us maintain this Biblical balance and not panic about climate change or other environmental or conservation issues.

- God is ultimately in control. God is sovereign over everything. Of course, we can have an impact on the environment but He is working out His plan. Climate change will not bring about the end. God's judgement will burn the heavens and the earth with fire, then He will create a new heavens and a new earth (2 Peter 3:7, 12-13).

- God has commanded us not to be afraid. News reports are filled with reasons to fear, like reports of natural disasters or uncontrollable climate change leading to millions of desperate climate refugees. God reminds us that He cares about His creation and that our worry won't change anything! (Matt. 6:26-30)

- God has promised that the seasons will continue. After sending a global flood, which He has promised He will never do again, God also promised – While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, shall not cease (Genesis 8:22). Climates may show some variations over time, but seasons will continue and we will be able to grow food.

- Our main focus should be on people. Jesus said – Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. But even the hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows (Matt. 10:29-31). Sparrows aren't unimportant. God's creation matters to Him. But people are of much more value and so we should have a 'humans first' approach to environmental issues. As the gospel of Jesus changes people, they will put sin to death and walk in God's ways – which will include how they care for His creation.



# GEORGE BUCHANAN

JIMMY FISHER, AIRDRIE RPC



Once upon a time, there was a man named George Buchanan. He was born a long, long time ago in a place called Killearn, Stirlingshire. George's family didn't have a lot of money, and his father died when he was young. So, his mother, Agnes Herriot, had to take care of George and his seven brothers and sisters with very little money.

But George's uncle, James Herriot, saw something special in him. He sent George to study in a faraway city called Paris when George was only 14 years old. George did really well in his studies and became a very smart student. However, after just two years, his uncle passed away, and George also got very sick. He had to come back to Scotland to get better.

After recovering, George spent some time in the military. Then he went to St. Andrews University, where he studied and graduated in 1525. Later, he went to another university in Paris called the Scots College and got another degree in 1528.

Because George was so smart, he became a professor and taught at the university in Paris. But in 1537, he came back to Scotland to be a tutor for a nobleman's family. The king heard about George's return and his reputation as a very smart person, so he asked George to be the tutor for the king's son.

During this time, there were big changes happening in Scotland. Some people were speaking out against the Roman Catholic church, and it was dangerous because they could be put to death. George upset some people in the Roman Catholic Church with a poem he wrote about them, so he had to leave Scotland and escape to Paris.

But even in Paris, George was in danger because some powerful people wanted to hurt him. He had to leave Paris to teach in another city called Bordeaux. After a few years, he went back to Paris to teach again. Then, in 1547, the king of Portugal invited him to teach at a new university in a town called Coimbra. George accepted the invitation, but it turned out to be a dangerous decision. In Portugal, George again got in trouble for speaking out against the Roman Catholic Church. He was put in prison for a long time and had to stay in a monastery for several months. After he was released, he went to England for a short time and then returned to France to teach and tutor.

During this period, George studied the Bible and became convinced that Protestantism was the right way to follow God. Since France was not a safe place for Protestants, he decided to go back to his home country of Scotland in 1561. Scotland had already embraced the Reformation, which was a big change in the church.

George helped the reformed church in Scotland. He was a member of the General Assembly several times, and even though he wasn't a minister, he became the Moderator for one year, which means he had an important leadership role. He also held other important positions, like being the principal of St. Leonard's College in St. Andrews.

When he returned to Scotland, George became the tutor for young Mary Queen of Scots. Mary was a Catholic and George often spoke to her about all the wrong things the Catholic Church was doing, but they also enjoyed spending time together,

reading Latin and talking about France, which they both loved.

However, things changed when Mary's husband was killed. People thought Mary had made that happen. George began to speak out against Mary and after she was removed from power, George was chosen as the personal tutor for her son, James VI. Many people, like John Knox, wanted James to have the best education possible and to grow up in the Protestant faith. George was the perfect choice for that.

George was a very smart and respected man in Scotland, and he taught the young king. He wasn't afraid to scold James when he misbehaved in the classroom. Some historians think of George as a strict and serious teacher, but that's not really fair. He just wanted the king to learn and behave well.

And so, George Buchanan, a poor boy from Scotland, became a famous teacher and advisor to kings. He had many adventures and faced danger, but he always trusted in God and used the intelligence God gave him to make a difference in the Scottish Church.

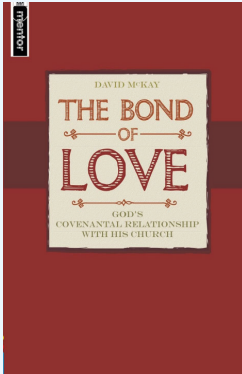
## Activity

### George Buchanan

P B I J I A U I I G A G Q O S  
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A R F K Q Q G D R Q L S E C N

Reformation	Protestant	Buchanan	Paris
Killearn	Portugal	Scotland	King
George	Agnes	Uncle	
Trust	France	Tutor	
James	Mary		

# RECOMMENDED READING



## The Bond of Love David McKay

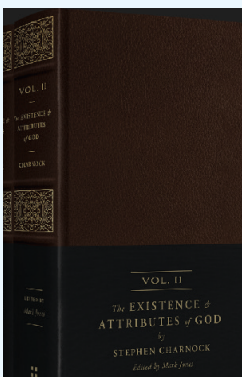
At the very start I must highly commend this book to anyone wishing to know more about our Lord Jesus Christ, and His work of redemption, and how the Bible is one interlinked work. The author explains to us about how practical and divine Covenant Theology is, and how it is loving and caring in its design and intentions. The book is a very successful attempt to convey to the reader, what God's covenant with us represents. It also seeks to take it out of the 'Dark Ages' and displays it as always relevant and timeless.

Unregenerate men cannot see an all-encompassing explanation for all things, as in a Covenant with God. People's view of the Covenant is that it is 'historical' and out of date. This shows ignorance of Scripture. The Covenant is a thread running through Scripture from Genesis to Revelation, tying together God's Word as it has been given to us. It shows that the Old Testament and the New Testament dovetail perfectly together.

The author also explains that even on the basis of the works of some of the greatest Reformation writers, the Covenant deserves serious consideration. He quotes Robert Rollock in his 'Treatise of God's Effectual Calling' of 1597. In this work he explained God's promise to love and care for us and walk among us. What God required is that we walk before him and be blameless. The author goes on to explain how the Covenant is linked to every aspect of God's Word. God is personal and approachable, because of the faithful work of Jesus Christ and his death on the cross.

A rapid, basic understanding can be gained from this most enjoyable and readable book, which has itself been created with love for the people of God

Bob Smith- (Airdrie RPC)



## The Existence and Attributes of God: Updated and Unabridged Stephen Charnock Crossway, 2022

It has been well said that 'What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us'. One of the all-time classic Reformed works in that regard is Stephen Charnock's *The Existence and Attributes of God*. Crossway have recently brought out a beautiful 2-volume edition that is both 'updated' and 'unabridged'. The updates are in terms of long sentences and paragraphs being split up, subheadings added, certain archaic words modernized, Scriptural references added or corrected and Greek & Hebrew translated. The editor, Mark Jones, has

also added short summaries at the beginning of each chapter. A particular plus point for us in the RPCS is that the biographical sketch of Charnock that's included is by former Stranraer and Glasgow minister William Symington!

In terms of reading level, Jones describes Charnock as more sophisticated than Watson but easier to read than Owen. This edition makes his work even more accessible.

-Rev. Stephen Steele (Stranraer RPC)



**People shall worship Him,  
each one from his place,  
indeed all the shores of the nations.  
(Zeph. 2:11)**

