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FIRST

Seek First the Kingdom of God!

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OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE FAITH MISSION



REMAINING STEADFAST

» GRACE NOT LAW

» LOOKING INTO THE GOSPELS (PART 4)

» GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF THE FAITH MISSION

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FAITH MISSION'S DIRECTOR FOR ENGLAND

These are challenging days for gospel ministry in the UK and Ireland as the culture becomes increasingly secular. Mark 4:35-41 recounts the story of Jesus and His disciples caught in a violent storm on the Sea of Galilee. The disciples were no strangers to the storms that commonly broke over this body of water. Mark records for us that these seasoned fishermen were terrified to the point that they were convinced they were going to drown.

What Jesus expected them to have remembered was that they were in a storm with Jesus! That should have made the difference for the disciples in the first century and ought to be remembered by us today. In fact, there was no need to panic in the first place. While the storm was too big for them, it wasn't for Jesus who lay asleep in the stern. Corrie Ten Boom wisely said: "There is no panic in Heaven! God has no problems, only plans." No matter how difficult the trial and how dark the sky, God is in control and we should remember that there is nothing too big for His power or too small for His Fatherly care.

Leaving

It is always sad to write of those who are leaving. Andrew and Grace Morton have decided to withdraw from the Mission to give themselves more fully to the work on the Earlesfield Estate. After spending two years in Bible College, they joined the team in 2013 and have worked tirelessly for the last ten years in establishing a church in the heart of the Earlesfield Estate in Lincolnshire. Andrew has also headed up the IT team as part of his responsibilities. We wish them God's richest blessing. Johnny and Amy Lennox have also decided to leave us. After training from 2008-2010 they re-joined in 2017. They initiated a ministry called FM Transition which was aimed at discipling young adults, as well as serving in many places throughout Northern Ireland including helping with the Gospel Truck ministry. We commend them to your prayers as they consider their future.

Bereavement

Former Faith Mission worker, Mrs Isabel Porter, went to be with the Lord in December. Along with her late husband Willie they devoted many years of service to the Lord in the work of The Faith Mission across the UK and Ireland. They are very warmly remembered by mission members and supporters throughout the country. We prayerfully remember the family circle during this time of grief.

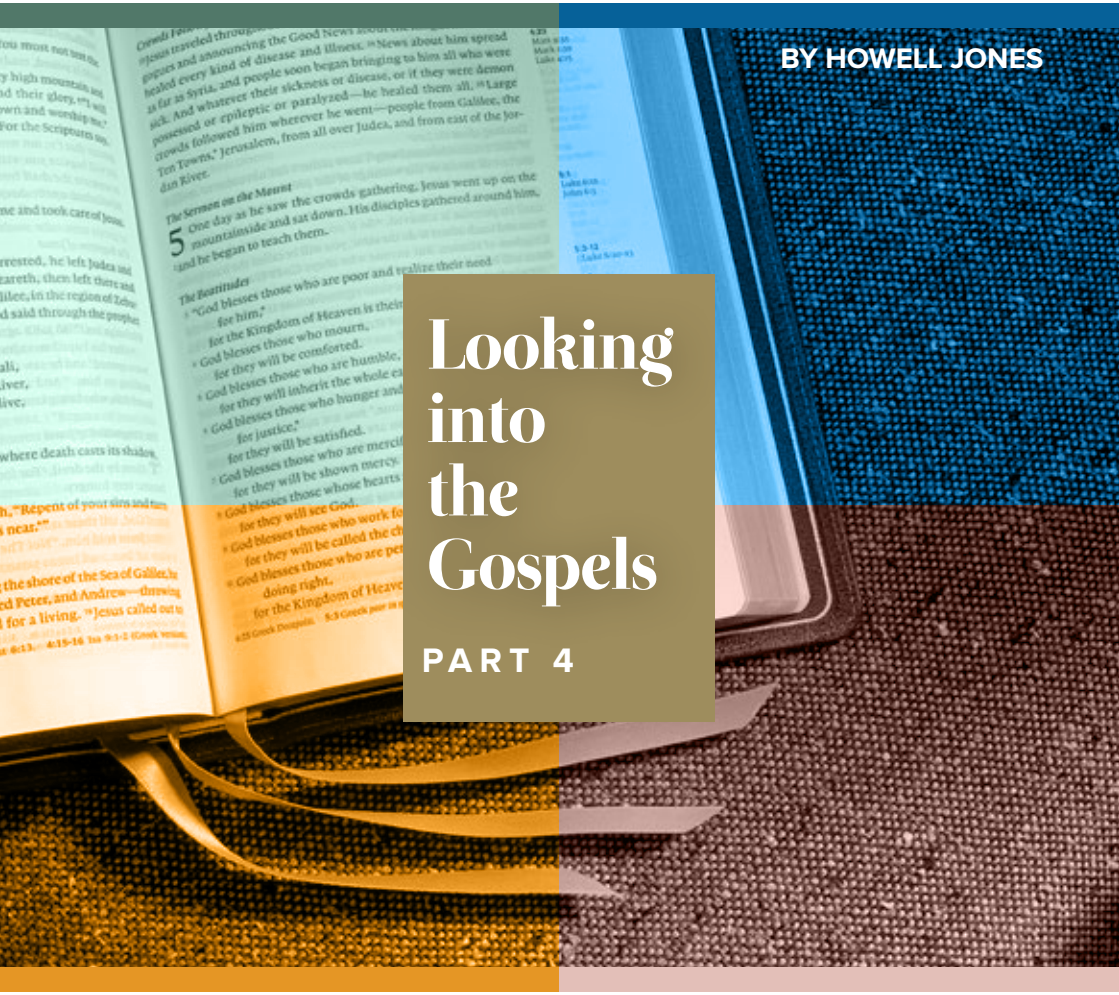
Members meetings and Bangor Convention

This year we will meet for members meetings from 3-6 April in Portadown and Edinburgh. For those in Scotland and England, it will be the first time in person since 2019.

We give you all a very warm welcome to the Bangor Convention over the Easter weekend. This has been a great blessing over the years, and we pray that this year will be no exception. For more details visit;
www.faithmission.org/bangor.

Thank you for your support in so many ways and may God richly bless you. •

***Stephen Walker,** Director for England*



BY HOWELL JONES

Looking into the Gospels

PART 4

Luke: The Beloved Physician

The third evangelist to write about Jesus is Luke, who as a doctor himself presents Jesus as the Great Physician – a special kind of physician. In this context His 'surgery' is the Temple. He is the 'doctor', and from there to the regions beyond He ministers to the people's needs.

The Compassionate Physician

It is Luke who says, *'For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which is lost'* (Luke 19:10). He features the despised Zacchaeus and his transformation and the good Samaritan who sets an example. Yet, there are notable contrasts, for the

rich and the self-righteous do not make good patients (4:28-30). Their self-sufficiency is condemned and they do not benefit from the ministry of the compassionate Physician. The rich young man did not see his need because of his riches (14:18-23). Among the patients are the Samaritans, the publicans, the despised, the poor and the marginalised. It is the sick, not the healthy who need a physician. *'The rich He has sent away empty'* (1:53).

The Patient Physician

The second feature of Luke's gospel is this beloved Physician has great patience in dealing with the needs brought before Him. There is mention of those who have been patiently waiting for the Messiah and with much detail describing the nativity scene. He takes the time to listen to Zacchaeus' story and then during the meal He pronounced healing and transformation. This patience is further represented in the healing of the boy with an unclean spirit He says, *'O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you and bear with you?'* (9:41). No matter what their background Jesus took the time to converse with individuals and bring healing. This 'care' is represented in the Shepherd going out into the night searching the wild places to look for the lost sheep.

"Luke presents this unique view of Jesus as the great Physician. No one was denied His attention even those who felt they had no need of this Physician."

The Considerate Physician

What stands out in this patient approach is His willingness to explain the situation. That is done in the early chapters. It is spelt out in the first encounter in Nazareth where He explains what His ministry really is, *'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to the broken hearted, and recovery of sight to the blind'* (4:18). He is still doing this work in lives today.

Later He explains to the two disillusioned disciples going home to Emmaus from Jerusalem, *'Ought not the Christ to have suffered?'* (Luke 24:26). Their hearts were troubled and perhaps filled with doubts but Jesus comes along side and reassures them, *'Then he said to them, "These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you"'* (verse 44). At the end of the gospel He explains to His disciples, *"And you are witnesses of these things"* (verse 48) but they first need to be endued with power from on high (verse 49). Jesus gives us the commission but along with that He also gives us the power to proclaim His message.

Thus Luke presents this unique view of Jesus as the great Physician who came to reside on earth, *'...to seek and to save the lost'* (19:10). He received all those in need, showing sympathy and concern for any who met with Him. No one was denied His attention, even those who felt they had no need of this Physician.

Luke gives us a picture of a tender Saviour which is further enhanced in the description in Hebrews, *'For we have not a high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities...'* (4:15).

In every pang that rends the heart,
The Man of Sorrows has a part
He sympathises with our grief,
And to the sufferer sends relief.
Michael Bruce (1747-1767) •

Howell *lives in Glasgow and is a retired pastor and lecturer.*

BY MICHAEL CORNALL



'For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace'
(Romans 6:14)

Just for a moment imagine that Paul wrote, *'you are not under grace, but under law.'* Imagine the way to obtain God's approval was not to receive it as a free gift by faith, but instead it was something you had to work for and you received as a wage. Let's think about the result of that.

Slavish Obedience

Every morning you would wake up to another day of trying to keep the law, working hard to maintain the commands so God would pay your wage by giving His approval. Your life would be similar to an Israelite slave in Egypt who worked hard producing a certain quota of bricks to escape the slave driver's whip. Obedience would ensure you stayed on God's 'good' list and so you would 'slave' away.

Pride or Despair

Each night you would go to bed, either proud of your law keeping achievements or you would be in despair. Your spirit feeling

crushed by the weight of the law you know you have repeatedly broken throughout the day. You would feel smug around those who were obviously not keeping God's law or threatened by those who made you look like an amateur.

Insecurity

"Have I done enough?" Perhaps this would be the question that plagued your mind. No matter how hard you tried and how many laws you kept you could never be sure that you had done enough. Insecurity would constantly follow you around and intensify as the day drew near, when you would be required to give an account.

Thanks be to God that we are no longer under the law. Thanks be to Jesus that He perfectly kept the law on our behalf. Thanks be to the Holy Spirit who reveals the wonder of grace to our hearts. God's good news to us is that salvation is complete. There is nothing 'to do'. While on the cross, *'Jesus said, "It is finished." With that he bowed his head and gave up his spirit'* (John19:30). It is a gift not a wage. God does not give us a list of ways to improve so He will accept us but a good news message to believe. Let's think about the result of God's free grace.

God's good news to us is that salvation is complete. There is nothing 'to do'. It is a gift not a wage.

Joyful Obedience

Although imperfectly, I seek to joyfully obey God's good and wise commands. It is not to gain His approval, because I already have that. *'But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness'* (Romans 6:17-18).

Humility

I live in the knowledge that my sin caused the death of Jesus. *'You once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness...'* (Romans 6:19). This reminds me of the seriousness of my sin but it also shows me the amazing love of God in His willingness to plan for my salvation. Knowing this truth creates a deep humility. I committed the sin but God orchestrated my rescue – by His grace I am saved!

Certainty

The question, "Have I done enough?" is replaced by "Jesus has done it all!" My future is certain and guaranteed. I can now look forward to that day when standing before this God of great grace, I will be confident that He will welcome me as His child, entirely on the merits of Jesus. Praise God that the Christian is not under law but under grace. *'For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord'* (Romans 6:23).

O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to Thee.
Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
Prone to leave the God I love;
Here's my heart, O take and seal it,
Seal it for Thy courts above.
(Robert Robinson 1758) •

***Michael** is the pastor of Hope Church, Ashton-in-Makerfield, Wigan. It was while he working for a firm of accountants he began to feel called to pastoral ministry. He is married to Holly and they have two children.*



REMAINING STEADFAST

BY
CHARLES
FERGUSON

We live in a day when the church is under fire from every angle and great condemnation is heard from the unregenerate people of our nation. It can give some great delight to highlight the failures and errors of those who profess to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

When we come to Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians we find a church where no condemnation is mentioned and only commendation is given. In Acts 17:1-15 we read about the founding of the church in Thessalonica. The Lord did a great work here through Paul but he was forced to leave because they had been charged with insurrection against Caesar. (See Acts17:5-8). With Paul not being able to return he sends Timothy to see how things were amongst the new believers. Paul now writes to the Thessalonians in response to the report he heard back from Timothy.

We see in chapter one the description of the believers in this church, what we would call today a New Testament Church. In 1:3 Paul remembers, *'...their work of faith and labour of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ'.* They preached the good news of the gospel and were not frightened to evangelise. Their lives had been changed by the Word preached by Paul and they were living in such a way that bore a good testimony, *'...your faith in God has gone forth everywhere so that we need not say anything'* (1:8).

They were also waiting for the Lord's return, *'...and to wait for his Son from heaven...'* (1:10), not taken up with their suffering but looking forward and upward. Perhaps we should ask the question, are we demonstrating these same characteristics within our local church and community? Do we have a similar evangelistic focus? Note they had become, *'...imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea'* (2:14). They were following the example of other believers. This emphasises the need for us who are more mature to be good models of the faith before young converts.

The Thessalonian church received the Word and with great eagerness they began to spread this message of hope. Spiritual growth will generally produce numerical growth. However, we need to bear in mind what Dr Martin Lloyd-Jones is quoted as saying, "We are not interested in numbers. We are interested in truth and in the Living God."

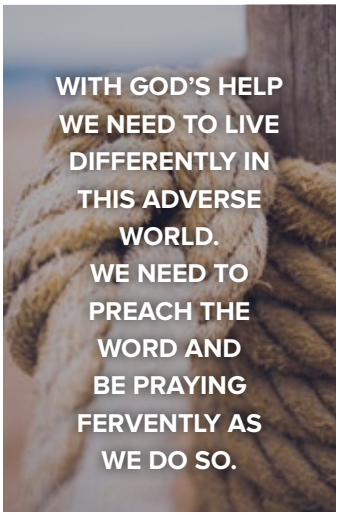
When we live out God's word there will be demonstrable consequences within His church and the community.

Nothing can replace the reading of God's Word on a daily basis and to be used for guidance in every experience of life whether it be family, marriage, employment or for our personal holiness. We may think that in today's church with all the Bible resources at hand, we ought to have a good knowledge of the Bible. Sadly, the opposite is the case, perhaps due to not reading the Scriptures. Sometimes there can be a tendency to read books and follow men rather than allow the Holy Spirit to speak to us directly through the Word.

Of course, we need to acknowledge that some of us are at different stages of spiritual growth and we need to be patient towards those who are still learning, creating a suitable environment for God's Word to have its effect. *'And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all'* (5:14). Certain characteristics mark a family and sadly these have almost disappeared in our society due to family breakdowns and

families becoming dysfunctional. Within the family of God, we as His children, need to reflect God's authority, love and peace. Paul urges them to, *'Be at peace among yourselves'* (5:13). When we live out God's Word there will be demonstrable consequences within His church and the community.

Paul is concerned for the believers in Thessalonica, that they have not fallen into temptation and all the labour from himself, Silas and Timothy had not been in vain, *'For this reason when I could bear it no longer, I sent to learn about your faith, for fear that somehow the tempter had tempted you and our labour would be in vain'* (3:5). There are times when everything is going well and we are seeing God at work, we can become complacent and satisfied with our efforts. If adversity comes it can easily rock our faith and our obedience to God weakens. Paul is concerned about their faith and, *'that no one be moved by these afflictions'* (3:3). This is the very time Satan will strike with his fiery darts and we need to be alert (See Ephesians 6:16).



However, at Thessalonica the believers were standing firm amid persecution. Whenever the honour of Christ is at stake we ought to do the same. From Timothy's report Paul was encouraged, *'But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us the good news of your faith and love and reported that you always remember us kindly and long to see us, as we long to see you...'* (3:6). They are persuaded to 'keep on going on' and that they, *'...do more and more'* (4:1)

Like the church at Thessalonica we need to be encouraged to *'do more and more'.* With God's help we need to live differently in this adverse world, be faithful witnesses at a time when His Word is under such scrutiny and being trampled upon. We need to preach the Word and be praying fervently as we do so. Paul reminds them, *'that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night'* (5:2). Our daily exercise should be to, *'... warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men'* (5:14). We sing about the great happening which is yet to be a fulfilment of prophecy, but are we waiting, watching and expecting the Lord's return? Paul ends his letter with a prayer for all followers of Christ, *'Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming our Lord Jesus Christ'* (5:23).

"Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the blessed hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope *'a blessed hope'* enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him" (A W Tozer). •

***Charles** was converted as a young man through SASRA. Until retirement he was a lecturer in Industrial Management. He lives in Fife and is involved with open air and street work.*

BY SANDY ROGER

SPIRITUAL ENLARGEMENT



'Make the tent you live in larger; lengthen its ropes and strengthen its stakes.'

Not long after I moved into my present house a near neighbour converted his garage into an extra room. It was quite a surprise to most of us neighbours, because like all of us he had only been in the house about six months and it was a new build which already had four bedrooms. And then, this last autumn, he created two more rooms in what had been the loft space. All this suggested he intended to be staying a long time, was adding value to his house or planning a big increase to his family. It used to be the case when people needed more space, they just moved house. But in these recessionary days when people are keeping an eye on changing mortgage rates, more folk seem to be going for house extension projects.

Many churches seem to be doing the same. I attended a Saturday afternoon carol service just before Christmas in a church near where I live and they incorporated the whole event into a kind of "come and see" viewing of their recently extended premises. It was thrown open to the community to step inside and then stay for carols.

All this building activity put me in mind of a famous text in the book of Isaiah. It reads well in the New Living Translation (although never the best version for serious bible study), *'Enlarge your house; build an addition; spread out your home. For you will soon be bursting at the seams. Your descendants will take over other nations and live in their cities'* (Isaiah 54:2-3). The text is more familiar in the older translations as, *'Make the tent you live in larger; lengthen its ropes and strengthen its stakes'.* It seems to me that here is a Bible verse to take us further than ever before. It outlines a basic principle in all that we hope to achieve for Christ and His kingdom in the months ahead. This is a clarion call to spiritual enlargement.

Isaiah's Imaginative Illustration

Even today, in the nomadic societies of the Middle East everything depends on the ropes and pegs. The larger the tent the firmer and deeper the stakes have to be. Weak pegs will result in disaster during a storm or high wind. The stakes are fundamental to the tent's survival. The bigger the tent the longer the rope cords have to be as well. Isaiah's picture has something to teach us as we continue to anticipate what lies ahead.

As we look back some of us may come to the realisation that we have been living very narrow and restricted lives. Our faith has been small and our spiritual growth too limited. Maybe even our involvement in God's work has been sparse.

As we look ahead we clearly see we need to enlarge the tent and make more room for Christ to work. We need to develop our full potential so that we can be of the greatest usefulness in the Lord's service. An incident in the life of Michaelangelo can help us here. He wasn't just a great artist, but took a great interest in the many students who came to him for instruction. On one occasion he wandered round the studio examining the work his pupils were doing. Standing in front of one student's canvas, he took more time over it than the others. Then to the surprise of the whole class, he lifted up a paintbrush and wrote something across the canvas. He splashed one Latin word across it, 'Amplius' which means 'larger'. But he wasn't condemning or rejecting what the student had done. In fact, this pupil's work exhibited great skill and had potential but it was only as good as far as it went. The small size of the canvas had made the design appear cramped and confined. If the student wanted his work to be better, he needed to make it bigger. It needed amplification.

Bigger and Larger

Is this what the Lord is asking of us in our commitment to Christ? He longs to see in us enlargement of the soul through increasing our prayer life, an improvement of spirituality spilling over into our lifestyle and development in our various spheres of service.

Across too many lives the Divine Artistic Creator may have to write 'Amplius'. Our past spiritual outlook has been too confined. Our vision of what God wants to do in us and through us has been severely restricted. What could have been achieved was bound by our own self-imposed limitations.

The Lord has not failed to appreciate the progress we have made, but He is encouraging us to expand our horizons. *'Make the tent you*



As we look ahead we clearly see we need to enlarge the tent and make more room for Christ to work. We need to develop our full potential so that we can be of the greatest usefulness in the Lord's service

live in larger with longer ropes and stronger pegs'. Surely this is a word in season for every believer and each congregation. It needs to be taken to heart at the individual level. God longs to grow His church and our lives in so many ways. We can be –

- Warmer through fellowship
- Deeper through worship
- Stronger through prayer
- Broader through ministry
- Larger through outreach

But He is only able to do these things as we increase the dimensions of our own souls. This was the text used by William Carey in 1792 in his address to a group of ministers in Nottingham. On the strength of this verse and its key idea he preached a sermon with two main points: "Expect great things from God and attempt great things for God" and ever after Carey was known as 'the father of modern missions'. That one sermon re-ignited missionary endeavour worldwide.

Let's listen for God's encouraging, insistent voice calling out to us: "Larger, Larger! Deeper, deeper! Wider, wider!" Unsurprisingly, Charles Wesley came up with some challenging lines on this theme. You could use them regularly as a daily prayer.

Give me the enlarged desire, and open, Lord, my soul,
Thy own fullness to require, and comprehend the whole.
Stretch my faith's capacity, wider and yet wider still;
Then, with all that is in Thee, my soul for ever fill. •

***Sandy** is a retired minister and lives now in Edinburgh. He lectures at our Bible College and has oversight of the devotional and pastoral side of college life.*

BY RICHARD MYRESCOUGH



Establish the Work of our Hands

We are now well into the new year and already we can see we have much to do and much we would like to do. Perhaps there have been pitfalls already and we know there may be more to come, that which is chosen and that which feels foisted upon us by circumstance or happenstance.

We are conscious that we're bounded by so many limitations, the very things that Moses wrote so plainly about in Psalm 90 - advancing age and increasing infirmity, life seeming to pass in a blur, our baleful inconsistency and proneness to wander into the wastes of sin, the chaos and instability of the world around us and within us.

We might wish Moses had glossed his prayers differently, burnished them with a little more positivity, but his words tell it as it is, they portray our lives as they really are. We can take and make his final words to be our own as we gaze at the unploughed field of this fledgling year, *'Establish the work of our hands for us — yes, establish the work of our hands* (verse17).

Within these words and at the heart of that request lie all our responsibilities and duties. All our loves and cares, our daily employment, our families, both near and far, whether beloved or estranged, the multiple opportunities for acts of love and deeds of faith, and the prayers that

necessarily surround them all. These we bring to the God who is unchanged and unchanging, who is wise and strong, living and active and purposeful. We ask that He would *'establish'* all we do and all we bring to Him.

This is not a prayer for the Lord to buff a few of the ragged edges that might appear here and there in what we do. It is far more realistic than that. This is prayer rising from the grit and grief of life where we know our weaknesses, where we grasp and own the very fragility of all we are and all we can do. This prayer is not for the finishing touches to be applied to the masterpiece we have been busy creating. It is for the living God to make firm what we know in our hearts to be so brittle, for Him to beautify and complete what we are so aware is unfinished and marred.

This prayer is not for the finishing touches to be applied to the masterpiece we have been busy creating. It is for the living God to make firm what we know in our hearts to be so brittle, for Him to beautify and complete what we are so aware is unfinished and marred.

That He is more than able to do so is underscored by the apostle Paul in his matchless words to the church in Corinth which was beset by crisis and confusion, *'Your labour in the Lord is not in vain'* (1 Corinthians15:58). Whatever that labour might be, if it can be honestly offered to God in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is governed by the glory of His resurrection life. It is established by His unequivocal victory over death, over everything that mars and spoils and dismantles.

As we offer from our own hearts Moses' ancient prayer, it is good to remember that we are the work of His hands, *'...created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should to walk in them'* (Ephesians 2:10 ESV). The great master-craftsman, the potter with consummate skill and sensitivity has already been at work and continues His labour of love - in our lives and through them into the lives of others.

As we put ourselves and our works into His hands, we are bringing back to Him all that He has already planned and shaped, all that He has in grace and mercy chosen and prepared for us. He will continue to establish you throughout this year, and any year. None of your work shall be in vain.

Forth in Thy name, O Lord, I go,
My daily labour to pursue,
Thee, only Thee, resolved to know
In all I think or speak or do.

The task Thy wisdom hath assigned
O let me cheerfully fulfil,
In all my works Thy presence find,
And prove Thy good and perfect will.

Thee may I set at my right hand,
Whose eyes my inmost substance see,
And labour on at Thy command,
And offer all my works to Thee.
(Charles Wesley, 1707-88) •

***Richard** is the minister of Pontefract Congregational Church in West Yorkshire. You can subscribe for free to receive Richard's weekly update at www.thewaitingcountry.substack.com*

BY THE EDITOR

You are His Personal Concern



'Casting all your anxieties on Him, because He cares for you'
(1 Peter 5:7)

Many years ago while studying at The Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh I discovered a beautiful text. You couldn't miss it as it was rather large and displayed in a prominent place. It read:

He knows, He loves, He cares,
Nothing this truth can dim,
He gives the very best to those
who leave the choice with Him.

As far as I can remember there was no mention as to who penned these poignant words but they have stuck with me over the years. You do find yourself wondering what made the author write such a timeless text and were they reading 1 Peter 5:7. Peter was writing to the believers who had been dispersed throughout Asia Minor (modern day Turkey). They were being persecuted for their faith and experiencing much suffering as Peter writes, *'In this rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials...'* (1:6). In the midst of this suffering Peter encourages them, that despite their present state, they can look forward to the future where their faith, *'...may be found to result in praise and glory and honour at the revelation of Jesus Christ'* (1:7-9).

Whilst on this earth, we will endure suffering and we also have an enemy who tries to destroy us. Peter warns the believers in his letter to,

'Be sober-minded, be watchful (alert), your adversary the devil prowls round like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour' (5:8-9). Behind every persecution that believers experience is our *'adversary'* (verse 8) but God is with us.

At the end of Peter's letter comes this wonderful truth and it may have been quoted to you many times whilst enduring suffering and trials, *'casting all your anxieties on him, he cares for you'* (5:7). It is interesting to note that in most bible versions there is a comma between verse six and seven which would perhaps suggest they are one sentence. Peter exhorts the believers to, *'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you...'* (verse 6). The opposite of humility is pride. We can be quite proud of our ability to perform certain tasks to the point that we can become independent and reliant on our own wisdom, strength and competence. We have accomplished much and see ourselves as having the potential to deal with anything that comes our way. This kind of attitude seeps into our Christian walk and sometimes God allows trials into our lives that we might learn to lean on Him.

In the difficulties and trials we see our weakness and our need for someone to carry us, to come along side and give daily strength. Jesus, our Saviour, has promised to do just that. The picture in 1 Peter 5:7 is that of someone carrying a heavy burden and throwing it onto a camel's back. Such a manoeuvre would require physical action with a lot of effort and exertion. For us to, *'...cast our anxieties on Him...'* requires us to deliberately stop and throw our anxieties – our worries, our fears, our concerns, our nervousness, our troubles and our apprehension – whatever shape or size they come, onto the One, *'...who cares....'* We can't manage on our own strength or ability. The Lord Jesus knows our competence and desires to give support, but He can only come alongside when you let Him in to take control of everything and accept what He intends His resolution should be in the midst of our confusion and lack of understanding. God has not left us to handle all that life throws at us on our own. He has filled His Word with promises to assure us of His presence and help. 1 Peter 5:7 is one of those promises.

What is a promise? If we refer to the old Oxford dictionary it tells us. A promise is – a word of honour, a guarantee, a pledge to undertake and do what one is declaring. This gives the person on the receiving end, cause for hope and expectation. Today we are given many promises by our political leaders and even close friends with little evidence of them being carried through. One proverb describes these kind of promises as, "Like pie crusts, lightly made and easily broken." But God's promises are never broken because, *'God is not a man that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should change his mind'* (Numbers 23:19). In 1Kings 8:55-56 Solomon declared to the assembly of Israel, *'Blessed be the Lord...not one word has failed of all his good promise.'*

In the pain and struggle He offers His help and reassurance of His presence. Do not listen to the lies of your enemy, God is with you in what seems to be darkness all around. When Corrie Ten Boom and her sister were in Auschwitz prison camp, Betsie became very ill. Corrie was angry as to why this was happening. She managed to visit her sister and Betsie seeing her anger said, "Corrie, God is with us in the darkness as well as in the light." If you feel weighed down with cares, ask Him to help you stand on His promise. It is a promissory note written to you by your Heavenly Father who loves and cares for you. •



Does your situation feel IMPOSSIBLE?

BY VANEETHA RISNER

I still remember reading the words, *'Nothing is impossible with God'* (Luke 1:37) at a low point in my life. I desperately wanted to believe them, but they seemed disconnected from my reality. They were assurances for other people, not for me. My problems seemed impossible to fix.

I had hoped for a different outcome multiple times and had been disappointed, despite my sobbing, pleading, and praying. So why would I dare to hope now? Spiralling downward, I paused. I knew my jaded outlook was only adding to my frustration, making an agonising situation even worse. I needed reassurance from God that He cared and that He was in this with me. I wanted hope.

So I asked God for help. As I prayed, I slowly realised that I'd been putting my hope in the wrong things. I'd been hoping for immediate change. Hoping for the outcome I wanted, hoping that I would get the fairy-tale ending. The Lord gently reminded me that my hope was in Christ alone and not in a particular outcome. I knew that truth, but I needed to remember that my living hope was in a Person who loved me extravagantly. That assurance comforted me, but I also needed reassurance that my struggles were not hopeless. I knew that God was with me and that one day I would see how He was using all my pain, but I wanted to know that God could also change the situation.

I sat before the Bible, asking the Lord to encourage me. As I flipped through underlined pages, I landed on verses that gave me hope.

Verses like:

- Luke 1:37 - *'For nothing will be impossible with God'.*
- Mark 9:23 – *'All things are possible for one who believes'.*
- Jeremiah 32:26 – *'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me'?*
- Romans 4:17b – *'God... gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist'.*
- Hebrews 11:3 – *'By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible'.*
- Proverbs 21:1 – *'The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will'.*
- Psalm 119:90-91 – ***'Your faithfulness endures to all generations; you have established the earth, and it stands fast. By your appointment they stand this day, for all things are your servants'.***
- Matthew 17:20 – *'If you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'move from here to there' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you'.*

After reading, I felt a renewed sense of peace and anticipation. I needn't assume life would be hard forever. Of course it could change. God could change it simply by saying the word.

God did change many things, though the shift was subtle and slow when I wanted it immediately. But I held onto the assurance that His mercies are new every morning as God sustained me day by day. I kept praying and trusting in His grace, goodness, and power. While there are still aches and unfulfilled longings, in retrospect God truly did beyond what I could have asked or imagined.

Nothing is impossible with God, and nothing is too hard for Him. God created the universe out of nothing so even if we can't see a flicker of hope, it's not hopeless. He calls into existence the things that do not exist. He controls kings and leaders and can change their hearts. Everything in the universe is a servant of God.

God calls me to have faith in Him, not faith in an outcome because I don't know what is best. He controls the outcome and can change my situation in an instant. I need not sink into doubt and despair as I look at the future. God is in my future, in my present and in my past. God can move mountains in response to our prayers. He hears and responds to everything we ask and gives us what is best. Nothing and no one are outside His control.

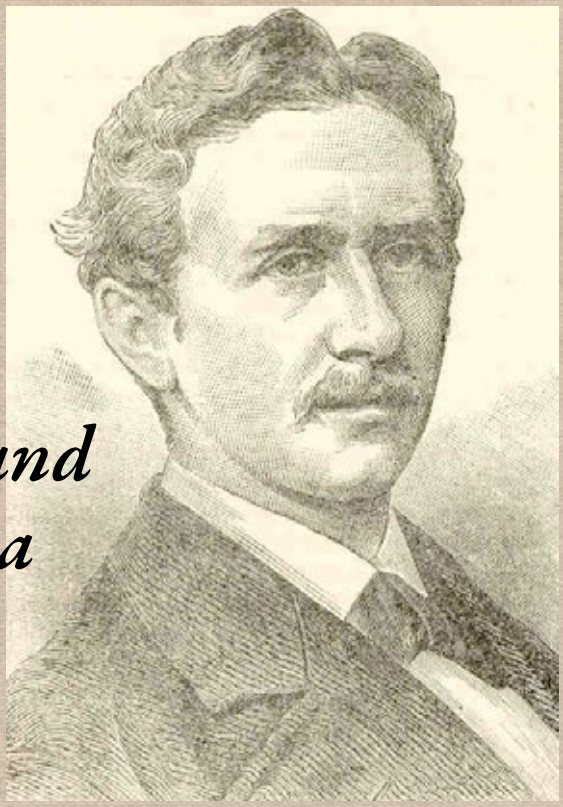
Maybe today you are facing something that feels impossible. Perhaps it's hard to believe that it could ever change. Maybe you're tired of praying and can't see any way out. Don't despair. Keep talking to God and leaning into Him. God is watching and listening and can move heaven and earth for you. *'Nothing will be impossible with God'* (Luke1:37).

Keep waiting. Keep praying. Keep trusting God. The story is not over yet. And when it is – when your faith becomes sight – you will see your part in the magnificent story God is writing and be thankful for every line. •

***Vaneetha** has authored many books and at her website she writes to encourage her readers to turn to Christ in their pain. Vaneetha was bullied as a child and suffered multiple miscarriages and went through the pain of losing her son to a debilitating disease. She has known the grace of God through all her suffering.*
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BY
MARY ATKINSON

From Bonnie Scotland to Dark Africa



Alexander McKay was born 13 October 1849 in Rhynie, Aberdeenshire. His father, a Free Church minister was known for his exceptional ability and many hours spent visiting the sick and neighbours but he took the time to go on long walks with his young son through the countryside, educating him in many areas of life.

Alexander loved to ramble through the moorlands learning much from his father, especially the study of birds and insects. He took great pleasure in watching a flight of grouse or wild ducks. When the history and botany lessons were over they would both exclaim, *'Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created'* (Revelation 4:11).

Like his father he had a love for books and when aged three years old he could read the New Testament. He also loved to walk through the village learning from local people about building, carpentry and blacksmith work. This would prove to be very helpful to him in future years.

Alexander was taught by both his parents about the way of salvation. Each night his mother would gather her children around and tell them about a missionary who left all behind to bring the gospel to those who had not heard. From a young age the missionary spirit was instilled into Alexander. His mother

was a descendant from an old Huguenot family and would often tell her children why they had to leave France. It was either leave or attend the mass. After much hardship and many dangers they finally settled in Scotland losing all their worldly goods and property. Here they could read the Bible and worship God in the open. This was never forgotten by the young family leaving a life-long impression on their lives.

His mother recognised her youngest son had many great talents and she prayed a lot for him, that he would be kept from the evil one. When Alexander was in Aberdeen studying, his mother, despite not feeling well, went to visit him for ten days. This was a precious time together for mother and son. On returning home she fell ill and three weeks later died. Her last words were, "Tell Sandy not only to read, but to search his Bible and to meet me in heaven." Stricken with grief he returned home and was told of his dying mother's words and of her prayers for him. This was a turning-point in his life. Standing at her graveside, he knew all his religious knowledge was not enough and he had to come to Jesus as a sinner in need of forgiveness.

"If Christianity is worth anything it is worth everything... if this is of God, must I not say, "Here am I send me?"

In 1867 Alexander began his studies in engineering at the University of Edinburgh. To pay for his fees and living expenses he did some teaching. He decided to take up a position in Germany as chief draughtsman, designing machinery. This did not diminish his strong desire to use his talents for God. From letters written at this time it is evident his aspiration was to do so on the mission field. He writes, "If Christianity is worth anything it is worth everything...if this is of God, must I not say, "Here am I send me?"

A very distinguished offer came to him from Moscow in the form of a partnership in a large engineering firm. This was quite an opportunity but Mackay refused it. He had offered his life to God for mission work and having put his hand to the plough he would not be turned aside by the offer of worldly wealth and position.

He applied to the Church Missionary Society and was accepted for the work in Uganda. Immediately he began to make preparations by gathering up tools, machinery, learning new skills and obtaining some medical knowledge. On 27th April 1876, Mackay along with five other missionaries set sail from Southampton to Zanzibar. He wrote home, "Pray for me that grace may be given, to keep steadily in view the one great object." For him, the one single aim was to bring the light of the gospel to a dark land.

On arrival, Alexander realised very soon that life in Africa was going to be no easy task. On his journey through the interior he met many adversities and setbacks including going down with small pox. He was witnessing such horrors as the slave trade when in one week no less than one hundred and fifty poor slaves had been stolen from their homes. He tried to set them free but this caused fighting with the slave traders who were now his bitter enemies. This did not dampen his enthusiasm, it only proved that God was watching over him. He needed this assurance, especially when the

terrible news came that the party who had gone on before were attacked and all killed.

In June 1878 Alexander wrote to his sister, "I am almost the only one still living of the missionary band who sailed from Southampton. The loss of so many valued friends and fellow-labourers is a great grief to me. But God's ways are not our ways." He had arrived in Uganda and soon realised, "A powerful race has to be won from darkness to light; superstition and idolatry have to be overthrown; men have to be taught to love God and love their neighbour, the slave set free, knowledge imparted, and wisdom implanted." He knew this was not going to be easy. There were times he had no food, no candles for light, constantly battling fevers and it would take three months to receive letters from home.

Despite the setbacks he built roads, taught the locals about machinery, carpentry and building but his greatest desire was to tell them the real reason why he came. As a boy he had asked his father for a printing press and now this same machine was in Africa. He was soon at work in his hut printing scripture and translating books, eagerly watched by curious eyes. In March 1882 five of these young men were baptised. Chiefs and slaves came to hear the words of the Book. Mackay preached in many places to crowds of people who were amazed at the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ. They called him, 'Mzungu-wa-Kazi' which means 'white man of work'. Other missionaries had now joined him in this great task but some who had left England never reached Uganda.

In October 1885 alarming things began to happen due to a new ruler. It led to great persecution amongst the young converts with some being martyred for their faith. One entry in Mackay's diary describes these times, "O, night of sorrow! God alone knows the cause." He fully expected to be following his brethren soon.

On May 23, 1886 with much fear hanging over them, they prepared for the church service not anticipating many to come but to their surprise the little church was full. The next day the soldiers came and eleven were put to death. Mackay pleaded with the king to intervene and he agreed to release those who were held prisoner but thirty were burned alive, and from the flames these young converts could be heard fearlessly praying to their God.

In July 1887, Mackay was forced out of Uganda by the wicked king. Many of the young believers feared what would happen after his departure but he assured them he was not going home but to nearby South Lake Nyanza. Two missionaries who were allowed to remain, concluded, "Mackay and Ashe (fellow missionary) have by the grace of God done a glorious work here." Despite the persecution the Lord protected His church with many still coming to Christ.

On 8th February, 1890 aged forty, Alexander Mackay, the pioneer missionary to Uganda went home to meet his Master. His last message at Lake Victoria on January 2, 1890 was a plea for help, "Ye sons of England, bring with you your highest education and greatest talents; you will find scope for the exercise of them all. I entreat you to leave your work at home to the many who are ready to undertake it, and come forth to reap this field now white to the harvest." •

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THE CISMAS FAMILY

Robert and Phillippa are our new Centre managers at Newton Stewart with the responsibility of overseeing the Centre and developing further outreach in the south-west of Scotland.

FM: Tell us a little bit about your background and how you became a Christian?

Robert: I am from a town called Simeria in Transylvania, Romania. I grew up in a Christian family who had stood the test of life through communism and remained strong. Although very young, this had an impact on me and I remember some of the trials of those days. I was involved in church and looked like a Christian but it wasn't until I was in my teens I realised my need of a Saviour. I responded to the gospel, repented and asked Jesus to forgive my sins for salvation.

Phillippa: I am from Cockermouth in beautiful Cumbria. I was blessed to grow up in a Christian home and trusted the Lord for myself at a young age.

FM: When did you study at FMBC and what valuable lessons did you learn that prepared you for Christian work?

Robert: I studied at FMBC from 2003 – 2005. My time there was a highlight in my theological education. The academic teaching was of a high standard and delivered by godly people who themselves had a deep faith in God and a love for His Word. I was also blessed by the varied practical experience gained through opportunities to minister in different contexts in the work of the Mission. My time at college taught me to deepen my commitment to live by faith, trusting God in all things while going to where the unreached are.

Phillippa: I was at FMBC from 2002-2004. It was a blessed time of rich teaching and good friendships. I was especially blessed by the outreach programme, where you were challenged to discover new gifts and go outside your comfort zone. I am also thankful for the emphasis on a close personal walk with the Lord and the atmosphere of prayer, which have been foundational for all future ministry.

My time at college taught me to deepen my commitment to live by faith, trusting God in all things.

FM: After Bible College and spending a little time in FM, you both felt led to a new work. Where did you go and what did this new appointment involve?

Robert: I came to college with a deep sense of God's call to go and serve in the ministry of the gospel in Botswana. With God's help we ministered there for almost eight years. In the beginning years we were led by God to establish C.A.R.E. Botswana (Christian Assistance and Rural Evangelism) as there was no existing organisation reaching the rural areas of the country. We felt the leading to take our work to the villages that had the least reached people in Botswana, in the Kalahari Desert and on the edge of the Makgadikgadi Pans. Over the years we were involved in much evangelistic work reaching children and adults and with Bible translation. We worked alongside other Christian organisations, as well as through CARE Botswana's own outreach in Nata and surrounding villages. We also saw the need to help people in practical ways through projects aimed at alleviating poverty. Over the entire time in Africa we dared to ask God for big things when it looked impossible on a human level and God was faithful every time. We saw Him do more than we could have imagined.

FM: What led you to coming back to the UK and ultimately back to FM?

Robert & Phillippa: After seven years in Botswana God started speaking to us about calling us away from there, at least for a season. An important part of that was noticing the changing needs in the development of the children as they were growing up and the biblical command to look after one's own household well (1 Timothy 5:8).

Once in the UK, which was just before Covid started, God didn't lead us directly into full time ministry in that immediate stage, but instead He provided a job using my practical qualifications. While living near Swindon we continued to pray about where God would use us in ministry. God laid on our hearts a particular ministry where He wanted us to serve but that we needed to wait on Him until He made it clear what and where that would be. After a period of waiting, the Lord led us

We have a strong desire to see people come to know Jesus in this spiritually needy area of Dumfries and Galloway where God has placed us, and to see Christians encouraged to a deeper and closer walk with our Lord by any means and using the doors that God opens before us.'

to the work of the Faith Mission Centre in Newton Stewart. When we arrived, we could see that God had prepared us for the kind of practical and evangelistic work the centre requires. We look for God's leading and help in developing the great potential for mission and practical outreach that the centre has.

FM: Was this a difficult decision to make?
Robert & Phillippa: It was difficult for us to accept at first that God may be calling us to leave life and ministry in Botswana and move back to the UK. It felt like it took more faith to decide that we will obey and come back, than it took to go out in the first place, but we had a certainty that we were following the Lord's leading. God's plan and timing is always perfect and this brought us peace and confidence in this move. Once the lockdowns started, we could see some of the reasons God brought us back when He did.

FM: Tell us a little about your family and how have they settled back into British life?
Phillippa: We are blessed with four children Nathan age 15, Keziah 13, Jerusha 11 and JJ 10. They missed friends and aspects of their life in Botswana and it was a big change for them but the Lord was good and placed us in a context where we had family support and the blessing of a strong network of Christian friends and church family. These made for a positive transition for which we are very thankful.

FM: What is your vison for the area where you are now placed?
Robert & Phillippa: We have a strong desire to see people come to know Jesus in this spiritually needy area of Dumfries and Galloway where God has placed us, and to see Christians encouraged to a deeper and closer walk with our Lord by any means and using the doors that God opens before us. We also hope to see the centre continue to be a blessing to encourage Christians and a hub for evangelism, reaching unsaved people with the love of Christ.

FM: How can we best pray for the work in your area and for you all as a family?
Robert & Phillippa: Please pray for God's abundant blessing in this work, for Him to continue to go ahead of us, opening doors for the work of the gospel in this area and that we would be sensitive to His leading. Pray for wisdom in all the practical work that needs doing around the centre and for His special caring oversight as we welcome groups and individuals back for Christian events. Pray for growth in their faith as well as for physical recharge during times of refreshment and rest. •

GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE OF THE FAITH MISSION

On 14th October 1886 the founder of The Faith Mission, John G Govan wrote a brief entry in his diary, 'The Faith Mission started'. At that time there were just two members, himself and George Colvin, by the end of the first year the numbers had risen to twelve. The work continued to grow steadily over the years.

In 1911 the burden of the work was overwhelming, and it was felt that some restructuring should take place. The work was divided into districts with Superintendents being put in charge. J Govan was appointed President and Treasurer and a few supporters of the work became part of a governing body which was referred to as 'The Council'. Their main responsibility was the oversight of the functioning of The Faith Mission and its members. This format continued for many years.

To ensure more efficient oversight of the governance of the Mission it was decided in 2017 that this structure be changed, and the large Council was reduced to a Board of Trustees supported by three sub-councils. The Board is made up of an equal number of Faith Mission Directors and other trustees who come from all walks of life and all parts of the UK and Ireland. They bring a wealth of knowledge, wisdom and experience to the decision-making process. At that time the role of President became the Chair of the Board of Trustees. The Board has the responsibility of ensuring that the Mission fulfils all its legal obligations and compliance requirements. Of equal importance the Board must ensure that the Mission remains true to its founding principles, core values and gospel calling.

Below: The Faith Mission Board of Trustees and Council



Experienced Mission members form the three sub-committees which support the Board of Trustees, these are :

- The Mission Council which oversees the fieldwork and evangelistic ministries of the Mission
- The Bible College Council which oversees the Mission's training and Bible teaching ministries
- The Bookshop Council which oversees the Mission's Literature Ministries.

Usually the Board meets three times in the year and the sub-committees meet separately a similar number of times. In January these sub-councils join the Board for an evening of prayer followed by two days of more in-depth discussion on matters that affect the work. These joint meetings help to keep the Board fully in touch with the issues facing those involved at the coalface of the Mission's ministry.

The meetings always begin with a time of devotion and prayer and there have been times when council business has been suspended, while difficult issues are brought before the Lord and His wisdom and guidance sought. There are also times when our faith and courage is challenged by the need to trust God for what would, humanly speaking, seem impossible or unrealistic intervention or provision from Himself.

Below: David Laing





Above: The Faith Mission Board of Trustees

In January 2022 Jonathan Currie, who had been chairman for four years, stood down from the role, due to new ministry commitments. We are indebted to him for his godly wisdom, sensitivity and help in guiding the Mission through some difficult times and are grateful that he is continuing as a Board member. After a period with an interim chairman, David Laing was appointed as Chairman of the Board in January this year. David is originally from Aberdeen. After studying law and serving his legal apprenticeship in Aberdeen he moved to Edinburgh where he joined a firm of solicitors, later becoming a partner in the firm. David, an Elder of Chalmers Church, Edinburgh, is now retired, he is married to Marina, and they have two daughters and two grandchildren. We are so thankful for the spiritual outlook and professional expertise which David brings to this role.

Please pray that God would give the Board and its sub-councils wisdom and direction in their oversight of the Mission, which is now in its 137th year and that it will continue to be used by Him to reach out to the needy rural areas of our land. Pray too for more workers to take up the baton passed on by those who have gone before. •

SNAPSHOTS OF GOSPEL OPPORTUNITIES

Below are just a few snippets of the opportunities our workers have had during the last few months. We are thankful for your prayer support and we can see God is working in the lives of individuals.

"We had a good conversation with a young man, who had made a profession of faith as a child but is not currently walking with the Lord".

"Immediately after I spoke on the radio, someone who heard the message phoned to say they would like to meet up. Thank the Lord for this opportunity and pray for salvation".

"We praise God for the service on Sunday morning when the Lord touched hearts and the elders had the privilege of praying with a lady who wanted to recommit her life to the Lord".

"We meet regularly with a young man who has much Bible knowledge but in a recent conversation he indicated he is questioning the existence of God but recognises his need to read the Bible. Please pray for his salvation."

"It was thrilling to have a very open conversation with a new Mum who was an atheist by upbringing, but God has recently revealed to her that there is a Creator. She has never read the Bible and knows nothing of the gospel but is very keen to read it".

"Very encouraging to hear one boy from a Catholic background stop us at the door to recite his memory verse, word perfect."

"SU was great last week as four new teenage boys turned up. We now have seven unchurched new young men who come along. Pray this would be the start of a great new SU group and that souls would be saved".

"A pupil in the class said she wanted God to forgive her sins. Another lad asked why I chose Christianity above the other religions which gave the opportunity to share quite a full testimony".

"There are three mums who regularly stay and listen. Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit as openings in conversations are giving opportunities to share about Jesus".

"As a result of receiving tracts at an open air three people made contact asking for inquirer packs. Pray they will trust the Lord for salvation. When checking my stock of tracts, I was surprised to discover that at least 8000 tracts have been distributed in the last three months. Pray for these tracts lying in homes, God's word will not return void". •

BY
ANDREA
CONN



Isabel Porter

Mrs Isabel Porter (nee Brookes) always thanked God for the mission conducted in her home church in Durrus, Co Cork in 1944 when she learned of her need of salvation through the ministry of two men (S Clarke and W Black) from The Faith Mission. When she realised she had been, '*...supposing Jesus to be in (her) company*' (Luke 2:44) she trusted Him as her Saviour. She matured as a Christian, living for God at home and at her work in department stores in Kilkenny and Dun Laoghaire.

When Isabel sensed God directing her to Christian service, she felt others were better equipped. However, in obedience to the call of God, she entered the Faith Mission Bible College in Edinburgh in 1956. After two years there she was involved in gospel missions in the North of Scotland and South East of England before marrying William Porter in 1961. They were privileged to work in Belfast, Ipswich, Ballymena, Edinburgh then back to Belfast where they retired from the work in 1999.
God blessed them with three daughters and a son and it was a joy to see them all seek the Lord and go on to live for Him. Although life was busy, Isabel continued in ministry being out a number of nights when the children were small and a baby sitter's help was found.

Isabel enjoyed hearing from various contacts over the years and learning how they were progressing in their walk with God. She had many names on her prayer list, bringing them daily to the Father whom she knew was able to answer prayer in every situation. She continued to be keenly interested in the work of The Faith Mission until her home call. She and William enjoyed Mission life every place they worked and often spoke of those saved here and there. Even in early years of retirement they had gospel missions around Kilkeel and thanked God for all His enabling those days.

Caring for her husband in his failing health and then as a widow, her eyes were still on the Lord who continued to sustain her. She always had gospel tracts in her bag to distribute even in later years in hospital and knew God would bless the printed page. After a struggle with health and celebrating her 90th birthday with all the family (by now 26 in all) the Lord took her home in December 2022. Only eternity will reveal the full extent of her witness. •

The Faith Mission

BANGOR Convention

EASTER 2023



Good Friday 7 - Easter Tuesday 11 April

- Solid Bible Teaching
- Inspiring Meaningful Worship
- Renewed Spiritual Vision
- Refreshing Warm Fellowship

Speakers expected...


Roger Carswell


Henry Montgomery


Andrew Mullan


Graeme Orr

Also check our website and Facebook page...

www.faithmission.org/bangor

facebook "Bangor Easter Convention"

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