

SUMMER 2013



Dear Friends!

You may well have been following the course of the present moral crisis within our denomination and wondered about the wisdom of the decision of the General Assembly recently. The Theological Commission set before the Assembly a simple choice between a 'Traditional' and a 'Revisionist' ('Revisionist') view of what the Bible teaches about same-sex relationships. This decision would determine whether a minister who was in such a relationship should be able to stay in their charge and whether anyone in such a relationship should be considered to be a candidate for ministry.

Traditionalists considered what the Bible actually says about these relationships and urged upon the Assembly that on each occasion they are dealt with they are regarded by God as unacceptable to him and a sin to be repented of. The Revisionists argued that our understanding of human relationships today is more sophisticated than in the times of the Bible and the Holy Spirit has been teaching the church new truths about them anyway, whilst at the same time using Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan as exemplars of lesbian and homosexual relationships in the Bible.

As you may know, in the first round of voting the Traditionalist view was rejected, a compromise between the two came second, and the vote was won by the Revisionist vote. In the second round of voting between the

compromise suggestion and the Revisionists, the compromise won and the Revisionists came second. The compromise solution maintains the church's traditional view of sexual relationships but allows congregations who so wish to call someone in a same-sex relationship as their minister.

Though the presenting issue is that of morality, the actual issue is about the Word of God. Did God say what the Bible reports to us or not? Has God changed his mind in the passing of time? If we know what the Bible teaches and reject it does God care? Will he accept humans voting against his Word?'

Our first parents were met by the Serpent who asked sneeringly, 'Did God really say....' and follows that by saying God is really a liar, 'God knows that in the day you eat of it you will not surely die' So our crisis is not new: it is as old as time, and each generation of God's people has had to deal with the same issues about the Word of God, just in different forms.

The present crisis is forcing us to ask ourselves what we truly believe about God's Word, the Bible. Is it really His Word and does it still have relevance to us today? Is the Holy Spirit teaching us new things that contradict what God has already said?

What does our doctrine of God tell us? *God is a spirit; infinite, eternal and unchangeable, in his being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.* Wisdom and truth are eternal and unchangeable for they express the character of God. So the Word of God, once given, is always and ever of contemporary significance and unchangeably so.

We ought to take that Word, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest it and live by it in whatever circumstances God sets us.

If we have a diminished view of the origin and relevance of the Bible and its teaching with respect to sin, then we will have an incomplete and defective view of the Lord Jesus Christ's two natures as God and man, and a false view of his death on the cross. If these are other than the Bible teaches then we do not have a gospel of salvation by redemption to proclaim to the world through the saving grace and mercy of God, the very matters our early church brothers in Christ fought to clarify, like Athanasius and, as the substance of the faith has been set out in the Nicene/Constantinopolitan Creed and in the Westminster Confession.

In addition to these, we also have a false view of the work of the Holy Spirit, claiming that the Spirit willingly contradicts what God has already said and reveals new things to our generation. Things which, funnily enough, are just what our generation wishes the Holy Spirit to say to allow them to sin without any culpability with the Spirit as the willing accomplice, which as you will know is impossible.

Do you see how far reaching in its impact this little issue is? Can we be content to see this be acceptable in the Church of Scotland? Can we remain in the denomination and not seek to be courageous in contending for the faith? Let us go on proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ in his death and resurrection and live in the power of the resurrection ourselves.

Your Minister and friend,

Richard.

DID YOU KNOW??...

On Wednesday 7th October 1936 the Women's Hour in Trinity Possil Church was formed. Rev James Hogg presided and Mrs Hogg, his wife, was installed as President. Can you guess how many ladies were in attendance??? **170!** Yes - one hundred and seventy ladies helped kick start the Women's Hour!

Quite an achievement – AND it is still going today!!!

T.P.H.D. WOMEN'S HOUR SESSION 2012/2013

Eva Campbell writes:

Our session started last October and we have had a mixture of Ministers and Lay People coming to speak to us including representatives of Christian Organisations here in Scotland and abroad.

The ladies who come really look forward to a Tuesday afternoon and hate to miss it. We had to cancel the meeting twice this year due to heavy snowfall but on most Tuesdays we have between 25 and 30 ladies. During the tea-break the noise of numerous friendly conversations makes the room quite noisy but when the speaker comes on he/she is always well received and 'gets a good hearing'

As usual our outing on the 28th of May was enjoyed by all! We went to Livingston Old Village for lunch and then a visit to the McArthur Glen Designer Outlet where the ladies were let loose in the shops. Next stop was at South Queensferry for a traditional "High Tea" in The Albert Hotel at North Queensferry, which was situated just below the Forth Rail Bridge with a lovely view of the Road Bridge. Although the day was a little cloudy it did not dampen the enjoyment of the ladies! All in all a great day was had!

My thanks as always go to the ladies on the committee who throughout the year work so hard to make the small hall such

a welcoming place for our get-togethers and for providing us with a tasty afternoon tea each week.

Following are some photos from our 2013 trip!





The Jarvie family would like to send a thank you to all the members of the congregation who had asked after Jean, sent cards and had her in their thoughts and prayers during the time of her last illness. It was really very much appreciated. Jean is now back at home and is doing well.

Thank you again,
Jean, Eunice and Crawford Jarvie

YOUNG WRITERS AWARD 2013



Members of the congregation will remember the Calley Family who used to attend TPHD before they moved to Dalry some years ago.

In 2008 we congratulated Ruth when two of her paintings were selected to represent North Ayrshire at an exhibition in the Harbour Arts Centre, Irvine. The following year we congratulated her younger sister Naomi when she had a poem

published in 'My First Acrostic - Southern Scotland Inspirations'. Now younger brother Thomas (who was only 7 ½ months when he left TPHD), not to be outdone, has had a story published in 'My First Story Presents: Mini Adventures Scotland'. Well done Thomas!

The photograph above shows Thomas with his "Talent for Writing" Certificate.

Item submitted by Norma McKenzie

30th June 2013 : 90th Birthday Celebrations

Great celebrations were held on Sunday 30th June 2013 when Bessie Sergeant celebrated her 90th Birthday.

The first stage of the celebration was at TPHD in the after church fellowship, when Richard led us all in singing "Happy Birthday" to Bessie and enjoyed a piece of birthday cake.

Unknown to Bessie a "Secret Party" had been organised for the afternoon of the 30th at Bishopbriggs Golf Club. Bessie thought she was meeting with the family for a meal but was totally surprised to find friends from TPHD and elsewhere there too. It was so much of a secret party that at least two of the guests did not know until the last minute where they were going.

It was great to see Bessie enjoying herself surrounded by her family and friends. A lovely meal was enjoyed by all.

Below are photos from the day:



SUMMER READING: Romans chapters 1 – 8

Romans chapters 1 to 8 teach us about the twin ways in which God recovers a fallen humanity.

This may be viewed in the following ways:

Chapters 1 – 5 are the *foundation* of this whole exposition of God's work set forth as both *root and teaching*, CHRIST DIED FOR HIS PEOPLE, or the giving of His Son for us.

Chapters 6 – 8 are the *superstructure* of this exposition set forth as *fruit and evidence*, WE DIED WITH CHRIST, or the giving of His Spirit to us.

Hence, salvation is Trinitarian.

We may set out Paul's exposition like this:

Chs 1:1 to 5:21 The Christian Message

The Work of Jesus Christ FOR US, or,
Jesus Christ crucified.

1:18 - 3:20 THE NEED, or condemnation.

3:21 - 5:21 THE NATURE, or justification.

Chs 6:1 to 8:39 The Christian Life

The Work of Jesus Christ IN US, or,
Jesus Christ risen.

6:1 to 8:17 THE PRESENT, or sanctification.

8:18 to 39 THE FUTURE, or glorification.

In his expositions of Romans 7 and 8 given at the Keswick Convention in 1953 Dr Ernest Kevan set out his studies of *The Saving Work of the Holy Spirit* under these four headings:

7:14 - 25 The Holy Spirit provokes spiritual conflict (in us)

8:1 - 5 The Holy Spirit fulfils (Christ's) righteousness (in us)

8:6 - 13 The Holy Spirit pledges (the) life (of Christ in us)

8:14 - 27 The Holy Spirit authenticates (our) Sonship.

It would be time well spent during the summer weeks to read through Romans 1 to 8 with these headings in mind.

PASSOVER MEAL

During Holy Week this year, we were privileged to have Rev David White of St Columba's Church in Kirkintilloch host a Passover Meal in the Small Hall. This was a participatory event –during the evening, we sat as the disciples would have been positioned and we learned of (and tasted) some of the food which would have been eaten at a Passover Meal in Jesus' time.

This was a first – perhaps we can look forward to another Passover Meal next Easter time?



“Why I will not be leaving the Church of Scotland” -some thoughts from Eric Alexander.

Much has been written and spoken since the General Assembly about whether or when evangelical people, especially ministers, should find themselves obliged to leave the Church of Scotland. Although I now have no pastoral responsibility, I am still a minister in the Church of Scotland, and find myself disturbed by the increasing momentum towards secession. I would like to set out five of the reasons I will not be leaving the Church of Scotland. They are obviously in much abbreviated form.

1) Because of who God is and what He has done.

That must always be where our thinking begins. The Church is God’s church, not ours, and He is the Sovereign Lord over all its life and work. He is the sole occupant of the throne of the universe and rules over all the affairs of people and nations and in particular those of His chosen people, who are the church of God. In everything we do, think or say, we are answerable to Him, and all our plans must be obtained from Him. More especially, He is the ultimate shepherd of His flock, and entrusts part of that flock to pastors as under-shepherds, giving them a sphere in which to serve Him. Now Jesus tells us in John 10:16 that there are “other sheep which are not of this sheep pen – I must bring them also”. The flock God has chosen includes some who are not yet in the fold. Now if an under-shepherd abandons some of these, he will be answerable to God for that neglect. Ezekiel 34 has a lot to teach us about that.

2) Because of what Christ has said and what he is doing.

In Matthew 16:18 we read “I will build my Church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it”. Notice that it

is Jesus Christ who is building his church, not we. He knows exactly what he is doing, and what he permits others to do. Nor is he surprised by the opposition to his work, even originating from Hell itself. But in the end of the day, all such opposition will fail ("the gates of Hell will not prevail"). Therefore, when we find opposition growing fiercer and more diabolic, we must not yield to the temptation to flee the battle-field, but rather stay and fight the good fight of faith. Describing his own ministry, Paul says "A great door for effective work is opened to me, and there are many who oppose me" (1 Cor. 16:9)"

3) Because of what I learn from the history of previous departures from the Church of Scotland.

Professor Donald Macleod of the Free Church of Scotland has said "Secession is a testimony to its own generation, but not beyond that". It is also true that secession breeds further division and future secession, of which there is ample illustration in the history of the Church of Scotland. When I went to my first charge in the Ayrshire village of Newmilns, there were three Presbyterian churches, each with its own minister and its own building. They bore visible witness in the community to divisions which had taken place in the past, the reason for which almost no one could remember. Thomas Manton the distinguished Puritan said "Division in the church breeds atheism in the world".

4) Because of what I have observed, where there are splits and divisions in churches throughout the world.

I cannot but conclude that these divisions and departures produce a most distressing spirit of harshness and bitterness, pride and self-interest, which are so foreign to the meekness and gentleness of Christ of which Scripture teaches us (2Cor.10:1). I have just been reading the biography of Justin Welby, the new archbishop of

Canterbury. He describes himself as "an orthodox, Bible-believing evangelical. Scripture is my final authority for all matters of life and doctrine". But he has a warning about behaviour in the context of controversy.

"If the people on the other side of the controversy are also Christians, then according to the New Testament I am obliged to love them. I do not have any alternative. I may correct them with gentleness ...but I cannot hate them. It is not an option that God in Scripture has left me".

Sadly I have seen a great lack of this kind of love in recent times. Few things are more effective in alienating those who are as yet outside of Christ

5) Because of a disturbing lack of true and strong leadership in our time.

It is quite simply a fact of history that when God has a special work to do, He raises up men of outstanding character with obvious gifts of leadership. I do not need to remind you of Moses, David, Daniel, John the Baptist, Paul the Apostle, Martin Luther, John Calvin and the remarkable leaders at the time of the Disruption, notably Thomas Chalmers. It saddens me to point out that not only in the Church but also in almost every sphere in the world we are bereft of such leaders. My personal conviction is that the greatest need in the contemporary Church is that we might earnestly plead with God to raise up strong, godly, outstanding leaders. My call is for intercession, not secession.

'O be not too quick to bury the Church before she is dead.'

John Flavel