

April - June 2012

Good News

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_____ NEWS - SEVEN DAYS THAT CHANGED THE FACE OF THE RPCS

_____ MAN TO MAN - THE (AB)USE OF POWER

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the



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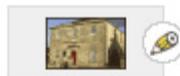
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Good News

'Good News' is the official church magazine of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland and is published four times a year. The goal of the publication is simple, to inform and encourage those who are either participating or interested in the life of the RPCS. www.rpcsotland.org

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contents

page 2	RPCS Ministers on Sermonaudio
page 3	Editorial
pages 4-5	The 'Ministry' We Are Called To!
pages 6-7	News
page 8	Leadership
page 9	A Different Take
pages 10-11	Semester in Scotland
pages 12-13	Sing To The Lord!
page 14	Reformation History
page 15	reformationhistory.org
pages 16-17	RP Global Missions
page 18	Man to Man
page 19	Woman to Woman
page 20	RP International Conference

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Good News

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Insignificant in many ways, but bearing fruit - Why?

The Reformed Presbyterian Church in Scotland is growing. A 2011 survey on UK Church Statistics which "gives a detailed denomination by denomination overview of church membership, church and congregation," indicates that whilst the RPCS is the smallest of the Presbyterian Churches in Scotland, it is the only Scottish Presbyterian church which is projected to grow in the five year period 2010-2015. Why is that the case? Well the survey doesn't provide any reasons, it just gives us the statistics.

Here are some of the reasons why I think the RPCS is, by the grace of God, experiencing a season of fruit bearing:

- Around 20 years ago the then dying RPCS began to think and take decisions, not on the basis of what was the situation on the ground, but rather on the promises of God. This required humility, sacrifice, and courage.

- During this time the priority of the preaching of God's Word and our complete dependence on God expressed through prayer was rediscovered by some in the life of the Church.

- Sessions also began to understand the importance of exercising Biblical church discipline. Loving people no longer meant letting them do as they please but rather calling them to be who they say they are - Christians.

- Then there has been the deliberate emphasis on the prayerful and financial investment in our covenant youth.

In other words, by God's grace, we have rediscovered something of who we are - blood-bought slaves of the living God!

In Christ,
Andrew
Rev. Andrew Quigley, Airdrie RPCS

the



we are called to!

This is an adapted version of the address the Rev. Kenneth Stewart gave at the 2012 Irish RP GO Rally on Isaiah 6:7-8.

If you are to 'go' for God in any service you must learn the lessons which Isaiah learned when God told him to 'go' in Isaiah chapter 6. And if you learn these lessons well, then you will 'go' cheerfully - and you'll be able to persevere in the work even in the most difficult circumstances.

First, we'll look at the ministry we're called to.

There is something very distinctive about Isaiah's calling: it was to the office of the Ministry in the Church of God - which is not a calling most of us will ever have. But there is still a Word ministry to which we are all called: Paul tells us in 2 Corinthians, we are to be 'living letters'. In other words, when people look at us and listen to us, they should be hearing the word of God from us and seeing it in our lives. Sadly, we can claim to be 'living letters' while the writing is smudged and confused. We are called to testify clearly to Christ by word and by example and to share the good news of the gospel.

Second, what are the difficulties we encounter?

Put very simply, you are in a world that doesn't understand you and that, according to Jesus, hates you. There are times in history when this problem becomes more acute. Paul warned Timothy that, during the gospel era, 'perilous seasons' would come which would be characterised by heightened selfishness, covetousness, pride, blasphemy, lack of love and respect in families, ingratitude - and much else besides (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Such a 'perilous season' has clearly come in the UK - and it's as well to be aware of this before you 'go' on a labour for the Lord. But Paul tells Timothy, in these perilous times, to go on preaching the

Gospel - 'Be ready in season (favourable times) and out of season (unfavourable times)' - see 2 Timothy 4:2, 3. Even out of season God has His work to accomplish.

Now if you're to 'go' and if the circumstances can be really discouraging, the great danger is that you become despondent. That despondency can harden into discouragement and your strength evaporates away, you feel like giving up and you have a sense of failure, and inadequacy. It is here that God's message to Isaiah becomes so important.

Now, I believe that Isaiah was struggling to some extent with these things in chapter 6. Although we can't be certain, it would seem that Isaiah was already preaching during the reign of Uzziah before he got this vision. But there was little fruit. Usually, when you've gone to do something for the Lord and nothing happens you wonder, 'Was it unproductive because of me? Was I the problem?' And even though Isaiah was highly gifted as a preacher and writer, I'm sure he often asked, 'Is it my lips Lord? Is it my unclean lips? Is it my service, and is it my witness, and is it my ministry?'

The surprising thing is that, in chapter 6, God tells him that the situation is not going to change all that much! While there will be fruit, the spiritual decline will continue! If you were told that the result of your work would be like that, you would feel quite deflated. It would have crushed Isaiah too - except that God gave him a marvellous vision to encourage him. The vision is one of the glory of God in Christ. And it is this vision which will encourage him as he goes out with the Word of God to a people who are, largely, not going to respond all that well to it.

Isaiah sees the glory of Christ in two places. He sees it on the throne and on the altar. First, he sees Christ's glory on His throne. And His glory is twofold: First, there is the glory of his sovereignty: He is 'lifted high' on his throne and the whole created order is subject to Him. Despite his

Our whole life of service has to rise up out of Christ's sacrifice, out of Christ in us and Christ for us.

incarnation, that sovereignty of Christ has not changed. You should rejoice that when you knock on a door, the heart of the person you meet is in the hand of the Lord and He can turn it whatever way He wishes. I want you to remember that as you 'go'. There's no surprise to God behind any door anywhere and no situation is outwith God's control or plan. And you are not under his sovereignty as an enemy of God but as his friend. Remember that. Everything is in His place, in His time - and you are on His side.

Second, still on His throne, Isaiah sees the glory of Christ's holiness. Even the angels, who serve Him in perfection and 'go' for God constantly, are deeply conscious of that holiness as they serve. And you forget that holiness at your peril. You can't serve God unless you understand that He is holy. Let that govern your team, your speech, your discipline - your whole life. We serve a holy God who hates sin who wants it obliterated in us and obliterated in the people we meet with.

However, if all we saw was the glory of Christ on his throne in His sovereignty and His holiness, we would be inclined more to despair than hope - after all, who are we, as sinners, to serve a God like that? But notice that God doesn't just give a vision of sovereignty and holiness: He also gives a vision of forgiveness and service. And that comes in the altar. The glory of Christ is in the altar too.

The altar in Isaiah 6 certainly points to forgiveness. After all, the first object you met stepping inside the tabernacle to worship was a huge bronze altar on which the sin offering was laid. This large bronze altar, with the sacrifice laid upon it, was symbolic of the great sin offering that our Lord Jesus Christ offered. If you don't know that your sins are forgiven, if you don't know that you are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ our Lord, how can you 'go' anywhere for God?

But there was a second altar too - a golden one - and it pointed not to sacrifice but to service. It was an altar on which incense was burned in the presence of God. This burning incense symbolised the life of service, especially of prayer and worship, which we give to God. Crucially, it was connected intimately to the first altar because the coals on which the incense was to be burned had to come from that first altar of sacrifice.

This connection between the altars reminds us that a life of service is of no use unless it rises from having our sins freely forgiven by the Lord Jesus Christ. It also reminds us that justified sinners can be as certain of effective service as they are of having their sins forgiven. Christ is the key to both forgiveness and service. Because of Christ, the sovereign, holy God is for you and with you - in spite of our failings - and not against you. Because of His forgiveness, our prayers are heard and our witness is acknowledged and used by God either to harden or soften hearts as He sees fit. Our whole life of service has to rise up out of Christ's sacrifice, out of Christ in us and Christ for us.

Remember all that as you 'go': it is not just the devil who wants you to have a sense of inadequacy - God does too! But the devil's intention is to get you to give up all the time while it is God's intention to get you to trust Him and do all your work in His strength. Even Isaiah, of the powerful lips (speech), needed God's enabling and cleansing for effectiveness in service. The burning coal from the altar reminds us that the God who equips you is the God who forgives you, and the God who forgives you is the God who equips you. Go with that and you have an arsenal at your disposal.



Rev. Kenneth Stewart
Glasgow RPCS

Seven days that changed the face of the RPCS



The seven days, Saturday 29th October through Friday 4th November 2011 will live long in the memory of many in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. The reason - the clear evidence of the Lord's hand upon the Church. After a number of years of deep pruning by the vine dresser, we have been permitted by God's grace to experience a season of fruit bearing.

Stornoway RP Church Inductions

The seven days began on Saturday 29th October when a congregation of 80 plus gathered in Stornoway Town Hall for the induction of elders, deacons, and a minister. (Stornoway RP Church was constituted a month earlier on Saturday 24th September.)

The Rev. Kenneth Stewart, moderated the meeting and preached on Colossians 4:17 "And say to Archippus, 'See that you fulfil the ministry that you have received in the Lord.'" In his sermon he challenged the elders, deacons, and minister elect of the recently constituted Stornoway RP Church, to consider and fulfil their task as a priority in their lives. He emphasised the fact that they do this as men who have to give an account, not to other men, but to the Lord.



Three men were inducted into the office of ruling elder: Rev. Donald Macdonald, Mr. D.R. Macdonald, and Mr. M.D. Maclean. There were also three men inducted as dea-

cons: Mr. Neil Chisholm, Mr. Cliff McElhatton, Mr. Scott Maciver. Then Rev. David Karoon was inducted as minister of the congregation through prayer led by Rev. Kenneth Stewart. The Rev. Andrew Quigley then brought the charge to both the newly inducted minister and the congregation.

Glasgow RP Church Ordinations and Inductions

Then on the evening of Friday 4th November a congregation of almost 200 gathered for the ordination of office bearers in Glasgow and the induction of the Rev. Kenneth Stewart.



On this occasion Rev. Andrew Quigley preached. Taking the opening verses of John 15, his key point was the fact that we are not called to 'faithful survival' but to 'fruit bearing growth'. He made the point that Christ has chosen and appointed us for a purpose - to bear much, good fruit to the Father's glory through abiding in Christ and in His love.

Three men were ordained and inducted into the office of ruling elder: Mr. Iain Gillies, Mr. Donald Mackay, and Mr. Norman Graham, and two men were ordained and inducted as deacons: Mr. Donnie Campbell and Mr. Gary Gunn. The Rev. Kenneth Stewart was then inducted as minister of the congregation through prayer led by Rev. Donald Macdonald. Rev. Gerald Milligan then gave the charge to Rev. Kenneth Stewart reminding him that as an ambassador of the gospel he had both the authority and the responsibility

ty to discharge the office using the means giving to him by his Master. In addressing the congregation the Rev. David Karoon called on them to to take care to their hearing of the Word of the Lord.

Both events were followed by simple but really enjoyable receptions, another reflection of the growing heart of the revitalised RP Church in Scotland.

Licensure of Mr. Donald Mackinnon

On Wednesday evening the 11th January at 7.30pm a congregation of over 80 met in Glasgow for the licensure of Mr. Donald Mackinnon. Mr. Mackinnon led worship and preached on Exodus 27 and Exodus 30 and how these two altars point us to Christ. After the service, Presbytery met and, following deliberation, licensed Mr. Mackinnon to become, upon acceptance of a call and ordination, a minister in the RP Church of Scotland. Mr. Mackinnon has been asked by Presbytery to undertake a six month internship under the oversight of the Glasgow RPCS Session. This will include leading worship in Stranraer on six Lord's Days.



Stranraer GO Team

A GO team visited Stranraer on 3rd September. Our team was led by Ken Nelson and had a mix of all ages. There were 16 of us who travelled down from the Airdrie and Glasgow congregations and a similar number travelled over from Ireland for the day. For some of us it was our first time in Stranraer, but the warm welcome and generous hospitality received made us feel very much at home there.

The team was tasked with distributing 3,000 leaflets across the town. Many hands made light work so this was done well within the time allotted. We are thankful to God for the good weather which made our work much easier to complete.

In the afternoon a group of us went to a local care home where we had worship during which John Watterson, licentiate of Newtownards congregation, spoke briefly. After this we had an opportunity to spend some time talking with the residents individually.

The day concluded with a time of worship in the church, where we reflected on what had been done, and the positive things going on within the RP church in Scotland. This was a fitting end to a great day.

I would recommend being part of a GO team. God willing, I look forward to attending many more GO teams in the future. For anyone who is unable to participate directly please remember that the work does not finish when the GO team goes home. Please continue to remember earnestly in prayer both those who received the leaflets and the Stranraer congregation who also face challenges. Prayer is a great gift that God has given each of us, and we must seek to use it well.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr. & Mrs. Milligan, the Stranraer congregation, and the GO team committee for all they did in making the day such a blessed experience for all involved.

Calum Gillies Glasgow RPCS





Is the gospel message really enough? Can we seriously expect people to respond in faith and repentance to words – spoken or written – and so be saved? Do we not need miracles, signs, wonders, healings, exorcisms? Look at the growth experienced by churches who major on such things, and then look at the number of conversions experienced throughout our entire denomination. Are we not getting something seriously wrong? Are we trapped in a past when people were more word-centred, when they didn't have TVs, computers, and all the trappings of the visual culture that shapes the minds of people today? Do people not need to see God acting in dramatic, visible ways before they will respond to Jesus? Are we doomed to paddle along as a tiny minority in a Christian world that is rapidly leaving us behind? Are word-centred, sermon-preaching churches a relic of the past, only fit to be visited by those who want to see how things used to be?

We could respond in various ways to these questions, though not, I trust, with an 'amen' to the objections they pose. We might, for example, unpick the 'successes' of the wonderworkers with some hard questions of our own. The challenge issued by a medical doctor some years ago to one of the most prominent of these miracle peddlers to produce several of his best successes in healing for medical examination remains unanswered. You can't believe all you hear, or indeed all you think you see. We have, however, all too often thought that pointing out the failures of others somehow lessened the significance of our failures, so we need a better response.

Surely if we wanted to justify a focus on the miraculous in mission we could turn to the Book of Acts. Isn't it full of healings, exorcism, and all the other miraculous phenomena, even raising the dead? Case proven! Or is it? Look a bit more carefully, and you will see a very different picture. Try the conver-

sion of Sergius Paulus, the Roman governor on Cyprus, recorded in Acts 13. Wasn't he converted as a result of the miraculous blinding of Elymas by the Apostle Paul? Luke does write, 'When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed' (v12). The lesson seems clear. But read the rest of the verse: 'for he was amazed at the teaching about the Lord'. The crucial factor in his conversion was the content of the gospel message, the words spoken by the apostle. That was the means of his conversion. The miracle was no more than a visual reinforcement of what Paul had to say about the Lord. The lesson of Acts 13 is not the one we might initially have expected. The word of the gospel is sufficient.

None of this is to overlook the role of the Holy Spirit in bringing the gospel home to the sinner's heart with saving power. As others make much of the Spirit giving miraculous gifts, we need to highlight constantly the miracle which, according to Scripture, the Spirit will perform in all ages, namely the giving of new life to those who are dead in sin. It is as Jesus said to Nicodemus: 'unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God' (John 3:5). To know that this is the case keeps all who speak the gospel humble. It is not our eloquence, cleverness or persuasiveness that bring anyone to saving faith: it is the work of the Spirit of God. If the Lord had not opened Lydia's heart (Acts 16:14), Paul could have preached to her for the rest of his life and she would not have been saved.

Is the gospel message really enough?

A focus on the ministry of the Word of God in evangelism is essential and in no way detracts (or it should not) from the miraculous working of the Spirit in granting new life to the spiritually dead. Nothing else can act as a substitute, however impressive it may seem on the surface. God has promised that his word will not return to him empty but will infallibly accomplish his purpose (Isaiah 55:11). We should not be intimidated by claims of miraculous phenomena or assertions of their necessity for evangelistic success. Having been born again, every Christian has experienced the greatest miracle performed by the Spirit in human life, and the Lord has promised that miracle in connection with the proclamation of His Word, and in no other connection. Our confidence in the gospel is confidence in the Spirit who gives life, and we must never lose sight of that precious truth.



Rev. Dr. David McKay
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Be taught by people who know and
love God, and who
count it as a privilege to
teach others

semesterinscotland.org



Semester in Scotland

Learn and grow through
experiencing life in another culture.
Come and grow through interaction
within a church that Christ is building
into a living, dynamic body

Semeter in Scotland is a ministry of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland run in conjunction with Geneva College, the RP third level College in America. Students take the programme as part of their university degree, obtaining 15 credit hours if they successfully complete all of their courses.

Based in Airdrie, under the leadership of Rev. Andrew Quigley, the programme has tutored 20 students in the past 8 years, as well as some young people from the Irish RP Church who have audited the courses.

The format is simple with the students given set reading on five subjects: Systematic Theology, Reformed Evangelism, Ministry in the Church, The Life and Work of Paul, and Scottish Reformation and Covenanting History, which they must read in a classroom context. They then receive seminar instruction on each subject. Last semesters teachers included, Rev. Andrew Quigley, Rev. Kenneth Stewart, Mr. Peter Loughridge, and Mr Jimmy Fisher who led the students Scottish Reformation and Covenanting History Tour.

On Wednesday afternoons the students are taken on cultural trips by members of the Scottish RP Church which contribute greatly to their semester experience.

The students are encouraged to play a full role in the life of the Airdrie RP Congregation including: participation in public worship, the prayer life of the congregation, and the weekly MET

Bible studies. They also assist in the Friday night Kid's Club and are part of the Covenanter Youth activities.

This past Semester we had five students complete the course, four from the USA - Anna McFall, Graci Arias, Casey Main, and Joshua Giesler, who were joined by Connor Quigley.

Final Thoughts from the Four American Students

The Plod!

As I've been reflecting on my time in Scotland over the past week, one thing that really stands out in my mind is something that Andrew said in our ministry class that I don't think Anna and I will ever forget [especially after Peter mentioned it in his sermon]. He explained to us that the Christian life is a plod, and said, "To plod is the job. Plod on." I loved this because it holds together what each of the books we've read here taught, when doing the spiritual disciplines gets tiresome, plod on. When evangelizing to people who may or may not want to hear the message, plod on. When we look at Paul's life and want to imitate it with our own, we plod on. When we think about all the different parts of theology that might confuse us or seem irreconcilable, we

plod on. This principle applies to every aspect of life, whether we were climbing up hills, or I was falling down them, whether we were tired and didn't want to read or hyper and didn't want to read. We plodded on. Now that our time here is waning one thing I want to carry back with me is the idea of plodding on. Regardless of the circumstances in my life the aim is to bring glory to God, and the motive - love and gratitude, so I plod on until I finish the race.

Graci Arias

What You Take With You?

While at Pastor Andrew's house for our last dinner before departing, we were asked if we had learned practical things that we could take with us. It may seem odd to categorize what I have learned during my time in Scotland this way because what I have learned has ranged from debates on infant baptism to eating with chop sticks. Some people may think that this program is only for ministry majors or Reformed Presbyterians. I would argue that this program is for anyone who is looking to get serious about their Christian walk and thinks it worth their time to spend four months in Scotland to do so. My time in Scotland has been saturated with God, His Word, and His people. I hope that the people I have met here know how much of a blessing they were to me and my fellow students during this semester. The habits I have

formed, the disciplines I have put into practice, and the friendships I have made most assuredly will never be forgotten. I can say with confidence that everything I have learned here I will carry with me always.

Anna McFall

Of all things to remember ... the warm welcome and encouragement....

I really enjoyed my time in Scotland. Not just the learning, which I really enjoyed as well, but also the sites and the church family which we really got to know well. I am very thankful for our time here and am very thankful for all those who encouraged us and our studies while we were there. They really did care. Before leaving I probably got near to 10 cards from different members of the church, if not more. To think that they took the time to do so for us students that may never return (though I hope to do so) is amazing and really uplifting. Of all things I will remember, though there is lots, I hope to always remember the warm welcome and encouragement that the church gave to us. Thank you everyone for making our time an experience we will never forget.

Josh Giesler

A Place of Growth, A Place of Peace... A New Family!

Looking back over my time in Scotland, I miss the smiles...the familiar walks...the passion I saw for seeking after Christ. I long to go back, and I've only been home for a mere two weeks. I've made it clear to many of the congregation...I have come to love them: they always were my family in Christ, but I have been so blessed to form such deep bonds with such a godly group of people. Everything about my experience brought me a step closer to Christ, and that was something I hadn't felt with such clarity before my stay in Airdrie.

The classes—which in reflection—were packed full of the knowledge of Christ and that which concerns His glory, did not even seem like work: I

do not mean there was no work...every day was a journey to wrestle with a new perspective, or to enrich a perspective already held. What I mean is that the atmosphere was one of truly wishing to imbue in us a greater desire for Christ, and to see us disciplined and that made it enjoyable...I am forever grateful, for such concern not resting solely on getting us to “pass”, but rather to see us become more like Christ. The priorities were right.

Even our trips around Scotland with the members of the congregation were a wonderful discipling experience: I came to befriend Christians of all ages, and it was amazing to share stories with the older members and to teach the youngest members. One thing is sure: if you seek to become part of the body of Christ, Airdrie is a place I have been welcomed like no other place...It is a place, a people seeking after their Saviour. Of that there is no doubt.

The worship life of this church was Living Water to my parched soul. The Word and prayer are held high, and it is an encouragement to see such a passion and desire for the Lord. Young and old gather together before the Holy God of our Salvation, and I cannot tell you how the Lord has used the preaching of the Word, the prayer groups, the Bible studies, etc. to draw me to Christ. The Lord and King, Christ, is in His rightful ruling place within this place, and I thank Him for placing me somewhere where the food given to the congregation is solid, and the foundation built is started alone on the cornerstone. I have returned home with a firmer foundation in the Word, and with a greater passion to know Christ.

I have had no church background whatsoever growing up, and the care and respect I was shown regarding my lack of Reformed knowledge was encouraging; I was not forced to accept all that they believed, but the way it was presented and the true reliance on Scripture I saw in their perspectives gave me a true desire to seek after Christ as He is revealed in



Graci, Casey, Josh and Anna

Scripture. I will even venture to say that I have been convinced to pursue the ministry, and even then within the RP church. It will be seen where the Lord will have me go, but He has used Scotland in such a way that I have come to know Him better and deeper. Once again, I praise the Lord that He gifted me with the experience, and thank all in Airdrie and all of the Scottish RP church for their contribution to my experience.

There is no amount of writing that could ever cover all I have learned, or have taken from this program...this chapter of my life. I have been disciplined, come to know Christ better, and fostered relationships with my brothers and sisters in Christ across the ocean. I saw new churches take root, new members taken in, and Christ working amidst His Church in Scotland. To all considering this program, please take a step of faith and give this place a chance...offer your gifts to this church, and you will not leave without more deeply knowing Christ. To all involved in the program, I thank you dearly and miss you all already. To Christ, I give glory for all I have learned, all those I have come to know, and all that He has imbued into my heart through this place, these people, this short time.

Let me cap this stay in Scotland, saying as I should with any thoughts I consider: “Amen. Come, Lord Jesus. The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God’s people. Amen” (Revelation 22:20-21).

Casey Main

Sing To The Lord!



Nails are efficiently designed for what they do. With the forceful swing of a hammer, your nail will sink through one board and secure it to the board behind. Screws, likewise, are well-designed for their purpose. Although similar to the nail in many ways, the screw has the added feature of spiraled thread running up its shaft, and a notched head. But the screw's distinct design requires a distinct action. It must be turned into the surface with a screwdriver, not pounded like a nail. For the screw to function at its best, it must be used according to its design.

The same is true of the Psalms. The ancient hymns of Israel (the Psalms) are as different from modern hymns as screws are from nails. Not only do the Psalms lead us in praise in the train of our Mediatorial King, but they also lead us in a very different 'method' of praise than modern church songs. Although the Psalms serve in generally the same capacity as modern hymns (to praise God), they are different in how they function within the heart as they stir that praise of God. To be specific: modern hymns are typically designed to prompt praise through declaration. For instance, one of Martin Luther's well-loved favorites, 'A Mighty Fortress,' declares, "A mighty fortress is our God, a bulwark never failing; Our helper he, amid the flood of mortal ills, prevailing..." In that beautiful song, Luther calls Christians to declare the steadfast protection of God. It is a declaration of God's greatness. The Psalms are full of declarations of praise also, but the Psalms also include doubts, contradictions, problems, and expectations of judgment—all of which feel very awkward if our worship is shaped by the expectations of modern hymnody (rather like the awkwardness of driving screws with a hammer). But these 'messy' features—complaining, judgment, and the like—are part of the distinct design of the Biblical hymns; and, it is a distinct design which calls for a distinct 'heart activity' as we sing them.

In the Psalms, praise is the expected outcome, but meditation is the underlying activity which we undertake in Psalm singing. Unlike modern church songs which are primarily about 'getting right to the point' and declaring praise, the Psalms are designed to help people who don't always feel like praising begin by meditating on the mess the world is in, and only through a full and robust process of meditation, to come out with praise.

The fact that the Psalter is a collection that lifts us to praise, but is itself full of much that is not praise, highlights the importance of rediscovering the use for which they were designed. Singing them and expecting 'to declare praise' like modern hymns tend to do, is a bit like hammering with a set of screws in your hand. These Psalms require a different kind of 'heart motion' as we sing them—meditation rather than mere declaration.

An example: Psalm 73

A great example, for illustrating the meditational nature of the Psalms, is Psalm 73. The Psalm opens with a grand declaration of God's goodness: 'Truly God is good to Israel, to those who are pure in heart' (v. 1). This is a truth that we learn from God's Word. Throughout the Scriptures, we are taught to trust in God's faithful goodness to his people, and to devote ourselves to holiness. But no sooner than Psalm 73 makes this assertion, it invites questions (vv. 2–3):

*But as for me, my feet had
almost stumbled,
my steps had nearly slipped.
For I was envious of the arrogant,
when I saw the prosperity
of the wicked.*

I came ‘this close’ to abandoning my faith in God’s goodness, our Psalm-leader leads us in confessing. First of all, those whom God calls wicked are actually the ones who seem to receive all the good things in life (vv. 4–12). Furthermore, all my own efforts to remain ‘pure in heart’ (v. 1) seem only to be rewarded by increased sufferings and mocking (vv. 13–15). Over half the Psalm is spent moaning and complaining about how doubtful this declared truth appears in my own experience of life.

But at verses 15–17, our perspective is anchored by drawing our attention to the fuller glory of God’s goodness. Though God’s goodness is not always visible in my present experience, nonetheless, His goodness remains certain. And it is in worship (‘I went into the sanctuary of God;’ v. 17) that I am enabled to experience that goodness of God in His promises, even if I do not yet see them worked out in my experience.

The remainder of the Psalm (vv. 18–28) helps me to ponder the certainty of God’s promises to His people and of divine judgment upon the wicked. This talk of judgment is not to tantalize us with some kind of cruel excitement over the destruction of the wicked who now prosper; rather, in understanding that God is a good judge, and that He will undo every wrong done to me (by judging the wicked) and will reward all holiness (despite my present suffering for it), my soul is nourished. If it does not all take place in the course of my experience now, God’s good rewards are eternally certain for those who love Him.

Indeed, by the end of the Psalm, we are led in words of praise to resolve: ‘for me it is good to be near to God; I have made the Lord God my refuge.’ (v. 28).

Thus, Psalm 73 does more than merely declare the truth, ‘God is good to Israel’ (v1). The Psalm helps us to examine that truth amidst the real problems and paradoxes we experience. The Psalm helps us to meditate on God’s promise in a way that leads us to praise, even if it takes a lot of complaining and confusion before we get there.

This kind of meditational singing is typical of the Psalms. Furthermore, it is a call to this kind of praise which is set at the head of the Psalter—in Psalm 1.

To make the most fruitful use of the Psalms which Christ has given us, we have to recover a meditational approach to singing.

A Call to Meditation: Psalm 1

It is generally recognized that Psalm 1 serves as an introduction to the whole Book of Psalms. Notably, it is a Psalm that exhorts us to meditate on God’s law.

Psalm 1 tells a story. If you have your Bible handy, open it to Psalm 1 and read it. The Psalm tells the story (in poetry) of a man who is joyful (‘how blessed/happy is the man’), even though he is lonely and surrounded by sin and temptation (‘the counsel of the wicked,’ ‘the way of sinners,’ and ‘the seat of scoffers.’)

But the reason he is so happy is because he possesses a grand hope. One day, the congregation of the righteous will stand in God’s presence in community together (v. 5). Right now, he is a ‘lonely outsider’ in a society of sinners (vv. 1–2); but one day, he will be an ‘insider’ in the congregation of the righteous gathered in God’s courts (v. 5). The heart of the Psalm is to show us how this man draws upon that eternal joy even now in his lonely condition in a wicked world. It is by ‘meditating day and night’ on God’s law (v. 2).

The Hebrew verb translated ‘meditate’ in Psalm 1:2 is *hagah*. This word is often used in reference to sung meditations (e.g. *Psa.* 63:6; 71:24; 77:12). That is certainly its primary intention, here, as well. As an introduction to the Psalter, Psalm 1 is showing us the power of these Psalms to bring us joy as we use them to meditate on God’s Word amidst a sinful and scornful world (cf. *Col.* 3:16).

The rewards of such meditational Psalm singing are as glorious as the visions of praise and heaven held out to us in its songs. But this also explains why the Psalms seem awkward to Christians who have not been taught the meditational character of singing. Christians today often expect songs to be merely declarative (getting right to the praise); they do not understand the process of wrestling the Psalms lead us through in order to get us to praise. The Psalms are designed for a different kind of ‘heart motion’ than many today are used to in our worship songs. We pick up screws and expect to pound them; we pick up Psalms and expect to declare praise with them (rather than stirring praise with them). So they feel awkward.

But the problem is not with the Psalms, but with our changed expectations of what a hymn is supposed to accomplish. To make the most fruitful use of the Psalms which Christ has given us, we have to recover a meditational approach to singing.



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This article is adapted from chapter two of Rev. Dr. Michael LeFebvre’s book, ‘Singing the Songs of Jesus’ published by Christian Focus Publications, www.christianfocus.com and is used with their permission.

Whilst we do not live in the past, it is important to know our church history, as one prominent author has written, 'we need to be refreshed, challenged and nourished by our past.'

Reformation History



George Wishart was born in Scotland in 1513. He was tall, with black hair and a long beard. He went to university in France (Louvain) and then became a priest. By 1538 he was back in Scotland as a school teacher in Montrose, where he taught his students the New Testament in Greek. When the Bishop of Brechin heard that Wishart was teaching young men to read the Bible in its original language, he was furious. Wishart fled to Bristol, where he got in trouble for his preaching, and he spent the next three years in Switzerland and Germany. In 1542 he taught at Cambridge University, where he was well known for his kindness and generosity towards others. He often gave his clothes and bed-sheets to the poor. In 1543, Wishart returned to Scotland where he preached in Montrose, Dundee, and the West. In 1545, plague broke out in Dundee and as soon as

George Wishart

Wishart heard of it he went back there, preaching to everyone and caring for the sick. He told them how there was a worse disease than the plague - sin - which could only be healed by the Lord Jesus Christ. Cardinal David Beaton, nephew of the Archbishop who had put Patrick Hamilton to death, sent a priest to kill Wishart with a dagger. However Wishart took the dagger off the priest before defending him from the angry crowd. Wishart survived another attack on his life by Beaton before finally being arrested near Edinburgh in 1546. By this time, a man called John Knox was following Wishart round as a bodyguard, carrying a large two-handed sword. However Wishart wouldn't let Knox come with him to his trial and execution. "One is sufficient for one sacrifice," he said.

Wishart was taken to St. Andrews and kept in prison in the dungeon of the castle. At his trial, he was found guilty of being a heretic because of what he had been preaching, even though he answered all the accusations against him by quoting from the Bible. He was then hanged and burnt at the stake outside the castle. His preaching had helped unite believers across Scotland, and like Patrick Hamilton, his death actually furthered the spread of the gospel.

Challenge

George Wishart was prepared to die rather than stop believing in the truth, once he had found it in the Bible. His life shows us the importance of preaching. His preaching around Scotland for over two years helped to transform the nation. Preaching is still what we need to change our country today. But as well as preaching to people, Wishart also cared for the physical needs of those who were poor and sick. Like Jesus and the apostles we should care for people's physical needs as well as their spiritual needs. Wishart also knew his Bible so well he could quote from it during his trial and prove that what he had been teaching was from God's Word. How well would we know God's Word if we didn't have it in front of us?

Read more:

- Thomas M'Crie, *The Life of John Knox* (Edinburgh, 1811).
- John Knox, *History of the Reformation in Scotland* ed. W. C. Dickinson (2 vols, 1949).
- John Howie, 'George Wishart' in *The Scots Worthies* (Edinburgh, 1995 [1775]), pp 18-32.
- Martin Holt Dotterweich, 'Wishart, George (c. 1513?-1546)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004

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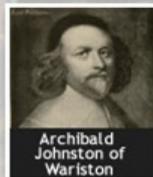
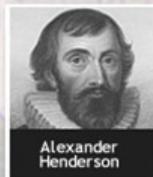
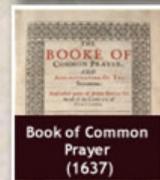
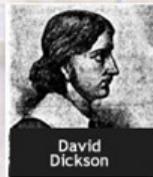
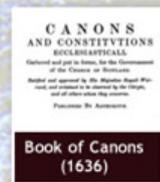
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Achievements of the Second Reformation

*Reaching the Lost,
strengthening the found.
For Christ's Crown and Covenant*

Cyprus RP Mission Team

This past summer, Josh Robertson and myself went to serve Christ's church in Cyprus (Trinity Christian Community Fellowship and the Greek Evangelical Church). We were there for about three and a half weeks. We were also joined by two Americans, Laura Troup and James Almond.

Our first few days in Cyprus were spent mostly planning for VBS (Vacation Bible School). We decided to make our theme 'The armour of God'. This was a great topic to do as it showed the children that if they had God on their side, He will protect them. VBS started at nine and finished at twelve every day for the first week. Our first day only nine kids came along, but by Wednesday twenty-nine kids came along - an answer to prayer. Every day we would talk about a new piece of armour that God has provided for us. There were a few children who only spoke Greek, so we had some of the youth group come along and translate for us - it was an experience. The week was amazing, the kids had a great time and wanted it to last longer, and so did we!

Also during the same week as VBS, we organised an event for the youth during the evening. The youth consist of 30-40 young people from ages 11 and upwards. We planned a number of activities: the first night we played some team games, second night was 'Find the Flag!' and then pancakes at our flat, third night was messy games, fourth night was 'Hunt the Leader!' (all leaders and a few helpers dressed up and hid in the city of Larnaca), and the final night was beach night! Each night we had a 15 minute talk with the youth. We decided as a team that each one of us would take a night and tell about our walk with Christ and the struggles that we have faced and are still facing. After youth group had finished we hung around with the older ones and this is where we had opportunity to share more about our testimonies and have more conversations about Christ. The youth group were the highlight of our whole trip.

The third week was camping week with the over 16's. Twenty-four of us all went up to the Tudous mountains

to hang out, and chill, and hear Zach's talks. It was a fantastic week. God provided us so many opportunities to talk with these young people about their problems and ours and just be there to help them! The talks were about how the Old Testament related to the New Testament, and how both of them always go back to Christ! After the morning talk we had time to go away and discuss the talks. I was really encouraged by my group of girls and how much the talk inspired them and made them feel closer to Christ.

In between all of this we had the chance to paint the church hall and have some free time as a team.

We would all like to thank you for keeping us in your prayers while we were away, and we ask you to still keep on praying for Cyprus that more and more people will come to Christ. The two congregations are very small, pray for them that a few families would come in, and that they won't be discouraged. Also both congregations have no minister, pray that this would change and that some men will be called to serve Christ's church in Cyprus.

Stacy Muir
Airdrie RPCS



Atlanta RP Mission Team

This past summer I went on the Mission Team to Atlanta. We visited a little over 2,000 homes during our door to door visitation. The church has a ministry for providing bread to people in need, which we were advertising, and we had one person ring up and ask for bread.

We participated in three of the outdoor services down in the slums known as 'The Bluff', which Pastor Frank conducts each Sunday afternoon, and even in the short time we were there, we got to know a good few of the residents! Stephen did very well preaching there the last two weeks, presenting a very clear and simple gospel message even in the midst of many distractions! The first week we were there two police cars pulled up with their sirens on to do a raid just as we were about to start, and the next week poor Stephen was interrupted by a very loud rapper driving past who was recording a video with 'his crew' in a convoy of monster trucks! It was quite a sight! Though he said it gave him a minute to collect his thoughts, so I don't think he minded too much!

We returned on three other occasions and ran a 'prayer table' where people could come up and share items for prayer. One of us girls would write down their information and Stephen or Pastor Frank would pray over them. We also promised to pray for these people every day for the next two weeks, but most days we ended up praying through the list at least twice. Many of the requests were the same with people asking for help/strength to get off drugs and for



'financial prosperity' - by that they mean enough money to rent their own apartment rather than squatting.

In our last few days we went back to 'The Bluff' and ran a 'block party' for the kids. This was the only work we did with kids the whole time, and it only lasted a few hours, but I think by that point in the team we were all glad for the change from our usual routine of door to door work. The theme for the morning was the ten plagues. We told the story by acting it out, and then played a game

corresponding to each plague such as covering each other in stickers to represent boils and drinking 'blood'. One of the reasons we ran this party is because there are two children (age 11 and 9) who faithfully attend the afternoon service each week, and this was a way for them to spend some time having fun with the mission team, and it was also something they could invite their friends to. Although none of their friends actually came to the party, when we

drove them home they introduced us to a lot of their friends who said that they would like to start coming to the Sunday school too. After speaking to their parents it was agreed that someone from the church would come and pick them up for the service next Sunday afternoon.

Please pray that these children will indeed show up for services on Sunday, pray for Pastor Frank as he preaches there and for Amy who teaches Sunday school. Also continue to pray for the Northminster congregation as they look for a new place to meet.

Thank you for all your prayers and support over the last three weeks, we truly are co-labourers in the gospel.

Carla Quigley
Airdrie RPCS



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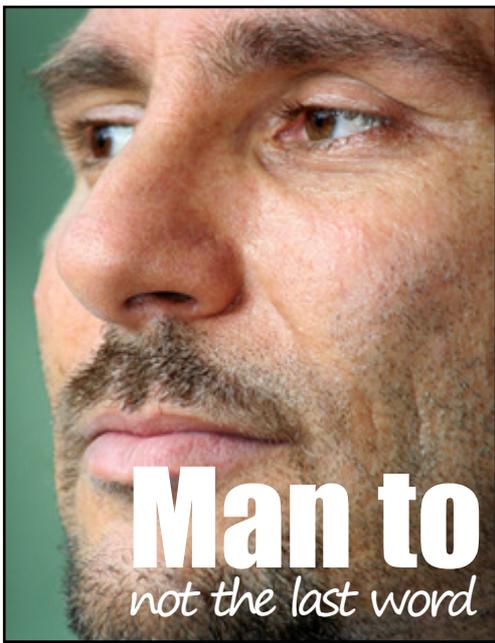
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Man to Man

not the last word

The desire to wield power can be a highly destructive one and one which arguably seems more deeply rooted in fallen man than in fallen woman. Most of us are familiar with this desire everywhere from the sports field to the boardroom, but the sad fact is that the church is not immune either. Indeed, some of the darkest hours in the history of the church have been due to an insatiable thirst for power on the part of Popes, Prelates - and Presbyters too. It wouldn't be quite so bad if we could blame unconverted intruders into the church, but it isn't that easy to explain away: after all, the Lord's people clearly fall under its sway.

Two of Jesus' disciples, James and John, once came to him with an extraordinary request. They asked that one should sit on his right hand and the other on his left when he attained to his glory. When we look at it more carefully, this simple request and the response to it says a lot about power, and how we seek to use it.

First, according to Matthew, this request was mediated through their mother. I wonder why? Since the request seemed to originate with the disciples themselves - after all, Jesus dealt with them about it and not with their mother - they may have chosen to present it through their mother on the basis that a woman's request would have been more difficult to refuse. This is not only an abuse of power on the part of men towards women but becomes also, on their mother's part, an attempted abuse of power on the part of a woman towards a man - in this case, the God-Man.

Second, the desire to sit on either side of Christ can be dressed up piously as a desire to be near to the Lord. I've no doubt that the desire for such nearness lay deep within their hearts, but Christ's response to the request indicates that it was not their primary motive. Sadly, the desire for power can often attempt to excuse itself in fairly innocuous ways: The rebellion against Moses was led by Korah, Dathan

and Abiram who dressed up their despotic tendencies in democratic language: 'You take too much power to yourselves... all the congregation are holy...why do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?' (Numbers 16:3). It sounds for all the world like a democratic appeal for a 'body ministry', but it was simply an attempt to get rid of the old boss only for them to become the new boss instead.

Third, although it seems encouraging that the rest of the disciples were angered by the request, it is worthwhile stopping to consider what the motive for their anger really was. Were they angry at the audacity of the request or was it a case of wishing the honour for themselves? Sadly, the fact that they argued so often about who the 'greatest' among them was seems to indicate that they all probably thought themselves to be at least as worthy of this honour as James and John were - so what we have is envy masquerading as righteous anger!

Christ says two things to check this tendency to want a wrong kind of power or to wield power in a wrong way. First, the kind of power which 'lords it' over others belongs outside the Kingdom, not inside it. This kind of power just relies on its own strength and seeks the benefit of the person who is wielding it. Christian power, on the other hand, comes from a sense of legitimate biblical authority and is authenticated and demonstrated by a spirit of service, seeking the good of others, rather than the aggrandizement of self. It is always marked by humility - even Paul chose to 'appeal' to Philemon rather than 'command' him as his apostolic authority allowed him to do (Philemon 8, 9). Interestingly, even the Devil, in the wilderness temptations, attempts to make Christ wield power for his own advantage rather than for the good of his church.

Second, the secret behind attaining real spiritual authority and wielding true Christian power lies in a willingness to suffer. When Christ heard the request of James and John, he immediately asked them if they were willing to suffer in a similar way to the way he would suffer himself (Matthew 20:22-23). Why? Because suffering for the right reasons (for Christ's sake), and in the right spirit (in faith, patience, and perseverance), sharpens the focus, purifies the motives, humbles the heart, broadens and deepens sympathy, and so enables authority and power to be properly exercised. Power in the hand of those relatively untroubled by chosen suffering remains a powerfully disturbing force.

Men especially need to remember what real power is like when dealing with each other, with colleagues at work, with women in general - and wives in particular - and with children.

Rev. Kenneth Stewart
Glasgow RP Church

The (Ab)use of Power

Living in the Moment



woman
to
woman
not the last word!

I'm notoriously bad at living in the moment. About two days into my holidays, I start thinking about how much time is left and anticipating that moment when it's all over. A friend I haven't seen in a long time will come to visit, and not long into the visit I'll start dreading that moment when they leave. Always looking ahead may make me a good planner, but sometimes it means I miss out on enjoying the here and now. I'd hazard a guess that I'm not alone in this - in fact I can think of two women who've told me they do the exact same thing. Planning ahead is a definite strength that women have, but like all good things, it too is stained and bent by sin.

Without a Biblical understanding of who God is and who we are, we're going to fall into one of two extremes when it comes to planning ahead or living in the moment. The first is to make an idol out of our plan or agenda. We get an idea in our head for what we think our life should look like, we come up with a plan for achieving that, and we work the plan. Then we start to worry. Are we moving fast enough? Are we making the right decisions to get what we want? Why haven't we moved on to the next step? Are we prepared for what will happen next? And as the plans in our head don't work out the way we want, the worry merges with discontent. We become unhappy because where we are is not where we want to be. Instead of enjoying where we are, living in the moment, we are wishing and worrying our life away. You might be the woman who thought that she would have a boyfriend/husband by now, the wife who thought that married life would be different, the mother who thought her children would accomplish certain things, the graduate who assumed they'd find a job in their field, the retiree who thought they would have perfect health, or maybe you just thought you'd accomplish so many things before lunch today and you haven't got any of them done. How do you deal with it when your plans don't work out? Have you made an idol out of your plans?

The other extreme can be summed up in the famous Latin phrase made popular in the film *Dead Poets Society* - *Carpe Diem* - *Sieze the Day*. What does it mean? It means this life is all there is, and you have to go for it. Grab each opportunity before it's lost forever. The future is a ticking time bomb and each day your time is running out. Live each day like it's your last. Take all your money out of the bank and travel around the world. Run away with that married man because, after all, it's your one chance for happiness. Each missed opportunity or broken heart is a tragedy because you may never get another chance. Live in the moment and forget the future. If you don't, you're missing out.

Ironically, neither of these extremes enables you to live in the moment. In the first one, obviously you're too busy worrying and wishing about things in the future to live in the moment. But in the second one, you're still not focused on the moment - you're focused on making the right choices for the moment. If this is your last day alive, what do you do? Are you sure that's going to give you the maximum happiness for

the few hours you have left? If this is your only chance to do certain things, you better make sure they're not passing you by. And so, instead of focusing on what you have, instead of living in the moment, you're looking around trying to grab those opportunities you may never have again. Both of these extremes also have in common a fear of the future. One deals with this fear by trying to plan for every eventuality, the other deals with it by trying to ignore it.

So what is the balance between planning ahead and living in the moment? As Christians how do we reconcile these things? Is it possible to do both? Yes, if we think Biblically. We can plan ahead and still live in the moment because of who God is. He is sovereign and is working out His perfect plan in your life. And His plan and agenda is always better than yours. If you belong to Him you can trust that He is working His plan for your good. Jeremiah 29:11 says, "For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope." You don't have to be afraid of what tomorrow might hold. You don't have to have a plan for every eventuality. God is sovereign and He loves you - He will take care of it when the time comes. Instead of worrying about something that hasn't happened yet, focus on what is happening. When things aren't working out the way you expect, you can rest in the truth that God is in control and He loves you. And instead of wishing for something He hasn't given you yet, start enjoying what He has given you. Trust that He knows what He's doing.

We can plan ahead and still live in the moment because the moment is not all there is. We have a future. We have time. As Christians, we have an eternity in heaven with our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, ahead of us. This life is not all there is. Our problem isn't that we make long-term plans, it's that our plans aren't long-term enough. We need to stop looking at the short term of our earthly lives and start working on having an eternal perspective. Do you really believe that you have a future of perfect happiness for all of eternity? If so, why are you worried and upset about the things you think you're missing out on in this life? Don't you think eternity will more than make up for it?

We can live in the moment, content that our good and loving God has given it to us, but we can also plan on a sure and certain future better than anything we can imagine.

Beth Bogue, Airdrie RPCS

WHY SHOULD YOU ATTEND?

Worship God Corporately

Hear the Psalms sung by a 1,500-voice choir! Join together with fellow believers, worshipping God in spirit and in truth.



PURPOSE



The RP International Conference is a six day "family reunion" held every four years, that brings together a segment of the Family of God

TRADITION



There is something for everyone at RP International 2012. Different classes and activities are scheduled for all age groups.

The RP International Conference is a held every two years, alternatively in North America and Ireland or Scotland.

The Conference brings together people from the church in North America, Ireland, Scotland, Japan and Australia. Over 1600 saints, young and old, enjoy fellowship through the preaching of the Word of God expounded, the singing of the Psalms and engaging in prayer. There is also the opportunity to participate in a range of workshops, seminars, and classes for all ages. Plus there is a talent night, a number of social events, and also plenty of free time when you can become acquainted with the members of Christ's bride.

The Conference Speaker this year is Dr. Joel Beeke who will be taking as his subject the theme of 'How to Live the Christian Life'.

