

# Reformed Vision

Spring 2014

A vision to be caught - a vision to be shared

## THE SEED *That Must Be Sown*

One of the ways in which we commonly think about the work of the gospel is in terms of the sowing of seed. Let's consider three ways in which we can think of the seed that must be sown.

### The Gospel

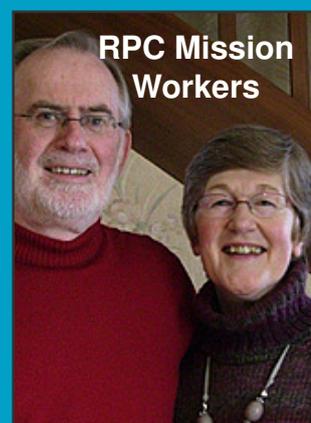
The gospel - the good news about the Lord Jesus Christ - is like seed that must be sown. Paul wrote about his gospel work in terms of planting seed. In 1 Cor 3:6 he says 'I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow'. The gospel is good seed that has to be sown. Without the seed of the gospel being sown, there will be no growth and there will be no harvest. Each generation needs to hear the gospel, and we should have every confidence in the quality of the gospel seed. We cannot know in advance where God will choose to grant growth, but we are to believe that always it will be from this good gospel seed that growth will come. No other kind of seed will do any good. Only the gospel of Jesus Christ can produce a harvest of Christians.

Sowing the good seed of the gospel is not easy work. It is not something that can be done casually and carelessly. According to Psalm 126, those who will 'reap with songs of joy' will be those who first 'sow in tears'. Spurgeon wrote that 'winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so there is no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression, we shall break other men's hearts'. God has saved us so that we might be sowers of the good seed of the gospel. Others are busy in life sowing other seeds - seeds that will only do harm, not good. Let us seize every opportunity we can to sow the good gospel seed. Only where there is sowing will there be reaping. The gospel is the seed that must be sown.

### You

The second way in which we can think of the seed that must be sown is an even more demanding one. You yourself, if you are a believer, are the seed that must be sown. Jesus says in John 12:24-26 that 'unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. The

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man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. Whoever serves Me must follow Me'. You are like a grain of wheat that must fall to the ground and die in order that many more seeds will be produced. Jesus calls upon us to be those who bury ourselves in service to Him.

We are to live for Christ as Paul reminds us in 2 Cor 5:15 - 'And He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died for them and was raised again'. We are to share in the mindset of the apostle Paul who says in Gal 2:20 - 'I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me' and in Phil 1:21 - 'For me to live is Christ.' We have not been saved in order to render mere occasional service to the Lord while spending most of our time serving ourselves. We are called to be more than just sowers for Christ; we are called to be sown for Him. Only when you are willing to be the seed that is sown can you have the joy of seeing new life arise. You are the seed that must be sown.

## Jesus

'The third way in which we can think of the seed that must be sown is the most important one of all. It is, of course, that Jesus is the seed that had to be sown. When Jesus said those words quoted earlier from John 12:24, He was speaking first and foremost and most fundamentally about what He had come to Jerusalem to do. Jesus had come to be like a grain of wheat that falls to the ground and dies. Jesus had come to Jerusalem to die. He was not content to remain as a single seed. He knew that it was His role to die and in dying to produce many seeds.

Jesus came to this world in order to die a life-giving death. If He had not died then forever it would have been the case that there would have been only a single seed. As He entered Jerusalem He did so with the intention of self-sowing. He knew that in His death was the sowing of the good seed that would produce a huge, vast, abundant harvest. Through the sowing of that one precious seed many, many other seeds would spring forth throughout the earth - what John describes as 'a great multitude that

no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language'. Rev 7:9.

As our Lord faced up to the self-sowing that He had to do, He said in John 12:27, 'Now my heart is troubled'. Yet He knew that it was for this very purpose that He had come and He was determined to go through with it. We are told in Heb 12:2 that it was 'for the joy set before Him' that He 'endured the cross, scorning its shame'.

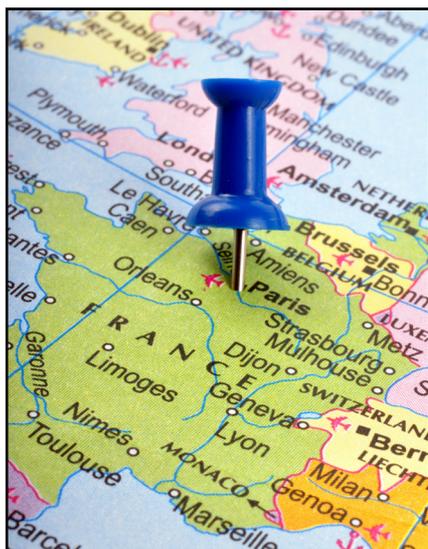
Our Lord Jesus Christ was the seed that had to be sown. He is the One we should have in mind when we sing the final words of Psalm 126. We are told there that 'He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with Him'. Jesus was 'a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering' - Isaiah 53:3. Much more so than any of us, He knows what it is to sow in tears. Jesus was the sower, but He was also the seed that had to be sown.

It is because of what Jesus has done that there is the good seed of the gospel to be sown for as long as this present age lasts. It is because Jesus did what He did that we can have hope in our work of sowing the good seed and of sowing our selves for Him. The death of Jesus and His subsequent exaltation guarantees the life of all for whom He laid down His life. Those who follow Jesus will experience tears, but we can also anticipate times of rejoicing.

The really, really important seed that had to be sown has already been sown. Jesus Christ was that seed and the harvest from that act of sowing still continues. As Christians we are called to follow Jesus. We are to follow Him as sowers of the seed and as sowers of our selves. We are given these words in 2 Cor 9:6 to challenge and encourage us as we go about that work of sowing - 'Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously'. Let us be thankful that in the Lord Jesus Christ we have One who sowed generously and One who will also certainly reap generously. Let us rejoice in our Lord Jesus Christ who was Himself the seed that had to be sown.

*Rev. David Fallows*

**“Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”**



As an English girl who studies Fine Art in Dundee I am used to sharing my faith openly. But I knew that coming to Nantes as an Erasmus student would be different. The French see no need for God. There is so much self-sufficiency yet spiritual deadness. These were my impressions coming to France, but what I found here in the strength of God's people and their trust in God's salvation encouraged me.

This was evident in the church that I joined in Orvault, Greater Nantes. This church, like most evangelical churches you will find in France, is very small, but we should not gauge the "success" of its work simply in terms of numbers. We look for spiritual growth, a burden for the lost, fellowship within the church, and for faithfulness. I have seen a huge burden for the lost in Nantes as God's people reach into their communities. The link that deeply struck me was that with the younger generation. Every other Friday there is a 'groupe d'ados' for teenagers, believers and non-believers alike. Helping out as a leader I can see the strong relationship of love between

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the church leaders and the youngsters. The latter are so faithful in their attendance that some have been coming since a very young age. To me these relationships show what the church should be striving for. To care so deeply for the lives of just a few individuals, to nurture and encourage them even if you may not see the outcome, that is faithfulness.

Furthermore, I befriended a French history student at English Café and joined her for Bible Study with Andrew and Heather. She is not a Christian but she is searching and to be able to journey with her is a true privilege. I am overwhelmed by the love and commitment that this couple has for just one individual.

However, within the church itself, community is difficult. Many different activities serve to create stronger relationships between members but the individualistic mindset of the French makes this difficult. The church is also constantly changing, with foreigners passing through for short periods of time. Fellowship is hard to find and this is so very important to build up the church! Much prayer is needed to know how best to create community within the church to allow it to be a strong body of Christ.

I have also had the privilege of attending GBU (University Christian Union) meetings. I am truly encouraged at the witness of French students. Being a Christian here means being in a minority. You don't just say 'I am a Christian' to fit in. In

fact you will probably be persecuted for this declaration. However these students are so assured in their faith, they are so filled with the love of Christ and love for his lost people, that they proclaim this with joy and urgency. That is what our witness should look like! Praise be to God for their passion!

So, passionate and persevering prayer is needed for this dark country. I urge you to pray for the French people, that they will realise that they are lost and need saving; that they will throw off their pride and independence and kneel with trembling lips before Jesus and declare their utter worthlessness and dependence on him. Pray for the Christians who are a light in this darkness, pray for perseverance and trust in God's provision. Pray for Malcolm, Andrew, Muriel, and Heather in their continual work in Nantes. And pray for the church, that community and fellowship would be found within God's people, for that is where we go out from to give God's light to the darkness that is France.

*Lydia Hiorns*



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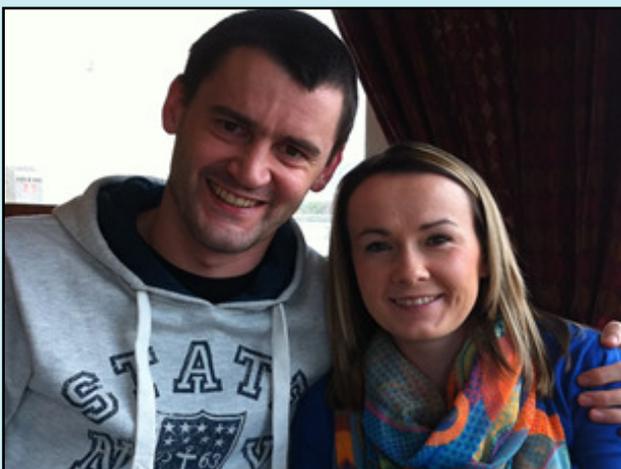
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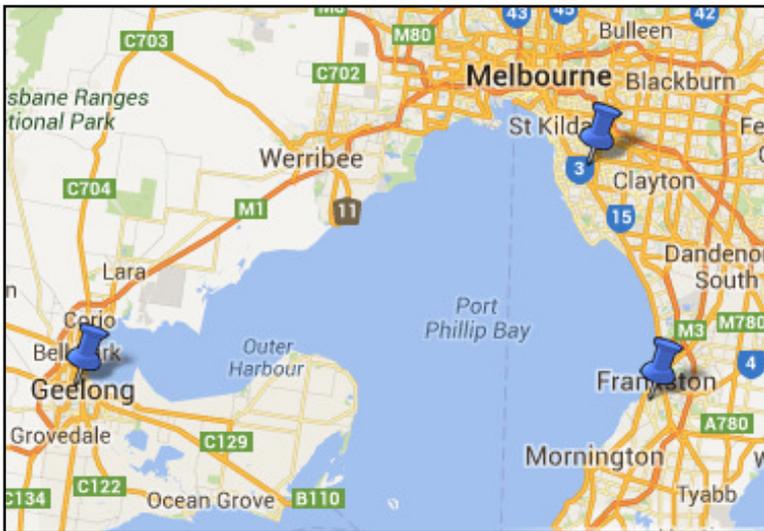


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# Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia



The Reformed Presbyterian Church of Australia numbers over 200 with the largest congregation in the area of Geelong, Victoria. The other congregations are in Frankston and Mackinnon.

The first church, in Geelong, was started in 1858. It links itself historically with those in the Covenanter movement in Scotland who did not accept the settlement of Presbyterianism in that country in 1690, and has sister denominational relations with the Reformed Presbyterian Churches of North America, Ireland, and Scotland. Fraternal relations exist with the very similar Presbyterian Church of Eastern Australia.

In 1959 the Rev. A. Barkley, RP minister in Geelong, became the founding principal of the

Reformed Theological College. In 1974, the Australian Presbytery petitioned the parent body, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland, and was made a separate denomination on 12th June 1974.

## Geelong RPCA

The oldest Reformed Presbyterian Congregation in Australia is found in Geelong, a city of about 200,000 people which lies about an hour's drive southwest of Melbourne. The first minister, Alexander M Moore, arrived in Geelong in 1857 and the following year a congregation was organised, drawing on Reformed Presbyterians from Scotland and Ireland who had settled in the area.



By 1862 a meetinghouse was built and the preacher at the opening services was John G. Paton, a fellow student of A.M. Moore while he was in Glasgow in the 1850's, and on deputation from the South Sea Mission.

In total the congregation has had nine ministers over the past century and a half. Currently we have a congregation of 170, drawn from every continent on the planet (except Antarctica) as Australia is a very diverse and multicultural nation.

Rev Andrew Stewart, originally from Northern Ireland, has been the minister of Geelong RPC since 1998. He and his wife, Katie, have two children.

Geelong RP Church is currently supporting a RP Church plant in North Geelong.

## Frankston RPCA

The Frankston congregation was established in 1971, but closed in 1989. It was revived in 2004 as part of the McKinnon congregation. Rev. Edwin Blackwood had a dual call and was preaching in McKinnon in the morning and Frankston in the evening. In February of 2008 it was organised as its own congregation, and Rev. Edwin Blackwood is the full time minister. He and his wife, Nancy, have six children.



The LORD has blessed this congregation with several youth and young children. When children's Bible school classes started in 2008 there was one class for the children. Since then it has grown to four separate classes for children age 3 - 19. The Frankston congregation has grown as Christian families have come into the church, but it is their prayer that unbelievers would be reached with the gospel, and that God would use the Frankston church to bring people to Him. The church is hoping to grow not only in numbers, but in unity of heart and mind, and also spiritually.



## McKinnon RPCA

In 1928 the Rev W. R. McEwen was appointed by the Synod of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland to its 'colonial mission' in Australia. Upon his arrival he ministered in the Geelong Reformed Presbyterian Church to allow the Rev H. K. Mack, the minister of the Geelong congregation, an opportunity to return home to Ireland for a time.

On the return of Rev Mack, Rev McEwen looked for a place to begin a new congregation. The suburb of

McKinnon was chosen as it was a growing district with few churches. He rented a house which served as a meeting place for a Sabbath School and Sunday evening services. The construction of a church building began in October 1939 and, although not finished, was opened on 24 February 1940. Six years later, on 11 April 1946, elders were appointed and the congregation logically became the McKinnon Reformed Presbyterian Church.

The McKinnon congregation has fluctuated significantly in recent decades and closure seemed painfully imminent. However, faithful ministry in recent years has spawned encouragement among those who remained. A slow, difficult but rewarding process of revitalisation is now under way. This is providing a renewed focus on the gospel of Jesus Christ, bringing with it renewed hope and enthusiasm for the work and witness of this congregation in the community of McKinnon and surrounding suburbs. The minister, Rev. Graeme Hart and his wife, Allison, have four children.



# Teams 2014

## Airdrie 2014 Team

Chicks-Chocolate, Flowers-Fun, Ships-Scotland, Adventure-Airdrie are some of the buzz words associated with the Spring Holidays, 16th-21st April 2014. For me joining with the Airdrie congregation for their Go Team in preparation for their Mission week was a highlight and a productive way to spend my holidays in service for King Jesus.

The main task was to give out leaflets inviting the town of Airdrie to attend a week of mission services looking at the subject "Life then what". The 9 members of the GO team were joined by members of the congregation to give out 16,800 leaflets over 3 days, Thursday-Saturday. During the evenings the GO Team spent time with the young people of the congregation accompanying them bowling, to Kripsy Kreme, and watching Frozen. I thoroughly enjoyed getting to spend time with the young people, and it was such a blessing to have them join us during leaflet distribution.



**Bailiesmills**  
23rd-27th June

**Glenmanus**  
23rd-27th June

**Galway**  
5th-12th July

**Cloughmills**  
9th-16th August

**Ballymoney**  
17th-23rd August

**Milford**  
24th-30th August

**For more information,  
please email [goteams@rpc.org](mailto:goteams@rpc.org)**

In addition to spending time as a team in prayer every morning for the advance of the gospel in Airdrie, it was a blessing to join the congregation for worship on Sabbath and the prayer meetings throughout our stay. As the week of mission has commenced we pray for family and friends of church members to accept the invitation and attend the services, and for those who have received invitations through the door to come also, and ultimately that God would be working, softening hearts to receive the gospel and commit their lives to Jesus.

*Ruth Coulter  
Carrickfergus RPCI*