

GOOD NEWS

From the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland | May 2026



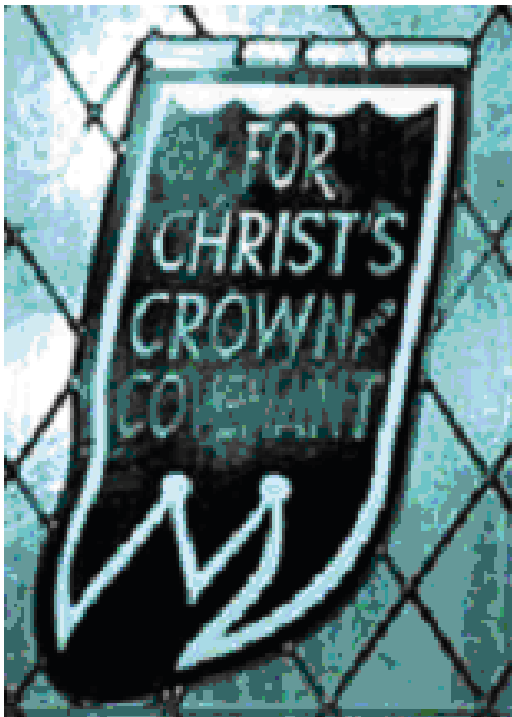
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EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

In our last edition, Tim Donachie wrote about the King’s official visit to the Pope, a matter that is of grave concern to Protestants in this nation. The Witness Bearing committee of Presbytery has written to the King about his promotion false religions, against the continuing obligations of our national covenants. This letter has been sent to MPs. At the time of writing the Scottish Parliament has been dissolved, but it is the intention to send the letter to all MSPs after the election. It will also be sent to other denominations in Scotland. Whilst all our congregations will pray for those in authority, it would be especially prudent to pray for a favourable response to our letter. The sceptical part of us may say that we will make no difference, we’ll be ignored. But we must remember that Reformation is not only possible, but, according to the prophecies of God’s Word, certain at some future time. We should therefore pray diligently and with faith for our letter to do some good. At the very least, it is a public witness “For Christ’s Crown and Covenant.”

I hope you find the articles in this edition useful. There is a diversity, from the moral issue of gambling that is ruinous to society to the challenges of preserving and promoting psalmody. There is no shortage of problems, but there are also helpful solutions suggested.

In a previous edition we interviewed Geneva College, a university under the authority of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America. This time we have interviewed Rev. Titus Martin, the minister of College Hill RPC. As the name suggests, his congregation sits on the college campus, giving opportunities to minister to students. Often this is a formative time in a young person’s spiritual life. The interview will be of interest to those who have students in their congregations.

As always, we are open to suggestions of topics that you would like to see covered in future issues of this magazine.

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CONTEMPORARY ISSUE
DR TIM DONACHIE

A Harmless Form of Entertainment?

For many people, buying a lottery ticket or having a flutter on the Grand National or buying a charity raffle ticket is a harmless and even praiseworthy activity, especially when it raises funds for charitable organisations. However, even a cursory examination of what is called the 'gambling industry' will quickly reveal that gambling in all its forms is anything but beneficial to society and has led to addiction, stealing and the destruction of family life.

It might be helpful to give, first of all, a definition of gambling. Gambling may be defined as 'an activity in which a person subjects something of value – usually money – to a risk involving a large element of chance in the hopes of winning something of greater value, which is usually more money'. It is not the purpose of this article to explain or define the various categories of gambling, something that is done very well by Rex Rogers in his excellent book 'Gambling. Don't bet on it', but he suggests that there are eight categories: Casual, occasional, risky, professional, habitual, serious, obsessive and compulsive, each one more harmful than the former. The fact of the matter is that there appears to be a gradation with the

possibility of a milder form leading to a more serious one. The question that must be asked however, especially as far as the Christian is concerned, is whether or not gambling in all its forms, from the casual to the compulsive, is sin.

It would be difficult to find a specific Biblical command forbidding gambling, but there are Biblical principles that demonstrate that gambling is not an activity that should be a part of a Christian's walk with God. Before considering some of these principles, it is important to consider the Biblical practice of casting lots, which some see as a form of gambling. There is no doubt that casting of lots was common in both Old and New Testaments, from the Urim and Thummim in Ex. 28:30 to the choice of Matthias in Acts 1:21–26, but the purpose was to determine the will of God on a specific matter, not to gain materially or personally. There was no luck or chance involved as is clearly set out in Proverbs 16:33 'The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the Lord.' Whatever decision obtained by the proper casting of a lot was recognised to be from the hand of the sovereign God. It is self-evident that belief in a sovereign God

completely destroys the concept of chance or luck or fortune! As Rex Rogers says in his book 'to believe in luck is to believe that God does not exist'.

For a Christian, there is one fundamental principle that should make any kind of gambling anathema, and that is the principle of stewardship. The Bible is quite clear that everything belongs to God and what we have is lent to us for a period, and is to be used wisely and for the glory of God and for the good of our fellow man. To argue, as some do, that playing the lottery is alright because a lot of the money raised goes to charity is a false argument – people do not buy lottery tickets because they want to support a particular charity but because they want to win a sum of money for which they have not worked! Scripture frequently emphasises the need for faithfulness in the stewardship of all that God gives and the foolishness of squandering these resources (1 Cor. 4:2, Prov. 21:20). Gambling, by contrast, involves risking money irresponsibly and often results in loss rather than productive use.

Gambling also undermines the Biblical principle of contentment, for it feeds the desire for quick riches, and can lead individuals away from reliance on God. Matthew 6:31–33 urges believers to seek first the kingdom of God rather than material riches and in 1 Timothy 6:10 believers are warned against greed and the pursuit of wealth at all costs when it says, 'the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil.' Christians are called to live by faith, trusting in God's provision rather than chance. Gambling, which relies on luck, stands in contrast to faith in divine providence. Rather than focussing attention on Biblical contentment, gambling fosters and encourages the sin of covetousness —desiring what others have. Many television adverts present a vision of a life of ease and luxury if you are only 'lucky' enough to win the lottery or the draw for a house or car that would normally be outwith your own financial resources. The Bible teaches contentment with what one has. Hebrews 13:5 teaches believers to look to God for daily provision and not to be envious of what God in his wisdom has given to others! Christians are encouraged to find satisfaction in God's blessings rather than pursuing wealth through chance.

Not only does gambling destroy Biblical contentment, it also undermines the principle of work, which although originally commanded after the fall, when God said to Adam, 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread', later Biblical passages demonstrate that work should not be seen as a punishment for sin, but as a command and gift

of God Ex. 20:9 'Six days you shall labour and do all your work,' Eph. 4:28 'Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labour, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need.' 1 Tim 5:8 'But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.'

The devaluing or undermining of these Biblical principles should be enough to convince Christians that gambling in all its forms is not appropriate behaviour for a follower of Christ, but there is also the consideration of ethical and social concerns. The twin evils of exploitation and addiction are ever present in the world of gambling. The prospect of instant wealth or at least of instant gratification plays on human greed or weakness and can lead to financial ruin, broken families and addiction. There is always the desire for 'one more bet' especially when the gambler has just lost, for he believes that the next bet will recoup his losses! He convinces himself that he is having a 'losing streak' and his 'luck' is sure to change if he just keeps on, and there is always the prospect of 'the big win' that will solve all his problems. It is a sad truth that this 'problem' gambling so often affects the poor in society who see the lottery, cards or horse racing as a means of escape from financial hardship. This is, of course, contrary to Biblical teaching which prioritizes compassion and justice—seeking to protect the vulnerable rather than profit from their loss. A Christian ethical stance emphasizes care for the marginalized (James 1:27) and opposes practices that perpetuate injustice.

The Christian approach to gambling must be rooted in faith, responsibility, and love for others. It emphasizes that money and possessions are tools for service, not self-indulgence. While the Bible may not explicitly mention modern forms of gambling, its principles clearly discourage practices that lead to greed, exploitation, and loss of trust in God. Ultimately, Christians are called to seek their fulfilment not in chance or wealth, but in God's faithful provision and the joy of stewardship.

Instead of seeking fortune through gambling, Christians are encouraged to practice three principal things: Contentment – trusting that God will always provide what is necessary. Generosity – sharing what God has graciously given to help those in need and to advance the kingdom of God. Work and diligence – earning through honest means by using the strength and abilities that God in his mercy has provided.

PRESERVING AND PROMOTING PSALMODY TO NEW GENERATIONS

Dr. Tim Duguid
(Airdrie RPC)



If you were handed a psalter from four hundred years ago, could you use it? The example shown here from *The Psalmes of David in Prose and Meeter* (1635) contains music that was once sung by congregations throughout Scotland. Today, however, even experienced singers would struggle to read it. This raises an important question. If someone in the year 2426 stumbled across our psalters from today, would they know how we used them? Would they know what tunes we sang, how we read the notation, or whether our congregations sang in harmony or in unison?

These questions highlight a challenge that all churches face: how to pass on our worship practices for future generations.

A Scriptural mandate

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly calls His people to remember His works and to hand them down with care. This responsibility is not optional but rather is a vital part of the life of faith. Before Israel had even left Egypt, God instructed parents to explain the meaning of the Passover to their children. Parents were commanded to recount to their kids how the Lord delivered His people from slavery (Exodus 12:26-27). Embedded within the annual

celebration was more than a ritual; it was a living act of teaching, and this pattern continues in Jewish Passover observances to this very day.

The Lord reinforced this pattern through many other signs and commands. His people were to speak about His mighty deeds during ordinary daily activities, so that remembrance would become part of the fabric of life (for example, in Exodus 13:8-14 and Deuteronomy 11:19). When Joshua set up memorial stones in the Jordan, he did so to ensure that when children asked about their meaning, their parents would tell them how God stopped the river for His people (Joshua 4:6-7). These instructions reveal a consistent truth. God provides His people with remembrances that help them to reflect upon His works and to look forward to the faith of generations yet to come.

Scripture also teaches that preservation is not limited to historical events; it also includes the worship of God. The Psalms teach us to pass on the worship of God itself. For instance, Psalm 145:4 tells us that one generation will praise God's works to another. Psalm 78:4 urges God's people not to hide His praises from children, but to declare His strength to the next generation. Psalm 22:30 looks forward to a future people who will be told of the

Lord's righteousness. Worship, therefore, is not only an act of praise. It is a means of teaching.

How the Church has remembered

Christians across the centuries have taken this responsibility seriously. Parish records, some dating back to 1303, preserve the spiritual lives of congregations. Lutheran churches then built upon this tradition and began keeping Kirchenbücher in 1518, while the English followed in 1538, when Thomas Cromwell ordered parishes to keep similar records. These surviving documents are more than a record of baptisms and deaths. They often detail how communities prayed, worshiped, and grew together over time.

The Church has also worked to preserve and pass along the practice of psalm singing. In Reformation Geneva, John Calvin set up music schools that trained children how to sing the psalms. They then led the worship in the local church, where adults were only allowed to join in the singing only after they could sing them as well. A similar pattern was adopted in post-Reformation Scotland, where memorizing the catechism and psalms was required before participating in the Lord's Supper. Worship was not something merely observed. It was learned, embodied, and passed on.

Psalmody's fragile state

Despite this rich heritage, psalmody is vulnerable. The melodies sung in ancient Israel have been entirely lost. Only the words remain. A similar loss happened closer to home. Before the 1650 Scottish Metrical Psalter, Scottish congregations used more than 150 tunes. Yet within a few decades, that number dropped to twelve. These twelve tunes dominated worship for nearly a century, a period that Millar Patrick called the Great Eclipse. Many tunes simply disappeared because people stopped singing them.

This should make us pause. How many new tunes have you learned in the last ten years? Are there melodies quietly slipping out of use in our own churches? Can a singing tradition remain healthy without growth? Psalmody survives when people deliberately sustain and enrich it.

In addition to internal challenges, there are external pressures. In 2004, the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland learned that its publisher no longer had the equipment to print split-leaf psalters, a format used

for generations. A resource once taken for granted is suddenly becoming more difficult to produce.

Digital tools can also be unexpectedly fragile. Apps such as the 1650 Psalter, Psalms for Singing, and Sing Psalms are widely used today. However, they do not preserve the psalms and tunes they include, and they rely on developers who must constantly update them as phones and operating systems evolve. Recent history offers many warnings about those who rely on data that is tied to a single application: the once-dominant word processor software WordPerfect vanished almost overnight in the mid-1990s, and Adobe's Flash Player became unusable after Apple chose not to support it in 2010. Digital resources can disappear quickly, even when they seem secure. For all these reasons, the preservation of psalmody requires thoughtful planning, careful stewardship, and the involvement of the whole Church.

A digital answer?

Despite these modern-day challenges, technology still offers avenues to fulfill our Scriptural mandate to teach future generations. The Digital Splitleaf project (<https://splitleaf.org>) was created to support the preservation and growth of psalm singing by applying archival best practices to psalm texts and tunes.

The idea began in 2018, as I explored the possibility of an online version of a split-leaf psalter that would be easier to use than a printed copy. As I surveyed existing psalm-singing apps, I noticed that none could place the text directly beneath the music, and none structured their data (either the tunes or the texts) in ways suitable for long-term preservation. In December 2019, I began building what would become the Digital Splitleaf, starting with the psalms of the 1564 Scottish Psalter and expanding it during the COVID lockdowns to include the full text of the 1650 Psalter and many public-domain tunes.

After six years of development, the Digital Splitleaf allows users to pair any text with any tune of a compatible metre, listen to playback, isolate voice parts, adjust speed or pitch, print settings, zoom in and out, and share their selections. These features make it easier to learn and teach psalm singing. Yet the platform's greatest strength is not its features but its careful management of data. Without accurate, structured information, nothing can be preserved for the future.

The current phase of the project, funded by the University of Glasgow, focuses on community participation. Psalm singers across Scotland are invited to help preserve the texts and tunes used in their own congregations. Once this material is gathered, new tools can be developed to help ministers plan worship, track which psalms are being sung, and identify tunes best suited to particular passages or themes. Digital publication can also support congregations that lack access to printed psalters, especially those in mission settings.

Digital resources also give composers the chance to share new psalm tunes widely, without waiting for a printed psalter. A global community of psalm singers could learn from one another, share their traditions, and contribute to a living, growing heritage of worship.

If we take these steps now, we will not only preserve what we have received but also strengthen psalmody for generations to come.

Tune writing competition

The Digital Splitleaf is pleased to announce a new tune writing competition. Composers, music students, church musicians, and anyone who enjoys writing music are invited to submit original four-part tunes using a text from the 1650 Scottish Metrical Psalter.

Submit entries to:

digital-splitleaf@protonmail.com

Deadline: 31 August 2026

Prizes: £150 (first), £100 (second), £50 (third)

Winning tunes will be performed at the Psalm Sing in Airdrie in November.

Digital Splitleaf workshops and events

Join us for training workshops designed to help you learn the Digital Splitleaf and strengthen your psalm-singing practice.

- Training Workshop (in-person and online):

Wednesday, 27 May, 4:30 – 6:30 pm

Highland Theological College, Dingwall

Online details at <https://splitleaf.org>

- Training Workshop (online):

Saturday, 25 July, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

Details at <https://splitleaf.org>

- Psalm Sing (in-person and online):

Friday, 6 November, 7:30 – 9:00 pm

Airdrie Reformed Presbyterian Church, Airdrie

Online details at <https://splitleaf.org>





DEVOTIONAL
PSALM 12

Rev. Ian Gillies
River Valley RPC

When David wrote Psalm 12, he was faced with the very same problem we face in the West today – a steep decline in godliness. “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men” (v.1). As David elaborates, he points to man’s use of the tongue: “They speak idly everyone with his neighbour.” Could the same not be said of our day?

The good news is that Psalm 12 does not just bemoan fallen man’s sinful words, it sets before us a contrast between man’s word and God’s Word, as David builds to the crescendo of verse 6, “The words of the Lord are pure words, like silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.” This contrast is good news because it sets before us the answer to the great problem of declining godliness that we face today. Quite simply, we need to listen less to the word of man and give ourselves to the Word of God.

Why? Firstly, because the word of man tells you what you want to hear but the Word of God tells you what you need to hear. David describes the “flattering lips” of those around him, like those who were afraid to challenge the wicked King Saul so tickled his ears instead. In our day, flattery is not hard to find either. Many are like Mr. Smooth Man of the town of Fair-Speech in *The Pilgrim’s Progress*. Bunyan describes another man from that town, Mr. Two Tongues, and we certainly see those of his ilk in our day too. The hypocrites, those who say one thing then, in a moment, say or do another thing. As David notes, a double tongue comes from a “double heart” (v.2), which cannot be trusted. But the Word of God can be trusted because it comes from the pure heart of God. Like refined silver, the Word has no dross of flattery or hypocrisy, just pure truth. It tells you not what you want to hear but what you need to hear. As another has said, the Word of God does not just sing, it also stings.

Another reason to turn back to the Word of God is that man’s word is proud but God’s word is proven. When men leave the moorings of God’s Word, in their pride, they sail in the direction of self-service. This reflected in their speech, “With our tongue we will prevail; our lips are our own; who is Lord over us?” (v.4.) Every day we hear the Lord’s name being taken in vain in a culture where anything goes apart from God. But hearts filled with pride are ultimately hearts that are empty and so too are the words that flow from them.

But God’s words are not empty. They are full of truth. Tried, tested, proven truth. Throughout the generations, like silver, the Word of God has faced the fiery furnace of opposition, yet still it stands, and still it saves. The Word who became flesh faced the fiery furnace of opposition on Calvary’s cross yet he endured it all. The scoffers called on him to prove Himself by coming down from the cross but He proved His Word true by staying on the cross, dying, and rising from the grave. The Word is proven true.

A final reason to turn back to the Word of God is that man’s word breaks down whereas God’s Word builds up. In a day when “vileness is exalted” (v.8), it is no surprise when you find “the oppression of the poor” and the “sighing of the needy” (v.5). The proud hearts and words of man, like the fire of James 3, destroy all in their path. But God’s Word is different. How? It refines us. As the Word is pure in its nature, so too it is purifying in its effect. As it sings to our souls, and stings our souls, the Holy Spirit removes the dross and makes us more like the Word who became flesh. This is why we need to listen less to the word of man and give ourselves more to the Word of God. It will keep us from stumbling and, like David, from despairing too, “You shall keep them, O Lord, you shall preserve them from this generation forever” (v.7).

A Letter to His Majesty the King

from the Witness Bearing Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland



21 April 2026

Sir,

We are writing to you, and to all members of the UK and Scottish parliaments, as the Witness Bearing Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland (hereafter, RPCS) in order to express to all of you, as interested parties, our deep concern regarding the decisions and conduct of the rulers of our nation.

General Context

As ministers and elders of the RPCS, we pray “for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence” (1 Timothy 2:2) and we recognise that God commands “every soul [to] be subject to the governing authorities.” (Romans 13:1)

However, it is also our duty humbly to remind you as King, Prime Minister, First Minister, MPs and MSPs – that you are accountable to God for your conduct in office.

Particularly, in these times of trouble and confusion, we believe it is of critical importance for all in authority to remember that the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 contain vows subscribed by the monarch and legislated into the constitutional architecture of both the Scottish state and the Church of Scotland.

Furthermore, the King is bound by the *Accession Oath* which he swore on 10 September 2022 and the *Coronation Oath* which he swore on 6 May 2023, while all members of parliaments are bound, by oath, to uphold the constitution of the United Kingdom.

And since it is the case that no vows made lawfully before God can be revoked and, given that the moral

and legal personalities of monarch, church and state continue in existence, these institutions remain bound by these covenants, and they continue to impose perpetual obligations upon all of you.

Context of our Concerns

Our concerns must be understood in the following context:

First, the National Covenant explicitly affirms Protestant, Reformed and Presbyterian Christianity as the ‘true religion’ and establishes it in perpetuity as the constitutional religion of Scotland.

Second, the National Covenant disavows all other religions (on the ground that they are false religions) and, further, explicitly rejects Roman Catholic and Episcopalian doctrine and practice.

Third, the National Covenant also requires the king, the church, and the state to promote and preserve the ‘true religion’ for the glory of God, for the king’s honour, and for the benefit of people’s souls.

Fourth, in his *accession oath* as taken on 10 September 2022, the King swore ‘to the utmost of (his) power (to) maintain in the United Kingdom the Protestant Reformed Religion established by law’. This oath also included a declaration by the King that he was ‘a faithful Protestant, and that (he would), according to the true intent of the enactments which secure the Protestant succession to the throne, uphold and maintain the said enactments to the best of (his) powers according to law.’

Fifth, in his *coronation oath* as taken on 6 May 2023, the king swore to ensure the security of the ‘worship, discipline, rights and privileges of the Church of Scotland’ as found in ‘An Act for Securing the Protestant Religion and Presbyterian Church Government’ of 1707 (passed

by the pre-union Scottish parliament and essentially incorporated by the Acts of Union).

Specific Concerns

First: The Role of the King

We are concerned by the following:

His decision to appoint a Roman Catholic as Lord High Commissioner to represent him at the General Assemblies of the Church of Scotland and Free Church of Scotland in 2025;

His decision to appoint the Princess Royal as his witness to the St Margaret Declaration of friendship between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland – which amounts to a statement of his approval of this spiritual union;

His decision to pray with the Pope during his state visit to the Vatican in October 2025, in a manner which was meant to convey spiritual fellowship;

His approval of the attendance of the Lord High Commissioner at Edinburgh's Central Mosque for the Edinburgh 900 City Council & Faith & Belief Community Accords, which affirm the religious pluralism which our national constitution – and our covenants particularly – explicitly reject;

His decision to open the King Charles III Wing to the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and institute the King Charles III Programme (which includes, a Young Muslim Leadership Programme), coupled with his earlier decision to open the doors of Windsor Castle to an Open Iftar, evidence his affinity for, and promotion of, the demonstrably false and dangerous creed of Islam.

All these decisions are in clear and serious breach of the obligations imposed by the covenants and by the coronation oath.

Second: The Role of the Parliament

We are concerned by the following:

The Church of Scotland (Lord High Commissioner) Act 2025 – which legalised the appointment of a Roman Catholic to that office – is clearly ultra vires (beyond lawful power) on the basis of the covenants.

Third: The Role of the National Church

We are concerned by the following:

The St Margaret Declaration of friendship between the Church of Scotland and the Roman Catholic Church in Scotland (referred to above) on the ground that it is biblically and constitutionally invalid;

The decision of the Church of Scotland (and the Free Church of Scotland) to receive the Roman Catholic Lord High Commissioner on the ground that such a reception is opposed to the covenants and to the Confession of Faith;

The Moderator of the Church of Scotland's prominent role in the official proceedings between the King and the Pope.

Conclusion

The RPCS humbly reminds all those in authority of the following:

This nation is constitutionally, explicitly, and avowedly a Christian nation;

On the basis of perpetual and binding covenants, the church and people of Scotland have a constitutional duty to be loyal to the king as far as he reigns in sympathy with their requirements;

No religion or ideology contrary to the obligations of our constitution – inclusive of the National Covenant and the Solemn League and Covenant – has any right to official recognition or public funding in Scotland;

There is no biblical (see Exodus 20:3) or constitutional warrant for interfaith dialogue and cooperation;

While acknowledging with all sincerity our own failings, the RPCS asserts that the failings of the Church of Scotland outlined above, in addition to the other serious sins of which she is guilty, have further demonstrated that she has no right to be recognised as the national church.

The RPCS, therefore, calls the King, Prime Minister, First Minister, MPs and MSPs, and every Scottish church to return to the obligations of the National Covenant of 1638 and the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643 and, further, calls upon the Church of Scotland (and the Free Church of Scotland) to reject the reception of the Roman Catholic Lord High Commissioner on the ground stated above.

The Witness Bearing Committee of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland



*Are you not called to marry Christ?
Is not this His revealed will to you?*
James Durham

The Altar and the Blood

Rev. Archibald Holmes, minister of Paisley RPC (1900-1903)



The term altar is expressive of the sum and centre of religious services. And around the altar the fiercest human conflicts have ever raged.

It is more than probable that an altar was erected just outside the gates of Paradise. Before his expulsion Adam needed no altar; but as soon as that event took place a way whereby the sinner might approach a holy God must be appointed if this earth was not to become a perfect hell. Adam must not long to be left, in this dark world, a helpless, God-forsaken soul. His Creator, in mercy, hastens to his aid. Indeed, it is stated that God placed at the east of the garden Cherubim: this was doubtless the place of the sanctuary - the place of the altar; the place referred to in the words, "Cain went forth from the presence of the Lord." The existence, then, of a ritual of Divine prescription is implied in the narrative in Genesis; and it is around this altar that human strife begins, and that the first human blood is shed. Cain and Abel brought their offerings and worshipped there; "but the Lord had respect to Abel, and to his offering; but unto Cain, and to his offering He had not respect." In later history, God signified His acceptance of offerings in kindling them by fire from heaven; this may have been His mode of showing His approval of Abel. However, a much more important consideration here is, Why was one of the brothers accepted and the other rejected? "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." The order of the words here is very suggestive: it is not "Unto the offering and to Abel." The difference in the Divine dealing seems to have been grounded not upon a difference in the thing offered, but upon the difference in character of the offerer. Cain's was a sort of deistic acknowledgment of an over-ruling and beneficent Providence. Less than that he could not do in the circumstances, with the traditions of Paradise so full and fresh upon him. On the other hand, Abel had respect to the promise. He acknowledged, no less than

Cain, his indebtedness to God the giver of all good; but he felt that he needed more than temporal good things; he was deeply conscious of moral loss. And he looked for deliverance from sin and death through the seed of the woman. In this lay the superiority of his sacrifice. It was by faith, as the writer of Hebrews says, that Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. The elder of the two brothers approached God in a spirit of proud self-righteousness; in this lay the demerit of his offering.

The course of sin in the soul of Cain is traceable to the point of murder, and through that on to the hell of howling despair. When he saw that God showed favouritism towards his younger brother, he was jealous. Why should Abel be thus honoured? Then the jealousy deepened into gnawing envy, and the envy into bitter hatred. The hatred ripens into cruel malice. Cain can have no ease till the object of his hatred is got rid of. And now God, in mercy, comes to him in his moody madness and expostulates with him, and warns him, "If thou doest well thou shalt be accepted," as Abel was. "And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. Beware! Like a ravenous beast it coucheth. It will fawn upon you - 'its desire will be towards you' - till you yield, then it will destroy you. But your duty, Cain, is to rule over it from the very first." The warning was lost upon Cain. One can picture Abel gathering his sheep preparatory to moving off to fresh pasture, and Cain going over to pick a quarrel. Listen as he taunts and gibes his brother about his piety. Abel bears it all as meekly as the lambs of his flock. This meek and quiet spirit only provokes the murderous man. He then pushes violently against Abel. "Are you so much better than I? Let your God defend you now if he thinks so much of you." The worst blood of the blustering bullying Cain is now excited. Pushing about among the sheep, some are scattered over the field; and, at one point, some are crowded down among the rocks, and injured.

Abel tries to save the injured ones, and expostulate with his brother for his unseemly behaviour. This only maddens Cain. "I will hurt you if you say much." He jostles him and threatens further evil. Abel falls over a huge sharp boulder. Seeing his prostrate form is, to Cain's evil eye, like the sight of blood to a lion. Cain strikes with the implement he had in his hand, and proceeds to make a full end of the helpless Abel. Something like this may have happened. At all events, whatever was the manner of his "taking off," Abel lies there a murdered man - murdered by his brother.

Abel had been in the habit of bringing a lamb of the first year, and shedding its blood by Jehovah's altar. And owing to the acceptableness of his sacrifices he himself now becomes victim - the victim of a brother's unnatural rage, and is the first human sacrifice offered in the name of religion. While Abel presented his sacrifices, God smiled upon the altar and the blood. But now through Cain that altar is changed; it becomes another altar which is yet not another; false religion for a time prevails; and God frowns upon Cain because of that other altar, and that other blood.

"Dear in God's sight is the death of His saint," and He makes inquisition for blood. "He that sheddeth man's

blood by man shall his blood be shed."

"For blood must blood be shed. A law by age
Thrice holy on the murderer's guilty head
This righteous doom demands."

When the murderer is called to account, he exhibits a spirit of impudent lying, "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?" But, after the sentence is pronounced, Cain loses his boldness; and cowering despair lays hold of him. "My punishment is greater than I can bear." This is the natural course of sin. All who bear themselves defiantly against high heaven now will, when the judgement overtakes them, become abject cowards trembling in all the horrors of despair. The conscience of Cain told him that he deserved to die - "Every one that findeth me shall slay me." But God assured him that his blood would not be shed, and placed upon him a token of that assurance. Although Cain was not executed, inasmuch as God had regard to the peculiar circumstances of the human race at that early date, yet, in the banishment, he suffered the pains of death, social and religious.

From the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was slain between the temple and the altar, torrents of blood have flowed and much of it in



the name of religion - the altar and the blood. From the blood of Stephen, the New Testament Abel, down to the last martyr whose life-blood the earth is drinking up now, the altar has stood conspicuous amidst the surging reeking eddies of human blood. Jerusalem was finally taken by the Romans amidst appalling scenes of carnage. And the conflict was begun and carried on in the name of religion. The sword of the persecutor for three hundred years wrought havoc through the length and breadth of the Pagan Roman Empire. The blood of ten thousand Abels cried aloud for vengeance. And the thunderbolt of Divine justice smote proud Rome, and Empire of the Caesars ceased to be. In the seventh century the false prophet arose, and in the name of his new religion bore an all-devouring sword north, south, east, and west. Mohammedanism soon penetrated as far east as the Indus, and as far west as the pillars of Hercules; and, not content with ravaging two Continents, it burst into Europe; but in the final clash with Christendom it was driven back, and confined south of the Balkans. But it did not pause in its wild career till vast multitudes of many nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues had been destroyed. Throughout three Continents it displayed in horrid form the altar and the blood! In mediaeval times the crusades - those holy wars, carried on by Papal Rome, drained all the kingdoms of Europe of their fighting men; and almost all who went forth fell by famine or by sword. A material crucifix and altar, the symbol of the faith, was born onward, in human blood, through swamp and forest, o'er mountain, moor, and flood. In Reformation times the wars waged against the Protestants by the Papacy were carried on with every circumstance of ruthless barbarity. It is calculated that the Papacy has put to death eight millions of human beings. The priests glory in their altar. It is an altar soaked in blood. Everywhere and always there have been, and still are, fierce religious contendings, and if in any instance they do not end in blood it is because God restrains the wrath of man.

John sees in vision souls under the altar, and hears them crying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" The soul of Abel went to God - hurried into His presence a martyred thing - and from on high, looking down upon the ruins of his body, he could point to the blood, and plead its right to live. He could protest against the sacrilegious violence which had assailed in him the

image of his God, and which, through that image, had struck at the Creator himself. Ten thousand times ten thousand martyred saints, pointing down to the blood, unite their voices in one pathetic pleading cry for justice. And shall not the Judge of all the earth make bare His holy arm, and smite every spirit of oppression, and tyranny, and wrong? Vengeance must be executed upon the Cain-spirit wherever found, and upon every spirit of anti-Christ.

But, then, all men are by nature murderers - "O Israel thou hast destroyed thyself." All are of their father the devil; and "he was a murderer from the beginning and abode not in the truth." But if all are red-handed in crime, there is another altar and other blood - a living altar - One in whom is summed up and centred all that is good, He who is the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last - other blood in justice shed for unjust guilty men, that far and wide the news might be proclaimed, "There is therefore now no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." For "He liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore." The blood of Abel cried for vengeance; but "the blood of Jesus Christ speaketh better than that of Abel." It speaks better, infinitely better; for it speaks mercy, forgiveness, reconciliation, love, life. His blood covers all blood-guiltiness for those who fly to Him; but speaks vengeance still to those who will not come. The one hope for fallen man is in "him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

The "altar" and "blood" brought first together in horrid revolting association by Cain, and kept in that association all down the centuries by fiendish man, appear an awful association at Calvary, and reappear in sublime and glorious association in Heaven above. "And I beheld, and, low, in the midst of the throne... stood a lamb as it had been slain." Truest, purest, holiest worship for ever and ever in the presence of the crucified, but now enthroned Redeemer! - the altar and the blood.



AN INTERVIEW WITH REV. TITUS MARTIN (COLLEGE HILL, RPCNA)

I. What does student ministry look like at College Hill?

Being right on Geneva's campus we have the blessing of having anywhere between 75-125 students participating in the life of our church in some way. There are the programmatic and more formal parts of the ministry combined with the informal ministry that happens among members and students. When I was called to College Hill, now 20 years ago, I was given the task of developing this ministry to college students. The way we go about student ministry has changed over the years and it continues to evolve as we make adjustments each year. We invite students to be involved in the life of the church in four basic ways:

Swarm - This is a gathering of students after evening worship on the Lord's Day. Everyone gathers for food and fellowship, either at the church or in the homes of church members. This is a time for students to get to know each other and to get to know the various hosts. Swarm got its name because when 70-100 students descend on a house, eat everything in sight and leave, it is reminiscent of a devouring swarm of locusts, only with much greater spiritual benefit.

DASH - This is our discipleship program and the acronym stands for Discipleship, Accountability, and Service on the

Hill. Students are placed in small groups of 3-5 and then connected with a mentor from the congregation. They meet weekly for about an hour to discuss various aspects of the Christian life, to encourage one another in their walk, to go deeper in the study of the Word, to pray for one another, and to learn how to be witnesses for Christ.

Service - Students are encouraged to find ways to serve the congregation and are often eager to do this since it helps them feel more connected and more an integral part of the church body. One thing we've done recently is Kid Swarm which is similar to Student Swarm. It happens about once/month and the college students host a time of food and games for kids at College Hill following evening worship.

Church life - While ministry specific to college students is a good thing, we encourage students to jump into the various activities already going on in the congregation so that they can build relationships with people in all walks of life, not just their peers. We encourage them to come to morning and evening worship, church school, shepherding group activities, prayer nights, fellowship events, and service projects.

To effectively minister to so many students, it takes a congregation that has embraced the vision of college ministry. It was obvious very early on that if I am the

primary contact for every College Student, then every college student will be neglected. But if the congregation embraces this ministry through intentional conversations, hospitality, mentoring, etc, there is great opportunity to play a formative part in the lives of the next generation of servants in God's kingdom. It is the community of College Hill that has made this kind of college ministry thrive.

2. What are some ways that the church has been able to help unconverted students?

Preaching - By being located virtually on campus, we commonly get students from all walks of life, including unbelievers. There are many students who have come to Geneva for reasons other than the Christ-centered education and inevitably there are some who have never heard the gospel before. I often say that God has given us our own mission field right across the street! We have students coming from all over the country and even all over the world who may be coming to understand for the first time who Jesus is and what good news he brings. It is safe to assume that every week there are unbelievers who are sitting in the pews, and my goal is to preach Christ crucified and raised.

Stories of Hope - Each year we have a special church service that is geared towards non-believers. We have a simple gospel message and a time of food and fellowship afterwards. We encourage students to invite their unbelieving teammates, roommates, and classmates.

DASH - One of the goals of DASH groups is to equip students to have gospel conversations with roommates, teammates, and friends on campus.

Hospitality - We seek to be a warm and welcoming environment for students, perhaps especially for those who have never experienced the body of Christ. College Hill is a uniquely close community in that many of our members live within a few blocks of the church and part of our ministry is warmly welcoming students into that community for as long as they are here. Conversations after church, meals in the home, meeting at the coffee shop during the week, etc. It is all part of the spirit of gospel hospitality.

3. What are the highs and lows of student ministry?

The nature of student ministry is high energy. Having College students involved in the congregation brings lots of vibrancy and enthusiasm to the life of the church. We

get to play a role in a very formative and exciting time when students are making big decisions and shaping what they believe about God and His Word. We get to see unbelievers converted, casual Christians become more reformed and grow deeper in the faith, and each student discovering their calling in the kingdom of God, whether that be a calling as a godly teacher or nurse or engineer, or a calling into full time gospel ministry as a pastor or missionary. We also have the privilege of being involved in a lot of weddings which is a great joy for us.

In the midst of incredible blessing, there are also some challenges that come with college ministry. By nature, the congregation feels very transient with new students always coming and old students graduating and moving on. Saying goodbye to students who have been part of our congregation for four years is definitely bittersweet. We are eager to send them into the world in service to the King, but we also miss having them among us. I would also say that college students can be a bit unpredictable. It can be hard to invest in students who come for a time and then drop off, who seem excited initially but then don't end up following through. One other thing I mentioned previously is that students bring with them great excitement which is a blessing, but the pace and volume can at times leave the congregation overwhelmed and fatigued. With so many college students, members of the congregation can begin to feel distant with each other. We are thankful for the school year where we get to invest in the students, and we are also thankful for the holiday breaks and the summer season which bring with it an opportunity for the congregation to rest and get reacquainted.

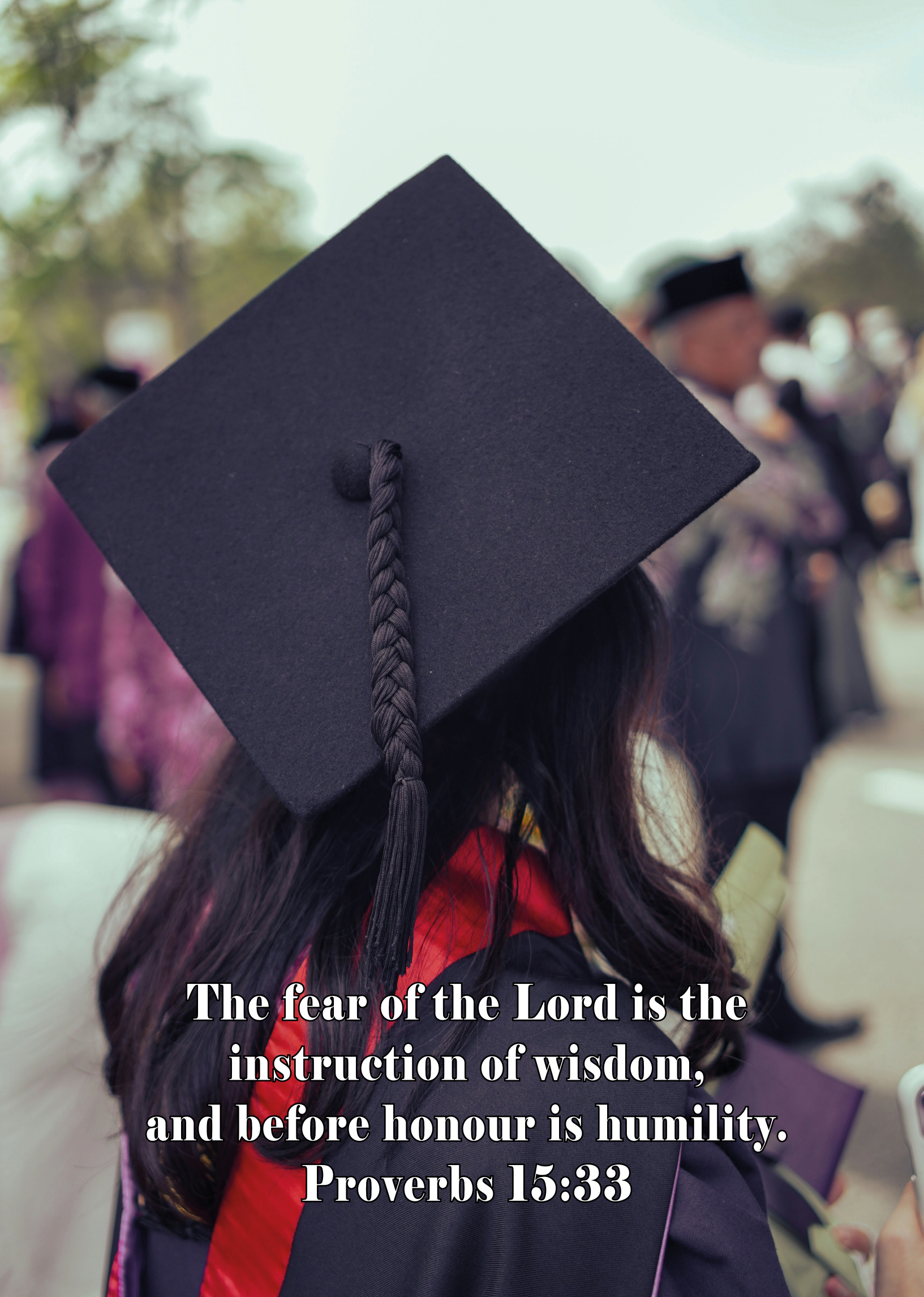
4. How can we pray for College Hill RPC in its student ministry?

-Starting in August this year, we will have a new Director of College Ministry, Josh Bout. He will take on many of the primary responsibilities for student ministry. Please pray for his transition into this role and ask God to bless his ministry among us and the students.

-For the congregation to continue to have strength, energy and zeal for this ministry.

-That God would continue to change hearts and that students would come to know and love Jesus Christ as their Savior.

-That God would raise up the next generation of Kingdom workers and full time gospel preachers.

A photograph of a graduate from behind, wearing a black mortarboard cap and a black gown with a red stole. The graduate has long, dark hair. The background is a blurred crowd of other graduates in similar attire, suggesting a large outdoor ceremony. The text is overlaid in the lower half of the image.

**The fear of the Lord is the
instruction of wisdom,
and before honour is humility.
Proverbs 15:33**

PRESBYTERY NEWS



PRESBYTERY

Presbytery met for regular business on 10th March. At this meeting, Rev. Luke Sheldrake (a minister of the Grace Presbyterian Church of New Zealand) was examined and accepted as a minister of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland. We remember the Sheldrakes in prayer as they prepare to move to Scotland.

On 28th April, a ministers' fraternal took place in Girvan. Three ministers were separated from us by bodies of water (Stornoway, the Gambia, and New Zealand), but the mainland ministers enjoyed a time of food, fellowship, and prayer together.

AIRDRIE

New Members

Our congregation was delighted to receive into membership Ed and Mairi Wynn along with their five children. The Wynns have been attending our monthly services in Wishaw, and then committed to coming to Airdrie each Lord's Day. We observed the sacrament of baptism as their youngest child, Grace, was baptised. Rev. McCollum preached on Hebrews 11:23 on the theme of the beauty of the covenant child. The congregation enjoyed a lunch afterwards. The whole day was one of great encouragement to the congregation.

Ian Shaw's passing

With the deepest sadness, we report that our beloved elder Ian Shaw passed away on the 3rd March. Ian was born on the 1st December 1940 in Salsburgh, the oldest of 4 sons. He met his wife, Elizabeth, when he was 19, and

they were married in 1965 in the Airdrie RP Church to which Elizabeth belonged. They had two daughters and then four grandchildren.

Ian left school at the age 16 to start work in a laboratory in a local company. He stayed there for six years until he moved to work in the Local Authority as a chemist, and from there he progressed through the ranks, eventually attaining the position of Assistant Director of Operations in the Water department of the old Strathclyde Regional Council.

Ian enjoyed travelling, golf, gardening, and spending time with his family. He also was a full-time carer for his wife for over 10 years as her health deteriorated before her death. He was a wonderful example of a selfless and loving husband.

Ian was baptised and became a member of our congregation in April 1965. He was ordained as an elder in August 1974, spending 51 years on Session.

Ian was an example of godliness and true Christian joy. Many in the congregation will remember his warm welcoming spirit, his loving pastoral counsel, and his commitment to Christ and His Church. Ian was an encourager, and we will really miss his loving attitude of getting alongside us. Those who have contacted us after his passing reflected on many of his qualities, but he is remembered most for his warmth in welcoming strangers to the church and how he interacted thoughtfully and joyfully with the young people.

Ian served in so many ways throughout his time in Airdrie, as Sabbath School Superintendent, Preses of the congregation, Precentor, Treasurer, and Elder. He wrote a history of the congregation for the 175th Anniversary. But of course, much of his service was also quiet and

behind the scenes where he would just get on with what needed to be done, with no complaints.

He was committed to the work of Presbytery, being an interim elder at various times in our congregations in Glasgow, Wishaw, and North Edinburgh, and was Presbytery treasurer for decades. He was always seeking to foster peace without compromising his principles.

Ian was a tremendously hard worker for the Kingdom of Christ, even at 85 years of age he was still distributing leaflets and doing other physical tasks. We are reminded of Caleb, who at 85 could say, "I am still as strong today as I was in the day that Moses sent me; my strength now is as my strength was then, for war and for going and coming." For Ian, to live was Christ and to die is gain.

As a Session, we recognise that we have lost a fellow-labourer, one who took a large share of Session and diaconal business. We commit ourselves to the care of the Chief Shepherd to protect and provide for us, and to answer our prayers, indeed prayers that Ian himself often prayed, for men for leadership.



Ian Shaw

Reformation Tour

We enjoyed a tour on the 28th March, visiting key sites of Covenanting history like Bothwell Bridge, Drumclog, Sanquhar, and Airds Moss among others. Many of those on the Tour were fairly new to the congregation, and had never heard these stories before.

Go Team

The Airdrie Go Team was from 1st to 9th April. The team helped us advertise our mission services on the topic "The Offensive Jesus". We had Royal Mail to distribute 20,000 leaflets, and the team helped us give out 5,000 more as well as putting posters around the town. We

were thankful to have several visitors each night, including some from our Drop In Cafe, Kids Club, and family members, and some folk who either received a leaflet or saw the banner. Please continue to pray that the Holy Spirit will work through the Word that was preached.



New members

GLASGOW

Our Youth Fellowship continues to meet every second week on Lord's Day evenings. The young people have been studying the fruit of the Spirit from Galatians 5 and have greatly benefitted from this. The men's Bible study has restarted on a monthly basis looking at the Westminster Confession of Faith and the ladies continue their monthly Bible Study currently in the book of James. We are grateful for the encouraging attendances at these meetings and pray that God will richly bless them.

On the evening of Friday 23rd January 2026, we held our annual congregational buffet. Around 70 people attended, including some visitors. As in previous years, there was a delicious spread and an enjoyable time of warm fellowship together. A special presentation was made to Mrs Catherine Macleod to mark her 90th birthday and to acknowledge the Lord's goodness to her. After the meal, Rev Baxter gave a brief Gospel presentation from the parable of the great supper in Luke 14. The evening was concluded with prayer and the singing of Psalm 23.



Glasgow Presentation

On Lord's Day 22nd February 2026, a lunch was held after the morning service for students and young people in the congregation. After some delicious curry and desserts, Rev Baxter gave a brief overview of the life of Joseph, drawing out some lessons for us today.

We continue to look to the Lord to bless His work in our congregation and thank you all for your prayerful support and interest.

NORTH EDINBURGH

Three members of the congregation continue to be involved in leading a Scripture Union group in the local high school. The group meets at lunchtime on Tuesdays. The format is simple: the young people arrive, often bringing lunch with them and enjoying some fruit and other snacks provided; then some games are played, followed by a short Bible talk. We are currently working through the gospel of Mark. Numbers can often be small (some weeks just 2 or 3; at other times 5 or 6), but this gives an opportunity to get to know the young people

well and chat to them. Most have no church connection at all. We are thankful for this opening to share the gospel, particularly in Craigroyston High where our church met for so many years.

STRANRAER

In March, we held our second successive World Book Day outreach. We set up a table in the town centre and gave out free Bibles and copies of Mark's gospel. We were encouraged by a number of good conversations, and especially to have one man at church the following Lord's Day as a result. We continue to have an open door in the local high school for which we are very grateful. Having been in Stranraer for ten and a half years, Rev. Stephen Steele is currently on study leave for two months. We are grateful to Rev. Noah Bailey of the RPCNA (but currently working on a PhD in Belfast) for filling the pulpit and leading Bible studies during this time. Stephen's book on the law of God, *Written on the Heart*, is due to be released this month.





AUSTRALIA

On 8th February 2026, members of the Australian Reformed Presbyterian Churches gathered with joy to witness the installation of Rev. Andy McCracken as the 11th Minister of the Geelong Reformed Presbyterian Church since its planting in 1857.



Geelong Ordination

McKinnon RPC also celebrated their 80th Anniversary in April.

CANADA

On February 6-8, the RP Church of Canada hosted its eagerly anticipated annual Winterlude Youth Retreat. Attendance was higher than ever, with almost 70 teens from Ontario, Alberta, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Indiana and Florida gathering at the Ottawa RP Church.

In April the second Women's Retreat was held with 51 women in attendance.

FRANCE

Give thanks that in March Richard Davies was ordained as an elder in Nantes RPC.



Winterlude

IRELAND

In October, Rev. Jonny McCollum was inducted as minister of Kilraughts RPC.



Kilraughts Ordination

Saturday 10th January marked the installation of Rev Nick Jones to the congregations of Milford and Letterkenny. Nick joins Mark Loughridge in a team ministry shared between the two congregations. (pic)



Nick Jones' Ordination

Sabbath 8th February was an historic day for Covenant Christian Fellowship in Galway, as they had the joy of ordaining and installing Mr Eli Williamson as a ruling elder in the congregation—the first elder to be ordained since 2006.



Galway Ordination

The Western and Southern Presbytery Young People Conference was held in October with 80 people in attendance.

SOUTH ASIA

In November Anugraha RPC had their first ever multi-day church retreat which was a great blessing to all who were there.



Anugraha RPC

SPAIN

The RP Church here has new premises in the Mairena del Ajarafe district (pop. 47,000), a 20-minute drive from Seville itself and close to other well-populated areas. The church is now called Iglesia Reformada Presbiteriana Gracia – 'Grace Reformed Presbyterian Church.' At present there are 26 people worshipping (including children) and it continues to be overseen by the Spanish Session in Ireland and the Mission Committee. (pic)



Spain

USA

Many American Presbyteries met in March and April. The Midwest Presbytery organised the Oklahoma City church plant into a full congregation.

Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery is exploring a new church plant in the Shoals Area of Alabama. Sadly two of their congregations that were over 200 years old are closing – Sparta, Illinois and Selma, Alabama.

Pacific Coast Presbytery ordained and installed Seni Adyemi as minister of All Saints RPC in Ontario, California. They currently have 3 vacant congregations in San Diego (California), Phoenix (Arizona), and Reno (Nevada).



Ordination of Seni Adyemi

St Lawrence Presbytery met for the ordination and installation of Reuben Lindeman as minister of Glengarry Community RPC in Glengarry, Ontario.



Ordination in Glengarry

Atlantic Presbytery has received in Reformed Covenant Church, a Chinese speaking church in the Queens Borough of New York City. They also have 3 vacant congregations: Cambridge, Massachusetts; White Lake, New York; and Coldenham, New York. Elkins Park RPC in Pennsylvania has celebrated their 175th Anniversary.

One new elder was ordained in Winchester RPC and three new elders in Rochester RPC.

In March Dr Jerry O'Neill died. He had served as a minister in the RPCNA and then as President and Professor of Pastoral Theology at RPTS for over 20 years.



Jerry and Anne O'Neill

In April Dr Wayne Spear died. The son of a RP minister, he was also a RP minister in Minnesota and California before serving as Professor of Systematic Theology at RPTS for 35 years.

The Midwest Women's Fellowship took place in March with about 60 ladies in attendance.



Wayne and Mary Spear

Several Winter and Spring Youth conferences have taken place over the past few months: Pacific Coast Presbytery had their Winter Youth Conference in December (pic); Midwest Presbytery CY had their Winter retreat in January and Spring retreat in April (pics); Allegheny Presbytery had their Sprinter Youth Retreat in March; Atlantic Presbytery had a Theological Foundations Weekend in February; and Great Lakes-Gulf Presbytery had a Winter Conference in December, CORPS (College RP Students) Winter Conference in January (pic); and a Theological Foundations Weekend in March (pic).



Pacific Coast Winter Conference



Midwest Presbytery CY



CORPS conference



How can I spend my summer well?

Peter Loughridge

North Edinburgh RPCS



I'm going to assume (since this Q&A series is largely aimed at teenagers and young people) that you have a long period off your studies in the summer, around six to eight weeks at least. That's more holiday time than most employees get over a whole year! So it's a good question to ask – how do I use that time wisely?

One important aspect of summer is the opportunity to take time off and rest and change your routine. Your school, college or university gives you time off because they are assuming that you are working hard for most of the rest of the months of the year! God has created us and has programmed us to need rest. It's probably a lesson that we learn better as we get older, but we are made from the dust (Genesis 2:7) and therefore rest and relaxation are necessary.

Be careful though that rest and relaxation don't become laziness! Proverbs 13:4 says "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing, while the soul of the diligent is richly supplied". Ephesians 5:15-16 say "Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil".

Having extra time off in the summer also allows us to spend more time with our family and with Christian friends. This is important too, as part of how God has made us. We are social creatures and are not meant to be alone (Genesis 2:18).

I might be biased but I also think church camps, conferences and GO Teams are some of the best ways we can spend our summers – particularly at the times in our lives when time off in the summer is especially long. These events provide opportunities for Bible teaching, growth

in our faith, Christian fellowship, deepening spiritual friendships, serving together and a whole lot of laughter and enjoyment mixed in!

I realise there can often be a lot of pressure for students to get a summer job. Sometimes this might be necessary to help the family financially or to contribute to the costs of education. However, even if you do get a job, try to remember the importance of what's been mentioned already – opportunities to rest, to relax and to be with other Christians. Maybe it would be possible to make do with less financially in the next academic year and fill your summer as much as possible with church camps and teams. Wouldn't that be better for your own soul and your own spiritual growth?

The summer months might also be a valuable opportunity to do what you don't normally have time for. It's easy to say in the busyness of term-time or an academic year: I don't have time to study the Bible more deeply or read that Christian book. With good planning and discipline, you could set aside more time for that during the summer months. Pick a Christian book that you'll read this summer (you could even ask your minister or elder for a recommendation). Maybe there are other activities in the life of your church that you aren't able to commit to when you're buried under homework, essays and assignments – but could you get involved over the summer? You might even appreciate the benefits so much that it helps you make it more of a priority when the summer is over.

You won't always have such long and seemingly endless summers! Don't waste them!

Children's Story

MARGARET GRACIE

JIMMY FISHER, AIRDRIE RPC



Margaret Gracie was a young woman who lived at Marmollach, in the quiet countryside of Tynron in Nithsdale. The hills and valleys around her home were peaceful and beautiful. But during Margaret's lifetime, they had also become places of danger.

Many Covenanters were being hunted by soldiers. Ministers were forced to preach in secret, and those who followed them often hid among the hills, moors, and thick woods to avoid arrest.

Margaret cared deeply for these persecuted believers.

She knew they were cold, hungry, and far from home. So again and again, she carried food and other necessities to them. Sometimes she travelled alone across the rough countryside, carefully avoiding the roads where soldiers might be waiting.

Each journey was dangerous. If she were caught helping the Covenanters, she could be imprisoned or even killed. But Margaret continued.

Her kindness did not go unnoticed. A young man from her area admired her and hoped to marry her. Margaret kindly refused, as she did not return his feelings. Hurt and angry, the young man allowed bitterness to grow in his heart.

In his anger, he betrayed her. He told the authorities that Margaret and her family supported the Covenanters and that she was carrying food to those in hiding.

Soon afterward, he regretted what he had done. Realising the danger he had placed her in, he came to Margaret and asked her forgiveness.

Margaret forgave him, but the harm had already been done.

Soldiers began watching her family and their home was searched. At times, when troops approached, Margaret and her family were forced to flee into the cold darkness of night, hiding among the hills until it was safe to return.

Still, Margaret refused to stop helping God's persecuted people.

On one occasion, she was captured at a conventicle (an outside worship service) along with several others. They were taken prisoner and marched toward a castle called Drumlanrig. It seemed certain that Margaret would soon face punishment.

But before they arrived, a group of armed Covenanters bravely intervened and rescued them. Margaret was freed.

Even this close call did not stop her. Margaret continued to carry supplies, encourage believers, and support those suffering for their faith.

Her final moments came at a conventicle held at a place known as the Whig's Hole on nearby Altry Hill. Believers had gathered quietly to worship God, read Scripture, and pray together.

Suddenly soldiers appeared and the worshippers scattered across the hillside, trying to escape. Shots were fired as soldiers pursued them.

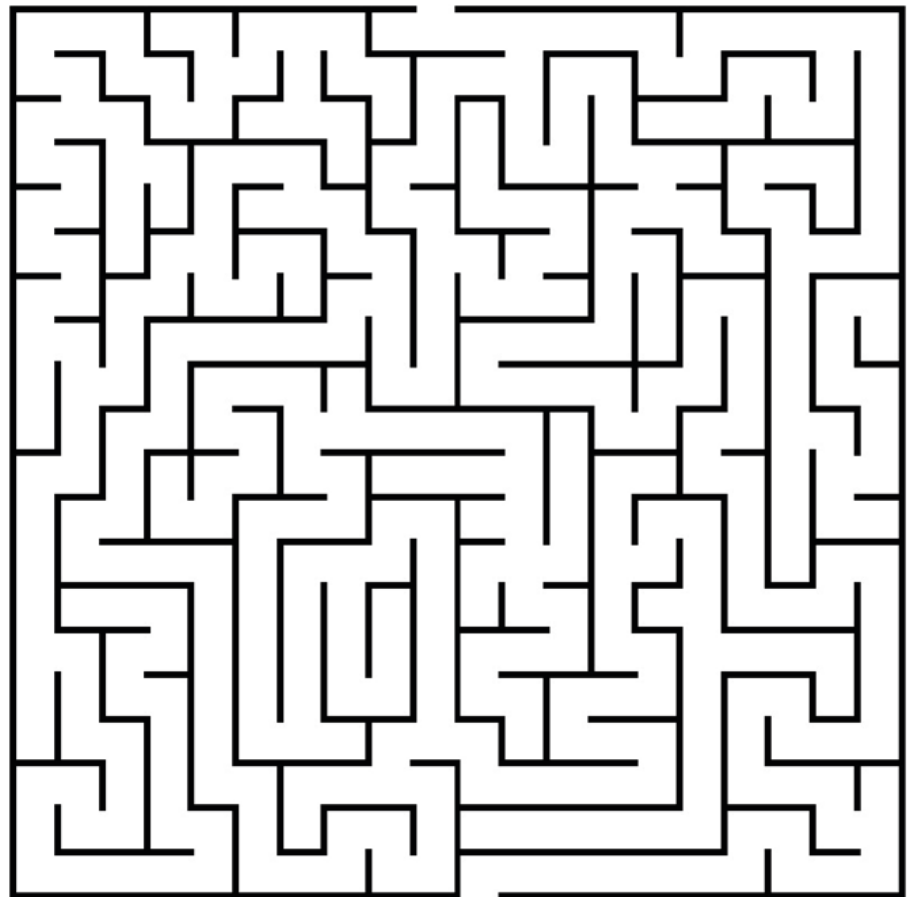
Sadly, Margaret was struck and killed instantly. Another man, George Allan, who was running in the same direction as Margaret also lost his life.

Later, when it was safe, fellow Covenanters returned and buried them both. They remembered Margaret's courage, kindness, and faithful service.

Activity

Help Margaret Gracie take food to the Covenanter ministers in hiding while avoiding the soldiers.

Start at the top and work your way through the maze to the bottom.



Religious Terms Defined

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Hope

The Christian's sure expectation and eager anticipation of the supreme glory and blessing which shall be his in the life of eternity, following the second coming of Christ and the resurrection (Rom.8:18-25; Heb.6:18-20).

Horn

In the Bible, a symbol of power, or of vigorous, flourishing health and growth.

Huguenots

A name, originally given in contempt, for the Reformed or Calvinistic Protestants of France.

Humanism

The false system that regards the human race as existing for its own sake, considers man's chief end to be his own welfare, and looks upon God and religion as means for promoting the progress of humanity.

Humanity of Christ

The human nature of Christ, consisting of body and soul, which He took into union with His divine person and nature. "Christ, the Son of God, became man by taking to himself a true body and a reasonable, soul, being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and born of her, yet without sin" (S.C. 22).

Hussites

A reforming party in the Church in Bohemia (Czecho-Slovakia) in the 15th Century and later. Named after their leader John Huss who was burnt at the stake in 1415 for his faith.

Idolatry

(1) In the narrower sense, the religious worship of idols, that is, images or pictures. (2) In the wider sense, all religious worship other than that offered to the true God.

Illumination

The progressive work of the Holy Spirit in the mind of a Christian, whereby he is enabled to see and understand the truth revealed in the Scriptures (Eph. 1:18). (Illumination is the intellectual counterpart of sanctification. By sanctification a

Christian is made to love and practice holiness; by illumination he is made to know and understand the truth).

Immaculate Conception

The false Roman Catholic doctrine, made a dogma in 1854, that the Virgin Mary was born without original sin. The term "Immaculate Conception" is often incorrectly used by Protestants when they mean the virgin birth of Christ.

Immanence of God

The truth that God is everywhere in the universe, and that absolutely nothing great or small could exist without His continual presence in it.

Implicit Faith

That faith by which a person accepts on the authority of another some doctrine or system which he has not himself considered, or of which he is personally ignorant. (Cf. Westminster Confession of Faith, XX.2. When a person says that he accepts the doctrines of the Westminster Confession and catechisms, yet admits that he has never read those documents, he is guilty of the sin of accepting them with an "implicit faith," that is, "sight-unseen", by a blind faith).

Inability

The condition of the unsaved sinner, by reason of which he is unable, not merely to save himself from sin, but even to desire salvation. (Note: Inability is not inconsistent with free agency. The unsaved sinner is free to turn to God, but not able to turn to God, just as a bird with a broken wing is free to fly, but not able to fly).

Incarnation

The act by which God the Son took to Himself a human nature (body and soul) and thus became man, to accomplish the work of redemption. (John 1:14).

Independence of God

The truth that God is in no sense whatever dependent upon, limited by, or in need of anything or anyone in, the created universe, but is absolutely self-sufficient and self-existent. (It is wrong to use the verbs "cannot" and "needs" in connection with God. Mark 10:27; Acts 17:25).



**If My people who are called by My name
will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face,
and turn from their wicked ways,
then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their
sin and heal their land.**

2 Chron. 7:14