



Fort William Free Church

Newsletter ~ January/February 2018 Issue no. 2



Dear Friends,

Welcome to our New Year newsletter. Usually the introduction would be provided by our minister, but as we are in vacancy, Mr. Robin Gray who was a visiting speaker to our church in August, kindly agreed to write the introduction for us this month. We graciously thank him for his encouraging words and his prayers for our church.

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.”

James 1:17 (AV)

In times of trial or change, the child of God will find the greatest comfort and encouragement from contemplating the unchanging source of all goodness, the Living God Himself.

At this point in his letter, the Spirit-inspired James is telling his readers not to let their difficult circumstances deceive them about the nature of God. God is not only good - all the time - He is also the source of all the goodness in this world.

In His common grace, God sustains the earth and bestows good things on believer and unbeliever alike (**Acts 14:17;17**). Whether or not it is acknowledged by the recipient as such, Scripture clearly shows that *everything* good in this life is the gift of God. He is the fountain of every blessing. Whilst many do not pay the slightest heed to the heavenly source of the good things they enjoy, to us who have been graciously brought from death to life is given the wonderful knowledge of the divine giver Himself. It is this restored relationship with the blesser, not simply an enjoyment of the blessing, that brings true joy to the regenerate heart. In every good thing we can see the hand of God and glorify Him for it.

James then follows this point immediately with another great truth - this Giver of good gifts does not change. Our circumstances may change, but God does not. If we look to ourselves, what we typically see is inconsistency; when we look to God we see the opposite. In Him there is perfect, unchanging, entirely consistent goodness. This is massively reassuring. There is “no shadow of turning” in God. He does not change his mind, and what He has purposed to do He will most certainly accomplish. In trying times, to know that the good God, the source of all goodness, does not change, should give our souls cause to be lifted up. Let us not look to the inconstancy of ourselves in uncertain times, but to the Father of heavenly lights whose purpose to purify a people for Himself can never be thwarted.

Of course, in remembering and rejoicing in the goodness of the giving God, the thoughts of our hearts will ultimately rise to the Altogether Lovely one, the greatest gift of all, our Lord Jesus Christ Himself. He is the supreme expression and the irrefutable evidence of God’s unchanging goodness. He is the ultimate good and perfect gift that came down from the Father of heavenly lights, and through Him we have the greatest blessing imaginable: forgiveness of sin and everlasting fellowship with the God who is always good. There is no shadow of turning in our Lord: He will build His Church – and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

Please remember that you are in my prayers and I hope it will not be too long before I am back with you again in Fort William.

In Christ our Lord,
Robin Gray

A Post Christmas Meditation

“And Mary said, “My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my Saviour” ~ Luke 1:46, 47 (KJV)

These two beautiful verses of Scripture begin the portion commonly known as “The Magnificat”. As we know, these verses from 46-55 were spoken by the Virgin Mary to her cousin Elisabeth, whom she visited after the announcement of the angel that she would be the mother of the Messiah. We can see in this song of Mary great similarity to Hannah’s prayer in *1 Samuel 2:1-10 (KJV)*

“My heart rejoiceth in the LORD..... I rejoice in Thy salvation. There is none holy as the LORD: for there is none beside Thee: neither is there any rock like our GOD.” says Hannah. Mary also says, *“holy is His name”* and so on throughout these two lovely portions of Scripture. If we look at them closely, we will see a remarkable likeness between them. J.C. Ryle, writing in the nineteenth century, comments, “It is evident that the memory of the Blessed Virgin was stored with Scripture. She was familiar, whether by hearing or by reading, with the Old Testament.” (This he says in his Expository Thoughts on the Gospels – Luke Volume 1)

Perhaps we should especially notice verse 47, where Mary says, *“my spirit hath rejoiced in GOD my saviour”* She is here acknowledging that, just like us, she stood in need of a Saviour. She did not regard herself as a sinless person, but rather as one requiring the saving grace of GOD as we all do.

It is good also for us to think of the verse preceding Mary’s hymn of praise – verse 45, where Elisabeth says, *“And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD”*

If we believe in our GOD, and are resolved to take Him at His word, then all that He tells us in the Bible will be performed. Not perhaps, or may be – but will be brought about in His own time and way. Thus, we will indeed be greatly blessed.

May we all feel a longing in our souls to “magnify the LORD” and to rejoice in our Saviour – that we would be pleading at the throne of Grace for that spiritual experience of longing – hungering and thirsting for His gracious presence in our hearts and lives.

~ Anon.

Spurgeon Gems

Christian, make your life a clear testimony. Be you as the brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom - not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface - but clear and transparent, so that your heart's love to God and man may be visible to all. You need not say I AM TRUE, be true. Boast not of integrity, but be upright. So, shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it. Never, for fear of feeble man, restrain your witness. Your lips have been warmed with a coal from off the altar, let them speak as like heaven-touched lips should do.



Upcoming Services

Services at 11.00am & 5.30pm

Sunday 7th January

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Bill McCully

Sunday 14th January

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Canon Gerald Kaye

Sunday 21st January

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Andrew Fraser

Sunday 28th January

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Andrew Fraser

Sunday 4th February

Conducted by visiting speaker Mr. Donald Stewart

Sunday 11th February

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Gordon Martin

Sunday 18th February

Conducted by visiting speaker Mr. Len Cazaly

Sunday 25th February

Conducted by visiting speaker Rev. Douglas MacKeddie

Wednesday Bible Study/Prayer Meeting

Meetings are at 7.30pm, conducted by Mr. Donald MacDonald or invited speakers.

A Time to Reflect

We trust you all had a blessed Christmas and are looking forward to the new year ahead. This time of year is often a time for reflection and thoughts of the year that has passed, remembering good times and difficult times. As Christians we know that God is with us through all of life's experiences, so the following devotional taken from the book "Streams in the Desert" by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman, is even more poignant when our homes are in the heart of such beautiful hills. Whether climbing mountains physically or spiritually, God is always with us, our guide and our strength.....

"Today dear friends, we stand upon the verge of the unknown. There lies before us the new year and we are going forth to possess it. Who can tell what we shall find? What new experiences, what changes shall come, what new needs shall arise? But here is the cheering, comforting, gladdening message from our Heavenly Father, *"A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year."* **Deuteronomy 11:12 (KJV)**

All our supply is to come from the Lord. Here are springs that shall never dry; here are fountains and streams that shall never be cut off. Here, anxious one, is the gracious pledge of the Heavenly Father. If He be the Source of our mercies they can never fail us. No heat, no drought can parch that river, *".... the streams whereof make glad the city of God."* **Psalm 46:4 (KJV)**

The land is a land of hills and valleys. It is not all smooth nor all downhill. If life were all one dead level, the dull sameness would oppress us; we want the hills and the valleys. The hills collect the rain for a hundred fruitful valleys. Ah, so it is with us! It is the hill difficulty that drives us to the throne of grace and brings down the shower of blessing; the hills, the bleak hills of life that we wonder at and perhaps grumble at, bring down the showers. How many have perished in the wilderness, buried under its golden sands, who would have lived and thriven in the hill-country; how many would have been killed by the frost, blighted with winds, swept desolate of tree and fruit but for the hill-stern, hard, rugged, so steep to climb. God's hills are a gracious protection for His people against their foes! We cannot tell what loss and sorrow and trial are doing. Trust only. The Father comes near to take our hand and lead us on our way today. It shall be a good, a blessed new year!"

Newsletter Contributions

If you would like to submit any news items, devotionals or events which you think would be of interest to the congregation, please leave them in the purple box on the vestibule table, or email them to us.



Newsletter Online

The online version of our newsletter is now only available on the church website. Should you prefer a digital copy of the newsletter sent to your email address please email the church and we will send you a copy. There is also a link to Rev. Gordon Mair's new sermons website and a link to our YouTube channel on the website.

Rev. Gordon Mair Website

The complete archive of Rev. Gordon Mair's sermons ranging from 2004 – 2017 is now available online. The archive consists of over 1500 Sunday sermons, Bible studies and Communion addresses, all available to listen to online or download at: www.gordonmair.co.uk

YouTube Channel

If you have been unable to attend church, our Sunday services are available on the church YouTube channel. Search "Fort William Free Church" on the YouTube home page. CD's of sermons are also available by request, these are free of charge.

New Year Thoughts

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God. – John 1:1 (KJV)

Life is full of beginnings. We are now at the beginning of a year. But here is a beginning that carries our thoughts back beyond all years, all dates of history, all imaginable periods of time, beyond the beginnings of creation. Then Christ was. What a sublime stretch of being these words give to Him who is our Saviour!

We cannot grasp the thought, but we can find security and comfort in it when we think of Christ, and when we rest in Him as our hope and salvation. We trust in human friends, and the comfort is very sweet; yet we can never forget that they are but creatures of a day, and that we cannot be sure of having them even for tomorrow. But we trust in Christ, and know that from eternity to eternity He is the same, and therefore our confidence is forever strong and sure.

Our trust is still more stable and firm when we read on and find who this Person is in whom we are confiding. "The Word was God." There is nothing doubtful in this language. No kind of exegesis can blot from this brief clause the truth of Christ's divinity. The Saviour, into whose hands you have committed your life, is the eternal God. Earthly trusts are never secure, for everything human is mortal; but those who commit themselves to the keeping of Christ are safe forever.

It is very sweet to think of Christ's humanity. It brings Him near to us. He is like one of ourselves. He is our own brother, with tender sympathies and warm affections. We study the gospel and learn the graciousness of His character as seen in His compassion, His tears, His love. Then when we know that behind these qualities are the divine attributes, that He is very God, what glorious confidence it gives us! Let us set this glorious truth at the gate of the New Year. It is a shining point from which to start.
~ *Anon.*

*"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."
Psalm 119:105 (KJV)*

I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,
Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.
And he replied, go out into the darkness,
and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light,
And safer than a known way.

~ *Minnie Louise Haskins*



A Blessed New Year

Deuteronomy 11:11-12 (KJV)

11. But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

12. A land which the Lord thy God careth for: the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

~

He leads us on paths we did not know:
Upward He leads us, though our steps be slow,
Though oft we faint and falter on the way,
Though storms and darkness oft obscure the day,
Yet when the clouds are gone,
We know He leads us on

He leads us on through all the unquiet years;
Past all our dreamland hope, and doubts and fears,
He guides our steps, through all the tangled maze
Of losses, sorrows, and o'erclouded days;
We know His will is done;
And still He leads us on.

Thought for the Day

Many in our community live alone, and not just elderly people. Never seeing another person from one day to the next can often leave people feeling lonely, depressed and isolated. If you know anyone who lives alone, why not pay them a visit? A cup of tea and some fellowship may be a welcome change for someone sitting by themselves feeling lonely. The following prayer was kindly given to us by a member of our congregation and if you think it would be of comfort to a friend living alone, please give them a copy.

A Prayer for Those Who Live Alone

I live alone, dear Lord, stay by my side.
In all my daily needs, be Thou my guide.
Grant me good health, for that indeed I pray,
to carry on my work from day to day.
Keep pure my mind, my thoughts, my every deed.
Let me be kind, unselfish in my neighbour's need.
Spare me from fire, from flood, malicious tongues,
from thieves, from fear, from evil ones.
If sickness or an accident befall,
then humbly Lord I pray, hear Thou my call.
And when I'm feeling low or in despair,
lift up my head and help me in my prayer.
I live alone, dear Lord, yet have no fear,
because I feel Thy presence ever near.

~ Amen

Remember in Prayer

"Now also when I am old and greyheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come." ~ **Psalm 71:18 (KJV)**

Please pray for the ladies of our congregation who are unable to attend church: Mrs Flora Boyd; Mrs Marie Kennedy; Mrs Bunty Kirsop; Mrs Sadie Maclean; Mrs Katie Murray, Mrs Irene Reese-Smith and Mrs MaryAnn Sandison.

Project 2017 NEPAL

This year the Sunday School collected money for orphans in Nepal. The Free Church of Scotland children's magazine COMPASS encouraged them to raise funds for this worthwhile cause. Suraj Kasula is a missionary to the people of Nepal and his church will use the money raised to help children who have been abandoned or orphaned. The amount sent to them was £70. Well done to Emma, Allan and Leonard for their fundraising, God will use the money you all raised to help those in need.



In Prayer

"Love never faileth." – **1 Cor 13:8**
One of the last, slowly murmured sayings of Whittier, was this: "Give my love to the world." And this is the world's supreme need today; more than our eloquence, or our knowledge, or our wealth, or all else besides, it needs our love. True, even love may sometimes err; but the cure for love's mistakes is just more love; we often blunder because we do not love enough. God help us all, that like Whittier, we may live and die, giving our love to the world.

~ **George Jackson**

"Lord God, help me to see the beauty of the world, and through my duty may I find the love in the world. May I not spend my life in discontent, but may I remember that thou hast said, "The meek shall inherit the earth." Fill my heart with compassion, that I may love my fellow man as I love myself.
~ Amen."

John 16:32-33 (KJV)

³² Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.

³³ These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

No Shrinking Violets Here!

“With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

~ Ephesians 6:7 (KJV)

Our church has always had lots of different help from many people and now that we have a newsletter we can publicly acknowledge the help that’s been given recently and in the past. Many of our congregation have helped with preparing the manse for visiting speakers, and Lord willing, our new minister. There have been kind donations of valuable time and labour, along with much needed household items. Acknowledgements also to those who provide hospitality to visiting speakers, make donations of tea and biscuits, clean the church, provide newsletter contributions, take care of church financial administration and many other important tasks behind the scenes. There is never a shortage of willing help when it’s needed. These acts of kindness are done by people who are not looking for recognition, for they know that ultimately it is Our Lord that we serve in doing them, however it is also important to recognise that everything is greatly appreciated and a blessing to the church.

Presbytery Oversight Visit

On 31st January 2018, there will be a visit from the Presbytery of Inverness, Lochaber and Ross, who have the responsibility for the wider pastoral and spiritual oversight of the Fort William and Kilmonivaig ministerial area, their office-bearers and congregation. As part of this visit, the Presbytery will visit each congregation within its bounds once every five years. The purpose of the visit is to provide an opportunity and basis for conversation between the Presbytery and the congregation and its office-bearers to discuss the state of the congregation in the Lord’s service, and to provide a pastoral assessment and examination of the work of the congregation.

A questionnaire will be sent to the congregation. The Presbytery would like to receive completed questionnaires by the day of the visit. The questionnaires will be returned to the Presbytery on the day of the visit.

The congregation will have an opportunity to make their views known at a meeting in the Church hall downstairs at 7.30pm on Wednesday 31st January, and as our church is in a “fragile position” of vacancy it will be vitally important to have a well-attended meeting to discuss our future.

Proposed Development Update

The planning application for the proposed development of flats adjacent to our Church building has received a formal objection from the Lochaber Panel. The applicants lack of response to conditions attached to the previously approved planning consent has left the Panel with no option but to remove their original decision until the requested information is provided. Details of the decision are publicly available online at the Highland Council planning website, the planning reference is 17/05038/FUL.



I Asked...

I asked for wisdom, that I might do great things,

I was given faith, that I might do better things.

I asked for health, that I might work for Him,

I was given infirmities, that I might lean on Him.

I asked for riches, that I might help others,

I was given poverty, that I might love others.

I asked for joy, that I might never be unhappy,

I was given sorrow, that I should know His compassion.

I asked for friends, that I should never be lonely,

I was left desolate, that I might cling to Him.

I asked for success, that men should befriend me,

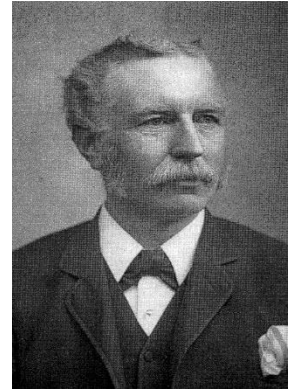
I was given disappointment and failure, that His name should be glorified.

In all that I asked for, He gave me not,

But manifold blessings, peace, love and a glorious hope beyond the grave did He give me.

Feeding Sheep or Amusing Goats?

The following article is often wrongly attributed to Charles Spurgeon, it is in fact by Archibald Geikie Brown (July 18, 1844 – April 2, 1922) who was an outstanding English Baptist preacher-evangelist and pastoral elder. Brown was a student and friend of Spurgeon and he also ministered at the Metropolitan Tabernacle from 1908-1911. In 1889, Brown wrote **“The Devil’s Mission of Amusement”* and this article is an excerpt from that publication. Regardless of author, what was written is nevertheless true, wise and very applicable to the Church today. It was not written by Brown to offend but if it does, maybe we need to ask ourselves why we are offended.



“An evil is in the professed camp of the Lord, so gross in its impudence, that the most shortsighted can hardly fail to notice it during the past few years. It has developed at an abnormal rate, even for evil. It has worked like leaven until the whole lump ferments. The devil has seldom done a cleverer thing than hinting to the church that part of their mission is to provide entertainment for the people, with a view to winning them.

From speaking out as the Puritans did, the church has gradually toned down her testimony, then winked at and excused the frivolities of the day. Then she tolerated them in her borders. Now she has adopted them under the plea of reaching the masses.

My first contention is that providing amusement for the people is nowhere spoken of in the Scriptures as a function of the church. If it is a Christian work, why did not Christ speak of it? "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). That is clear enough. So, it would have been if He had added, "and provide amusement for those who do not relish the gospel." No such words, however, are to be found. It did not seem to occur to Him.

Then again, "He gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some evangelists; and some pastors and teachers, for the work of the ministry" (Eph. 4:11-12). Where do entertainers come in? The Holy Spirit is silent concerning them. Were the prophets persecuted because they amused the people or because they refused? The concert has no martyr roll.

Again, providing amusement is in direct antagonism to the teaching and life of Christ and all His apostles. What was the attitude of the church to the world? Ye are the salt" (Matt. 5:13), not the sugar candy - something the world will spit out not swallow. Short and sharp was the utterance, "Let the dead bury their dead" (Matt. 8:22) He was in awful earnestness. Had Christ introduced more of the bright and pleasant elements into His mission, He would have been more popular when they went back, because of the searching nature of His teaching. I do not hear Him say, "Run after these people Peter and tell them we will have a different style of service tomorrow, something short and attractive with little preaching. We will have a pleasant evening for the people. Tell them they will be sure to enjoy it. Be quick Peter, we must get the people somehow." Jesus pitied sinners, sighed and wept over them, but never sought to amuse them.

In vain will the Epistles be searched to find any trace of this gospel of amusement! Their message is, "Come out, keep out, keep clean out!" Anything approaching fooling is conspicuous by its absence. They had boundless confidence in the gospel and employed no other weapon.

After Peter and John were locked up for preaching, the church had a prayer meeting, but they did not pray "Lord grant unto thy servants that by a wise and discriminating use of innocent recreation we may show these people how happy we are." If they ceased not from preaching Christ, they had not time for arranging entertainments. Scattered by persecution, they went everywhere preaching the gospel. They turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6). That is the only difference! Lord, clear the church of all the rot and rubbish the devil has imposed on her, and bring us back to apostolic methods.

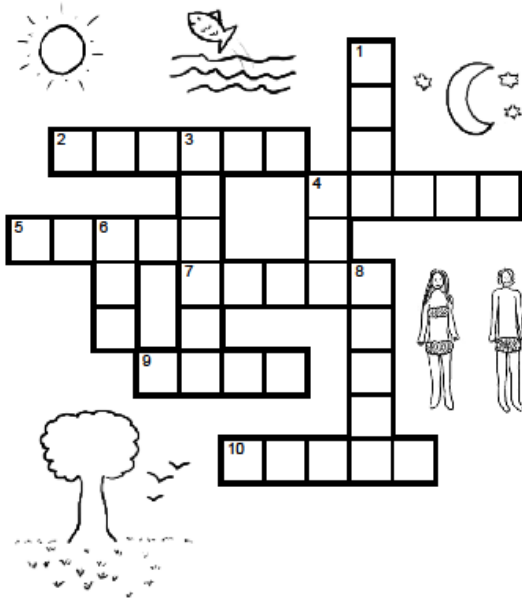
Lastly, the mission of amusement fails to affect the end desired. It works havoc among young converts. Let the careless and scoffers, who thank God because the church met them halfway, speak and testify. Let the heavy laden who found peace through the concert not keep silent! Let the drunkard to whom the dramatic entertainment has been God's link in the chain of the conversion, stand up! There are none to answer. The mission of amusement produces no converts. The need of the hour for today's ministry is believing scholarship joined with earnest spirituality, the one springing from the other as fruit from the root. The need is biblical doctrine, so understood and felt, that it sets men on fire.”

*The full article “The Devil’s Mission of Amusement” by Archibald Brown is widely available online.



Creation Activity Worksheet

by SundaySchoolResources.co.uk



- Across**
- 2 God created the moon on this day (6)
 - 4 The earth was this before the creation (5)
 - 5 God created these on the 5th day (5)
 - 7 God created these on the 3rd day (5)
 - 9 The name of the Garden the man and woman lived in (4)
 - 10 God created this on the 1st day (5)

- Down**
- 1 The name of the man that God created (4)
 - 3 God did this on the 7th day (6)
 - 4 The name of the woman that God created (3)
 - 6 God created the woman by taking this from the man (3)
 - 8 God created land creatures on this day (5)

- ANIMALS
- BEGINNING
- CREATION
- EARTH
- GARDEN
- GOD
- HEAVENS
- LIGHT
- MAN
- PLANTS
- SEA
- STARS
- WOMAN



Quick Quiz for Kids

1. Who wrote the book of Revelation?
2. Where did Jesus grow up?
3. Which apostle was a tax collector?
4. Name one book that tells of Jesus' birth?
5. Who lived on locusts and wild honey?

(As always, the answers are in your Bible.)

Bible verses to memorise.

Proverbs 3:5 (KJV)

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding.

Proverbs 14:5 (KJV)

A faithful witness will not lie: but a false witness will utter lies.

Proverbs 30:5 (KJV)

Every word of God is pure: he is a shield unto them that put their trust in him.

God, Hear My Prayer

God in heaven hear my prayer,
 Keep me in thy loving care.
 Be my guide in all I do,
 Bless all those who love me too.
 ~Amen.

~Traditional

Answers to November "Quick Quiz" questions:

1. Twelve
2. Luke
3. On the road to Damascus
4. Matthew, Mark, Luke & John
5. Leprosy