



Easter

Tron Times

Newsletter | St George's-Tron Church Glasgow | April 2011

We have been remembering Bob Fyall especially recently during his medical treatment. Though absent from the pulpit of late, he has written to us of its importance for Tron Times in this excellent letter which I commend to you all. William Philip.

How shall they hear without a preacher?

by Bob Fyall

In recent months both the elders and the staff team at their meetings have been discussing 'The Trellis and the Vine' by Colin Marshall and Tony Payne, both Australians with many years of ministry experience. The thesis of the book is that much of our church life concentrates on the trellis i.e. the framework of committees, programmes, structures, activities, groups for this and groups for that, and meanwhile the real work of vine growing, of Christ being formed in his people's hearts and lives, is often neglected. The remedy they argue is to change from programmes to people, from running events to training, and rather than looking to fill gaps, to train new workers and to develop team ministry. The book is well written in an engaging style and with its main argument I am in complete agreement.

However, we need to remember when we are studying a book other than the Bible that it is not inerrant and that it is not simply a case of swallowing it whole and wondering how we can change our practice to conform to it. I felt increasingly as we discussed the book, valuable as it was, that there was a tendency which becomes clear in Chapter Eight 'Why Sunday Sermons are Necessary but not Sufficient' to see preaching as one of the ways in which we hear the Word of God rather than the supreme way in which the congregation is led, guided and grows to maturity in Christ. So why is preaching so important? In a day of sound bites, interactive learning and in the midst of a highly visual culture are we simply trying to hide our heads in the sand?

Preaching first of all is a unifying activity where the whole Christian body, preacher as well as hearers, come together to hear what the Lord is saying. That is why preaching must be expository, unfolding and applying the text rather than using it as a trampoline to give a boost to our own speculations. This kind of preaching encourages people to read the Bible for themselves. It is effective not when people are entranced by the ingenuity of the speaker but when they say, 'That's clear now. Why didn't I see it before?' As more and more of the Bible is expounded people grow not just in knowledge but in grace, because it is the Spirit himself who takes the words on the page, and, by the preacher's faithful although imperfect words, leads us to the Lord Jesus Christ the living Word.

Preaching also leads the church in a way that house groups and one-to-one studies, however excellent in themselves, cannot. By their very nature groups are often led by those who do not have the time for the in-depth study of the Bible which is essential to all true preaching. A strong pulpit ministry, as one of its beneficial effects will produce people hungry to learn more and this will express itself in the proliferation of groups eager to study together. This is excellent and to be encouraged. But if such groups begin to be seen as alternatives to the pulpit then instead of unifying the body they will cause the growth of cliques, places where the discontented can express their dissatisfaction with the ministry and where the Bible is no longer in the driving seat. It is essential that such groups are loyal to the pulpit ministry and want to help people to apply it to their lives.

Preaching further can address the whole person in the way a group study cannot. In a group we can explore together the meaning of a passage and see how it applies to our lives and raise questions which cannot be raised in large gatherings. However, preaching can build up and explore the argument of a

passage [say in a Letter] or unfold the narrative technique of a story in a fuller way and thus give a clearer sense of the flow of a passage. But — and this is important — it can also appeal to the heart in a way inappropriate in a smaller group. More importantly still, it can directly challenge the will not only of individuals but of a whole congregation in a way that the more relaxed setting of a group in a living-room cannot. This is why preaching is so vital as it gets under the radar and we hear the unmistakeable voice of God.

Preaching confronts us as well with truth we would rather not hear. A common

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statement is that the preacher must 'make the Bible relevant'. This is simply untrue; the Bible is relevant and the task of the preacher is to demonstrate its relevance. This is closely linked to another criticism of expository preaching which is that it is simply lectures on the Bible which are boring and bear little or no relevance to people's lives. Far better to sit down with a group of friends and raise our personal concerns and see what, if anything, the Bible has to say about these. Far be it from me to deny that there is preaching which is boring, vague and unrelated to life. That is usually because the preacher has failed to study enough, pray enough and work hard enough at application. That is self-evident. What I am concerned with is the implication that even good expository preaching fails to connect in a way that group work does.

At least two things need to be said. The first is that the starting point must never be 'what is this passage saying to us?' That way we hijack the text and read our

own concerns into it and allow these to set the agenda. That means, among other things, that we will not learn anything we do not already know. The Bible is God's story about God and his purpose not only to save his people but also to restore the whole created order and introduce an unimaginably wonderful and glorious new creation. Our little stories need to be fitted into that big story, not the other way round. That is why, for example, in the book of Job, when the Lord comes to answer Job's agonised questions he gives him an amazing panorama of creation and his control of the powers of evil to show Job's experiences in a wider perspective.

The other is that the Bible is continually concerned to present us with the questions God is asking us and the truth he wants to teach us. Sinful people, including forgiven sinners, do not naturally think like God and thus there must be continual teaching ranging widely throughout the Bible. Preachers must take the lead in leading people through these questions and establishing priorities. Nothing can be more practical than this because we will find that the answers to our felt needs will also be addressed as Scripture deals with our real needs. For example in Genesis 32:27 when the Lord asks Jacob 'What is your name?', he is forcing Jacob to admit that he is a cheat and that his real problem is not vengeance from his brother Esau but an unresolved need to remove hindrances to his relationship with God. The preacher, in a way a group leader cannot, will continually be confronting us with our congenital desire to evade God and to fail to be honest with ourselves. Preaching, unlike group discussions, cannot be hijacked by those whose own concerns are more important to them than anything else.

All of us need to be committed to the central ministry of preaching which brings great responsibilities. The Tron has enjoyed faithful Biblical preaching for many decades; some have been here for most of these decades and probably heard every book in the Bible

expounded, many several times. How much of that has become part of the congregation's life? Attentive listening and transformed living are products of true biblical preaching. Also, realisation that such preaching does not come except by diligent study and continual prayer and many, many hours of work. That is why the ministry of the whole body is vital; no one man can devote himself to preaching and do a multitude of other tasks well.

Good preaching comes with authority. This does not lie in the preacher and his personality, eloquence, mastery of ancient languages or his pulpit presence. Of course God can and does use these and other gifts but if that is all the preacher has to offer it is a performance which may instruct, move the emotions, even entertain, but it will not bring life from the dead or cause any growth in grace. That authority comes from the Spirit of God and the conviction that, in the words of Timothy Dudley-Smith, 'God in his wisdom for our learning gave his inspired and holy Word'. That conviction, far from leading to laziness in the preacher, will make him study consistently all his ministry as he seeks to unfold the unsearchable riches of Christ. In his wisdom God has ordained that the folly of what is preached [1 Cor 1:15] means that it is not only pulpit preaching Paul has in mind, but all the ways in which the Gospel is presented. But I do not doubt for a moment that Paul deliberately uses the term 'preached' with its connotations of authority, and not 'shared', 'debated', 'discussed' or the like. The note of authority in preaching is a continual reminder that all Gospel work is about enthroning Christ in the human heart.

And preaching is at the heart of a congregation's worship. Worship only happens when we realise that what God says to us is more important than what we say to God. Indeed we would have nothing at all to say to God unless he first spoke to us. Thus only as our minds are renewed by the living Christ who comes to us in the Scriptures can we

worship at all. This is why every part of the service matters: the choice of hymns and the emphasis in the prayers are all shaped by the passage to be expounded, and the other parts of the service help us to hear and to respond to the preached word. PT Forsyth, a preacher of an earlier generation, described preaching as 'the ordered alleluia of the congregation'. None of this means that the Word of God is collapsed into the words of men, rather, that as when an ordinary sinful man breaks the Word of Life into digestible pieces that word, like the communion bread, mediates the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is why preaching is never simply

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'explaining the passage' but proclaiming Christ. A key passage is Acts 10:44 — 'While Peter was still speaking these words the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word.' The word of God is not collapsed into the human words, yet it was in the hearing of these words that the Holy Spirit worked powerfully to bring Christ to people.

Such a vision of the life-changing power of preaching is an exciting prospect which we badly need to recover in our own day. Sadly, much of contemporary evangelicalism has lost its nerve and has lost this single-minded commitment to this ministry. It is no accident, therefore, that there is so much confusion and a loss of the great realities of what used to be called 'preaching the eternities'. In my view this is responsible for the lamentable failure to make a vigorous stand for the Gospel in the present debates on sexuality and the lack of confidence in the Gospel which lies behind it. Without true biblical preaching a church will not long remain evangelical.

We rejoice in the varied ministries of the Word in Christianity Explored, Release the Word, the numerous groups for Bible Study and the one-to-one studies in all parts of the congregation and beyond. We thank God, too, for the street evangelism, the caring work among the addicts and homeless as well as innumerable acts of kindness where the love of Christ is shown. May these and others flourish! We are so grateful for the wonderful music ministry both at the regular services and on Fridays and other times. But these will only flourish if at the centre is the preaching of the Word which both inspires and guides all such activities. Remove the central preaching, or even lessen its importance, and it will not be long before the other activities wither or become forces for discontent, and the good will lead us away from the best.

'How shall they hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?' says Paul [Romans 10:14, 15]. This is the crying need of today. It affects all of us. Pray for Willie as he preaches week by week and for others who share that ministry whether on a regular or occasional basis. Whatever our other roles in the church this needs to be close to our hearts. As we look to the future, one of the things which gives greatest encouragement is the young men who have come through Cornhill whom God has so wonderfully gifted and whose ministry is proving such a blessing. Pray that they will be sustained and keep the vision for the years to come and that God will raise up many others, perhaps some who are reading these words.

Yours in the fellowship of the Gospel,

Bob Fyall



Bob Fyall is an honorary Associate Minister at St George's-Tron, and is Senior Tutor at the Cornhill Training Course.

Home news

compiled by Ruth Hodgson

'The **Outward-Looking Church** is a group of outward-looking people. We cannot be corporately what we are not personally.' So began one of the speakers at our recent Outward-Looking Church Conference. More than a hundred people from at least twenty-eight different churches came and were challenged and encouraged by the ministry of **Alex Bedford, Craig Dyer and Nate Morgan Locke**. Two years on from the reopening of our church building people from all over the world come in and many become engaged in meaningful conversations with members of the Building Evangelism Team. Only God knows what harvest there might be from the seed that is sown.

Outreach is not limited to any particular age group. It was encouraging on a visit to two of our older members, **Jessie Bellingham** and **Sophie Lowe**, to find them actively reaching out with the gospel to their carers. A new venture, **Music and Movement**, has begun on Friday mornings as an outreach to mums and toddlers.

After the disappointment of postponed surgery we are thankful that **Joyce Miller** is back home and progressing well after a knee joint replacement. **David Airlie** is now home from hospital having had radiotherapy which has brought some improvement. We lovingly pray for Kate and David, and they in turn are so grateful for all the support and kindness they feel they are receiving. We remember too **Saied's wife** as she continues her treatment and we pray for **Mary Leonard** whose husband, Pat died in January, **Janice Cochrane** who lost her mother just after Christmas and **Colonel Dick Begbie** whose wife died last month.

We congratulate two couples who have become engaged, **Vivian Kaunds to Shamitha Karkada**, and **Debbie Angus to Andrew Mountford** (their wedding is planned for 16th September). We also congratulate **Euan and Helen Dodds** on the birth last December of their daughter **Anna**, and **Oliver and Susan Ward** whose son **Ethan** was born in February.

Many of our number have been involved with University CU missions this past term. **Euan Dodds** was one of many guests at Durham CU along with **Rico Tice**. **Caroline Dodds and Naomi Hull** were at Glasgow Caledonian; **Rupert Hunt-Taylor, Oli Ward, Kieran Dodds and Stephen Ballingall** were at Glasgow CU, and **Andy Baxter and Robert Hamilton** were at Aberdeen. We trust that the many students amongst us were encouraged and that their witness will be emboldened in an increasingly secular society.

Christianity Explored led by **Duncan Porter** moved from Thursday to Friday and from the Halls to the Wynd. Between fifteen and twenty five people from several different countries have attended part or all of the course. Some came with church friends, some 'chanced' in and saw the notice, some just wanted to know more, but all have now had the gospel explained.



Euan and Helen Dodds with Anna



picture: Mary Francis

The Late Turkey Walk ... extreme weather delayed many events this year!

Kenny Macleod reported to the prayer meeting on his visit to Levice in Slovakia to see **Csaba, Darina and Richard Tolnai**. Since completing Cornhill Csaba has worked as 'Vikar' (assistant pastor) in their local church. He has considerable responsibilities for preaching, teaching, bible study groups, young people's work and a youth cafe where Darina also works part-time. They are hoping to pay us a visit some time later this year.

Away News

compiled by Ruth Hodgson



The Rowbory family in Jos

Reports from Jos, Nigeria tell of a warm (very!) welcome for **David, Julie, Rebekah and Elizabeth Rowbory** when they arrived there after one or two delays on the 21st February. Their Wycliffe colleagues on the compound have been helpful

and hospitable and it was almost a week before the Rowborys had to make a meal for themselves.

We rejoice with **Darren and Susan Wall** that **Elsbeth and Catriona** have now got places in school in SE England where they will live when Darren starts as OMF Finance Director this coming summer.

It was a joy to see **Scott and Nok Murray** on their brief visit to Glasgow in February. Shortages of staff and equipment in the Kwai River Hospital continue to make life challenging for both of them.

Jonathan and Juay Blyth are both in Scotland at present. Juay is recovering well after all her treatment, and Jonathan, who has also undergone surgery, is recovering rather more slowly.

Imran Gill continues the demanding work of bringing relief and hope to the thousands of people affected by the earthquake and floods in northern Pakistan while at the same time reaching out with the true hope that there is in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Other Ministries

compiled by Ruth Hodgson

After thirteen years of faithful ministry at Sandyford Henderson Church **Peter White** has decided to retire and will preach his last Sunday there at the end of this month. We thank God for Peter and pray God's blessing and a happy retirement for **Liz** and him. We are delighted to hear that **John Ferguson** (son of Sinclair and Dorothy) is to be inducted to Inverness APC Church next month.

Plans changed for **Murdo Maclean** and he continues in Carmyle and Mount Vernon where one of the encouragements has been an increased attendance at the prayer meeting. A seven-year-old boy who came to the children's mission last October subsequently came to church and brought some of his family but has now been diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia. We remember Murdo as he ministers to that family.

Jonathan deGroot of St Stephen's Comely Bank Edinburgh is encouraged by the appointments of a ministry associate, Graeme Williamson (former Cornhill student) and a music director, Alistair Dewar.

Cafechurch (in the local Costa) is a good outreach opportunity where people are exploring the truth of Christianity using Tim Keller's *'The Reason for God'*.

John and Susan Rushton in Cootehill, Co. Cavan, take every opportunity to teach the Bible — from the pulpit, at weekly Bible School, in schools, in Bible study groups, in Sunday School and in one-to-ones — and pray that God will work in hearts moving traditional presbyterians to a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dave Shedden in Clonmel, Co Tipperary, is encouraged by the slow but steady work going on in the Baptist Church where he works alongside the minister. A decision will be made next month about his continuing ministry there.

Garry Brotherston called into the church a few weeks ago. He now ministers in the northwest of England where he finds the work hard and demanding and would greatly value prayer for wisdom, strength and grace.



Chinese New Year picture: Euan Dodds



Scottish Evening picture: Vincent Wake



Scots Thai Cultural Event
picture: Kak Pratchayapong Yasri

Heart-warming Chile

Alan McBride talks to Tron Times about Santiago, single-celled organisms and summer teams to Anstruther.

'The story that stands out most in my mind was from the fishing community Las Barras. To think, I travelled half way across the world and ended up at the Barras!

The Chilean earthquake (8.8 magnitude) triggered a tsunami which messed up the fisheries. The people smoke, salt and store the year's supply of fish and then continue to fish for their income, so it's the basis of life.

One of the local pastors, Miguel, went out on door-to-door evangelism and met a couple. The old man out back was mending his nets and saying how the fish stocks had crashed and it was really bad. The team prayed with them before they left and didn't think about it until the end of the three weeks.

Our team then received a call from Miguel saying the old man had been in touch to give thanks to the missionaries. They had been fishing and caught so many fish their nets were breaking under the weight. How biblical is that!

The trip to Chile was a massive step out of my comfort zone. Since the age of seventeen my experience of mission had been as part of a summer team in Anstruther, Portobello and Blairgowrie before being nominated to lead my first team to Fort Augustus in 2005 and every year since. Now I was to be part of the thirteen-person Operation Mobilisation Team whose aim was to spread the word of God through evangelism to communities. We spent time at a boys' orphanage, the fishing communities, and in rural ranching communities with the Mapuche Indians, an indigenous people who use black magic and witchcraft. We also were able to see a lot of the landscape which is incredibly beautiful.

For the past eleven years I have worked as a countryside ranger at Mugdock Country Park. My family home was in Howwood next to two country parks and I grew up with a love of nature. When I left school I studied photography for a year in Greenock before moving to the University of Glasgow to study environmental science and conservation.

I can't put a date on when I became a Christian, some say "it was this or that day" but I can't do that. I used to go to a Church of Scotland event at the Youth Assembly. At one of those events my attention was grabbed about who is Jesus.

At University I didn't get involved in the CU which is one of my regrets. I would finish lectures and go home to Howwood and study. I feel like I am making up for lost time now! I meet



up with students on a one-to-one basis and I hear of things going on and wish I'd been involved. I was asked to consider meeting with one of the younger lads as part of Release the Word. I now meet up with six! I read 'Disciplines of a Godly Man' with some, and each month meet others for prayer and bible study over coffee or a meal.

The benefits are amazing. I naively thought 'giving' to that person but didn't realise it was mutual! The amount I have learned in return is humbling and gratifying.

People ask how God fits into my work but really it's how work fits into God. You give your work-life to God. I have such thankfulness to God for his creation. I see the turn of the seasons, from the smallest single-celled organism under the microscope to the large trees and giant raptors. God has such an amazing planet, like a diamond with so many facets. And it's my office! Our work is valuable to God, whatever occupation we find ourselves in. The church is one body with many parts, doing many different things to the glory of God. I feel I am a steward of the earth because I am actually a land manager!

I love my work but my intention in Chile was to find out if God was calling me to full-time mission work overseas. I didn't leave Santiago airport feeling sad but felt I would be back. In the meantime, I'm learning Spanish but think I will be around a wee bit longer!

As told to Kieran Dodds

Hear the whole story with Alan:

**13th April South Inner Group
Eric McDonald**



The Christian Institute



Nigel Kenny as told to
Andrew MacIntyre

As the UK Coalition Government approaches its first birthday and with Holyrood elections just weeks away the need for the Christian Institute and an evangelical influence in the corridors of power has never been greater.

One of the areas of concern for the Institute has been the Equality Act 2010.

- Under the Act, civil partnership ceremonies in churches and “gay marriage” are being considered.

In December, a homosexual couple sued Peter and Hazelmary Bull for refusing them a double room in their B&B. The court awarded them £3600.

The Bulls’ case was funded by the Institute’s Legal Defence Fund and an appeal has been lodged.

- Freedom to preach the gospel has been another area for the Legal Defence Fund, with two street preachers winning

their cases for wrongful arrest and breach of their civil liberties.

- On the Scottish scene, the Institute lobbied against Margo MacDonald’s End of Life Assistance Bill, which was defeated in November by 85 votes to 16.

As the Scottish elections approach, the Institute is urging Christians in Scotland to vote and make their concerns known.

Colin Hart, the Institute’s Director, said: “Our politicians are God’s servants to do us good and part of their job is to ensure we live peaceful and quiet lives as Christians. When they act in a way that affects this, they need to be told – if Christians won’t tell them, who will?”

The Christian Institute held a meeting in the church on 30th March

Salt and Light in the Jungle

Andrew MacIntyre



The Murray Family in Thailand

Fixing broken beds and dealing with rats and snakes in the laundry are just some of the challenges facing Scott and Nok Murray six months after taking up ministry at the Kwai River Hospital.

Scott and Nok visited the church in February to tell us how they were settling into this new work. Previously they had been serving in a local government hospital in Chainat, Central Thailand.

Since taking up the position Scott has introduced a number of changes to improve performance and hygiene at the hospital.

Sending the children away to boarding school had been a hard struggle but things had become much better this term with Shane feeling more settled. The children are based at Grace Boarding School in Chiang Mai more than 500 miles and over a

twelve-hour drive from where their parents are based. Nok spoke of how missing the children has strengthened her daily trust in the Lord as she spends much more time in prayer about the situation.

Speaking at the prayer meeting Scott thanked the church for the £12,000 plus raised to buy a new industrial washing machine and said the money left over would be used to purchase a dryer.

Scott explained how his and Nok’s call was to build a great hospital and medical facility that reaches patients with the gospel, and asked us to consider the following prayer points:

- Willing staff — Many of the staff have been there for twenty years have become complacent doing things their own way. There’s a dramatic shortage of staff at the hospital with nurses currently working sixteen-hour back shifts with only eight hours off in between. Pray that new willing staff can be found to work in the hospital.
- Equipment — Lack of equipment has been a real issue in the hospital with all washing done by hand. Laundry area has been cleaned out ridding it of rats and snakes ahead of installation of a new washer and dryer. Pray that Scott can build up the hospital with right equipment that will operate and be maintained properly.
- Evangelism — Though a Christian hospital little evangelism has been done. Daily preaching is now underway and the first ever Christmas services were held last year. Five hundred attended a recent praise service so pray for Scott and Nok as they increase Gospel mission at the hospital.

As easy as ABC

It's our joy and duty as Christians to hold up our brothers and sisters in prayer, suffering and rejoicing with the body of Christ globally. But if you're like me, that seems a rather large task. With so many Christians in so many countries, where do I start?

Well, good thing you came here! ABC has just what you need, Operation World's new edition, with all the latest information on the global church in every country, and suggested prayer points for each. It's a rather Massimo-sized

volume though, and designed primarily for use in prayer rather than for reference, so I'll conclude this review with some handy suggestions on how to use it.

Why not ... use it to build a daily prayer time into your routine? Each country has a day and a few key prayer points. Set aside half an hour to read it and pray, and see how your prayer life expands from there.

Why not ... use it to respond in faithful prayer to news stories from around the world? Read the appropriate chapters and remember Christians in, for example, Libya, Pakistan and Egypt.

Why not ... use it to study spiritually informed geography with your family? Read regularly and choose a country to pray for together as a family.



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ANDY'S BOOK CORNER

Happy Easter

Over Easter we celebrate the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus.
We'd love you to join us at any of these services...

Wednesday 20th April

Lunchtime service 1 pm —1.45 pm
with hot cross buns.

Good Friday 22nd April

Lunchtime service 1 pm.

Easter Sunday 24th April

Services at 11 am and 6.30 pm.

