

CORNERSTONE

BEHOLD, I LAY IN SION A CHIEF CORNER STONE

A WORD FROM OUR MINISTERS

Rev. John Greer

As a church family we have been saddened by the emergence of the illness of our caretaker, Mr. Andy McKendry. Andy has been caretaker of the church property for approximately forty years. Until a few years ago, his wife Elizabeth assisted him in taking care of God's house.

We are indebted to both for their faithful labours over these years. Recently, a beautiful clock was presented to Elizabeth to mark their retirement from

caretaking roles, with Andy being unable to attend due to his hospitalisation. Please continue to remember our brother and sister in prayer in these difficult days.

Over the years the Rev. and Mrs. John Wagner have endeared themselves to Ballymena FPC. Mr. Wagner was the guest preacher at several of our Bible Conferences and on other occasions, with his wife Kim accompanying him at various times.



The Lord brought the Wagner family into the fledgling congregation in Newtown Square, Pennsylvania in 1983, when I took up the challenge of pioneering the Lord's work there. Rev. and Mrs. Wagner proved to be utterly committed to the cause of Christ in

those early years, and a strong bond of friendship was formed between the Wagners and our family.

Mrs. Wagner went home to be with the Lord very recently after a fifteen-year struggle with illness. For us, it brings sadness, but for her it is far better. Please remember her husband and family in these days of deep sorrow. The attached photo was taken in September 2017 when Rev. Wagner preached at our Bible Conference.

Rev. Andrew Stewart

In the last issue of the Cornerstone, I wrote about my first endeavour into the world of vegetable growing. There are many things I have learned in the past few months while tending to the vegetable plot. For example, I have found out that I am an expert at growing lettuce - to be honest it seems easy to grow. I planted too much at one time, and we could not eat it all, so I removed a lot of it. I also learned that plants seem

to grow better when they are watered by rain; so, rainwater harvesting will be a future project.

One thing that did amaze me was the pea plant. As it grows, it sends out tendrils to seek for something to cling to, to help it climb upwards towards the light. I erected canes, wires and branches to provide a support structure for them to make their upward progression; and while they were still tender, I was able to bend them so as to get them to grow in the right direction.

This caused me to think of the tender plants of the many children that the Lord has blessed our congregation with over recent months. As they grow, they need that Christian support structure that will direct them towards the One who is the Light of the world. That is our



responsibility as parents, aunts, uncles, grandparents, Sunday School teachers and Children's Meeting workers. If we will not do it, the world will certainly give them something to cling to.

While they are in the tender years of life and the world with its troubles and trials has not hardened them, let us pray that they will **"grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."**



WHY PRAYER MEETINGS?

REV GREER

From 1857-58 there was a great awakening along the east coast of the United States, coinciding with the Ulster 1859 Revival.

One of the areas greatly affected was Charleston in South Carolina, under the ministry of Dr. John Girardeau, following a lengthy season of congregational prayer. During this period, the attendance constantly increased, with some of the elders urging Girardeau to commence preaching services. He refused, waiting for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. He rightly believed that the Father had given the Son the sovereign right to bestow the Spirit upon whomsoever He pleased, when He pleased, and in whatever measure He pleased. Therefore, day after day, Girardeau led prayer directly addressed to Christ



on His Kingly throne for the Holy Spirit to come. One evening as Dr. Girardeau prayed, he felt as if a bolt of electricity had diffused itself through him, rendering him speechless. Then he said, "The Holy Spirit has come; we will begin preaching tomorrow evening." He dismissed the congregation, left the pulpit, but no one moved. The Holy Spirit had not only come upon him, but He had also come upon the hearts of the people. Girardeau immediately began to urge sinners to turn to Christ.

They began to sob softly, like the falling of rain; then to weep with deeper emotion.

The meeting that night went on until midnight; and then continued day and night for eight weeks, with large numbers being converted. In the light of such a stirring

account, let us give the prayer meeting the importance it deserves. Christ initiated the church prayer meeting, Matthew 18:19-20. He speaks of believers in agreement asking of God and obtaining His answers. The Spirit is the Spirit of grace and supplications, (Zechariah 12:10). By His work in the hearts of believers He begets the desire to pray, (Galatians 4:6). That personal desire in every true believer translates into the corporate prayer meetings of Christ's Church. Any denial of this truth betokens a blindness to New Testament Scripture and is to ignore the Lord's revealed will.

Believers in tune with Christ will make the church prayer meeting a priority and will fear to miss it. It is there that the Lord commands His blessing upon the life and witness of the corporate body of His people.

WHY YOUTH FELLOWSHIP?

JOHN GREER JNR

In considering why we have a Youth Fellowship, we do not need to go much further than the title of the group. Some churches use an exotic name for their youth work, such as 'Collision Youth', 'Crossroads' or 'Elevate' and those may be fine in their place. Our title of 'Young People's Fellowship' is timeless, functional, and enlightening when we consider why we have an element of the church program specifically targeted at the youthful age range of our church family. Fellowship is the operative word in that title, and we will use it to think about 'why we have a Youth Fellowship' in three ways:

First, fellowship with the Lord is the primary focus and guiding principle of everything that takes place within the Youth Fellowship schedule. Meetings and activities are centred on prayer, praise and the preaching of God's Word, with the goal of everything being done to the Lord's glory. Prayer times are held as part of the regular schedule of

meetings, which gives an opportunity for young people to pray publicly. Special times such as the Youth Challenge Week and Youth Weekend have been blessed with the Lord's presence and have deepened and strengthened the relationship of the young people with their Saviour. Topics addressed during the preaching at Friday night meetings and in items such as the 'Living Word' are designed to challenge, strengthen and encourage the young people in their Christian walk.

Second, fellowship with other Christian young people is a key purpose of our Youth Fellowship. We specifically organise events for the young people to spend time together, and we pray for Christian friendships to be developed which will stand the test of time. Both the Friday night meetings and other events on the calendar are designed to bring young people time together in a range of settings that they might seek out Christian friends who will encourage

them in their walk with the Lord. We have repeatedly seen that personal invitation is the most effective way to reach the unsaved in this age bracket, and the number of friends who come in to Bring-a-Friend and Youth Mission meetings is testament to the desire of our young people to see their friends brought to Christ in salvation.

Third, fellowship with the wider church family encourages the young people to be an active part of the church both present and future. Ministering to the Senior Citizens through home visits has helped to form links between the young people and those who are examples to them for their Christian walk. Taking part in church services and youth meetings is an important training ground for young people to see how they can serve within the church when they grow older. Similarly, serving in Youth Committee also helps our members to learn to work together as a team, which will help in roles they may hold in the future of the Lord's work.



So, when you see the youth of our church family, please pray for them. They face great temptation and opposition in education and in work. They need your prayers that they will be built up in the truth of God's word to be able to stand for what is right and continue the Lord's work for many years into the future.

WHY SUNDAY SCHOOL?

IVAN & KAREN BAILIE

Mark 10:14, “Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not.”

We are all very familiar with these words that our Saviour uttered as he rebuked his disciples who sought to hinder the little children of His day from coming unto Him. However, we often overlook the preceding words of this text “...He was much displeased,” which highlight to us the importance our Lord placed on teaching the little ones the things of God.

As the Church of Christ, our desire should be to see our little ones brought to the Saviour at an early age. We must pray that the Spirit would enlighten their souls in salvation, and that they would be clothed with the whole armour of God and equipped to tackle a world that is increasingly at war with Christ and all that is holy. Our Sunday School is where this burden for their souls is outworked in a practical way as the love of Christ is presented to them in the Gospel.

It might come as a surprise to learn that the Sunday School movement originated outside the visible Church,

owing much to the work of the 18th century philanthropist, Robert Raikes. Greatly concerned about the moral state of the nation of England, and in particular the decline in behaviour of children of that day, Mr. Raikes had a great vision for social reform amongst the street children. He believed that it was better to ‘prevent’, rather than try to ‘cure’ these issues, and saw schooling as the best intervention.

Since the children worked in factories six days a week, Sunday was the best day for such schooling to take place. Using the Bible as their textbook, the children were taught to read and understand the Scriptures and learned the catechisms, under the teaching of the lay people of that day. Although he faced opposition and criticism from some quarters, the schools continued and their numbers grew quickly throughout the land, to a point where at one time more than 85% of the child population in the UK attended such schools. There was a noticeable drop in crime rate where the schools were located, indicating the degree of social reform that accompanied the work of these Sabbath Schools.

Over time, State funded schools took up the responsibility of educating our children. Sadly, in many of today’s schools there is a concerted effort to sideline the teaching of the Bible, and in particular, God’s moral law. This accompanied by the fact that now less than 1% of children attend Sunday Schools in the UK, highlights the great need that exists for sound Biblical teaching of our children.

There are many Scripture references which remind us of the importance of teaching our children, from earliest days, the Way of Life which is only to be found through faith in Christ and His finished work. In Deuteronomy 6:6-7 we are taught that family conversation should focus on our Saviour.

Pray for our Sunday School teachers as they seek to “...train up a child in the way he should go.” May the Lord give us all a vision and burden for the souls of our little ones, like that of those early parents who brought their children to the Lord to be blessed.

Proverbs 29:18 “...where there is no vision, the people perish.”

SPECIAL CHILDREN’S MEETINGS

We were so thankful to the Lord for the opportunity to have four special Friday night meetings in the month of May. It was great to get the work up and running again and gather the boys and girls from the town in under the preaching of the word of God. We were encouraged with the reception we received when we went back to the doors to talk with the parents and invite the children. Many said that they had missed the meetings! We also welcomed some new children in each of the meetings for which we are so thankful.

Please continue to pray for the boys and girls of our town, that the Lord will save them and break into many homes that are ruined by sin. Also pray for the summer work as we look to the Lord for His guidance.

Pray that the Lord would give us a vision and greater burden for these children. Just as we heard last Lord’s Day of Ruth going to glean in the field, may we do likewise in the spiritual harvest fields of our own town.

PHILIP MCCLINTOCK



Henry, with his little brother Micah, born to John and Emma Ferguson, on 5/5/21.



Little James Gregg with his big sister Sophie. James was born on 27/4/21 to Timothy and Emma Gregg



Peter and Rhonda Maternaghan have a new addition to the family, Oliver, born 13/5/21. Oliver will get plenty of attention from Anna, Grace, Lewis, Charlie, Lucy and Martha-Lily.

NEW BABIES

MY TESTIMONY

Winston and Jean Kirk have been faithful members of the Ballymena congregation for many years.

Winston

I was born and brought up on a farm in Kildowney Hill, Glarryford, the youngest of six brothers and one sister. It was not a Christian home, but my parents were strict about the Sabbath day. We were sent to Sunday school where we were taught by faithful teachers, first in Carnlea Mission Hall, then some time later in Clough Presbyterian Sunday School.

After leaving school and starting work, it wasn't long until I met my future wife, Jean. In 1966, a mission came to Clough Presbyterian, and, for the first time, I saw my need to get right with God. I also had a work colleague, Mr. David Warwick, who was a faithful witness to me and often quoted John 3 v 3 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'

This planted a seed in my heart, and I never fell deep into sin.

Jean and I got married on 30th March 1970, and set up home on the Moat Road. In 1975, we attended the mission in the Town Hall, conducted by Dr Paisley. At the last meeting, I came under conviction of sin and accepted Christ as my Saviour. After that meeting, we called at my brother's home to tell him the good news and, on the Monday morning, I told my boss and work colleagues. They all were very encouraging.

In 1978, when our daughter was born and Jean was at home with her, I decided to visit Ballymena Free Presbyterian Church, at that time in the old High Street building. The singing of the old

hymns and the preaching of God's Word appealed to me. I had found a church where we could worship and the same year we came into membership.

In 1992, I was voted on to the church committee and served there for eighteen years. I can testify to the faithful ministry of God's servants, Rev. Beggs, Rev. Greer and Rev. Stewart.

I can never repay what Christ has done for me in the shedding of His blood and dying on the cross for this hell-deserving sinner. Lamentations 3:22-23 "...his

compassions they fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness."

In the words of John Newton's great hymn, I can say "Tis grace has brought me safe thus far, And grace will lead me home."



Jean

Unlike many children in our church, I did not have the privilege of being into a Christian home. However, my parents sent me along to First Broughshane Presbyterian church and Sunday school. The minister was Rev. Strawbridge, and, sadly, I do not remember hearing anything of my need of salvation under his ministry. There was however a faithful Sunday School teacher, Miss Maisie Smith, who taught the children gospel truths and who sometime later, went to work on the mission field.

Growing up on a farm, life was busy with chores after school; and looking back, I am thankful for a quiet life with little opportunity to get involved in the things of the world.

After leaving school, I started work in Ballymena, and I met Winston. We attended the last night of a mission in Clough Presbyterian Church, and I believe it was there the Lord first spoke to me. We were given decision cards; but when I came home to tell my parents and work colleagues, I got no encouragement, and nothing came of it. After getting married in 1970, I was going to work one morning, when Elsie Sutters approached me and asked if I would consider coming to work for her and her brother John in Wellington Lighting. I accepted; and I believe, looking back, the Lord's hand was working. There was a Christian atmosphere in that workplace. I worked alongside Donna Simpson, the daughter of Mrs. Sadie Leith, a former member of our church, and Donna invited me to Tullygarley Mission Hall. It was there I heard the gospel message and, after attending one Sunday evening, I simply asked the Lord to save me in my own home.

In 1978, the year our daughter Emma-Jayne was born, we came as a family to Ballymena Free Presbyterian church. We joined the church under the ministry of Rev. Beggs. It is a joy to testify of the faithful teaching and gospel ministry of men who know the Lord in this church. I can truly say that my walk with God has been strengthened here.

I am just a sinner saved by grace, and I still need much grace to bring me home to be with my Saviour; but I know that one day He will present me faultless before a Holy God.

Psalm 27 v 1 **"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?"**

April 2021

Average weekly offering	£ 5520
Home & Foreign Missions	£ 2975
Building Fund	£ 710
UK Fund	£ 165

May 2021

Average weekly offering	£ 4398
Home & Foreign Missions	£ 2080
Building Fund	£ 568
UK Fund	£ 94

Missionary Offerings April & May 2021

Liberia School	£ 3500	LTBS	£ 640
Glenn Hamilton	£ 2845	Kenya	£ 460
Rev P Gardiner	£ 1807	Nepal Orphanage	£ 355
Stephen Miller	£ 1304	Stephen Greer	£ 350
Emergency Aid Fund	£ 1050	Cherith Brown	£ 200
Nepal Radio	£ 1040	Building Bridges	£ 160
Liberia Radio	£ 1000	Missionary Boxes	£ 72
Joanne Greer	£ 970	Lewes	£ 50
Kenya Radio	£ 800	Angel Alvarez	£ 50
Uganda School	£ 800	Colin Maxwell	£ 50
Asia	£ 800	TOTAL	£18303