

The magazine of Portobello Baptist Church

MESSENGER

www.portobellobaptist.co.uk • April 2013



*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is,
there is freedom.*
(II Cor 2:17)



How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news



Scottish Registered Charity: SC015322



NEWS • TEACHING • ENCOURAGEMENT • LETTERS

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

	Tues	10.30 a.m.	Weekly Hour of Prayer
	Wed	7.30 p.m.	Midweek Prayer & Bible Study
April		7.30 p.m.	Management Meeting (T.B.C.)
	Sun	1.30 p.m.	Discipleship Course (6/ 7 weeks)
18th	Thurs	7.30 p.m.	Vision Group Meeting
June	1st	Sat	7.30 p.m. Symphonic Praise by Origin Scotland (at St Mary's Episcopal Cathedral, Palmerston Place)

FUTURE SERMON PLAN

April	7th – “Lyrics of life”
	14th – “Let my People go!”
	21st – “A Plague on you!”
	28th – “The lamb that was slain”
May	5th – “Ascension”
	12th – “Pentecost”
	19th – “The God of Miracles”
	26th – “Which gods will you serve?”

SCOTTISH BAPTIST PRAYER LINK

April	7th	Rev Carol Campbell (<i>Lead Healthcare Chaplain, Clyde Area</i>) Rev Anne Dougall (<i>Chaplain, West Glasgow Hospitals</i>)
	14th	Stranraer & Strathendrick
	21st	Stromness & Thomas Coats Memorial, Paisley
	28th	Tillicoultry & Tیره

MARCH OFFERING



3rd	£715.00	17th	£672.00	31st	£776.00
10th	£672.00	24th	£397.00		

Dear Friends,

Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands.
Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."
Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"
(John 20:27-28)

Ken Davis writes about a woman who looked out of her window and saw her German shepherd shaking the life out of a neighbour's rabbit. Her family did not get along well with these neighbours, so this was going to be like a disaster.

She grabbed a broom, pummelled the dog until it dropped the now extremely dead rabbit out of its mouth. She panicked. She did not know what else to do. She grabbed the rabbit, took it inside, gave it a bath, blow dried it to its original fluffiness, combed it until that rabbit was looking good, snuck into the neighbour's yard, and propped the rabbit back up in its cage. An hour later she heard screams coming from next door. She asked her neighbour, "What's going on?" "Our rabbit! Our rabbit!" her neighbour cried. "He died two weeks ago. We buried him, and now he's back!"



John Ortberg connects this story to Jesus' resurrection with the following comment:

People in the ancient world knew dead rabbits tend to stay dead. They knew dead rabbits tend to stay dead. A scholar by the name of M. T. Wright notes, "There were many messianic movements in the first century. In every case, the would-be Messiah got crucified by Rome as Jesus did." And this is what he writes: "In not one single case do we hear the slightest mention of the disappointed followers claiming their hero had been raised from the dead. They knew better."

The idea that disciples would naively make up a story about the resurrection of a dead messiah, unless, against all expectations, it was true, requires more faith than the resurrection itself. Surely if God is God, and became a man, it must be the most logical possibility ever. Surely God, to be God, must be in the miracle business!

Jesus is alive today!

Your Pastor

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Smith". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

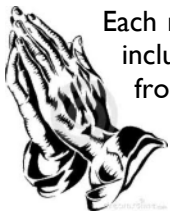
THE CHURCH FAMILY

We continue to remember, in prayer, all those who have been so faithful in the service of the Church and are no longer able to worship with us:

PRAYING FOR THE FLOCK

(1 Thess. 5:17; Acts 6.4)

(Eph 6:18) "praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints"



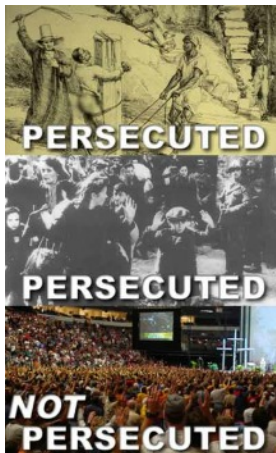
Each month this new section will include a cluster of names taken from the Church Directory so that we can uphold them particularly in prayer over this month.

HIGH ANXIETY?



Upon his arrival at the Ark, Stanley discovers Noah has accidentally double-booked his room with Melvin and Florence Adder.

FOUR RESPONSES TO THE COMING PERSECUTION



Persecution is the reality for much of the Christian world. There are many places in the world where churches are not legal, evangelism is banned, and Christians are regularly beaten by their governments. In Egypt, Christians are martyred for their faith, probably

even today. In Bhutan, Nepal, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, if the police show up at a church, they are there to shut it down — and arresting and/or beating everyone in attendance is likely as well.

China probably has more Christians than any other nation. Many of these believers suffer imprisonment and significant pressure from the government; they are evidence of the fact that 2,000 years after the Great Commission, it is still not legal for Christians to worship together in much of the world.

This is why believers really need to come to terms with the fact that persecution is on the horizon. Christians all too easily tend to see persecution as something that happens “*over there*.” For the most part, that may be true (for now). In the United States, the police are at churches to direct traffic, and make it easier to attend. They are not there to shut it down.

But recent events should serve as a gentle reminder that “it has been granted unto us to suffer for the gospel.” Briefly:



- The day is quickly coming when churches will be subject to legal obstacles for their stance on homosexuality. Expect banks to call in loans if the government declares that the loan was made to a group that “facilitates hate speech.” Meanwhile, cities such as Boston and Chicago have already said that they will not approve of granting zoning changes for business that “don’t reflect the inclusive values” of their city.

- This will not be limited to churches, but will affect private business owners as well. Lawsuits for discrimination, health insurance violations, neighbourhood nuisance infractions have already started. Expect them to continue and increase.

- Expect marriage to be completely secularised as cities, counties and states revoke the ability for pastors to perform weddings unless they sign documents affirming “marriage equality.”

- It seems like only a matter of time before lawsuits targeting churches are filed if a church refuses to do parent/child dedications for same-sex couples. Because most Boy Scout troops meet in churches, the recent decision concerning openly gay Scout leaders will hasten this day.

- A federal judge in California has already ruled that if it can be shown that Christians voted for a ballot proposal, and their faith was a motivating factor in their vote, then their votes do not count and the proposal is invalid.

- It is not far-fetched that pastors will lose their housing allowances, and churches lose their tax exempt status, unless they are willing to affirm the validity of the homosexual lifestyle.

How should we respond to this?

- First, we should be thankful that the kind of persecution listed above is still not as extreme as most of the world hurls at believers. A difficult zoning process, limited ability to borrow money, and extra taxes must seem like a strange form of persecution to many believers in Asia.

- Second, we should realize the apolitical nature of persecution without neglecting the political means of forestalling it. On the one hand, those who persecute Christians are not operating out of political ideology, as much as simply a hatred for the truth. On the other hand it appears that the means of persecution is through political channels. We need to find the balance of not looking to politics to save us, while also not neglecting the pursuit of a social framework that enables us to exercise our God-given rights as a matter of Christian testimony. We want to resist evil and defend those with no voice. We cannot simply welcome persecution if it can be forestalled, and to smilingly shrug and say hostility is inevitable is a breach of fidelity with the Word of God. Yet we must always remember that the only lasting solution to the love of evil in the world is evangelism—and even that is not so much a solution as it is the mission we are given by Jesus to begin with.

- Third, we should refuse to worry. Jesus himself told us that if we find ourselves dragged before courts and

asked to explain what it is exactly that we think we are doing: “Don’t worry about how or what you should speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, because you are not speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is speaking through you” (Matthew 10:19).

- Finally, we should continually remind ourselves that love for our enemies is a biblical mandate. David refused to harm Saul, and so we must continually cultivate love for those who persecute us.

As the storm clouds of persecution gather on the horizon, here is what we should NOT do:

“Don’t be surprised by [persecution], as if something unusual were happening to you. Instead, as you share in the sufferings of the Messiah rejoice, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory”. (1 Peter 4:12-13)

(<http://thecripplegate.com>)

PERSECUTED CHRISTIANS

NORTH KOREA: CHURCH LEADERS ASK FOR PRAYER AMID WAR PREPARATIONS

Prayer for beleaguered believers in North Korea is more important than ever, says Open Doors, an organization that supports persecuted Christians in 60 countries.



OpenDoors

According to underground Christians, there is a war-like atmosphere in the country:

“We are to meet the decisive battle with a gun in one hand and a hammer in the other,” summarized a Christian leader about the message the North Korean people recently received from the “high command.”

“The military army, navy, air force troops, strategic rocket troops, the red guards and the red youth guards are already in combat mode. Urgent meetings are being held everywhere, regardless if it is day or night. At those meetings, officials make decisions on what needs to happen in case war breaks out and everyone, including women, needs to be combat ready.”

According to Open Doors sources, many cars on the roads are covered with camouflage nets. Also, soldiers are wearing hats with camouflage dried branches and carry guns. North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un released a statement to his people, saying that “If war breaks out because of the actions of the U.S. and puppet South Korean’s unpardonable behaviour, they will end up with a disgraceful downfall, and our people will greet a brilliant new day of reunification. The day has come to show off the power of ‘Military First’ and our great nation to the whole world.”

However, Christians and other citizens fear war and its consequences.

“Many people are in a hurry to purchase emergency food supplies and daily goods just in case. The prices of goods, including food, are skyrocketing,” tells one believer in North Korea.

North Korean Christians are grateful for their fellow believers in the West and request their urgent prayers.

“I would like to thank the many brothers and sisters around the world for their continuous love and support,” says the Christian believer. “We know that our journey will not be an easy one, but we are sure that our faith, desperate hope and passionate desire will some day bear many fruit. No matter how difficult life is for us,

we never blame or complain about our circumstances. God has promised us in the Bible that if we seek His Kingdom first, all other things will be given to us as well. Please pray for us.”

Jerry Dykstra, a spokesman for Open Doors USA, adds: “Beneath the surface of the all the rhetoric of war and the possible launch of nuclear missiles are the suffering and persecution of the estimated 200,000 to 400,000 Christians in North Korea. Also, an estimated 60,000 to 80,000 Christians are in harsh political prison camps. The government has been the No. 1 persecutor of Christians for 11 years in a row, according to the Open Doors 2013 World Watch List (www.worldwatchlist.us).

“We must respond now to the Christian leaders’ request to pray for them. Pray for Kim Jong-Un; that God will work in his heart and he will pursue peace and not war. Pray for wisdom for leaders in the United States, South Korea and China. Pray for Christians who are put in even more danger due to war preparations. Pray families will find food to feed their families. Finally, pray that no matter what happens Christians will remain strong in their faith.”

THE UNSPOKEN PRAYER REQUESTS

Grace is a 26 year old woman from Northern Nigeria. The dark purple dress she wore on the day we met her illuminated her sad and piercing brown eyes.

She had only been married for a year and a half when she lost her husband in an attack by Boko Haram. Boko Haram is the Islamic extremist group responsible for multiple attacks on government and church buildings in Northern Nigeria.



Though it had been six months since Grace had lost her husband, she was still in a deep state of mourning. Even though she had come to share her story that day, she was unable to speak about the day she lost her husband and what life was like as a 26 year old widow from Northern Nigeria.

James 1:27 says “Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.”

As Grace was in a state of mourning and distress, we knew that we were called to minister to her by covering her in prayer. About four or five of us women gathered around Grace and began to pray for her unspoken prayer requests.

Though we did not know her exact needs, we knew that God did. Though we could not fully understand the pain such a young Nigerian widow felt, we knew that God did. Though she could not verbalize her exact feelings and emotions to us, we knew that God knew all of those feelings and emotions.

After we prayed for these unspoken prayer requests, Grace looked up with tears in her eyes. For the first time a beautiful smile emerged onto her once stoic face. This was a connection that transcended both culture and spoken word, something that only God could do.

Please continue to pray for Grace and the many young Christian widows she represents. Though their unspoken prayer requests may not be known to us, our heavenly Father knows their every need.

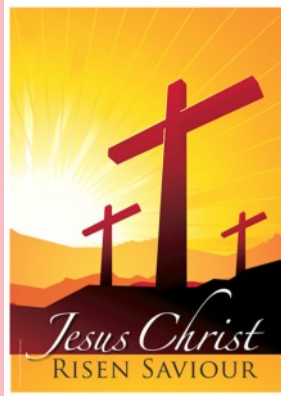
SON RISE!

How like God to take the most dramatic moment in human history and hide it from our eyes. In the moments of the early dawn on the third day after the crucifixion, Jesus Christ awoke from the grip of death and walked again on planet earth. It was a moment that was not witnessed by humans but was displayed to the powers and rulers in the heavenly realms. In that moment Scripture tells us that God disarmed the spiritual rulers and authorities who opposed him (see *Ephesians 2:1-3 & Colossians 2:15*) and made a public spectacle of their defeat before all the universe. Death was smashed and life was assured for God's sheep. Hurting, sinful people could now participate in the resurrection, the grand moment of redemption, rescue, and renewal.

In a manner similar to the event of His birth, the first witnesses to this stunning triumph over sin, death, and the evil spiritual authorities were not of royalty or human fame. Two humble women saw Him, and even then they did not recognize Him at first. Just like His birth, the significance of His resurrection must be apprehended by faith.

Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, would now spend a few more days on the planet before ascending to His throne to rule the universe with His Father. Our eyes were hidden from the full spectacular triumph of the risen Son. In this way, all who would come to faith are equally dependent upon the written testimony of the Holy Spirit to understand the significance of the unseen moment of the resurrection.

By this faith, given by God, the power of the resurrection also belongs to you and me. Death has no hold on us. The timeless wonder of eternity with the risen Son awaits.



The choice is simple but profound. You can live by sight and listen to the alluring cry of this dying world that all you could ever want can be satisfied by what you can see. Or you can live by faith and follow the risen Son to life that is truly life. Through eyes of faith you can see that life is not what it appears to be. You can see that the world's grand promises are really the gateway into the blackness of despair. Truly, in God's mercy, no eye has seen what God has conceived for those who love Him.

Death has ended. The gospel provides life that is truly life. Choose life and live. The Son has risen.

(Jay Younts, shepherdspress.com)

