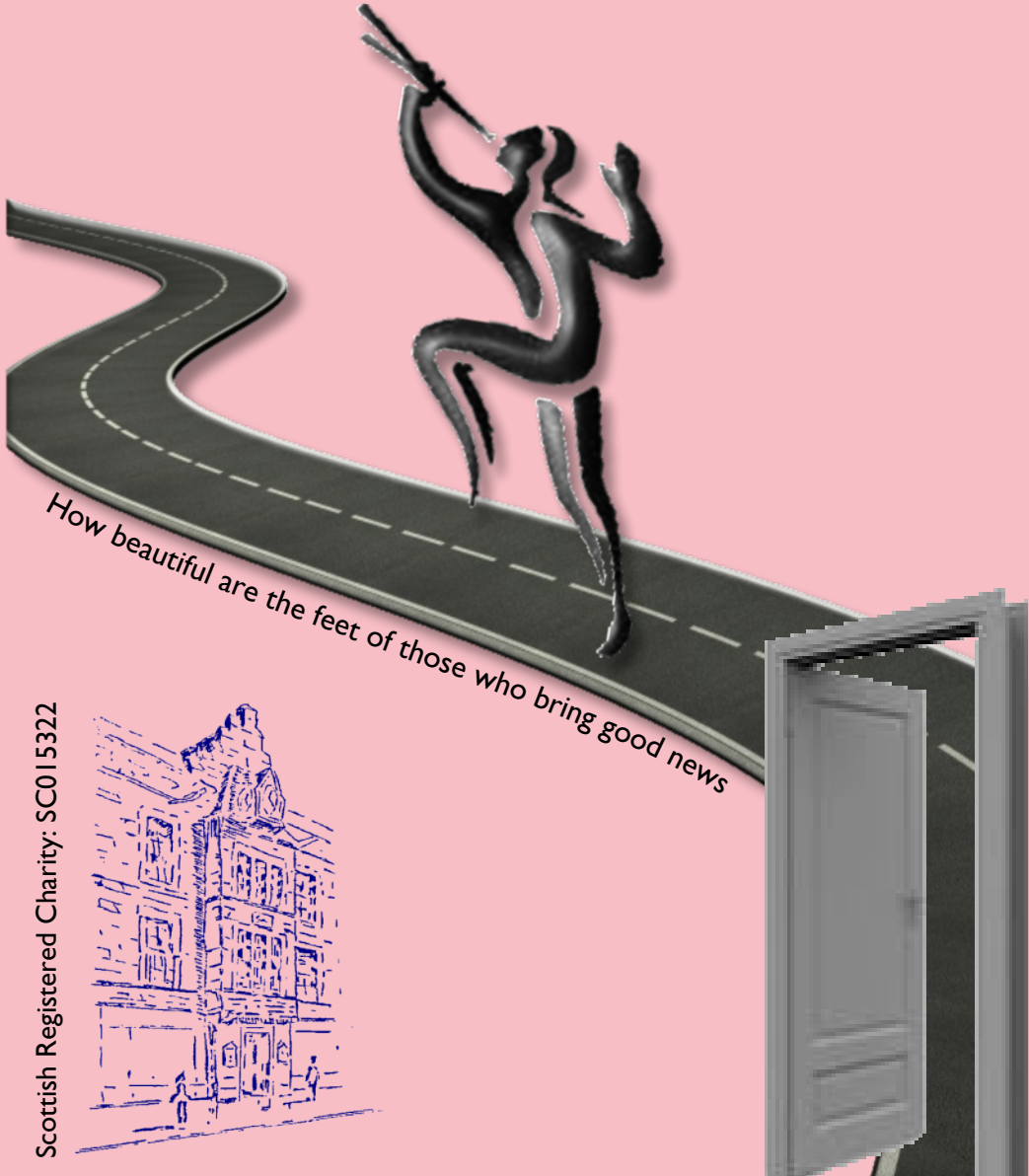


The magazine of Portobello Baptist Church

MESSENGER

www.portobellobaptist.co.uk • March 2014



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 [drop-in for all or part of the time]
		Wed	7.30 p.m.	Midweek Prayer & Bible Study
March	6th	Thurs	7.30 p.m.	Vision Action Group
	11th	Tues	7.30 p.m.	Management Meeting
	30th	Sun		British Summertime begins – “Spring Forward”
April	20th	Sun	9.00 a.m.	Resurrection Breakfast
	27th	Sun	7.30 p.m.	Reflective Space (see ‘buzz’ for details)

FUTURE SERMON PLAN

March	2nd – “Do not commit adultery”
	9th – “Do not steal”
	16th – “Do not lie”
	23rd – “Do not covet”
	30th Speaker: Judy White (from BMS World Mission)
April	6th – “Watch this space”
	13th – “Palm Sunday”
	20th – “Easter ‘Resurrection’ Sunday”
	27th – “Our Values - Worship”

SCOTTISH BAPTIST PRAYER LINK

March	2nd	Chaplain, Prince and Princess of Wales Hospice, Glasgow; Burra Isle; Calderwood; Cambuslang
	9th	Chaplain, Aberdeen City Centre; Campbeltown Community Church, Carbrain (Cumbernauld)
	16th	Carluke, Carnoustie Community Church, Castlehill
	23rd	Lead Chaplain, MHA Auchlochan, Cathcart, Central: Jesus at the Heart, Edinburgh
	30th	Cleland, Coastline Community Church, Coatbridge

FEBRUARY OFFERING

£213.00 – February Cafe Day
for Jericho House



2nd	£798.00	16th	£750.00
9th	£866.00	23rd	£554.00

Building Fund total, so far :- £8,767.75

Dear brothers and sisters,

“To each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.” (I Cor. Ch 12 v 7)

"In Cremona, Italy, where most experts believe history's best violins were made, Andrea Mosconi has the tall task of keeping the precious instruments in shape. For the past 30 years, six days a week, the old musician has gone to the museum in Cremona's city hall where the 300-year-old violins are stored in display cases. Each morning, before the museum opens to the public, Mosconi plays each violin for 6–7 minutes. He starts with basic music scales and then makes his way to Bach, Tchaikovsky, and Bartok. Over the course of an hour, he plays three violins by the Amatis, two by the Guarneris, and four instruments—3 violins and a cello—by Stradivari.

Why does Mosconi do this day after day? A violin needs to be played to perform at its best level. "The wood gets tired," explained Karl Roy, a German violin-maker and one of the field's top experts. "A violin needs to be played". It's the same with a human being. It is even more true for the Christian. A Christian's life is meant to be an instrument upon which God plays, to make kingdom music. The tune He plays on your life is unique. It cannot be played quite the same on any other life. We have each been given special abilities to be used for God's kingdom. Are you available to Him? Are you allowing Him to use you for His glory?

We have started exploring the gifts of the Spirit on Wednesday evenings. It's not too late to join us.

Your Pastor



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:



(I Thess. 5:17; Acts 6.4)

PRAYING FOR THE FLOCK

(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.

FLOWER CALENDER

If you would like to add your name to any blank space then please see either Allistair or Ewan

M 3th
A 10th
R 17th
C 24th
H 31st

CHURCH PLANTING CONFERENCE

IN THIS CITY 2014

Saturday, 8 March 2014
09:30 to 16:30 (GMT)
Central Hall, Edinburgh

[church planting]



A Day Conference to equip people for church planting and mission.



Matt Chandler - Lead Pastor of The Village Church in Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas. Author of *The Explicit Gospel*, *Creature of the Word* and *To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain*. Matt is also President of the Acts 29 Church planting network.



Steve Timmis - Co-founder of the Crowded House Church planting network and co-director of The Porterbrook Network. Steve is also the director of Acts 29 Western Europe. And has authored many books including, *Everyday Church*, *Total Church* and *I wish Jesus Hadn't Said That*.

There are also breakout sessions from Mez McConnell (pastor of Niddrie Community Church and Director of 20Scheme), Robin Sydserrf (Minister of

St. Catherine's Argyle), David Robertson (Minister of St. Peter's Free Church Dundee).

There are still a few tickets available from www.eventbrite.co.uk, priced £15.00

(<http://www.eosgp.org/>)



PUT YOURSELF IN THE PATH OF GOD'S GRACE

(by David Mathis www.desiringgod.org)

I can flip a switch, but I don't provide the electricity. I can turn on a tap, but I can't make the water flow. There will be no light and no liquid refreshment without someone else providing it.

And so it is, in a limited sense, for the Christian with the ongoing grace of God. His grace is essential for our spiritual lives, but we don't control the supply. We can't make the grace flow, but God has given us circuits to connect and pipes to open in case it's there.

Our God is lavish in his grace, often liberally dispensing His favour without even the least bit of cooperation and preparation on our part. But He also has His regular channels. And we can routinely avail ourselves of these revealed paths of blessing, or neglect them to our detriment.

The Places Where the Grace Keeps Passing

“The essence of the Christian life,” says one seasoned saint, “is learning to fight for joy in a way that does not replace grace.” We cannot earn God’s grace or make it flow apart from His free gift. But we can position ourselves to go on getting should He keep giving. We can “fight to walk in the paths where He has promised His blessings” (John Piper, *When I Don’t Desire God*, 43–44). We can ready ourselves for receiving along His regular route sometimes called “the spiritual disciplines.”

Such practices are not fancy or highfalutin. They are the stuff of everyday, basic Christianity — unimpressively mundane, but spectacularly potent by the Spirit. While there’s no final and complete list of such spiritual disciplines, the long tally of helpful habits can be clustered into three big groups: hearing God’s voice, having God’s ear, and being with God’s people. Or simply: word, prayer, and fellowship.

These were called “the means of grace” by previous generations. “The doctrine of the disciplines,” says J. I. Packer, “is really a restatement and extension of classical Protestant teaching on the means of grace” (*Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 9). Whatever the term, the key is that God has revealed certain channels through which He regularly pours out his favour. And we’re foolish not to take His word on it.

What “Means of Grace” Means

To put means with grace might endanger the free nature of grace. But it need not do so — not if the means are coordinate with receiving and the exertions of effort

are graciously supplied. Which is emphatically the case for the Christian. Here there is no ground for boasting.

The one on whom we lean is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10). He not only elects the undeserving without condition, and works in them the miracle of new birth and the gift of faith, but He also freely declares them righteous by that faith, and begins supplying the flow of spiritual life and energy to experience the joy of increasing Christ-likeness.

God’s immense flood of grace not only sees us as holy in Christ, but also progressively produces holy desires in us. It is grace to be forgiven of sinful acts, and grace to be supplied the heart for righteous ones. It is grace that we are increasingly “conformed to the image of his Son” (Romans 8:29), and grace that He doesn’t leave us in the misery of our sin but pledges to bring to completion the good work He has begun in us (Philippians 1:6).

For the glory of God, the good of others, and the satisfaction of our souls, the goal of the Christian life is such Christ-likeness, or godliness, or holiness rightly understood. And all our exertions of effort toward that goal are gifts of grace.

Train Yourself for Godliness

Yes, it is grace, and yes, we expend effort. And so Paul says to his protégé, “Train yourself for godliness” (1 Timothy 4:7). Discipline yourself for growth. Take regular action to get more of God in your mind and your heart, and echo Him in your life — this is “godliness.” It’s a gift, and we receive it as we become it.

Paul’s own reliance on God for ongoing grace is a powerful testimony to this means-of-grace dynamic. He says in 1

Corinthians 15:10, “by the grace of God I am what I am . . . I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.” God’s grace didn’t make Paul passive, but supplied the energy for discipline, and every ounce of energy expended was all of grace.

Or Romans 15:18: “I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me.” Jesus’s grace didn’t mean accomplishing this purpose despite Paul, or apart from him, but through him. Where does Paul get the power to labour and expend such spiritual effort? “I toil, struggling with all his energy that He powerfully works within me” (Colossians 1:29).

How to Receive the Gift of Effort

This dynamic is true not because Paul is an apostle, but because he is a Christian. So he says to every believer, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,” because of this great promise: “for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12–13). And so Hebrews closes his magisterial epistle with a prayer for God’s “working in us that which is pleasing in His sight” (Hebrews 13:20–21).

The way to receive the gift of God’s empowering our actions is to do the actions. If He gives the gift of effort, we receive that gift by expending the effort. When He gives the grace of growing in holiness, we don’t receive that gift apart from becoming more holy. When He gives us the desire to get more of Him in His word, or in prayer, or among His people, we don’t receive that gift without experiencing the desire and living the pursuits which flow from it.

Lay Yourself in the Way of Allurement

Zacchaeus may have been a wee little man, but he modelled this big reality by positioning himself along the path of grace. He couldn’t force Jesus’s hand, he couldn’t make grace flow, but he could put himself along the path where Grace was coming (Luke 19:1–10). The same was true of blind Bartimaeus (Luke 18:35–43). He couldn’t earn the restoration of his sight, but he could position himself along the route of grace where Jesus might give the gift as he passed that way.

“Think of the Spiritual Disciplines,” says Don Whitney, “as ways we can place ourselves in the path of God’s grace and seek Him as Bartimaeus and Zacchaeus placed themselves in Jesus’s path and sought Him” (Spiritual Disciplines, 19). Or as Jonathan Edwards puts it, we can “endeavour to promote spiritual appetites by laying yourself in the way of allurement.”

God’s regular channels of grace are His word, His ear, and His people. So often, He showers His people with unexpected favour. But typically the grace that sends our roots deepest, truly grows us up in Christ, and produces lasting spiritual maturity, streams from the ordinary and unspectacular paths of fellowship, prayer, and Bible intake in its many forms.

While these simple “means of grace” may seem as unimpressive as everyday switches and taps, through them God regularly stands ready to give his true light and the water of life.

