

Congregational Concern



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Concern
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for and about
the **Evangelical
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*Cover illustration: Ministers'
Prayer Conference, Willersley
Castle (Ian Densham)*

Editor's comment

Welcome to the first issue of *Concern* for 2012, a year which is of significance for Congregationalists and other historic Dissenters as it marks the 350th Anniversary of the passing of the Act of Uniformity and the consequent ejection from the Church of England on “black Bartholomew’s Day” of over 2000 of its most faithful ministers. We shall be marking this at the Studies Conference at Beverley in March, and in articles in the magazine throughout the year.

This time we record the passing of two of our ministers: Tom McVey, formerly of Eston, North Yorkshire, and Mark James from St Briavels in the Forest of Dean. We do not have “sorrow as those who have no hope”, but thank God for their faithful ministry, and extend our loving sympathy to their families and friends. They have “fought the good fight, ... finished the race, ... kept the faith.”

From time to time we invite folk to send letters to us, but it is a very long time since we had one, so it was good to have to search out a “letter box” to head up the page. We trust that you will find this issue of the magazine encouraging and stimulating – whether or not, write and tell us!

Peter Beale

Round about

Larne induction

The ordination and induction service of Chris McKinven to the Pastorate of **Larne** Congregational Church took place on Saturday 7th January 2012 at 2pm. Chris was minister of Dagenham Congregational Church in London when he received the call from the Larne church.

The Deacons and members of Larne Congregational church continue in prayer that God will bless Chris, his wife Stacey and their three children as they settle in to their new home, new school and new work here in a new town; and that he will meet their every need, and that, every morning.



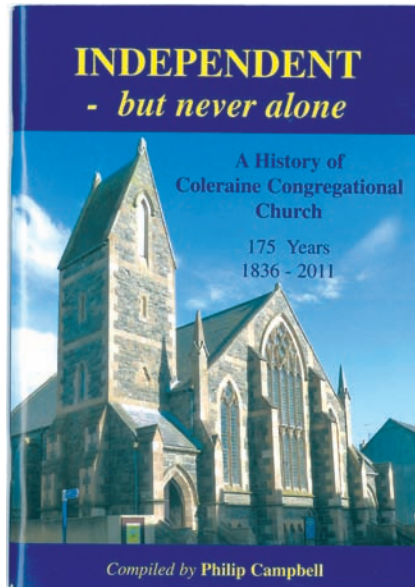
From left: Revs Henry Montgomery, Chris McKinven, Raymond McLaren (CUI Secretary), Rev. Jim Moore (CUI Chairman), Paul Bradley, Noel Darragh, Tom (Chris's replacement in Dagenham) and Pastor Simon Smallwood (London).

All-age Bible School

Starting at the end of January through to March the church at **Aldersholt** is running an All-Age Bible School on Sunday evenings, covering such subjects as Questions People Ask; Christianity Explored; Teaching the Bible to Children; and Caring and Counselling: Helping People through Tough Times

Coleraine history

Philip Campbell, minister of Coleraine Congregational Church, has produced a history of the work to mark its 175th anniversary. Copies are available from him at a suggested donation of £3, the profits going to SOON Ministries of WEC International. Contact him on 028 7035 2885 or revphilipcampbell@btinternet.com.





From the Gen. Sec.

Why bother revising EFCC's statement of faith?

A task reluctantly undertaken

Some Ministers love revising their church's current statement of faith and constitution or even producing new ones where they don't exist already but I am not among that number. That isn't because I don't think it is something that may not sometimes be appropriate but because I have never been able to see it as a Number One priority to ensure church life and health. I still don't see it as a Number One priority but it is something for which sound reasons exist for limited and constructive change. For this reason we actually took a fair amount of time on the Committee discussing this and getting informed opinion from inside and outside the Fellowship. A few points to think about concerning the reasons for the proposed changes:—

1. *We need to change to remain the same*

Our Statement of Faith was actually adopted in 1971 and anyone who has an interest in what theological teachers are saying is aware that there have been many debates amongst professedly evangelical Christians during that 40 year period. In my opinion debates about whether Scripture is completely without error, whether Christ on the cross really experienced his Father's punishment of our sins in our place, and whether God really knows the future are pretty fundamental to a genuinely evangelical, Christian faith. To say clearly in 2012 what you were saying in 1971 demands that you carefully examine how what you were saying may be misinterpreted in a changing world.

2. *We need to check that we are saying all we want to say*

People thinking of joining an EFCC church, or of serving within EFCC in the ministry, will often go on to our website and check what we believe. I am uneasily aware that a church group should have within its Statement of Faith statements which indicate something of its understanding of Baptism and the Lord's Supper and that currently ours does not. I have received one or two criticisms of our current statement from those outside

the fellowship which make me feel that it could and should be improved.

3. *We need to check that we are not over-defining so as to exclude unnecessarily*

We wish to include all who are genuinely Evangelical and Congregational and so on occasions we have simply chosen to use biblical language without seeking further to define what we are saying. For example, there are two Evangelical understandings of what is involved in Christ's intercession for us. Many have held that Christ's intercession is not an ongoing activity but consists in Christ's presence in heaven on our behalf which acts as intercession securing the benefits of his life and passion for us. Others, myself included, have held that it is a personal ongoing activity on the part of the risen and glorified Jesus. After discussion we concluded that we wished to have a statement which left the matter open.

Where are we now?

Having gone through a reasonably leisurely and lengthy process, because we regard this as important without being urgent, we have now submitted the revised document to the churches for their comments and hopefully eventual approval. It is available for all to view on the EFCC website. If, and we certainly hope the work already done achieves this, proposed changes are few and not radical then we will be able to go ahead to vote at EFCC's May AGM. However if changes are proposed and agreed by the Committee that are more than tidying up then I would anticipate that we would need to have another round of consultation with the churches before matters are taken to a vote.

Being realistic about Statements of Faith

It is important that we are realistic about such statements and how we can use them as a source of unity and agreement:—

1. *We will not all feel that the wording is ideal and couldn't be improved on*

More strongly, I can guarantee that those who drafted the Statement will know that better than anyone. We have and will incorporate improvements to wording, either to clarify or to augment what we are saying. However all processes have to come to an end and so we will need to make decisions at some point, as did those who adopted our current Statement of Faith.

2. *We need to unite around what we can agree on*

One matter that has emerged very clearly for me is that we often have slightly different emphases from our brothers and sisters in Christ and so while probably everyone will agree that improvements could be made they will also think that different improvements could be made. Realistically that means we need to agree that we can unite to say something even though we feel it could have been better expressed.

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Golden Wedding

by **Bill Dyer**

On Saturday 27 September a large gathering of family and friends joined with **Mike & Betty Wilde** in a thanksgiving service at Pontefract to celebrate their Golden Wedding. Refreshments and fellowship followed in the church hall. Their son, Mark, spoke movingly of his parents' faith, and the wonderful answers to prayer which he witnessed as he grew up, so that he and his sister, Michelle found it impossible to live in their home and not believe in God.

Bill Dyer led the service and recalled some of the highlights of God's goodness to Mike and Betty during their 50 years together. They experienced life-changing conversions as a young married couple, and later, through their witness, had the joy of seeing both their sets of parents saved and then active in church

membership. It was evident, right from their conversion, that they had a God-given burden to reach the people of Pontefract with the Gospel.

Mike became an elder and then served as full-time evangelist, home visitor and Sunday School leader for some 30 years. Betty served as a Covenanter leader and Bible teacher among the women. Together they played a major role in developing a passion for prayer, evangelism and special missions in the church which God has been pleased to use to reap a harvest of souls for his glory. Their golden wedding was an occasion for great joy and thankfulness to our faithful and loving God.



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What is my Number One priority?

Like churches, fellowships of churches thrive on mutual love and involvement. The most a Statement of Faith can do is to protect us from unneeded and unhelpful disputes and disagreements which frustrate our fruitful working together and it is in that spirit and with that intent we are putting forward a revised Statement of Faith.

Every blessing,

Mike Plant

Come to Beverley on March 17th!

by Digby James

This year sees the tenth anniversary of the death of Alan Tovey, a pastor, scholar and General Secretary of EFCC. Those of us who had the privilege of knowing him still miss his wit and wisdom. This year's Congregational Studies Conference will have Neville Rees speaking about Alan's life, and there will be opportunity for others who knew Alan to add their tributes to a good friend.



Alan Tovey



Neville Rees

This will be followed by the AlanTovey Memorial Lecture. Alan having been an historian and scholar we want to honour his name by learning more about our Congregational history. It was on 24th August 1662, 350 years ago, that about 2000 ministers, teachers and lecturers were ejected from the Church of England because they could not tolerate the requirement to use the then new Book of Common Prayer. Dr

Garry Williams, of the John Owen Centre, will be delivering a lecture introducing the details and principles that flow from the Great Ejection. Booking forms have been sent out to churches and are also available from the EFCC Office or online at efcc.org.uk under Events.

There will be several other events remembering the events of 1662. The Friends of the Congregational Library have a summer event in June where several lectures will be delivered discussing the events and the principles that flow from the Great Ejection (or Ejectment as it is in the advertising). Don't think about attending this event. It is heavily overbooked. There is also a Special Study Day on 1662 being held at the Evangelical Library on 27 March with Gary Brady, Dr Robert Oliver and Garry Williams speaking.



Garry Williams

With the Lord

Two of our EFCC Ministers have been called home in recent months: one a retired pastor at a good old age, the other “in harness” and quite unexpectedly. Mike Plant and Cyril Aston pay tribute to these brethren, both of whom will be much missed.

Tom McVey (1918–2011)

I first met Tom in 1982 when I became Minister at Cannon Park Congregational Church. Tom had formerly served as a deacon, and in the Sunday School, the Choir and the Boys’ Brigade but at that time was serving as Minister of Eston Congregational Church. Tom’s ministry was the human agency by which Eston was enabled to remain open and continue its ministry until today. Tom was a small man, a “Zacchaeus” as he liked to describe himself and until very near the end was always pretty fit and active. I can well remember the embarrassment of congratulating him on his “early” retirement in 1983, only to discover he was 65.



He had been brought up in a non-church family and had attended the church’s Sunday School for some years, but had put all that behind him as a teenager and was employed as a painter and decorator until the 2nd World War changed his life. He served in North Africa and was converted through the ministry of SASRA, a society he supported lifelong. On returning to Middlesbrough one of the first things he did was to visit his former Sunday School Teacher to tell him what had happened. He married Celia in 1947 and the one shadow on a long and happy marriage was that they couldn’t have children themselves. Both had a great love of children which was particularly expressed in their care for their many nieces and nephews, on Tom’s side of the family alone were eight brothers and one sister. Celia died before Tom and was much missed by him.

Some of the qualities I noted and valued in Tom were:—

1. His warmth: Several of those present at his funeral commented on their affection for Tom because he had greeted them and shown genuine interest in them when they first started attending the church. He would show particular care for those experiencing the tensions of being converted within an unsaved family.

2. His love of the Bible: Tom wasn’t always the most concise or logical preacher but his personal warmth and his deep love of Scripture and his thoughtfulness about it meant that I never listened to him without profiting.

3. His enthusiasm for the gospel: Whether he had preached or

someone else had, Tom was always ready to engage with people in the congregation about what they had heard. Several folk who came to faith were helped by Tom.

4. His particular care for young people: My son Jonathan was converted aged 19 and early in his Christian life went to church with something weighing on his mind. When he came home he said to me: "How great is Tom McVey!" — Tom had talked to him, realized that something was troubling him and sat down in church with him and prayed with him about it. I wasn't at all surprised — he'd done the same with me the previous week! For quite a while when young people were becoming church members or were being baptised I would ask them who they would like to pray for them during the service. Invariably it would be Tom McVey.

Mike Plant

Mark James (1959–2011)

The Congregational Church at St Briavels in the Forest of Dean were shocked by the sudden death of their beloved Pastor, Mark James, on Wednesday 16th November 2011. Mark, who was only 52, was taken ill on 13th November but seemed to be making good progress in the Gloucester Royal Hospital when his condition suddenly deteriorated and he was called home to be with the Lord he had loved and served with so much devotion for many years.



Converted early in life, Mark had a passion to make Christ known from the outset, whether to children, young people or adults. Many throughout the Forest of Dean where Mark lived all his life heard the good news of Jesus Christ from his lips and from his godly example. He was the Pastor at St Briavels for many years and was much loved in the community and particularly by his congregation which built up significantly over the years he was the Minister.

Mark was ably supported by his dear wife Adèle, whom he married in 1986. They worked together as a wonderful team in the Chapel and our prayers and love go out to Adèle in particular at this time that she may know in a special measure the help and strength of the Lord.

Thanksgiving Services for Mark were held on Tuesday December 6th 2011 at the Forest of Dean Crematorium and then at St Briavels Chapel. Charles Unsworth, a close friend of Mark's, led and preached at both services. The Crematorium and Chapel were both filled to capacity and there were several moving tributes, some lovely hymns and powerful messages proclaiming the need of a Saviour. Refreshments were then served in the village Assembly Rooms which gave opportunity for further fellowship and thanksgiving for Mark's life.

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Ministers' Prayer Conference 2011

by John Marker

It was with great anticipation that I accepted the kind invitation to attend the recent conference at Willersley Castle. It has been some 11 years since I last attended the Conference in Derbyshire and I was looking forward to meeting up with old friends and other Ministers that have been made known to me through my time at the Independent Theological College over a decade ago. Over the years I have prayed for individuals and churches and it was encouraging to hear that many prayers have been answered: I think of the work at *Seacroft*. Despite many difficulties, the work continues and Peter Lane shared his recent encouragements especially amid the work with the young people in the area. *Thorpe Edge* is another Congregation that has been very dear to me personally and I am encouraged to learn from Bernard Umpleby that they too have a Minister who is continuing the much needed work on the Estate.

It was a delight to be together with fellow Ministers that I haven't seen in a good few years and despite many of us gaining a few more pounds and a few more wrinkles, the fellowship was warm and welcoming.

Mike Plant delivered a message that suggested that Ministers contemplate ways of writing sermons that "connect" with our Congregations and subsequently challenged us to ensure that the message is relevant to our listeners. Neil Stewart also provided instruction on preaching, and we were given a stark reminder that the Minister is answerable to the Lord for "rightly dividing the Word of God" and not to the congregation. David Greene from London Theological Seminary graciously stepped in at the last moment to bring us a sermon from Ezekiel 37: "Son of Man, can these bones live?"

Emphasising that it is God who sustains the life of his Church. Consultant Psychiatrist Keron Fletcher reminded us of the brokenness of our society with the challenge to appreciate the "long road back" for many individuals suffering through and from various addictions and to assume

☞ continued from page 7

EFCC was represented by several delegates as Mark was a keen supporter of the Fellowship.

Pray for the Church as they adjust to being without their much loved Pastor and continue to pray especially for Adèle.

Cyril Aston

a friendly but firm approach towards them. Eddie Lyle from Open Doors shared about the plight of the persecuted Church and gave a moving presentation about three women, jailed in Indonesia for teaching children with the aid of the Bible to read and write.

I noticed that the well-stocked book stall provided by “10ofthose.com” was put to good use by many, this was much appreciated. The “icing on the cake” for me was to hear the beautiful harmonious praise rising up from men of faith. I feel blessed to have been at the conference and privileged to be a part of this Fellowship. I will continue to pray for all who were present (and those who were unable to be with us) and trust that the Lord will continue to go before us as we walk with him in the peaks and troughs of ministry.

John Marker is pastor of Avoch Congregational Church on the Black Isle (www.AvochCongregationalChurch.co.uk)



David Greene

Dates for your diary

Congregational Studies Conference

Saturday 17th March at Latimer Congregational Church, Beverley. See page 5. Even if you have never attended a Studies Conference before, think about coming to this one, which will be really special.

EFCC West Midlands Rally

Saturday 21st April at Bridgnorth: further details available shortly.

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 12th May at Nazeing Congregational Church, near Hoddesdon in Essex.

Ministers' Prayer Conference

Monday 5th – Thursday 8th November at Willersley Castle, Cromford, Derbyshire

Overview of the Minor Prophets

(7) Nahum: A City in Ruins

by Chris Sinkinson

Our lives revolve around cities. Whether we live in one or only visit them, our world is dominated by city life. The three most visited cities are Paris, Bangkok, and our own London (New York only makes number six in the top ten!). Paul's missionary travels see him take in the great cities of the ancient world, Jerusalem, Athens, and Rome.

The book of Nahum, like Jonah, is concerned with the city of Nineveh. However, while Jonah sees the city turn to God in repentance and find mercy, Nahum sees only judgement and destruction. The prophecy of Nahum dates to some time between the destruction of Thebes in 663 BC (Nahum 3:8–10) and the fall of Nineveh in 612 BC. That puts this prophecy about one hundred years later than the time of Jonah.

Uncomfortable

Nahum's Hebrew name means "comfort", but if we read the book in one sitting we might feel very uncomfortable. Nineveh is to be destroyed and her destruction will be violent (3:1–7). But Nineveh is a wicked city, deserving destruction. As the capital of the Assyrian empire and home to some monstrous dictators, she would preside over the destruction of Israel and the oppression of Judah. If you have never done so may I encourage you to visit the British Museum some time and survey the haunting and brutal portrayal of the siege of Lachish (Room 10b)? In astounding detail, this enormous wall relief records the force of the Assyrian army bearing down on a small city, not far from Jerusalem in 701 BC. The executions of men, and deportations of women and children, are graphically recorded. They were found in excavations at Nineveh during Victorian times and brought to London where they are now beautifully displayed. They bear testimony to the wickedness of the Assyrians and the destruction of its own capital came within a hundred years; *"She is pillaged, plundered, stripped! Hearts melt, knees give way, bodies tremble, every face grows pale."* (Nahum 2:10).

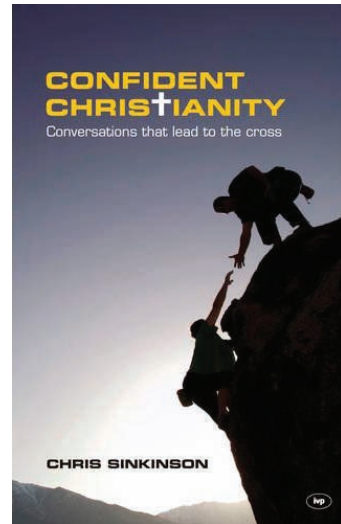
God's justice

So where is the comfort of Nahum? The comfort is found in knowing that God will not allow any to go unpunished. Whether it is the cruelties

of ancient Rome, or the Third Reich or countless contemporary cities and dictators, nothing is outside the justice of God. Perhaps the most famous words of the prophecy are Nahum 1:15; *“Look, there on the mountains, the feet of one who brings good news, who proclaims peace!”* which are echoed, along with Isaiah, in Romans 10:15. Peace can only be declared because judgement has fallen, and evil destroyed.

Words of judgment

As Christians we sometimes struggle with words of judgment. We prefer the message of Jonah with its story of Nineveh transformed. While both prophecies deal with the same city, one speaks of God’s mercy (Jonah 4:2), while the other reveals an irreversible judgment; *“Nothing can heal your wound; your injury is fatal.”* (Nahum 3:19). There is only one God and he can display both mercy, as at the time of Jonah, and judgment, as he would in fulfilment of Nahum’s prophecy. How can the same God be so wrathful in judgment and yet so merciful in forgiveness? Jesus Christ brings together, in one moment of world history, the justice and mercy of God. As Vernon Higham’s hymn puts it; *“Great is the gospel of our glorious God, where mercy met the anger of God’s rod.”* There is a place where God’s anger against human lust, idolatry, violence and lies finds satisfaction. That place is not London, New York or Hong Kong. That place is Calvary, the lonely rocky outcrop, where Christ suffered and died on the cross. Because of the cross we can declare that our God is a God who hates all that is wicked and will destroy it. But he is a God of love who takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked, and offers forgiveness to all who will come to him.



Chris has recently published a book with IVP, Confident Christianity (224 pages, £8.99), which is an introduction to apologetics and objections to Christianity. It is available from bookshops and from Amazon. A review will appear in the next issue of Concern.

Called home

As we go to press we are sorry to record the passing of Ted Lammas, for many years the leader of the work at Binfield Heath Congregational Church, on 25th January. Ninian Lewis, elder at the church, writes: *“We thank our Father for the fact that he is with the Lord whom he loved, and we shall all miss him at Binfield Heath.”*

“It could never happen in our church!” Or could it?

by Jackie Brown

“**B**ut we’re all Christians in this church — we trust our children’s workers!”

Ah yes! But do you trust the children?

What do you do when your children’s workers are dedicated to serving the Lord? Not one of them is dubious; all are fine Christians with no record against them — even after twenty or thirty years. All have been through the CRB checks — and all are “clean”. The church has a Child Protection Policy that is regularly reviewed and strictly adhered to.

And then ...

A child makes a complaint against a teacher!!!!!!

What do you do?

You know the teacher: he/she has your complete confidence. He is a personal friend — there has never been a hint of suspicion before ... And now this ...

What do you do?

Report the complaint

You report him to the Social Services or the Police. It might break your heart... It will cause offence and hurt ... It will bring your friendship to almost breaking point ... Some people in the church will ask questions — the local community will certainly point the finger ... But you have to report him.

Unfortunately children “know their rights”, and all it takes is for one worker to rebuke a child — or one worker to reject a child — or maybe even put his arm round a child to comfort him ... And the child has a case — and he knows it! Even at seven years old.



An investigation is started — the teacher is told to withdraw from any activities involving children — the reputation of the church is in question — the parents of the child are making all sorts of

accusations — the child is questioned in detail ... and is found to have “an overactive imagination” — and not one iota of the story is true. The church is exonerated from all wrongdoing, but it is recommended they do not to have the child back to Sunday School.

Wonderful! The church is cleared — but the teacher has a record!

The very fact that one child has made a complaint — even though it is completely unfounded — is enough to put a stain on your teacher’s testimony.

It’s unfair — it’s sickening — but it’s there all the same. And the worst thing about it is — you cannot stop it happening again!

Child Protection Policy

But you can take precautions to protect your teachers, yourself and the church. **Get yourself a Child Protection Policy.**

Oh yes — the Government wants children protected — but a working policy also protects you and your staff. There is a cost to have your children’s workers checked by the Criminal Records Bureau — but it is well worth the cost to protect your workers.

Take time to set up your own policy and implement it so that every worker knows what is expected from him or her.

Never allow any teacher to be alone in a room with any child or children. Can you imagine the can of worms that could open up, if an accusation is made? Sometimes it takes patience and long-suffering waiting for teachers to realise it’s for their protection too.

Go to Child Protection workshops — they bring you up to date with legislation and they bring encouragement when you meet others who have the same questions you have.

Invite the Police

One good piece of advice I received was — ask your local Police representative to come along to the church to explain the law to your teachers. It shows the Police you are serious about Protection — of children and teachers; it allows them to see the church in action; and it builds up healthy relationships between the church and the community. Oh — and you just might evangelise the Policeman.

Visit the EFCC Web-site at www.efcc.org.uk

EFCC now has a broadcasting account at www.sermonaudio.com. There is a great deal of good preaching on this site. You will find increasing material there, too, from EFCC ministers and speakers at EFCC conferences (including Studies Conferences) promoting evangelical congregational principles.

Further afield: South Sudan

A New Nation and the Kingdom of our God and His Christ!

by **Malcolm Coles**

In January 2011 a referendum was held in southern Sudan to decide whether to break from the North, with its capital Khartoum. The result was overwhelmingly in favour, and in July the new nation of South Sudan was born. Whereas the North is predominantly Islamic, and the official language Arabic, the South is (nominally) Christian, and the official language, as in Kenya, is English. Its population is about 9 million, and it has a land mass about the same size as France — but with only 50km of tarmac roads.



The Middle East Reformed Fellowship has worked with Christians in Sudan for many years, and it has had a compound at Lokichoggio, in Northern Kenya, about 40km from the Sudanese border. This compound has good facilities, and has been a safer base during the years of persecution in Sudan, for the recording and editing of radio broadcasts to Sudan and for the teaching and training of Church leaders and workers. The Rev. Bruce Powell, formerly Minister of Castle Street, Tredegar, has been responsible for seeking out men able to teach and train these Sudanese brothers.

Annual visit

I have had the privilege of an annual visit for the last four years, and have been immensely blessed by the fellowship with these men. Some of the courses are basic, and last for six months. Others are shorter, but more advanced and intense. This year the course in which I was involved was just two months — with 4 different teachers — and the thrust was 2 Timothy 2:2 — teaching men to teach others. We had 14 men — 12 from South Sudan, and 2 from Kenya. Some of the men had been on previous courses I had taught, so it was really good to renew fellowship with them.

Our daily programme began with devotions conducted by the students, (singing from Christian Hymns, given by a Church in



Eastbourne.) followed by a full morning's teaching — with a tea break. Two more hours of teaching followed in the late afternoon — the middle of the day was considered too hot, since temperatures were around 36°C. My subjects this year were Genesis, selected passages of Isaiah and the gospel of Mark. The students all went home with a plastic folder filled with photocopied notes of my lectures — with questions for discussion. The discussions we had were lively and animated. One student who had training as a medical doctor had never before considered that abortion might not be a good thing. We did have a half day on Saturdays, with only morning classes.

Illness

Illness amongst the men was a problem. Typhoid and malaria were prevalent. Some needed to be taken to the “clinic” in the town — basically a corrugated iron shack (as were all the shops) with a red cross painted on the roof. The men found the very basic diet of rice with tomato sauce for two meals a day difficult — as did I — but I had taken a supply of dried fruit and cereal bars, which helped.

Public Worship is held in the Lecture Hall on Sunday mornings, with a congregation of about 100 people. Quite a large contingent of Turkana Christians from the surrounding villages join the students and compound staff, as well as missionaries from the nearby MAF base. The visiting lecturers are normally asked to preach, and translation is given for the Turkana people. It is a great privilege and joy to preach in this situation. All the ethnic groups are asked to contribute in singing.

Communication

Communication with the outside world is difficult — the landline telephone has been disconnected for over a year, and the internet often is down. The Lord wonderfully overruled in that I emailed my notes for photocopying — I had been asked to produce a “mini-commentary” on the books we were studying, for the students to take home with them. (Some of the Sudanese pastors do not even have the OT in their tribal language, let alone any books.). This email arrived the day before the internet went down. In the event, not all the notes could be photocopied, because the printer ran out of ink — and replacement cartridges have to come from Nairobi — three days by bus. Most people seem to use mobile phones — charged by solar power. Despite all the difficulties of climate, health and the sense of being in a remote part of the world, the care of our Heavenly Father, and the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ were very real. I was, and am, grateful for all those who were praying for us. I was humbled to hear on my return that the people in the EFCC office had prayed for me daily.



Please pray

The next course begins in January, and Spencer Cunnah from the EFCC Church in Sheffield is to have a teaching slot. Please do continue to pray for the expansion of the Kingdom of our LORD and his Christ, as we seek to help our brethren in South Sudan. There are great opportunities. The official use of English could



South Sudanese women

be taken up as a tool to teach God's truth. Please remember our brothers that they may know the unction and anointing of the Holy Spirit on their ministries. The LORD will reign over his Kingdom for ever. Revelation 11:15

Malcolm Coles is a retired EFCC Minister now living in Swindon.

Insulting?

affinity
gospel thru new partnership

Affinity has made the following submission to the Government Consultation on the Public Order Act:

In recent years the Public Order Act 1986 has been used by the police in ways which have unjustifiably hindered the legitimate freedoms of Christian street-preachers and others involved in evangelistic projects.

Affinity therefore welcomes the government's current review of the wording of Section 5 of the existing Act, including the public Consultation, which closed on 13 January, over whether the use of "insulting" words and behaviour should continue to be a criminal offence.

Affinity, convinced that the ministry of street preachers and others is well outside the legal definition intended by the word "insulting" in the 1986 Act, has responded to this Consultation, contending that the word should be removed from the Act. This would leave the police with far fewer grounds for intervention, and preserve a Christian freedom which existed in practice, uncontroversially, for more than 250 years prior to the high profile incidents of the last 10 years.

Pause for thought

by Peter Beale

What was so important about December 25th 2011? Well, you may say, that's a silly question — it was Christmas Day! Yes, of course it was: but there was something infinitely more important about it than that: it was the *Lord's Day*, the Christian Sabbath.

Search your Bible from beginning to end, and nowhere will you find a command for an annual commemoration of the birth of Christ. On the other hand, there is a very clear command that we are to “remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.”

There will be some among our readers who take a “New Covenant theology” position which denies that the Lord's Day is the Christian Sabbath, but even they will probably agree that it is right for Christians to “Keep Sunday Special”.

And yet a surprising number of churches — not just any churches, but evangelical churches, within and beyond EFCC, cancelled their normal evening service on 25th December. Of course most of us consider it appropriate to celebrate in a special way the birth of our Saviour. Of course there are special considerations to be taken into account, with many having family get-togethers, and it is understandable if adjustments are made — for instance at Bulkington we had our morning service at 10 instead of 10.30. But to cancel the evening service altogether ...?

“How do you celebrate Christmas when it falls on a Sunday?” “Well, we make it special by only having one service instead of two.” Sounds a bit odd, doesn't it?

Time for a sabbatical?

Do you know about the possibility of sabbatical terms at Westminster College, Cambridge? The **Cheshunt Foundation** sponsors and finances sabbatical terms for ministers and lay people in ministry and teaching from a number of groups including EFCC.

The Cheshunt Foundation will meet the cost of fees and board and lodging charges. A book grant is available and the Foundation will help with travel costs within Britain. Accommodation is normally in a single study bedroom in the college. However, each term one self-contained flat is available for a sabbatical visitor accompanied by his/her spouse — a small weekly charge is made for this.

The normal sabbatical period funded by the Foundation is one academic term, i.e. 8–12 weeks. For details telephone 01223 741084 and ask for the Director of the Cheshunt Foundation or email jet40@cam.ac.uk.

Letter box



From Ken Foot, Keswick

I must express the concern which is felt, not only by me but by others I have spoken to, about the second of the two articles by Jeff Myers which was printed in the latest edition of *Concern*. In particular I would refer to these sentences (the emphasis is mine), “*The choice to emphasize a covenant rather than a creed was due to the recognition that the devotion of the heart was deeper than the assent of the intellect.*” There is a trend among Congregational churches to replace their covenant with a purpose statement or a series of core values. This trend shows a lack of understanding of the basic nature of a Congregational church. The covenant emphasis is upon

relationship. It emphasizes our loving relationship with God and with one another. The covenant is God’s idea to help people to connect with authentic community.”

In order to back up his view of this matter, in his Summary he appeals to the “story of good King Josiah” who “assembled all the people, both small and great and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant ... On that day the King and the people made a covenant to put into practice the re-discovered principles that were written in the book.”

If I have understood Myers correctly, the re-discovered principles of which he speaks were, in fact, God’s *commandments and his testimonies and his statutes* to his people, the Book of the Covenant. Today we set down these principles of our faith in the form of a creed. The covenant is between God and his people, not a code of inter-personal relationships devised by the individuals making up the nation. The observance of the covenant was predicated on their relationship with God but it is God’s words, not theirs.

God has made man with a heart *and* with an intellect. Without intellect man could not understand the commandments, testimonies and statutes and the reason for them. Myers says that the choice to emphasize a covenant was because “the devotion of the heart was deeper than the assent of the

intellect". Surely the heart and intellect work together in order that man can carry out God's instructions with a spiritual understanding; without the commandments, testimonies and statutes, he will not know how he is to live. We need to remember that "the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Does not God recognise the need for the heart and intellect work together when he says, in the next verse, "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind"?

Affinity's *Table Talk* 2011.2 deals with this matter in what I regard as a very helpful way.

I think that to get things in context you need to see the article as a whole, including the first part which was in the previous issue of the

magazine. I agree that NACCC is a liberal, or at least mixed, body. Jeff Myers, however, is a minister of the 4Cs which is committed to an evangelical basis of faith. And in the first part of the article he clearly states that "Scripture is the infallible guide of church order and discipline". In the light of this I should read the reference to "the freedom to affirm a variety of Christian creeds and statements of faith" as being within the confines of evangelical doctrine. It is surely true that "the devotion of the heart [is] deeper than the assent of the intellect" — "the devils also believe, and tremble".

Having said that, I do agree that some of his wording is ambiguous, and I should not express myself in that way. But that is why we have a disclaimer on the back page of the magazine! — PJB

The Chorus Line

An old farmer went to the city one weekend and attended a big city church. He came home and his wife asked him how it was.

"Well," said the farmer, "it was good, they did something different, however. They sang praise choruses instead of hymns."

"Praise choruses?" said his wife. "What are those?"

"They're sort of hymns, only different," said the farmer

"What's the difference?" asked the wife.

The farmer said: "Well, if I said, 'Martha, the cows are in the corn', that would be a hymn. But if I said, 'Martha, Martha, Martha, O Martha, Martha, Martha, the cows, the big cows, the brown cows, the black cows, the white cows, the black and white cows, the cows, cows, cows, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn, are in the corn', that would be a praise chorus."

From the magazine of Birstall Community Church



Stan Guest

Why “Concern”?

Have you ever thought about the title of our EFCC magazine *Concern*? It was, of course, my great privilege to introduce it. So where did the title come from? I would say it comes from the apostle Paul. 2 Corinthians 11:28 says: “besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of concern for all the churches.”

Now that, of course, is the NIV rendering. So what of the Authorised? In a passage where Paul is listing all his problems and cares we read: “besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.”

Have you such a concern — a care? I trust you have. So how do you express it? For a good number of years it was my privilege to visit as many of our churches as I could. That is now very restricted. However, I have the regular daily privilege of prayer. Yes, of course, we also have *Prayer Concern!*

My quote “concern for all the churches” means that, every day, I pray down a page. So I pray for every church twice a month. There are names of people to pray for, their services, and any particular points in their town or village. Let us all share such concern with the One who himself would echo the words I have quoted from the apostle Paul.

C O N C E R N	of an
O O	Evangelical
N N	Fellowship of
C O N C E R N	Congregational
R R	Churches
R R	
N N	January - 1969

CONCERN	for the glory of God that His Name should be praised that His Word should be heard that His Will should be done
CONCERN	for the welfare of the Churches that they may know the power of the holy Spirit that their-witness may be clear that their liberty may be safeguarded
CONCERN	for the whole Church of Jesus Christ that His true UNITY may be shown to the world that His TRUTH may be in the Scriptures alone that His PURITY may be seen in doctrine and behaviour
CONCERN	for the honour of the Lord Jesus Christ that He alone is exalted in the Church that His Cross is the sole ground of salvation that all other religions are tested by Him
CONCERN	for our fellow-men that they may hear the one true Gospel that they may believe on the Lord Jesus and live that they may love one another in deed and truth

Books for Congregationalists

Dissertation on the Death of Christ by Bishop John Davenant, £25.00

Christian Fellowship by John Angell James, £3.75

Manual of Congregational Principles by RW Dale, £13.00

Visible Saints by Geoffrey F. Nuttall, £25.00

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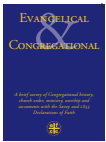


Telling Another Generation £0.50

This book contains a symposium of papers originally written to mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of EFCC, and as a tribute to Stan Guest, who has been closely involved in the work of EFCC ever since its formation, and retired as secretary of the Fellowship in 1989.

Serving as a Deacon by John Legg £1.95

Now reprinted in a revised edition. "Diaconates might find it useful to supply each member with a copy of this work" —*Evangelicals Now*.



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A brief survey of Congregational history, church order, confessions of faith, the ministry, worship and sacraments. Includes *Savoy Declaration of Faith*.

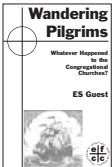
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**Christian Fellowship or the Church Member's Guide
by John Angell James** £3.75

A practical manual for church members to learn their duties and responsibilities.

All these items are available from the Office Manager. Prices are exclusive of postage and packing.

Online purchases available at www.efcc.karoo.net/publications.html



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