

HAVE YOURSELF A FACTUAL, HEARTFELT CHRISTMAS



Rev Philip McAlister
District Superintendent

A Christmas Challenge from Rev Philip McAlister

The title may not flow like the Judy Garland song, "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas", first sung in the 1944 musical, "Meet Me In St Louis", nevertheless, I think that the church has a responsibility to declare the facts of Christmas from hearts that are full of joy that Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, came into the world to save us from our sins.

For the last number of years my local church has joined its voice with the many other voices that publicly denounce the superficiality and materialism associated with Christmas. There are many in our communities who will not have a 'Merry Little Christmas', but maybe the church can do more than speak out against materialism. Maybe we can help some in our communities to experience a Factual, Heartfelt Christmas.

My favourite Christmas carol is "Oh Holy Night" written in 1847. There is a line in the first verse that helps me capture the factual heart of Christmas – Long lay the world in sin and error pining, 'til He appeared and the soul felt its worth.

The first phrase confronts us with the realisation of the world's absolute hopelessness and despair without Jesus. To 'pine' means, "to yearn intensely and persistently, especially for something unattainable."

Before the coming of Jesus humanity was lost, and we had no way of saving ourselves. Jesus did not come into a world that was just having a bit of trouble, or a world that merely needed some encouragement and motivation, or a better self-image. Jesus came into a world that lay in sin and error, a world that was "sitting in darkness, in the shadow of death, and bound in affliction and irons" (Psalm 107:10). He came to people who had "no hope and (were) without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

The second phrase informs us that through the coming of Jesus, the soul felt its worth. In spite of the sin and error that caused us to languish, in Jesus, God says to each person, "You are the object of my affection, I value you and through My Son I have come to bring light into your darkness. I have come to break the chains of sin that bind you and I have come to make you My own." The Apostle Paul tells us, "But God demonstrates His own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8 NET). God demonstrates His love for us by making what is impossible for us to do on our own absolutely possible by accepting the gift of His Son. Jesus is the means by which our sins are forgiven and we are brought into a living relationship with God, the Father. The tyranny of sin no longer reigns over us, we no longer sit in the shadow of death, and because of Christmas, our soul does feel its worth.

Have Yourself a Factual, Heartfelt Christmas!

INSPIRE

Over 100 people from across the North District gathered in Erskine, Scotland, on Saturday, 5th September, for INSPIRE 2015. SSDM Director, Rev Nathan Payne reports:

"This year the focus of the day was "Church Beyond Walls – faith in the places where we spend most of our time." Most of us spend most of our time beyond the context of formal ministry or church activity. Pastor Chic Lidstone (Workplace Chaplaincy) and Rev Trevor Hutton



INSPIRE Worship session



Seminar with Rev Trevor Hutton

(Momentum) helped us reflect on how our faith informs the way we live our lives in every sphere of life. Dr Fred Drummond (Evangelical Alliance) and Pastor Ann Goodwin (Chaplain/Manse Ministries) also presented resources to help us continue the conversation on how we are to be the church. Youth and Missions were also active participants in what was an altogether challenging and "inspiring" day! Look out for "INSPIRE N.IRELAND" in the New Year!"

NAZARENE THEOLOGICAL COLLEGE

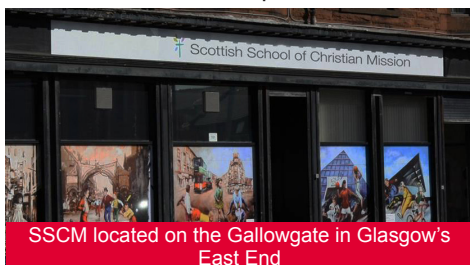


NEW FENCE – a recent practical improvement to the College Campus is the new iron fence which replaces the old wooden one. Running in front of Dene House and the Emmanuel Centre Building, the attractive fence gives the College greater visibility from the street and a message of welcome to any passing by.



NTC Fence

NEW PARTNERSHIP – NTC has recently entered into a partnership arrangement with the newly established Scottish School of Christian Mission (SSCM) which has a most interesting history. Following the Moody and Sankey campaigns in Scotland (1874-1891), the Bible Training Institute (BTI) was founded in Glasgow in 1892. Over the years the name (and the location) of the college changed - from BTI to Glasgow Bible College, and then, more recently, to International Christian College (ICC). Due to financial and enrolment pressures ICC found it necessary to find a new direction for its work and in September new premises were found (in Glasgow's East End – around the corner from the Parkhead Nazarene Church) and SSCM was launched. Courses at SSCM (HNC's for those working with young people, children and families) will be offered through NTC and validated by the University of Manchester. SSCM Principal, Rev Richard Tiplady, says, "...we need... ongoing prayers and support...if we are to see the fruit that Jesus promises."



SSCM located on the Gallowgate in Glasgow's East End

COLLEGE GRADUATION was held on Saturday, 17th October, in the Whitworth Hall, University of Manchester. During the ceremony, 33 awards and prizes were awarded and 31 Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates were conferred and this included 3 PhD degrees and 2 MPhil degrees. This year's graduation speaker was the Bishop of Manchester, The Rt Rev Dr David S. Walker. Following the graduation service, guests were invited back to the College campus for fellowship and refreshments.



College Faculty group with the Bishop of Manchester and College Principal, Dr Deirdre Brower Latz (centre front)



Visitors from Scotland with Dr Dwight Swanson (far right) examine a display celebrating 100 years of Nazarene Missions

NTC LEARNING CENTRES continue to develop and expand. In addition to the Nazarene Centres in Glasgow and Belfast, centres in Preston and Cornwall have been established where ministers of sister denominations can participate in classes and seminars. In early September Dr Joseph Wood taught a Church History Course in Cornwall to a good group from the Free Methodist Church. More recently a Church History course was taught, mainly by video conferencing, with students in Manchester and in Belfast - who met at NCM House. And a course on Romans was taught this autumn by Dr Sarah Whittle and Dr Kent Brower to ministerial students in Glasgow-Viewpark.



Glasgow (Viewpark) Centre



Ruth Ross 1958 – 2015

RUTH ROSS SCHOLARSHIP – it was on 29th June that Ruth Ross tragically died while on holiday in Palm Springs, California, USA. She was 57. Ruth was a College Governor and had been serving as Secretary of the Board of Governors – she was also a tireless worker in the Parkhead church where she was a Board Member and Church Treasurer. Her passing has been a great loss to her husband Chris, and to her family, as well as to the College, her local church, and to Airdrie Academy, near Glasgow, where Ruth was a Deputy Head. The College has announced that as a result of the generosity of Ruth's parents, John & Vera Packard, a scholarship, in honour of Ruth's life and service to the college and the church, is being established. The scholarship will begin next academic year, and will be awarded over a five-year period.



Dr T A Noble

BOOK TRANSLATED – Dr T. A. Noble – Senior Research Fellow in Theology - was in Campinas, Brazil, at the beginning of November to speak at a theology conference at the Faculdade Nazarena do Brasil and to promote his book, Holy Trinity: Holy People which has been translated into Portuguese. Dr Noble was able to visit the Central Church of the Nazarene, which has a membership of 7000, and to have fellowship with Stephen Heap and members of his family. (Stephen, now retired but still active in the church, is the son of UK missionaries, Samuel & Gwladys Heap, who went to South America in the 1940s and served with the Calvary Holiness Church and the Church of the Nazarene).

INDUCTIONS

The Dunfermline church was packed on Saturday, 10th October for the induction of joint pastors, Nick Daldry and Sammy Robinson. Rev Philip McAlister, District Superintendent, preached and conducted the covenant service of induction, and Rev Wesley Hands brought greetings from the Nazarene Fraternal, and read letters of encouragement and good wishes from Rev Stephen & Sharon Robinson (parents of Pastor Sammy). Numbers have been increasing in the Dunfermline church and the pastoral team is trusting God for future blessing.



(L to r) Pastor Sammy Robinson, Pastor Nick Daldry & Rev Philip McAlister

Most of the churches on the Ulster Zone were represented in the 100-strong congregation at the Induction of Rev David W. Evans to the Megain Memorial Church, Belfast, on Saturday, 31st October. Rev Philip McAlister, District Superintendent, preached and conducted the induction, Rev Albert Griffith brought greetings from Nazarene clergy, and Stephen McMaster (Church Secretary) welcomed David & Pauline on behalf of the local fellowship. After serving in a rural setting (Desertmartin) for 17 years David & Pauline face the challenge of ministry in the inner city. We trust God will bless the work at Megain in the days to come.



(L to r) Rev Philip McAlister and Pauline and Rev David Evans

RETIRALS



Rev Wes & Janet Hands

Rev Wesley R. Hands retired 28th June following a 6 year ministry in the Paisley St Matthew's Church. A good number attended the farewell Sunday morning service, at which Rev Colin H. Wood spoke, and this was followed by a fellowship lunch in the church hall. Pastor Hands has also ministered in Carlisle and Carrickfergus, and, for a time, worked with the YMCA. Wes & Janet have moved to Fife and are supporting the Dunfermline church.

Rev Andrew McRae retired officially at the District Assembly in March having been in the ministry for over 30 years. Andrew has pastored Nazarene churches in Hazel Grove, Salford, Bristol, Gillingham, Cleethorpes and Stockton. Married to Jan, and with a daughter, Sarah, the McRaes are living in Grimsby and are involved in support and ministry in the Grimsby church.



Rev Andrew & Jan McRae



Rev Bruce & Sandra Lloyd

Rev Bruce Lloyd concluded 37 years of ministry in Sheffield (Victoria Street and Heeley) on Sunday, 27th September. Formerly a probation officer, Bruce entered our ministry in 1978 and is married to Sandra – a daughter of Rev Leslie & Anna Evans. In 2014 Bruce published an autobiography, entitled, "The Changing Scenes of Life" – which covers his childhood, secular career and ministry years - to raise funds for the refurbishment of the Heeley church, which is currently taking place. Nearly 250 attended the retirement party, held on Saturday 26th September at a nearby school, which included presentations, refreshments – and featured a local jazz band. The Lloyds will remain in Sheffield and plan to support, and be involved in, the work of the Heeley church.

SUMMER MISSIONS

MOZAMBIQUE – a team of 8 went on a mission trip to Mozambique from 3rd July to 19th July 2015: Pastors Rob and Bev Fitzjohn and Mary Taylor from Govan, Cheryl and Roy Adair, Gillian and David McBride and Matthew Arrighi from Paisley.



The Team Relaxing

Cheryl Adair reports, "The team spent a year planning and fundraising for the trip in conjunction with John and Carol Fillmore from Idaho who founded the Nazarene Charity "Roofs for Africa" - to provide roofs for new Nazarene churches in Mozambique. £5500 was raised for roofs and £500 to install a new pump on the well at the District Superintendent's house in Milange. The Team visited several churches in the Milange area who were receiving roofing materials, taking services and providing suits, ties, and glasses for the Pastors and scarves for their wives. We also organised children's clubs and this was a real challenge as 150 -200 children would attend these clubs and we only had 1 or 2 interpreters. The children were given sweets, biscuits, pencils, colouring pencils and frisbees. At the end of the trip the Team visited Linwonde National Park in Malawi which was a fantastic experience. The trip was a life changing experience for all the team and we thank God for the opportunity to serve Him in this way. Helen Taylor (who passed away in May 2014) was very involved in the planning of the trip and we want to thank God for her and acknowledge the contribution she made."

NORTHBREAK

Over 200 of all ages attended another successful North District Church Holiday, held 1st-7th August at the Lancaster Royal Grammar School. Rev Ruth Turner (Millbrook) and Rev Michelle Robinson (Manchester) were the main speakers, with many others taking part. Special visitors to the holiday included Doug & Jen Mann (Nazarene Missionaries in Sofia, Bulgaria), Andy Hawthorne OBE (Founder: The Message Trust), and the energetic musical group, "Twelve24". Comments from the holiday included, "amazing worship", "the best holiday of my life" "a life-changing week". Thanks to holiday director, Steve Clarkson (Perth), and the Northbreak Team for another great week.



Rev Ruth Turner



Group wearing Northbreak merchandise



"Twelve24" Concert



Andy Hawthorne OBE



Northbreak Youth



Doug & Jen Mann

IN MEMORIAM



Joan Gorman

Joan Gorman passed away 21st July – she was 87. Joan Ackerman was born in Cape Town, South Africa, and attended the Docks Mission Church where Rev Maynard G. James often preached and who influenced Joan to attend Bible College in the UK. Joan came first to Beech Lawn Bible College and then enrolled at Hurler Nazarene College in Scotland where she met a young student from N. Ireland - Hugh Gorman. Hugh & Joan were married on 26th September 1959 in the Belfast First Church with Rev William Kelly officiating. Ministry appointments for the Gormans included Scotstoun, Troon, Ballymacarret, and Dublin, followed by assignments in Canada.

Over 200 attended the Service of Thanksgiving which was held in the First Church of the Nazarene, Calgary, Canada. The service was led by the local ministers and the Gorman sons, Wes & Tim, and the 6 grandchildren, all brought tributes. And the service included a recording of Joan singing "It is well with my soul"...a testimony that is a fitting tribute to a life lived in the service of the Master.



Rev Andrew & Edith Spence

Edith Spence was called home 28th October – she was 95. Originally from Oldham, Edith Parkinson attended Emmanuel Bible College where she met Andrew Spence, a fellow student from N. Ireland, and they were married in Birmingham in 1945. Forty years of ministry included assignments in Birmingham (Emmanuel Hall), Workington, Batley, Salford, Weston-super-Mare and Morley. The Spences retired in 1985 and emigrated to Melbourne, Australia, where some of the family were living - Rev Andrew Spence passed away 6th September 2001. The Spences had four children, Graham, Martin, Janet and Angela (Graham and Angela are both deceased), and there are seven grandchildren.

The Thanksgiving Service for the life of Edith Spence was held 2nd November at the Wantirna Church of the Nazarene, Victoria, Australia. We thank God for the life and ministry of the Spences and remember the family at this time.



Rev Hugh Gorman (L) & Rev Leslie Porter

While on a recent trip to Western Canada, TOGETHER Editor, Rev Colin H. Wood, renewed fellowship with these retired brethren at First Church of the Nazarene, Calgary.

SUMMER MISSIONS

BULGARIA - A 9-strong team from the Erskine, Houston, Parkhead, and Perth churches visited Bulgaria for another Summer Mission week (30th June-7th July) based in the village of Vidrare. This is the 6th trip that has been organised. Working alongside Nazarene pastor, Zhaneta Georgieva, the team ran kids clubs in three villages – Vidrare, Ravnishte and Manaselska Reka - spent time with local children and young people, and visited the local orphanage and the newly built protected house in Vidrare and Pravets.



Bulgaria Team (Back row l to r) Jessica Canning (Houston), Pastor Zhaneta Georgieva, Ruth Lloyd (Parkhead), Jessica Hutt (Parkhead), Sarah Wilson (Erskine) (front row l to r) Nicola Dunlop (Erskine), Ashleigh Smith (Parkhead), Morven Donald (Erskine), Niamh Cochrane (Perth), Caitlin Stewart (Erskine)

NEW MEMBERS

HOUSTON – Rev Benito Coetzee welcomed six new members into the Houston fellowship on Sunday morning 5th July.



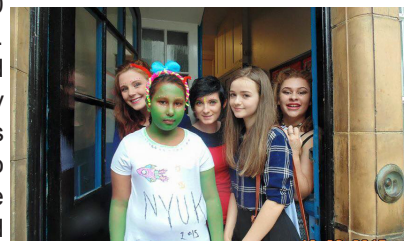
(L to r) Patricia Wetherill, Erin Wetherill, Happiness Hayton, Stewart Hayton, Agnes Ersek, Edgar Mpamo



ARDROSSAN – Rev Geoff Austin (r) has welcomed 11 new members into the Ardrossan fellowship by profession of faith over the two Sundays, 4th October and 2nd November.

YOUTH HOLIDAY

South District youth returned to Smallwood Manor for this year's summer holiday, held 14th-21st August, with 70 attending. James Strong reports... "... the services led by Jack Buxton and Rev Kat Wood, were profound. Every evening, in the chapel, the word was brought to us by Ruth Jackson who spoke on the "I AMs" of the Bible; the messages were great and deep and led us to understand more of the amazing person of Jesus. The three seminars were superb; I went to Dr Joseph Wood's seminar on Church History which was both interesting and challenging as we heard about church leaders like Martin Luther and discussed what we would change about the church. Apart from worshipping, eating, sleeping (we did sleep!) we also took part in a



Ready for the themed banquet (l to r) Sophie, Yosan, Jojo, Lucie, Mona-Lisa



Smallwood Manor

gargantuan amount of activities – including, astronaut training and repairing the space ship. Throughout the week we were in teams: the comitrons, the eworks, the solar flares and the cyber folk, and teams were awarded points...I was proud to be in the comitrons and I was even prouder when we won the week-long competition! We had our own chef, Lawrence Hinchcliffe, and the food was exquisite – we had a curry night, and Mexican night and many more amazing meals. All in all, the week was amazing, so "thank you" to all who organised it and...I cannot wait until next year!"

BREAKTHRU '15

Breakthru committee chairman, Rev Pete O'Brien, reports on this year's South District Church Family Holiday, held 23rd-30th August at Ellesmere College, Shropshire. Over 150 people of all ages attended, all agreeing that the location was fantastic. Surrounded by beautiful countryside on the border between England and Wales, the college is set in spacious landscaped grounds and offers modern accommodation and excellent facilities. We used the large swimming pool for our swimming gala and the even larger sports hall, tennis courts, and 9-hole golf course, were all taken advantage of by the more energetic. The famous "Breakthru Café" was our main meeting area where we chatted with friends, old and new, while children played close by. For those of us who enjoy our food, there was a very impressive menu with a choice of fantastic and plentiful meals (the tuck shop was hardly visited!). The young adults (16 and over) had their own accommodation and a programme tailored to their age group – in addition to having the flexibility and freedom to join the main programmes. Challenging morning seminars were lead by Dr Joseph Wood and Rev Louise Kenyon, and we shared together in great times of evening praise and worship with the theme, "Our Christian Journey: past, present and future". There was also a good range of trips and a packed programme of entertainment and fun, including a jazz night, an outdoor cinema, and the wet and wild, "it's a wash out"!

We return again next year for continued fun, fellowship and blessings.



COSHAM NEWS

Awards were presented to Martha Tinney and Dolly Ewence on Sunday 10th May in recognition of many years of faithful service in the Lord's work in Cosham as Secretary and Treasurer respectively (Dolly Ewence has served as Church Treasurer for over 50 years). And on Sunday, 28th June, a service of Infant Dedication was held for Baby Raphael Onuoha. Gordon Mann reports, "It was a pleasure to stand with parents, Prince and Francesca, and 4-year old Beatrice, as parents and the Church fellowship committed themselves to help Raphael grow in the faith".



(L to r) Geraldine Merewood, Martha Tinney, Dolly Ewence and Rev Paul Mortimore (retired Baptist minister/visiting speaker)



The Onuoha Family

HOLIDAY BIBLE CLUB

The Dromore church held its annual Holiday Bible Club 17th-21st August on the theme "Sky". Esther Christie reports, "...over the week we had many different children who were taught about how to 'Trust God' in each of the five areas – 'no matter...who you are, how you feel, what people do, what happens, or where you are'...always Trust God! The hall was decorated as the sky and we had our very own "Nazarene Aircraft" and most importantly the children heard about Jesus through Bible stories, quizzes, crafts and games."



Holiday Bible Club

BAPTISMAL SERVICE

Held at Glossop Methodist Church, approximately 160 were present for this Baptismal Service held Sunday evening, 27th September. A total of seven gave witness to their faith in Christ, and were baptised – 5 from Oldham (including 2 Iranians), one from Ashton and one from Sheffield. Rev Bruce Lloyd preached – his last sermon as pastor of the Sheffield church – and music was provided by the NYUK worship group. Also present were some from Leeds South and Manchester (Longsight).



Glossop Baptism Service

CHURCH ANNIVERSARY



Rev Ernest Stafford preaching the Word

The Greenisland church celebrated its 50th Anniversary over the weekend of 13th September. It was in 1965 that Dr George Frame inducted Rev Ernie Stafford into his first charge, and meetings were held in the "builders hut with the green door". Fifty years later Rev Stafford returned to Greenisland, along with five other former pastors, to celebrate this special anniversary. A three-course meal was held in the church hall on the Friday evening, on Saturday evening the church was full for a Celebration of Praise - led by Associate Pastor, Rev Stephen Robinson - and Rev Ernie Stafford preached the Word, and ministered in both Sunday services.

The church has had a number of locations over the years, the Unionist Hall, the Community Centre, and, by 1975, a temporary building. In late 1980 the congregation moved to the Ebenezer Hall on the Shore Road, and in 1993, under the leadership of Rev Raymond Phillips, the building of the present church began in Longfield Gardens, which was opened in 1994. In 2012 the new hall was completed, and opened by the present pastor, Rev John Dickson. Other pastors who have served across the years have included, Rev Glynn Thomas, Rev Allan Mounce, Rev Frank Bennett, Rev Chris Frazer, Rev Andrew Young, Rev Ernest Eades, Rev Kelvyn Adams, Rev Des Robinson, and Rev Brent Long.

Pray for Greenisland as they now embark upon a "Jubilee Year of Outreach" to reach out into the community...plans are being made for a Sunday School Reunion, an Ulster Scots outreach, Film Nights, Evangelism Training and a St Patrick's Night Communion Outreach.



Former pastors (l to r) Rev Frank Bennett, Rev Raymond Phillips, Rev Ernest Stafford, Rev Andrew Young, with Rev Stephen Robinson (Associate), Rev Gordon Brown (former member)

IMPORTANT DATES

2015

NY CHRISTMAS EVENT (ND)
19th December 2015

2016

PRAYER CONFERENCE (SD)
Brooklands, Manchester
11th–12th January

INSPIRE DAY (ND)
16th January–N. Ireland

LADIES RETREAT (SD)
Swanwick,
22nd–24th January

PRAYER CONFERENCE (ND)
1st–2nd February

MANSE LADIES RETREAT (ND)
5th–7th February

NY WEEKEND AWAY (ND)
12th–14th February

LADIES CONFERENCE
23rd April–Irvine (ND)

DISTRICT ASSEMBLIES
18th–19th March–(SD)
18th–21st March–(ND)

PASTOR'S SUMMER SCHOOL
16th–19th May–NTC

M+POWER TRAINING
Sofia, Bulgaria
22nd–24th June

BREAKTHRU
Ellesmere College
14th–21st August

NORTHBREAK
Lancaster
30th July–5th August

COLLEGE GRADUATION
Rev Peter Read
15th October

DIDSBURY LECTURES
Professor Michael Gorman
24th–27th October

ANNIVERSARY



USA Work & Witness Group (with Rev Trish Laird – back row far left)

The Largs church celebrated, in July, its 30th Anniversary with, a Work & Witness team from the USA, an Open Air on the Beach, a banquet, and a service of celebration. Originally the Largs Evangelistic Mission, it was in 1984 that Rev David J. Tarrant began negotiations for the Church of the Nazarene to unite with the Mission, and Pastor Tarrant became the first pastor. The present pastor, Rev Trish Laird, reports that many improvements have been made to the church (new carpets, rewiring, new lighting, new chairs), kitchen, and upstairs room – and the work goes on. A recent addition to the already busy programme is a Mothers & Toddlers group meeting in the church. Pray for Largs and the outreach into the community.

NEW APPOINTMENT

Rev Andrew Robinson (Oldham) is one of 9 new chaplains appointed in June to the Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service. This is the first time a UK Nazarene minister has been appointed as a Fire Service chaplain. Having had a career in the Fire Service, Rev Robinson is ideally suited to this ministry and his role involves covering 3 Fire Stations and Borough Headquarters within the Oldham Borough.



Rev Andrew Robinson (front 2nd from left) pictured with other chaplains

CLOTHES SWAP



Clothes swap (Sarah Sankey is 2nd from the right)

The side hall of the Llay church was transformed into a clothes shop, where people could swap their old clothes for new ones. Over 100 people from the local community came through the doors on Saturday 12th September, and over £500 was raised for the charity "Stop the Traffik" – the global coalition which is working to help stop the sale of people, and the use of 'slave labour' especially in the fashion industry. There was also a café, serving 'Mocktails' and homemade cakes. The event was the idea of Sarah Sankey, and was so successful that another is being planned for next year.



Cake – £1 a slice!

REGIONAL CONFERENCE

TURKEY, 31st October-4th November. Dr Ian G. Wills (Glasgow) reports.

The Eurasia Region of the Church of the Nazarene covers some of the most controversial and unsettled areas of our world, where national and international conflict, political unrest, and a swelling refugee crisis command centre stage. However, this Regional Conference represents and celebrates the realities of a different world and Kingdom. The conference itself (some 650 delegates) gathered around the theme “Ambassadors for Christ” based on 2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (the call to serve God through the ministry of reconciliation) and so it has faced “head on” the challenges that are so evident across the region. Our coming together has felt like a prophetic announcement in word and action, declaring that the Kingdom of God overarches and ultimately overcomes the human and political divisions that steal life from His World. Across borders that are politically divided the church from those places came together to declare their deep underlying unity in Christ and His Spirit.

Our times in worship together have been deeply moving as people from neighbouring nations, some in conflict with each other, worship side by side, share meals and fellowship together, and pray for one another. On the evening that I write these thoughts I have just returned from a communion service where we broke bread together and shared the cup - Russians with Ukrainians, Iraqis with Americans and Brits, Indians with Pakistanis - and we united around confessions of faith: that Jesus is Lord; that Christ is Risen; and that Christ will come again. The repeated words of one song is still ringing in my ears as each sang in their own tongue this

one phrase - “There’s no God like Jehovah”. In every sense of the word, it was “awesome”.

But this has also been a conference of encouragement and hope. We are part of a church that remains not only present on those front lines of conflict, danger and unrest, but a church that remains present as people of peace, compassion and mercy - providing a refuge, a sanctuary, a hope - courageous, bold, yet humble, serving others. In those places, they offer costly and at times dangerous hospitality irrespective of whether it is to friend, stranger or enemy. It is indeed the unconditional “love of Christ that compels them” - a people of reconciliation, grace, love.

So, we have celebrated not only our own reconciliation to God, and not only our reconciliation with each other, but our ministry of reconciliation to and with the world - and all the more given the challenges of our region. The divine irony is of course that in the midst of this regional turmoil, the church is growing in Eurasia, and we must not ignore or deflect or neglect these signs of hope but continue to ask, how can we also become those people of reconciliation and hospitality, welcoming the stranger, the marginalised, the excluded - even those we may have excluded or precluded ourselves - for we are Ambassadors of a different Kingdom, based on unconditional love and our hospitable Saviour. After all, “if God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them” (2 Cor. 5:19), as Ambassadors we ought to follow His lead.

It has been a beautiful conference, one that has helped me see the Church from angles that I have not seen before... and my conclusion??? Christ is preparing his Bride - and I have to say, that many parts really look quite beautiful already!



Regional Conference



UK Delegates



Rev Arthur Snijders – Regional Director

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