

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION OF THE FREE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF NORTH AMERICA

CURRENT

VOL. 8/No. 1 WINTER 2019

**ANIMAL
RIGHTS &
WRONGS**

**SEXUAL
ETHICS**

**TROUBLED
BUT CARE FREE**

**THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO
GODLINESS**

WINSTON SALEM FPC

**VALUE OF THE PRAYER
MEETING**



From the Editor

3 The Gospel According to Godliness

Features

4 Troubled but Care Free

5 Animal Rights & Wrongs: Part 2

8 Focus On: Winston Salem FPC

9 Bible Study Q & A with Dr. Mark Allison

10 Presbytery Statement on Sexual Ethics

12 Qualifications of a Sunday School Teacher

13 The Value of the Prayer Meeting

14 Week of Prayer: Between the Lakes

16 Evangelism

17 Church News

Kids' Corner

18 Onesimus: The slave who finally lived up to his name

The Free Presbyterian Church of North America is a conservative, Protestant, and Reformed denomination with churches in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. We maintain a biblical position of separation from false ecumenism while seeking to stand with all who stand for Christ and the historic Protestant faith. While we are unashamedly Reformed in our theology, our Calvinism is never a hindrance to our preaching the free offer of the gospel since we always seek to keep our Calvinism Christ-centered and evangelistic. Our great desire is to preach "the unsearchable riches of Christ" (Ephesians 3:8) in our churches and throughout the world.

For a complete listing of our congregations, contact information, and instructions on how to listen online to sermons from our ministers, please go to www.fpcna.org.

Subscriptions

Current is published quarterly by the Free Presbyterian Church of North America (www.fpcurrent.com). The annual subscription price is \$15.00 (US). To subscribe, please go to www.fpcna.org/subscriptions. You may also subscribe by writing to Rev. Derrick Bowman, 5865 Woodsway Drive, Pfafftown, NC 27040. Checks should be made payable to *Current*.

General Editor, Rev. Ian Goligher. Assistant Editor, Rev. Andy Foster. Copy Editor, Jill Saunders. Graphic Design, Moorehead Creative Designs. Printer, GotPrint.com.

The editor may be reached at cloverdalefpc@telus.net, phone: 604-897-2040, or Cloverdale FPC, 18790 58 Ave., Surrey, BC V3S 1M6.



YOU CAN READ *CURRENT* ONLINE

You can read each issue of *Current* online or look for specific articles by title and author at www.fpcurrent.com





THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO GODLINESS

by Rev. Ian Goligher

In recent times the Roman Catholic Church has been much in the news for all the wrong reasons. The mask of pious pretence came off to reveal fearful depths of depravity among her clergy.

Corruption in the papacy, however, is nothing new. Before the Protestant Reformation, immorality of Roman Catholic priests, bishops, cardinals, and popes was paraded for all to see. Priests lived shamelessly with multiple concubines and openly acknowledged children born to priests, though they had sworn an oath of celibacy. In part, their open disgrace in immorality became the Church of Rome's undoing first as the light of the renaissance — the revival of learning — and then as the light of the gospel of Christ rolled across Europe. The stench of moral corruption among the clergy became the subject of open jest among the people. Priests became as one of them in lust and all manner of deceit.

In the late 1800s in North America, converted Canadian priest Rev. Charles Chiniquy exposed the sins of the Roman church in his book, *The Priest, the Woman, and the Confessional*. In it, he highlighted the corrupting influence of the confessional box where even young females revealed the most depraved thoughts and sins of their hearts to their priests. While fiercely opposed by the Roman church, Chiniquy's shocking stories of the ruination of priests through the confessional box were no exaggeration, for it was, and still is, destructive to the minds of confessor priests and more so to bachelor priests!

Strangely, none of the modern media critiques dealing with the abuse of children within the Roman Catholic Institution that I have heard dealt with the error of celibacy, the real cause of the corruption that foments the debauchery among their clergy. In the clearest terms, God condemns those who forbid to marry as instruments of Satan:

“Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to

seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth” (1 Timothy 4:1-3).

Sadly, even with married clergy, incidences of sexual abuse have also scandalized the evangelical church. Unspeakable things are too frequently alleged, and in many cases proven to be true. These intolerable evils deeply affect the work of the gospel at large. Sins of the church harden the public and give ammunition to her accusers to shoot freely at all things Christian.

Leaders of gospel churches must, therefore, take heed to the warnings of God's Word that such men will infiltrate the church for their wicked devices. We are called to resist this evil whatever the cost. The apostle Paul warned young Timothy to prepare for these things.

“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:1-7).

The Protestant Reformers applied the remedies of marriage and its sacred trust to

the wholesale corruption among the clergy. Monks and nuns were brought out of their cloisters and given freedom to marry. German Reformer Martin Luther married nun Katharina von Bora, whom he had helped escape from a life of religious darkness.

Today, gospel ministers, elders, and churches must work for the purity of the church by insisting that marriage is God's order for holy living and is to be promoted and protected. Proper church discipline must be exercised to prevent sexual sins and so rid the church of the scandals they cause in the community.

The apostle Paul called his message of Christ to fallen sinners, “The doctrine which is according to godliness” (1 Timothy 6:3b). Just as the gospel is the power of God to release souls from the guilt of sin, it is also the power of God to lift sinners from the gutter of sin. The mark of the true church of Christ is her genuine burden to pursue holiness. The command of the Lord, “Be ye holy; for I am holy,” was first spoken in the Old Testament (Leviticus 11:44), and repeated by Peter in the New (1 Peter 1:16). For godly living the Lord has ordained the holy estate of marriage — a union between one man and one woman. To deviate from God's order is a recipe for immorality in society.

The Lord's command that “Thou shalt not commit adultery” still stands, and the Larger Catechism (Question 138) asks, “What are the duties required in the seventh commandment?” Its answer is a timeless warning to flee from every avenue that may lead to sexual sins.

“The duties required in the seventh commandment are, chastity in body, mind, affections, words, and behavior; and the preservation of it in ourselves and others; watchfulness over the eyes and all the senses; temperance, keeping of chaste company, modesty in apparel; marriage by those that have not the gift of continency, conjugal love, and cohabitation; diligent labor in our callings; shunning all occasions of uncleanness, and resisting temptations thereunto.”

This is wise counsel, for “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” ❧

TROUBLED BUT CARE FREE

Mothers-in-law often get a bad rap. Not too often do their sons and daughters-in-law have too much good to speak of them. However, I have to say that I was blessed to have a mother-in-law who was a real gem: a humble, hard working, gracious Christian with a big heart for God's work. Not that she was perfect. She wasn't. Perhaps her greatest battle with the flesh was that she tended to worry. She knew she shouldn't be a *worry wart* and so she developed a way of dealing with her weakness. It was by having constant recourse to 1 Peter 5:7, which became her favorite text of Scripture: "Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you." By God's grace she was able to do that and so found victory and peace.

Many people glibly quote that text, but gain little or no benefit from it. It states such a precious and important truth that we should give it our closest attention. After all, who among us does not have cares? Who does not long for peace of mind and heart amid the storms of life? So let us look a little more carefully at Peter's words and see how we can benefit from them.

First of all, we must not rush into the text. It is not a saying that has somehow dropped out of heaven without any context or connections. It follows immediately on from the command of verse 6: "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time." Literally this verse reads, "Be humbled under the powerful hand of God." The powerful hand of God means His power in resistless action. To be under that hand is to have the power of God acting in some way on us. It may be acting to protect us (Deuteronomy 33:3; Ezra 8:22, 31); or, it may be acting to guide us, provide for us, or otherwise bless us (Genesis 49:24; Hebrews 8:9; Mark 5:41). Or, it may mean—and often does mean—that God's hand is administering affliction. This may be as a direct correction for sin, as in the case of David (Psalm 32:4), or it may not be, as in the case of Job (Job 6:9; 12:10)—we should not jump to rash conclusions. The inclusion of the word "under" leads me to believe that Peter is speaking particularly about suffering

afflictions and realizing that they come from the hand of the Lord.

Peter's point is that, even if we cannot understand why the Lord brings us under difficult circumstances, we should recognize that He is acting according to His perfect, sovereign, and all-wise purpose. "Be humbled under the mighty hand of God" means to acknowledge that He does all things well, that whatever we are enduring is part of His plan and that it is for His glory and our good. Isn't that what Paul teaches us in Romans 8:28? "We know that all things work together for good," so let us "be humbled under the mighty hand of God." As Martin Luther said, "Where we cannot trace God, we can trust Him." In his commentary on 1 Peter, John Brown comments that we should humble ourselves in three ways: as creatures under the hand of our Creator; as subjects under the hand of our Sovereign; and as children under the hand of our Father. In life's hard times, recognize that the hand that brings our troubles is the hand of our all-wise Creator, our gracious King, and our loving Father. Judge the circumstances from this perspective and not from mere appearances or human feelings. And never forget that God's purpose in humbling us is to exalt us "in due time," or at His appointed time. So don't be impatient. His timing is always perfect. Both Jacob and Paul suffered great afflictions, but while Jacob cried in anguish, "All these things are against me," Paul shouted in triumph, "All things are working together for good." Jacob was wrong and Paul was right.

Now we can come to the lovely promise of 1 Peter 5:7. With hearts clothed in humility, hearts that bow before God and believe His Word whatever the circumstances, we can enjoy the comfort of this text. "Be humbled ... casting all your care upon Him." The word "care" means anxiety, as in Matthew 6:25, 31, 34. It refers to anything that distracts us and bids to destroy our peace. There are many such things—cares of family, finance, health, and employment, to name a few. The idea of the text is not so much that we are to cast each care

on the Lord as it arises, which of course we should do, but that as we live by the faith of the gospel we can cast our "whole care" upon Him. That is humbly living in submission to God's will, where we are in the best position to deal with each particular care as it arises. Far from losing our peace, we can see each trouble for what it really is, our Father's way of leading us on to the "due time" when He will exalt us.

Whatever our afflictions or difficulties, we humbly receive what His hand delivers to us, because there is one thing of which we are assured: "He careth for us." The word "careth" is entirely different from the one translated "care" earlier in the text. It means "the *watchful* care of interest and affection" (M. R. Vincent). The Greek text reads, "It is of interest to Him concerning you." Or, "It matters to Him." Let that sink in. Here is the best antidote to care, worry, depression, loneliness, disappointment, self-pity, and a host of other destructive emotions that can so easily best us. What is happening to us matters to the Lord. He is no disinterested bystander. He is no harsh taskmaster. No, He has our best interests at heart. He takes a personal and loving interest in us and is pursuing a gracious purpose for us, even amid our most severe trials.

All this is true and most Christians will at least pay lip service to it; however, very often we add our own "but," so that we find a way to avoid applying the truth to our immediate circumstances. So we come full circle, back to the command, "Be humbled." Vincent wisely remarked, "Pride is at the root of most of our anxiety." It is pride that questions God's purpose, that rebels against His providence, that sulks at His dealings with us—all of which may explain why in grace His hand leads us where we don't want to go, to endure what we don't want to suffer. He is teaching us the benefit of godly humility, enabling us to enjoy a care free, though not trouble free, Christian life in the joyous knowledge that the Lord always has better things in store for us here and hereafter. ❧



Dr. Alan Cairns
is minister emeritus of Faith FPC, Greenville SC. He and his wife, Joan, live in Ballymoney, Northern Ireland.

ANIMAL RIGHTS & WRONGS

PART 2: A MODERN BIBLICAL VIEW



Animal rights and animal abuse are current topics. What should man do or not do with, to, and for animals? What Scriptures teach about animal/human relations was discussed in the previous article. At Creation, God placed animals under man's dominion. The Old Testament mandated animal sacrifice, but once Christ offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice this use of animals became obsolete.

After the Flood, God placed a fear, a dread of man in the animals and instructed Noah that animals could be used as food (Genesis 9:1-2). By that statement and by examples, Scripture ordains the use of animals as food and their skins for various purposes. In Bible times, animals were both hunted and domesticated for these purposes.

Animals were also domesticated for labor. Bible characters rode donkeys, camels, horses. Animals pulled plows, carts, chariots. Technology has made these uses of animals obsolete in much of the world. But even in technically-advanced countries certain animal skills are useful. Dogs use

their sense of smell to locate accident victims, track lost individuals, or locate hidden illegal substances. Others are trained to help the handicapped. Such animal use is within man's God-given dominion.

PETS

But what about pets—animals whose primary purpose is being a companion? Scripture does not speak directly of pets, but some passages indirectly deal with the concept. When David was confronted about his sin with Bathsheba, Nathan the prophet confronted him using an analogy. "But the poor man had nothing, save one little ewe lamb, which he had bought and nourished up: and it grew up together with him, and with his children; it did eat of his own meat, and drank of his own cup, and lay in his bosom, and was unto him as a daughter." Nathan describes a man with a pet. David recognized this relationship. Believing the account to be true, he demands substantial retribution of the rich man who took, killed, and ate the poor man's pet (2 Samuel 12:1-6).

Old Testament references to dogs mainly deal with packs of feral animals waiting to scavenge the garbage. But in the New Testament we read of what can be translated "little dogs" which are inside, under the table waiting to be fed by the children (Mark 7:28). Since Romans and other nations of the time kept dogs as pets, some feel that these passages refer to pet canines.

A corollary of the biblical principal that animals can be domesticated for work appears to be that animals can serve as companions. Because of their disposition and God-given instincts, some animals are well suited for this—others are not. Studies indicate that a good relationship with a pet can be beneficial for many people. Keeping pets appears to be within man's God-ordained dominion.

What about zoos, public aquaria, and such places? Some would consider these animals to be community pets. If the animals are not abused and if they are well cared for, such places appear to fall within the Scriptural use of animals. The same would be true of

animals that have been trained to entertain. This may not be an essential function, but if the animals are well cared for, are not suffering, and not in significant danger, Christians have little Scriptural basis for concern.

Humans are responsible for the animals they domesticate. This was discussed in the previous article, and is summed up in Proverbs 12:10, “The righteous man regardeth the life of his beast.” Not all domesticated animals are well cared for. Cramped, filthy cages; inadequate or inappropriate food; and failure to meet their needs are contrary to the Bible’s teaching regarding the proper use of animals. But the fact that some domesticated animals are not properly cared for does not make all pets, zoos, or circuses improper. Those that do not properly regard the welfare of their domesticated animals are the ones violating a scriptural principle and are the ones Christians should condemn.



ANIMALS IN THEIR NATURAL HABITAT

“Should not animals be free in their natural habitat?” Some of the “glory” we associate with animals in the wild is our perception of the situation. In this sin-cursed world most animals live difficult lives. Some must constantly be alert to escape predators; others struggle to live by tooth and claw. Most compete for substance and bear the scars of that battle. Domesticated animals often have a much less stressed life, which is illustrated by the fact that their life expectancy is three to ten times that of their wild counterparts.

“But don’t animals have a right to be wild, rather than suffer the humiliation of domestication? Should not they be free to pursue their own brand of happiness?” Although many who express these ideas

think they are supporting a Biblical view, their ideas actually reflect the doctrine of pantheism.

PANTHEISM

Forms of pantheism are found in various religions. Basically, it is the belief that god is in the physical. Pantheists believe that humans have various amounts of divinity in them; “higher animals” have less, “lower animals” less again, and so on. Generally, a pantheist’s goal is to unite god parts through things like transcendental meditation.

Reincarnation is often associated with pantheism. If you adequately respect your god parts and unify them with other god parts, you will be reincarnated up the ladder; you will contain more god in your next incarnation. If you harm the god part in you or in other things, you go down the reincarnation ladder in your next life.

As a result many pantheists believe that animals need to express their nature in order to unite their god parts, and thus be reincarnated to a higher position. Since they believe animals have some god in them, they have the right to be wild. If we do not let an animal be wild, we are spiritually hampering it. Pantheists generally teach that animals should not be killed or eaten, since that hampers the animal’s up-the-ladder quest. Most people who are vegetarians for spiritual reasons do so based on pantheism.

When faced with pantheism, ancient Jews and early Christians rejected it. The Bible’s position is dualism—the doctrine that God and the physical are separate. God made the universe, but God is not a part of it. God’s power is demonstrated in that He created and sustains the physical, but He is not in the rocks, plants, or animals He made.

If one came preaching pantheism most Bible believers would reject it. So why do so many people accept pantheistic ideas? Generally pictures of animal abuse and tales of the glory of animals in the wild get their sympathy. As they climb aboard the politically-correct bandwagon, vague ideas about the spirit of the animal, the forest, the river, and the like are presented. Soon wearing fur or leather is wrong and vegetarianism noble. Being anti-domestication, and seeking to return

animals to the wild follows.

Satan is adept at getting people started on a path that appears right but is actually the first step away from God’s path. As one continues on Satan’s pantheistic path he gets farther away from the truth. What started with “regarding the life of (one’s) beast” can end up in pantheistic heresy as one seeks to spiritually unite with furry, feathery, or scaly brothers and sisters. Spiritual growth for a Christian is seeking the Holy Spirit’s help to become more Christlike, not becoming more “in tune with nature.”

THE PURPOSE OF ANIMALS

Part of God’s wisdom and power is displayed in the attributes He gave animals so they are ideally suited for their natural habitats. This, however, does not mean that animals have a right to live in their natural habitat or that they must be wild to serve God’s purpose for them. Scripture speaks favorably of David keeping his father’s sheep. These animals were not in their natural habitat, and thus needed shepherding so they could serve as food, clothing, and possibly sacrifice. This was God’s purpose for them.

When a lion and a bear threatened the sheep, David slew the predators and was justly proud of doing so (I Samuel 17). When animals threaten us or our legitimate endeavors, they are under human authority and can be dealt with. You could say that the lion and bear’s death at David’s hand accomplished the purpose God had for them. Thousands of years after these animals were killed we are still learning lessons about God and David from their death.

THE STORY OF DOGS AND INSULIN

Ancient Egyptians described a physical condition in which a person was thirsty, passed excessive urine, lost weight, and died. A second-century physician felt the person’s tissues were turning to urine and named



the condition *diabetes* meaning “to siphon away.” Later, it was discovered that there was sugar in diabetics’ urine and *mellitus*, meaning “containing honey” was added to the name.

A person with diabetes mellitus does not metabolize sugar properly. Sugars from a meal remain in the blood so the body must use its proteins and fats for energy—thus the weight loss. The kidneys seek to remove the excess sugar from the blood and expel it in the urine, but this takes time. After a meal a diabetic’s blood sugar can go so high that he enters a coma and dies. To prevent this, diabetics were placed on virtual starvation diets. Millions died excruciating deaths, with adults weighing under 60 pounds.

In the 1890s, scientists noted that if a dog’s pancreas was removed it became diabetic. Checking the pancreas of diabetics who died, scientists observed that tiny clumps of pancreatic cells, called the *islets of Langerhans*, were abnormal. Did the disease cause the abnormality or did abnormal islets cause the disease?

Today we understand hormones—chemicals made in one place, carried by the blood and affecting another place. In the early 1900’s that was a novel idea. In 1920 physician Frederick Banting proposed that the islets of Langerhans may produce a hormone involved in diabetes. Banting’s team experimented with dogs because previous observations involved dogs and they were large enough to permit dealing with the pancreas using known surgical techniques. They found that if a dog’s pancreas was removed and it received injections of an extract from the islets of Langerhans, the blood sugar remained normal. If

injections continued the dog metabolized sugar properly. Eventually they isolated the hormone responsible: insulin.

For the three years that Elizabeth Hughes had been diagnosed with diabetes, she had been on an 800-calorie per day diet. At 15 she was five feet tall and weighed 45 pounds. In 1922, a few months after the first dog had been given insulin, Elizabeth

was the first American to receive an insulin injection. She began to recover. Eventually she graduated from college, married, and had children. During her 58 years as a diabetic she received over 42,000 insulin injections. She died of a heart attack at age 73.

ANIMALS IN MEDICAL RESEARCH



Scientists took the lives of a number of dogs to discover, isolate, and test insulin. Today, millions of people live relatively normal lives as the result of insulin injections. Despite the researcher’s efforts to make them comfortable, dogs suffered as they died of high or low blood sugar. Some died of infection: a common surgical complication before the discovery of antibiotics. But at that time there was no other way that this life-saving information could have been obtained.

In war, soldiers suffer and die so that others may live. War is not a desirable event, but in this sin cursed world it has often been necessary. Scripture recognizes this. In the war against diabetes, dogs were called on to suffer and die so that people could live. Using animals in this way may not be desirable, but it is often necessary.

We honor those who gave their lives for their country. It might be excessive to

honor an animal that gave its life for human advancement. It is also excessive, even pantheistic, to claim that no animals should be called upon to give their lives so that human life may be improved.

ANIMALS AND HUMANS

God created humans and gave each of us a soul—our spiritual, eternal, in-the-image-of-God existence. The value of human souls is revealed by God sending His Son to die for them. Although spiritual, our soul is currently “tied” to our physical bodies. Spiritual things we do (pray, witness, meditate on Scripture, reflect Christ to others, and the like) are accomplished by using our physical bodies. It is this soul/physical body union that causes the extreme value of a human’s physical life (often called the *sanctity of human life*).

All creation, including animals, serves God and accomplishes His purposes. Wild animals serve God’s purpose in things like maintaining the balance of nature. Animals were not given souls and God placed them under man’s dominion. By statement and example, Scripture teaches that animals can be used and domesticated for various purposes. God gives guidelines regarding how to use this gift. Domesticated animals must be appropriately cared for. Wanton animal abuse is outside Scriptural guidelines.

This does not mean that animals have a right to pain-free lives. As the lion and bear served their purpose in dying at David’s hand, the dogs that died during insulin research can be said to have served God’s purpose for them. Animal suffering and sacrifice for the legitimate betterment of man is within Scriptural guidelines. A Christian’s concern should be that animal suffering is for human betterment and that it is as minimal as possible. ❏



William Pinkston teaches science at Bob Jones Academy in Greenville, South Carolina. He is a member of Faith FPC.



WINSTON SALEM FPC

Grace FPC was founded in 1987 with a nucleus of approximately 20 people. Many of these members were conservative believers who were hungry for more than they were receiving both doctrinally and practically. After several years of slow growth, the Lord began to open doors in unexpected ways. Several began to visit from much larger churches, looking for something more conservative. Also, some from Reformed backgrounds began showing interest. Within 10 years the church was fully supporting the minister and shortly thereafter elected elders. Recently the church elected deacons as well. The church has remained at about 75-80 people for several years, with others visiting in the mix. It has been blessed with a good and stable congregation with many children, and has been encouraged with the consistent testimony of the members both within and without. It is wonderful to see children who were raised in the church now rearing families of their own within the congregation. In 2012 the church was encouraged when Derrick and Lydia Bowman joined the work with Derrick coming to serve as Associate Minister. The church has a vibrant Sunday School program as well as a Kids4Truth ministry. It also maintains outreach ministries at a local nursing home and the Rescue Mission with several of the men in the congregation taking part in preaching. In-home Bible studies also provide opportunity for members as well as some from outside the congregation to come under the Word. It is a joy to see the people the Lord has brought together under the simplicity of the faithful pursuit of the means of grace. ❏



BIBLE STUDY Q & A WITH DR. MARK ALLISON

WHAT ARE THE KEY PROOFS FOR THE BIBLE'S INSPIRATION?

The Bible claims inspiration for itself. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 we read, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." The Greek word for inspiration means "God-breathed." This term indicates that God breathed out an inspired book that is profitable to the believer and sufficient for his spiritual needs (v. 17). In 2 Peter 1:21, Peter writes, "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." The word "moved" has the idea of being born along. God moved upon the writers of Scripture producing a unique and inspired book. God used the personalities of the writers while at the same time delivered to His people a perfect and infallible book. David wrote, "The Spirit of the LORD spake by me, and His word was in my tongue" (2 Samuel 23:2). "It is not merely that God elevated men's minds, but that He directed their thoughts. It is not simply that He communicated concepts to them, but that He dictated the very words used" (A. W. Pink).

WHAT DOES INSPIRATION MEAN IN REAL TERMS TO THE READER AND THE CHURCH?

The inspiration of the Bible means that it has the **authority** of God on it. The Bible takes precedence over every other book. It gives to mankind a revelation with the stamp of heaven upon it. Closely associated with this authority is the Scripture's **accuracy**. The Bible gives exactly what God's will is. It is because of its authority and accuracy that a believer's life, or even a congregation's life, can know God's desire for them both as to their eternal salvation and how they are to live in this life.

HOW SHOULD WE READ AND STUDY THIS INSPIRED BOOK?

We should look to God for His help in the study of His Word. In Psalm 119:18, we read, "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." It is God's Spirit that gives the anointing or unction necessary to properly interpret the Scriptures (1 John 2:20-27). In our study we must also study the Word in its context and at the same time compare Scripture with Scripture. Isaiah wrote, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (8:20). Like the Bereans of old, we should "receive the word with all readiness of mind, and search the scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11). We must also look for Christ and our salvation in the Word of God. Christ said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me" (John 5:39).

WHAT IS THE FIRST PRINCIPLE OF INTERPRETATION OF THE INSPIRED BIBLE?

We must take the Word of God as literal as the context demands. There are some contexts that are poetic or have figurative language that must be interpreted as such. For instance, Christ is said to have seven horns and seven eyes (Revelation 5:6). That would mean the sovereign Christ has perfect power and perfect knowledge. Apart from these figurative portions, the Bible was written to be understood literally and the believer must resist the twisting of Scripture by the devil or his emissaries.

DO WE DEPEND ON THE GRAMMAR OF THE BIBLE TO SEARCH OUT ITS MEANING?

The Bible was originally written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. Through the labour of God's servants, we possess in the Authorized Version a translation that is very accurate, readable, and dignified. Our translation is in English, so a working knowledge of English grammar is of value in our study. Still, without violating English grammar, we remain in darkness and prejudice because of our sinful nature. We must rely on the help and leading of God's Spirit in studying the book He has written. Thankfully, believers have the author of the Bible as their indwelling teacher (1 John 2:27).

WHAT IS THE BIGGEST FAILURE IN BIBLE STUDY?

We are not to add to, take away from, nor deliberately twist the Scriptures. Most of God's people would readily agree to that assertion. But perhaps the biggest problem with the study of the Bible is, after seeing Christ and His salvation, we fail to make application to our life. This failure of application destroyed many in the wilderness. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it" (Hebrews 4:2). We must be "doers of the Word, and not hearers only" (James 1:22). Thomas Manton wrote, "It will not answer our duty to have a naked notion of truths, unless we embrace and pursue them." ❧



Dr. Mark Allison
President, Geneva Reformed
Seminary, Greenville, S.C.



FPCNA PRESBYTERY STATEMENT ON SEXUAL ETHICS

1. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

We, the Free Presbyterian Church of North America (FPCNA), declare our commitment to the authority of the Word of God as the sole rule in matters of faith and practice. Our ethical standards will not be determined by individual experience, by the will of the majority, or by civil government, but by the authority of sacred Scripture.

We, therefore, affirm that man is created in the image of God in two distinct sexes, male and female. God made Adam and gave him Eve to be his wife. In so doing, God instituted marriage as being between one man and one woman, as confirmed by Jesus Christ. God, in wisdom and grace, included in His creative order the propriety of sexual relations between a man and a woman in the context of marriage. The command of God to our first parents was “to multiply,” indicating that unfallen mankind was created with a heterosexual orientation. All sexual relations and inclinations deviating from this created order arise in consequence of man’s fall into sin.

2. ETHICAL CONVICTIONS

We hold the scriptural position that adultery, heterosexual fornication,

homosexuality, incest, bestiality, and pedophilia are violations of God’s will as expressions of human sexuality, and that all sexual activity outside of biblical marriage is sin.

The only sexuality that is affirmed in the Word of God is heterosexuality, which must be expressed only in marriage. However, the child of God may choose not to pursue marriage for various reasons, including the good of the kingdom of God.

The issue of sexual orientation and identity is of particular relevance for the church which is under growing pressure to recognize homosexuality and gender fluidity as legitimate expressions of human sexuality. We cannot accept the notion that true believers will be content in identifying themselves as “gay Christians,” or any other unbiblical variants of sexual identity. As the homosexual act is sin, so the inclination towards it is sinful. Through the work of the Spirit, the inclination of sinners is changed. By nature, they are inclined towards sin. By regenerating grace, they are inclined towards righteousness. Even though indwelling sin remains, the power of sin is broken in reborn souls. Christ delivers from all sin: its penalty, its power, and eventually, its presence. Since believers will be finally

delivered from all sin in glory, we hold that they will not be content in affirming an identity from which they will be delivered in the eternal state.

Except for some rare medical conditions, the gender of an individual is determined by his or her chromosomes and anatomy. Any desire or attempt to reverse an individual’s gender constitutes a rejection of the will and wisdom of our Creator and is therefore sin.

3. PASTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Any form of sexual sin will lead to misery and, without repentance, to eternal separation from God in hell. Thus, out of compassion for lost souls, we affirm our commitment to warn them of the wrath of God towards all ungodliness and to bring them the gospel of hope. Persons engaged in homosexual practice can know both forgiveness of sin and power over sin. Out of sincere love for our neighbors, we must seek to present Christ to them in a manner that is faithful to God’s truth regarding sin and the necessity of salvation, but that also shows the love of Christ to all who will turn to Him in repentant faith.

Those who come to faith in Christ will endeavor, by the Spirit, to put to death the deeds of the body. True Christians, in turning from homosexuality, may face real battles and temptations regarding their former sexual desires. However, as is the case with all Christians, their desires and attractions should not determine their actions. Their actions must be ruled by the Word of God, which teaches us what conduct is holy and righteous. Recognizing that succumbing to homosexual temptation is to commit sin, believers will therefore renounce their same-sex attraction and behavior as being against the law of God. Furthermore, the Spirit of God will carry on His work of sanctification so that all who are in Christ are “enabled more and more to die unto sin [and its desires] and live unto righteousness.”

As a church that believes in the grace of God in the gospel, we aspire to encourage and support all believers in their walk with God as they seek to put sin to death. An outworking of that will be seen in our willingness to give adequate time to teach, counsel, and pastor people who have been converted from a background of sexual sin in its various forms. We will endeavor, by God’s grace, to be open in our reception of

such people into the fellowship of our churches so that they can be disciplined by their fellow believers.

Since parents and other relatives experience distress at seeing a loved one walk outside the will of God, the pastoral care of families with individuals practicing sexual sin must be sensitive, compassionate, and committed.

The above pastoral considerations should also be applied in respect of persons committing sin in relation to their God-appointed gender.

4. ECCLESIASTICAL IMPLICATIONS

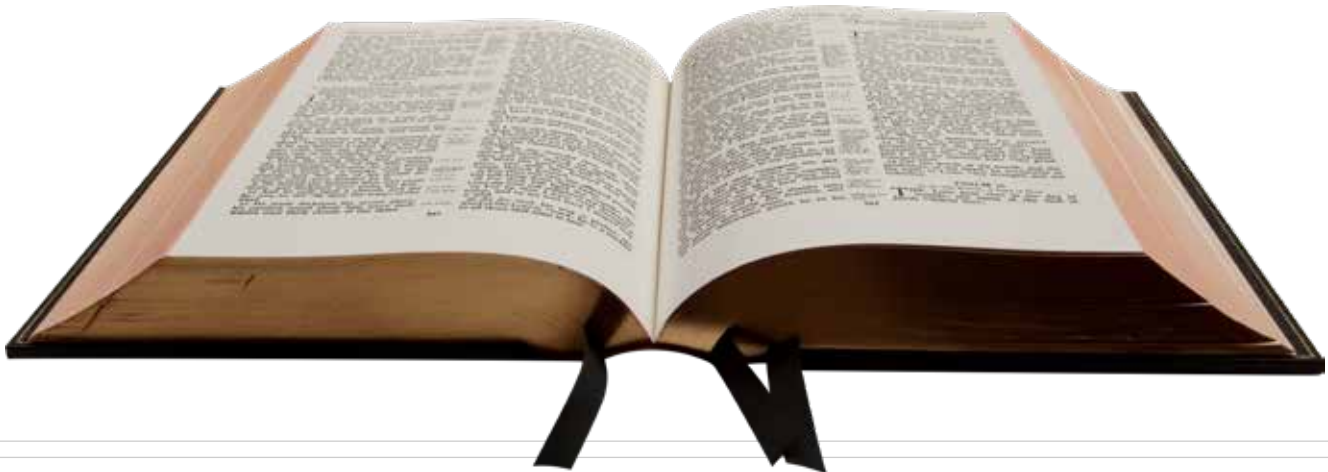
The matters discussed above affect the practices of the FPCNA in the following ways:

a. Concerning sexual sin and discipline: We reaffirm our determination to faithfully and lovingly discipline those guilty of sexual sin in accordance with the teaching of the Word of God as reflected in our *Book of Church Order*.

b. Concerning ordination: We disallow the ordination of practicing homosexuals, men who would assert their identity as celibate homosexuals, transgender individuals, or any other unbiblical variant of sexual identity.

c. Concerning church membership: Communicant membership in our churches is open to those believers who are in sympathy with our doctrinal and ethical positions. We are happy therefore to receive into membership believers who have turned in repentant faith from a homosexual lifestyle or transgenderism. We disallow from membership those who would assert their identity as celibate homosexuals, transgender individuals, or any other unbiblical variant of sexual identity.

d. Concerning “same-sex marriage”: From the conviction that God has instituted marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman, we assert that same-sex marriage is a misnomer. Though society may affirm same-sex marriages, God does not. Therefore, our ministers will not conduct a marriage between persons of the same sex. ❏



¹ Psalm 19:7–9; Isaiah 8:20; 2 Timothy 3:16–17

² Matthew 19:4–6

³ 1 Corinthians 7:2; Hebrews 13:4—Marriage is here defined as a covenant lawfully made between a man and a woman in the sight of God and man.

⁴ Genesis 1:28

⁵ Sexual sin in all forms is included under the Seventh Commandment (Exodus 20:14). The Lord Jesus teaches that such sin can be in the heart without physical action (Matthew 5:27–28). Leviticus 18 gives us an insight into the application of God’s will in the realm of sexual relations. In considering the Scriptures as a whole, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that sexual intimacy is to take place only between a man and a woman lawfully joined in marriage. Homosexuality is deemed as sin in both Testaments. The sin of Sodom is revealed in Genesis 19:5 as a desire to

“know” the visitors (compare Genesis 4:1). That sin is condemned by God, as seen in His judgment upon Sodom and by the commentary of 2 Peter 2:7–8, which describes their conversation as “filthy” and their deeds as “unlawful.” Leviticus 20:13 calls homosexual activity an “abomination.” The New Testament is equally clear in passages such as Romans 1:26–27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9–10.

⁶ Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 7:7–9

⁷ Romans 6:17–18

⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:9–11

⁹ Romans 6:14; 17–18

¹⁰ Romans 8:13 (Consider in light of the teaching that all who are Christ’s possess the Holy Spirit, Romans 8:9)

¹¹ *Westminster Shorter Catechism*, Question 35

QUALIFICATIONS OF A SUNDAY SCHOOL TEACHER



In this short series of articles, we have dealt with the aims of Sunday school teaching, the principles governing the content, and the importance of catechization. But who should take on the task of teaching? What qualities should we look for in identifying those who could be appointed? What attributes will mark out the Sunday school teacher before and after their appointment to the service?

The task of teaching Sunday school is challenging, and we pray that God will provide and equip teachers. The following adjectives display some of the essentials.

WILLING

It may seem painfully obvious that we ought not to force people to serve God in a role they are not willing to assume. Certainly, those who serve will know a Moses-like sense of reluctance. All should feel their inadequacy but ultimately God gives us a willing heart to do His will. The Old Covenant sacrifices were to be offered “of his own voluntary will” (e.g. Leviticus 1:3). All of our service must be performed with a similar willingness, a reflection of Christ, who delighted to do the Father’s will (Psalm 40:8). Teaching children is not easy. Time is required for prayerful preparation. Faithfulness is required to teach week by week, year by year. At times there may seem to be little fruit to show for the efforts made and some days the teacher will doubt the children heard anything at all. The teacher must, by God’s grace, be committed to the work, a commitment that usually develops in a heart of one willing to serve.

SPIRITUAL

If we accept that the role of teaching God’s truth is a spiritual exercise, then we need teachers who walk with God. In a sense,

anybody can lead in song, read a Bible story, and listen to Bible and Catechism memory work. But the communication of God’s truth in truth requires men and women who know that truth experientially. We should never succumb to the notion that anyone can teach children. To make truth simple enough is no small challenge. But the real issue is not the hearers, but the content of the teaching. We need, and should require that, those who teach the gospel to our children have themselves been converted under that truth. That truth should captivate their hearts day by day so that they have a genuine, spiritual walk with God. That spirituality will be manifest externally in a holy walk and in a burden for the worship of God and the place of public prayer. It is vital that those who teach will pray over their class, realizing that only God can apply His Word in truth.

ABLE

The qualification that an elder be “apt to teach” could be applied here (1 Timothy 3:2). The exercise of teaching requires a measure of competence. Granted it is nearly impossible to quantify that measure, but it is not helpful to our children’s appreciation of truth to sit under a teacher who cannot simply and clearly explain what is contained in the Scriptures. The objective of teaching is understanding (read Nehemiah 8 and 1 Corinthians 14). True understanding requires the illumination of the Spirit, but all who teach must strive to be understood. Church sessions should endeavor to make some assessment of competence prior to placing a teacher over the care of children.

SUBMISSIVE

The church must remember that the Sunday school ministry is an extension of its larger teaching ministry. Therefore, they

place themselves under the submission of the pastor and elders. An implication that arises out of that is that Sunday school teachers will ordinarily be church members. Church membership is the practical step showing a submission to those in rule in Christ’s church. The oversight bears responsibility for the teaching under its watch. That responsibility extends to the Sunday school. The elders’ responsibility is complemented by a teacher’s submissive spirit. This submissive heart works itself out as teachers are prepared to receive direction as to what should be taught and receive correction if they teach error.

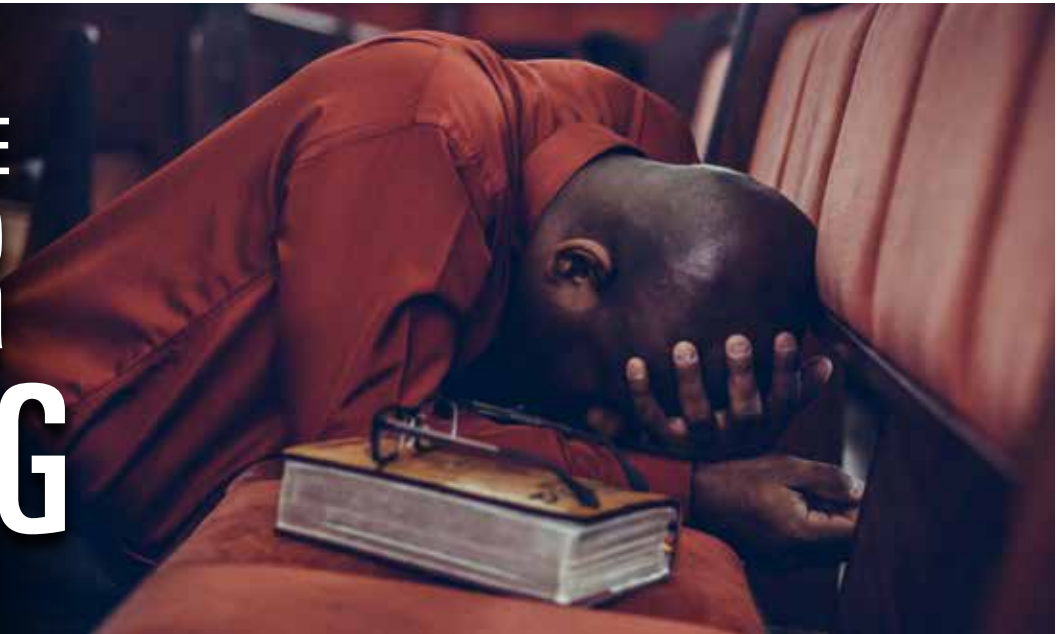
PATIENT

One of the great joys in church life is to listen to someone’s experience of saving grace. Like Bunyan’s pilgrims, we walk to heaven talking about the Lord’s dealings with our souls. Many pilgrims will bear testimony to the influence of a godly Sunday school teacher; however, the fruit so demonstrated will often not arise as quickly as the teacher would desire. A patient spirit is required that is content to serve under the sovereign will of God. The teacher must sow the seed of the Word, water that seed with tearful prayers, and then leave the matter with God. “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Ecclesiastes 11:1). ❏



Dr. Stephen Pollock
is minister of Malvern
FPC, Malvern, PA.

THE VALUE OF THE PRAYER MEETING



I have been going to Wednesday night prayer meeting my whole life. I'm thankful to my parents for instilling in me a lifelong pattern of church attendance. Now that I'm a pastor, it's my *job* to go to church, but even if I were not a pastor, I'd still go to the prayer meeting because the Lord has taught me how important it is.

The public prayer meeting is a means of grace or the ordinary means that God has ordained to minister grace to His people. Obviously, God can give grace to His people however He sees fit, but the Scriptures teach us that the preaching of the Word, prayer, the ordinances of the church, and the fellowship of the Lord's people are the ordinary ways that God communicates His grace. How many times have you come to the prayer meeting exhausted from a day's work, but been encouraged and revived? I have!

Ever since I came to the Free Church, I learned that the prayer meeting is the most important service of the church calendar and prayer is the power plant of the church. Why do we continue to insist on having prayer meetings, and why is a whole article in our magazine devoted to this topic? We believe that a church can function without electricity, water, and even a building, but a church cannot function without prayer. A church leadership team can do a lot of organizing and make a group of people look like a church on the outside, but without prayer, there will be no blessing or power from God.

The Lord can even use the prayer meeting

to save souls. I know of two women who were converted as a result of the public prayer meeting. My wife was saved as a girl after listening to her father earnestly pray for the conversion of his own father. The Lord used that to impress on her heart her need of salvation. The other woman has a similar testimony. I believe these two examples prove the benefit of bringing children to the prayer meeting. You might think it an unnecessary waste of time, but the Lord can do great things in the heart of a child simply sitting under the means of grace.

So what's the point of the public prayer meeting? Can I not just pray at home? The aim of the church prayer meeting is to agree together to pray for the glory of God and the advancement of His kingdom on the earth. The Lord taught His disciples, "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). To that end you should pray for your pastor. Pray for the Lord's power on his preparation and preaching. Pray for missionaries. Pray for the salvation of souls. Pray for the church's outreach ministries. Pray for the sick to be raised up so that they can return to the body of Christ to worship together and collectively seek the glory of God. Pray for yourself that the Lord would help you to pray. While someone else is praying audibly, pray with them. Agree with them in prayer, and add your "amen" to what they are asking. Together, we need to plead with the Lord to pour out His

Spirit on the ministry of our local assembly and for the advancement of Christ's kingdom at large.

Sadly, the prayer meeting is quickly becoming a relic of the past. Many churches have pulled the plug on the whole idea or the attendance is low. When a church's leadership doesn't support the prayer meeting, what message does that send to the rest of the congregation? It silently communicates that the corporate prayer meeting is not really important. Of course, they would never admit that, but their actions speak louder than their words. I think a lot of parents inadvertently communicate the same thing to their children. What are you teaching your children by your church attendance? I want my children to know that our family's attendance at the prayer meeting is important because prayer is important. I hope you do too.

Take a moment to consider how you view your church's prayer meeting. I hope you will be encouraged to seek the Lord with your brothers and sisters in Christ and have a renewed vigor for the advancement of God's kingdom and His glory on Earth through the weekly prayer meeting. ❏



Derrick Bowman
is associate minister at
Winston Salem, FPC, NC



WEEK OF PRAYER BETWEEN THE LAKES

Eight years after its only other visit to Barrie, Ontario, the presbytery met in Barrie Free Presbyterian Church October 1-5 for the fall Week of Prayer and regular meeting of the presbytery. Rev. Anthony D'Addurno has been the pastor of the congregation for ten years. Together with his wife, Pina, he led the congregation in caring for the members of the presbytery while they were in the city. The congregation provided at least one meal each day for those attending the Week of Prayer and made other aspects of the church's facilities available to support the presbytery's various committees in the work they were accomplishing for the presbytery. The moderator conveyed to the congregation at a public service on Wednesday evening the thanks of the members for the care the congregation expended during the week.

Barrie occupies the western end of Kempenfelt Bay, one of the arms of Lake Simcoe, one of Ontario's larger bodies of water. Less than one hundred miles to the northwest lies Georgian Bay, part of Lake Huron. During the winter months especially, the wind that blows off Georgian Bay toward the usually frozen Lake Simcoe carries copious amounts of snow that make the city one of the snow recreation centers in that part of Ontario.

As the members of the presbytery began to gather for the opening session of prayer on the evening of October 1, there were noticeable absences. Rev. Geoff Banister regretted missing his first Week of Prayer since 2001 due to his secular job commitments. Dr. Mark Allison was also absent for the first time in many years,

possibly the first time ever, because of his serious illness for which he was undergoing treatment at Duke University's medical center in North Carolina. The needs of Dr. Allison and his family, along with the various aspects of the denomination's ministry that are Dr. Allison's responsibility, occupied a significant portion of the time that the ministers, elders, and students spent in prayer throughout the week.

The presbytery welcomed to its prayer sessions and business meetings three students who are under care of the presbytery—Mr. Ramón Sosa from Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic, along with Mr. Marcus Reyes, and Mr. Lalo Peña, who are from the Veracruz area in Mexico. Mr. Peter Banfe was also present. He is a 2018 graduate of Geneva Reformed Seminary who is carrying out part of the responsibilities of his pastoral internship in preaching for the congregation of Orlando FPC. In several of the prayer sessions throughout the week, the presbytery rejoiced in the attendance of Mr. D'Addurno's son, Frankie.

There was a remarkable spirit of unity and fellowship throughout the week, beginning with the opening prayer session on Monday evening. Following a wonderful meal that the church provided, those who had already arrived in Barrie heard the opening message from Rev. Derrick Bowman, associate minister of Grace FPC in Winston-Salem, North Carolina. The moderator of the presbytery, Rev. Ian Goligher, addressed those in attendance the next morning when all of the other expected attendees were

present. Others who preached during the week were Rev. Reggie Cranston from Port Hope, Ontario; Rev. Andrew Foster from Penticton, British Columbia; and Rev. Myron Mooney from Trinity, Alabama. During a special service in the church on Wednesday evening, those in attendance heard testimonies from Mr. Reyes, Mr. Peña, and Mr. Sosa. Mr. Steven Lee, ruling elder from Faith FPC in Greenville, SC visited the Dominican Republic earlier in the year and showed a ten-minute video presentation he produced following that visit.

On October 2, Rev. Ian Goligher of Cloverdale FPC in British Columbia, moderator of the presbytery, called the fall 2018 meeting to order. He welcomed the students under care of the presbytery who were visiting from the Dominican Republic and Mexico. He also noted other causes for concern and matters for prayer in the deaths of Mr. George Walker, longtime ruling elder in Orlando FPC, in June, and Mrs. Marie Heter, mother of Mrs. Robin Fineout, in August. The moderator also read a thank-you card from Miss Kathy Walker, missionary to Kenya, who retired earlier in the year.

A major cause for rejoicing was the report of an election that took place in Heritage FPC, Prince George, British Columbia, on September 11. The members voted to issue a call to Rev. Andrew Simpson, a licentiate in the Ulster presbytery, to become its minister. The presbytery voted to ratify the report of the election and transmitted the various documents to Rev. John Greer, clerk of the Ulster presbytery, for action by that

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH GOVERNMENT

We are thankful for this report from our Clerk on the work of our Presbytery at its meeting in Barrie, Ontario. Rev. David Mook lectures on the Book of Church Order at our Seminary to equip young ministers on church procedure and policy within our denomination. To inform our readers on the principles of church government in the Free Presbyterian church, I have invited Rev. Mook to contribute a number of articles on Presbyterian church government. We look forward to including these articles in future issues.

Concerning the business of the Lord's church, the Bible exhorts, "Let all things be done decently and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40). The FPCNA has therefore drawn up and implemented a Book of Church Order to guide its ministers and elders in their work in all areas of doctrine, procedure of government and of worship. The following sections are general principles of Free Presbyterian Church government.

Book of Church Order 2.1 states: "The church is the creation of God, not an institution of man. It is, therefore, to be governed by laws and principles set forth in divine revelation. What has no basis in Scripture can have no authority in the church."

Book of Church Order 2.2 states: "The Presbyterian form of church government is founded on the Word of God and is agreeable to the model set forth in the New Testament. Presbyterianism works on the principles of representative government, which are, we believe, clearly set forth in Scripture."

Book of Church Order 2.2 Section C explains how Presbyterian government is based on a Biblical model.

"Properly constituted courts are the biblical way of maintaining good government and discipline in the church. Private opinion or personal action cannot replace the God-ordained functions of the elders of a local church or of a presbytery. Nor does independency, which vests ultimate ecclesiastical authority in each local congregation, reflect the New Testament model given in Acts 15, where we read of the deliberations and enactments of the Council of Jerusalem, setting forth the standards for all the congregations within its jurisdiction."

We will allow Rev. Mook to explain these things further in his forthcoming articles.

— Editor

presbytery. On October 5, the Ulster presbytery voted to issue the call to Mr. Simpson, and he indicated his intention to accept the call. He and his wife began the process that will enable them to move to Canada. The Ulster presbytery is planning an ordination service for Mr. Simpson on December 1, and the Simpsons hope to arrive in British Columbia on December 11. Following their arrival in Prince George, the North American presbytery will schedule his installation service in the church.

The presbytery also acted on the report of an election of ruling elders in the Malvern church. The election on September 21 resulted in a clear vote by the members of the congregation that Mr. James Brouse, Mr. Wayne Kearns, and Mr. Paul Trimble should become the church's ruling elders. The presbytery voted to ratify the report of the election, and appointed a special commission to conduct the ordination and installation service in Malvern on October 26.

The presbytery's Liaison Committee for the International Congress of Free Presbyterians delivered its final report on the 4th meeting of the Congress July 30-August 3 in the Malvern church building. Those who were present during those days, beyond the members of the committee, agreed with the assessment that the Congress meeting was highly successful and solidified to a greater degree the fraternal relationship between the North American presbytery and the presbytery of Ulster. [A full report on the Congress appeared in the previous issue of *CURRENT*.]

Among the highlights of other committee reports was the adoption of the Finance Committee's proposed presbytery budget for 2019. The Mission Board reported that it had named Dr. Saunders to be its acting chairman in view of Dr. Allison's illness. The Constitutional Documents Committee reported that, with the presbytery's action to adopt the remaining chapters in the Book of Church Order's Code of Practice and Discipline, that part of the BCO is complete. The committee is pursuing the remaining sections of the BCO before embarking on the process for final publication of the completed BCO.

Other actions of the presbytery included the appointment of Rev. John Wagner of Columbia, South Carolina as interim moderator of Faith FPC in Greenville, as Dr. Mark Allison requested that he be replaced; the appointment of Rev. and Mrs. Derrick Bowman as leaders of potential mission teams that will function under the Mission Board's supervision as part of the Presbytery's Outreach Initiative; and the final adoption of the report of the presbytery's special commission on sexual ethics. The text of the approved report appears elsewhere in this issue of the magazine.

Before the presbytery adjourned on the afternoon of October 4, the moderator thanked those in attendance for their contributions during the meeting and relayed the thanks of the members to Pastor D'Addurno and the people of the Barrie church for their diligent efforts in hosting the Week of Prayer. Rev. Goligher reminded the members of their next regular meeting, to be held in Toronto FPC, Toronto, Ontario, May 13-17, 2019. ❧



Rev. David G. Mook is the minister of Phoenix Free Presbyterian Church in Peoria, Arizona. He serves as clerk of the presbytery of the FPCNA, chairman of the Constitutional Documents Committee, and is an adjunct professor in the field of practical theology at Geneva Reformed Seminary.

EVANGELISM

When I was a kid I loved cars. I collected model cars and *Hot Wheels* and even cards with different car specs. If you had asked me, I could have given you horsepower, speed range, make, and model of many cars. But do you know what I couldn't do? I couldn't drive!

This reminds me of some Christians when it comes to personal evangelism. We have heard about the Great Commission. We know all about the free offer and content of the gospel. We have a lot of theological knowledge, but if we are honest, we struggle with talking to people one-on-one about Christ. We know the facts, but we can't "drive". So what often happens as a result? Nothing. Let's face it, sometimes we just don't know where to begin speaking to someone about Christ. Instead, we think "Someone else will do it," or "It's not for me", but we can't be content with this. Spurgeon wrote, "Soulwinning is the chief business of the Christian minister; indeed, it should be the main pursuit of every true believer." Here are some practical guidelines from Scripture to help us in our personal evangelism.

In John 4:1-30, we have Christ's encounter with a Samaritan woman. In this account we are able to watch Christ in the work of personal evangelism. He is our example, and we are exhorted to follow His steps. Here are a number of guidelines:

1. *Christ was a man of prayer.* Although this account doesn't record Christ in prayer, the whole of the NT is so permeated with His prayer life that I must assume He prayed. Before anything else, you must be a man or woman of prayer. Pray for opportunities, pray for a burden for souls, and pray for individual people.
2. *Christ went where unbelievers were.* It would have been easy for Jesus to travel in such a way so as to avoid contact with the sinful world, but He didn't. Christ came from heaven to "seek and

to save that which was lost." We must be careful not to stay in our comfort zones, but deliberately go where unbelievers are.

3. *Christ was looking for opportunities for evangelism in everyday life.* Verses 6-7 tell us that Christ was sitting on a well when the woman came to Him. He then spoke with her about the gospel. For Christ, a well was an opportunity. He knew that everything has significance because everything is God-ordained, so He was looking for opportunities. What is your *well*? Your office at work? A line at the Subway? A seat on an airplane? Look and pray for opportunities in everyday life. We serve a sovereign God.
4. *Christ lovingly engaged in conversation with her.* Jesus said, "Give me to drink." Conversation is the subtle power of personal evangelism. Often starting the conversation is difficult. Christ's question to the woman showed His love because Samaritans were spurned by the Jews. Show people you love them, and are sincerely interested in their life by asking a question about something they are interested in like their work or family.
5. *Christ saw her emptiness, and directed her to the Living Water.* Every person has been born in sin, and is attempting to fill their emptiness with more sin. We discover this woman had multiple husbands, and none of them satisfied her. When Christ asked her to go and call her husband, He wasn't being intrusive or inappropriate. Often in conversation, sin and its effects will surface. Watch, and when that happens, gently point to Christ who alone can satisfy.
6. *Christ kept Himself central.* "If thou knewest...who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink...I that speak unto thee am he." Christ was the center of

the conversation. It is Christ whom people need. We don't just offer people forgiveness; we offer them Christ, for in Him alone is forgiveness. Don't get sidetracked when you talk to people. Keep Christ's person and work central. The gospel is God's power unto salvation.

7. *Christ was careful in what He said, and how He said it.* Although *what* you say is important, *how* you say it is equally so. Godly character is essential. As Christ exemplified, be respectful, patient, and attentive. When someone gets upset or makes fun of you, like the woman at the well did to Jesus, remain calm.
8. *Christ kept it simple.* As Christ spoke about the gospel, He never used complex words. He used familiar terms to her. She drew water from a well, so He used the analogy of water that will never leave anyone thirsty again when speaking about the gospel. Keep it simple but truthful. Remember most people have no idea what justification or imputation means. Put yourself in their shoes, and speak to be understood.

So, what now? If all we do is talk about guidelines for personal evangelism, then we are in the same place we were before we started. Let's now take the gospel to the lost, and remember that, whether God gives us souls or not, the ultimate goal in evangelism is God's glory. ❏



Mr. Peter Banfe

is a graduate of Geneva Reformed Seminary. Presently he is doing an internship in Orlando FPC, under the supervision of Dr. Stephen Pollock.



Lightning Strikes Radio Transmitter in Liberia

Just when Rev. DiCanio got the radio station running 24/7 it took a major setback due to a lightning strike, which damaged a number of components on the transmitter and some equipment inside the station. As we all know, electronics don't do well with electrical surges. Despite considerable efforts to ground the system, damage was not totally averted. At last report things were sorted with the help of Canadian tech support and the station was back on the air. We know that Satan doesn't want the gospel to go out over the airwaves in Monrovia, Liberia, but we praise the Lord for this most effective means to proclaim the gospel. This incident reminds us all to pray for this ministry for the Lord's protection and blessing upon the Word of God as it is broadcast again twenty-four hours per day, seven days per week.



New Elders Ordained in Malvern, PA

In Paul and Barnabus' first missionary journey they demonstrated the will of God for the New Testament church as they "... ordained them elders in every church..." (Acts 14:23). It is the will of God that there be a plurality of elders in every church. Knowing this, the people in the Malvern Free Presbyterian Church set themselves to pray with fasting for God to direct them in the election of elders who would serve as shepherds after God's own heart. Those prayers were answered as

Presbytery conducted the ordination of Messrs. James Brouse, Wayne Kearns, and Paul Trimble on Friday October 26, 2018.

Rev. Derrick Bowman presided over the meeting as Rev. David Mook asked the prescribed questions and the Moderator, Rev. Ian Goligher, conducted the ordination. Visiting ministers, Revs. Reggie Kimbro, Stephen Hamilton, and Dr. John McKnight (Reformation Bible Church, Maryland) also took part in the meeting. Rev. Goligher brought the charge to the men, exhorting and encouraging them from Peter's words to the elders in 1 Peter 5. The newly-ordained elders testified of their faith in Christ and their need of the Lord's grace as they take on the role that the Lord has set before them. The congregation in Malvern rejoices in the Lord's mercies in answering prayer and covets further prayer as it seeks to labor with Christ for the extension of His kingdom.

Update on Rev. Armen Thomassian

As we are going to print, Rev. Thomassian has arrived in Greenville, SC with his family to take up his ministry at Faith FPC, for which he had been waiting many months. Pray for the Thomassian family and for our brother's future ministry. In the next issue of *Current* we hope to report on his installation service at Faith FPC on January 4.

Prince George Church Calls Mr. Andrew Simpson

Mr. Simpson, who graduated from the Whitefield College of the Bible, Northern Ireland, and was licensed by the Ulster Presbytery in September, has accepted a call from Heritage FPC in Prince George, British Columbia. Mr. Simpson's ordination service took place on Dec. 1 in Magherafelt, FPC, his home church. He and his wife Naomi arrived in Canada on December 15.

Our FPCNA presbytery has scheduled a service for January 25 when Rev. Simpson will be installed as minister of Heritage FPC, Prince George.

Dr. Mark Allison Under Medical Care

As many of our readers are aware, Dr. Mark Allison, president of Geneva Reformed Seminary, has taken ill and has been hospitalized. Last August he was one of the preachers delegated to preach at the Free Presbyterian Congress held in Malvern, PA. Very soon thereafter he experienced some health problems and medical investigations led to a diagnosis of brain cancer. At the time of writing, Dr. Allison was receiving treatments at Duke University Hospital in North Carolina. He and his wife, Charlene, and their daughter, Hannah, have been encouraged by the visits of many of his colleagues, church friends, and all who have prayed and shown their loving concern in so many ways. They also give the Lord praise for His sustaining grace.



25th Anniversary in Port Hope

Rev. William McCrea, minister emeritus, Magherafelt FPC, Northern Ireland was the guest preacher for a week of meetings in Port Hope FPC from October 21 – 26. Attendance was strong with support from Toronto and Barrie congregations each evening. A dinner was held on the following Saturday evening to mark the church's 25th anniversary under the Free Presbyterian Church with Rev. Cranston as its minister. Rev. Cranston and his wife Doreen and family members along with the congregation are to be commended for their faithful witness for Christ. They, in turn, give thanks to the Lord for His faithfulness and abounding goodness to the church over the past twenty-five years.



Onesimus

The Slave Who Finally Lived up to His Name



In Bible times, many rich people owned slaves, and everyone recognized them because one of their ears was pierced to show they belonged to a master. The little book called Philemon near the end of the New Testament tells us about Philemon, a wealthy man from Colosse, who owned a slave named Onesimus.

The book of Philemon is actually a letter written by the Apostle Paul to this rich man. Philemon had come to know Jesus through Paul's ministry, and through history we learn that he was a good master. Onesimus, however, was not a loyal servant and had acted dishonestly towards Philemon. Even though Onesimus' name means "useful" or "helpful", the Bible tells us he was a useless servant who ran away from his master. Onesimus ended up in Rome, over 1200 miles away from Colosse. He must have done something very wrong against Philemon to run so far away from him! There were no cars, buses, airplanes, or trains in those days, so can you imagine how long it took Onesimus to get to Rome? While he was there, he became friends with the Apostle Paul who was imprisoned by the Roman government. Onesimus soon came to know Christ through Paul's ministry and became a great help and encouragement to him.

Onesimus must have shared with Paul what he did to Philemon, which caused Paul to write this letter to Philemon. Paul wanted Philemon to know that his runaway slave, who had once been an unfaithful servant, was now a changed man.

Paul loved Onesimus so much that he called him a "brother" and he begged Philemon to take him back and to treat him as a family member rather than a slave. Paul even offered to pay back anything Onesimus might have stolen from Philemon. Onesimus had traveled far to escape the master he had wronged, yet Paul was encouraging him to go back to that master. I'm sure he wondered how Philemon would treat him when he returned. Would he be punished?

The Bible doesn't record the end of the story, but we do know that Paul was confident Philemon would receive Onesimus lovingly and would forgive him of any wrongdoing. How relieved Onesimus must have been as he traveled back home, knowing he would be welcomed as family by the man he had dishonored!

How often are we like Onesimus? We sin against God, our loving Master, and we

turn away from him at times as Onesimus did to Philemon. Yet, God is patient, loving, and ready to forgive us when we turn from our sin back to Him. In this letter to Philemon, the apostle Paul asked that if Onesimus owed Philemon anything, that he was to "put that on [his] account," which meant that Paul would pay Philemon for any debt owed by Onesimus.

This is a beautiful picture of what Jesus does for us in salvation. The Lord paid our debts to God when He died on the cross for us. He took our sin on Himself, and He will wash us clean so that we no longer have to pay the price for our sin. What a wonderful lesson we learn from Onesimus the slave who returned back to his master as a beloved family member, no longer in bondage to sin but forgiven and made righteous. ✎



Rachel Huffman
(nee Hamilton) is a member of Greenville FPC. We congratulate Rachel and her husband Chase upon their marriage on October 26, 2018.

A WORD WORTH KNOWING

Loyal

A loyal person will keep his or her promise to honor and obey



Fall 2018

★ **Eunice Ferolino**
Cloverdale FPC (Cloverdale, B.C.)

★ **Ethan Munger**
Grace FPC (Winston-Salem, N.C.)

★ **Cherrissa Nymann**
FPC of Indianapolis (Indianapolis, Ind.)

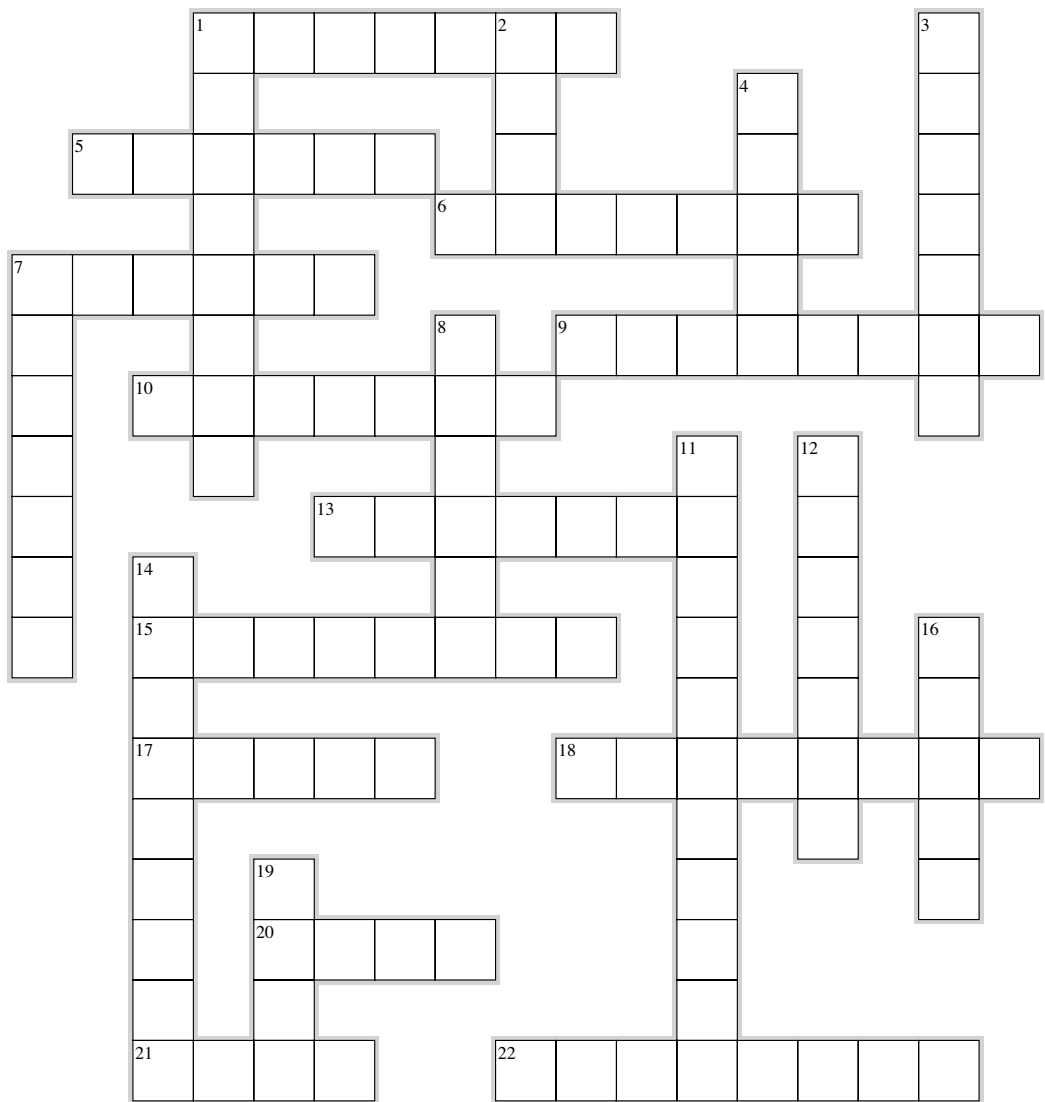
Kids' Crossword Puzzle



All answers are found in Philemon (KJV)

Across

1. Paul believes he will visit Rome because of this
5. Believers in Christ
6. Original relationship of Onesimus to Philemon
7. Old word for "hearts"
9. Paul's description of himself
10. Paul asks Philemon to prepare this for him
13. New relationship of Onesimus to Philemon
15. Kept, held onto
17. Church location
18. Fellow prisoner
20. Old man
21. Philemon owes this to Paul
22. Paul calls him his son



Down

1. Paul's "dearly beloved" fellow labourer
2. The book of Philemon was written there
3. Hurt or damaged
4. Chains
7. Appeal, ask with urgency
8. To command
11. Fellow labourer
12. Helped write the letter to Philemon
14. Fellow soldier
16. Undeserved blessing
19. Offers to pay Onesimus's debt

PLEASE NOTE: Please send your completed puzzle to Current Kids' Corner, C/o Judy Brown, 651 Ponden Dr., Greer, SC 29650, or by email to ljsbrown2@gmail.com by Feb. 28, 2019. Include your name, address, age, and the name of the church you attend. Five winners will be drawn from all correct submissions received. The contest is open to young people ages 5–12. Winners will receive a \$10 cash prize.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 15-20

Mexico FPC Youth Camp

APRIL 21

Easter Sunday

MAY 13-17

Presbytery Week of Prayer Hosted by Toronto FPC

God Moves in a Mysterious Way

I heard hymns for the first time at the age of eleven. Up until then, I didn't have any spiritual influences in my life. My parents were unbelievers and never went to church. Then God graciously saved my mother, and she began to take my brother and me to church as often as she could. I found this newfound zeal to take us to church odd and a bit annoying. Looking back now I am very grateful for my mom's persistence. God blessed her faithfulness in getting me under the preaching of the gospel and graciously saved me when I was thirteen. The songs and hymns we sang at church took on a completely new meaning! I remember the words speaking very distinctly to my soul, but many of the truths they taught were not yet real to me. I was astounded that so many hymn writers spoke of hardship, grief, and sorrow. At that stage of my life such things were pretty foreign to me.

But as we all learn as the years pass, life is full of troubles. We wouldn't classify them all as "hardship, grief, and sorrow," of course. But even when everyday cares wear us down, our souls are grateful for the encouragement found in a favorite hymn. And when truly difficult things rock our lives, we appreciate more than ever the hymns that were written by those who knew what it was to suffer.

I love many hymns, but one that continues to speak deeply to me, especially in the last several years, is "God Moves in a Mysterious Way." Written by William Cowper, an Englishman who wrestled with life-long depression, it

paints a beautiful picture of the faith that sustained him.

The first two stanzas speak especially of God's sovereignty:

God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill
He treasures up His bright designs,
And works His sov'reign will.

I cannot know all the "whys" of the events in my life, even though my flesh wants to. What I do know is that our God is King over all, working His perfect, sovereign will with impeccable and beautiful design. The hymn continues:

Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

Judge not the Lord by feeble sense
But trust Him for His grace;
Behind a frowning providence
He hides a smiling face.

When I am fearful because I don't have control or because I'm dreading the future, the hymn advises me to meditate on the truth that my loving Father delights to show mercy and to surprise His people with overwhelming grace and

blessings. When the way ahead is dark and I am tempted to let my thoughts run away with me, the hymn reminds me to trust the Lord.

His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain.

Instead of believing *my* plans are better than the Lord's, I find joy and peace in submitting to my God, whose plan is perfect. Like Cowper, I have a precious, good, and wise Father who bears up with my lack of faith and my questioning spirit and who graciously shows me over and over that He can be trusted.

I am so grateful that God's mysterious ways are always good ways! Though I have certainly tasted the bitterness of the trials He sends my way, I now know—more than I ever have before—the sweetness of His grace. ☞



Mrs. Kim Wagner
is the wife of Rev. John
Wagner, minister of Covenant
FPC, Columbia, SC.