

Congregational Concern



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Contents:

News in Brief	1
In Fellowship	2
Stan Guest & Gordon Booth	4
David Livingstone (3)	13
Pause for thought	16
Pre-evangelism (3)	18
Bookshelf	22
Beale's Blog	24
WECF Conference	25

Cover illustration:

St Briavels, Gloucestershire:

at the induction of Matthew Rees.

Left to right: David Jackson, Cyril

Aston, Bill Dyer, Matthew Rees and

Gwynne Evans

From the Editor

Little did I know, when putting fingers to keyboard to write my first piece as Editor, in which I mentioned my predecessors Peter Beale and Stan Guest, that Stan, along with Gordon Booth, two of the pioneers of EFCC, would have received a call home before the next issue.

I am old enough and privileged enough to remember both of them in ministry when they visited Pontefract. Stan, as General Secretary, in the early years of EFCC, had the task of convincing sceptical Yorkshire folk to throw in their lot with a fellowship of churches where the majority were set in rural idylls to the south and east of a line from the Bristol Channel to the River Humber.

Stan's success was confirmed by a visit that Gordon made at the church anniversary weekend in the Autumn of 1978, which became an impromptu evangelistic mission, the first in a bi-annual (Spring and Autumn) series, which, in turn, resulted in many people of all ages and backgrounds coming to saving faith in Jesus Christ.

I can remember Gordon in his shorts (and probably sandals) on that Saturday morning, as Mike Plant recounts in his "*In Fellowship*" letter. He may not have known the risks he was taking in such a gritty mining community on market day: perhaps he didn't care!

What Gordon did care about was preaching the gospel, which was heard and received gladly by many over the years. There is no doubt that these patriarchs of EFCC have left a lasting legacy in the churches for future generations.

Robert Neilson

News in Brief

Called home

Rev. Gordon Booth, M.M. (1922–2013)

Rev. (Edward) Stanley Guest (1921–2013)

This issue contains obituaries and feature articles *in memoriam*.

Comings and goings

The summer saw three men Inducted to Churches in the South West:–

Rev. David Legg at Lee Mill Congregational Church, Devon and

Rev. Ian Cameron at Galampton Congregational Church, Devon were inducted as Pastors in August.

Rev. Matt Rees was inducted as Pastor of St Briavels Congregational Church in Gloucestershire, in the first week in September.

All the Services were well attended and EFCC was represented by Mike Plant and other EFCC Committee Members.



Please pray for these three men and their families as they settle into very challenging and potentially exciting situations. Pray also for the three Churches as they are all small congregations and in great faith have called these brothers as their Pastors.

Rev. Bill Dyer, EFCC's Training Officer, was asked by Matt Rees to preach at his Induction Service. Bill mentored Matt over the period of his training for the ministry.

Rev. Iain Clements was inducted into the pastorate at Latimer Memorial Congregational Church, Beverley, East Yorkshire, on 12 October 2013. About 140 people attended including some from his sending church, Ealing International Presbyterian Church where he was Associate Minister. His former Minister and colleague, Rev. Paul Levy, was the preacher.

In Fellowship

from the General Secretary's perspective



Gordon Booth and Stan Guest

Dear Friends,

Saying Farewell to Respected Friends

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day. Up to this year we have been privileged to have those I regard as the three key players in the formation of EFCC still with us. Stan Guest, Gordon Booth and Brian Dupont have been blessed with long and active lives and it has been a shock to lose both Gordon and then Stan in a short space of time. I first came across EFCC face to face when I attended an EFCC AGM at Westminster Chapel in the late 70s. I think the programme referred to Edward Guest and for some time to follow I believed that there were two brothers – Edward and Stanley Guest. Strangely, I think I fell in love with EFCC that day – Stan was always warm and loving and Gordon interviewed Albert Johnson on evangelism – say no more! Now they are no longer with us.

Appreciating their contribution to the Fellowship

I got to know these brothers better as time went on and when I came on to the committee during the 1980s. Stan was tireless in his work for EFCC; it is a matter of wonder, and a matter for genuine gratitude to his family, that he was able to devote his time and considerable abilities to unravelling a complex financial and legal inheritance from the Congregational Union and establishing EFCC both doctrinally and organisationally. Many things I have valued greatly over the years – **Concern**, the Ministers' Prayer Conference and a loving and welcoming ethos – stem from those days. Gordon was a great encourager and something of a strategist. I think he saw more clearly than many the need to establish EFCC as not only evangelical but also as being recognisably Congregational. He wrote *Evangelical and Congregational*, although I gather from Brian Dupont that Stan exercised considerable editorial influence. In E & C we reprinted the *Savoy Declaration of 1658*. Evangelical Congregationalists were not those who deviated from the original pattern – those who led the majority of the Congregational Church (formerly Union) into the United Reformed Church were the deviants.

Appreciating their contribution to individuals and churches

Since Stan's death I have received a number of e-mails and have had numerous conversations in which Stan's timely support in a time of need has been referred to. Many ministers consulted with Stan and many responded to his gentle guidance and pulled away from committing themselves to the URC. I think some churches were helped to take a stand which has meant that as the years have gone by their evangelical stance has become clearer and stronger. Gordon was a man of great zeal and preached at the first mission at Pontefract which set a much blessed pattern of evangelism which has persisted for many years. He also gained the attention of the locals by jogging round the area in his shorts! Gordon encouraged people not just to serve their local churches but also to serve the wider group. He encouraged people both to serve on the committee and then to take up responsibility within it. I know from personal experience that he could be extremely persuasive.

The Judgment of Time

I think that one of the things I become most conscious of in my own life is that times change. I am 62, young at heart I am assured, but relentlessly I am told that younger Christians and younger Ministers no longer share my assumptions and attitudes. I am sure this is so, but partly what brings this about is simply that times change and issues confronting us also change. We make decisions in good conscience before God during the time in which we serve him and that is all that we can do. I am sure that gifted with foresight both Stan and Gordon would have done some things differently but they were men of their own time and served God appropriately for that time. We ourselves face the judgments of those who follow us but all we can do is live by faith seeking to be obedient to God and to seek his glory now. We may be relieved long term that we were not wrong more often!

The Judgment of Eternity

One reason why we shouldn't be fixated about the judgment of time is that we can't anticipate what it will be. The other, more important reason, is that it really doesn't matter compared to the judgment of God in and for eternity. A point which Gwynne Evans made, giving an appreciation of Stan from EFCC at his funeral, was that Stan was gospel driven and motivated. At heart, whether he was duplicating copies of **Concern** by hand or visiting churches or sorting out funds, he was serving the churches to enable and encourage their gospel witness. Gordon too was sold out for the gospel and prepared to labour long and hard for it. Nor were their efforts simply focused on the UK. Stan was instrumental, with much help

from David Saunders, in bringing together the people who made up the World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship and much good has been done through this. Gordon visited Eastern Europe and encouraged a whole generation at Oldbury, and David and Joyce Saunders were part of that generation, to have a worldwide gospel vision. Only what is done for eternity will last and both Stan and Gordon served for eternity.

Following in their footsteps by God's grace.

Mike Plant

Evangelical and Congregational

Brian Dupont,

the third of the "three key players" mentioned by Mike Plant, above, reflects on the contributions made by Stan Guest and Gordon Booth, along with him and others, in the formation of the Congregational Evangelical Revival Fellowship, which eventually led to formation of EFCC.

STOP PRESS

Brian Dupont has fallen and broken his hip. He is hospital following an operation to fix it and is making good progress. He is grateful for prayers from the Fellowship.

Stan Guest served in the RAF and Gordon Booth served in the Army during WW2, Gordon winning the Military Medal. Both of them trained for the ministry at New College after "demob", which is where I met them in 1948, and they were active members of the Congregational Evangelical Revival Fellowship (CERF), a personal membership organisation founded by two Congregational ministers, Harland Brine and Gilbert Kirby in 1947, which I also joined.

CERF was open to all members of Congregational Churches who wanted to make a stand and witness for evangelical truth, and the need for Holy Spirit revival in the churches that were affiliated to the Congregational Union of England and Wales (CUEW), which was becoming increasingly liberal in its leadership and in its statements on faith and polity.

They were involved in the "Evangelical Union" at College, Stan serving as Prayer Secretary and then President, and then pursued evangelical ministries from their first appointments onwards. Stan moved to Sawbridgeworth but also took on the voluntary role of General Secretary of CERF, and both were involved in the development of CERF through regional and national conferences throughout its early years.

However, 1958 saw a further swerve towards liberalism in the CUEW when it adopted a new constitution that diluted the importance of Scriptural principles. When in 1961 'Covenant and Oversight' proposals were published which included establishing the 'Congregational **Church**

in England and Wales', to replace the **Union**, Stan and Gordon, together with David Marshall, fearful that this was a threat to the independence of local churches by a non-biblical centralist organisation, wrote to all the ministers who were members of the CERF and asked them to sign an Appeal to the Churches. Twenty seven ministers responded and the Appeal was sent out, calling on Congregational Churches to stand firm on Scriptural principles.

This set in train a series of events which led to the formation in 1967 of EFCC as an umbrella organisation for local churches who wished to assert their independence, under God, as congregational churches *that wished to maintain historic evangelical doctrines and ministries*. Stan was the obvious choice to be EFCC's first General Secretary.

Opposition to the idea of a national Congregational Church was not confined to evangelicals. The Congregational Association was formed in 1965 and published its manifesto in 1967 which, in essence, asserted the right of local churches to be independent of any superior body, for those in them to do and believe whatever they wanted, and for preachers to preach whatever they wanted.

The one thing the Association had in common with EFCC was the necessity of maintaining the independence of the local church, and this proved invaluable when the Congregational Church in England and Wales and the English Presbyterian Church promoted the United Reformed Church Bill in 1972. Lady Stansgate, widow of the first Viscount Stansgate, had switched her allegiance from Anglicanism to Congregationalism, which had been her husband's affiliation. He had been a Liberal politician in the Commons and a Labour Peer and Minister in the House of Lords. Lady Stansgate was a prominent supporter of the Association and later became the first President of the Congregational Federation when the URC came into being. Her son, who had succeeded his father as Lord Stansgate, had renounced the peerage as soon as he could do so, to return to the House of Commons as an MP. So, Tony Wedgewood-Benn became his mother's and Congregationalism's MP advocate in the House of Commons during the passage of the United Reformed Church Bill on the key issue of allowing Congregational Churches to opt out of the URC and remain independent.

During this period Stan, Gordon and others were lobbying and briefing, obtaining legal advice, and listening to debates, to get the best terms possible for Congregational Churches. When the Bill became the United Reformed Church Act 1972, Congregational Ministers and individual Congregational Churches could elect to remain Congregational and not become part of the URC. Stan and Gordon were amongst those on the EFCC Committee who sought to convince ministers and churches not to join the URC and, if evangelical, to join EFCC rather than the Federation.



Rev. Edward Stanley Guest

1921–2013

by Gwynne Evans and Brian Dupont

based on earlier material from Brian Dupont and others, and on material previously published by EFCC

Edward Stanley Guest, universally known as Stan, was born in 1921 in Edmonton, Middlesex. After leaving school he began training as an accountant, but war service intervened and he joined the RAF. After WW2 had ended, he enrolled at New College, named then the Congregational Divinity School in London University, where Gordon Booth was a fellow student. Two years later, in 1948, Brian Dupont also enrolled and joined them in the Evangelical Union of the College.

Stan's happy, prayerful, godly testimony was a witness for Bible truth. He served as Prayer Secretary and then President of the Evangelical Union, guiding and encouraging fellow Bible believing students during the sometimes 'rough' opposition received from those of a theologically liberal persuasion.

Stan married Hazel Warlow in 1950, and was ordained to the ministry and inducted to the pastorate at Southchurch Park Congregational Church. His subsequent move to Sawbridgeworth saw the beginning of a period of spiritual growth and enlargement of witness in the Church there. His gifts as a preacher, teacher, caring pastor, able administrator and an effective writer and editor came to be increasingly recognised.

He was called to the voluntary role of General Secretary of the Congregational Evangelical Revival Fellowship, which he had joined along with fellow students when training for the ministry and, together with Gordon Booth and David Marshall he took a bold stand in setting out what became known as the *Statement of the 27* (after the 27 Congregational ministers who first subscribed to it) and by some as the *Sawbridgeworth Manifesto* (after Stan's then place of ministry). This set out briefly the Biblical and historical reasons for not supporting the plan for churches in Congregational Union in England and Wales to covenant to form the Congregational Church in England and Wales, a body which, in its shift towards central administration, was a forerunner of the United Reformed Church. He was opposed by those who supported the changes being contemplated. A few of us can still remember with a sense

of grief the occasion when, in the Congregational Union Assembly in Westminster Chapel, Stan presented a gentle and clearly reasoned case which warned of the then current ecumenical trends. He was hissed for his pains.

When legal advice suggested that a body was needed to which evangelical congregational churches could affiliate (as distinct from the purely personal membership of CERF), Stan was the clear choice to head up 'an Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches', which was formed in 1967.

He experienced personal tragedy in the early death of his dear wife Hazel, in 1969, leaving him a widower and their three teenage children, Peter, Janet and Mary, bereft of a mother. He still continued to show much filial affection for his ageing widowed mother (who lived to be over 100) and his partially disabled brother.

Stan sensed the clear call of God to the pastorate at Braughing Congregational Church. His labours with EFCC grew apace, and he was appointed as General Secretary in a paid capacity – it being recognized that he would continue to serve the Braughing Church.

He played a key role in the foundational times of waiting upon the Lord, seeking His guidance during the crucial early days of the Fellowship. The Statements of Faith and Polity and the establishment of **Concern** were two major initiatives he led. Stan's editorship of **Concern** and his choice of articles over the years have been of continual help to us all. Other major written contributions to the well-being of the Churches have included his editing of *Evangelical and Congregational* and his work on *Calling a Minister*.

With the formation of the United Reformed Church, many consultations covering legal and financial matters were required with the professional advisers of the Fellowship. Our original Vice Presidents, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones and the Rev. Gilbert Kirby, were amongst those whose insights were made available to us through Stan. His second marriage, to Doris Todd in 1970, an experienced teacher and senior Guide officer, was a source of great support to him over the years. She frequently accompanied him on his travels as well as splendidly overseeing catering arrangements for many EFCC functions.

When the uncertainty regarding the future of the Congregational Memorial Hall Trust led to the matter being referred to the High Court, Stan was asked to prepare a written submission on behalf of Evangelical Congregationalists. This he did with such historical and theological skill that it won the grudging admiration of the counsel for the other side. The fact that EFCC participated in the management and benefits of the Trust owes much to Stan's faithful witness on that occasion.

Stan had the gift of keeping comprehensive files, of knowing what was

in them and being able to find what he wanted! Repeatedly his skill amazed us. He could produce from apparent chaos just the quotation required from something said or written twenty years before. Some of his papers have found their way to the EFCC office but, without his mental index, they are relatively inaccessible until time can be found to go through and index them.

Keeping in touch with ministers, church secretaries and many others also involved him in endless telephone calls and the writing of numerous letters. All this was in addition to the continual preparation of agendas, minutes, memos and detailed background notes for members of various Committees. He also faithfully and ably represented EFCC on the British Evangelical Council and in many other important contexts. On several occasions he made most useful contributions to the discussions of the Westminster Fellowship – the Ministers’ Fraternal which was chaired for so many years by Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones.

His consultations, like his preaching and teaching ministry up and down the land, have been a channel of the Word of the Lord coming to so many – in instruction, challenge and encouragement – as he has opened and applied the Scriptures. In his own humble, gracious personality, as well as by his labours, he has been a means of strengthening both individuals and the member Churches within this Fellowship in our sense of common purpose, in our Biblical heritage and our shared Gospel calling in these days.

Evangelical Congregational witness has been much more in evidence in Hertfordshire and Essex than in many other parts of the country. There may be some historic factors in this, because of where the original seeds of nonconformity fell. But in the twentieth century, in large measure, Stan’s life-long ministry in Churches in these Counties has been a significant factor.

Finally, we should consider Stan’s international ministry. After the URC had been formed in 1972, the Congregational Federation in particular was keen to maintain the identity of Congregationalism as an international force and arranged an International Congregationalism conference at Chiselhurst in 1975. Stan attended as an observer and it is clear from his report to the EFCC Committee that he was not impressed.

Gracious as always, he expressed his concern, shared by others at the conference, “at the emphasis placed on Congregationalism rather than getting on with mission” He continued, “The emphasis must be on the Gospel. Our emphasis (EFCC) is evangelical first: the ‘Evangel’ is the Gospel; ‘Evangelistic’ is offering the Gospel; ‘Evangelical’ is holding to the Gospel.”

So, from then on, Stan’s international focus was not on International

Congregationalism, but on fellowship amongst Evangelicals in Congregational churches throughout the world. His were the human hands that God used, the vision, persistence and stamina that our Lord gave him, that led to the inaugural meetings of the World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship, which were held at Pilgrim Hall, Uckfield, in October 1986. His organisational skills prepared the ground in all the practical ways for a most inspiring and valuable time of prayer and fellowship. Representatives of Evangelical Congregational Churches gathered from many countries. During the proceedings Stan was appointed Treasurer of the new Fellowship, and he and Doris were to be amongst our delegates to the second, enlarged, gathering which was held in Brazil in 1989 and the third Conference, held in Australia in 1992, when he relinquished the Treasurership.

He enjoyed a retirement that was relatively long, given the age at which he retired, but maintained an active interest in the Fellowship from his retirement chair. In particular he contributed a regular column, *From the Guest House*, to *Concern*, missing, because of ill health, only the last one (in Spring 2013) to which he was due to contribute, before his column as the immediate past editor was taken over by Peter Beale.

He is survived by his second wife Doris, and by his daughter Janet from his marriage to Hazel, Mary and Peter having predeceased him.

In those days, as since, his spiritual depth, Biblical knowledge and early professional training came together to serve the whole Fellowship.

Uppermost always was the glory and honour of the Lord and the well-being of the Churches, but the daily demands included much meticulous attention to detail in Trust Deed and financial matters. When our Solicitor opined that the former Congregational Union and County Funds would take ten years to sort out, we thought he was exaggerating, but in fact it proved to be an under-estimate. Stan battled with these over all his years as General Secretary, with much success, but there were still some to finalise when he retired and the present Trust Board are still engaged in a process of simplification and rationalisation.

Editor's Comment

As EFCC's name proclaims, we are 'Evangelical': we hold to the Gospel. But how good are we, today, as individuals and as churches, in being 'Evangelistic': in offering the Gospel – proclaiming it clearly and unambiguously in our pulpits, and witnessing daily of God's Saving Grace with our words and by our lives. Do we have Stan's heart for the Gospel?

Rev. Gordon Thomas Booth

1922–2013

by Digby James



Gordon was born in Teddington and grew up in south London. He attended Ramsden Road Congregational Church, Balham. He said that the minister was not a believer, but it was from him that Gordon learned how to preach. He attended Upper Tooting Crusaders, and it was in one of their meetings, in Trinity Road Chapel, Tooting, that Gordon was converted.

The Second World War delayed all thoughts of training for the ministry. He joined the Royal Signals and saw action in North Africa and Italy. It was in the latter place that he was awarded the Military Medal for keeping his cool under fire and maintaining communications with headquarters. Gordon always played this down. When asked, “How did you get your medal?” his reply would be “It came with the rations”, or, “It had something to do with a donkey.” His parents moved to North Wales because of the Blitz, he there met Gertrude Banks, whose government department had also moved there. They married at Westminster Chapel in 1948.

Gordon trained for the ministry at New College, London along with Brian Dupont and Stan Guest (though they were not in the same year). Brian remarked that it was Gordon that kept them on the theological straight and narrow. During his time there Gordon was president of LIFCU (London Inter-Faculty Christian Union). Gordon was blunt with people, sometimes too blunt. Geoffrey Nuttall said of him (50 years later) “Gordon Booth: *He didn’t like me*”!

On graduation Gordon was called to the ministry of Oldbury Congregational Church in 1951. He made it a condition of the call that the church stopped supporting the London Missionary Society, which had ceased to be evangelical. Gordon was very enthusiastic for evangelism, taking Lionel Fletcher, the Australian evangelist, as his pattern. While in Oldbury Gordon saw many people converted and get involved in evangelism. He lectured at the Birmingham Bible Institute and then at the Midlands Bible Training College.

In 1971 he was called to Pall Mall Congregational Church, Leigh-on-Sea where he remained till his retirement in 1986. He retired to Gobowen, wanting to be near the sea, near the mountains, near a hospital, near the children and near a Congregational Church that he could help. Two out of five wasn’t bad! Gertrude died in 1993, shortly after a collection of 54 of

Gordon's hymns were published as a Christmas present for Gertrude. Gordon was concerned about good hymns: they had to be theologically sound, be poetic, and be sung to suitable music. Modern "worship" songs he dismissed as ditties. Being mean (his own description of himself) he thought it cheaper to have his own details added to Gertrude's gravestone. He would often preach at local churches, sometimes walking up to ten miles in both directions after he stopped driving. He preached his last sermon in 2000 at Quinta, because he had a series of mini-strokes. His hearing also deteriorated and his last few years he found frustrating, not being able to hear much of what was spoken or preached.

In his latter years his health deteriorated and he moved into a nursing home in Oswestry where he died. The funeral on 6 August was a joyous affair. Gordon had it all planned out, with the instruction there would be no eulogy. "Don't worry Gordon, no one would give you a eulogy. We'll tell the truth!" According to his instructions, the gospel was preached. He was buried with Gertrude, and the passage from Pilgrim's Progress about Christian crossing the river and entering the heavenly city was read, as it had been at Gertrude's funeral.

Gordon was one of those people that things "happen to", such as cycling into the local canal; being overtaken by one of the wheels of his car; his Bible smelling of Italian cheese and eau de cologne; his driving skills ("I did not learn to drive on a tank; I learned to drive on a Jeep").

A remarkable man, we miss him greatly. What would the churches he was a member of have been like without him? What would the history of EFCC have been without him?

Independent and Evangelistic

Bill Dyer,

gives an appreciation of the work of Stan Guest and Gordon Booth with Pontefract during the 1970s: Stan Guest for persuading Bill, as a Congregational Minister, and the Pontefract members to throw in their lot with EFCC when the URC came into being, and Gordon for setting the Church on the path to active evangelism in the local community.

The Congregational Church in Pontefract owes an incalculable debt to Stan Guest and Gordon Booth. In each case their visits proved to be crucial turning points for the church.

I began ministry at Pontefract in 1968. In 1971/72 churches were faced with a critical choice, either continue as Congregational or abandon our heritage and join the United Reformed Church. Denominational leaders, who were militantly Liberal in theology, were putting serious pressure on

the churches to join the URC. Pontefract also had been theologically Liberal but now with an Evangelical ministry, was in transition from Liberal to Evangelical. I was desperately anxious that we continue as Congregationalists and also complete the transition and become a clear Bible-believing church. But would the members follow my lead; particularly those who were resisting the new Evangelical direction of the church and were hearing that nearly all the other churches in our area were likely to join the URC? I was still a young inexperienced minister and a lone Evangelical voice in this part of Yorkshire. Although by now, through the preaching of the Gospel, the church had come alive and was growing, I had no confidence that sufficient of our members would follow my lead and vote to continue as Congregational. I therefore invited Stan Guest to talk with our members. I had admired his courageous stand at the annual May Meetings in Westminster Chapel when year after year he was publically resented and “hissed” for upholding historic statements of faith which declared the entire Bible to be the Word of God.

At our Church meeting he not only endorsed my warnings about the Liberal stance of the URC but also gave great reassurance that EFCC would provide credible fellowship for Bible-believing congregations. Our members saw in Stan a spiritual man with maturity and stature, and a caring winsome manner, and the majority, including some who were not yet convinced Evangelicals, felt they could trust his counsel. Remarkably, all but four voted to continue as Congregationalists.

During the years 1968–1978 most of the church’s evangelism took place through the regular church activities, and particularly the Sunday evening Gospel Services, with about 80 people professing conversion and 70 being baptised over that period. With the Lord abundantly blessing Gospel preaching, the church was eager to provide more occasions when the Gospel was preached and to be much bolder in inviting the people of our community to attend.

The visit of Gordon Booth in the autumn of 1978 to preach at our Church Anniversary weekend was the catalyst which brought this about, and launched the church into 30 years of evangelistic missions. Because of Gordon’s enthusiasm for, and experience of, special seasons of concentrated prayer and evangelistic preaching, the church decided to extend the weekend so that Gordon could preach each day from Thursday to Sunday. Gordon’s passion for evangelism was inspirational, and he prayed, witnessed and preached with confidence in God expecting that people would be saved and six people did profess faith that weekend; all were subsequently baptised. He underlined for us the essential link between fervent persistent prayer and fruitful Gospel preaching. Gordon’s enthusiasm for prayer and evangelism was infectious and faith-building – his faith and expectation was almost tangible.

continued on page 24

David Livingstone

(1813–1873) (Part 3)

by Gordon Cooke



David Livingstone Memorial
at
Victoria Falls

Articles in the last two issues of Concern have traced the early influences on the life of David Livingstone, one of Congregationalism's finest figures, born two hundred years ago this year, and have seen how his life was spent evangelizing and exploring in Africa. This final article attempts to assess his life and draw lessons for us two centuries later.

It is always difficult to assess the life of an historical figure writing decades or even centuries later, and that must be true of a complex character like David Livingstone. We have already commented on the criticism that he faced for concentrating on exploration rather than evangelism, and on the frequent inter-personal problems that he had with those with whom he worked. How can we evaluate this, and what more needs to be said?

We are all products of our own age, and life is very different in the United Kingdom at the end of the second Elizabethan age, compared to how it was at the beginning of the Victorian era. Despite the political uncertainties, Africa today is a largely open continent. Television, jet travel, foreign holidays and the computer age mean that we can know as much about it as we do about other parts of Europe or even of the United Kingdom. The people of Livingstone's day knew less about Africa than we do about Mars. Those who criticise Livingstone for being more of an explorer than a missionary need to remember this!

The evils of the slave trade, too, were much more open in the nineteenth century than they are today, and Livingstone's conviction that Western civilization and commerce, along with the Gospel, would eradicate this wickedness was an understandable one. Some might even say that subsequent events have proved him right.

That Livingstone was a difficult person to live and work with seems undeniable. It is hard to think that he would have achieved so much as an explorer, and endured so much personal tragedy if he had not been such a determined and independently minded man. One man's determination is another man's stubbornness, however, and perhaps we would have to admit that his behaviour was sometimes unhelpful in many ways.

Looking at his personality through modern eyes, however, more than one modern medically minded Christian has noted in his life and diaries a pattern of alternating highs and lows that were often not to be explained by circumstances. At least one expert has concluded that Livingstone probably suffered from what we would now call manic depressive disorder, a condition that also appeared to be present in his brother and two sisters. Perhaps that was the case, but even if not, we are reminded again of the truth that we see so often in the Scripture; God uses deeply flawed individuals to do His work!

That Livingstone was a thoroughly converted man cannot be doubted. The depth of his conversion experience and of his subsequent dedication to Christ is well attested. He never lost sight of the greatness of the Gospel, nor lost his burden to take the good news to the lost. He had great stamina as a missionary, spurred on by his biblical belief that God was going, in time, to call men and women to Himself from every nation in the world. He also saw that though he might be called to be a pioneer who would begin the work in Africa, later generations would be wonderfully transformed by the message he carried. His own words are interesting, as we compare the one African conversion that could be attributed to Livingstone's work with the many hundreds of thousands converted in Africa during the twentieth century;

“... when we view the state of the world and its advancing energies ... we see the earth filling with the knowledge of the glory of God, – ay, all nations seeing His glory and bowing before Him whose right it is to reign. Our work and its fruits are cumulative. We work towards another state of things. Future missionaries will be rewarded by conversions for every sermon. We are their pioneers and helpers. Let them not forget the watchmen of the night – us, who worked when all was gloom, and no evidence of success in the way of conversion cheered our path.”

Not only has Livingstone been proved correct abundantly, but his faith serves as an example to all who serve God in barren days, us included.

What was the secret of such dogged perseverance and commitment? The answer shines clearly from his own diaries and writings and from the testimony of those who knew him and worked with him. He had a great desire for God, a personal humility about his own gifts, and a longing for Jesus Christ to be proclaimed and glorified in the lives of men and women. He was never satisfied with his level of experience of Christ or of personal sanctification, but always wanted to know more of Him. Are you like that?

The Africans amongst whom he worked give the most eloquent of testimonies to his love for them. They would have been sensitive to any patronising, superior or racist attitude towards them, but they recognised in Livingstone a man who genuinely loved them and desired their welfare. How else can you explain the fact that two of his African associates were willing to carry his body those 1,500 miles on the journey back to eventual burial in Westminster Abbey?

Gordon Cooke is pastor of New Inn Congregational Church, Pontypool, and a member of the EFCC Missionary Advisory Committee

A most helpful summary of Livingstone's life and personality can be found in. "Eternal Light, Adoption and Livingstone", available from EFCC (£2.50 + £1.25 p&p). This book records the three papers given at the Congregational Studies Conference in 1998, and the third paper, by Dr Arthur Fraser, deals with David Livingstone. It is thoroughly recommended if you want an introduction to this fine figure of Congregational history.



Pause for thought

by Andrew Leach

Reflections on my time as EFCC Chairman

Are you a “twitcher”? No, I don’t mean someone who becomes restless during a long sermon! I mean a person who studies wildlife through binoculars? For many years I have sat on the EFCC committee, at a distance, but recently was asked to put the binoculars down and come up closer and see the wildlife first hand. What did I see?

I would liken the EFCC to a Swan gliding along on some fairly choppy waters. With closer inspection I have seen how hard the office staff works. The calm exterior hides the paddling Swan’s feet. I also saw the immense work our General Secretary undertakes, like the head of the Swan, out at the front leading the way finding a path through choppy waters.



Over the past two years as a fellowship we have faced a number of waves and some dark clouds seem to suggest more to come, from within the fellowship and from the world at large.

The feathers of the EFCC Swan have become a little ruffled and at times dishevelled but I am happy to report an influx of new younger men being added to the plumage which I am sure will benefit the fellowship in the long term.

I was once one of the “young” men and was worried I was going to hold on to that title until retirement, I am 46 now, an age that is not considered “young” in most professions.

The role of Chairman was a great privilege. One in which, I learned so much more about the churches in the fellowship through being co-opted onto the Trust Board. The Board under Gwynne Evans’ leadership need our prayerful support as their workload increases and the wisdom to do the right thing at the right time intensifies. We ought to be very thankful to God that He has given us these men to assist us in using the fellowship’s

resources well. It was my privilege to represent EFCC at the WECF meetings in Lisbon, Portugal, and enjoy fellowship with brothers and sisters across the globe. It was humbling to hear how God is building his Church and using ordinary people to do so. We have developed some good links and we don't want to cut back and miss the opportunity to be a blessing to others.

The last two years has continued to highlight how these resources are being used up more quickly than we would like. The financial picture has never been clearer but for the Swan to keep swimming and make headway against ill-winds of sin in all its guises and to help struggling causes across the land we need to support our fellowship more.

I have recently re-taken my binoculars after a two year stint. It was at times nerve-racking speaking to and leading more accomplished contemporaries, a little wild and raucous, for example, at our last AGM but an eye-opening experience nonetheless to all that goes on to make our fellowship what it is and hopes to become.

It was noted that I was a few inches taller having passed on the baton to the new Chairman, Bill Calder. The weight of responsibility was over but the weight of concern continues. I hope you share that concern and will prayerfully give yourself to supporting the fellowship as we seek to swim like that Swan through the waters of our time.

Andrew Leach is Associate Minister at Rochford Congregational Church, Essex, and Immediate Past Chairman of the EFCC Committee.

Homes for Retired Ministers

The EFCC Trust Board has a small number of properties for the benefit of retired ministers, which may become available from time to time. If a Minister within a few years of retirement is interested in occupying such a property, which would be let at a realistic rent with the minister responsible for claiming any needed rental support, he should write to the EFCC Office to advise what the accommodation needs are likely to be and where is the preferred geographical area. Owing to the limited number of properties in total, we cannot guarantee when or where a property will be available.

Pre-evangelism around the Fellowship

Submissions from the churches,
edited by Robert Neilson

Alderholt

The following pre-evangelism-style events, some first in a series, were advertised in a recent edition of Alderholt News.

“Who Let The Dads Out?” – hopefully the first of many. Dads, next Saturday is your chance to spend some fun time with your kids (and fellow Dads!). Join us in Presseys for a morning of tasty brunch followed by lots of activities to enjoy in the Sports Hall. Work up an appetite, practise your X Box skills and put this event on the calendar!

We are desperately in need of a couple of people to help cater for the event – please see Jon if you can give up just a couple of hours in the morning to make this event a real success.

Editor’s comment: Kids in church YP groups can bring non-church Dads to something non-threatening. Note the need for support with catering.

Community Groups (replacing Home Groups) are starting back this week! To find out more about the groups, which groups you’re in, or to sign up to be put in a group, see the table on your way out in the foyer. This term we will be doing an exciting series using the Christianity Explored course materials, which will be a great opportunity to grow as we think through the fundamentals of why we believe what we believe. Get involved, join a Community Group, we’d encourage anyone committed to the church here in Alderholt to be a part of one!

Editor’s comment: There is potential for these groups to be evangelistic in their localities, using Christianity Explored, as well as to feed the flock.

Jonathan Veira is coming again, with his sons, to bring us a Christmas Concert on November 23rd. Please keep the date. Tickets available now, please see a member of the events committee for details.

Editor’s comment: Cross-over singer with a Christian repertoire will appeal to contacts, even the general public outside the church, at this season.

Beverley

Holiday at Home

is organised by a number of churches for those in the 60+ age range, to give this age group a break from everyday routine – to do something different with others in a similar position – a bit like being on holiday, but at home. It is good fellowship for those in churches but also can be used as a means of reaching out to this age group in the community, including families and friends.

When it was first suggested that Latimer Memorial Church should run a Holiday at Home, a member of the church did an internet search and found several churches who had run such an event. When contacted they were all very enthusiastic about it even though it was a lot of hard work. They seemed to be quite large churches with a big congregation to call on but, nevertheless, we felt we could organise one.

Planning started in June 2011, the enthusiasm of the team for the event was evident and remained so during the whole of that planning year, growing to a peak with the event itself in June 2012. The talents used were mainly those of the team members and the choice of crafts mixed with a bit of entertainment proved very popular. But we didn't lose sight of the main reason for Holiday at Home, and the gospel was proclaimed. The excellent lunches that were served each day also showed care for the physical needs of the folk who came and were very much appreciated.

One of the crafts on offer was to knit a jumper for a Peruvian street child. By May 2013 we had sent 102 jumpers to Peru with ladies still knitting. The jumpers are all very bright colours, so Peru won't be a drab place!

Since June 2012 the team have organised a Holiday at Home reunion in September and this year a one day H-at-H just before Easter and a three-day H-at-H in June. Good contact has been made with a number of folk, many known to the fellowship, but more could be contacted. It is also a big benefit to those at Latimer aged 60+. A monthly "luncheon Club" to develop the work is at the stage of early-planning and consideration.

What is needed for a successful Holiday at Home programme?

- Prayer
- Commitment by the church
- Good and enthusiastic team
- Good contacts in the local community
- Opportunities to encourage
- Opportunities to reach out and make new contacts

Anthony Harrison, Deacon, Latimer Memorial Congregational Church

Pre-evangelism

does not necessarily have a clear-cut distinction from evangelism, and sometimes, as in the case of some of the examples given below from Cannon Park Congregational Church, Middlesborough, and Hayes Town Chapel, it becomes integrated with it.

Cannon Park, Middlesborough

A Family Fun Day (usually in July), has a bouncy castle, face painting etc., with a series of games, and includes a short address. We supply some food and drinks and it proves to be a great afternoon and draws people into the church from the community. Not many have joined the church as a result of this event but it does raise the profile of the church.

Carols in the Community where we organise a carol service in a neutral venue. We used to hold it in a local community centre and got a lot of folk coming along. Last year we moved to the primary school because the community centre was closed, but this did not prove as popular. The thinking behind it is to have an event in a 'non threatening' environment.

Men's breakfast events run every two months. They are not evangelistic as such, although we do choose a subject to talk about.

Ladies craft afternoons are held about three times a year, at present, and have been extremely successful in getting folk along to the church and establishing friendships.

Social Evenings are held occasionally in the church for example a Harvest Tea or a New Year's Party and friends and contacts are invited to join us on these occasions to get to know us more. We have a bring and share lunch on the second Sunday of each month and that too draws people in.

Befriending people is the basic aim. So we usually have someone to greet parents and carers when they drop off and collect their children from our youth work and on occasions I have strongly urged our membership to join a local club or gym where they can befriend and show that Christians are normal people too.

David Williams, Minister, Cannon Park Congregational Church

Hayes Town Chapel

The annual Harvest Supper is planned for Saturday 12th October with the Harvest Thanksgiving Services the next day. Usually we get up to a hundred 'outsiders' to this meal, made up of parents and families who are contacts through youth activities, toddler group, old people's meetings, neighbours and relatives.

During the evening between meal courses there is an evangelistic message from a visiting speaker (who also preaches on Sunday). This year we have Roger Carswell. On the tables there are usually good opportunities to engage in conversation. Of course a lot of work is involved in preparation, serving and clearing up.

In addition we leaflet about 3,000 homes to invite folk to the Sunday Harvest services. Similar invitations are made at Christmas and Easter.

A Songs of Praise Service for senior citizens is arranged every quarter. Different members introduce a traditional hymn with a testimony or explanation of the verses. This is well attended and is followed by serving them tea, sandwiches, cakes, which gives another good opportunity for conversations.

Street Outreach

We do have a retired London City Missioner who goes to the Town Centre each week to give out tracts and speak to any who will listen, some speak to him regularly, especially some Muslims.

Follow up

At present Gwynne Evans, our pastor, is using material based on the Christianity Explored course to prepare two people who show real signs of conversion, for baptism and Church Membership.

John Lodge, Elder, Hayes Town Chapel

Sold Out in Pontefract

Stuart Townend, we had heard, was looking for venues for a tour of the Midlands. West Yorkshire is not normally considered part of the Midlands and our church is not a natural venue for a concert style event – but we thought we'd see if Stuart was interested and he was.

But why did we bother? To reach the unreached? To encourage our church? To encourage other churches? Why go to all the trouble of hiring a stage and lights, of changes to the sound system, of all the other work necessary?

continued on page 23

Bookshelf

News and Reviews of
Christian Literature and
Reading Resources



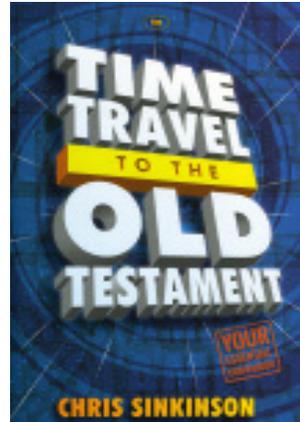
TIME TRAVEL TO THE OLD TESTAMENT

by **Chris Sinkinson**

Published by Inter-Varsity Press

ISBN 978 1 84474 904 1

Review by **Cyril Aston**



The Bible is a wonderful and amazing book, given to us by God Himself to teach and instruct us about Himself, about our Saviour the Lord Jesus, about ourselves, about the past, present and future. It is also a big book with dozens of different human authors spanning many hundreds of years between them. So we need help to get to grips with God's sacred Word. Of course our greatest Teacher is the Holy Spirit Himself and we need primarily to rely on His help every time we open the Bible – the One who guided the human authors is the best One to show us what He meant when those words were originally written down.

Having said that God does particularly gift certain people to help us understand His Word more clearly, obviously through preaching, but also through the writing of books. Chris Sinkinson is one of those people and his book *Time Travel to the Old Testament* is a great guide for us in getting to grips with the background to the first 39 books of the Bible. Written in an attractive, engaging style that will appeal to all ages he avoids the pitfalls of being too sketchy about the OT on the one hand and giving too much confusing information on the other. Eye catching Chapter headings such as 'Preparing to Embark'; 'Meet the natives' and 'Back to the Future' take us into the world of the Old Testament and give

us enormous help in understanding the many layers of the history, religion, economics and cultures of the peoples of those days and how God was bringing His glorious plans and purposes to fulfilment, ultimately in the Coming of His Son into the world to be Saviour. Several simple maps and a Timeline graph are also useful, as well as a generous inclusion of photographs, some taken by the author himself of various OT sites.

I could hardly put this book down when I began to read it and it is a book that can be referred to again and again. The publishers make the bold claim that "... we guarantee that the Old Testament will come alive in a new way, as we are transported far beyond the living room or the park bench where we are sitting." Well as the winter months come on we may not be doing much sitting on the park bench but it's certainly true that Chris's book made the OT come alive to me in a fresh way as I read it and I can guarantee it will do the same for you as well!

If you are a regular reader of **Concern** magazine (and I hope you are!) you will have followed Chris Sinkinson's series on the Minor Prophets over several issues which has been one of the most popular series **Concern** has ever done so you will already be familiar with his style and that should encourage you to go and buy and read this excellent book for yourself.

continued from page 21

We thought that it would be a lovely evening for our church, a chance to hear Stuart, to join together worshipping the Lord, an opportunity for us to welcome people from other churches and an opportunity to invite people who might be reticent about coming to a normal church service.

So did it work? Did it achieve all those things? More than 300 tickets were available, and sold out, well ahead of the event, with good numbers from our church and other churches – and some from here who we would rarely see in church.

It really was a lovely evening of praise and worship. Stuart shared quite a lot between songs and it was encouraging to hear what he said. His songs are notable for their strong theological content and this came through with a lovely gospel message in what he said. So, yes, it did work.

And was it worth the effort? Would we do it again? Yes, we would with a few changes – a bigger stage for Stuart – refreshments for the audience. But overall the evening was a great blessing to us as a church and hopefully to many others too – we'd recommend it!

Peter Mills, Associate Minister, Pontefract Congregational Church

Beale's Blog



Mind what you say!

I am writing this in the airport at Canberra a few days after the WECF triennial conference near

Sydney. It was a great time of fellowship with believers from many countries, for some of whom (Bulgaria, Brazil, South Africa, NE India) English was not their first language. So there was scope for misunderstanding, even between those two nations (UK and USA) described as “divided by a common language”. Thus a brother from Northern Ireland was surprised when an American sister said to him, “I see you’ve got your knickers on”! She was describing his three-quarter length trousers!

Since Babel communication has

always been fraught with problems, and misunderstandings abound. But the greatest communication problem is that described by Paul in 1 Cor. 2:14 (NKJV): “The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

We may, and should, proclaim the gospel as clearly as we possibly can, whether from the pulpit or in conversation. But unless the Spirit of God is at work, the communication problem will remain and the message will not get through to the salvation of those who hear. How much we need to pray that God will open the understanding of those we seek to reach with the best message of all, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

continued from page 12

He had seen God's blessing when minister at Oldbury and that left an indelible mark on his expectation and conviction that no situation or evangelistic endeavour, however unpromising, was without possibility or hopeless. In personal evangelism and door to door work he expected conversations which could lead to conversions. I have no doubt the key to his confident faith was his intimate relationship with his Lord in prayer

With Gordon's encouragement, God was pleased to help us build a three-fold model of concentrated prayer, booklets of testimonies and Gospel preaching that was taken up by and bore fruit in many churches around the country during the 80s and 90s. In Pontefract, over the years and in God's Providence, there was a remarkable harvest of souls. Those of us who were privileged to witness it know we have been upon holy ground – but how different things might have been without the providential visits of Stan and Gordon.

WECF Conference Report

by Peter Beale



Mike Plant speaking at the WECF Conference

Over seventy delegates and others from every corner of the globe met at the end of September in Wollongong, near Sydney, for the triennial conference of the World Evangelical Congregational Fellowship. In addition many others from the Australian churches joined us for the evening meetings. It was a wonderful time of fellowship and encouragement, with folk from USA, Northern Ireland, New Zealand, Bulgaria, Brazil, Manipur (NE India), South Africa, as well as Australia and Great Britain. We were sorry that no one was able to attend from Canada, Micronesia or Portugal on this occasion, and prayed particularly for the brothers and sisters in Portugal who are ill. It was good to welcome into WECF the evangelical Congregational churches of Samoa and Myanmar (Burma).

The conference began on the Monday evening, but some of us from the UK arrived the previous weekend. Lucy and I stayed with Matt and Susan Murray in Engadine, where I preached on Sunday morning. I had known Matt when he was pastor at South Chingford and served on the EFCC Committee, and could not believe that they had been in Engadine for 25 years.

The guest speaker for the conference was Rev. Mike Raiter of the Centre for Biblical Preaching in Melbourne, who preached helpfully from the Book of Psalms. The theme of the conference was “No Other”, and this was taken up by the evening preachers: “No Other Gospel” (Rev. Alan Best, Australia); “No Other King” (Rev. Dr Steve Gammon, USA); “No Other Power” (Rev. Mike Plant, UK); “No Other Life” (Rev. Matt Murray, Australia).

Following the conference Lucy and I stayed with friends in Manly, and I preached there on the Sunday morning, while other overseas ministers preached in other churches. After the weekend our Australian hosts took several of us for a very interesting couple of days visiting the capital city, Canberra. We are all very grateful to the Australian friends who made us so welcome, and specially to Alan Best and Kerrian Cartledge for all they did to make the conference such a success.

About Concern

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