

Congregational Concern



Magazine of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches

Issue No. 210



Winter 2014



Concern is the magazine for and about the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches

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Contents:

News in Brief	1
In Fellowship	2
All Nations: Cameroon	4
Hayes Town Blackout	8
Willersley Conference	10
All Nations: Borneo	12
Willersley (continued)	15
Fire at St Briavels	16
Bookshelf	18
Beale's Blog	20
From Generation to Generation	21

Cover illustration:

Iain Campbell, guest speaker, in conversation with Peter Taylor, Nazeing, at the Ministers' Prayer Conference held at Willersley Castle

From the Editor

You may have noticed that the last issue of **Concern** contained an extra four pages and had a slightly different finish from previous issues. The first change was a one-off, approved by the Committee, to accommodate the series of memorial articles about Stan Guest and Gordon Booth, without depleting the breadth of coverage too much. This issue reverts to 24 pages including covers.

The second change came about because we had to change printers at short notice when our previous printers found themselves unable to accept the job.

I hope to be able to continue to improve the appearance of **Concern** in conjunction with the new printers. You may notice in this issue some changes to internal layout, which I hope look as good on paper as I think they do on screen. I have included more pictures of people and places and I hope these complement the variety of written content.

In this issue we have two articles about Gospel work outside the UK, to inform our prayers, and another is anticipated in the next issue concerning the Philippines. I know the natural modesty of many in the Fellowship probably makes them diffident about sharing what God is doing in their own locations in the UK, but please do so. It is vital for the encouragement of us all that we know where and how God is blessing in these difficult days.

My thanks as always go to all contributors to **Concern**, past and present. In future, I hope to be able to thank new contributors, **perhaps you?**

Robert Neilson

News in Brief

Comings and goings

Rev. Iain Clements was inducted into the Pastorate of Latimer Congregational Church, Beverley, on Saturday 12th October, 2013.

Rev. Douglas Legge, from 1962 to 1993 Minister at Thorpe Edge, Bradford and latterly senior Elder and Treasurer there, received his home call in December at the age of 93. Until his short final illness, he was in regular attendance at Sunday morning worship, when he played the harmonium. Prior to his call to Thorpe Edge, he was minister at Seacroft Congregational Church in East Leeds for ten years and before that had served in China with the London Missionary Society, from 1949 to 1951. Please pray for Mrs Legge, now in hospital but hoping to move shortly to residential care, and the remaining Elder, Bernard Umpleby (also a former Minister) and the fellowship at Thorpe Edge, as they continue to bear witness to Christ's saving grace in that needy district of Bradford, and seek a new Minister and a new Treasurer.

Recovering from a fall

Rev. Brian Dupont, formerly Minister at Staines Congregational Church, fell and broke his hip, just before the last issue of **Concern** went to press. Before his accident he had contributed to the memorial articles for his former colleagues in the ministry (and CERF and EFCC), Rev. Stan Guest and Rev. Gordon Booth. We are pleased to learn that the surgery to mend Brian's hip was successful and that, after a short stay in a convalescent home, he continues his recovery at home. Our prayers are with Brian, and his wife Brenda.

Portugal to Brazil

Vanderli and Alina Carreira, who have been working in Portugal for many years, are going home to Brazil for a period. Alina has almost completed a course of chemotherapy in Portugal, and she will have the final cycle when she returns to Rio de Janeiro. Please pray for them and their ministry, and continued healing for Alina.

The Philippines

In the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan (known as Typhoon Yolande in the Philippines), the most powerful recorded in the Philippines history, in which over 6,000 people died, please remember in your prayers all the people of the Philippines and especially the churches of the National Association of Congregational Churches. We hope to have more information in the next issue.

In Fellowship

from the General Secretary's perspective

The Congregational Way: What Is It? (4)



Dear Friends,

Church Membership. Something we find nowadays, which I suspect is a fairly recent phenomenon at least on its current scale, is a tremendous resistance from evangelical Christians to actually committing to any church. What do we make of it, because Congregationalism has always majored on committed membership to a local church?

The Problem We Find. In the first few years of my ministry we commenced a 'tidying-up' of our church membership list. One church member had transferred her membership from what I worked out had been a distinctly non-evangelical Congregational Church in Scotland. She was quite affronted that we expected her to attend regularly when her previous church hadn't been bothered. That was sad but, given that she seemed to have little gospel understanding, was also understandable. What has worried me more is that 'card-carrying' evangelical Christians seem to have a similar failure to appreciate what is involved in committing to being a church-member. So we have people saying, and making it sound very spiritual, that they belong to the 'Universal Church' and that of course means that they do not need to actually commit to any particular church. Are they right or wrong?

The Importance of Belonging. One of the greatest privileges of my life is to have been a member of a church and to be in fellowship with the same people over a period of time. We have seen one another's children grow up with all the difficulties and joys that brings. We have seen one another in good days and on bad days. This develops a closeness and level of fellowship not otherwise obtainable. Frankly, because I am strong-minded and driven, I need people who can tell me I'm wrong and, equally importantly, I need to know that the people telling me I am wrong, or just telling me they see things differently, genuinely love and accept me.

I also need to deal with relationship issues so that I will grow and develop as a person and as a Christian. I remember a sermon illustration about producing polished stones—the method was to put them in a container with sand and water and spin it as fast as possible. Unattractive stones with plenty of sharp edges came out beautifully smooth and shining. By analogy we also have a lot of rough edges and only the experience of fellowship and friction will mature us and make us shine as we should. Obviously this can be painful but it is necessary. I have often observed that some evangelical Christians move very frequently from church to

church and, if they are theologically articulate, can always explain wonderfully well why they have done so. By my reckoning the basic problem is actually they cannot sustain relationships once they get beyond the ‘honeymoon’ stage. The tragedy of such Christians is that they never really grow deep in any relationship and miss the real and deep joys of doing so.

Understanding the Problem In writing this article I have been reminded of the fact that the reaction against church membership on the part of some is because of bad experiences. Now of course it is legitimate, right and commanded by Christ that in some situations, with sin for which repentance is not forthcoming and with fundamental error, the church should act to discipline its members. The only discipline available to the church is the spiritual one of the withdrawal of membership and its privileges. However the experiences of some Christians of the misuse of church discipline have so scarred them that they have no desire to ever risk being a member of a church again.

I understand this because the authority of the minister and/or elders has been used to direct people in ways which scripture doesn’t mandate. People have been directed to particular jobs, to particular areas to live and church leaders have intruded into areas that are a matter for the individual’s conscience and guidance. This can be immensely damaging to Christians who are young and keen and genuinely believe that Christian leaders can know God’s will for them in a way in which they themselves cannot do. The result is to leave Christians with spiritual burn-out and unwilling to commit to a fellowship of God’s people and the legitimate authority of its officers and church meeting. Before anyone thinks they identify a particular group of churches to which this criticism applies I will come clean and say where I have seen these problems. The group includes the first generation of Congregational Churches, some Charismatics, some Reformed Baptists and a number of Independent Evangelical Churches which are either completely Independent or affiliate to a variety of church groupings.

How do We Respond? I think we need to be clear and upfront about church discipline when we take people into membership. There are three basic conditions for membership: faith in the gospel; gospel living which commends the gospel to others; and commitment to the local fellowship of God’s people. We bring people into membership if these conditions are met and this means that it is obviously logical to remove people from membership if these conditions are not being met. However we do not use the authority God gives the church and its leaders to dominate or direct in areas where the issues are a matter of personal responsibility before God.

May God bless you in and through the fellowship of his people.

Yours in Christ,

Mike Plant

All Nations: Cameroon



Cameroon became a German Colony in 1884, known as Kamerun, but after World War 1 the League of Nations divided the country and gave mandates to Britain and France. In 1960, the French-administered part became independent of France as the *Republic de Cameroun*. The southern part of British Cameroons merged with it in 1961 to form the *Federal Republic of Cameroon*, with English and French as official languages. It has since reverted to the name *Republic of Cameroon*

Population: 20,549,221 (2013 est.)

Area: 83,569 square miles

Capital: Yaounde

Governance: Dominant Party
Presidential State

Neighbours:

Nigeria, Tchad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea

Religions:

Roman Catholic	40%
Protestant Christian	30%
Muslim (all)	18%
None	6%
Folk	3%
Other	3%

From Anatole Dlordon

I have been serving The Grace Evangelical Church in Douala since my return to Cameroon in February 2004. Since then the Church has been through a number of different phases. From 2004 to 2009, there was planting. I worked in collaboration with two men, the first being Keutschanga Klebert who had to leave in order to pursue training first of all with London City Mission and later with LTS. The second was Katla Jean, the Evangelical Press Country representative, who was based in the western part of the country.



From left to right, at the front:
Katla Jean, Anatole Dlordon
and Keutschanga Klebert

As a church our goals were set as follows:

- Bring to God the due worship
- Proclaim the gospel of God's sovereign grace
- Proclaim the whole counsel of God as revealed in the sacred scriptures
- Work towards perfecting the members by exhorting them to obedience to bible teaching.
- Encourage members to put their trust in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, the only true God.

In order to achieve these goals, we have a programme of activities. The weekly Sunday worship service takes place at the same time as the Sunday school for the younger children. In Sunday school the children are divided into three classes and are taught by three teachers who rotate, in order to be in the Sunday service at least once every two weeks.

Every 2nd Sunday of the month the service is followed by the Lord's Supper. Once every three months during the communion service the church warmly welcomes new members and after the service we have a time of extended fellowship with bring and share lunches.

We have been holding three to four Bible studies each month and two prayer meetings, one prayer meeting at the church premises and one in the house of a member who expresses the desire to host the meeting. Every month we have a special prayer item for which we pray as a fellowship, such as prayer for the nation, for the youth, families, the church, etc. Guidelines for these subjects were given in our bi-monthly bulletin.

Divided into small groups, the members devoted themselves to the reading and sharing of a portion of scripture every month, and other literature carefully selected for their mutual edification.

Evangelism was and still is a key element in the activities of the church: once a month, on Saturday afternoon, door to door visitation; once every two months video projection.

Once every quarter a training seminar is organised to tackle some controversial issues or to train the church as a whole in some aspect of the work. Some of the topics covered have been: 'Follow up of New



Sunday School

Converts'; 'Saved to Serve'; 'Tongues, Miracles and Prophecies'.

Sports events are also part of our goal to reach out to the community. So every Saturday morning we host a football time on the play grounds of the Barnabas Centre. This is very well attended by the young people and adults of the neighborhood. In July and August a six week long tournament named after Barnabas was organized with the participation of teams from local churches and from around the town. These occasions were proven to be great opportunities for gospel sharing and tract distribution.

With this programme we were definitely a growing church and in 2009 the fellowship counted about 80 members comprising 30 children, 20 young people and about 30 adults. The future looked bright and very promising. Alongside the already mentioned activities, we were planning to extend our services to young people with outdoor games on school-free days and lunch at youth and adult camps over the holiday.



The Gathered Church

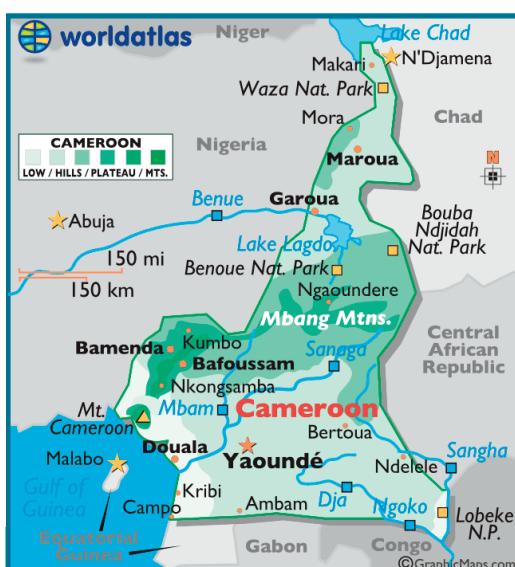
This dynamic was broken when in September 2010 we witnessed a terrible split, and the church that was looked at in the town as a model of sound preaching and God-centred ministry became, in a sense, just like other churches, as what happened to us is exactly what happened to others. The main reasons were leadership conflicts, irreconcilable differences, doctrinal issues and sin, all quite regrettable. The effects of this split regardless of the causes were devastating. Mature believers were in serious distress and dismay, new ones were disillusioned, and there was havoc in the lives of leaders and their families. Above all, the reproach brought upon the name of Christ was great. This situation has frustrated us for a long time and there is no way we can say that it is all behind us. But through many prayers the Lord is restoring us step by step. We have been trying to pick up the pieces and start again. How we would love to go back to where we were and do this as quickly as possible. But, rather, we must learn to listen to God's voice and to move at His pace.

This has opened our eyes to the tremendous potential for the Gospel in this city and brought us to reconsider our aims, so that we might reach as many people as possible through various evangelistic means. There are so many out there who are lost, without hope and without Christ. God alone can call from darkness and bring into the light.

Pray with us and for us that He will model us into His Son's image, prevent us from fighting the wrong fight and that our only desire and project will work toward seeing the sinner saved and the saint perfected. Pray also for the country, that peace may be preserved and that this may lead to the prosperity of the gospel.

His Providence has led some of those who left to start another work. We as a fellowship are committed to pray that these brothers may prosper in their ministry and glorify the Lord through faithful preaching of the gospel. But this does not mean that everything is resolved. There are still obstacles on the road to full reconciliation. One of the things we have struggled with most is the lack of forgiveness. Expectations have been too high and disappointment inevitable. But there are signs of improvement and we continue to work and pray that our response to one another should be to forgive one another in kindness and compassion, and we hope there will be healing and restoration.

Some signs of encouragement are perceptible today and we are grateful to the Lord for the work He is doing. We have seen His hand on the door to door work we have been doing since last year in a neighbourhood east of Douala. This work has led to some evident conversions, with four people committed who now come all the way to attend Sunday services at the Barnabas Centre in Douala, where we meet. They also meet together for a weekly bible study which takes place every Wednesday evening in the home of one of the ladies in the locality, with the participation of 10–15 people from the neighbourhood.



Clipart provided by: www.worldatlas.com

An Unintended Candlelit Supper

As was reported by John Lodge in the last issue of **Concern**, Hayes Town Chapel, Middlesex, was looking forward to an autumn weekend, when the evangelist, Roger Carswell, was to speak at the Sunday services, morning and evening, preceded by an evangelistic event on the Saturday evening, which was a Harvest Supper, where a majority of those attending were visitors to the church.

Shirley Evans reports on how the supper did not go exactly to plan, but how the Lord was faithful to his purposes in the end.

When we were in Droylsden one elderly member used to say ‘Man proposes, God disposes’ I have remembered his wise words on many occasions. God is sovereign, so what happens will have a purpose.

When you are preparing a meal for 130 people, two thirds of them visitors, then you want all to go smoothly. Preparation made, lists written, everyone knowing what to do and where to be, all going well and then... the lights go out and more importantly for those of us in the kitchen, the oven goes out, the sockets don't work, so no hot water, no microwave, no hot plate and the list goes on...

I wasn't too concerned, we have very resourceful men in Hayes, so have no doubt the problem will be soon sorted. Sadly, this is going to be a long job. Everyone starts to think ‘outside of the box’. Christmas candles for the Ladies Fellowship are brought down from the loft (it is surprising what you can see from the light of a mobile phone). The half cooked meat is transferred to frying pans, people rush home for torches and anything else that might be useful. Thankfully at Hayes we have coffee pots, soup containers that are insulated and bain-marie that have solid fuel heat.



And so the preparations go on, the older folk sit and chat at their tables by candle light reliving the feeling of ‘war time resourcefulness’, children love the excitement of being in the dark, we have lots of laughter in the kitchen as the conveyor belt of ‘frying up’ continues. The hotel over the road willingly heats up our fruit crumbles.

All were fed and the meal was lovely. Our purpose for the meal, was that our visitors might hear the good news of the gospel, and so the men came into action again, rigging up a microphone with a car battery and lots of wires! So, with a PA system in action Roger Carswell was able to clearly present the gospel in a compelling way. When you have semi darkness, people aren’t distracted from listening quite so easily. Spurgeon used to like the lamps lowered when he was preaching, maybe he understood that as well.

All finished—and the lights came on. We had mixed feelings, we cheered but at the same time it was so lovely to have the warm glow of the candles and the lovely fellowship of working together under difficulties.

None of us are going to forget the evening ‘the lights went out’. We hope and pray that none of our visitors will forget the message they heard and that God willing, it will bring ‘light into their hearts’.

Concern for Women

We would like to advertise Ladies’ Days taking place around the country, in **Congregational Concern**, so that more women in EFCC may have access to them wherever possible.

Please send details for publication to Val Taylor by email:

val@the-taylors.org

or by mail to

20 Middle Street, Nazeing, Waltham Abbey, Essex EN9 2LD.

Thank you

Ministers' Prayer Conference 2013,

Who was there?

Over 60 men, mainly ministers or retired ministers in EFCC churches met for prayer, ministry, fellowship and in-service training. It is encouraging, year by year, to see more and more younger men coming into ministry in EFCC Churches and, despite in many cases having young families, being able to meet together at Willersley.

Rev. Iain Campbell, from the Free Church of Scotland at Point, Isle of Lewis, was the invited key-note speaker and he spoke four times during the conference.

Rev. Mike Plant, General Secretary, Rev. Bill Dyer, EFCC Training Officer, and Rev Bill Calder, EFCC Chairman, led other developmental and devotional sessions.

Prayer

Feedback from previous conferences had indicated that less time had been provided in the programme for prayer than in former years.

It was noticeable at this conference that the daily pre-breakfast prayer meeting was well attended, and had to be divided into two groups in different rooms, to allow full participation.

There was also time allocated for prayer after some of the sessions of ministry and news from the churches. It is always a sign of prayer times that are blessed of God in a time-tabled event such as this conference, when prayers flow from one to another and not all who would pray can.



Willersley Castle Conference Centre

Ministry

Three of Iain Campbell's ministry sessions were on the theme of Grace in the Old Testament: Grace in Genesis, Grace in Exodus, and Grace in the Book of Ruth. These three books, for which Iain Campbell provided a powerful exposition of their richness in examples of God's Grace to us, were chosen as examples themselves of the thread of God's Grace throughout the whole of the Old Testament.

His fourth session, 'A Theology of Preaching' was based on the raising of Lazarus, which he declared, with the characteristic whimsy that endeared us to his ministry, was a passage that says nothing about

continued at foot of page 15

In-Service Training

The development of men for the ministry, either training younger (and sometimes older) men for the ministry, or training men in the ministry, whatever their developmental needs are, is something that the EFCC Committee takes seriously, as does the EFCC Trust Board, which provides the finance.

'Developing our People' was led by Bill Dyer with contributions from Ian Hughes and Deiniol Williams; 'Developing in your Ministry' was led by Mike Plant, who also spoke about 'Lessons from the Life and Ministry of John Miller'.

continued at foot of page 15, column 2

Fellowship: *continued at top of page 15*



All Nations: 'Headhunting' for Christ in Borneo

Borneo is the third largest island in the world and the largest island of Asia. It is the only country in the world divided amongst three countries: **Indonesia** to the south and east occupies 73% of the land area and **Malaysia** and **Brunei**, to the north and west, around 26% and 1% each. Brunei is exclusively within Borneo; Indonesia and Malaysia have other provinces apart from those on Borneo.

John Semper's article, below, gives a brief introduction to missionary work amongst the Murut tribe, now known as the Lun Bawang, who were formerly headhunters. This people group is indigenous to an area in the north of Borneo which crosses the political boundaries of the three countries. Until the 1920s they were largely animist, but in 1928 three Australian missionaries formed the Borneo Evangelical Mission, which became part of OMF in 1975. However, as John recounts, God intervened directly with the Lun Bawan during World War 2 with his Saving Grace, when the Australian missionaries were interned, so much so that there was revival in the embryonic church and many of the Lun Bawang people are now described as Christian.



How to Catch the Bug by John Semper

Some of you with white hair or grey beards may just remember a book by Michael Griffiths, then General Director of Overseas Missionary Fellowship, published in 1975 and reprinted several times since. It was called *Cinderella with Amnesia*, and argued that the Church, the bride of Christ, was being sorely neglected; there was very little Biblical teaching on the subject among Evangelical churches. I found this to be true when I discovered hymn-books, which had no section on the Church, being used by such churches. Things have moved on since then, and the subject is no longer so ignored; however the book is still a helpful summary of the Biblical principles.

What I want to say is that the present day Cinderella is not so much ‘the Church’ as ‘missionary interest and concern’, judging by the low attendance at missionary meetings, and the lack of support of prayer meetings for particular people-groups or missionary societies. Financial help also for missionary projects has diminished, resulting in some having to be closed down and national workers left unpaid. ‘So what?’ you may say. ‘We’re living in a time of economic depression—this is what you must expect!’

I disagree; if you have caught the bug, your missionary interest and support will continue, come what may. I believe that one of the best ways of catching the bug, of becoming really enthused about missionary matters, is through a book (or a speaker, of course), which arouses our enthusiasm and challenges us to action. A book which did this for me is by Shirley Lees, entitled *Drunk before Dawn*. It heightened my interest in a part of the world where God was obviously at work, describing the amazing transformation of some of the tribes-people who inhabit part of the huge island of Borneo.

What did the book do? It demonstrated what God could do, had done, and was doing in spite of man’s expectations. That always warms the heart, increases our understanding and enlarges our view of the great redemptive purpose of God.

What could be more encouraging and exhilarating, than to see the sovereign hand of God at work in a situation which was beyond the power and ability of man to change? The work which resulted in the establishment of the Sidang Injil Borneo (the Evangelical Church of Borneo) has been very obviously God’s work. It began in the period prior to the Second World War, with the arrival of three Australian missionaries. They made little progress in evangelising the degraded Murut tribe (now known as the Lun Bawang) who, it was reckoned, were drunk for 100 days in each year!

There seemed countless obstacles in their way. The authorities forbade the missionaries to attempt any further work among them, believing that in the course of time the people-group would bring about its own extinction through alcoholism and disease. But when a little progress had been made, the war came, and with it the internment by the Japanese of all missionaries in the country. On top of that, the majority of the people were illiterate—like the apostles described in Acts 4:13 as unschooled and unlearned men—‘agrammatoi’ & ‘idiotai’!

Gradually, in various ways, God showed His hand. He had led the missionaries involved to put much of their emphasis on teaching, establishing a Bible School, and giving themselves a limit of fifteen years to establish an indigenous, independently-led self-supporting church.

While the missionaries were interned, God used fellow tribesmen, already Christian, from the Indonesian part of the island, to cross the border and work among the Lun Bawang and bring them a few scraps of Scripture. After the war, when government officials re-entered the tribe, they found a total transformation: most of the people professed to be Christians, having burnt their idols and turned from drink. How could this be? It was humanly impossible, but God had worked the change in their hearts. Since then, there have been periods of revival, especially in the Bible School, and among the missionaries themselves. The Lun Bawang have been constrained to carry the gospel to neighbouring tribes, with similar results. Previously, they would have coveted these people's heads; now they longed to see hearts changed and brought into submission to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I hope there is enough here to whet your appetite and lead you to read more about this astounding demonstration of the power and grace of our amazing God.

Find Out More

The book by Shirley Lees, *Drunk before Dawn*, is currently out of print, but pre-owned copies are available from internet booksellers, including amazon.co.uk

The Joshua Project website www.joshuaproject.net

gives profiles of the Lun Bawang within the context of the three nations in the island of Borneo that they inhabit. Go to the website Home Page and then click Start. Select 'Brunei' as a country of interest and this page summarises the position for Brunei as a whole. Click on the 'Lundayeh, Lun Bawang' people group link in the table to go to another page which profiles the Lun Bawang in Brunei. Repeat the process for Indonesia and Malaysia to see profiles of the Lun Bawang in those national areas of Borneo.

Fellowship at Willersley Castle

continued from page 11, column 2

One of the understated benefits of ministers and leaders being able to meet together at Willersley each year is the opportunity for them to have fellowship with each other. Sharing meals together, tea and coffee between sessions and opportunities for the energetic to have afternoon walks in lovely Derbyshire countryside, or (for the less energetic) simply to have conversation in the lounges, all add to the sense of our Fellowship in Christ, and the reality of that fellowship through personal contact, which is often vital for brothers labouring in small and struggling situations.

Below is a small selection of photographs of brothers in fellowship.



Ministry continued from page 11, column 1

preaching! Of course the key text was Jesus speaking into the grave and saying ‘Lazarus, come out’. Addressing a gathering of ‘fellow presbyters’ (another example of his whimsy, as a presbyterian speaking to congregationalists), he declared that his purpose in speaking about Lazarus was to emphasise that the focus of preaching should always be ‘not what we are doing in the act of preaching, but on what Christ is doing in the act of

our preaching’. The preacher is but the instrument of Christ speaking to His people and rescuing them from the grave of sin and eternal condemnation.

In-Service Training continued from page 11, column 2

‘The Minister’s Devotional Life’ was a very helpful and practical session, led by Bill Dyer, with personal inputs from Ian Densham, Tom Brand and Gwynne Evans.

Fire at St Briavels Chapel

The following article appeared recently in the Forest of Dean and Wye Valley Review and is reproduced here by permission

Locals rally round fire chapel

Chapel-goers in St Briavels are continuing to meet despite a fire which caused extensive damage to the building. Congregationalists have been offered a temporary home at St Briavels Church of England Primary School until the chapel in High Street is repaired. Much of the interior of the Congregational church was seriously damaged in the fire on Monday, January 6.

Pastor Matt Rees—who has been at St Briavels since September—said:

'The response from local people has been heartening. The way people have offered support and encouragement is really touching. Fundamentally we are about people not buildings so the fire has not put stop to what we do. We work very closely with Robert Simpson (the Anglican associate priest at St Briavels) and Ian Barkley, the head at the school. We are meeting at the school and our main service is on Sunday mornings at 10 am.'

Much of the building, fixtures and fittings were extensively damaged by smoke and it is expected it will take around three months to return the building to a usable state. The cause of the fire is still being investigated but there was no sign of a break-in or vandalism. Smoke was spotted coming from the chapel by a villager at around 8 am and the fire brigade was called immediately. Two fire engines and 11 crew members were despatched from Coleford and they spent around two hours on the scene.

'We are very grateful to the attentive person who saw the smoke and called the fire brigade. Their prompt action meant that although there is a lot of smoke damage the fire did not reach the roof timbers which would have caused a lot more damage.'

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Fire Damage at St Briavels Chapel

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Fire Insurance and Fire Risk Assessment

The recent fire at St Briavels comes as a shock to us all. Fires do happen, but always to someone else, and it takes a house fire in our neighbourhood or, in this case, a fire in the chapel of an EFCC church, to make us more personally aware of the tragedy of such an event.

Matt Rees gives the view that we all should have—fundamentally we (Christ's Church) are about people not buildings’—and we can thank God that no one was harmed by this fire, and that the damage was not so bad that God’s work in St Briavels will be harmed in the long run.

Our prayers are with the folk at St Briavels as they continue worshipping in the local school whilst the chapel is restored.

This event should be a reminder to all churches in the Fellowship to ensure that they have adequate insurance against **total** loss—because, otherwise, claims for partial loss will be scaled down. Church leaders should also ensure that they have completed a fire risk assessment, as now required by law, and have regular electrical safety inspections.

Bookshelf

**News and Reviews of
Christian Literature and
Reading Resources**



SOVEREIGN SERVICE

by Brigadier Ian Dobbie

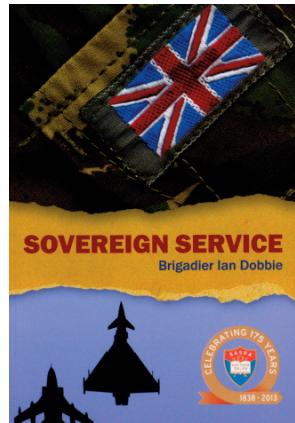
Celebrating 175 years of SASRA

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ISBN 0 9512486 0 X

Paperback

Review by Robert Neilson



The first Edition of **SOVEREIGN SERVICE** was published in 1988 to mark the 150th anniversary of the founding of the Soldiers' Friend and Army Scripture Readers Society, the older of two organisations that came together to be today's SASRA. This second edition celebrates the work of SASRA over 175 years (1838–2013) and has been updated by the original author, then Colonel, now Brigadier (ret.) Ian Dobbie.

Although 1838 is marked as the foundation year, Ian Dobbie begins his account with a chapter of historical reflections and influences which centre mainly on four characters of influence in the formation of SFASRA and, later, the Soldiers Christian Association (SCA).

The story of Sergeant Rudd, first posted as a 28-year-old NCO to Woolwich in 1804, was particularly poignant in view of recent events in Woolwich, when a serving soldier was murdered. Rudd faced opposition from his own Commanding Officer when (without permission!) he placed a notice in the guardroom offering to lend a Bible or Christian literature to any soldier desiring it. He gained support from another officer whose father was a senior serving officer and the outcome was, initially, that a wagon-load of Bibles was sent to the Woolwich Garrison for all guard

rooms and hospitals. Later, the Army provided Bibles to all enlisted men and new recruits wanting them. Privately funded Scripture Readers followed, as did SFASRA.

Mini biographies of Major General Sir Henry Havelock of Lucknow, Miss Lucy Deacon and W. B. Harrington, are equally illuminating in the early development of SFASRA and SCA.

Subsequent chapters deal, in turn with the development of the two societies until their amalgamation in 1938, by which time SFASRA was known as the Army Scripture Readers and the SCA had become the SACA by adding ‘and airmen’s’ to the name, to recognise that the RAF had become an independent branch of the services, after its beginnings in WW1 as the Army Air Corps.

A new name for the combined organisation proved more of a challenge. For the duration of WW2 it was truly amalgamated, as the ‘Army Scripture Readers and Soldier’s and Airmen’s Christian Association’, which was more than a mouthful! SARSACA, however, had more important challenges during WW2 than finding the right name, and its history reflects the spiritual needs of service men—and increasingly in WW2 service women—in the context with the politics and armed conflicts of the days.

For those who are not over keen on history, don’t let this put you off, for Ian Dobbie intersperses the necessary historical narrative, with wonderful stories of how God dealt in Sovereign Grace with his people in Sovereign Service. The book’s title is, of course, a double entendre, but not of the usual offensive kind.

Following WW2 the Council decided on a name change, ‘The Soldiers’ and Airmen’s Scripture Readers Association’, the SASRA we now have.

In 1938 at the Centenary Service, Brigadier Arthur Smith, Vice Chairman of the newly amalgamated association, had drawn on two words, one from each of the two banners of the constituent parts. From ASR he chose ‘Scripture’, as the foundation of the work, past, present and future, and from SACA, he chose ‘Association’ because that implied fellowship and they were all one in Jesus.

When, after WW2, a new name was under consideration, Brigadier General Biddulph strongly advised Council to retain ‘Scripture’.

‘ “Nowadays”, he wrote, “unfortunately the word ‘Christian’ in a title may have little connection with what we mean by that word; whereas the word ‘Scripture’ definitely binds us to an evangelical faith, founded on the Bible, and the Bible alone” ’.

Now, almost 70 years later, some of us may have the same concerns about the words ‘reformed’ or even ‘evangelical’, as used by others of a much different persuasion to the doctrines to which we adhere.  overleaf

Beale's Blog



Faithful to the end

On 16th January it was my privilege to join with the many people from all over the country who packed to overflowing Copse Road Chapel in Clevedon for the funeral of **Rev. David Godfrey**. David had served for 10 years as a field representative of the Slavic Gospel Association during the years of Communism, and testimony was given to his brave and faithful service over those years, bringing Bibles and other spiritual sustenance and encouragement as well as practical help to the persecuted believers of Eastern Europe. Following that period for many years he served on the Council of SGA.

I first met him when he preached the ‘charge to the church’ at my induction to the pastorate at Bulford in 1980. He had himself been pastor there from 1963 to 1973, at the same time working part-time for SGA, and it was under his faithful ministry that the church was brought onto a clearly evangelical foundation. Consequently it stood firm on that foundation, continuing as an evangelical congregational church as part of EFCC and declining to enter the United Reformed Church in 1972.

The fact that his successors, Frank Lawes, myself and now Barnaby Alsop have been able to minister in a Bible-believing, Gospel-proclaiming church is due under God to David Godfrey. We thank God on every remembrance of him, and are challenged by his example.

Peter Beale

SOVEREIGN SERVICE Book Review continued from page 19

Ian Dobbie concludes by looking at the changes that have occurred in the recent years, when there have been new conflicts alongside a rapid and continuing modernisation of the armed services. Through all of this, SASRA retains its original aims, leading the military to Christ by sharing Scripture.

Those who support SASRA and receive ‘READY’ magazine (available for anyone to read on-line on the SASRA website), will know of the work Scripture Readers are doing, today—and the lives of servicemen and servicewomen that are being changed, today.

www.sasra.org.uk

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From generation to generation

Exodus 3:15 ‘This is my name forever, the name you shall call me from generation to generation.’

The delegates at the November 2013 Ministers’ Prayer Conference at Willersley were representative of all ages. The gallery below is not wholly representative of the men who were there but, from the pictures available, it does show the range, from generation to generation.



Bob Cotton



Bill Dyer



Deiniol Williams



Arthur Fraser



Stuart Dainty



Tom Brand



Neville Rees



Ian Hughes



Nick Gray

About *Concern*

Congregational Concern is the quarterly magazine of the Evangelical Fellowship of Congregational Churches, and is edited by Robert Neilson, who is an Elder at the Pontefract Congregational Church.

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The magazine is made available freely to member churches of EFCC and is sent in bulk to a nominated distributor at each church. It will be sent to individual subscribers at a cost of £8 per annum (4 issues) inclusive of postage, or can be viewed free on the EFCC web site (see below). Cheques for postal subscriptions (payable to EFCC) should be sent to the Office Manager. Data for mailing labels will be stored electronically, but names and addresses held will not be passed on to any other organisation.

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