



## December 2019 Newsletter



### WELCOME

### LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

### PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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## WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

I recently read an enjoyable and humorous book about punctuation. Perhaps you're thinking there is something wrong with me! For some time, our school system has tended to reduce the time spent teaching grammar and punctuation. You might heave a sigh of relief or wish that it had been that way in your day. But proper punctuation is essential to accurate communication; a theme about which the Bible has much to say. How important is punctuation to you?

Consider an innocent, yet consequently blasphemous, misprint from the past, simply because a printer failed to use commas: "And there were also two other malefactors led with Him to be put to death." This rendering makes the sinless Jesus to be a malefactor along with the two thieves. Rather it should read, "And there were also two others, malefactors, led with Him to be put to death."

Or what about when there is debate about where to put a comma? Compare the rendering of Isaiah 40:3 in two different versions.

The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (NKJV)

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. (ESV)

Is the voice in the wilderness or are the preparations to be in the wilderness? The comma makes the difference. This debateable point does not cause any doctrinal difficulties, however.

One final example, where a comma makes a difference between a glorious truth and a destructive error. What did Jesus say to the thief on the cross? We have two options:

1. "Assuredly, I say to you today, you will be with me in Paradise."
2. "Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise."

The first option gives the interpretation favoured by Roman Catholics and so-called Jehovah's Witnesses; the second is the Biblical and Protestant understanding. The first option admits that the thief on the cross would get to Paradise eventually, but leaves open the possibility that he would have to wait, whether passing through purgatory or soul-sleep first. If the comma comes after the "today", it robs the thief of the majestic promise given by Christ and it robs Christ of the power to save to the uttermost, even from death itself. The comma must come before "today". The promise that the penitent thief could cling to was that whilst he would soon see his Saviour die before his eyes, nevertheless, when he closed his own eyes in death they would immediately be opened in Paradise, in the presence of Christ.

The same wonderful promise is there to sustain us through death if we are trusting in Christ for the remission of sins.

What a difference a comma makes!

In Christ,

Stephen

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### REFORMATION TOURS UPDATE: GLASGOW CATHEDRAL

There is a lot to see in and around Glasgow Cathedral with regards to Scotland's Reformation and the Covenanters, and it's one of the places we visit on our tours regularly.

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On the 21st November 1638, a few months after the signing of the National Covenant, the first free General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for 36 years was held here. Alexander Henderson, one of the main architects of the National Covenant, was moderator.

The Rev Thomas McCrie writes in his Story of the Scottish Church:-

“This famous Assembly met at Glasgow on the day appointed. A more noble, grave, and competent body of men never perhaps convened to deliberate on the affairs of the Church.


It consisted of 140 ministers, freely chosen by their different presbyteries, with 98 ruling elders, of whom 17 were noble men of the highest rank, 9 were knights, 25 were landed proprietors, and 47 were burgesses of great respectability, capable of representing their respective communities in parliament. Some of the noblemen and gentlemen, hearing that an attempt would be made by the Marquis of Hamilton, the king’s commissioner, to overawe the Assembly by a large retinue of followers, came accompanied by their usual retainers in arms. The Assembly was conducted throughout with the utmost gravity and decorum.”



*Glasgow Cathedral*

The Glasgow Assembly began a complete reformation of the church. It declared the Articles of Perth, the Book of Canons, the Book of Common Prayer, and Episcopalianism itself unlawful. The Covenanters were in control, and Presbyterianism was established. Despite various underhand attempts by Charles I and the Marquis of Hamilton to stop it, the assembly continued to sit until the 20th December when it dissolved itself.

RP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 2020



RPIC2020

RP INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
TUES., JULY 28—MON., AUGUST 3, 2020  
INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY  
MARION, INDIANA

**“GLORIFYING GOD IN BABYLON”**

**SPEAKER: REV. WARREN PEEL**  
MINISTER OF  
TRINITY REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,  
NORTHERN IRELAND

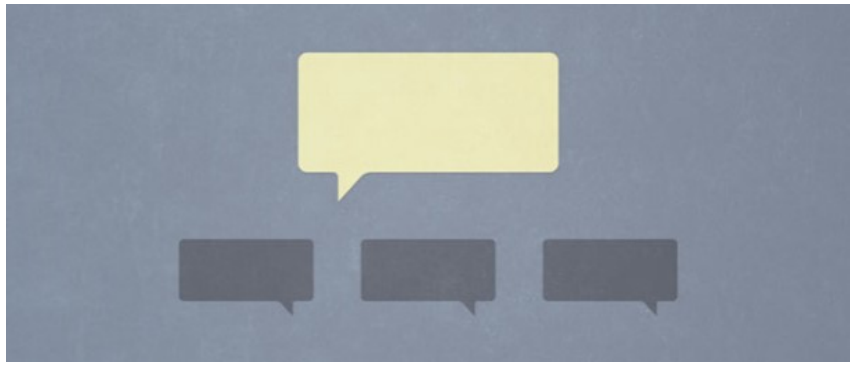
**Conference Psalm:**  
**Psalm 84B from**  
*The Book of Psalms for Worship*

**CONFERENCE WEBSITE:**  
**www.rpic2020.org**  
*Check back soon for more information!*

INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY / MARION, INDIANA

## CATECHETICAL EVANGELISM

Although evangelism differs to some degree from generation to generation according to gifts, culture, style, and language, the primary methods of Puritan evangelism—plain preaching and catechetical teaching—can show us much about how to present the gospel to sinners.



Like the Reformers, the Puritans were catechists. They believed that pulpit messages should be reinforced by personalized ministry through catechesis—the instruction in the doctrines of Scripture using catechisms. Puritan catechizing was evangelistic in several ways.

Scores of Puritans reached out evangelistically to children and young people by writing catechism books that explained fundamental Christian doctrines via questions and answers supported by Scripture. For example, John Cotton titled his catechism *Milk for Babes, drawn out of the Breasts of both Testaments*. Other Puritans included in the titles of their catechisms such expressions as “the main and fundamental points,” “the sum of the Christian religion,” the “several heads” or “first principles” of religion, and “the ABC of Christianity.” At various levels in the church as well as in the homes of their parishioners, Puritan ministers taught rising generations from both the Bible and their catechisms. Their goals were to explain the fundamental teachings of the Bible, to help young people commit the Bible to memory, to make sermons and the sacraments more understandable, to prepare covenant children for confession of faith, to teach them how to defend their faith against error, and to help parents teach their own children.

Catechizing was a follow-up to sermons and a way to reach neighbours with the gospel. Alleine reportedly followed his work on Sunday by several days each week of catechizing church members as well as reaching out with the gospel to people he met on the streets. Baxter, whose vision for catechizing is expounded in *The Reformed Pastor*, said that he came to the painful conclusion that “some ignorant persons, who have been so long unprofitable hearers, have got more knowledge and remorse of conscience in half an hour’s close disclosure, than they did from ten years’ public preaching.” Baxter invited people to his home every Thursday evening to discuss and pray for blessing on the sermons of the previous Sabbath.

The hard work of the Puritan catechist was greatly rewarded. Richard Greenham claimed that catechism teaching built up the Reformed church and seriously damaged Roman Catholicism. When Baxter was installed at Kidderminster in Worcestershire, perhaps one family in each street honoured God in family worship; at the end of his ministry there, there were streets where every family did so. He could say that of the six hundred converts brought to faith under his preaching, he could not name one who had backslidden to the ways of the world. How vastly different was that result compared with those of today’s evangelists, who press for mass conversions and turn over the hard work of follow-up to others.

### Dr. Joel Beeke, Ligonier Blog

Sin is a plague, yea,  
the greatest and most infectious  
plague in the world; and yet, ah!  
how few are there that tremble at it,  
that keep at a distance from it!

Thomas Brooks



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IT IS WELL TO PRAISE THE LORD  
FOR HIS MERCY WHEN YOU ARE  
IN HEALTH, BUT MAKE SURE THAT  
YOU DO IT WHEN YOU ARE SICK,  
FOR THEN YOUR PRAISE IS  
MORE LIKELY TO BE GENUINE.

Charles Spurgeon



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