



**STORNOWAY**  
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO  
THE WORLD TO SAVE SINNERS  
(1 TIMOTHY 1:15)

## January 2024 Newsletter



### WELCOME

### LORD'S DAY

Morning Worship—11.00am

Evening Worship—6.30pm

### PRAYER MEETING

Thursday—7.30pm

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#### CONTACT DETAILS

Stornoway RPCS  
Bridge Community Centre  
Bayhead Embankment  
Stornoway, Isle of Lewis,  
Scotland, HS1 2EB

[www.stornowayrpcs.org](http://www.stornowayrpcs.org)

[info@stornowayrpcs.org](mailto:info@stornowayrpcs.org)

Scottish Charity No: SC043043

Minister—Rev Kenneth Stewart, [stewart\\_k@sky.com](mailto:stewart_k@sky.com)

## WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

Although this is the January issue of our magazine, you might well be reading this in December and so, perhaps, you will allow me to focus on the close of *this* year rather than the beginning of *next*...

It so happens that it was last January I drew your attention to Rev William Jay, a Baptist minister who ministered in the Argyle chapel in Bath for over 60 years from 1791 until his death in 1852. I wrote then that 'for depth of thought, spirituality of mind, richness of experience and beauty of expression, William Jay's *Morning and Evening Exercises*' are well worthy of anyone's investment of both time and money'.

Well, in the light of that, I have no hesitation in turning to him at the close of the year as well. While those of you who use his *Morning Exercises* might recognise what follows, I have taken the liberty of making some substantial linguistic and grammatical changes for the sake of contemporary readability – and I do so with reluctance as Jay is a better writer than I am! – but the thoughts, apart from my own reference to the fifth commandment at the close, are entirely his own.

*'Are not my days few? (Job 10:20)*

Job doesn't say 'years' or 'months' or 'weeks', but *days*. Life is to be reckoned by *days* and they are few in every respect: relatively, comparatively, and absolutely so. It will not be necessary to prove this. No one denies it and no one can deny it. Yet much depends upon the proper use of so obvious a truth.

First, *how did they come to be so few?* Although all men die, they don't die willingly. As the Devil said regarding man, 'skin for skin, yea, all that a man hath will he give for his life' – but although a man will give much for his life, he cannot continue that life however much he wants to. He hates and dreads death: it is the king of terrors. The thought of it embitters his comforts and always keeps him subject to bondage.

Could this have been the natural state of man as he came from the hands of his Maker? No, indeed it was not! The Bible gives us the only rational and convincing account of the reason for death: 'By one man sin entered into the world, and death (entered) by sin; and so death has passed upon all men, because all have sinned'. Death is not 'a debt due to nature' (Thomas Pynchon, novelist) but the consequence of a judicial and penal infliction.

This connection between death and judgment doesn't strike us because deaths normally occur gradually – however, had we seen the great flood destroying the whole ancient world at once, we would be in no doubt regarding such a connection. But, regarding punitive justice, what is the difference whether all the criminals are executed together or led out to their death one by one?

Second, if your days have come to be so few, *do not make them fewer*. Although some do so through suicide, violence is not the only way to shorten life. Many sins shorten life: Envy is the rottenness of the bones; prayerless anxiety corrodes; anger and malice consume while drunkenness, drugs, and sensuality, produce effects which so often lie down with the sinner in an early grave. Godliness, on the other hand, has the promise of the life that *now* is as well as the life that is to come by freeing us from the malignant passions, inducing the affectionate and benevolent ones, shedding peace abroad in our hearts, authorising and inspiring hope and confidence, and surrounding us with the care of Providence. Godliness is, as David calls it, *'the health of the countenance'* and, as Solomon calls it, *'health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones'*.

Third, if your days are few, then *carefully regulate your attachment to everything that depends upon their brevity*. Who would load treasure on a rotten vessel or a vessel full of holes? All the admired distinctions and possessions of the world are very uncertain in themselves, and they often leave us: but even if they continue with us, we certainly cannot continue with them: We brought nothing with us into the world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out: yet, stripped and naked, we must go and the time of our departure is virtually at hand.

What shall we think, just a few days from now, of those pursuits which engross us so much just now? 'Tomorrow, we die' and what will it matter whether we are carried to the grave from a cottage or from a mansion; or whether we leave behind us much or little? Try to think always, as you are bound to feel soon. 'Brethren, the time is short :  
2 it remains that both they that have wives be as though they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this world, as not abusing it ; for the fashion of this world passes away'.

Fourth, if your days are few, *then use them well*. This is what Moses prayed for: ‘So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom’. The wisdom we need is God’s wisdom, but the man who will discover it is the man who numbers his days and finds them to be few: and who has, while they last, an all-important interest to secure. If he is guilty, it must be his wisdom to seek forgiveness; if he is lost, it must be his wisdom to seek salvation; if he is unable to save himself, it must be his wisdom to apply to another, who is appointed for the very purpose. And, in our case, there is such a one: His name is Jesus, and he is mighty to save. He is willing to save. Instead of complaining of your application to him, he only complains of your neglect of him: ‘you will not come to me that you might have life’. Many have tried his power and his love; and recommended him from their own happy experience. So, seek him while he may be found and call upon him while he is near. Remember that though he is now on the throne of grace, he will soon ascend the throne of justice.

Also, this part of our subject (improving our days) branches itself into another line of duty: As you are to *gain good*, so you are to *do good* – and this duty, too, is enforced by the *fewness of your days*. As a Christian in this dark world, you have one privilege above the saints in light: The privilege of beneficence – of relieving the poor, instructing the ignorant, converting the sinner. But remember two things: *Their days* are also few, and they will soon be gone beyond the possibility of receiving relief, and, since *your days* are few, you will soon be placed beyond the possibility of granting it. Put wings on your zeal, therefore, with the thought that ‘the night cometh, wherein no man can work’.

In closing, let it be said that there is also a way of lengthening life. Lengthening it by duration (since honouring our parents will usually bring a length of days to those who do so) and by diligence – by ‘*filling our days*’, by doing much in a little time. Some live longer in a week than others do in a year.’

May the Lord grant us all a truly happy new year!

Your minister.

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### BIBLE READING PLAN 2024

As we begin another New Year and make plans for 2024, have you considered following a Bible reading plan? A Bible reading plan enables us to read the whole of the Bible, rather than merely our favourite books.

It has been suggested that there are two approaches to daily Bible reading, intimacy & Familiarity. Intimacy comes through slow meditative reading of smaller portions, whereas familiarity comes through faster reading of larger portions. Bible reading plans fall into the category of familiarity.

There are many Bible reading plans which take us through the whole Bible in a year. The Robert Murray M’Cheyne Bible Reading Plan, takes us through the Old Testament once and the New Testament and Psalms twice each year, by reading four chapters a day. An alternative is the Five Day Bible Reading Plan, which is more of a chronological reading plan.

Find a realistic plan that works for you and plan to devote time to it each day. Don’t get discouraged, if you fall behind, or turn it into a bind. It may be worth considering reading the same plan as others, for accountability purposes. Each time we read the Bible, the Lord is speaking to us. If you haven’t read through the whole Bible in a year, it may sound like an onerous task, but you might be surprised to find that it is both an obtainable and a rewarding goal. Why not try it for 2024?





# RPIC 2024

*Reformed Presbyterian International Conference*

## GLORIFYING GOD IN BABYLON DANIEL 6:26

**SPEAKER: REV. WARREN PEEL**  
Minister  
Covenant Christian Fellowship  
Galway, Ireland

**JUNE 25 – JULY 1, 2024**  
INDIANA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY  
MARION, INDIANA

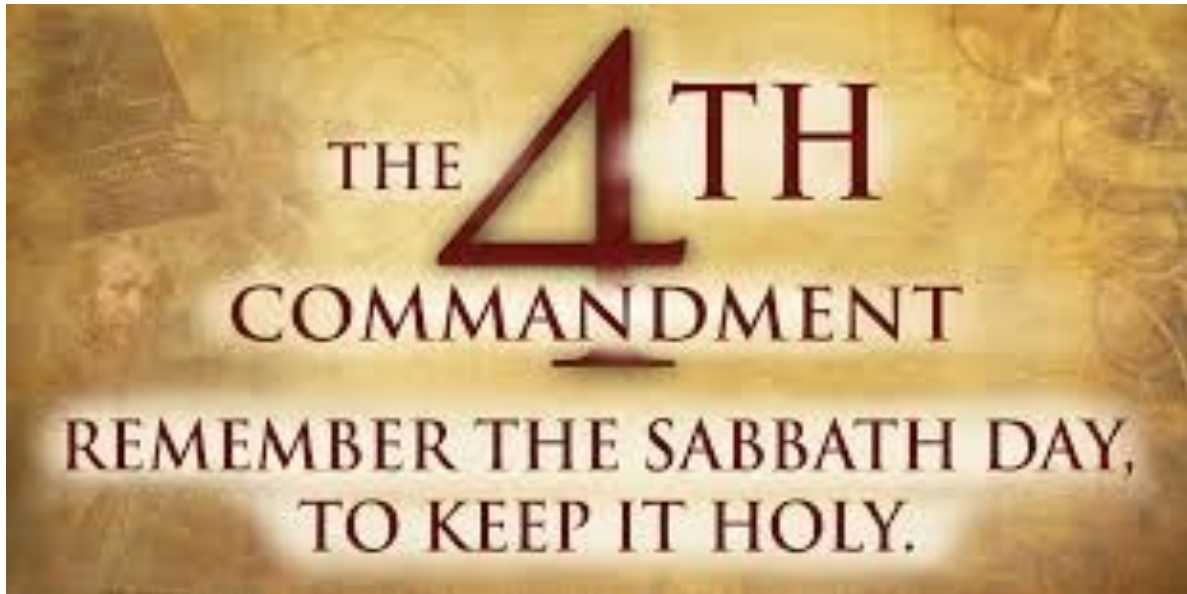
Conference Psalm  
Psalm 93B  
*The Book of Psalms for Worship*

**CONFERENCE WEBSITE**  
[www.rpicconference.org](http://www.rpicconference.org)



Conference is not a function of  
Indiana Wesleyan University

## THE SABBATH AS A MORAL COMMANDMENT



**1. Is the Sabbath commandment a moral law or a ceremonial law?** The commandment to observe the weekly Sabbath is a moral law of God.

**2. How can it be shown that the Sabbath commandment is a moral rather than a ceremonial law?** (a) The fourth commandment itself mentions the fact that the Sabbath originated not at the time of Moses but at the creation of the world. Thus the Sabbath existed thousands of years before God gave the ceremonial laws in the time of Moses. (b) The Sabbath commandment is a part of the Ten commandments, and thus, being found in a context of moral laws, it too must be regarded as a moral law: it would be very strange if the Ten Commandments were composed of nine moral precepts and one ceremonial precept, nine permanent laws and one law of only temporary validity. The Ten form a unity as a summary of God's moral law, and if the Sabbath commandment were not a moral law, this unity would be broken. (c) Like the rest of the Ten commandments, the Sabbath commandment was not written on perishable material but upon tablets of stone, indicating its permanent validity. All parts of the ceremonial law passed away at the time of the crucifixion of Christ, and if the Sabbath commandment is a ceremonial law, then it too passed away, and was not permanent, but only of temporary validity. But the fact that it was written on stone by God himself indicates that it was intended to be permanent.

**3. On whom is the Sabbath commandment binding?** Upon all men without exception. As Jesus said, "the Sabbath was made for man"; he did not say that the Sabbath was made for Israel, but that it was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. Thus it is not limited to any particular class of men, but is binding upon the human race.

**4. What attempts have been made to limit the obligation to observe the Sabbath to certain classes of people?** (a) Some have held that the obligation to keep the Sabbath is binding only on the people of Israel or the Jews. (b) Others have maintained that the obligation to observe the Sabbath is binding only on Christians, and that those who do not profess to be Christians need not observe the Sabbath.

**5. How can these claims be answered?** (a) It has been shown above that the Sabbath commandment is a moral law. But if it is a moral law, it must be binding on all people without exception. (b) If we say that the fourth commandment applies only to Jews, or only to Christians, why not go on and say that the fifth, sixth, and seventh commandments, for example, apply only to Jews, or only to Christians? We must always remember that the Ten Commandments form a unity and may not be arbitrarily broken up. We may not single out one commandment and say that it applies only to a limited group of people, while the rest apply to all mankind. The Ten Commandments must be taken together, and we should realize that while they were originally revealed by God to the people of Israel, they form a summary of God's moral law which is binding on all mankind.

## A PLEA FOR THE COVENANTED REFORMATION IN BRITAIN AND IRELAND

It is the Confession to which all ranks in these lands are bound to adhere as a part of their Covenanted uniformity. This Confession was framed in carrying into effect one principal object of the Solemn League, which was to bring the Churches in the three kingdoms to the nearest possible uniformity, in doctrine, worship, discipline, and government. Moreover, it was actually received, and solemnly recognized by the parties concerned in that federal deed, as their doctrinal standard of uniformity, to which they were bound to adhere by the oath of God. To abandon this Confession, therefore, in principle at least, so long as it cannot be shown to be unscriptural, would be to incur the charge of covenant violation.

We do not insist that the design of that League would be defeated by a mere change of statement, if the principles in the Westminster Confession were retained, provided the change of statement had that concurrence of all the Churches in Britain and Ireland, which gave their sanction to that Confession. But till this is obtained, the safest way to preserve the public faith inviolate, is to adhere to it not only in the spirit, but also in the letter of it. ...

It is a Confession to which the Churches in Britain and Ireland are not only bound to adhere by solemn covenant, but it is also the basis on which there is a great probability that they will unite, when the Lord brings again Zion. Though the greater part of these Churches have never fully redeemed the pledge given by them in the Solemn League, to cleave to the Westminster Standards, as standards of uniformity to the three nations; it does not free any of them from their solemn engagements. The friends of these standards are still bound to hold them fast, and to display them as a banner to the generation, in order to remind them of their first love, and of their first works.

Nor are they left without hope that the great object of the Westminster Confession, as a standard of uniformity, will ultimately be gained. However far even the Presbyterian Churches in Britain and Ireland may have departed in administration from that Confession, it is still recognised by them in some form or other, as an explanatory standard. It seems therefore to be reserved in the providence of God as a central point, in which all the scattered sections of the Church in these lands will meet, when times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.

**George Stevenson**, *A Plea for the Covenanted Reformation in Britain and Ireland* 1844, p. 95.

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### LETTER TO A YOUNG CONVERT

Your letter, which I received a few days ago, was most acceptable to me; it gave me no small joy, when I heard formerly of your design, and saw your rules, whereof I heartily approve. I desire to bless God that in this degenerate age when atheism, infidelity, and all kinds of wickedness abound, and especially amongst the younger sort, he of his mercy should incline the hearts of any, and you in particular, to venture out in the ways of God. You have begun well; may you still go forward in your Christian course! You will no doubt meet with solicitations from Satan, your corrupt nature, and a wicked world, to give over the enterprise, but stronger is he that is for you than all your enemies. Beware, I entreat you, of grieving the Holy Spirit, by returning to folly.



Great is the danger of backsliding; as will appear, if you consider these Scriptures: Luke 9:62, 'No man having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God'; Heb. 10:36, 'If any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him'; 2 Pet. 2:21, 'It had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after they have known it, to depart from the holy commandment delivered to them.'

It is grace alone that establishes the heart. They that have no root, may 'endure for a while; but, when tribulation or persecution arises, they are ready to be 'offended.' I shall offer some advice, which by the blessing of God, I hope, may be of use to you.

1. *Study to be well acquainted with the natural wickedness of your own heart; this is a good, if not a distinguishing mark betwixt a Christian and a hypocrite: The former will trace sin to its source, but the latter only seeks to restrain his open vices, which would expose him to the world. Let your search be diligent and accurate, and cry to God that he may try your heart and reins. You now run a very dangerous part of your race; youth adds a double strength to corruption, and gives temptation great advantage.*

2. *Endeavour frequently to take a serious back-look of your younger years. Reflect on the many sins and follies that there stand in record against you; and cry with your whole heart to God that he may give you grace to mourn over them with real bitterness of soul.*

3. *You must not rest here (for a sorrow for sin, as some vainly imagine, will never atone for it) but cry earnestly to God, whom you have offended, for mercy and pardon. You have often heard of precious Christ, and his righteousness, who is daily offered to you in the glorious Gospel. O plead for a day of his power, making all of you willing to embrace him. Receive him wholly in all his offices, as your alone and complete Saviour, desiring to 'be found in him, not having your own righteousness which is of the law, but the righteousness of God which is by faith in Christ.' And endeavour to live a life of faith upon him; and O that out of his fullness you may be daily receiving, and grace for grace!*

4. *Count what religion may cost you. It is easy professing Christ in a time of prosperity; but when such days come as I have seen (and from which may the Lord ever preserve this poor land!) I am afraid that many would go back. But lay your account with the very worst that can happen, and resolve through grace to cleave to Christ, his truth and way all your days, Acts 11:23.*

5. *Daily read and endeavour to be well acquainted with the holy Scriptures, from which you may draw true wisdom and real knowledge.*

6. *Study soundness in faith; and, for this end, read sound books; make the Confession of Faith and Catechisms perfectly your own: shun the company of such as are either of unsound principles or unsuitable conversation. It was a good advice of worthy Mr Dyer, 'Hear the best ministers: read the best books; and keep the best company.'*

7. *Wait close upon God in the way of his ordinances. Be frequent and fervent in prayer; and 'in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God.' He is a faithful friend, and able and willing to help. Be often putting up heart-felt ejaculations, which may be of great use for fixing hearts when employed in the affairs of this world. Watch over your hearts in the time of duty, and pray that God may by his Holy Spirit make the Word effectual for your salvation.*

8. *Let your discourse be savoury, your whole conversation grave and circumspect, suitable to the profession you have made. Remember you have many eyes upon you: The wicked will have their eyes upon you, waiting for your halting, and, if you carry not suitably, will be ready to reproach the ways of God on your account; the eyes of the godly are upon you, who will rejoice to see you walking in God's ways, and will be grieved for every slip that you make; the eye of conscience is always upon you; but above all, the eye of a holy and jealous God, to whom you must give an account of all your actions; wherefore endeavour to approve yourselves to him.*

9. *You are now setting out into the world in some one profession or other: Be diligent and faithful in your respective businesses. Beware of idleness and sloth, which is the mother of all vices: And let the glory of God, and your being useful in your generation be still in your view; and pray to him for success in your lawful endeavours.*

These directions I give, as most necessary for you in all circumstances. I shall conclude with a few advices to you in your present situation:

First, *Keep your meetings punctually. Secondly, Observe your rules strictly; and, if any thing be blame-worthy in the conduct of any member, admonish him in love. Thirdly, Be edifying in your conversation; and, for that end, always choose in your meetings, some head of divinity for discourse. Fourthly, I recommend to you humility. Be not lifted up, as if you were beyond others, since the Lord has done good to your souls: 'What have ye that ye have not received? and if ye have received it, why are ye proud?' 1 Cor. 4:7. Fifthly, Take heed whom you admit as members of your Society. Let them be of pious inclinations, sound in their principles, of a suitable walk, and such as will not spread what is among you, and such as are zealous for the interest of Christ.*

I take your writing to me very kindly; and, if in any thing you need my advice and counsel, pray let me know, and it shall not be wanting. I conclude with the words of the Apostle, 1 Thess. 5:23: 'The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, soul, and body may be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

*John Bonar, Torphichen, April 14th, 1740.*



# Children's Corner



Dear Children,

A Happy New Year to you!

As I wish you this greeting, and pray for it as well, I would like you to stop for a while and ask yourself what you think would make you happy in 2024. Would it be to have lots more toys? Or perhaps lots more cakes and sweets? Or maybe even a lot of money so that you could buy lots of different things?

Many people make a big mistake because they think that getting more and more things in this world will make them 'happy'. That's why they spend their whole lives trying to get more and more things, usually more expensive things, and often bigger things but, sadly, the happiness they find when they get these things only lasts for a very short time and it gets even harder to be really happy next time.

Christ tells us to make sure that our real 'treasure' (the things we value most) are spiritual and heavenly things and not the things of this world: He said, 'Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also' (Matthew 6: 19-21).

The Bible tells us how someone can be happy and contented not just for one year or for twenty years - but forever! You can look up Psalm 146 verse 5 and fill in the words in the blanks below to find out how!

\_\_\_\_\_ is \_\_\_ who has the \_\_\_\_\_ of \_\_\_\_\_ for his \_\_\_\_\_,

Whose \_\_\_\_\_ is in the \_\_\_\_\_ his \_\_\_\_\_.

Try and learn it now and pray that this verse would be true for you in 2024.

Here is another verse that teaches us how to be truly happy. Look up the verse and fill in the missing words.

Proverbs 16 verse 20

\_\_\_ who \_\_\_\_\_ the word \_\_\_\_\_ will find \_\_\_\_\_, And whoever \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_,

happy is \_\_\_.

8 May God give you this happiness.

With my love and prayers,

Mrs S