



February 2024 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,

One way of understanding and evaluating a culture is by noting the people and the events it chooses to memorialise and those it is content to forget.

Last year (2023) saw the centenary of the sailing of the *Metagama* which carried around 300 Lewis emigrants to the brave new world of Ontario, Canada. Of the 300, twenty were women while the rest were almost all young men with an average age of twenty-two.

Of course, it is right and natural to memorialise such an event: the sense of loss felt in the island was palpable, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the loss of nearly 2,000 men in the war, followed by the loss of a further 201 in the tragic events surrounding the Iolaire disaster. Last year, anyone unaware of the 1923 emigration would have their ignorance dispelled by an abundance of articles, events, programmes and exhibitions designed both to bring the events to remembrance for some and to retell the story for others.

As this year came in, however, I couldn't help but wonder if our culture – or even our churches – would remember or commemorate an important bi-centenary this year, marking an event of profound and enduring significance for the island. That event was the Lewis revival of 1824, the revival which, more than any other, deserves to be known as the Lewis revival – one which was described by Professor George Smeaton (an accurate writer, notably free from any tendency to exaggeration) as possibly the purest revival in the history of the Scottish church (in speaking of 'purity', Smeaton would be referring to the absence of spurious accompanying phenomena as well as long-lasting spiritual fruit). Indeed, I remember one of the late ministers in our island telling me that he was persuaded, as were others, that we were still living in the long afterglow of the 1824 revival, one which made a deep, spiritual impression upon the consciousness of the island.

As well as being commemorated, the story of the revival needs to be retold to the present generation. There is insufficient space to do so here (perhaps I might attempt a lecture later in the spring), but it is worth noting the salient facts as a context for deeper study.

Although there were stirrings prior to the induction of Rev Alexander Macleod to the parish of Uig, the beginnings of the revival are normally related to the preaching of that remarkable man of God. Apart from the small 'stirrings' referred to, the parish was largely in spiritual darkness, the religion of the island having degenerated into a dead form without any life or power. Although there was still a fairly strong tradition of church attendance, the gospel message had degenerated into a lukewarm moralism and those who sat at the Lord's Table (all too often, their only attendance in the year) lived very carelessly, thinking little of swearing, lying and profaning the Sabbath. Notoriously, it was a common sight to see church goers buying and selling tobacco and whisky at the church door on the Lord's Day.

Although several hundred would receive communion, such was the ignorance amongst them and in the wider community that Alexander Macleod – much to the annoyance of the Lewis Presbytery – suspended the communion shortly after his arrival. Although he didn't intend this suspension to be for long, it was to last until 1827. Famously, at the first communion after resuming the Lord's Supper, only six individuals came to the Lord's Table! The Presbytery was concerned at the nature of the preaching that had brought about such a result and became hostile to Alexander Macleod. For many people today, as for the Presbytery then, that would be viewed as gross management of the congregation's affairs and a sure sign that the church was dying. However, on the contrary, the congregation had come to life!

The intervening years, marked by prayerful, powerful, awakening, direct and discriminatory preaching had brought hundreds of people to real seriousness about the Christian religion and the state of their own souls before God. Requests came for extra prayer meetings (it appeared that people couldn't have enough of them) and house meetings as well as additional services and lectures. These meetings were full to overflowing and the spiritual temperature rose remarkably.

Many hungry souls, enduring lukewarm or 'moderate' ministries elsewhere on the island, heard that bread was to be found in the parish of Uig and they began to visit there on the Sabbath from as far as Point and Ness. Such was the earnestness in the congregation and in the gatherings that copious tears were shed, and it was sometimes

difficult for the minister to continue speaking.

Several godly men, some of whom were later to become ministers, became highly effective teachers, both in the local schools (which the church planted, such was the need and demand for them) and in the Sabbath schools – all of these schools becoming spiritual nurseries for the 600 or so pupils to be found in them.

If the first communion after ‘suspension’ only saw six coming to the Lord’s Table, on the following year, remarkably, the communion in Uig was attended by nearly 9,000 people! In 1933, an even greater number, including many from Harris and Uist, were in attendance. Like the write to the Hebrews, ‘time would fail me’ to detail how this revival of evangelical religion found its way into nearly every part of the island, with effects still discernible today.

In calling these things to mind, we feel like Elisha when he said, ‘Where is the Lord God of Elijah?’ The younger prophet was so deeply conscious of how the Lord’s works appeared to be so bound up with the intercession and ministry of that great prophet who had preceded him, the prophet whose prayers God had answered with fire and with rain. But God answered Elisha’s question by dividing the waters for him, assuring him that he would be present with him also. James, the Lord’s brother, reminds us that Elijah was a man like ourselves – but that he prayed. And he assures us that the fervent prayer of a righteous man ‘avails much’ (James 4:16). Revivals are always preceded by prayer – can we not all pray our part in that?

Lewis made a deliberate effort to remember 1923 – will it do the same for 1824?

Your minister

NEWS & EVENTS

FEBRUARY COMMUNIONS

The Communion Services are due to take place in the congregation from 15th-19th February.

The Lord’s Day services will be held in the Bridge Centre. All other services will be held in the Gospel Hall, Bayhead. The preachers and service times are detailed, as follows:

Thursday 15th February 7.30pm—Rev Kenneth Stewart

Friday 16th February 7.30pm—Rev Kenneth Stewart

Saturday 17th February 11.00am—Rev Donald Macdonald

Saturday 17th February 6.30pm—Prayer Meeting

Lord’s Day 18th February 11.00am — Rev Kenneth Stewart

Lord’s Day 18th February 6.30pm— Rev Kenneth Stewart

Monday 19th February 7.30pm—Rev Kenneth Stewart



THE GAMBIA PARTNERSHIP—BIBLE DISTRIBUTION

Samuel Mendy, from the Gambian committee, has recently been distributing Bibles in the North Bank region of Gambia, where Bibles are hard to come by.

Pray that the Bibles would be a blessing to these believers, that they would be built up in their faith and in turn be witnesses of Christ in the North Bank. “Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). Here are a few photos of those in receipt of Bibles.



BRIKAMA RP CHURCH, THE GAMBIA

Please continue to remember Brikama RP Church in Gambia as they reach out with the Gospel and the reformed faith. The following are some recent photos taken during and after worship.

To hear Pastor Konteh’s sermons, visit:

www.sermonaudio.com/solo/brikamarpchurch



MAKING SPIRITUAL PROGRESS

The Christian walk is characterised by newness of life and closeness to the Lord. Yet as time goes by, those who are in the way can grow conscious of distance from the Lord as well as a degree of lifelessness and lack of energy for the journey. At significant milestones, it can help to refocus on our priorities and remind ourselves of the things that will assist our progress and reduce hindrances. Samuel Rutherford is a pilgrim who shared what he himself had learned on the way to help those coming behind to make better progress. The following updated excerpt comes from a recently published book called *Daily Walking With God*. It was originally titled “Some Helps for a More Exact and Close Walking with God.”



SET ASIDE TIME FOR THE WORD AND PRAYER

Give some hours of the day, maybe more, maybe less, to read God’s Word, and to pray. Prefer these activities to the greatest affairs and employments of your calling, even if you spend the shortest time in them. Let the firstfruits of your morning thoughts smell of such religious duties, excluding all else till they have taken possession.

HAVE OCCASIONAL SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS DURING WORK

In the midst of worldly employments let there be some thoughts of sin, judgment, death, eternity, and God’s free love, with a word or two of prayer to God.

AVOID DISCOURAGEMENT IN PRAYER

Do not grudge it even if you come away from prayer without sense, or downcast, or a sense of guiltiness. Instead let this sharpen your appetite for another hearing, and do not rest on what you have already done.

KEEP THE WHOLE OF THE LORD’S DAY HOLY

Spend the Lord’s day from morning till night always in private or public worship, even taking account of the smallest thoughts, as this day is set apart from the rest of the days of the week for the Lord’s worship only, as not being lawful to have our own thoughts.

AVOID IDLE THOUGHTS

Observe and avoid wandering and idle thoughts, as they are the harbingers of unsavoury speech, and ushers to profane actions.

AVOID WONDERING THOUGHTS IN PRAYER

Beware of wandering of heart in private and public prayer to God. In private, make your heart go along with your tongue, and in public have hearty joining, as if you felt the present necessity pressing you to it. Also join in praises with a feeling heart, proceeding from a principle of love, to exalt His glory.

AVOID ALL KNOWN SIN

Eschew all revealed sins and whatever things are against the conscience, as most dangerous preparatives to hardness of heart. Always be governed by your conscience, rather than conscience being governed by you. Have integrity in dealings with others.

HAVE INTEGRITY IN DEALING WITH OTHERS

In dealing with others, whether in agreements or business, have a regard for sincerity, and make conscience of idle words and lying. Let us behave in such a way that they shall speak honourably of our sweet Master, and not in any way that would damage our profession. The life we live should correspond to the outward show, so that not only in appearance but in reality we may be true Christians.

SPEND TIME IN SPIRITUAL COMPANY

Frequent most the company of those with whom the soul may be most benefited. Develop all conversations in a way that contributes to spiritual usefulness, striving to edify one another in mutual confidences, cherishing heavenly thoughts, and sympathizing with the sufferings of our mother the church. In all your prayers hold up her (the church's) condition to the Lord, and the condition of one another.

AVOID GODLESS COMPANY

Eschew the company of the profane and "those who are without," unless it is for the purpose of bringing them into the knowledge of Christ, by convincing their judgments. In no wise abstain from challenging their erroneous vices, as choosing rather to incur their wrath than to let God's glory suffer in the least measure. Better to suffer in vindicating His cause than to be guilty by participating in sin that dishonours Him, for what you suffer in that, you suffer as a member of Christ.

MEDITATE FREQUENTLY ON THE WORD

Do not content yourself with morning and evening reading of God's Word and sacrifices of prayer. Rather, whatever you read or hear, digest it by meditation, and turn it over in praises oft-times a day, as occasion offers, not sparing your most important activities.

KEEP DAILY ACCOUNTS

Every night call your thoughts, words and actions to a strict account. See where you have omitted, gone back, stood still, or come short. With sorrow, promise and purpose to amend what has been amiss. Let this possess your night dreams, and then awaken with a desire to pray and praise.

SUBMIT TO GOD IN AFFLICTIONS

In afflictions or crosses, whether on body or mind or friends, often practice submission by acknowledging that nothing happens by accident, but by an overruling providence. Gather sweetness out of the bitterest portions, as things that serve to make you more heavenward, and do not drag Christ's cross, but bear it cheerfully.

AVOID HATRED EVEN TOWARDS ENEMIES

Keep well clear of vehemence, envy, hatred, desire of revenge, even against those who persecute the truth; for we often mix our zeal with our wildfire. Maintain charitable thoughts of those that are without, not being a slave of your passions, but commanding them, and let them express themselves most against your own corruption.

DAILY EXAMINE YOUR GROWTH IN GRACE

Daily assess your growth in grace. If you do not see it grow daily perceptibly, yet by testing you must find imperceptible growth [over time], otherwise doubt yourself. For as standing water goes bad, so grace not growing must decay, and then you would come short of your mark.

SUPPRESS IDLE THOUGHTS

When idle thoughts enter your heart, suppress them quickly, for they are like the thief that will open the door to the rest to break in till they become the strong man, and then act in a way which cannot be so easily resisted. It is best to smother them in the birth before they come to infancy, and far more before they come to such full strength that they can hardly be rooted up.

BE CONSISTENT IN RESOLUTIONS

Do not content yourself with flashes of good resolutions, before or after the sacrament, or in the heat of public or private ordinances, which are suddenly choked. These are like the seed among the corn, which spend their life in their birth. On the other hand, do not be discouraged with the clouds of God's absence. Rather judge for yourself what occasions it, still waiting patiently, not idly, under the cloud, till He break forth with the beams of His countenance to enlighten your deserted (but not rejected) condition.

DAILY EXAMINE EVERY THOUGHT

What if, if it were possible, you were to write every thought of the day, both good and bad, and, in order to make more conscience of them, you were to summon them before thee at night to be censured according to their demerits, persuading yourself to be so strictly examined before God's tribunal in the day of the Lord?

DENY SELF IN ORDER TO BE CHRIST'S

Do not let idol-self have such a reigning power in you, but rather dismiss it in disgrace, so that Christ may take possession. To be less your own is to be more His. This will oblige you to be more painstaking about mortifying your sin and putting on the new man.

RESIST DOUBTS AND UNBELIEF

Strive against doubting. If you lack feeling of faith, complain bitterly for the lack of it, and seek out where the sin that hinders it is lurking. Use all means by which you can get the Lord's countenance, and no less to entertain it.

Excerpt taken from **Daily Walking With God**, by **Samuel Rutherford**, Reformation Press (2022)

FATHER, IF IT BE POSSIBLE

"I remember the first time I ever sat at the Lord's table...There was an old minister preaching (he had been born and bred in St Kilda. He was preaching the sermon leading up to the administration, the taking, of the supper, and his text was, 'Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me.'

He was painting a very vivid picture. (This is the kind of man he was; he didn't bother about polishing his sermons or looking for all the fancy words, but he built eye-pictures).

He said, 'here is a father, the eternal father, and His hand comes down and it is holding a cup. Look at the cup, it is full, and it's full of the wrath of a holy and almighty God. And look', he said 'there's the shepherd of the sheep, and He is stretching out His hand. He takes it and He shrinks and He draws back His hand and He looks up and says, "Father, if it be possible." 'But no,' he said, 'His hands go up, He is taking it and He is putting it to His lips.' Then he said, 'Do you know what He is doing? He is drinking it to the dregs.'

Then he stopped for a long time, and He said very quietly, 'And what's he doing with it now? He's licking it clean.' Then, 'what's He doing with it now? He's filling it up, He is pouring into it and it's beginning to flow over. And what is He pouring into the cup? Eternal love! And now He is holding it out, and what's He doing with it? He's handing it to you believer. "This is my body, broken for you." That's the shepherd.

Excerpt from **The Lord Our Shepherd** by **J Douglas Macmillan**
Contributed by Bill Lucas

Children's Corner



Dear Children,

I'm sure you all enjoyed the snow in January? I hope you got an opportunity to go sledging, sliding, snowballing and building snowmen! It is so much fun as long as the temperature doesn't go too low because, if it does, your nose and lips could freeze and you could get frostbite which is very sore. Human skin can freeze at temperatures just below 0 degrees centigrade but, amazingly, some of God's creatures can survive in temperatures as low as -50 degrees centigrade! The Emperor penguin is one of them and I want to tell you a little bit about this special penguin.

You can recognise the Emperor Penguins because their beaks and flippers are smaller than other penguins' beaks and flippers (take a close look at the picture!). As well as that, God has designed them to have two layers of feathers and a thick layer of fat so that they would lose less heat. God made them that way because He has a very special task for them in the very cold temperatures of Antarctica. What task is that?

Well, the male Emperor penguin, who is slightly larger than the female, has to stay standing in exactly the same place, day and night, for over two months with the egg balanced on its feet, covering the egg with its feathers to keep it warm! During these two months, the winds can reach 200km/hr and the temperature can fall as low as -50 degrees centigrade and all this time, the penguin survives on the body fat it has been storing for months. After the chick is born the male Emperor continues to keep the chick warm till the female returns.



Now, God is the perfect architect, engineer, physicist, biologist and chemist - and He does all things well! It is God that has designed your fathers too! He has given them strength and abilities which they use for your benefit because they love you. If they are well enough to work, they work hard at their jobs to make sure you have food and clothes, a warm and comfortable home, a church - and so much more! They give up their time and use their energy for you. They often have to be cold so that you can be warm, and they are often wet so that you can be dry. Have you ever thought about these things? Maybe you have never thought of how much your father (and your mother) does for you?

God commands us in Psalm 103 v 2 to 'forget not all His benefits'. It would be a good challenge for you to make two lists, one for your father and the other for your mother, of things they do for you so that you can thank them, and thank God, for all the love they give you.

May you be richly blessed.

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With my love my prayers.

Mrs S