



June 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,

As you are no doubt aware, the Scottish government recently launched a consultation regarding their proposal to outlaw so-called 'conversion therapy'. The proposal, as it stands, would make it illegal for anyone to encourage other people to adopt a biblical approach to sexuality irrespective of what their existing sexual inclination and practices are. Clearly, this would forbid the normal work of biblical preaching and teaching in churches as well as the work of ordinary Christian parenting and witnessing.

On behalf of the session, I responded to the consultation and thought it might be helpful to include the response in our newsletter. The consultation was a lengthy document, but I am only inserting the response to the main question followed then by some further answers which I have summarised. Our main response was as follows:

'As the ruling body of the Reformed Presbyterian Church in Stornoway, Isle of Lewis, and having the authority to act in this capacity, we are thankful for the opportunity to participate in this consultation.

As a congregation of Christians, while we believe in a society governed by Christian principles, it is these very principles which could not endorse the kind of coercive or abusive practices which are, presumably, in the minds of those who drafted this legislation.

However, in common with similarly intended legislation (such as was drafted in connection with the subsequently abandoned 'named person' scheme), we believe these proposals are intrusive into both family and private life; that they lack clarity and precision at several key points and, as such, open the door to grave abuse; that they involve prejudicial vocabulary; that, as they stand, they would criminalise pastors and other Christian counsellors for expressing what has been mainstream biblical and Christian teaching for over 2,000 years; that, in their bearing upon children and minors, they contravene the human rights of parents as provided for in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

First, then, we note – as was the case, again, with the 'named persons' scheme referenced earlier – the unwarranted and unwelcome reach of the legislation into the domain of private and family life. The government of the state ought to respect the governments of both the family and the church and refrain from impinging on their God-given and historically recognised respective sovereignties.

It is our belief, aside from our specific concerns below, that the proposed legislation will, effectively, create a climate of fear, with the possibility of being reported and prosecuted for the mere expression of views regarding sexual identity or orientation becoming all too real. This is a serious departure from what was previously understood to constitute freedom in our society.

Second, as regards the lack of precision and resultant lack of clarity, we note the following:

Fundamentally, and in spite of the claim that clarity is being provided, we remain unclear as to what – precisely – is meant by 'conversion therapy' and what particular practices would be rendered lawful or unlawful under this proposed legislation. In this case, the devil is in the lack of detail.

Again, the legislation also proceeds on the assumption that there is universal agreement regarding 'gender identity', which is very far indeed from being the case. Significantly, at least as far as we understand, the term does not appear in any legislation in this country and, with that in mind, these proposals are establishing a legal usage of a highly contested term – without a valid basis for doing so – and using that particular understanding of the term to criminalise those who disagree with it. In other words, anyone counselling from a different perspective of 'gender identity', one which has not been proven invalid, will automatically be caught by the legislation.

Third, and still in connection with vocabulary, the use of the term 'conversion therapy' is not at all helpful. To be precise, we feel constrained to question the adoption of the term 'conversion' – with its clear religious connotations – in these proposals. This term, the use of which could easily have been avoided in favour of other suitable words, increases the suspicion that, despite claims to the contrary, the legislation has been promoted by those who are targeting the regular ministry of faith groups and of the Christian churches in particular. It is a fact that 'conversion' is a well-established term of turning towards a faith, particularly in our society, both historically and currently, turning towards the Christian faith and is equivalent to 'repentance' and involves a comprehensive change of lifestyle.

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Fourth, this concept of 'conversion' explains why the proposals would criminalise pastors and other Christian counsellors for expressing what has been mainstream biblical and Christian teaching for over 2,000 years: It is, simply, the duty of every Christian, particularly ministers or pastors, acting on Christ's command, to call people to 'conversion' or 'repentance'.

To demonstrate the incompatibility between this legislation and regular Christian practice, it is worth noting the attempt in the proposals to reassure ordinary Christians and ministers that they have nothing to fear, since they will continue to be able to issue ‘non-directive’ guidance. However, to Christians, this assurance is just about as far from reassuring as it could be! The Christian call to change is, in its very nature, a directive one, and one which lies at the heart of the Christian message whether it is shared in personal, family (particularly, parents to children), communal, public and worship settings.

Indeed, the attempt to assure Christians by saying that they can continue to offer ‘non-directive’ guidance only serves to convince us that it is, in fact, the ordinary work of the church which is being targeted here for prohibition – and not the abuse of it, as we are often led to believe.

This conviction is only deepened when we note the frequency with which ordinary people, in pursuit of their ordinary lives and callings, are assured that it is unlikely that they will be in breach of this law. It seems to us that such assurances would not be required if the proposed legislation was clear and well defined – which, of course, only serves to highlight the fact that it is the same lack of definition and precision which makes it possible for these very people to be criminalised. In other words, the very vagueness of the law, which requires so much assurance to be given, is the very vagueness which will catch ordinary people in its net. The legislation protests its innocence too much.

Fifth, we believe that this prohibition of ‘directive’ guidance is in breach of Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights and that, if legislation needs to come before the courts, we pray that it will be found to be so. Previous attempts to legislate in the realm of religion have already foundered on this rock, and this is likely to be another: Article 9 expressly safeguards the right to public and private manifestations of belief in ‘worship, teaching, practice and observance’.

Finally, we are disappointed, if not altogether surprised, that the consultation document views the ‘conversion therapy’ legislation in Victoria, Australia as a model to follow rather than an extremity to be avoided. The accompanying guidance to that legislation specifies the following examples as being in breach of the law: ‘A religious leader telling a member of their congregation – with the intent to induce that person to change or suppress their sexuality – that they will be excommunicated if they continue their same-sex relationship...’; and ‘...a parent rejecting the recommendations of qualified health professionals and refusing to support their child’s request for medical treatment that will prevent physical changes from puberty that do not align with the child’s gender identity, because the parent believes it is against nature and a boy should be a boy and a girl should be a girl’.

These examples confirm that Christians will be made to feel that this proposed legislation is intended only to allow them to affirm the choices of those who are already inclining towards ‘transitioning’. Those of us committed to historic biblical Christianity are not prepared to accept this and will continue to proclaim the grace of God to all in a directive way.

On these, and on other grounds, we strongly object to the proposed legislation.

Some additional information also included in our response:

The proposals would outlaw the ‘suppression’ of the sexuality of children and minors by ‘controlling’ their clothing or make-up or controlling where they may choose to go or who they may choose to see. However, we strongly believe that this is a clear intrusion into the rights of parents and an infringement of these rights. Parents will be shocked to discover that their ordinary parenting is suddenly to be viewed as ‘controlling’ and ‘coercive’ – and in their belief that they should instruct their children in these matters, they can appeal to the Bible, to common sense and to their human rights as secured by the European Convention. Are we to assume that forbidding children access to pornography would also be suppression of their sexuality – irrespective of whether that pornography was ‘straight’ or ‘gay’?

We note, also, that the proposals include encouraging celibacy as an example of suppression. However, historic Christianity has taught the suppression of the sexual impulse until marriage and the lawful expression of sexuality as being within it. The proposals would mean that a Christian minister or counsellor, counselling sexual abstinence to someone who had voluntarily sought their counsel, and who wished to follow biblical teaching on sexuality but was struggling to do so, would be in breach of this legislation.

Of course, a Christian leader teaching that failure to ‘repent’ carries eternal penal repercussions for those who reject that call (as faithful Christian teachers will do) will most certainly be viewed as coercive – as would the sanction of withholding communion from those in a same-sex relationship or forbidding a transsexual from becoming a minister – and many other similar scenarios.

Again, the proposed package of criminal and civil measures to address conversion therapy are both unnecessary and draconian:

They are unnecessary because Scots law (including child protection and vulnerable persons protection as well as the Equality Act of 2010 and the Convention on Human Rights) currently outlaws threatening or abusive behaviour; harassment; conduct deemed to be degrading and resulting in psychological suffering as well as any aggravations deemed to be present by police on the ground of sexual orientation. These laws already outlaw abusive and coercive conversion and no more laws are required.

They are draconian in their recommendation of a maximum sentence of seven years: In this way, a conversion practice acknowledged to be less than 'threatening' or 'abusive' (and which would, if it was threatening or abusive, carry a maximum five-year penalty) is deemed worthy of a seven-year maximum. This means that a lesser offence carries a greater punishment! Needless to say, we are strongly opposed to a potential seven-year sentence for Christian workers, ministers and parents who are merely living out a biblical ethic.

Again, it should be noted that the standard of proof for obtaining an order follows the civil standard rather than the criminal standard - deliberately so, in order that it might be easier to obtain one. However, violating the civil order – which would ordinarily incur civil penalties – brings a criminal penalty! This is unjust. And it also opens the door to the easy and constant pursuit of Christian leaders by activists through the courts. Evidence already exists of local authorities coming under pressure from activists to cancel significant evangelistic events. It is not hard to conceive of those same activists putting pressure on local authorities and the police to acquire pre-emptive conversion practice civil orders to cancel events of a similar kind or, perhaps, the more regular work of churches.

Also, the role of the 'third party' in this legislation is sinister as well. Consider the following scenario: Person A begins to attend a church where she voluntarily seeks guidance on matters pertaining to sexual orientation or gender identity. Person B, believing that the church is a 'cult' may then apply for a court order to prevent the church interacting with Person A - thus destroying her religious freedom.

We believe that the ordinary work of the church, in teaching and practicing biblical ethics, is always reasonable unless it is carried out in threatening or abusive manner and should not, therefore, be criminalised.

These proposals appear designed to obliterate the proclamation of the historic Christian faith and it is increasingly impossible to see them in any other way. We further suspect that binding the churches in this way is a plain infringement on the liberties of the church in Scotland as guaranteed by historic Scottish law, subsequently guaranteed by the Treaty of Union and, indeed, by other subsequent legislation.'

These responses to the consultation should highlight for us, I hope, the magnitude of the issues involved. Please pray that these proposals will be defeated and that the Lord would have mercy upon us as an increasingly decadent nation.

Your minister

NEWS & EVENTS

GOOD NEWS FOR EVERYONE—ANNUAL RALLY

GOOD NEWS for Everyone! (formerly Gideons UK) - Western Isles Branch Annual Rally

Associated Presbyterian Church, Stornoway

Friday 7 June 2024 at 7.30 pm

Main speaker: Bill Thomas, former National President

All Welcome - refreshments served afterwards



If anyone was unable to attend, Rev Kenneth Stewart recently gave a lecture entitled **Christian Education Explained**, which is available on the Providence Christian School YouTube channel.

Providence Christian School have a number of news items, including an appeal for clothing donations, a Light Lunch and an upcoming Pilgrims Progress adaptation event, as per below:

Could you help us?



Clothing donations needed!

As part of an upcoming fundraising clothing sale, we are looking for donations of clothing to be sold to raise funds for Providence Christian School.

We require:

Clothing for: Women, Men, Teens, Children and Babies

Only clothing in very good condition please!

Please drop off clothes between 27th May-1st June at Providence Christian School or Kinloch Free Church Manse, HS29LA



Light Lunch

FUNDRAISER FOR

PROVIDENCE CHRISTIAN SCHOOL

SATURDAY 8TH JUNE

12PM-2PM

MA MEMORIAL HALL




PROVIDENCE SCHOOL PRESENTS AN ADAPTATION OF

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

MONDAY 17TH JUNE

6PM

THE FAILTE CENTRE



AN INTERVIEW WITH REV DAVID ZADOK

Rev David Zadok is the minister of *Grace and Truth*, a congregation located in Kannot, Israel. Following our minister's recent articles on Israel and Palestine in our April and May newsletters, we were grateful for the opportunity to interview Rev Zadok.

Can you provide a brief background about yourself and how you came to Christ?

I was born in Israel to both Iraqi (Babylonian) Jews parents. From the age of three I grow up in Iran with my uncle and aunt. At age of 17, due to the Islamic revolution in Iran, my family sent me to San Diego, California. It was there that through the ministry of Navigators and New Life OPC (Orthodox Presbyterian Church), that the Lord converted me and was baptized there.

Are there any distinguishing marks of a call to the Gospel ministry? How did you come to conclude that the Lord had called you into the ministry?

Soon after the Lord granted me a new heart and a new life, I had a desire to share the Gospel to my family, friends and Jewish people. What the Lord ignited in my heart, was that at first when I heard the Gospel, I said to myself, "if this is true, than how is that for 17 years not in Israel, not in Iran and not anyone in my family and circle of friends have ever told me or heard of this. That was the beginning of the call, and later at age of 29 I was elected as an elder in our church. And have been serving the same church as elder, and as pastor since then. And also as the director of HaGefen Publishing.

The call to full time ministry was given to me on my second year of my theological studies at the Westminster Seminary in California.

You serve the Lord as the Minister of a Reformed congregation in Israel. Where is the congregation based and when was it planted?

It is based in Kannot, not far from Ashdod, and it was established in 1976 by its founding pastor Baruch Maoz.

What are the greatest blessings and challenges you have experienced in Gospel ministry in Israel?

The greatest blessing has been to see the faithfulness of the Lord to the generations. Having been in the church as an elder for 34 years, I have seen people coming to faith, and I had the privilege of baptizing them, then marrying them and now seeing their children serving in the Lord.

The greatest challenge is the dark history of Christianity and the "Christian church" against the Jews (the crusaders, inquisition, programs, Holocaust, and other horrible events), that was done to the Jews. It makes the work of outreach very challenging. In addition for too many centuries, Jewish Mission was under the radar of the Church. And the Jews were either were accused of being Jesus killers or ignored totally for evangelism. Thankfully that was changed in the 19th century in Scotland and England and later on in other places.

Does your congregation engage in Foreign Mission?

Mainly through supporting missionaries outside of Israel and particularly to non-Jews. In the past we had a short term missionary from our church in Turkey reaching to Iranians and Jewish people there.

How ought we to understand the current conflict in Israel from a spiritual perspective?

Ever since Genesis 3 a horrible war was declared which divided the world between two seeds – that of the Woman and that of the serpent. The Scriptures of both Old and New Testament clearly shows us how the two seeds were in constant battle, Ishmael and Isaac, Jacob and Esau and on and on. Too often Satan tried to destroy the seed of the woman, that was to come from the Jewish people (Pharoah, Philistines, Haman, and many others). Even at the birth of Christ, and in the beginning of his public ministry, Satan tried to destroy and frustrate his mission, but failed – the Seed of the Woman indeed bruised the seed of the serpent.

So the current conflict, and in fact all the conflicts since the establishment of Israel is about what began in Genesis 3. God is not done yet with Israel, Jewish people and Jerusalem and it is at epicenter of God's redemptive plan. Satan knows this and tries to do all it can to frustrate it. You can see the hatred of Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis in Yemen, and all the antisemitic demonstrations all over and in these days in acute ways in USA top universities.

Why don't the Jewish people accept Christ as the Messiah?

Coming to faith is the work of the Holy Spirit, and its timing, how and who has been determined by the Father before the creation of the world. So, that is the main reason, but secondary, the history that I mentioned earlier has made it challenging. And thirdly the Rabbis in the generation past and now have successfully been able to make a clear distinction between Judaism and Christianity, and have removed any connections to it. We often say that the best kept secret in Israel, is that Jesus was a Jew!

Does the Lord have a particular purpose for the Jewish people?

Emphatically Yes! As Paul so clearly states it in Romans 9 -11, who follows the directive of Christ Himself, who came first and foremost to the "Lost House of Israel." We, as Jewish people were and are still called to be a light to the nations. We have done it much in many areas, like agriculture, medicine, security, solar systems, high tech and many other areas; however, we have not been a light to the world when it comes to spiritual aspect of life. And the fulfilment of Ezekiel 8:23 and Romans 11:25-26 are yet to come. So, yes God still have a particular purpose for his covenant people of old, the Jewish people. And this of course is not because we are any better than other people, but only because of faithfulness of God to His promises and covenants.

How many Christians are living in Israel today?

Some estimates us as 30,000, others around 20,000. The population of Israel is roughly, about 10 million, of whom some 20% are Arabs. But here is what is more interesting in those numbers:

In 1948 when Israel become a state the population of Israel was roughly 800,000, and the number of Jewish Christians were about maybe 24. So, while the population of the country grow by 12 fold, the population of Jewish Christians grew by 1000 fold!

What is the state of the Church in Israel? What kind of presence and ministry does the Reformed Church have?

The church in Israel is on the rise, not just in numbers but also influence and presence. Certainly the October 7th war with Hamas made it very clear, as a large number of believers were serving in the various combat units, both as reservists and active duty. Four believing soldiers were killed and at least two were injured severely. Many Messianic Jews are in various positions in high tech, business including owning and running them, as well in other areas like medical, education and other areas. The influence of the body of Messiah has increased significantly over the years.

For many years, our church Grace and Truth, was the only reformed church with a confession that was based on some of the principles of Westminster. Today there are nine churches that are part of the Reformed Churches Fellowship and I have the honour of chairing it.

What is HaGefen Publishing company?

HaGefen Publishing was established in 1974, and its roots, and history goes back to the famous Robert Murray M'Cheyne. The goal of HaGefen is to support the churches in Israel in their God given task of evangelism and discipleship. We publish reformed books written by puritans and others. HaGefen has

been the first to publish commentaries by Matthew Henry, and Spurgeon's Checkbook of Faith, as well M'Cheyne's Robert's Song Book, John Bunyans' Pilgrims Progress and Holy War. But also some contemporary pastors and authors, including Arthur Pink, J. I. Packer, Mark Jones, Sinclair Ferguson, Paul Washer, R. C. Sproul and many others.

What resulted from the Mission of Enquiry to the Jews from the Church of Scotland in 1839?

The fact that the Church among the Jews and in the land of Israel exists today is the result of the Mission of Enquiry that started in 1838. The passion of godly people like M'Cheyne and Bonar and others, together with their understanding and commitment to scriptures and Jewish Mission rekindled the fire that for too many centuries was deemed and almost distinguished.

I believe that the Reformation of the 15th and 16th century and the Puritan's passion for Israel, the "Puritan Hope" brought an unprecedented transformation in world evangelism and in a true way began the missionary movement. The result of that transformation in the church was also the desire to preach and present the Gospel also to the Jewish people, and in fact to them first.

Are there any books you would recommend, concerning the Church in Israel and the Jewish people?

There are certainly a few good books that I can recommend. Here is the list that includes a variety of topics related to Israel, the Jews and the Church:

- 1) The Puritan Hope by Ian Murray (He was for a few years assistance to Dr. Llyod Jones at Westminster Chapel in England)
- 2) Romans 11: To God's Glory by Lloyd-Jones, D. Martyn
- 3) How The Church Lost The Way ... and how it can find it again by Steve Maltz.
- 4) Immanuel in Our Place: Seeing Christ in Israel's Worship by Longman, Tremper III
- 5) God's Glory in Salvation through Judgment: A Biblical Theology by Hamilton, James.
- 6) Preaching Christ from Genesis: Foundations for Expository Sermons by Greidanus, Sidney.
- 7) Come, Let Us Reason Together: The Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the Church by Maoz, Baruch.
- 8) To the Jew First: The Case for Jewish Evangelism in Scripture and History by Darrell L. Bock and Mitch Glaser.
- 9) Jews Don't Need Jesus. . . and other Misconceptions: Reflections of a Jewish Believer by Avi Snyder.
- 10) Messianic Judaism is Not Christianity: A Loving Call to Unity by Stan Telchin
- 11) Time for Favour: Scottish Evangelism among the Jewish People: 1838-1852 by John S. Ross (I wrote an endorsement to it and this second edition is to be out in July).
- 12) The Alfred Edersheim The Temple - Its Ministry and Service by Alfred Edersheim.
- 13) Mission of Discovery: The Beginning of Modern Jewish Evangelism: Journal of M'Cheyne and Bonar's Mission of Inquiry by Andrew Bonar by Andrew Bonar; R. M. McCheyne.
- 14) John Stuart Conning: The Autobiography of John Stuart Conning with his 1927 book Our Jewish Neighbors by John Conning.

How can the Scottish Church take an active interest in the Lord's cause in Israel and His purposes for the Jewish people?

The Scottish Church in my opinion needs another reformation! It needs to ignite again the passion of its forefathers for the Jewish people. Part of taking active interest is becoming informed of the "Living Stones" in the land, and by praying for the growth of the church in Israel and among the Jewish people in the world. Their return would be even a greater blessing to the church and certainly for the Scottish Church.



Rev David Zadok

Children's Corner



Dear Children,

This is your minister writing to you! Mrs. S will be back next month but, just for this month, I am taking her place.

Look at the picture on this page. Have you any idea what it is? Believe it or not, it's a picture of the moon! It looks very different to other pictures of the moon, doesn't it? Why do you think it looks like that?



Well, the reason it looks so different is because the sun is right behind the moon! That happens because, as the moon goes round the earth, it sometimes goes in between the earth and the sun. When that happens, if you look up at the sun it looks just like it is in the picture – the sun looks dark because the moon is blocking it from your view. The brightness around the moon is really the sun shining behind it.

Maybe you can try an experiment by going into a dark room or a cupboard and using a torch and putting a ball up near the torch. If someone holds up the ball near the torch, you will see that the ball will look dark with light shining around it (ask your Mum or Dad to help – or even your Gran or Grandpa!)

Every time there is an eclipse and it gets dark, it makes me think of something in the Bible. It makes me think of what happened when Christ was being crucified. The Bible tells us that at 12 'o' clock – just when the sun was shining bright in the sky – 'there was a darkness over all the land' (Matthew 27:45)

Just think how strange that was! A strange darkness at midday, as Christ was on the cross! It wasn't an ordinary eclipse, though. It was a special darkness – and it was telling us that when Christ was being crucified, God was judging our sins.

Amazingly, instead of judging us and punishing us – which we deserved – Christ agreed to take our punishment instead! And, when you think about it, it was like an eclipse for him: He had always enjoyed the fellowship of His heavenly Father and, suddenly, our sins are coming in between Him and that loving fellowship – and everything for Him is very dark.

But, just like the eclipse, it didn't stay that way! After He had dealt with our sins, the darkness lifted off the land, the sun shone again – and Jesus felt the love of His heavenly Father again. And so will we if trust in Christ. Our sins, which come in between us and God, will go away and the love of God will shine on us.

Well, if you ever see an eclipse, make sure you remember that amazing day when the sun went dark at midday long ago outside Jerusalem.

8 With my love and prayers,

Your minister