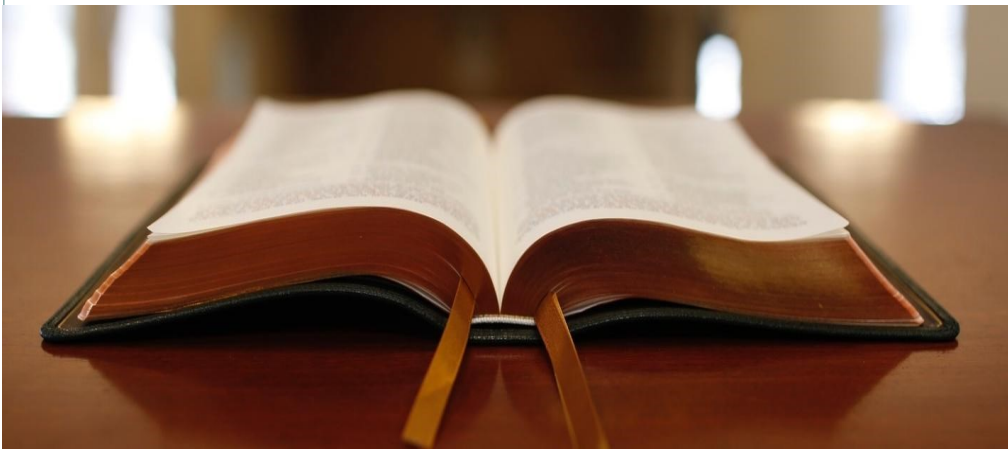




**STORNOWAY**  
REFORMED PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

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

# July 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

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## WORD FROM THE MANSE

Dear congregation,

With the advent of an election (supposing this gets out in time) our thoughts turn to politics (derived from ‘polis’ in Greek, meaning a ‘city-state’ and from ‘politikos’, meaning ‘to do with citizens’, and is the term used to describe the science of governing society).

As Christians, it's always important to root our conduct in first principles and, in this case, an understanding of what our role is, or should be, in the government of the country – after all, a representative democracy such as ours means that everyone in possession of a vote has a say in how the country is run.

Of course, you could argue – understandably – that your individual vote doesn't really count for much. But that misses the point: When you vote, you are endorsing a particular person whom *you* believe is fit for the office of governing your country. In that respect, you are indeed having a say in how the country is run.

Let's look, briefly, at the relationship between the Church and politics followed by the relationship between the individual Christian and politics. But, first, a brief word about the authority of the state.

### CIVIL MAGISTRATE

In older writings, the term used to discuss the ruler of the state was ‘civil magistrate’. The ‘Civil Magistrate’ is the person who has power to *make* and *enforce* law in a nation. It can refer to the Head of State (King, Queen or President) or to their subordinate officials exercising delegated powers, including both ministers of state (executive) and judges of the realm (judiciary).

### AUTHORITY OF CIVIL MAGISTRATE

Although the civil magistrate is elected by the people, he is nonetheless occupying an office ordained by God and is answerable to Him for the way in which he discharges it.

The Westminster Confession of Faith (hereafter, WCOF), chapter 23, states that, *‘God, the Supreme Lord and King of all the world, hath ordained civil magistrates to be under him over the people, for his own glory and the public good; and to this end, hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil-doers.’*

### QUALIFICATIONS OF CIVIL MAGISTRATE

The Bible lists the qualifications for civil magistracy: In summary, ‘He that rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God’ (2 Sam 23:3); Particularly, in Exodus 18:21, we read that they are to be men of ability, who fear God (honour him and his word), men of truth (not liars) and men who hate covetousness (not seeking their own gain). Also, we note from Deuteronomy 1:13, that while doing the choosing, they are required to choose qualified men – and these qualifications consist of wisdom and understanding.

In this way, the Civil Magistrate, along with his subjects, is subject to the law of God – including the principles behind the judicial Old Testament law. For this reason, a Christian is eminently suitable to be a civil magistrate.

Chapter 23 (WCOF) *‘It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto; in the managing whereof, as they ought especially to maintain piety, justice, and peace, according to the wholesome laws of each commonwealth, so, for that end, they may lawfully, now under the New Testament, wage war upon just and necessary occasions.’*

2

Chapter 19 (WCOF) *‘To them also, as a body politic, he gave sundry judicial laws, which expired together with the state of that people, not obliging any other, now, further than the general equity thereof may require.’*

The Church of Christ is a society of Christians which has its own appointed government in the hands of ministers and elders. Again, WCOF, Chapter 30, teaches that *'The Lord Jesus, as king and head of his Church, hath therein appointed a government in the hand of Church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate.'*

There are four possible ways in which this church government can relate to the government of the civil magistrate. These are:

The Papal view – which asserts the supremacy of the Church over the State. According to this view, the Pope has supreme oversight of all *spiritual* and *civil* matters in the world.

The Erastian view – which asserts the supremacy of the State over the Church and entitles the State to interfere in spiritual matters. This is the position of the Church of England and Lutheran churches.

The Voluntarist view – which teaches an entire separation between the church and the state in which it unlawful for them, as institutions, to take to do with each other. This is the American position and is held by most American Presbyterians.

The Establishment view (commonly referred to as the Establishment Principle) – which is embraced by the main Scottish Presbyterian Churches – except the United Free Church of Scotland (which adheres to 3 above). This principle teaches that the civil authority and the ecclesiastical authority each rule in their own distinct spheres with each authority being sovereign in matters belonging only to their own Kingdoms - although they are mutually dependent.

This principle requires the church to pray for the state and to encourage corporate and individual obedience to it as a Divine institution, sovereign in its own sphere: (WCOF) *'It is the duty of the people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their obedience to him: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted.'*

The principle also requires the state, to recognise and legally establish the Christian church, as well as to protect her and help her further her mission: WCOF, chapter 23, *'The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven: yet he hath authority, and it is his duty, to take order, that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire; that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed; all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed; and all the ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God.'*

Again, WCOF chapter 24, *'And, for their publishing of such opinions, or maintaining of such practices, as are contrary to the light of nature, or to the known principles of Christianity, whether concerning faith, worship, or conversation; or, to the power of godliness; or, such erroneous opinions or practices, as either in their own nature, or in the manner of publishing or maintaining them, are destructive to the external peace and order which Christ hath established in the Church, they may lawfully be called to account, and proceeded against by the censures of the Church, and by the power of the civil magistrate.'*

This principle forbids the state from furthering the cause of other faiths – *although it does not tolerate the persecution of them* – and from interfering with the internal spiritual matters of the church including the ordination, suspension or deposition of ministers as well as the admission or discipline of members. WCOF *'The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Word and sacraments, or the power of the keys of the kingdom of heaven.'*

The principle also forbids the church from interfering judicially in matters pertaining to civil government: WCOF, chapter 31, *'Synods and councils are to handle or conclude nothing but that which is ecclesiastical: and are not to intermeddle with civil affairs which concern the commonwealth, unless by way of humble petition in cases extraordinary; or by way of advice for satisfaction of conscience, if they be thereunto required by the civil magistrate.'*

## THE INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN AND POLITICS

The Individual Christian owes a duty of prayer and obedience. WCOF, chapter 23, *'It is the duty of the people to pray for magistrates, to honour their persons, to pay them tribute and other dues, to obey their lawful commands, and to be subject to their authority, for conscience' sake. Infidelity, or difference in religion, doth not make void the magistrate's just and legal authority, nor free the people from their obedience to him: from which ecclesiastical persons are not exempted.'* (We should note, here, that the obedience extends to 'lawful' commands: it does not extend to 'unlawful commands', which would be defined as commands which are contrary to God's law). Again, WCOF chapter 24, *'And because the powers which God hath ordained, and the liberty which Christ hath purchased, are not intended by God to destroy, but mutually to uphold and preserve one another; they who, upon pretence of Christian liberty, shall oppose any lawful power, or the lawful exercise of it, whether it be civil or ecclesiastical, resist the ordinance of God.'*

### HOW DOES THIS APPLY TODAY IN BRITAIN?

As we saw above, the British political system is a form of democracy called a Parliamentary Representative Democracy in which every eligible citizen votes for someone else who will proceed to make decisions in their name. By a process of election, every voter is able to vote for the person they wish to represent them. The following principles should guide Christians in voting:

*Christians must recognise that only those who meet God's standards for civil office are truly qualified.* An unqualified man is no more entitled to serve as Civil ruler in the state than an unqualified man would be to serve as elder in a church.

*Christians should equip, support and vote only for those men who have the biblical qualifications.* Failing to vote for qualified people on the ground that they 'won't win' is looking to expediency rather than principle and is looking to the short term rather than to the long term. If there are no good candidates, why not run for office? Or why not spoil your paper in protest? The aim of the church must be to produce men who are qualified to hold the office of civil magistracy in the land. If there are no such men, it is because the church has failed in her duty.

*Christians must recognise that a bad candidate is not sanctified by a good party and neither is a bad party sanctified by a good candidate.* If the candidate is bad, you are voting for him/her to be your personal representative. If he/she is good but is committed to accept the discipline of an evil party, then he/she is not as good as you thought he/she was!

*Christians should not vote for someone who has promised to sin should he win.* To vote for such a person is to give a mandate for that sin – for example, legislating abortion or assisted suicide.

*Christians should pray that the Ten Commandments and God's standards for office would become part of the national constitutional law.*

Your minister

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## NEWS & EVENTS

### TEN YEARS ON: ASHERS BAKERY

Ten years ago, the owners of Ashers Baking Company in Belfast were surprised to receive a letter from the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (ECNI) threatening legal action. A few weeks before, they had refused customer Gareth Lee's order when he had requested a cake decorated with a pro- same-sex marriage slogan.

Karen McArthur, who with husband Colin owns Ashers, had initially taken the order for the cake, which was to display the Sesame Street characters Bert and Ernie, the slogan "Support gay marriage", and the logo of campaign group QueerSpace. But Karen and her family were committed



Christians, and though she hadn't wanted to be the cause of confrontation by upsetting Mr Lee in person, she knew her family-run business would not be able to fulfil the request.

She discussed the order with her husband, who agreed they would have to decline. He asked her at the time "how we could stand before God and bake a cake like this, promoting a cause like this".

They informed Mr Lee they could not fulfil his request, and refunded him.

They thought this would be the end of

the matter, but several weeks later, on 26

June 2014, they received a letter from the ECNI, saying they had discriminated against Lee on the basis of his sexual orientation.



*Daniel & Amy MacArthur*

### Legal Battle

And so began a four year legal battle for the family, fronted by Karen and Colin's son and bakery General Manager Daniel and his wife Amy. Ashers argued that they had not discriminated against the customer, but against the message, given they had served many homosexual customers over many years. But the equalities watchdog argued in court that it had discriminated against Mr Lee. District Judge Brownlie ruled in the ECNI's favour, saying that Ashers had broken sexual orientation and political discrimination laws.

The family appealed, but while the appeal judges recognised that the family did not refuse the service because Mr Lee was gay, they nonetheless ruled in October 2016 that refusing the order because of its slogan "was direct discrimination".

The Christian Institute supported the family from the start, not only providing legal advice and representation, but also offering pastoral care as the family dealt with the emotional burden of the case.

While they could have accepted the small fine and moved on, they felt determined to see the case through. In October 2018 the UK Supreme Court delivered a unanimous ruling in favour of the company, stating emphatically that the family's objection "was to the message, not the messenger".

The comprehensive ruling upholds free speech and prevents the law forcing businesses to express views with which they profoundly disagree.

Ten years on we continue to give thanks for the McArthur family's courageous stand for the truth and for the way in which they chose to glorify God in their words and conduct throughout an exhausting legal process – culminating in the UK Supreme Court's wonderful ruling.



### SERMON AUDIO—THE VAULT UPDATE

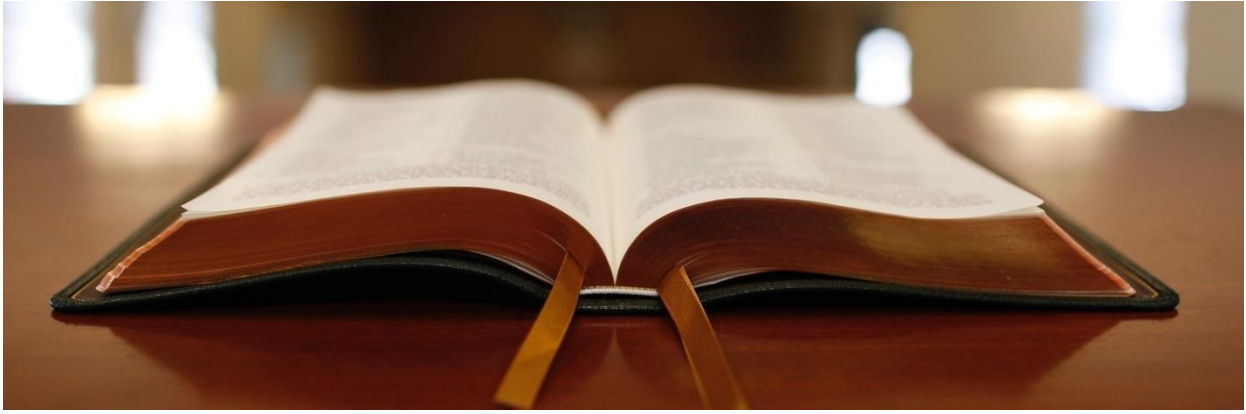
Last year, we had a congregational collection for **The Vault**, which is an initiative of Sermon Audio aimed at building their own in-house infrastructure of hardware and servers.



The purpose is to fund and build all the necessary technology in-house and thereby gain independence from Big Tech companies, who may at some point decide that the Gospel message is too offensive to be broadcast online. If Big Tech were to withdraw their services, the ability to broadcast sermons online would be severely hindered. Sermon Audio have reported that the giving has slowed, but to date they have raised almost \$570,000 of the \$1,000,000 goal.

**\$569,950** raised of \$1,000,000 goal

## PREACHING AND TEACHING



Over the years, I've made no secret of my admiration for men such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, who were so instrumental in the recovery of the gospel during the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. I'm amazed by their towering intellects and their ability to stand firm amid much danger. Their love for biblical truth is an example to follow. I'm particularly grateful for their pastoral model. Both of these men were "celebrities" in their day, but neither of them spent his years traveling Europe in order to consolidate a movement of followers. Instead, both of them devoted themselves to their primary vocation of preaching and teaching the Word of God. Both men were tireless preachers—Luther in Wittenberg, Germany, and Calvin in Geneva, Switzerland. They took the ministry of the Word of God seriously, so when they talk about the task of the preacher, I pay close attention.

More than a decade ago, I was invited to give a lecture on Martin Luther's view of preaching, and I found that preparing for that exercise was invaluable for my own work as a preacher. I also discovered that what Luther had to say about preaching was not only for the pastor but also for the entire church, and it's amazing how timely his words remain in our day.

One of the emphases that we find again and again in Luther's writings is that a preacher must be "apt to teach." In many ways, this is no great insight, for he's just restating the qualifications that are set forth in the New Testament for church elders (1 Tim. 3:2). Yet given what we expect from our preachers today, Luther's words—echoing biblical revelation—need to be heard anew. The concept that the primary task of the minister is to teach is all but lost in the church today. When we call ministers to our churches we often look for these men to be adept administrators, skilled fundraisers, and good organizers. Sure, we want them to know some theology and the Bible, but we don't make it a priority that these people be equipped to teach the congregation the things of God. Administrative tasks are seen as more important.

This is not the model that Jesus Himself commended. You remember the encounter that Jesus had with Peter after His resurrection. Peter had denied Jesus publicly three times, and Jesus went about restoring the Apostle, telling him three times to "feed my sheep" (John 21:15-19). By extension, this calling is given to the elders and ministers of the church because the people of God who are assembled in the congregations of churches all over the world belong to Jesus. They are His sheep. And every minister who is ordained is consecrated and entrusted by God with the care of those sheep. We call it the "pastorate" because ministers are called to care for the sheep of Christ. Pastors are Christ's under shepherds, and what shepherd would so neglect his sheep that he never took the time or trouble to feed them? The feeding of our Lord's sheep comes principally through teaching.

- 6 Typically, we distinguish between preaching and teaching. Preaching involves such things as exhortation, exposition, admonition, encouragement, and comfort, while teaching is the transfer of information and instruction in various areas of content. In practice, however, there is much overlap between the two. Preaching must communicate content and include teaching, and teaching people the things of God cannot be done in a neutral manner but must exhort them to heed and obey the Word of Christ. God's people need

both preaching and teaching, and they need more than twenty minutes of instruction and exhortation a week. A good shepherd would never feed the sheep only once a week, and that's why Luther was teaching the people of Wittenberg almost on a daily basis, and Calvin was doing the same thing in Geneva. I'm not necessarily calling for the exact practices in our day, but I'm convinced that the church needs to recapture something of the regular teaching ministry evident in the work of our forefathers in the faith. As they are able, churches should be creating many opportunities to hear God's Word preached and taught. Things such as Sunday evening worship, midweek services and Bible classes, Sunday school, home Bible studies, and so on give laypeople the chance to feed on the Word of God several times each week. As they are able, laypeople should take advantage of what is available to them by way of instruction in the deep truths of Scripture.

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*“History shows us that the greatest periods of revival and reformation the church has ever seen occur in conjunction with the frequent, consistent and clear preaching of God’s Word.”*

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I say this not to encourage the creation of programs for the sake of programs, and I don't want to put an unmanageable burden on church members or church staffs. But history shows us that the greatest periods of revival and reformation the church has ever seen occur in conjunction with the frequent, consistent, and clear preaching of God's Word. If we would see the Holy Spirit bring renewal to our churches and our lands, it will require preachers who are committed to the exposition of Scripture, and laypeople who will look for shepherds to feed them the Word of God and take full advantage of the opportunities for biblical instruction that are available.

**R.C. Sproul, Ligonier Blog**

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God has always done  
His greatest work  
through a remnant.  
Get rid of the notion  
of numbers.

Martyn Lloyd-Jones

LONG AGO I CEASED TO COUNT  
HEADS. TRUTH IS USUALLY IN  
THE MINORITY IN THIS EVIL  
WORLD

- CHARLES SPURGEON -

# Children's Corner



Dear Children,

I hope you enjoyed last month's Corner as much as I did. I'm thankful that our minister was able to do it because he was just too busy at that time.

Look closely at the animal in the picture. Have you any idea what animal it is? It's called a chameleon. You can't really tell what size it is from the picture, but it's really quite small, around 20cm long.



If you haven't heard of them, I'm sure your parents have. That's because God gave them a special power – they are masters of disguise! Now, I'm sure you might find this hard to believe but if chameleons think they are in danger and want to hide, they can actually change their colour to match their background! So, if they're in the desert, they will change into a golden colour to look like sand and, if they're on a tree, they will turn green to look like the leaves. Come to think of it, maybe that's why we haven't seen one – they might be hiding!

So, when you think about it, Chameleons are like living transformers, except that they don't change their shape – as transformers do – but just their colour.

They also hide so that they can catch their food. They hide so that they can trick live insects and worms and then eat them.

The Bible talks about someone else who can transform himself – Satan! We usually think of Satan as an angel of darkness because he does evil things, but the Bible tells us that 'Satan transforms himself into an angel of light' (2 Corinthians 11:14). That means that instead of trying to get you to do things that you know are bad, he sometimes tries to get you to do things that look and sound quite good – but, deep down, you know they are bad and if you pray and check your Bible, you can be very sure they are bad.

He did that right at the beginning. God told Adam and Eve that they shouldn't eat the fruit of the tree of knowledge in the Garden of Eden – but Satan told them that it would be a good thing to eat it! How wrong he was!

So, watch out for him! When you hear your heart telling you that it would be better if you told a lie or spread bad things about someone, it's that chameleon Satan hiding himself again!

At the beginning, I said that I was busy recently. Well, I don't think I'm going to have much free time from now on since I will be working four days in the Christian School instead of two. So, I've decided that it might be better if someone else wrote this Corner for you. I think the minister did such a good job of it last time, he should do it – what do you think?

8 Anyway, I've enjoyed having this chance to speak to you every month over the last year and a half and it is my prayer that you will all grow up to know and love the Lord Jesus Christ.

With my love and prayers,

Mrs S