



WORDWISE

Autumn 2018

**Quarterly magazine of the Scottish
Fellowship of Christian Writers**

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STARTING LINE

I felt absolutely helpless. There was nothing I could do except silently pray and watch time drifting by. I was on my way to Sheffield. The outward bound trek, from the middle of nowhere in Kintyre, started just after six that morning and was taking forever. The southbound train from Glasgow was running late, and it was probable that I would now miss my connection in Warrington.



I'd never been to Warrington before; I'd been through it many times but never actually to it. My change of trains also involved a change of stations and this added to my anxiety.

I knew or thought I knew, all about being still and knowing God. I tried to experience the NOW of God that is separate from time – but sitting still in impotent helplessness on the 2.00pm so-called express train from Glasgow was not easy. There's nothing I could do but sit, wait, pray and trust. I can still feel the rise of tension within me as I write about it. My inner feelings were not calm and serene I can tell you!

Time, or the lack of it, is a problem that we are all battling with to one degree or another. Time management is a reality – either it's managing me, and you or we're winning through and controlling it. On reflection, I'm not very good at this management business and constantly find myself being manipulated by time. I've discovered that my greatest feelings of satisfaction come when I've done what I *should* do rather than what I *want* to do. My "to do lists" (*do you have to do lists as well?*) spin around what I don't want to do but feel I must. When the "MUST DO" doesn't get done because it's swallowed up by more pleasant pursuits, there is a nagging feeling of unease deep inside me. This is no trivial matter. For example, we set ourselves writing goals and, on bad days, find ourselves either doing something else or battling with an impassable writer's block.

My perception is that the problems of writer's block have a lot to do with time and its pressures as well. Writing is a lonely occupation and the battles we fight with time are solitary ones and can fill us either with elation or depression.

I believe in the power of prayer. I have noticed, however, that one of the major battles I have to fight on my knees is against time. Before I pray, I can see the urgency of reaching out to God; when I'm on my knees, I hear the urgent voice of *time* yelling at me to be up and doing.

As members of a Christian Fellowship, we know that the deepest form of oneness is that of prayer. The problem I have, however, is that because I don't know what you're doing, I am uncertain as to how to pray effectively for you. The same is true, I suspect, for you in your efforts to pray for me. The conclusion I come to is that one of the best ways I can pray is for you to experience a breakthrough in the realm of time and its management.

I was reading Hebrews 4 the other day and the call to strive to enter into His rest. We know the difference between struggling on our own and discovering He has effortlessly propelled us into victory. The difference between what I do with God's help, and what He does through me is very real. Striving to enter His rest is an activity we carry out in prayer on our knees, *not* with our intellects on our feet.

So, sitting there on the dawdling 14.00 hours from Glasgow I came to the point of accepting that I was going to be late and miss my connection – *c'est la vie!* I ceased to pray prayers of desperation and slowly the levels of frustration sank and inner peace returned.

We arrived at Warrington Bank Quay Station twenty minutes late. A taxi between the two stations helped reduce the connection problem. I scurried up to Platform 1 of Warrington Central Station and found it heaving with passengers waiting for long overdue trains. My connection to Sheffield was running over an hour late – and I learned yet another lesson about prayer and time.

Norman

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



Dear fellow-members,

Hasn't it been a gift of a summer? Weeks of *dependably* warm, sunny weather. What will be your most abiding memory from it? Mine will not be paddling on a Hebridean beach; nor the many barbecues; nor even going barelegged without resorting to fake tan!

No, it will be an astonishing experience at the Keswick Convention. I signed up to do a one-hour session at the 'Global Village' which had been erected by OM (see: <https://uk.om.org>). Along with seven other people, we were taken through a multi-media presentation of creation; were first spectators and then shrinking participants in crucifying Christ (an actor on a life-size cross); then, honoured guests (with our own named seats) at God's banqueting table, where we were loved and encouraged ... then sent out 'into the world'.

A door opened on a dim, threatening 'street', along which were various desperate individuals and scenarios (portrayed by actors). Our challenge was to 'do mission' to at least one. My husband and I spoke to two illegal immigrant girls, listened to their desperation and fear, tried to think of something/anything to say that would be helpful. Next, my husband was accosted by a teenage prostitute and I tried to talk to the 'madam' in the brothel. To say it was challenging is quite an understatement. The trite acronym, WWJD (What Would Jesus Do?) had never seemed so apposite. What did *we* do? We listened, gave our time and close attention, sympathised, prayed and wracked our brains for ways to help, to have some/any impact on these people and situations.

In *Out of the Saltshaker*, Rebecca Manley Pippert says: ‘In Jesus, we have our model for how to relate to the world ... Jesus confronted people on their own level of humanity.’ If I learned anything in the ‘Global Village’ at Keswick, it was that first base in mission, evangelism and pastoral care has to be identification, not reaching down to help but settling down alongside.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at our November Conference. Do remember the Open Mic session (**see below**)

Blessings

Fran

***THE NOVEMBER CONFERENCE BELONGS TO
YOU AND NO ONE ELSE***

WHAT WE GET FROM IT DEPENDS ON WHAT IS PUT INTO IT

(To him that giveth, shall more be given: it is more blessed to give than receive)



This November’s conference will include the Open Mic slot.

We are looking for up to eight people to take the floor and share some of their own written work. The presentation could, possibly, though not necessarily, be with a “slide” or PowerPoint presentation, the choice is up to you. The presentation, however, should last for a maximum of three minutes, so it’s not too long. At this point, there has been only

one response, so this is the opportunity to shine and your own colourful light in the event.

COMPETITION WINNERS

The summer edition contained the first two of the award winning works in the “Favourites” writing competition. Here is the third prize winner.

THE JOB INTERVIEW (as it *should* be conducted)

by Lorna Smith

There’s a new chap just started at work. Our workroom wasn’t part of the interview process: the formalities focused on irrelevant details like qualifications and work history. Human Resources do tend to get rather caught up in formalities, don’t they? Have they any idea what is *really* important in a workroom?

Harmony.

Do you know *how* to create the perfect harmonious team? Have a tin of Quality Street. To clarify: have an *open* tin of Quality Street and simply invite the candidate to have one. Wait a few minutes, then invite them once again.

What is their favourite?

I mean, if anyone goes for the Orange Cream then no chance. That’s mine. I don’t share. I *can* go for a Toffee Deluxe to bring variety to my palette, but the Orange Creams are mine, and I’ve worked here longest. Anne goes for the Green Triangle and pity help anyone whose hand gets in the way when the Christmas tin is first opened. Karen goes for The Purple One. We’re never sure if she likes the chocolate or the wrapper purple *is* her favourite colour.

John, weirdly (but happily for the rest of us), favours the

Chocolate Chunk. He takes his chocolate straight up, you see. Working class through and through, he has no truck with fancy fillings. Gavin goes for the toffees. The way he sees it, you get more sweet for your money as it lasts longer. What were the odds of finding someone who'd actually *choose* a Toffee Penny?!?

Kath is fairly new here. She was offered a turn from the tin and she reached straight for the Strawberry Cream. First *and* second time of asking, so, welcome to the team!

Can we even mention the shock of Sharon's behaviour? Maybe not yet.

Personally, I still hanker after the Nut Cracknel, but it's long gone, and we're all too long established to change our favourite to a new kid on the block, like Honeycomb Crunch. So, it comes down to Caramel Swirl or Fudge. Basically, in interview, choose one or both of these and you should be a shoo-in for the job.

Ah, a brief mention of the truly shocking behaviour of Sharon. She didn't even look! Just reached in, grabbed a handful (!), unwrapped them and stuffed them in her mouth -without checking the flavour! Can you believe it? Don't be looking for a permanent contract!



PROBLEM PAGE

Dear PP,

I recently suffered a wrist injury and can no longer type more than a few lines at a time. This is rather frustrating and upsetting for a writer! Do you have any suggestions? Frustrated Writer



Dear Writer Friend,

First of all, although this seems like a challenge for you, consider it an opportunity. I can recommend two options in the first instance:

Be like Barbara Cartland and dictate your work rather than physically writing it. You can do this into a voice-recorder, an app on your phone or even to a laptop/PC. You could also employ someone to write your work as you dictate it, however this is beyond most writers!

In the absence of a full-time secretary/scribe, I would steer you in the direction of some of the existing and developing assistive technologies. 'Dragon' remains a popular choice, and has the advantage that it develops with you, to learn your vocabulary and pronunciation on an on-going basis. This does mean, however, that you don't just buy it as a one-off. Newer models of 'Macs' will have an in-built dictation mode essentially for free.

See the following link for more advice:
<http://disabilityhorizons.com/2017/10/assistive-technology-the-top-dictation-apps/>

A second point would be to consider different forms of writing until such times as your wrist is healed or you become more comfortable with alternative technology. This could include mind-maps of plotlines and character development; key words for themes or chapters; and that scarcest resource for all writers – time to just think about your project.

I will leave you with a thought – Sir Stephen Hawking wrote a best-seller based on ideas he wouldn't have had if he had been able-bodied. His disability gave him time to think when it took away his ability to act. Perhaps this is development time for you rather than writing time. Explore your characters and plot lines. Unravel the kinks and think about your current and/or next project.

Yours,

PP

Dear PP,

I want to be more creative but my work is very repetitive and I don't really have the opportunity to be my 'writer' self. There's a lot of negativity in the office, and much as I know that I should be a Christian light in the darkness, I tend to just keep my head down and get on with my job. When I get home, I'm too tired and unmotivated to write. Have you got any ideas how to be a Christian writer when most of my waking hours are spent in a very pro-atheist office? Struggling in the City

Dear Writer Friend,

Work is a significant portion of your day, so I'm sorry it doesn't sound like a positive experience for you just now. Aside from suggesting you look around for a different job, I can recommend a couple of things that may be quietly subversive and uplifting for a Christian in an anti-Christian environment.

First of all, I expect your office job requires you to log in, so why not start your work day with an affirmation? Most logins require around eight characters using a mixture of upper and lower case letters, numbers, and maybe a character like a colon. Luckily for Christians, the Bible has this sorted! Here are a few to get you started. When it comes time to change your login (monthly/quarterly etc) then take time to pray and find a fresh affirmation.

Col3:23to24 [Colossians 3:23-24 Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as...it is the Lord Christ you are serving]

Phil4:13 [Philippians 4:13 - I can do all this through him who gives me strength].

And there is always the reminder of God's love and grace in **Matt11:28** [Matthew 11:28 - Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest].

You don't need to limit your logins to work. Perhaps Facebook could use **Acts19:20** [In this way the word of the Lord spread widely and grew in power].

Tax return proving, well, taxing? Log in to HMRC with **Romans 13:6** [This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants].

Also bear in mind that the majority of your day is not spent at work. Spend time in prayer on your commute. Consider listening to the Bible either on headphones or in your car (a personal favourite of PP is David Suchet's

reading of the complete Bible – his intonation and rich tone invite new interpretations of even familiar passages).

When you leave your office, leave the strain of your work day behind and step out with a glad heart, and look for some sign of God’s perfect love around you. This will help you to be in a better place when you get back home to your writing desk.

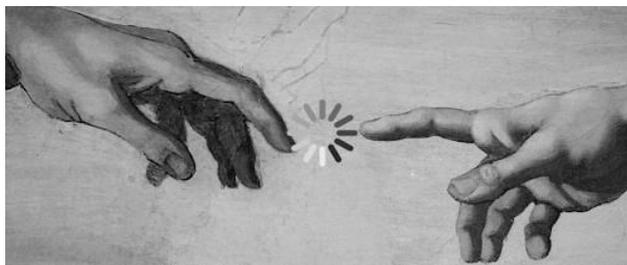
Yours,

PP

THE POWER OF TOUCH

JESUS TOUCHES US
AND
WE TOUCH OTHERS IN HIM

*Transforming
Others
Under
Christ's
Hand*



OKS..BOOKS..BOOKS..BOOKS..BOOKS..BO

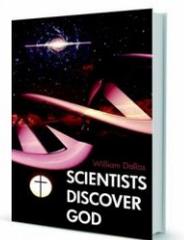
“SCIENTISTS DISCOVER GOD”

by William Dallas

This book seeks to truthfully examine the facts that scientists have discovered about the origin of the universe and the beginning of life. Using this information the cases for creation and evolution are discussed with an open mind. The scientific evidence on the subject is recorded and the flaws in some claims are exposed. The reader can, therefore, form their own opinion on the scientists’

interpretation of the facts. Using Christian and Non-Christian historical sources the Christian Churches’ beliefs are examined to determine the reliability of the churches’ teaching.

Available on line from “www.ambassadormedia.co.uk” Price £6.99



“LETTER FROM BIRMINGHAM JAIL”

Martin Luther King Jr.

Even though this historic and powerful book is over fifty years old, it has been re-published this year as part of the Penguin Modern Classics Series.

For those to whom it is a stranger, here are some words of introduction:

“Written on the margins of a newspaper in an Alabama jail in 1963, Martin Luther King, Jr.’s ‘Letter from Birmingham Jail’ is a response to eight white Alabama clergymen, who argued that the battle against racial segregation should be fought in the courts – not the streets.” The publishers have also included “The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life,” which was delivered as a sermon at the Covenant Baptist Church in Chicago on 4th April, 1967, just under a year before his assassination in Memphis, Tennessee.

It is a powerful and gripping read and the issues then have more than a present tense about them.

Available from: Waterstones, Amazon, Ebay *et al.* Price £1.00.



“TRAILBLAZERS & TRIUMPHS OF THE GOSPEL”

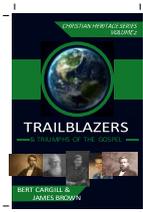
by Bert Cargill and James Brown

The second book in this series gives accounts of those who took the Gospel message into the “regions beyond”. Missionaries from the UK who ventured into the unknown, motivated by the love of God and a sense of His call to bring the message of saving grace “into all the world”. Included are also some of the triumphs of the Gospel in the UK during the 19th and

20th centuries, and also in some parts of the USA. Great revivals did happen and thousands of individuals from all walks of life were led to Christ.

Some of the characters included are: Adoniram Judson, Burma, Robert Morrison, China, Charles T Studd, China, Robert Moffat, Africa, Mary Slessor, Africa, John Williams, South Sea Islands and accounts of the Ulster 1859 revival, the Dublin 1860 revival and much more.

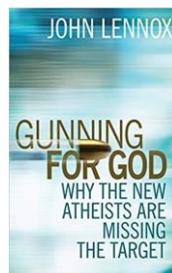
Available on line from: “www.ritchiechristianmedia.co.uk” Price £9.99 – 20% discount for SFCW readers – (quote code SFC18 on checkout).



“GUNNING FOR GOD”

by John Lennox

It may not be a new title, but that does not reduce the effectiveness of this much needed classic in Christian apologetics. In this work, Professor John Lennox powerfully rebuffs the deadening claims and ideas of *New Atheism*. He also meets head-on and silences the arguments of Richard Dawkins and his colleagues. *Available from:* Amazon (and others). Price £9.18.



Our call is to quit believing what we can see, and begin to see what we believe.

MEMBERS IN PRINT

Norman Weir has reviewed the following two books.

“THE CRACKIT CUP”

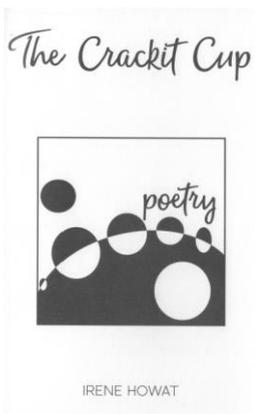
by Irene Howat

This is a delightful and sensitively written collection of Scottish verse with English for those who don't know better.

In actual fact, it's far more than a book of beautiful poetry, it is a powerful and moving statement about the cost of war on the "home front." The cost borne by a non-combatant carrying the heavy end of bringing comfort and care to a grieving and war-torn community.

In November we celebrate the end of WW1; this is a heart moving and tenderly written momento of those terrible days. It's style, being Scots and English lightens the intensity and gives an intriguing balance.

Obtainable from: Sanctus Media, Boness Business Centre, 12-16 Corbiehall, Boness EH51 0AP Price £5.00



"THE FRIENDSHIP BOOK - *A thought for each day* - 2019

By David McLaughlan

The Friendship book is what it says it is. A pleasant pot-pourri of sweet literary fragrance.

It creates pictures, deepens ones experience and relationship with God and also provides the gentle insight that opens doors for those who do not know the Lord all that well.

It is "predictive text" for who knows what 2019 will be like. It's a lovely book to have to hand through the coming year.

Available from: Amazon and others: Priced £6.09.



TRAVELLERS' TALES – THE HOUSE CALLED “STET”



“Stet” stands mid-way down Brompton Farm Road on the edge of Strood. Only half a mile away there is Stonehorse Lane with its quaint country pub and oast houses. It is all very Kentish, and extremely desirable in the yuppie housing market.

Squeezed between swanky new houses, “Stet” is narrow; in fact, it’s slightly wider than its front door and barely two storeys high.

A small window above the front door indicates an upstairs bedroom. It’s that type of two-roomed farm labourer’s cottage once common in rural Kent. However, unlike its swish and elegant neighbours it is a hideous oddity. It is built of corrugated iron, painted electric blue and stands as a defiant bulwark, against middle-class progress.

This strange building was bulldozed down whilst Old Jim, its sole occupant, was at work in the fields. To be fair, alternative housing had been repeatedly offered to the slow thinking tenant and had been refused. After all, Jim had been born there and this was the only home he had ever known.

Not content to let matters rest, the developer, backed by the local council, began to try and resolve the impasse. However, all their soft and subtle letters sent to the old man were ignored. The strident and threatening declarations that soon followed received a similar response.

In lonely anxiety, Old Jim spent long evenings pouring over copies of the council’s planning proposals which showed his home as dotted lines between two mansions. He knew that the new build was going

to happen despite soft responses to his angry protests. The fact there'd only be three inches between the neighbours walls and his own was unreasonable and spoke only of the demolition of his home.

His only security lay in the ancient and tatty tenancy agreement. He took this with him wherever he went, and showed it to whoever had the time, sympathy and patience to listen to his tale of woe.

It's a good job too that he always had it tucked in his pocket and not left behind, unguarded, in his home.

It's a shock to get home after a hard day's work in the apple orchards and find it is no more. Not only that, to see what is personal, stacked higgledy-piggledy on the kerbside.

The legal battle commenced with the developer. Angry local support was roused. There were small but noisy, banner waving demonstrations, midnight vigils by zealous and youthful insomniacs and horrified protestations of innocence from the political powers that be.

Finally, the developers gave in. "Stet" was stetted. The gap between the neighbours and "Stet" is the width of their gutter pipes.

As G. K. Chesterton said, "The Bible tells us to love our neighbours, and also to love our enemies; probably because generally they are the same people."

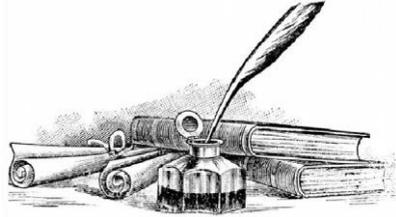
This is certainly true of Old Jim's neighbours!

Stet was a real place though my tale about it may have been stretched a little. Sadly, I understand that it is no more. Progress and a flowering rockery have won and the protest is long forgotten by many. But not by me; the memory of that quirky little building lingers on.

The story about "Stet," is a parable. Any righteous stand we may make might only achieve a short-term reprieve and soon be forgotten history. But we know that there is much more to it than that! The King of Kings sees everything and forgets nothing and makes the final comment!

Writers' Group

Much as I enjoy being part of the Kintyre Writers' Circle, I felt the urge to set up a Christian group of writers as well. None of the Kintyre Writers' Circle would readily accept the calling and designation of "Christian," so I had to start from scratch.



The first step was to draw up a list of Churches in the area and then, using Google, to get their internet contact details.

The second step followed after sending out a dozen or so emails, and involved much waiting, patience and prayer. And lo! I had a response. It may be only one person, a local pastor, but it was a response. So the two of us, in faith, launched the Campbeltown Christian Writers' Group.

We are both busy people and decided, initially, to hold our meetings once every six weeks. The meetings, and there's now been four of them, are held on a Wednesday afternoon and last for between ninety minutes and two hours.

Another local church leader, a Salvation Army captain, wants to join with us when he's completed his current academic studies. Not a flamboyant big splash of a start, perhaps ... but it's a start nonthe-less and we're both feeling encouraged.

We are planning a poetry workshop (inspired by Irene Howat's convention seminar). This event will be held in one the town's churches and, hopefully, coax more Christian writers into the open.

We all know about what comes from faith as miniscule as a mustard seed – so we're not daunted by the smallness of our numbers – but press on, believing.

Norman Weir - Campbeltown Christian Writers Group

POETS' CORNER



Caving

We are so easily split up
diaries dictate to us
conflicts overpower us
beliefs corrode
memories erode
hope dwindles, dies
We are so quickly separate in
silos with well decorated walls
cabins which we say are temporary
schedules which become charades
accomplishments which turn into parades
in bad things we enjoy more than the better
in good things edging out the best
We are so sadly
diminished and the days
will pass the months
multiply
the years stack up
until the heap of all we've lost caves
into the present, chokes and buries us alive
I'm glad those Thai boys found
a way to leave that cave
with the eyes of the world upon them
I must close my file on
caverns with no exit
keep one eye out for the weather
surf the wave we call 'together'

Jock Stein

The Good Samaritan

Look around you, my friend! The olive trees, the sun-kissed stones!
Ancient terraces, a happy flock of goats: just as Jacob the Father saw
from the entrance to his tent, when family duties allowed. Down there,
you see the well he dug.

And this, the Mount of Blessing! It was almost at the top
where Abraham the Wanderer placed Isaac on his altar of
tears.

(They told you it was another hill entirely? They always do;
just jealousy, I'm afraid.)

If you turn round: yes, tall and dark, the Mountain of the Curse.
Moses the Shepherd saw it from afar, against the setting sun.
Here, all the tribes recited words of prophecy and doom;
some nights we hear them still.

This hallowed ground! This chosen dwelling for God's holy name!
A temple stood here; here we worship, in unbroken line.
I sit just where my forefathers sat, at the annual covenant feast
of Jeroboam the Wise.

You see, we were not exiled! God keeps a remnant round his altar.
Ask who was the favoured son – was it ever Judah the Proud?
How they came trickling back from Babylon, with new ideas
of synagogues and scribes!

So, yes, since you ask, I'd say I am a good Samaritan. Sychar's a
devout village, and we worship God's way. Most of us... I don't
know what you'll have heard; one doesn't wish to gossip. But it's
all well known, of course.

I knew her first husband, and she was respectable then; took her
place at the well with the women, and her home was tidy.
But since that young scoundrel from Shechem, and then the others...
Good families avoid her.

Then yesterday in the morning, I saw with my own eyes, from a
window, how she entertained a rabbi and a band of Jewish men!
Shamelessly drew water – from Jacob's well! I shuddered as I watched.

May God have mercy on us all.

Steve Davies

The last one left

It's a strange thing
being the last one left,
the last one left
of a family of three.

For as long as I remember I
had a brother on either side.
Now there is no-one,
there in no-one
to check out my memories.

Did Dad actually say that?
Did Mum really make a pudding
called white apple?
Did the three of us argue as much as I
think we did before the truce, the
truce
that grew into friendship?

I will believe my
memories and pass some
of them on. If I don't, if I
don't
no one will know about white apple.

Irene Howat



A RAINY DAY

A dreary grey day with grim lowering skies
Everything, a colourless neutrality.
Arran with a wild, wind tossed Kilbrannan Sound
Has been painted with the same sad sobriety.
The meadows, sloping down to the ancient dun
Are deadened into dull grey melancholy.
Heavy rain, sweeping in, driven by gusting winds
Horizontally lash against window panes.
The children stand and watch, mesmerised, spellbound
By the watery grimness of the scene, whilst
Enjoying the fireside warmth of the homestead.
Outside, the skies darken and the rain thickens
Enshrouding all in tearful mistiness.

Norman Weir



“Heart of the Matter” has had a presence on local community radio since Easter 2007. Since then there have been many great opportunities to hear something of how Christian faith makes a difference in the lives of people up and down the country as well as some living or based around the world.

The team are grateful for the input from many at SFCW and have used their material in various programmes. We are always open to suggestions for future interviews and if you have knowledge of someone whose story deserves a wider audience (and are willing) we would be happy to consider it at our next meeting.

Those interviewed this year have included Will Graham (Billy Graham’s grandson), Ian Gordon (Bethany Christian Trust) and Kate Forbes MSP, as well as many local Christians active in the local community.

October sees some of the team travelling south to the Jerusalem Awards ceremony to be held at BAFTA in London. HotM has been shortlisted in two categories this year. The contacts made during these visits in the past have been fruitful opportunities to link with many to develop the ongoing work.

Most programmes are now available online after broadcast and can be accessed at “www.heartofthematter.biz”. Contact details are also available there.

BROADCAST DETAILS:

Black Diamond FM 107.8 FM. At 9 am. repeated the following Sunday at 8 am.

Crystal FM 107.4 Sunday at 11 am., 12 midnight Sunday and Tuesday at 11am,

TD1 106.5 FM Sunday 8 am.

Alive FM 107.3 Sunday 10 am.

Internet stations: heartsonglive and Caleb also broadcast at a variety of times.

Pray for:



- *Fellowship members and their families in need - especially those struggling with health issues or coming through the dark valley of bereavement.*
- *Pray for wisdom for our committee members in all their planning and decision-making.*
- *For new outlets for our writing. For our gifts to be used for God's glory.*
- *For non-Christian people to respond to the info on the website and to engage in healthy fruitful dialogue*
- *For all writers' groups that our members are involved with.*
- *That the ekklesia in Scotland will grow in number and in unity.*
- *For more people to take part in our SFCW competitions.*
- *For Christ to be given his rightful place in Scotland - for hearts to be open to the Gospel.*

God is delighted when we wrestle in prayer with him. He not only changes our name as we do that, but he also gives us a new destiny as well.

WRITING AND PRAISING

Lynda Samuel

Matthew 10:16 (NIV) *I am sending you out as sheep among wolves. Therefore be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves. (Or 'As wise as serpents and as peaceable as doves.')*

When we are young, peer pressure is very strong. We may be urged to join in with friends who are playing with a ouija board or some other occult practice. But if we are wise, we shall steer clear of it, no matter what our friends may say or think. A dear Indian Christian friend of ours learned this lesson the hard way. When she was in her early twenties, in a group, someone offered to read their palms. She joined in. She was told, 'When you are in your mid-thirties, you will become seriously ill. You might even die, but if you survive, you will have a long life!' When she was 35, in 1986, she began to suffer severe stomach pains for no apparent reason. She was worried, and remembered what the palm-reader had said. She realised she had exposed herself to something harmful, and confessed her foolish sin to God. He is our good Father, who forgives and restores. She attended our fellowship one Sunday and when we asked if anyone wanted prayer, she came forward. A group of us stood round her and prayed. I knew her story; others did not. I sensed in my spirit, 'With long life I will satisfy you,' but I kept quiet, thinking, 'She is my friend; perhaps this is simply my desire for her.' Then my husband read Psalm 91 – all 16 verses. When he came to the last verse, 'With long life will I satisfy him....' I said confidently, 'Yes, that is God's answer for you! You will live for a long time.' God had confirmed it from His Word. To this day she continues to lead a very fruitful life in another part of India, ministering as the Warden in a Christian Hostel for young working women. She is a healthy, happy, sociable Christian leader.

Prayer: Dear Lord, please forgive me for any time in my life when I have yielded to the temptation of doing something that you warn us against. Cleanse me from any effects of my actions and make me wise and discerning in future.

Thought for the Day: It's better to avoid sin than to suffer its consequences

Dear Friends,

Subscriptions & Data Protection.

As you know, your committee recently decided to increase the annual subscription from £10, which it had been for many years, to £12.

Many thanks to you who have updated your standing orders. A gentle reminder to those who haven't (including your treasurer! I paid the difference and updated my standing order online immediately after writing this letter). I attach a copy of the amended standing order for you to send (to your bank - not to me, please).

Please note that, although the standing order clearly states that it is **annual** and **replaces** all previous standing orders, it appears that not all banks read standing orders carefully and there have been cases where they have set it up as **monthly** or **additional**! I think we have got all of these sorted now but please let me know if you are in this category.

If you are receiving this letter and the Summer WordWise and don't wish to keep receiving it, please let me know and I will remove you from our mailing list.

Data Protection,

You have probably received communications under the new data protection rules asking for your permission for various organisations to continue to contact you. SFCW likewise has a duty to inform you as to how we use and secure the membership details we hold. SFCW holds your details solely for the purpose of sending you information about your SFCW membership, and to send you our regular WordWise magazine. We do not use your details or allow them to be used for any other purpose (including the promotion of work by other SFCW members), and we will never pass on your details to anyone else. Since you only receive membership-related information such as this letter and WordWise, we believe that it is appropriate to assume that we have permission to continue to contact you in this way, unless we hear from you to the contrary.

Please come back if you have any questions.

Many thanks again.

Kind regards,

Ian

Ian McGregor,
Treasurer/Membership Secretary,
Scottish Fellowship of Christian Writers.

The Harvest Festival

Norman Weir

What a difference sunshine makes to old stonework. The golden autumn day heralded the season of mellow fruitfulness. Sunlight blazed through stained glass windows making drab sandstone glow with sacred colour.

The products of farming labour were transformed into vibrant colour by the sunshine. The ancient parish church was liberally bedecked with mounds of harvest produce grown, gathered and given by grateful parishioners.

Harvest Festivals were always the opportunity for the faithful to express love for their country church and the “less fortunate.” This festival was even more so. Recent farming and financial hardships had hurt the poor. The Harvest Festival should bring much welcome cheer into grim households.

The church was packed, hot and scented by harvest fare. Worship and word focussed on thanksgiving. The enthusiastic singing of well-known harvest hymns expressed hearty and heartfelt gratitude. Choir boys, in white surplices, looked angelic and sang with seraphic beauty. The rector lovingly challenged about being Good Samaritans to needy neighbours. All were moved & many a generous sacrifice dropped onto the offertory plates.

Two hours later and quiet peace had been restored. The church was deserted and the heavy doors locked. The only noise was that of the clock in the belfry. Long shadows were cast by the fiery glow of the westerling sun pouring through the windows. The harvest displays had disappeared into overnight storage, but their fragrance lingered on.

Just beyond the pulpit, deep in the thickness of the church wall was the stout oaken door of the vestry. Unlike the serene emptiness of the church, the vestry was a hive of industry. The small windowless room, with its stone flagged floor, had about it that air of genteel shabbiness common to many vestries. In the corner was a rickety hat and coat stand on which the rector's robes now hung. In the opposite corner was an old safe and between the two, an age blackened table and four equally venerable chairs under which was a small and threadbare carpet. The only illumination was from a naked light bulb dangling over the table.

In this cell-like room, the rector and his two churchwardens, Alf and Bill, carefully counted, checked, and then re-checked the unbelievably large offering. The harvest fare had been painstakingly catalogued and the list had been checked as well. They were stunned by the generous giving. None of the congregation was well off, in fact the margin between them and the “less fortunate” was vague.

The rector listed the parish's needy folk and then established a priority order with the poorest first. The next step was the joyful allocation of harvest and money gifts to those on the list – a lengthy process that involved much discussion. When finished, all three sank to their knees with prayers of joyful thanks for God's bounty. As they prayed they remembered about being Good Samaritans to needy neighbours and their prayers turned into agonised intercession.

Old Betty Brown, the first on the list, was crippled with arthritis. She lived with her husband in a tiny two room, tied cottage. Poverty was a way of life, but now things had become impossible. There was neither food nor money. Disability allowances had been suspended pending government review and pensions were painfully small. Added to this, a final demand from the electricity board had just arrived. Betty sat in the kitchen with her head buried in her hands. A helpless captive to abject penury. Tears trickled down her wizened cheeks. Upstairs her husband was coughing, always coughing, day and night without respite and this fuelled her misery and tears. A sudden knocking on the door roused Betty from her sorrow. An early morning mist still lingered making it hard to see who the visitor was. “Good morning, Mrs. Brown,” the ghostly silhouette cheerfully said. “The parish church held its Harvest Festival yesterday and I’ve brought something for you.” With that, the figure bent down and heaved up a huge box. With no further ado, the visitor was ushered into the kitchen and the box put on the table. She was lost for words. Alf, the church warden, saw the tear stained face and sympathetically asked what was wrong. This was the key that unlocked the floodgates for such a tale of woe.

In silence, Alf unpacked the box and, as he did so, the torrent of misery dried up. There was an abundance of everything. A welcome cornucopia that totally covered the kitchen table. “And,” when the box was empty, “there's this too,” he said and thrust a bulky envelope into her hands. “We guessed ready cash may be handy.” The tears started again, but this time with joyful relief.

“Well, I can't stay,” said Alf with a little embarrassment, “I'll let the rector know of your problems, I'm sure he can sort things out for you.” With that, he headed to the door and out into the mist.

As he hurried to his car he thought that the name “Good Samaritan” did not fit him well for he was just a delivery boy. “Surely,” he thought, “the Good Samaritan is both my church and the Lord that made all this possible.” With that, and a heart filled with thankfulness, Alf started the car and set off for the next address on the list.

Thank you for reading our Fellowship's magazine. We sincerely hope you enjoyed it.

This is an edited version of the actual magazine which our members receive and, as such, it doesn't include contact details or time-sensitive information.

For any information you might need, please get in touch through the Contact Us page.

Differences in the layout or formats are purely as a result of the changes made to get this publication online and do not reflect the excellent work done by the WordWise editor.

We hope the prose and poetry shared here encourage you to write your experiences of God, and we would love to read them.