One of the earliest Baptist groups found in Scotland from 1765 were known as the Scotch Baptists. Unlike our churches today, they regularly practised the Christian tradition of foot washing following Jesus’ example in John 13 and taking literally v15 “I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you.”

Today foot washing in the Christian tradition is still regularly practised by Mennonites and Anabaptists; a few of our Scottish Baptist churches will, on Maundy Thursday or at some point over the Easter weekend, take off their socks and shoes and dip bare feet in a basin.

Rev Bruce Milne points in his commentary on John 13 to two different purposes of this gospel story. Firstly he sees it as a “vivid illustration of the way of salvation” and secondly as “a powerful demonstration of the secret of communion,” to which I want to pose the question: whose feet are in your basin?

As a believers’ church in Scotland I want to ask, whose feet are we washing and who are we allowing to wash our feet? I am still convinced that most people in Scotland today are seeking authentic community, a place to find comfort, security, purpose, acceptance, hope and many other life-affirming gifts. We are called as God’s people to be intentionally relational. Within our churches, both at the core and the edges, there are people who are seeking authentic relationships with those who claim to be “in Christ.” In washing the disciples’ feet, Judas included, Jesus is demonstrating the depth of his love and the nature of our response to his love if we will humble ourselves to accept his rule in our lives. The raw material for the church is that of helpless sinners transformed into humble servants, confident of who they are in Christ and trusting that our Father God is in control, just like Jesus.

To call Jesus our teacher and Lord, as the early disciples did, means allowing our habits, actions and attitudes to be transformed by Him: to choose his descending way, repeatedly demonstrated in his birth, life and death, and to choose to follow His command to “love one another as I have loved you.”

Henri Nouwen wrote “The further you descend, the more your eyes are opened to the brokenness of our humanity.” It is in that place we find grace for ourselves and grace to share within the Church at its core and edges.

Washing one another’s feet may not be a practise that catches on soon but let us receive the grace afresh this Easter that permits no exceptions to those we are willing to serve, nor make exceptions of those who offer to us their service in Christ.

Alan Donaldson

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Things coming together but with still more to do as time flies past. One thing that hasn’t happened yet is selling their home in Buckie. Would you join with them in praying about this: that the right buyer would come forward and the sale go ahead smoothly, enabling Julie and Stephen to settle fully to life in Forfar.

Judy White

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The Church is God’s prism through which His light shines finding rich and colourful expression.
Preaching Christ in Unlikely Places

Greenock’s Waterfront Cinema

“The hiring of places of public amusement for Sunday preaching is a novelty, and a painful one...It is entering into an alliance with the world”. So said a London paper over 150 years ago when the congregation of Charles Spurgeon decided to hold their services in the Music Hall of the Royal Surrey Gardens, a venue more usually associated with concerts, exhibitions, and even wild beast shows.

In March this year Greenock Baptist Church also began hiring a place of public amusement for their Sunday morning services – the local cinema! Four years ago the two Baptist congregations meeting in Greenock joined to form Greenock Baptist Church, deciding to sell both of their buildings and look for an alternative. Four years on, with the buildings recently sold, we haven’t found a permanent home yet, hence the reason for moving to the cinema.

Do you agree with such a thing? In Spurgeon’s case he writes, “One or two of our good members thought it wrong to go to what they persisted in calling ‘the devil’s house’”. Nevertheless, he continued, “I bade them not to discourage either their brethren or me, for we were willing to go even into ‘the devil’s house’ to win souls for Christ”.

At the opening service in the Music Hall where 10,000 people were crammed in, the service had not long started when the cry of ‘Fire...fire...the galleries are falling in’ was heard. The smoke was later discovered to be a hoax but seven people lost their lives in the ensuing crush with many others seriously injured. Was this God’s judgement on holding worship in a music hall? Was a place of entertainment a suitable venue for the preaching of God’s Word? It haunted Spurgeon for rest of his life. Yet a couple of weeks later the church resumed services there with Spurgeon continuing to preach there for three years.

Looking back on his time at the Music Hall, Spurgeon felt the decision was vindicated, “As for the multitude, they were always there in force; and these not only from the religious section of society, but largely from those who never went to public worship...The best of all is, God was with us. Conversions were numerous...All along through the years in which we worshipped in it, there were continual additions to the church...”

Greenock Baptist Church can’t match the numbers of Spurgeon’s day but the simple point is this - God can, God has, and God will bless His Word wherever it is preached. We would ask you to pray for us during this transition process. We do not want this move to be an interruption to Gospel work nor seen as a break from God’s blessing until we eventually have our own building when the real work can start.

We want to be able to say with Spurgeon, ‘The best of all is, God is with us, conversions are numerous, additions are being made to the church’. The novelty and neutrality of our venue may mean that people will join us who would never think of visiting a traditional church building?

The apostle Paul also experienced occasions when he did not have the use of a religious building and was forced to use a house and the hiring of a lecture hall (see Acts 18:5-8; 19:8-10). Yet many still heard the Gospel, accepted Christ, and were baptised.

Rev Paul Coventry

Collydean Granary Baptist Church

Collydean, God’s Bridge to the Community

As a small ‘Aided Church’ within the BU of Scotland we are grateful not only for the financial support that we receive but also the knowledge and assurance of being part of a larger fellowship nationwide. A Union that is supportive of one another in practical and prayerful ways.

Since our ‘relaunch’ in September 2007 our membership has risen from five to eighteen. The past year has been difficult though, and we were compelled to sell the Church Manse. However, this may have a very beneficial ‘upside’: we hope that once our present part-time pastor, John MacSporran, retires, we may fund a full-time pastor who would devote even more energy and enthusiasm to Collydean.

We worship as a Church on Sunday morning and have Guides, Brownies, Rainbows and Mother and Toddlers during week days. We also have a House-group and a Ladies Bible Study Group. John is chaplain to our local primary school and also the Glenrothes YMCA. Yet we are only scratching the surface as there is so much more that could be done in the Collydean gousing estate.

On Saturday 10th March we had a Vision Renewal Day in the Church when we shared together, prayed and waited on God to find His mind for us to take the next steps together to fulfill our vision of Collydean, God’s Bridge to the Community. We took great encouragement from the day together and from our prayerful deliberations came up with four points that we will take forward together.

John MacSporran

MacSporran, inspirational statements were placed around the room for everyone to choose one, then share what it means to them.
Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers’ Association - Conference 2012
You’re warmly welcome to join with the growing network that is the Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers’ Association as they meet at Central Baptist Church, Dundee on Saturday 12th May for their annual conference.

Alan Donaldson, our guest speaker, will help us unpack the relevant theme of ‘Discovery’. We’ll have sung worship, and lots of opportunity to hear good news stories of what God is doing. It’ll be a vibrant and inspiring day.

Let Glen Cartwright (SBLPA General Secretary) know by 5th May if you’re planning on being there. The cost of £12 includes a three-course lunch!

Glen Cartwright, Secretary
Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers’ Association
glen@glencartwright.orangehome.co.uk

Scottish Baptist History Project
The Scottish Baptist History Project will meet on Saturday, 21 April, 2012, at Bristo Baptist Church, 41 Buckingham Terrace, 1 Queensferry Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3DJ.

The programme is as follows:

10:00 Tea / Coffee
10:30 Ian Birch ‘The Origins of the English Particular Baptists’
12:00 Lunch [Tea / Coffee available]
1:00 Emma Macleod ‘Civil Liberties and Baptists: William Winterbotham (1763-1829) in prison and thinking of America’
2:30 Tea / Coffee
2:45 Jimmy Thomson ‘The Greenock Medical Martyrs of 1864-1865’
4:00 Conclusions

There will be a conference fee (cheques payable to Brian Talbot) of £3, including coffee, tea and biscuits. Participants may like to bring a packed lunch. There is a car park at the church. Those coming by train to Edinburgh should alight at Haymarket Station. From there it is a 15-20 minutes walk to the church.

Book Review
Leda by K. C. Murdarasi
According to the front cover Leda was shortlisted for the Scripture Union New Fiction Prize 2007, and, having read the book I can understand why.

K. C. Murdarasi, a member of Adelaide Place Baptist Church and a former missionary in Albania, writes beautifully and deeply theologically for young people.

Leda is titled after the main character growing up in Albania in 1991 just after the fall of Communism. When visiting missionaries come to a nearby village she hears about Jesus for the first time and puts her trust in Him. However, life circumstances threaten to overwhelm her and her faith at first falters. Yet God continues to reveal Himself to her, and she learns what it really means to put her trust in God and grow in faith with the help of a local pastor helping her understand the Bible.

When the country is thrown into chaos again in 1997, Leda and her best friend run away, to escape to Greece, and once again Leda’s faith is tested - though she knows that God is faithful and will get them through.

Throughout the book Murdarasi cleverly weaves biblical and theological truth into the well thought through narrative addressing issues such as what happens when God doesn’t answer our prayers in the way we would like, the challenge to not compromise our faith in our lives, listening to God’s voice and being open to His guiding presence.

Leda

The BIG Welcome
This is a simple concept that encourages us to invite one person we know to something we love. We hope that through the simple word ‘Welcome’ local churches will find ways to invite people into their church. This may be through a Sunday service, a special Sunday lunch, Cafe Church, a concert or whatever. The important thing is that you invite people by personal invitation, and when they respond you make them feel very welcome.

Whilst ‘Back to Church Sunday’ is celebrated by churches across the denominations each September, your church is free to adapt the Big Welcome resources and use them for events on other dates (the date can easily be removed from the bottom of the poster).

There are many resources available to help churches present the Big Welcome in a professional way. For more details, see http://www.baptist.org.uk/crossingplaces/evangelism/the-big-welcome.html

As summer approaches and Sunday School prizegivings loom, Leda is well worth considering, especially for readers over 10 years of age. For more info or to obtain copies then visit K.C. Murdarasi’s website www.kcmurdarasi.com

Mo Gibbs

NB. If you’d like to see more Reviews, keep an eye on our website where you can reach them from the Resources page.

Act of Witness
On Saturday the 31st March there will be an ‘Easter’ act of witness outside the gates of the Faslane Naval Base by Christians who are opposed to nuclear arms. This is an ecumenical event organised by the ‘Scottish Clergy Against Nuclear Arms’. Historically for a number of reasons there has been little evangelical and dissenting church participation in this event. Last year, however, an informal group from various Baptist churches took part and some plan to do so again this year. The event will involve a short walk, an act of worship, and a picnic at the gates with people gathering at approx. 11.30 for the 12.00 event. If you require more information or are interested in joining the ‘baptist’ group, contact Stuart Blythe at stuart.blythe@uws.ac.uk. This is not an official BUS event and those participating are representing their own convictions on this matter.

Stuart Blythe

Fit and Flexible
The Baptist Union of Great Britain (BUGB) Council takes place over 3 days, twice a year, at Swanwick in Derbyshire, and it is a privilege for Alan and me to attend as your representatives. The Council consists of people from all over England and some from Wales, representing the 13 Associations and 6 Colleges that make up BUGB, as well as the Senior Management Team of BUGB and representatives from BMS World Mission and other denominations.

Last week’s Council was largely considering how BUGB should go about restructuring to make them more flexible and fit for purpose as well as making a 20% cut in their annual budget. This is very similar to the challenges we have had as a Union in the last few years and I was struck by the number of people who commented about the reassurance it was to them that we had already been through it and survived.

Please pray for our sisters and brothers as they work out, under Christ, what they should do. Pray that they may have the wisdom to know what is best, the courage to do it, and that, in it all, they may know and show God’s grace.

Jacqueline Primrose

PLEASE NOTE: The events advertised in our publications or on our website cover the wider Christian scene in Scotland and do not necessarily reflect the involvement or endorsement of Baptist Union staff or any specific knowledge about content.
Sunday 1st
Baptist Union of Scotland Office Staff - Please pray for the staff and join with them in giving thanks for their new office and structures.
Alan Hamilton Messer: Chaplain, Cameron Toll Shopping Centre, Edinburgh. Pray for Alan in this part-time post in a busy retail centre.

Sunday 8th
Forres: The Lighthouse Church The church is facing a time of considerable change at present. The closure last year of RAF Kinloss has had a significant impact in the local area, not least the church. A number of people very active in the life of the church for many years have been posted away from the area with their families. In addition, from July, for the first time in its short history (11 yrs), the church will enter pastoral vacancy as Chris Woodman follows a call to the pastorate of Lyme Regis Baptist Church, Dorset.
The Church would greatly appreciate prayer for wisdom, guidance and provision concerning:
- Moving forward at the Lord’s pace concerning the pastoral vacancy.
- How to address the decrease in people actively involved in church ministries.
- Managing a significant decrease in the church’s income as folk move on.
- For grasping the opportunity to use these challenges to grow as a church in faith in and witness to the gospel of Christ.

Fort William: Rev David White. We are actively involved in church ministries.

Graziabella: Rev Arthur Hembling. We thank God for what he is doing among us. Our building is undergoing refurbishment of the sanctuary which will make our worship area more usable and flexible space for the future. This is phase 1 of a much larger vision to modernise it for mission to our community. As a result, we are currently worshipping in a local primary school with great opportunities for witness to the people there.

Over the last year numbers have increased for Sunday worship and we have people waiting to be baptised when we return to the building. The church continues to be active in the community by helping to run a drop-in for those with addictions, a lunch club for the elderly, children’s and youth clubs, men’s breakfasts and ladies’ days, and we partner with other denominations in town and across the Borders in seeking to make Christ known to those around us.

We hope to run another holiday club and youth outreach week this year with a Step Out team and would value prayer as we continue to struggle for personnel to play music, to help us teach children, to lead and disciple people and to become workers in the ‘harvest field.’

Thanks to all for support and encouragement - God is at work in our Borders churches and we praise His Holy Name!

Sunday 22nd
Garioch Church Please pray for this fresh expression of church in Aberdeenshire.

Gerrard Street: Rev Matthew Henderson. Building for the Gospel, our £2m building project, is coming to a critical point as we receive bids from local contractors and then have to decide how to move forward. Please pray for wisdom as we decide on a contractor, whether to phase the project or do it in one go and all the other practical matters involved in such a project. Give thanks that we now have a team in place and pray for an outpouring of financial resources to facilitate the project. And most of all, please pray that we will never lose sight of the reason for building: that we might be ever more effective in seeing God’s Kingdom grow in Aberdeen.

Our student ministry continues to bless many who come to study in Aberdeen. With over 130 students, we feel a real weight of responsibility in seeing them leave Aberdeen strong in their faith. Please pray for us in this.

Our growing focus on outreach ministries stretches our resources, finance and people. Give thanks for the newly started women’s drop-in centre (“Wednesday Women”) where women in need are finding relational, emotional and spiritual support. Please pray for wisdom as we consider two other projects: an outreach to prostitutes and football training events for kids.

Sunday 29th
Glenrothes: Rev Jacob Brothers. As we give God thanks and the glory for the growth in our fellowship and for amazing results from our “Outreach Programmes”, we also would like prayers for the following:
- for our mentoring/discipleship programme as we seek to bridge the “generation gap”, allowing the young to benefit from the wisdom and experience of the older/mature folks in the fellowship and the older members to share in the life and experience of our younger people, enabling them in faith and walk with the Lord in their daily lives.
- we have a fairly new men’s ministry which is just beginning to take shape, within this is also mentoring and discipleship.
- we also to continue to give thanks and pray for our Pastor, Jacob and his leadership.

Gourrock. We are in pastoral vacancy but thank God for His known presence among us and for nourishing us from His Word. We have seen some modest growth and give thanks for His blessing on a Bible study course we are following which challenges us about being an effective community of His grace. Please pray for us as we undertake a total review of our church’s work and seek the Lord’s guidance, preparatory to seeking God’s choice of pastor.

Other prayer requests outwith the Prayer Link, but from our Scottish Baptist family, can be found on our website’s new Fellowship of Prayer page.

If you’d like to submit an item for prayer, please send it to admin@scottishbaptist.org.uk

Engagement Diary for April

12 The National Team meets today.
14 The Public Issues and Social Action Group meets today. Mrs Andrea Voysey, National President of the Scottish Baptist Women’s Fellowship (SBWF), takes part in the Ayrshire Rally at Maybole Baptist Church.
19 Jim Purves preaches in South Beach Baptist Church, Saltcoats.
16 Andrea Voysey takes part in the Fife Rally at Cowdenbeath Baptist Church.
21 For the next 4 days, John Greenshields visits the church in Tiree. Interviews for our new young leaders initiative, ‘Stepping Up’, take place today. Andrea Voysey attends the Women’s Fellowship’s Lanarkshire Lunch.
22 Alan Donaldson speaks at the official opening today of St Kilda Road Community Church (formerly St Kilda Road) in Dundee.
26 The National Team meets today.
28 Alan Donaldson is with Arran Baptist Church this weekend as they celebrate their Church Anniversary. Andrea Voysey attends the Renfrewshire Rally at Erskine Baptist.
30 Alan Donaldson and Jim Purves visit Grace Community Church, Inverness. Andrea Voysey visits Peterhead Baptist Church today.

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