

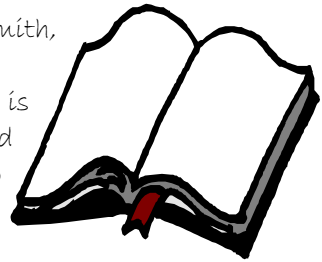
Looking Back - Church History (from the Minutes)

January 1848. Minute Respecting Chapel Debt.

We the Existing Trustees of the Congregational Church in Musselburgh Considering that the Board for the Liquidation of Debt on Congregational Churches in Scotland have recently advanced to us from the fund under their Charge the Sum of Sixty Six pounds Sterling to enable us to Discharge the Debt upon the said Chapel Amounting to one hundred pounds Sterling which will free the said Building from all incumberance of Debt. Therefore in accordance with the object for which the Board was constituted, we hereby engage as Trustees to do all in our power to prevent the incurring of Debt in future as a burden on the said chapel and to record on this our minute book a full Statement of the transaction for the information and guidance of our Successors in Office.

Signed:- James Hay, Alex Brown, John Smith, John Ronald.

At the same time be it known that there is debt on the property belonging to the said Chapel or the proprietors Amounting to three hundred pounds Sterling apart from the Chapel at the present time.



31st March 1897 - Extract

Mr Wishart brought up the case of an evening member, Mr Kenneth Shaw - as one for the exercise of discipline. The meeting agreed that he should be warned and admonished in a brotherly way and that Messrs. Wishart, Nelson and Bell should visit him with this object on an early day.

28th April 1897 - Extract

Mr Wishart reported the visit of Deacons appointed to visit on Mr Kenneth Shaw - who received them in the same brotherly and kindly way as they had gone. He confessed his fault and promised amendment; but it was to be noted he had not been at church since.



Say a Little Prayer

What do you want out of life? Everybody must have asked the question some time or another. Here is a pithy, witty and comprehensive answer. Who wrote it is unknown, but it was used in a "Highway" programme from East Anglia and was read by Dick Graham.

It struck a few chords -- particularly with one gentleman, who was on the phone at half-past nine on the Monday after transmission. He wanted to have it word-perfect for a speech he was making that day at a business conference. Perhaps none of us, businessmen or not, should ask for more than is asked for in this prayer.

Give Us, Lord



Give us, Lord, a bit o' sun
A bit o' work and a bit o' fun
Give us all in th' struggle and splutter
Our daily bread and a bit o' butter.
Give us health, our keep to make,
An' a bit to spare for poor folks sake,
Give us sense, for we are some of us duffers,
An' a heart to feel for all that suffers.

† Our Conscience

Everyone knows the story of Peter and the cock-crow. At the last supper he had boasted never to desert his Lord. Jesus had known better. "I tell you, Peter, that before the cock crows you will disown me three times. And then it was the cold, grey light of dawn, and they were taking the Master away to be crucified, and he had disowned his Lord with curses. And the cock was crowing. The Bible tells us it broke Peter's heart. He went out and wept bitterly. In an odd way, the Rev. Dr. Nelson Gray who wrote this story for the Evening Citizen newspaper, was reminded of Peter's failure by a news item.

"Engineer John Matthews was fined ten dollars at Perth, Western Australia, yesterday for climbing over his neighbour's fence and wringing the neck of a rooster which persistently started crowing at 3.00 a.m. Said John: 'It was worth it a hundred times to get some sleep'."

Strikes me our conscience is like a cock-crow. There are two things we can do with it. Wring its neck, and go back to sleep.

Or listen, like Peter, and remember Jesus, and repent.





Congregational History

The origins of Congregationalism have been said to lie in the independence of the churches of the New testament. However the conversion of the Roman emperor led to an authoritative hierarchy which in the west centred on the Pope. The 16th century Protestant Reformation, with the Bible printed in English resulted in an overthrow of clericalism and in worship being conducted in the language of the people. Those who wanted further reforms than the monarch would allow were forced to break with the Church of England and Separist churches grew up in London, Norwich and elsewhere. Some were imprisoned, some executed like Barrow, Greenwood and Penry in 1593, some went into exile in the Low Countries, and some, like the Pilgrim Fathers, to New England.

The English Civil War saw these Independent or Congregational churches grow markedly in numbers and Cromwell, Milton and Bunyan were all affected by them. At the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, they were excluded from the church settlement and thus became Nonconformists, with Presbyterians, Baptists and Quakers. Subject to harsh laws they endured persecution, exclusion from public office and their sons were barred from the universities. Consequently they set up dissenting academies and hymn writers, like the genius Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge, received first class educations there.

The evangelical revival of the 18th century benefited the Congregational churches in England, Wales and Scotland, where the Haldane brothers, in particular, were keen to build Independent churches. In 1795 the London Missionary Society was founded and this became the main agency for Congregationalists serving abroad. Among these were Scotsmen like Robert Moffat and David Livingstone who went to South Africa, the Englishman John Williams to the Pacific Islands, and the Welshman Griffith John to China. The athlete Eric Liddell also went with the LMS to China where he died in a Japanese camp in 1945.

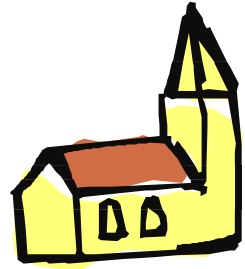
In the 20th century Congregationalists were often zealots for church unity which led to failed attempts to bring most mainstream Protestants together. Some Congregationalists joined the English Presbyterians in the United Reform Church, in 1972 (England and Wales) and 1996 (Scotland), but some 500 Congregational churches opted to retain their freedom and rejected this centralising measure. The Congregational Federation has provided fellowship for most congregational churches since 1972 without infringing their right to respond directly to the Holy Spirit in whatever way they believe called by God to act.

FABRIC FACTS

Large Hall:- The north, south & window walls have been painted. The old large cupboard was stripped out and a new cupboard built with different access, then varnished. Steps from kitchen were renewed and carpeted and new handrailing built & varnished. The floor will be sanded & sealed in early July and the carpet replaced with hardwood flooring to match existing. The hall will be out of commission for three weeks in July so that it can be emptied for the flooring work to be carried out and the surface treatment allowed to dry and harden before use. The furniture etc. will then be replaced.

Small Hall:- This has been re-carpeted and completely redecorated.

Future Work:- With the help of a grant from the Congregational Insurance and the proceeds from the Alexander Brothers concert it is hoped to have the cement work above the church entrance repaired and the lintels above the large hall windows replaced.



From The Congregationalist

✠ An old, tired-looking dog wandered into the yard. I could tell from his collar and well-fed belly that he had a home. He followed me into the house, down the hall, and fell asleep in a corner. An hour later, he went to the door, and I let him out. The next day he was back, resumed his position in the hall, and slept for an hour. This continued for several weeks.

Curious, I pinned a note to his collar: "Every afternoon your dog comes to my house for a nap." The next day he arrived with a different note pinned to his collar: "He lives in a home with ten children - He's trying to catch up on his sleep. Can I come with him tomorrow?"

✠ A 50p piece met a £5 note and said, "Hey! Where have you been? I haven't seen you around here much." The £5 note replied, "I've been hanging out at the bingo, done the lottery a few times, had a Chinese takeaway, gone to a couple of football matches, a bit of shopping, holidays abroad, that kind of stuff. How about you?" The 50p sighed and said, "Oh, you know, the same old stuff -- church, church, church."

✠ Some prospectors struck gold, and decided to keep it secret until they could return with more equipment. When they returned more than 300 people had followed them. Their faces had given them away. They couldn't conceal the treasure they'd found. Do our faces give us away? Do they show the treasure we have found in coming in faith, face to face with Jesus.