

Summer - and beyond - at TCF

There is plenty evidence on social media of good holidays being enjoyed by a fair number of the TCF Family. I know that I have had a great time with family in Faroe. Re-entry can sometimes be abrupt and as we seek to take forward aspects of life and service in TCF, there are a number of meetings taking place may be important in relation to sustained change in our fellowship:

- Friday 5 August 2016: OM about the situation in India (and the visit of Rev. Kumar Swamy on 2 October 2016)
- Sunday 7 August 2016: meeting with Home Group Leaders, Visitation Group and Elders to discuss Pastoral Care arrangements and how they support the Strategic Aim of 'Caring and Sharing'
- Sunday 7 August 2016: Elders special meeting
- Wednesday 10 August 2016: Evangelism and Social Action Group (Sarah Braithwaite, Lynne Clarke, Jim Crooks, Dave Martin, Sandra Morris and Jim Wilson with possible input or observation by Hazel Fowlie and Stephen Jones)
- Thursday 11 August 2016: Home Group Leaders
- Sunday 28 August 2016: Family Service on Strategic Aim 1: Caring and Sharing (message with a special Family Communion - more details later)
- TBC: Young Adults Group
- TBC: Website and Social Media developments meeting with Steve Braithwaite, Bob Brown, Jim Crooks, Darren Grant and Miguel Gallardo

Your prayers would be very much appreciated.

Witnessing

One aspect of my own life that I have been challenged about is personal evangelism. Although I am committed to the Pocket Testament League (*please ask me...*) for personal witness, there is far more I need to do to cultivate a sense of expectancy in my witnessing. This came home to me recently when I visited my new home in Guildtown and met the stonemason who was building a stone wall at the front of my new garden. After an initial conversation he shared that he had been having some personal difficulties and I was able to identify with these. He shared that he also studied philosophy and was intrigued by his creative connection with stone. It was a simple step to then share with him about a Creator God who was building a spiritual dwelling place comprised of 'living stones'. He took my card and promised to call me after he had thought about our conversation. Whether he does or not, is in God's hands but I drove away, forgetting all about my house and prayed for him as I journeyed back to Perth. Maybe you have had opportunities over the summer as you met new people, re-engaged with family or enjoyed time outside in the garden and speaking with neighbours. Even as we relax, we can be aware of others needs in the gospel and I am confident that sharing your faith will make you come alive and reinvigorate you as nothing else can!

Reading

I have been reading some books over the holiday period including biographies (Matthew McKinnon who serves God still in Greenview Evangelical Church at age 78 but was formerly with TEAR Fund, MAF and Christian Men Together) and Michael Yaron (an Israeli Jew who converted to Christianity whilst studying medicine in Italy and who is now a pastor in Messianic Jewish congregations in Jerusalem). I find that reading biographies helps me to understand how God works in our lives - observable phenomenon that stimulates me to serve Him and know Him in every circumstance of life. I have also been reading 'A Wind in the House of Islam' by David Garrison. Something is happening in the Muslim world, something unprecedented in history. Over the past 14 centuries, Islam has forged a 'spiritual empire' that stretches from West Africa to Indonesia. Today, the Dar al-Islam or "House of Islam," as Muslims call their religious community, counts more than one in five persons on earth. David Garrison travelled a quarter million miles into every corner of the Muslim world collecting interviews from former Muslims who have come to faith in Jesus Christ. The results are truly astounding as the research shows that Muslims are converting to Christ at a rate that is entirely unprecedented in history. In a personal conversation with Craig Dyer who heads up Christianity Explored in Scotland, he confirms, with the producers of Operation World, that the fastest growing area of Christianity today is in Iran - and the largest growing market for Christianity Explored! *Habakkuk 1:5 'Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told.'* In post-Brexit, post-modern Scotland, we need the assurance that God is in control. Which brings me to Habakkuk again...

Thank you for ...

accepting me ...

and being patient with me!

Results from survey on Habbakkuk

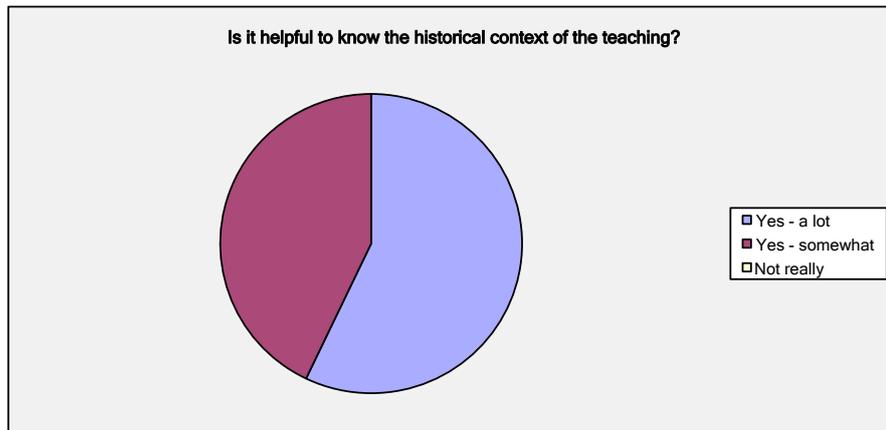
The results of the survey on the teaching of Habakkuk have again been very helpful and encouraging. The response rate is lower because the congregation size for the evening teaching is smaller but all respondents had attended two or more of the three sessions with over 70% attending all three. The range of responses on the central point of Habakkuk shows a great deal of similarity and this helps to reassure us that the main point is being understood albeit expressed in slightly different words by each individual. The typical responses were:

- "God is faithful even in a time of disaster"*
- "God listened and responded to all that Habakkuk said."*
- "Our need to fully depend on the superior Wisdom of God in all of life's circumstances."*
- "God may be silent but He is not absent in the affairs of men. In His own time He will act."*
- "Our vision of events is limited and God has all things in His hands ..."*
- "We can trust in God in all things and times in our lives."*

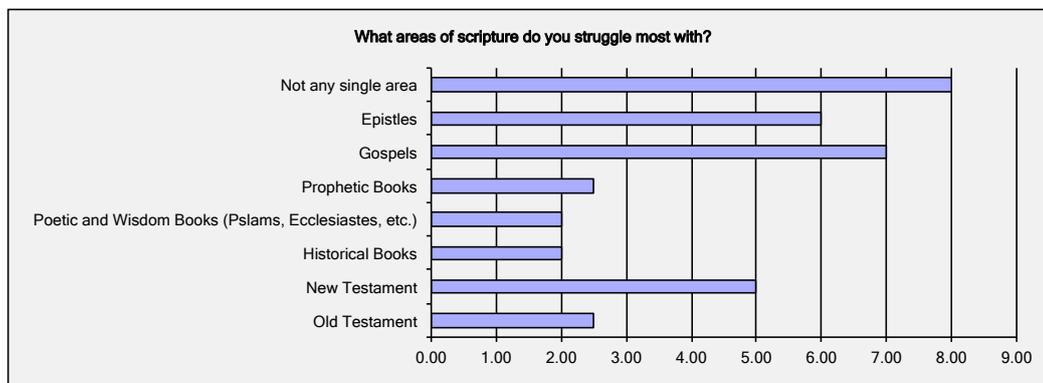
In Question 5, respondents were asked to identify the most important aspect of Habbakkuk's message to their own Christian lives (from 8 possible choices) and only three were chosen:

- I may have questions that I don't know the answer to but I can still trust God - 28.6%
- God can use bad things done by others for His own ends - 28.6%
- We can trust Him with all of life's circumstances - 42.9%

Two further questions were very helpful in relation to approaches to take in future teaching series:



In supplementary answers to this question, it was interesting to see how much individual respondents sought to understand the context to a book but the degree of agreement on getting *some* understanding was very significant.



The 4th question was complex because it calculated two scores: the ring average and the frequency of scoring. In short, more people had *some* level of difficulty with the Poetic and Historical books but the greatest priority for understanding is in the Gospels and the Epistles.

As always, we'll be taking account of the feedback in future series. Thank you for your participation.

Jim

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