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Pastoral Letter — April / May 2020

‘Now Christ is Risen From the Dead’
(1 Corinthians 15: 20)

In recent days our world has been severely shaken by news of the spread of the coronavirus. Our thoughts and prayers are with the sick, the bereaved and with all the brave workers in our NHS. And, as a church we will continue to seek to meet the spiritual and material needs of the elderly, lonely and vulnerable.

In the 1st Century the Apostle Paul asked believers in Corinth to consider news that would have been even more shocking. *‘There is no resurrection of the dead—Christ is not risen’*. (1 Cor. 15:13). If this was true, then the outlook could not be more bleak and hopeless. It means we have:

- 1) No Foundation (vs 12-13)
- 2) No Faith (vs 14-16)
- 3) No Forgiveness (v17)
- 4) No Future (vs 18-19)

These are the sad but inevitable consequences ‘if Christ is not risen’.

Sadly many, without ever investigating the facts, accept this fake news. If Jesus did not rise from the dead—what happened to His body? Why didn’t the authorities produce His body and nip Christianity in the bud? Hundreds saw Jesus after His death—were they all deluded? Why were His disciples—timid and frightened men before Jesus died, now prepared to boldly preach and to die for what they knew to be a deception? Millions claim to have been changed by an encounter with the risen Christ—have they all been mistaken and deceived? ‘If Christ is not risen’ has implications for now and for eternity—surely it is wise to consider the evidence.

Paul dismisses this fake news and rejoices in the truth. *‘Now Christ is risen from the dead’* (1 Cor. 15:20)—the greatest truth this world has ever heard and a truth which gladdens the heart of every believer. Jesus lives and this turns our negatives into positives.

1) Our Foundation is Firm

The resurrection of Jesus is the bedrock doctrine of the Christian faith. It is the uniqueness of Christianity, for now the Gospel story does not end in death and burial but in resurrection and ascension. God raised His Son from the dead. Forty days later, He received Him back into heaven. His resurrection is the vindication of all that Jesus said and did. We have not believed a lie. In the words of the Apostle Paul *‘Jesus Christ—declared to be the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead’* (Romans 1:4). Our foundation is firm.

2) Our Faith is Genuine

In v14 Paul makes what many today would regard as being a controversial statement. He says that a faith without a resurrection is a faith which is vain and empty. This does not mean there is nothing of value in other faiths but as far as eternal realities are concerned, only a ‘resurrection’ faith can meet our deepest need. Therefore, it is not a waste of time to trust in Jesus. It is not a waste of breath to preach the Gospel. Our faith is real and genuine.

3) Our Forgiveness is Guaranteed

It is sin which stops a person from knowing God and which will ultimately bar a person from heaven. It is vital, therefore, that we know our sins to be forgiven. In v 17 Paul says that to trust for salvation anyone who has not been raised from the dead—it is a futile exercise. We are trusting an impostor. But, how do we know that Jesus was not an impostor? The answer is that God raised Him from the dead. *‘This Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God’* (Hebrews 10:12). God raised Jesus from the dead and then exalted Him into heaven. Proof that Jesus was no impostor. His sacrifice for sin was accepted by God and that guarantees, in Christ, our forgiveness is guaranteed.

4) Our Future is Assured

‘Now Christ is risen from the dead and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. Christ the firstfruits, afterward, those who are Christ’s at His coming’ (1Cor15:20 and 23). I was reading a few days ago an article by a well known politician and he said, “Christian by background

and tradition but I believe that when the lights go out that's that". Were it not for the resurrection of Jesus, the Apostle Paul would have believed the same *'Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die'* (1 Cor 15:32). Millions, influenced by evolutionary teaching, also believe that 'when you are dead, you are dead' but not the Christian. Christ died but rose again and ascended into heaven and what happened to Him will happen to all who through repentance and faith are united to Him. *'Christ the firstfruits – afterward those who are Christ's at His coming'*. Heaven is certain. Our future is assured.

May you have a blessed and peaceful Easter.

John Mollitt

Farewell for now!

On Thursday 18th March, Glyn and I went down to bid farewell 'for now' to dear Margaret Green at the house which has been her home for 58 years. As we are in the stringent regulations which have been in operation recently because of the Covid 19 virus we didn't go into the house. Margaret's favourite place to sit has been near the French windows at the rear of the house overlooking the secluded garden with its many bird visitors and we went round to that window where we could see each other. We took a mobile phone with us and phoned her on the landline so she was able to see us and hear us on speakerphone.

With arms outstretched in a virtual hug, and with real tears we had a very precious time together on this last visit before she left for her new home with her daughter in Scotland two days later.

Margaret was in good spirit and greatly blessing the Lord for His goodness to her. As she approaches her 90th birthday in May her spiritual joy and sharpness of mind on all things spiritual was a great encouragement to us. She had her Bible at the ready and Glyn read Psalm 18:1-3. Brief notes of what he said follow.

"Well Margaret, it is time to say goodbye. I have written in the Tinshell card to you which we have all signed 'You came as a breath of fresh air, and

you still are'. You came over 25 years ago and I mean that you had/still have the spiritual freshness of one who loves the Lord and, as you often said, you love the Word of God-The Scriptures.

Linked with love for the Lord Psalm 116 begins in a similar vein "I love the LORD because He has heard my voice and my supplications". In both cases the Psalmist is speaking by personal experience. In Psalm 18 David calls the Lord 'My strength', implying that sometimes he experienced weakness. And nine further times he says 'My'. The Lord is also David's Rock (My) when everything else seems to give way. He is the rock of our salvation, our cornerstone. The Lord Jesus is our Rock because He died for us and saved us from the penalty of our sins. We can trust Him with every eventuality. We should never, in one sense, leave the foot of the cross.

In verse 3 he speaks of prayer, beginning with praise. The Lord is worthy to be praised. David speaks of his enemies who for him were often people. Ours are more likely to be doubts and fears and the Lord gives us rest. These verses are to dwell on.

So Margaret, we love you very much at Tinshill: we are going to miss you very much: you are still part of us and still a member! We know you will be in good hands and good company with Gill and Andy and family and the Lord's people on Orkney. Let's pray together".

Glyn prayed with thanksgiving for the many years Margaret has loved and served the Lord here at Tinshill and what she has brought to us and encouraged us with in that love. He prayed for safety in the epic journey to Orkney in the current situation and for her to settle with peace and rest. For her to have times of refreshing from Himself and that she would know Him as her rock in her personal life and in this period of national trauma. He asked that both her heart and our hearts would be at peace in Him.



Turning away from the window and leaving was a very difficult moment but a deeply triumphant one. We believe that being in the very presence of the Lord Jesus in heaven is ahead for all true believers, gathered all together with Him for all eternity with tears and pain gone. It's not the end, it's farewell just for now. A moment like this is where the reality of faith is seen and He proves to be our Rock and our rest.

The photograph of Margaret, taken two weeks before, shows her with the bouquet of flowers which went to her, with great love, from the church at Tinshill. If you want to write to Margaret please ask me for her address. She will receive news regularly with the church Magazine.

Margaret Williams

Second Tuesday Notes-Tuesday March 10th 2020

Living for God in a material world

1. Introduction-our consumer society

We live in a material world-a physical natural world, God made but fallen, with things we can see/ touch/taste/hear/smell-using all the senses that God has given us. In the West we also live in a materialistic world-a consumer society where we are the consumers and there is much to excite/enjoy/tempt us.

George Harrison wrote a song and album of the same title in 1973 — “Living in a material world” where there were hints that it did not satisfy and he was seeking something more spiritual (unfortunately he sought that in the wrong direction). A very different song but with the title “Material Girl” was released by Madonna in 1984 with the lyrics “We are living in a material world, And I am a material girl”.

Britain is a wealthy nation-dependng on how you measure it we normally come in the top ten of richest nations in the world with £6 trillion in private wealth. There are 2.4 million dollar millionaires in the UK-6% of the global figure. But there are huge wealth inequalities with plenty not having enough and wanting a greater share.

Compared to many though our country consumes significantly of the various products on offer:-

89% of households have access to a car in GB in 2017 (38.4 million licensed cars in March 2019). 7.6 million households in UK have 2 cars or more (a quarter of the total).

Smartphone use in the UK has grown from 41 million in 2015 (5 years ago) to an estimated 52 million today. Nearly 80% of UK adults have a smartphone now and a recent survey estimated that by age 11, 9 in 10 children now have their own device. Indeed 53% of children own a mobile phone by the age of 7.

The emphasis in our society is on what we've got in our consumer driven society. Every TV advert/ billboard/magazine/newspaper/flier tells us of something we need, must have and are missing out on if we have not got it.

Even during the Covid 19 crisis there is much evidence of panic buying and selfishness even over items such as toilet rolls with fights in supermarket aisles!

2. What does the Bible say?

We know from John 3:16 that God loved the world and He made it but our starting point is 1 John 2: 15-17-do not love the world. What does John mean? He mentions 3 things in this passage:

- the lust of the flesh-to satisfy our desires/ourselves i.e covetousness — wanting more and more
- the lust of the eyes-what we see and want-material (not spiritual which we can't see)
- the pride of life-focus on pleasing ourselves, selfishness. Us in control and at the centre of our world.

The world is temporary (passing away) and the lust of it-but he/she who does the will of God abides forever (permanent). Obedience leads to blessing. There are many good things in the world — it is God made, but it is fallen/spoiled. Every good and perfect gift is from above.

So we have this contrast between worldly and godly. All that is in the world compared to doing the will of God. Flesh versus Spirit. We see this so clearly in Jesus meeting the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 18: 18-23.

The Ruler wanted eternal life but was so firmly rooted here-had money and religion (v 21) — a foot in both camps but “very rich” and so important to him-not prepared to give it up and follow Jesus. We cannot serve both God and mammon. Luke 16 v 13 — we can’t have 2 masters. Our emphasis should not be on laying up treasure on earth but treasure in heaven-Luke 9:25 — we must not risk losing our own soul. Matthew 6:19-21 Where is our treasure? What time do we spend assessing our treasure — are we putting all our efforts into working for wealth/goods here or for eternal wealth? Where is your heart? Proverbs 4:20-27 written by Solomon has wise advice “ Keep your heart with all diligence for out of it spring the issues of life”. Our heart sets our direction of travel.

For the Christian

- (1) We are servants not masters — we are not our own, we have been bought with a price; there has been a change of ownership; from self to Christ on the throne
- (2) We are travellers not residents-just passing through; our home is in heaven, although we still live here for a good while
- (3) We are caretakers not owners — we are stewards. What we have is not ours but God’s and we have been given it to look after for Him (see the parable of the minas/talents in Luke 19).

Implications

So our emphasis should be:

- (1) Pursuing our relationship with God first above all else. Having an eternal perspective with our heart right.
- (2) Holding lightly onto things here but tightly onto eternal things. Where is our grip?
- (3) Producing fruit-being good ground for God’s word-Matthew 13:22-23 — the parable of the sower. Not allowing the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches to choke the word.

3. How then are we to live as stewards of God's gifts to us in our materialistic world?

Let me deal with this in relation to 4 areas of our lives

(1) Our bodies

Looking after our body as good stewards — it's God given. This includes our physical body and our soul (our spiritual life).

1 Corinthians 6:19-20-our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who indwells the Christian. This we have from God as His gift — we are not our own. Bought at a very costly price so glorify God in your body and in your spirit which are God's.

So, do not abuse-alcohol, drugs, cigarettes, sexually. It's special-take care and look after it. Physical exercise is good but more so is spiritual exercise-1 Timothy 4:8. Feed your souls and keep your heart as Solomon counsels in Proverbs 4:23. Pursue holiness and becoming more Christ-like.

(2) Our resources

We are to be wise and faithful stewards-Luke 12:35-37 and 42-44. We should have our waist girded and our lamps burning, active about our Master's service doing His will and watching for His return.

The emphasis is on using what we have to lay up treasure in heaven-Matthew 6:19-21. This includes our time, gifts, talents, money, savings, energy and possessions. Be prepared to share/to meet needs/to invest in God's work because that will last and have eternal consequences. So we can and should be wholehearted, committed fully, concerned about honouring God above all and thankful (that we have resources and we can use them for His glory and eternal purposes). We are to be content with our lot-Hebrews 13:5 and not covetous.

(3) Our family

Includes natural family-spouses/children/grandchildren/siblings, and our spiritual family in the local church and beyond.

Love, give, encourage and nurture-1 John 3:16-19. This should be our response to His love to us-active, generous, real and true. Love in action. If

we have resources/savings then we should consider carefully how these should be used for God's glory to achieve His purposes. This should cover not just what we have now but what we leave for others. In terms of our stewardship what is our legacy?

(4) **Our world**

There's lots about climate change at present and Extinction Rebellion/Greta Thunberg. We can dismiss them as extremists or idealists and question some of their methods but it's right to be concerned about our world. We are stewards. In Genesis 2:15 God put Adam in the Garden of Eden "to tend it and keep it". So we need to show care and be good stewards as God has entrusted it to us to look after but we should do so with a recognition that here is not our long term home and that God will ultimately transform it-2 Peter 3:10-13. Look at verse 11, how shall we live? With holy conduct/godliness/looking for the day of the Lord, wanting it to come. We should have an eternal spiritual perspective and our behaviour should reflect that.

Martin Sellens

Loneliness Lock-in Challenge

Last October my brother, a Methodist minister, took part in the Loneliness Lock-in Challenge, which aims to raise awareness of the massive issue of social isolation and loneliness. The challenge entailed spending 24 consecutive hours in 'isolation' at home having no access to electronic devices, including mobile phones and wi-fi.

Afterwards, Stephen wrote, 'There were a few positives to come out of the experience. For example, I had a bath for the first time in about 10 years! It was one way of passing the time, although how easy it would have been if I had been older and less mobile is a moot point. I also had time to do a spot of reading. Overall, though, I found the experience more difficult than I had imagined. Normally I am fairly comfortable spending time on my own, but to go a whole day with no human interaction, no conversation, not even seeing a human face in person, and feeling so cut off from the outside world, was, at times, rather uncomfortable. I really feel for those for whom

that experience is an ongoing fact of life. I decided to try and write about my experience in the form of a poem. I claim no artistic merit, but in it I have tried to reflect both something of my own experience of the Loneliness Lock-In, and my imagination of what this might be like in an ongoing basis.'

The clock and I

Another day begins — what will it bring?
Same old, same old, no doubt.
I slowly rise, get dressed, make breakfast,
Tea with toast and marmalade -
Traditions are some comfort.

Breakfast over, I sit and wait -
For what? I wonder.
The old clock seems loud today -
Tick-tock, tick-tock.
The hands are moving, but O, so slowly
Tempus certainly fugits not today!

Another day, another day,
Just like yesterday and the day before.
I dream, just for a moment,
Of days gone by -
A house full of noise, chatter, laughter,
Even arguments at times.
Those really were the days.

But they've long gone,
A faded memory.
The days are silent now (if you ignore the clock),
No highlights, no conversations, no purpose?
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

“What about me?” my friend, the telly, asks,
“I keep you entertained, don’t I?”

Yes, there is some truth in that,
But even your attractions are less strong,
And when I watch, I often fall asleep.

Suddenly I hear the door — a caller?
But no, it is the letter box.
A letter from a friend?
Eagerly I rise to see,
But only disappointment greets me:
Some junk mail and a bill.
What happened to the days when friends wrote letters?
Even such a small thing would bring joy.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

Half way through the morning — is that all?
A coffee and a biscuit — comfort food.
Homes Under the Hammer, but even
Dion’s jokes fall flat today.
Roll on lunchtime; I sit and wait
And as I sit, immobile, a chill comes over me.
A dull, grey, cold autumnal day outside,
And maybe inside, too.

Lunch over, the afternoon ahead.
A silence so profound around me and within;
They say that it is golden
But now it seems so tarnished.
I give thanks even for tick-tock.

‘Cooped up’ — an apt description of me now.
Perhaps I ought to venture out,
But what to say to passing strangers?
I’ve lost the art of casual conversation.
And would these old and weary legs
Still carry me from A to B and back?

And so I stay, and sit, and wait
As time grinds slowly on.
“They also serve who only sit and wait”
How can I serve? I ponder in my mind.
I cannot see a purpose for me now.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

Yet God is here, I often feel Him near me.
I’ve known His loving presence through the years
And I have loved and served Him as I could.
What is the way of service for me now?
Yes, I can pray, and do,
It comforts me to know prayer makes a difference.
I talk to God and He to me,
Yet still I crave some audible conversation.

And there are times I ask that God
Would take me to Himself.
I feel my earthly course is run
And yearn to be in heaven,
Where pain and tears and loneliness will cease.
I wait his call, and so the day goes on.
Patience is my calling, but it’s hard.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

The phone! The phone!
My heart leaps in anticipation.
A friend? A relative? A conversation!
“Hello, this is your internet service provider...”
And with those words, frustration fills my soul.
A happy chat would make my day,
But nuisance calls just leave me feeling empty.

There was a time I was an avid reader
And still I try, Though concentration is elusive
And my eyesight is not what it was.
I soon grow drowsy,

But try to keep the sleep at bay,
Or I would lie awake through the long night.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

Not all is doom and gloom, of course,
For many times my mind drifts back
To happy days, And I give thanks to God
For all that I've lived through,
And precious memories of life and love.

For I've been blessed in many ways
And I recall a song my mother used to sing,
Which urged us, "Count your blessings"
And I do.
Memories — treasured
And yet a source of pain, for they are from the past
And I live in the here and now.
Tick-tock, tick-tock.

And so the darkness falls outside,
Another day alone, me and the ticking clock.
No human conversation, no touch, no smile, no face to see.
It's early evening, still, but I feel tired
And not a little sad
I'll go to bed and hope and pray
Tomorrow will be better, we shall see.

Steve Clark 25.10.19

This is very appropriate for our situation today with everyone staying at home and only going out for essentials and the daily walk, so we must stay in touch regularly with our friends and neighbours, and help where we can.

Christine Crossley

Lessons from a Jigsaw puzzle

I am becoming more like my Dad as each year passes! I can picture him in my mind at home in Hastings sat at the dining room table hunched over a large board as he carefully puts together the latest jigsaw puzzle that he was working on. He is methodical and disciplined. He has decided to do half an hour on his puzzle and then he will put it away until the next time. So he does.

I had not made a jigsaw puzzle for years but in November last year I rediscovered the 500 piece jigsaw that I had brought back from Hastings which pictured the contents of a garden shed which I remember Dad making before he died back in mid 2012. So I sat down one day and removed the pieces from the box and set about completing it.

Since then I have made a number of other puzzles — all 500 pieces — taking 2 or 3 days to do each. I like the puzzles which picture real places and especially places I have been to. So at the start of the New Year I completed a puzzle picturing a scene in Bath, a place I had visited with Alison, my sister, when visiting her in Somerset (see the picture).

I have a 636 piece jigsaw of Whitby waiting to be made and two puzzles in the pipeline of 1000 pieces — one of the sights of London and the other of the Steep Hill in Lincoln. I hope I have not bitten off more than I can chew!



I have also joined a Jigsaw Club which meets fortnightly at OPAL for an hour and a half on a Tuesday — as well as working on your own puzzle it is a good opportunity to meet people and talk whilst you are puzzling. Of course we are not meeting at the moment but hopefully normality will be returned before too long.

So what lessons have I learnt whilst puzzling away?

1) Each piece is unique

There are no two pieces in a puzzle which are the same. Each piece has its place and will only go in one place in the puzzle. It is unique in terms of its shape, size and colouring. Sometimes there is a gap in the puzzle and you hunt for the piece to fit it and can't find it. You try lots of different pieces but they don't seem to fit, but eventually you find the right piece and it just slots in snugly with no bother! God has made us as unique individuals and we all have our place in God's amazing jigsaw which He is putting together through history and over time.

2) You need the box to complete the puzzle

The box which the puzzle arrives in has the picture of the completed puzzle on the cover. I have found that the picture is absolutely vital if you are to complete the puzzle. Without the blueprint you would really struggle to know what you are doing and where each piece fits into the whole picture. God has a blueprint for our world and our lives and unless we understand that then we struggle to make sense of it all. God has been so gracious to us in revealing His purposes to us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ and laying it out for us in His Word, the Bible. There we learn how we are to live whilst we are here. Life makes sense when you become a Christian and understand who you are, why you are here and discover the wonder of a relationship with God through Christ.

3) Eventually the puzzle is complete and you see the whole picture

As you get towards the end of the puzzle the number of pieces to fit in becomes quite small and fitting them in becomes much easier. Eventually you come to that moment when the final piece is inserted and the puzzle is complete — there is real joy and satisfaction in that moment. Then you can look down and see the complete picture in all its glory and complexity (before you break it up and put it carefully back into the box!). There is a day to come when our lives here will be over and if we are believers and trusting in the death and resurrection of Christ we will go to be with the Lord. Then we will know and see (fully and totally) the bigger picture and understand all the things here which we did not understand at the time and see all the things that God has achieved in and through our lives. What joy and satisfaction that will give and great glory to God. In the meantime we

continue living our lives, seeking to let Him work in us and through us, putting new pieces into our individual puzzles until one day the picture is complete.

Martin Sellens

To God be the glory

A big thank you to all at Tinshill and to all who have been praying for me. As most of you know I had a bad car accident in December 2018. It was initially not my fault as I had to swerve as a car was coming at me, but in doing this I lost control and unfortunately hit a lady who was badly hurt.

I pleaded guilty and had to attend court 3 times, being told it was now classed as dangerous driving and carried a 6 month imprisonment as a penalty. God had His hand on me and with all your prayers and cards I was given a 6 month suspended sentence for one year and loss of licence to drive plus court and solicitor fees. Amazingly the lady who was injured asked the judge not to send me to prison. Praise the Lord that I am free.

So a big thank you to all.

Christine Blayney

A Biography — CHARLES HODGE (1797-1878)

In the pleasant little town of Princeton, situated on the fertile slopes of New Jersey, a theological seminary was founded in 1812. From here were to go forth a long line of distinguished ministers and missionaries who made the name of their seminary revered throughout the English-speaking world. For over a hundred years, while great and sad changes were taking place within the Protestant churches, “Princeton theology” was to remain a synonym for orthodoxy, and, long after other colleges had gone down the road of error, Princeton was to stand firm in its reverent and faithful allegiance to the Word of God.

At the inaugural service, held in the old Presbyterian church, a youthful figure could be seen, leaning against the rail of the gallery, listening with

rapt attention to the address of Dr. Archibald Alexander, one of the senior professors of the new seminary. It was an event which fourteen year old Charles Hodge was never to forget. That same year he had left his home in Philadelphia and entered Princeton College, one of the old American seats of learning associated with the names of such men as Jonathan Edwards. As it provided a general education, the College remained distinct from the Seminary which was specifically theological, but it quickly became the custom for students entering the ministry to pass from one to the other. Thus, after graduating from the College in 1815, Hodge enrolled his name, on 9th November, 1816, as one of the twenty-six students attending the Seminary.

From his childhood Hodge had never wavered in his sense of a call to the ministry, though the profession did not run in his family. His grandfather, an emigrant from Northern Ireland in 1730, had been a successful merchant, and his father, who died only six months after his birth, had been a medical practitioner. It was to his mother, Hodge used later to say, that, under God, he owed everything. Before her marriage in 1790, she had been known as “the beautiful Mary Blanchard of Boston”; her family were of Huguenot extraction, and she inherited their strong character and earnest piety. Left a widow at an early age, Mrs. Hodge, by her example brought her youngest son, Charles, under the power of godliness from his infancy and by self-denying economy she was able to give him a first-class education. Hodge later wrote concerning the influence of his home: “I think that in my childhood I came nearer to conforming to the apostle’s injunction, ‘Pray without ceasing’ than in any other period of my life. As far back as I can remember, I had the habit of thanking God for everything I received, and asking him for everything I wanted. If I lost a book, or any of my playthings, I prayed that I might find it. I prayed walking along the streets, in school and out of school, whether playing or studying. I did not do this in obedience to any prescribed rule. It seemed natural. I thought of God as an everywhere-present Being, full of kindness and love, who would not be offended if children talked to Him. I knew He cared for sparrows. I was as cheerful and happy as the birds, and acted as they did.”

At Princeton Seminary Hodge showed himself an earnest and successful

student, diligent at his books, ardently devoted to his professors (then two in number), and warmly attached to his friends. He graduated on 28th September, 1819, and a month later the presbytery of Philadelphia licensed him to preach the Gospel. Missionary zeal was already a marked characteristic in his life; "I would give the world," he recorded, "were my desire of honoring Christ and of saving souls so strong that I should be indifferent to what related merely to myself." When, therefore, he received a proposal about this time to become an assistant-teacher of Biblical literature and exegesis in his former seminary, we find him writing: "Did the duties of the contemplated office require me to give up the prospect of preaching altogether, I think I should not hesitate in declining it; for I believe that preaching the Gospel is a privilege superior to any other entrusted to men." The office did not call for the relinquishment of any directly spiritual duties, and Hodge well aware of the intimate connection between the prosperity of the Church and the propagation of sound theology, accepted the appointment in 1820. After two years his two senior professors, Dr. Alexander and Dr. Samuel Miller, were so satisfied with his abilities that they successfully recommended to the Assembly his appointment to a regular professorial chair. A month later he married Sarah Bache, a young lady of unusual beauty both of person and character who attributed her conversion to his influence. A new house was built for them near the Seminary and it became the scene of Hodge's life and labors for more than half a century to come. Here his eight children, except the eldest, were born, and here his loved partner was torn from him by death in 1849. His two sons, A. A. Hodge, and Caspar Wistar Hodge, and his grandson, Caspar Wistar Hodge, Jr., were themselves later to become professors in the Seminary and his eminent successors.

From this early period in Hodge's life till the day of his death his activities were almost entirely of the same character. Year after year his life was one uniform devotion to the training of men to preach the glorious gospel of the grace of God. Some 3,000 students passed through his classes, and for over fifty years he continued to mold the current opinions of his Church and country. Hodge was a man of wide outlook; at an early period in his life he spent two years at German Universities listening to men of very

different views from his own, yet he never faltered in his conviction that historic Calvinism provides the only sound basis for true exposition and evangelical preaching. By deep study he arrived at the settled conclusion that the doctrinal standards of the Reformers and Puritans were the truth, and in 1872 at his jubilee, when multitudes were elsewhere confounding novelty with truth, he boldly declared, "I am not afraid to say, that a new idea never originated in this seminary." Strife was not congenial to his nature, but he could not, and did not, shun controversy on these doctrinal principles. In an age of increasing uncertainty, compromise and confusion, he saw clearly, in the words of his son, that "The last issue must be between Atheism and its countless forms and Calvinism. The other systems will be crushed as the half-rotten ice between two great bergs." Dr. Shedd spoke the truth when he said, "Dr. Hodge has done more for Calvinism than any other man in America." It was a fact which his opponents unconsciously recognized when they referred to him as the greatest hindrance to theological "progress" that the century had seen!

Hodge's life is itself the best answer to those who have wrongly deemed narrowness and coldness to be the necessary accompaniments of the Reformed Faith. He was always concerned with the living application of the great truths of Scripture to men's spiritual experience. He did not forget the warning of an old Puritan divine, "Beware of a strong head and a cold heart." The mention of the love of Christ would sometimes, even in the classroom, affect him to tears, and in no spirit of exaggeration a life-long friend testified – "Not Rutherford himself was more absorbed with the love of Christ." Professor B. B. Warfield, who later succeeded to Hodge's theological chair, gives the following description of his manner of teaching: "After his always strikingly appropriate prayer had been offered, and we were settled back into our seats, he would open his well-thumbed Greek Testament – on which it was plain that there was not a single marginal note – look at the passage for a second, and then, throwing his head back and closing his eyes, begin his exposition. He scarcely again glanced at the Testament during the hour: the text was evidently before his mind, verbally, and the matter of his exposition thoroughly at his command. In an unbroken stream it flowed from subject to subject, simple, clear, cogent,

unfailingly reverent. Now and then he would pause a moment, to insert an illustrative anecdote – now and then lean forward suddenly with tearful, wide-open eyes to press home a quick-risen inference of the love of God to lost sinners.”

In his home Hodge was ever found to be a humble, lovable Christian. “Clear light did not interfere with warm love in good old Dr. Hodge,” declared one visitor. “I remember his parlour study as one of the cheeriest glimpses I had of an American interior.” His study was in fact the family thoroughfare through which the children, boys and girls, went in and out for work and play. Often, if too busy to rise and open his door, he would leave it off the latch “so that the least child might toddle in at will unhindered”. A. A. Hodge, recalling his father’s influence in the home, wrote: “He prayed for us all at family prayers, and singly, and with such soul-felt tenderness taught us to pray at his knees, that, however bad we were, our hearts all melted to his touch. During later years he always caused his family to repeat after him at morning worship the Apostles’ Creed, and a formula of his own composition, professing personal consecration to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost. But that which makes those days sacred in the retrospect of his children is the person and character of the father himself, as discovered in the privacy of his home, all radiant as that was with love, with unwavering faith, and with unclouded hope.”

Charles Hodge finally bade farewell to his beloved Princeton and entered his eternal rest on the fifth of June, 1878. The last consecutive utterance of his expiring moments was, “To be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord; to be present with the Lord is to see Him; to see Him is to be like Him.” A great life’s work was done, but behind him in his books he left a legacy to enrich the Church of God till the end of time. He was a great writer and his pen seems never to have been idle. For over forty years he had been the editor of, and chief contributor to, the “Biblical Repertory and Princeton Review”, and through its pages he had exerted a very weighty influence. In 1835 he issued his great commentary on Romans which was followed later by his fine expositions on first and second Corinthians and Ephesians. “The more we use Hodge, the more we value him. This applies to all his commentaries,” wrote Spurgeon. At length, after

his sixty-ninth birthday, his masterpiece and “magnum opus” on “Systematic Theology” was written and published. These volumes have in recent years all been made available again in America. Perhaps his finest work contains the rich outlines of sermons – full of doctrine and devotion – delivered by Hodge over many years to his students on Sunday afternoons. “There it was”, said one who attended these meetings, “as nowhere else perhaps, that the ‘old Doctor’ made his power felt, as, with glistening eye and quivering lip, he bent forward to press home some practical truth that had a powerful hold on his own inner experience. He seemed to yearn over his young disciples as Paul did over Timothy; and every week he spoke as earnestly and tenderly as though it might be his last.”

Such sermons have a peculiar advantage in the present day. Our busy times call loudly for conciseness and simplicity. It is not a reading age, and we have to face the fact that attention to study is no longer common either among Christians or their ministers. Yet there is a growing awareness that we have been too long concerned with activity at the expense of doctrine, there is some awakening to the realization that our fathers were much more deeply acquainted with God’s Word than we are, and there is a call for books that set out clearly the truths upon which the Church was fed and nourished in the days of her spiritual prosperity. To the prayerful and meditative reader these outlines will provide an inexhaustible supply of spiritual light and strength.

Banner of Truth Trust, London 1958
(submitted by Paul Crossley)

Preaching Plan / Bible Studies/ Diary /Rotas

These are not appearing this time as all our public meetings and activities have been cancelled and the building has been shut up during this time of national emergency to limit the spread of the Coronavirus. We are seeking to provide a Service on a Sunday at 10.30am through the internet and send out weekly bulletins and make information available through the website (www.tinshillfreechurch.org.uk) including the series of 7 Bible studies on the sayings of our Lord from the cross.

For our Sunday services we are uploading videos on YouTube. Go to YouTube and search for Tinshill Free Church. If you have a smart TV with YouTube on it then you can watch them on the TV!

The next Magazine for June/July is due out on Sunday 31st May — all contributions to Martin please by Wednesday 20th May.

We trust that normality will be restored as soon as possible but in the meantime do keep in contact with each other, stay safe and stay at home apart from those limited times when you have to make essential journeys. Above all please do pray for our nation, for each other and that God would have mercy and spare us from the virus and turn many hearts to Himself through this.



Philippians 4:6-7

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Diary of Services and Activities

Sunday	Prayer Meeting	8.00am
	Morning Worship*	10.30am
	Key Club (Children aged 4-11)	10.30am
	Evening Worship	6.30pm
	Holy Communion follows the first morning and the third evening service each month	
	*A fully supervised crèche for young children is run in the church side room during the sermon.	
Monday	Girls Group (aged 14-18 – fortnightly)	7.30pm
Tuesday	Second Tuesday (bi-monthly)	10.15am
	Making and Thinking (for ladies — monthly) venue as announced	7.30pm
	Men's Fellowship (3rd Tuesday monthly)	7.45pm
Wednesday	Tots Club (term-time)	1.15 - 2.45pm
	Prayer Meeting and Bible Study	7.45pm
Thursday	Thursday at Two (senior citizens — fortnightly)	2.00pm
Friday	Ketchup (Children aged 5-11)	6.00pm
	Missionary Prayer Group (monthly) at 1 Tinshill Mount	7.45pm

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