

OneKirk Journal

working for an inclusive, affirming and progressive church

www.onekirk.org

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A TORTURED TRUTH



'When I survey the wondrous cross' we sing with fervour and emotion. That we do so about Christianity's best-loved icon is no surprise. The emotion and power it evokes for Christ's followers is entirely understandable as we remember the Easter events in which the cross plays such a pivotal role.

Could it be, however, that the celebration of this icon has somehow desensitised us to its role as a means of torture, ridicule and execution?

While a deeply questionable film, Mel Gibson's *Passion of the Christ* certainly left one in no doubt about the horror surrounding Jesus' death, though Gibson may have gone too far in his depiction, to the point of glorifying the horror.

That the key icon of Christianity is a symbol of torture and death is humbling, and should remind us of the evils of torture.

In the report of the Church and Society Council for this year's General Assembly there is a helpful paper on the 'Ethics of Defence', that confirms the Church of Scotland's pastoral care for those serving in the Armed Services, and long advocacy for peace and reconciliation. However there is no mention of the use of torture.

This is an unfortunate omission in a month when the world is coming to terms with the confirmation that a systematic programme of torture had been instituted at the highest levels of the United States government for interrogation of prisoners following the terrorist atrocity of September 11, 2001. This system allegedly has been applied to British citizens and, of course, is outlawed by numerous treaties.

While some argue that sometimes torture is necessary under extreme conditions, let it never be forgotten that torture has historically been used to elicit false confessions, rather than to elicit the 'truth'. The prisoner tells his captors what he thinks they want to hear in order to stop the torture.

The use of torture, as with all forms of the abuse of power, reveals far more about the torturer than it does from the victim.

As followers of Christ, we remember we are called to a higher way, not the abusive way of those who tortured Jesus and nailed him to the cross, but rather to follow his lead and reach out to the world in costly, self-sacrificial love.

Surely nothing less will ultimately challenge or change the cycle of violence?

Events at General Assembly

'Threads' Launch

A new Scottish DVD based programme for living as Christians in modern Scotland.

Thursday 21 May 2009, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
Augustine United Church Centre
41 George IV Bridge

Through My Eyes

A 50 minute film giving an unflinchingly honest look at the role of today's young Christians in the gay debate: what they really think, how they perceive the church, and what they wish other Christians knew.

Thursday 21 May 2009, 7 p.m.
St Columba's-by-the-Castle
The Mound, Edinburgh
(organised by OneKirk)

Church Without Walls Fringe Party

An opportunity to celebrate the last ten years and to look forward to future CWW plans.

Friday 22 May 2009, 8 p.m.
Dynamic Earth (by Scottish Parliament)

Praying for an Inclusive Church

A special service to reflect on what it means to be an inclusive church, a church truly for all people.

Sunday 24 May 2009, 3 p.m.
St George's West Parish Church
Shandwick Place, Edinburgh
(organised by Affirmation Scotland)

People with Learning Disabilities

What does it mean for us to call ourselves the Body of Christ if we exclude people with learning disabilities from the church?

Monday 25 May 2009, 12:30 – 2 p.m.
St Columba's by the Castle

There are many more events taking place during Assembly Week. See the Church of Scotland website for more details.

Articles in this issue: **An Introduction to Emerging Church
In Conversation with Rev Scott M Rennie**



In many ways this is nothing revolutionary but it brings together people of all ages from the very young to the elderly in a way we never imagined it would. People talk about the freedom they have found, the value of silence and space and the joy of finding a group of people they can be open with.

The second stream, which is often described as emergent/emerging/missional church, is altogether more difficult for denominations. Groups of people are forming out of, but often out-with, existing church structures to worship and witness in and to their communities. Their focus is mostly on worship, community and mission. People talk of 'free-range Christians' and 'urban saints' who network and gather around shared interests, projects or geography. Their commitment is to Christ and to each other, not to a dogmatic denomination.

It can be helpful to think of the church in all its expressions as a wagon wheel with the spokes showing the different expressions we would recognise as denominations.

Fresh expressions are at the inner rim with the emergent church or emergent conversation located on the outer rim, the part of the wheel closest to the outside world. As this model shows, it would be wrong to assume that the emerging church is one coherent and homogenous as each expression has grown out of its own tradition. It is, however, often the case that the people on the outer rim of the church share more in common with others on the edge of church than they might share with those at the centre of the wheel in their own tradition.

What is emerging?

*Stewart Cutler
Children and Youth
Development Officer
United Reformed Church
National Synod of Scotland*

churches doing new things in worship, to create 'Fresh Expressions' of the worship of that community. The challenge for the church here is resourcing creativity in worship without alienating existing congregations.

For the last year or so I've been working with a group of people from the Murrayfield Churches Together Group in Edinburgh on a fresh expression called Together@MCT which draws on worship resources old and new using labyrinth, stations, making things, singing, listening and discussion.

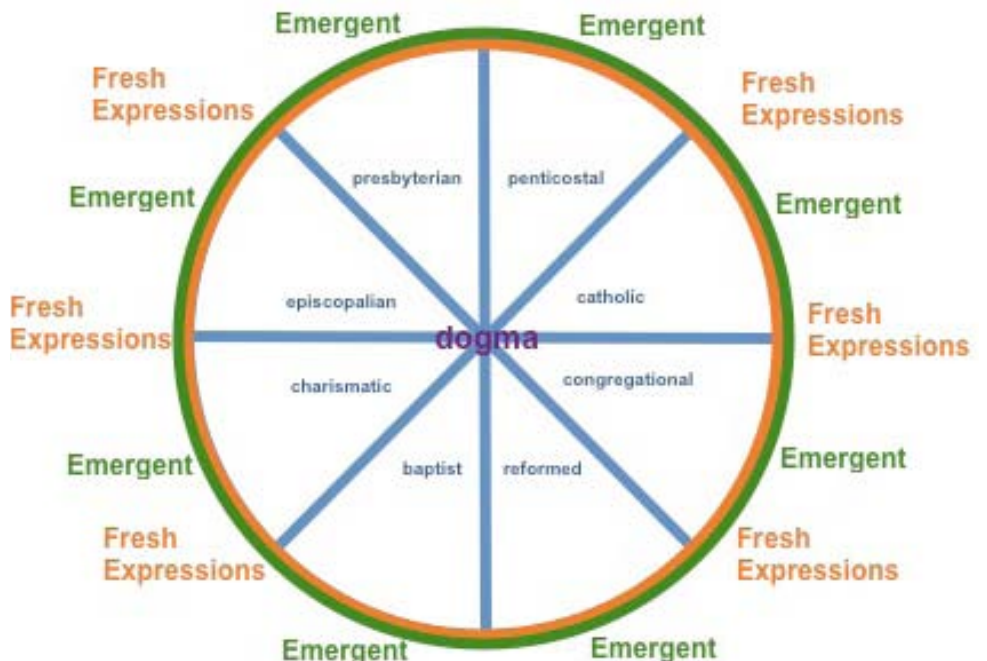
Emerging Church. Emergent Church. Fresh Expressions. Missional Church... Whatever you call it, something is going on in and around the church. A quiet revolution seems to be gathering pace and volume. Things are changing. Whether you want them to or not. Church is being re-imagined.

The decline in church membership over the past decades gave rise to a mistaken belief that because people were not interested in church they therefore wouldn't be interested in God.

BIG mistake.

The first assumption was only half right. Many people aren't interested in church... the way it was being done. But they are interested in God and they are interested in coming together to explore what faith means in today's world. Communities have grown, projects begun, networks formed. The power of the Internet to put like-minded people in touch with each other has aided and resourced a creative and engaged generation to find new ways and re-imagine old ways of worshipping and serving God.

As I see it, there are two streams to this new emergence. The first is established



For many close to the centre of the wheel the goings on at the outer rim raises their concern, but I think both offer great signs of encouragement alongside the challenge they present to the church.

People want to be engaged in following Jesus but in a way founded on three understandings of a conversational engagement:

- A generous orthodoxy, that is an understanding of faith that has room for different points of view without having to give up your own.
- A generous praxis, that is the understanding that the way we choose to do church isn't the only way and that we can learn from other expressions.
- Generous relationships, where there is a real valuing of each other even when there is disagreement.

The challenge for denominations is that people want Jesus but don't want to be lumbered with the structure of the church. They want to spend their time and energy on building the kingdom not propping up an institution. They want to share in the priesthood of all believers. They want to rediscover real relationships without toadying to traditions.

Helpful Websites

Emergent Scotland

<http://emergingscotland.ning.com>

Emergent Village

<http://www.emergentvillage.com>

Fresh Expressions

<http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk>

Jonny Baker

<http://jonnybaker.blogs.com>

Brian McLaren

<http://www.brianmclaren.net>

Peter Rollins

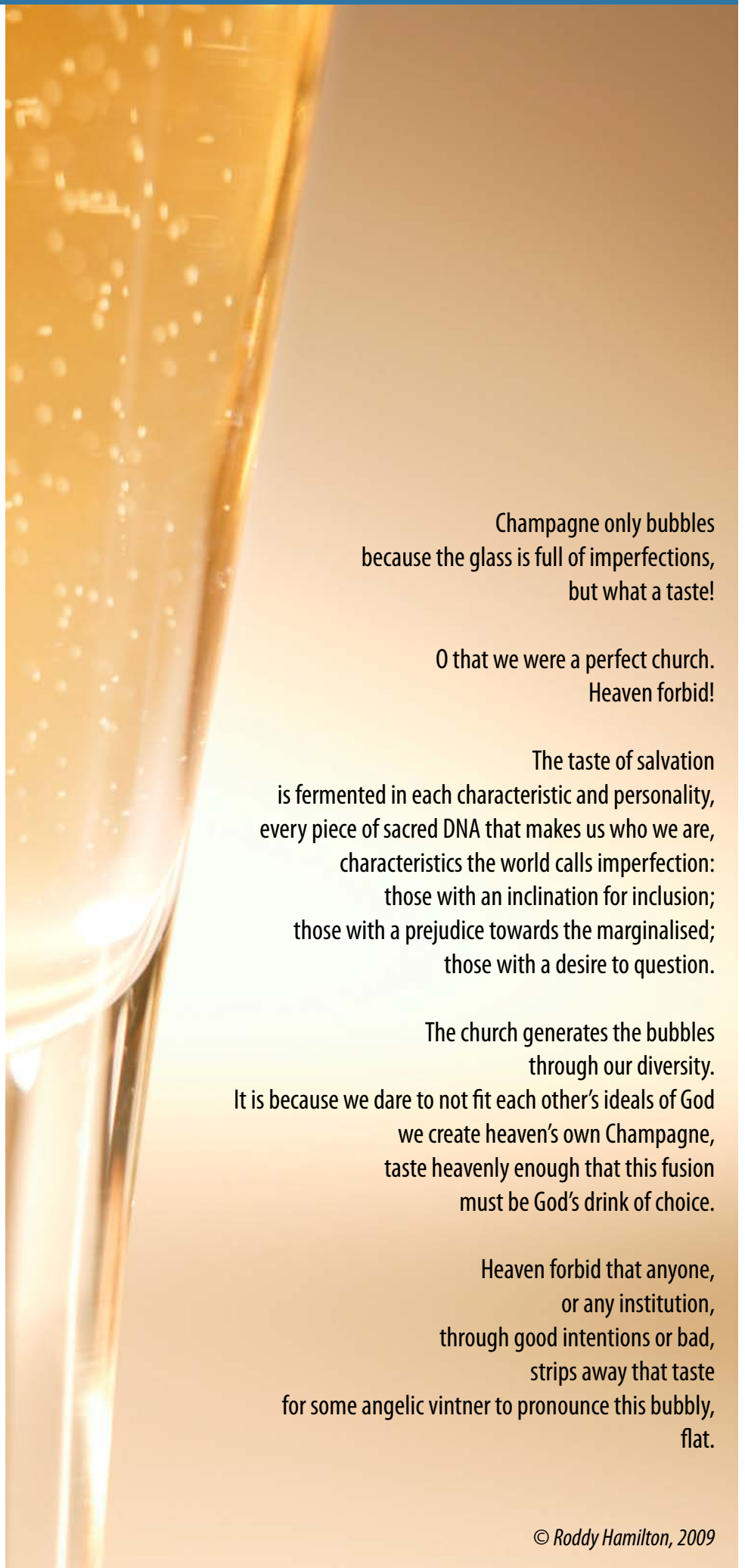
<http://www.peterrollins.net>

General Assembly

Emerging Church in Scotland

With guest speaker from 'Fresh Expressions', Bishop Graham Cray, plus films and interviews with leaders of emerging church initiatives.

Monday 25 May 2009, 7 – 9 p.m.
Assembly Hall



Champagne only bubbles
because the glass is full of imperfections,
but what a taste!

O that we were a perfect church.
Heaven forbid!

The taste of salvation
is fermented in each characteristic and personality,
every piece of sacred DNA that makes us who we are,
characteristics the world calls imperfection:
those with an inclination for inclusion;
those with a prejudice towards the marginalised;
those with a desire to question.

The church generates the bubbles
through our diversity.
It is because we dare to not fit each other's ideals of God
we create heaven's own Champagne,
taste heavenly enough that this fusion
must be God's drink of choice.

Heaven forbid that anyone,
or any institution,
through good intentions or bad,
strips away that taste
for some angelic vintner to pronounce this bubbly,
flat.

In Conversation with Scott M Rennie

*Minister of Brechin Cathedral in Angus,
and Minister-Elect of Queen's Cross Parish
Church, Aberdeen, UK*

Having spent nine years as the minister of Brechin Cathedral in Angus, Scott applied for the vacant charge of Queen's Cross Parish Church in June 2008. Following his appointment as sole nominee, Scott preached and was elected by the congregation, with 86% of the vote, as their new minister on Sunday 20 November 2008. His call went before the Presbytery of Aberdeen for approval on Tuesday 6 January 2009, at which point his call was approved, 60 votes to 24.

However, twelve people chose to appeal the Presbytery's decision to a higher court of the church on the basis of his life and doctrine. This appears to be the first time this has happened since the Disruption of 1843 and the prized right of congregations to call the minister of their choosing was established. The Commission of Assembly met to consider the case between the Presbytery and those dissenting from its decision on Wednesday 25 March 2009. The Commission of Assembly voted by a majority of one not to debate the case, but to send the case to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland. The case will now be heard at 1900 hours on Saturday 23 May 2009 at which time a final decision will be made.

Peter Johnston: Scott, you and I have known each other for many years and have talked a lot about the events of the last few months in your life. Thank you for agreeing to have this conversation more widely available to others via OneKirk.

Scott Rennie: That's okay.

PJ: Perhaps that's a good place to start: why did you agree to have this conversation at this time?

SR: Chiefly because, though I have no locus in the case itself, I have had to endure months of speculation about my personal circumstances. This has caused distress to me and to those I love. It has been particularly difficult to have untruths, and assumptions made about my personal situation, presented as fact.

PJ: Let me grasp the nettle then; would you be prepared to say something about your personal circumstances?

SR: Hmm. [Pause] One of the most troubling aspects about the way things have developed so far, has been the speculation about my personal life. As I said before, much of this speculation, presented as fact, has been untrue. I had hoped that people in the church especially, would be pastorally sensitive to anyone in my situation.

It wasn't until after the demise of my marriage, and the pain and grieving that entails, that I finally decided I had to face up to my own issues around sexuality. The death of my mother also played



an important part in this. She was one of the closest people to me in my life, but she died without me ever feeling able to have an honest conversation with her about who I really was as her son. And that is a regret that I continue to carry with me.

I remember listening to Radio Four one morning after my marriage broke down. I felt a sense of despair—that all of life had collapsed in on me... wondering where God was in all of this... and a woman said on the radio: 'the things you run from in life are the very things that run your life.' And I realised that day that I couldn't sweep my sexuality under the carpet any longer. I accepted that my sexuality was an issue I had to face and deal with—for my own health and wellbeing and those who are closest to me.

It has been of immense value to me that following our divorce, my ex-wife and I remain great friends, and are able to bring up our daughter in a happy and loving environment. ➔

“ Since our divorce, Scott and I have maintained a strong friendship, with our primary focus being the upbringing of our young daughter. Scott is a dedicated and loving father, who is actively involved in our daughter's daily life. Our separation and subsequent divorce was unconnected to Scott's present situation. Scott and David have my full support and that of my family also.

Ruth Rennie

PJ: I appreciate your candour on this sensitive issue. How has your relationship with your partner David been affected by this situation?

SR: Well, the past few months have been hugely stressful and distressing, as I'm sure you can image. However, I am strengthened by the knowledge that Christ loves me and is with me and also by the kindness of other people who have reminded me what Christianity is all about. I am quite proud of David. Not everyone would have been prepared to stay and be supportive in these circumstances. It says a lot about him, his character, and his own strong Christian faith.'

PJ: And what about your faith? How has this experience affected you?

SR: Interestingly, it has greatly strengthened my faith. It has heightened my sense of call, opened my eyes to a wealth of kindness and Christian love from other people; some of whom I know, and some of whom I have never met. It is always easy in these kinds of circumstances to focus on the negative, but the reality is that most people are kind, compassionate and good at heart. Through them, God reveals himself to us all. I keep hearing in my mind the verse of that children's hymn we all grew up with: 'Jesus loves me this I know, for the Bible tells me so.'

PJ: And in general, you are feeling...?

SR: I feel both strong and at the same time battered. Battered by weeks of speculation about my private life, which no other minister would have—or should be expected—to endure. On the other hand, and for the greater part, I feel hugely strengthened and supported by the hundreds of messages I have received from people both inside and outside the Kirk. Some of the correspondence I have received has been deeply moving: very often from gay people who are serving in ministry, or as lay people in their churches—and who feel caught between a rock and a hard place. On one hand, they feel the church does not understand or appreciate them as gay people. And on the other, they are treated with suspicion within the gay community because of their Christian faith—no doubt, because of the negative treatment of gay people by the church throughout history.

Although the present discussion centres around my own response to God's call, all the correspondence over the last few months has reminded me that there is a large body of people, like me, in a similar situation, in the Kirk.

PJ: You mention your call. I'm interested in exploring this further with you, if that's okay? I'm wondering more generally how you sensed a call to ministry?

SR: I have known a call to ministry since I was an older child at Primary School. I asked Jesus to come into my heart at a young age, and committed myself to loving and serving him with my life. That sense of call deepened in my teenage years, though because I was so young, as you can imagine, it was frequently derided by others. But I always knew that God wanted me to serve him through parish ministry and in the church. Now having had the privilege of almost ten years in parish ministry, my sense of call is stronger than ever. Through parish ministry: helping people; standing alongside people; being with people in difficult times; I have come to know the presence of Christ in

a much deeper and meaningful way. My faith has matured and grown, and my sense of call is stronger than ever.

Only the other week, I had a letter from my Primary 7 teacher, whom I have not seen for years. She mentioned in her letter that as a child I had been determined to become a minister. So, she was not surprised when she heard of my call to Queen's Cross Parish Church! Her hope was that my sense of call remained as strong as it was then, which it has.

PJ: You've explained how you see your call in general. Perhaps you could say something specifically in relation to Queen's Cross Parish Church?

SR: Well, I don't want to enter into the details of the case—the General Assembly will deal with that. But suffice to say that after nine happy years of ministry at Brechin Cathedral, I have increasingly had the sense that God is calling me to a new place, and a new challenge. And over the last year or two, I have been praying and thinking a lot about where that call might be. I still very much feel called to parish ministry. I love parish

ministry: being with people; helping them; empowering and serving in a congregation and its wider community. I have no doubt in my mind that it is still this form of ministry that God is calling me to. Like most ministers, one reaches a point when you feel you have served God's purpose in one place, and it is time to think about where else God might be calling you to serve. It's a perfectly normal feeling, and I am no different to anyone else.

When Queen's Cross was advertised, it interested me. Again, I prayed a lot and decided to apply. Following many months, I was delighted to have been selected to be Queen's Cross' sole nominee.

Having lived happily with my partner in Brechin, getting on with parish life and all that entails, I did not imagine, given how

peaceable and happy my time in Brechin has been (with no fuss whatsoever), that such a furore would be caused following my desire to respond to God's call by moving church. It certainly was never in any way my intention to be at the centre of what has transpired.

PJ: So, how has your ministry in Brechin been affected by this situation?

SR: Obviously, the delay has been difficult and disruptive for the Cathedral congregation and me. I know that it has been hard for many here to understand why their minister should be put through this, and the main reaction locally has been astonishment and incredulity at the turn of events. The depth of support that I have had from people, not only in my Kirk Session and congregation, but in the wider community in Brechin has been tremendous. I have always loved living in Brechin, but the way people here have responded to the situation has made me especially proud to be considered an honorary Brechiner.

PJ: You said that many have expressed to you their difficulty in understanding the treatment of you and your call to Queen's Cross. Can you understand where those who oppose your call are coming from?

SR: [Pause] Yes I do. I grew up in a conservative evangelical church and initially shared their perspective. I wrestled with that perspective internally, for most of my life. Now I think that it is mistaken, however faithfully held.

“ Scott is much more than “an enthusiastic and gifted preacher”. He has a capacity to love and to care and, yes, he is also loyal, open and honest. It is distressing to witness his being condemned by some of his fellow-Christians for displaying those characteristics.

Robert Wilson

There are differing interpretations of Scripture on the issue of human sexuality and other issues in the church. There is nothing to be gained by wars of interpretation on this or any other issue in the church. What we really have to achieve is the ability to calmly share our perspectives with each other and respect them. That is what the 2007 Sexuality report called for. We need to agree to differ and not lose sight of all that we share in common. The problems begin when we subscribe to a winner-takes-all view of theological debate and we don't leave space for one another.

In the church, we are often uncomfortable talking about issues relating to sexuality. So when you are dealing with a minority group defined, by some in the church, with reference to their sexuality, that tends to make many people—understandably—very uncomfortable. But I think it is time for the church as a whole to take an honest look at itself, and its perspectives on sexuality, in much the same way that it has had the courage over the years to do so on issues of: gender; power; and, most recently, sectarianism.

PJ: If you shared the perspective of those who now oppose your move to Queen's Cross, how did you change? What I mean is, how did you reconcile your own sexuality with the Bible's teaching on sexuality?

SR: I think it is fair to say that reconciliation has been at times a long and painful process. Today, having worked through this, I feel a much more healthy and rounded person. I grew up with a terrible fear of who I was inside, and how other people around me might react to who I really am. But now, with a deeper understanding of the love and grace of Jesus Christ, I have been able to leave that terrible fear behind.

As a young man growing up in a conservative church, it felt impossible to deal with issues around my own sexuality. It did not feel like a safe environment, and certainly not one in which I could have found support and understanding. So, I came to believe that I had to ignore it and do what I thought was the right thing at the time: live a heterosexual life.

Also at school, I witnessed firsthand homophobic bullying, and the menace that anyone who even seemed gay was subjected to. It was not a pretty sight, and I wasn't brave enough to risk facing the bullies.

My understanding of Scripture was completely transformed by my formal theological studies. It was an awakening for me. I always knew, of course, that God speaks to us through the Bible, but I began to understand that the original context within which different passages were written is particularly important when interpreting Scripture. It is all too easy to read our modern 21st century concepts back into a 1st century text.

Central to my own reading of Scripture is the Jesus we find in the Gospels, in whom I believe God to be most fully revealed. It was only through my studies that I began to get a sense of who Jesus is—beyond the well-worn titles we give him. I came to know him more deeply. To understand that his was a life of crossing the boundaries—to include people and to assure them of the love and grace of God. Jesus preached the Kingdom of God: that a more just, fair and peaceful world could come in our own time, if we only have the courage to live in his way.

PJ: In the New Testament there are four passages that have

been interpreted by some to refer to homosexuality, all of which are outside the gospels. How have you related these to Jesus and his ministry?

SR: I remain committed to seeing Scripture as authoritative. In terms of sexuality, Biblical authors did not have the modern knowledge and understanding of sexuality that we have today. Nor should we expect them to. Committed gay relationships are not addressed in Scripture, because culturally speaking, they didn't exist.

Like many Christians who have wrestled with their sexuality, I have studied the four New Testament passages that are claimed by some to address contemporary homosexuality. I found that in all of these passages, it is hard to pin down exact meanings.

For instance, on my shelves, I have a number of different Bibles—all of which translate these four passages differently. So before even getting to the point of making a decision about how to interpret these passages—the Bible translators have already made their own interpretations.

In looking at these passages, I could make the decision to take a particular translation at face value. I could also decide that the original 1st century context is not relevant to understanding the meaning of the passage for us today. Both of these decisions are decisions about how to interpret the Bible. Often, people imply that if you bring issues of context into the discussion, you are 'interpreting' Scripture, instead of accepting the 'plain meaning of Scripture'. But of course, whether you make a decision to either consider or ignore the context of a verse—both are decisions about how to interpret that verse. We all interpret.

For me, lifting verses out of their original context leads to misinterpretation. In the Bible it says, 'Slaves obey your masters as the Lord', which, at face value, supports

slavery. But we agree today that God isn't condoning slavery for all time, this verse is addressing a specific 1st century cultural situation. It seems to me that the four passages some translate to refer to homosexuality must also be interpreted within their 1st century context. A context that knew nothing of loving, committed lesbian and gay relationships.

Most importantly, we have to read all of Scripture in reference to the life of our Lord Jesus, who consistently stood alongside the oppressed and marginalised of his society. It is through poring over the gospels that I came to realise that God loves and accepts me as I am, just as Jesus loved and accepted those his own community considered to be 'unacceptable'.

I take my lead from Jesus. If we want to see how Jesus treats Scripture we only need to see how he deals with the Sabbath laws. He ☞

“ Scott is an outstanding individual, both charismatic and enthusiastic. He has been a major asset to the school over the years and will be sadly missed by all those who have had the privilege of working with him.

Colin McKenna (head teacher, retired March 2009) & Yvonne Gadala (depute head) Maisondieu Primary School, Brechin



makes clear that the law is there to serve God's purpose of love, not to cause people harm. So in Luke 6 he heals someone on the Sabbath, showing the primacy of the command to love above Sabbath rules. When I compare the Levitical command to stone those who work on the Sabbath with what Jesus did you see the radical prioritising of love over the law. For Jesus 'Love your God' and 'Love one another as yourself' summarise the law.

You often hear the cry 'hate the sin but love the sinner'. For me it is a false dichotomy. I can testify to the fact that it was impossible for me to experience this blanket condemnation of homosexuality as loving. Instead, it caused me to hate and fear a large part of myself—an experience gay and lesbian Christians around the world will relate to.

For me, when I encountered the Jesus who, first and foremost, loves and accepts us—the Jesus who prioritised love and healing people over the blunt imposition of law—it was a revelation. I realised that I had been caught up with—like the Pharisees—a restrictive legalism not grace. In denying my sexuality, I was rejecting Jesus' unconditional love for and acceptance of me, and saying there was something wrong with the way God had created me.

One of the great themes of the Old Testament is the importance of covenant in relationships. I cannot believe that the destruction of committed relationships between people is what God wants, or what the Biblical authors had in their minds when writing.

PJ: Strong passions are raised on either side of this issue. How do you feel people with different Biblical interpretations can co-exist within the Church of Scotland?

SR: First of all, we have to be committed to being together—and we do that through a recognition that none of us, whatever our perspective, owns Jesus or the Gospel message. We all value Scripture, but we interpret it differently. The church, since its inception, has always been diverse; it has always had a wide range of perspectives—and we have to come to terms with that. We discovered on the Sexuality Taskforce that wrote the 2007 Report, A Challenge to Unity, that in some sense we need each other, and we called for dialogue and reflection. To be fair, the church has always found inclusion difficult. When we open out the gospel to our communities, as Jesus commands us to do, it always poses questions—just look at Peter and Paul's debate over Jewish food laws in the Acts of the Apostles! But we can be

sure that Christ is asking us to widen our tent, not draw it in, to take the gospel out to people, not cut them off or exclude them. Scripture has often been used to exclude people—take the issue of women's ordination. Scripture was also used by some to defend slavery. Thankfully, in both instances the church came to accept a more inclusive interpretation of Scripture.

Even in all our differences we are united by our love for Christ and desire to follow him. Surely we should be able to serve Christ together, with our differences, and without trying to exclude each other?

After all, all of us in ministry, male or female, young or old, straight or gay are trying to serve God where we are called.

PJ: That is a sentiment that I know many of us can relate to, Scott. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with us so candidly. I know this is a stressful time for you, so how are you finding ways to relax?

SR: Well, I am spending a bit more time on the golf course—though I can't say my game is improving. But the fresh air and Angus countryside are great. I am also enjoying reading some Tudor history at the moment which is interesting. And, of course, there is always the footie on TV which, at this time of the year with the climax of the English League and Champions League, is great. Not to mention watching the Dons play!

This conversation took place on Wednesday 29 April 2009.

If you want to read more about some of the issues raised in this conversation please refer to www.onekirk.org where you will find many relevant papers available.

Discrimination Legislation

This year's General Assembly is going to be interesting as it will test the Kirk's Act Anent Discrimination V (2007) in which 'sexual orientation' is included in a longer list of 'protected grounds', from which it is not legal to discriminate under church law:

protected grounds shall be one or more of the following: age, gender, marital status, colour, racial group, ethnic origin, national origin, nationality, sexual orientation or disability.

Such lists will be familiar to many from the civil sphere, for example in the workplace, and intentionally so—for the Kirk has sought to provide at least an '[e]quivalence of protection' to civil law for its 'ministers and others' (Joint Report of the Ministries Council and the Legal Questions Committee, May 2007, 1.1).

Unlike civil society, will the church seek to interpret 'sexual orientation' as something distinct from 'sexual practice'? If so, how will this provide an 'equivalence of protection' to civil law? And what will the implications of such a decision be for the relationship between the Kirk and civil society?

CALDERSIDE LEARNING COMMUNITY
CHAPLAINCY TEAM

Bubblegum 'n' Fluff



Ever wondered how your church can make a positive contribution to the Christmas celebrations in your local primary school?

Ever wished you had a resource that could help children see through the 'fluff' and explore the Christmas story in a meaningful way?

Bubblegum 'n' Fluff is a 2 hour Christmas event for Primary 6 children that will help them to explore the meaning of Christmas.

The **Bubblegum 'n' Fluff Resource Pack** includes a full colour resource booklet and resource CD with all the information you need for your church to host a fantastic event for Primary 6 children. Resources available for purchase online (£6 + P&P).

www.calderside.org.uk

The musical and lyrical accompaniment to life

Rev Peter Johnston

A few years ago I went along to a series of weekly training events held in a local church looking at how the church could and should reach out to men.

In general it was quite a good series, but there was one evening that jarred. In thinking about young men and older boys, the leader that evening wanted to outline the predicament and need that these boys and young men had for Jesus.

In doing so he showed a presentation of various images of lad behaviour along to the soundtrack of U2's song *I still haven't found what I'm looking for*. The connection was then laboriously made that the song was the anthem of this generation of men: never happy, always searching after something new, on a constant quest for that next thing.

On the surface of it, that is fine. Except that this is not what that song is about. Indeed it really was a perversion of the theme of the song which lacked any understanding of the quite profound depth of this song in describing someone's faith journey.

Our leader on that evening was playing to the stereotype that "if only you find Jesus, then all your questions are answered, all your struggles are over, and all your wants will be met". If only.

I was delighted to see that Nick Baines in his recent book, *Finding Faith: Stories of Music and Life*, uses this particular U2 song as the basis for one of his chapters.

Baines notes that the song, while a big hit, had a mixed reaction from Christians. Some thought it was asking questions that shouldn't be asked, while for others it articulated exactly how they felt about their faith in a messy world—it is a work in progress.

Nick Baines is the Bishop of Croydon and author of a number of books for Saint Andrew Press. Baines' books are approachable and worth a read, and *Finding Faith* is no exception. He reflects on his own life and faith through the use of songs that have been important to him at different times.

Finding Faith is a very personal book for Baines, almost autobiographical, and yet

FINDING FAITH

STORIES OF MUSIC AND LIFE

NICK BAINES

"It is honest, funny and challenging – one of those books that makes you remember why it's worthwhile being a Christian."

Rowan Williams Archbishop of Canterbury



Finding Faith
Nick Baines

Saint Andrew Press, 2008
ISBN: 9780715208687
£8.99

Note that all Saint Andrew Press titles can be purchased direct from the online Church of Scotland Shop at www.standrewpress.com

I am sure it will appeal to all who have reflected on their own faith at different times of their lives. The songs Baines has picked range from The Beatles to Van Morrison, and Paul Simon to Joan Osborne with many other stops along the way.

The themes that Baines picks from his own life and the musical accompaniment to those times are both challenging and also affirming, they are very aware of the complexity of this world and life, but through it all find ways to express wonder and hope through his commitment to serving Jesus Christ.

While reading the book, I could not help but to think about the songs that have accompanied my own life, and about the artists that have been influential at different stages of my faith development.

If Baines' own journey helps us to explore our own faith, then so much the better for us: let the song continue.

Supporting OneKirk

OneKirk is an inclusive network of ministers, deacons, elders, members and friends of the Church of Scotland.

As such, there is no dotted line to be signed to join OneKirk or statement of scriptural interpretation that must be adhered to. To join the mailing list, please email us via the website (www.onekirk.org) or call Peter Johnston on 01698 828633.

However, if you would like to also become a Supporting Member then your contributions would be gratefully received to enable OneKirk to provide resources to assist and encourage members and clergy of the Church of Scotland.

We suggest an annual contribution of £15 (or £5 for unwaged).

Please make cheques payable to 'OneKirk' and send c/o Rev Peter Johnston, 332 Glasgow Road, Blantyre, Glasgow, G72 9LQ, United Kingdom.

Inclusion and Grace

Space for Grace: Creating Inclusive Churches

Giles Goddard

Canterbury Press, 2008, £12.99

ISBN: 9781853119163

Divine hospitality is a helpful summary of inclusion, and in this extended essay Giles Goddard draws on his experience both as Rector of St Peter's, Walworth, and also as chairperson of Inclusive Church. Rooted in a Biblical



understanding of God's desire to include Goddard shares how a theology of inclusion is working in a local setting to break down barriers and labels, and explores the dynamic it creates, the success and also its limitations, even touching on how a continuing engagement with people who do not share an inclusive theology can take place.