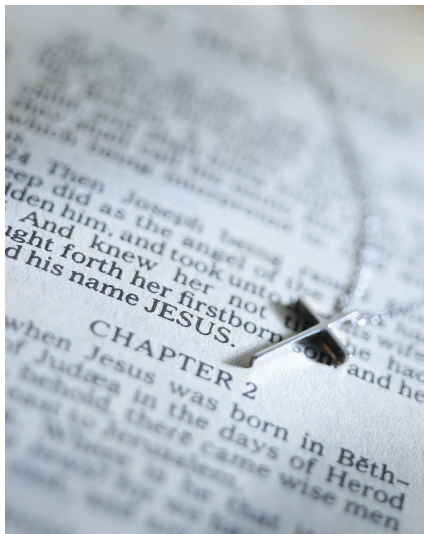


What's in this edition ?



- An article by Tony Bickley on GARF as a Missionary Society (p3)
- Summary of the sermon given by Stan Evers at the AGM. (p1)
- Prayer Items (p4)

AGM and Thanksgiving Service 1st June 2006

We were thrilled Pastor Howard Sayers and the fellowship at Hailsham Baptist Church hosted our AGM.

It was also a pleasure to have Stan Evers, the Pastor at Potton to preach.



The following is a précis of what he preached.

Questions about the poor.

Having agreed to preach at the GARF AGM my mind turned to the Book of Proverbs. Did you know that the word '**poor**' occurs 35 times in Proverbs and the word '**poverty**' occurs 14 times? Let's ask some questions arising from these references.

Question 1. Why are some poor?

Solomon gives several reasons for poverty.

1. **Laziness** (10:4). Pastors are not lazy; many of them are overworked and underpaid!
2. **Excessive drinking and eating** (23:21). Pastors are usually men of self-control.
3. **Lack of careful planning** (20:5). Pastor's wives are usually very good at using meagre resources to wisely and skilfully keep their husbands and their children well clothed and fed.
4. **God's sovereignty**: 'The rich and the poor have this in common; the Lord is the maker of them all' (22:2). If a pastor is in a bigger church that can

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afford to pay him well - that is God's plan for him. If a pastor is in a small church, that is unable to pay him much - that is God's plan for him. The pastor in the smaller church must not scheme to get a call to a bigger and a better paying church! Neither must he become critical of his members or grumble against God's providence. The church must do all it can to pay their pastor as much as they can. Part of God's provision comes through agencies such as GARF.

Question 2. How should we treat the poor?

1. ***Some despise the poor*** (14:20-21) but remember that God sees how we treat the poor. To despise the poor offends God, *'He who mocks the poor reproaches his Maker'* (17:5).



2. ***Some ignore the request of the poor for help*** but the poor in purse and the poor in spirit have a caring Friend in Christ, *'who sticks closer than a brother'* (18:23-24). How then should we treat the poor? We should ***show compassion and kindness by providing for them*** (see 11:25-26; 19:17, 22; 22:9; 31:9).

Question 3. What should we pray when we consider the plight of the poor and the prosperity of the rich?

We should pray with the wise man Agur, *'give me neither poverty nor riches'* - see 30:7-9.

The danger of prosperity is to forsake the Lord. We lose our zeal for God becoming preoccupied with this world and its empty treasures. Our wealth becomes our god even though we profess to worship the true God.

The danger of poverty is to steal or by other dishonest or dubious methods to solve our problems. Agur prays *'remove falsehood and lies far from me'* because he knows that faced with severe want or intense temptation he may resort to dishonesty. The words *'feed me with food allotted to me'* find an echo in the prayer *'Give us this day our daily bread'* (Matthew 6:11). Whether rich or poor, we are to be content with God's plans and God's provision for us (1 Timothy 6:6, 8, 17-18).



The importance of missions?

If we look at the history of the church in this country it has always had missions as a priority; the need to preach the gospel has been paramount, and in many ways it was the gospel that embodied the best of the Empire: the sad fact today is that, for the most part, we have lost our missionary zeal. We are forced then to ask why this is, and it can only be a reflection of the poor state of Christianity as a whole in our nation. *The loss of missionary zeal is paralleled by our loss of a Christian ethos and by the inward looking nature of what has become a large part of the Church in our land.* How do we change this? It has to be changed from the inside so that we can once again regain an outward looking attitude. If we change the heart then the will, will follow.

The first thing that we need is for the Church to become vibrant and for the nation's attitude to be changed; instead of being conformed to the image of Jesus we have in many ways become conformed to the image of the world. We are concerned about our own fellowships, and rightly so, but without a strong British church we work in isolation, I am sure that many of you will feel this. This is the reason that it is felt that GARF should be considered in mission support, so that we might maintain smaller gospel works that are accountable to those who support them.

GARF is in every way a gospel missionary work; it supports ministers and their families, who often make great sacrifices for the gospel, and who minister in small Churches with both a missionary outlook and who find themselves in missionary circumstances, for as long as a need remains. GARF is a gospel and missionary minded society who has set about making it possible for the message of salvation to continue where it otherwise might cease to exist. It is a supporter of the Reformed doctrines of the Reformation, those doctrines that we call 'The doctrines of God's Grace'. Its aim is to further the gospel and by God's grace to change the nature of the nation through a greater witness of God's love and through the conversion of souls; the first part, though not easy, is still the easier of the two, for the spiritual state of our land is not only declining, it is dire.

We would encourage you to consider GARF in this light; gone are the days of Christian influence in our land, gone are the days of Christian prosperity, missionary work is needed if we are to see our nation saved; GARF seeks to be at the forefront of supplying this need. I can testify myself that the work of the gospel of God's grace in Brighton would be lessened if it were not for the support of 'The Gospel Advocate Relief Fund' namely GARF.

*Tony Bickley
Brighton Reformed Baptist Church
(Formally known as Ebenezer Baptist
Chapel)*

Advance Notice of AGM 2007.

A date for your diary.

On May 31st our friends at Forest Fold Chapel, Crowborough will be hosting the Annual General Meeting.

Prayer Items



- Continued wisdom when dealing with enquiries for grants
- The need for another committee member.
- Thanks for the meetings recently held in Northern Ireland to promote the work over there and that there may be fruit as a result of the ministry given.
- A minister's wife who has undergone surgery - we thank God this went well. Pray she may soon be restored to her usual health & strength.
- An elderly widow who has now had to move into a care home – that she may settle in well and find Christian fellowship.

- An ex-committee member – though advancing in years, for strength to cope with the rigours of daily care for his wife.
- Pray for Ian an addict in remission who asked Tony Bickley some moving questions at a recent evangelistic event at Erith Grace Baptist Church

Deputation Speaker:

Tony Bickley
Pastor, Brighton Reformed Baptist Chapel

If you would like Tony to speak at a missionary meeting please contact the secretary.

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David Cottington (Halland)
Chris David (Halland)
Ken Starnes (Ringmer)
Phil Starnes (Halland)

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