The Mission Board Chairman Visits the Churches in Australia

Above: The congregation in Port Lincoln

For three weeks in the early part of April my wife and I travelled to and across Australia to visit our Free Presbyterian Churches. After an uneventful 11,500 miles journey from Omagh to Hobart we met the Rev Ralph Hall, his wife, Tanya, and their family, Emma, James, Matthew, and Jack. They live in the picturesque area of Blackman's Bay, and he ministers in the neighbouring town of Kingston. The fellowship with God's people in Kingston Free Presbyterian Church was a rich blessing, as young and old gathered to worship God. Two services on the Lord's Day were separated by a church lunch, giving us an opportunity to hear the congregation's deep appreciation for Rev Hall's ministry and the warm affection they have for the many ministers, missionaries, and lay men who have visited Tasmania to supply the pulpit in the past. A missionary meeting on Monday evening and a prayer meeting on Wednesday evening completed the preaching schedule for our visit and soon we were preparing to make our way to Port Lincoln.

Travel to Port Lincoln involved two further flights, covering approximately 550 miles. Rev Kyle Graham has ministered in Port Lincoln and Lock congregations for seven years, and he lives in Port Lincoln with his wife, Eppie, and young daughter, Abiah. Prior to our arrival in Australia both congregations had held successful elder elections, and it was my privilege to conduct two ordination services on behalf of the Presbytery. On 14th April, Mr Graham Spiers was ordained at an afternoon service in Lock and three hours later, Mr Ian Douglas was ordained in Port Lincoln. A missionary prayer meeting was held on the following Tuesday and Wednesday evenings in the respective churches, and it was a thrill to hear the work of the Free Presbyterian Church across the world being remembered before God in prayer.

Five days after arriving in Port Lincoln we were back on a Boeing 737-800 for a short flight to Adelaide, before taking another flight to visit Rev Philip Gardiner and his family in Perth. Philip, Cherith, and their two daughters, Anna and Cerys, live on the outskirts of the city, and Philip oversees the work in Perth Free Presbyterian Church. As with the other Free Presbyterian congregations in Australia, fellowship with God's people in Perth was a great encouragement. Four meetings had been arranged for me on the theme, 'Enjoying Christ'.

Although separated by vast distances, the congregations in Australia are very much part of the Free Presbyterian family. The ministers, office-bearers, and congregations are pressing on despite national spiritual apathy and are praying for a revival of true religion. As we made our journey home, we thanked God for raising up these congregations, establishing them and enabling them to continue to declare the unsearchable riches of Christ. Pray for the ministers and their families as they serve God thousands of miles from their homeland and join with our Mission Board and Presbytery as we seek God's blessing upon this witness. Heather and I are indebted to the Mission Board for the opportunity to visit Australia and thank all who remembered us in prayer. ■

Rev Colin Mercer,
Mission Board Chairman.

Below: The Gardiner family

Below: The office bearers in Kingston

Below: The congregation in Lock

Retirement Services in Kenya for the

Pattersons

Above: The Pattersons receive farewell gifts at the service in Kitale.

The apostle Paul encourages rendering 'to all their dues' and proceeds to use the words 'honour to whom honour' (Romans 13:7). In April of this year, the Rev Malcolm Patterson and his wife, Alison, celebrated their retirement from missionary service in Western Kenya, where they had served the Lord in a full-time capacity since 2013. Truly, they deserve to be honoured for their faithfulness over these years, and this was the desire of the people among whom they laboured. Consequently, our Presbytery and Mission Board arranged that Rev Garth Wilson and I should travel to Kenya to participate in the meetings to mark the Pattersons' retirement.

Below: Service in Kitale

The Glory Bible Churches in Kenya had scheduled special services to recognise the labours of God's servants. The first service was held on Saturday 6th April at Nyaporo which is a rural area close to the town of Kakamega, and the second on Sunday 7th in Kitale. These two venues are approximately two and a half hours apart. This schedule facilitated the people of the churches located in these districts.

The meetings were lengthy, with various participants. I had the privilege of preaching at the Nyaporo meeting and Rev Wilson at the meeting in Kitale, with each of us in turn bringing thanks and greetings from Presbytery and the Mission Board. The presence of the Lord was real and powerful. It was evident that Rev Patterson and his wife are held in very high esteem by the people among whom they served. This esteem was not only demonstrated by the gifts given, but also by the deep emotion that was manifested openly in the meetings.

Our Presbytery and Mission Board owe much to the Pattersons. It is impossible in this report to detail what they accomplished in their service for Christ. On behalf of Presbytery and the Mission Board, and above all in Christ's name, I salute them and thank them for work well done. ■

Rev John Greer,
Clerk of Presbytery.

Below: Service in Nyaporo

A Very Encouraging Trip to Nepal

Above: One of the mountain churches

Rev Andrew Patterson and I spent almost two weeks in Nepal, leaving Northern Ireland on 10th April and returning on the 23rd. It was our privilege to meet with Joy our worker in Nepal; to fellowship with the Moderator of the Nepal FPC, Rev Paul Thapa, and his fellow pastors; to visit the LTBS studio that has been responsible for so many contacts across Nepal, often resulting in the establishment of substantial congregations; and to conduct the opening of a new church, Gyangrang FPC in Makwanpur, on Lord's Day 21st April.

The centrepiece was the annual 'Pastors' Conference' – with 250 plus people packed into the building in Kathmandu, sitting cross-legged on the floor, listening to four sermons per day delivered through an interpreter. Sandwiched between and surrounding the two weekends we spent preaching in the churches were visits to fifteen additional churches, the majority of which were in remote mountain locations. The journeys to reach them usually lasted between two and four hours and involved travelling on the bumpiest roads imaginable and circling many a mountain with drops of hundreds of feet – all too often just a matter of inches away. On several occasions, when our 4x4 vehicle could go no further, we trekked up the mountain for a couple of hours to get to the site of the church. In every location we visited, it was our joy to bring an encouraging word from the Scriptures.

These are bands of men and women "whose hearts God has touched" (1 Samuel 10:26) in a way which we covet for ourselves. Most are living in poverty but are willing to walk on mountain tracks for hours – sometimes barefoot – just to meet us for fellowship or attend a church service. One pastor, based in India, had to travel for three days on a bus to get to the conference!

Above: The Pastors' Conference

We are indebted to Presbytery for sending us on this mission trip; the large number of photographs and video clips will remind us of a most blessed time spent in the company of many precious people. ■

Dr Ian Brown,
Deputy Moderator of Presbytery.

Above: Dr Brown opening the new church building

Above: The graduation of students from the College

The First Graduates from the Mission Board's Bible Training Institute

The first students have graduated from the Mission Board's Bible Training Institute (BTI) which was commenced in 2021.

Seven students from Kenya and one from Uganda have been presented with certificates to mark their completion of the two-year course of study.

Jack Musee Kikuvi

Obala Steve Odiwuor

Stephen Ngotho Mwenga

Benson Osundwa

LtoR: Isaac Kariuki Gachuru, Stephen Macharia Kinuthia, Joseph Methu Gichuki

Matua Tomas

FPCMISSION
BIBLE TRAINING INSTITUTE

Please pray for these students that the Lord will use them mightily in His service, and that they will be the first of many from around the world to benefit from studying through the BTI.

Office:
Mrs Glenda Graham
3 Carrigenagh Road
Kilkeel, BT34 4NE
T: 028 4176 5574
office@fpcmission.org

Chairman:
Rev Colin Mercer
12 Crevenagh View
Omagh, BT79 0JH
T: 028 8224 2299
rev.mercer@fpcmission.org

Secretary:
Rev David McMillan
1 Drummanmore Grange
Armagh, BT61 8RQ
T: 028 3778 8150
rev.mcmillan@fpcmission.org

Treasurer:
Mr Alastair Hamilton
37A Ballymacvea Road
Kells, Ballymena BT42 3NH
T: 078 6061 6302
a.hamilton@fpcmission.org