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FOUR-MONTHLY NOTES AND NEWS
OF HIS MINISTRY FROM JOHN BLANCHARD

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‘... where the saints have trod’.

The last engagement on my recent tour of South Africa was at a service for the faculty and students of George Whitefield College, in Muizenberg, Cape Town. A few days later, my first engagement back in England was at St Botolph’s-without-Aldersgate Church, in London. Dedicated to a 7th Century Anglican divine and founded before 1291, it escaped the Great Fire of London in 1666 and was rebuilt in 1788-1791.

The church is currently used by London City Presbyterian Church, which joined with others in arranging the 20s-30s Preaching Rally at which I spoke, yet it was none of the church’s building history that caught my attention. Instead, it was being told that this was the very site where on 24 May 1738 John Wesley went ‘very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street’ and ‘at about a quarter before nine’ his heart was ‘strangely warmed’ and he felt ‘I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation, and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death’.

For consecutive engagements to take place in buildings so closely associated with two giants of 18th Century church history warmed my heart too! Reading of their godly love for each other that transcended their disagreement over a major theological issue was to receive a lesson in seeking to obey Scripture’s injunction, ‘Seek peace and pursue it’

(Psalm 34:14) underlined by, ‘Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy’ (Hebrews 12:14). I was also deeply moved by the sense that in my own relatively tiny ministry I was, in the hymn writer’s words, ‘... treading where the saints have trod’. A third reaction was to remember what amazing things God accomplished through Whitefield and Wesley, and to recall that they came on to the scene when true Christianity in our country was at a desperately low ebb. We are in the same state once more — but the God who transformed the spiritual life of our nation then has not changed, and he is able to do so again. Let this be a powerful incentive to pray that he will, and to do everything we can to let the gospel loose wherever he has placed us in our needy land.



‘As much as I can, as well as I can, for as long as I can’

SOUTH AFRICA — *ONCE AGAIN!*

In 2009 I had what was intended to be my final preaching tour in South Africa, but this was so fruitful that in 2013 I was persuaded by Christian Book Discounters (the organizers of these tours) to return. This turned out to be even better, so towards the end of last September, with Howard Williams on board, I went back for another tour that in some ways surpassed the previous two. South Africa has always had a special place in my heart since I first went there in 1994 and to have the privilege of widespread ministry there again was a special joy.

The tour got off to a challenging start. The eleven-hour flight to Johannesburg was fine, but the connecting flight to Durban was cancelled, then merged with another flight, then delayed because a larger aircraft was needed. I eventually got to my digs twenty-two

sleepless hours after leaving home — to be told that I would be picked up in an hour for my first engagement! 120 people had paid for a dinner at Christ Church, **Pinetown**, with fifty others unable to get a place. It was good to renew fellowship with The Rev. Vernon Locker, and a privilege after dinner to move into

the church to give a one-hour presentation on ‘Evolution: fact or fiction?’ The Lord upheld me wonderfully, and there were no ill-effects from the long journey.

We made a very early start the next day to travel to **Hilton**, where another friend, John Stimson, heads up a remarkable work at the town’s Christ Church. The church pioneered the foundation of Grace College, which began in 1999 with thirteen pupils meeting in a room in a shopping centre. It is now a dynamic faith-based secondary school, owning superb



The big five

premises on a twenty-two hectare site, with over 270 students and a magnificent record of academic achievement. Two Saturday morning sessions on ‘Heaven’, held at the college, drew people from a wide area, and were very well received.

An even earlier start on Sunday got me to Christ Church, **Pietermaritzburg**, for a great morning service, ably led by the Rector, Wayne Barkhuizen. With an attendance of 400 and remarkable liberty in preaching it was a memorable occasion. The evening saw me at Hillcrest Baptist Church, **Hillcrest**, where Clint Archer leads a fine work, and where it was good to end my time in KwaZulu-Natal.

On the following day the first of three 5.00am starts took us on flights to Johannesburg and Hoedspruit, on the way to Ngala Private Game Reserve, adjoining the famous Kruger National Park in **Limpopo** and **Mpumalanga**.

Peter Temple, the head of CBD, had kindly arranged this wonderful experience, and for thirty-six hours it was like living in another world. Seeing all the wildlife, from the tiniest birds to the largest mammals, was wonderful, and we managed



to ‘capture’ every one of the ‘Big Five’ (lion, leopard, buffalo, elephant and rhinoceros). It was a marvellous break from the ministry — and if I had been an evolutionist when I arrived, I would have been a creationist when I left!

Our last day in Ngala ended with a flight to get me to an evening meeting in Honeyridge Baptist Church, **Johannesburg**, where I had been asked to address several key questions Christians ask. The church was nearly packed as I dealt with a number of them, and the feedback was excellent. At one point I mentioned the word ‘annihilation’ and all the lights went out! Speaking in the dark for several minutes was quite spooky.

After a good meeting at Emmanuel Baptist Church, **Florida Park**, the following day, it took another early start to get to Rosebank Union Church, **Sandton**, for a 7.00am sell-out breakfast meeting of 170 people, at which I had been asked to address three key questions. It was a stimulating time, as was the evening meeting at Maraisburg Fellowship, **Florida**, where I had been asked to speak on the same subject I tackled last year — God’s place in a broken world.

On the Saturday I shared in a Biblical Worldview Mega Conference in **Douglasdale** with two American speakers, Gary Gilley and James White. Several hundred people came

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and there was some close interaction with many of the delegates in the course of a long day. Sunday was memorable, beginning with 8.00am and 10.00am morning services back in Rosebank Union Church, **Sandton**. The spirit in both services was such that I told the congregations of about 1,100 people that I would have been happy not to preach, but there was a sense of God's blessing on all that was done, and CBD had its biggest-ever response to the books that were made available. The evening service was very different — at the charismatic GodFirst Church in **Johannesburg**. About 80% of the 200 or so attending were in their teens and twenties and I was given perfect freedom to preach for fifty minutes on the authority and relevance of the Bible.

There were two remaining engagements in Gauteng Province. The first was in Muldersdrift Union Church in **Krugerdsorp**, which meets in a magnificent building that was opened debt-free six months earlier ... and the lights went out again while I was preaching, this time for fifteen minutes! The second was in Brackenhurst Baptist Church, **Alberton**,

where I spoke to some 200 people on the flaws in Richard Dawkins' atheistic position in areas ranging from evolution to the person of Jesus Christ.

The flight to Cape Town on the following day was threatened by a horrendous traffic jam, and Howard and I



At the Biblical Worldview Mega Conference

reached the departure gate with just three minutes to spare. From Cape Town we drove out to the university town of **Stellenbosch**, where a big crowd at St Paul's Church included a large proportion of students, who gave a great hearing to a message on the after-life. CBD had air-freighted pre-publication supplies of my latest book *Why are you here?* from the UK, and there was a big demand for it at the first-ever meeting at which the title was available.

On the following day Howard and I took part in a Golf Day arranged by George Whitefield College on the windswept Milnerton Golf Course, and that evening I preached the gospel to an augmented youth group at Tokai Community Church, **Tokai**. This was followed by long interaction with a group of Christians anxious to be helped in their personal evangelism. On the following evening the pastor at Mountain View Baptist Church,

Lakeside, encouraged me by telling the congregation that my books had been a significant influence in his own life and ministry.

This week was the 60th anniversary of my conversion to Christ in Guernsey in October 1954, and preaching the gospel for fifty minutes to a Sunday morning congregation of 500 (about 100 more than normal) at King of Kings Baptist Church, **Fish Hoek**, was a memorable experience, while CBD reported an extraordinary response to the books. A receptive crowd at Tokai Community Church, **Tokai**, brought a rewarding day to an end.

The final event of the tour was a service for faculty and staff at George Whitefield College, **Muizenberg**, a thriving institution equipping Christian men and women for ministry in Africa and the rest of the world. 2014 marked the tercentenary of the birth of the remarkable English evangelist, and the college's 25th anniversary, and it was a special privilege to have some input into this significant year.

In spite of the overthrow of the apartheid regime in 1994, South Africa faces enormous social problems. Last November, the *Daily*



Full house at Fish Hoek

Telegraph reported that in the previous year there were forty-five murders a day, that the difference between rich and poor remains among the greatest in the world, that there were twice as many private security guards as policemen, and that the unemployment rate was 25%. Yet I have been strongly drawn to the country ever since my first visit there, and ever since have longed to serve the Lord there in person and in print. This tour was graciously used to help in fulfilling that longing. Was it my last-ever visit? At every stop, I told people that it was — but in every church, without exception, the pastor's last words to me were along the lines of, 'When you come back...'. So once again, watch this space!

THANK YOU!

My warmest thanks once again to friends who have recently sent ministry gifts through the CM Trust. Your fellowship is greatly appreciated. Gifts sent directly to my home address are always acknowledged personally at the time.

Progress in the Province

Only by working back through my records could I say how often I have visited N. Ireland, but a guess of seventy times would not be far wide of the mark. It is always a privilege to do so, and the October-November Popular Christian Apologetics tour was no exception. It began with a united rally in First Presbyterian Church, **Ahoghill**, where I had an extraordinary evening eight months earlier. A large crowd from several local churches again made it a special occasion, which was marked by the first public release of my latest book, *Why are you here?* Howard Williams told me later that the response had been extraordinary, which was a great encouragement — and a relief, as EP Books had sent 1,000 copies for the tour!

The next three days were jointly arranged by Trinity Reformed Presbyterian Church, **Newtownabbey**, and Reformed Presbyterian Church, **Carrickfergus**. The first event was at the brilliant Theatre at the Mill, Newtownabbey. The 400 seats were all booked weeks beforehand, so I was asked to add a ‘matinée’ at 6.00pm. This gave two great opportunities to speak on ‘Where is God when things go wrong?’, and there was excellent interaction after both sessions — and another heavy raid on the book tables.



Theatre at the Mill

The Carrickfergus church meets in the fine Oakfield Community Centre, and I was encouraged to see a fairly good crowd there, in spite of the event clashing with country-wide firework displays and such a deluge of rain that I think I might have hesitated to go out. In introducing me, Pastor Harry Coulter said my book *Learning and Living the Christian Life* had been foundational to his early growth as a Christian, and was used so much that it fell to pieces and had to be replaced. He urged me to have it reprinted, and I was able to assure him that a thoroughly revised, restructured and retitled version was on my writing agenda (though not at the very top!).

There were two meetings in Newtownabbey on the Saturday, the first preceded by a breakfast, and at which I spoke for an hour on ‘Heaven’, and the second to a nearly-full church (in spite of lashing rain) most of the audience being in their teens and twenties. Someone told me of a mission I held in Ballymoney in the 1970s

4 unmissable FREE events

with speaker Dr. John Blanchard

Dr. Blanchard is an internationally known speaker, evangelist and author, with over fifteen million copies in print in 60 languages.

<p>WHERE IS GOD WHEN THINGS GO WRONG?</p> <p>Thursday 19th October, 2014</p> <p>Time: 8.00pm</p> <p>Speaker: Dr John Blanchard</p>	<p>WHY BELIEVE THE BIBLE?</p> <p>Friday 31st October, 2014</p> <p>Time: 8.00pm</p> <p>Why believe the Bible?</p> <p>Speaker: Dr John Blanchard</p>	<p>Anyone for heaven?</p> <p>Saturday 1st November, 2014</p> <p>Light breakfast: 8.30am - 9.30am</p> <p>9.30am Presentation</p> <p>Anyone for Heaven?</p> <p>Speaker: Dr John Blanchard</p>	<p>Has science got rid of God?</p> <p>Saturday 7th November, 2014</p> <p>Time: 7.00pm</p> <p>Has science got rid of God?</p> <p>Speaker: Dr John Blanchard</p>
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and said he knew several people converted then and who were going on strongly in the faith.

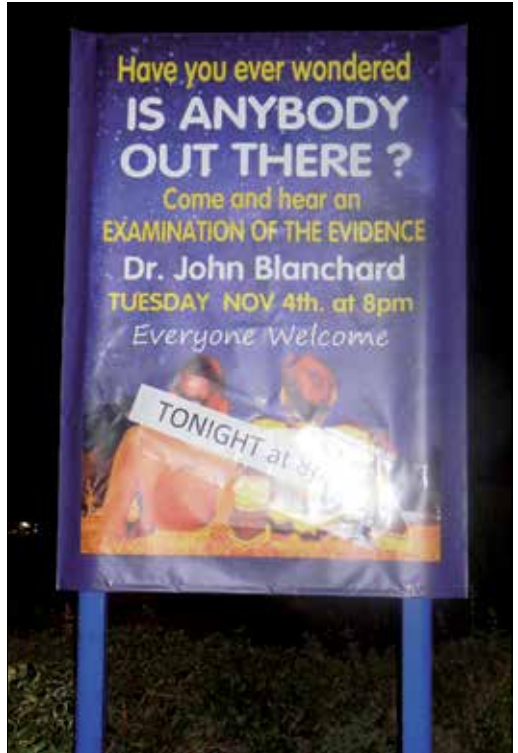
On Sunday morning I was at First Presbyterian Church, **Dromara**, in Co. Down, where Shaw Thompson has seen great blessing in the course of his ministry there over the past 20+ years. It was good to challenge a large, mixed congregation, especially those who might have been no more than nominal Christians. In the evening I was back in **Carrickfergus**, this time at Carrickfergus Baptist Church. The young pastor, Paul Lawther (who, like me, has a Young Life background), has been there for two years, and the encouragement has been such (with the building nearly full even on Sunday nights) that the church is having to extend its premises. An excellent crowd gave a very warm response to the ministry there, closing out a great Lord's Day.

A long commute took us next to Co. Londonderry, and to Stonepark Baptist Church in **Eskeragh**. It was founded in 1956 with just eight members, but long-time pastor Harry Dowds now leads a good-sized congregation meeting in a splendid building with a superb kitchen (they *are* Baptists!). Howard and I could not have been made more welcome, and the warmth of response during and after I had spoken on 'Meet the real Jesus' made the long journey very worth while.

One of my favourite N. Ireland churches was next — Bethany Baptist Church in **Bangor**, Co. Down. Pastor Steven Curry has an outstanding ministry in the church and in fulfilling numerous demands to preach elsewhere in the Province. It was a privilege to be back with him and to hear that a church study group had made detailed use of *Major Points from the Minor Prophets* and found it a great help. The large crowd responded very warmly, and it was also encouraging to meet two local people who have been faithful prayer partners of mine for well over thirty years.

Our final engagement was in **Antrim** Baptist Church which, under the enthusiastic leadership of Neil Watson, meets in spacious new premises that cater perfectly for the fine numbers that attend. The spirit of the meeting and the response both to the ministry and to the literature made it an excellent way to end the tour, and when two people told me that *Ultimate Questions* was instrumental in their coming to faith, the evening finished on a high note.

N. Ireland remains one of my favourite stamping grounds — and a well-established pastor's willingness to organize another tour next year was eagerly accepted!



At Bethany Baptist Church, Bangor

2015 — ALL CHANGE!

The back page of *Newsline* usually lists my engagements for the following four months, asking for prayer support. In this issue the list would have been very short, as other than preaching in my home church on 11 and 18 January, 15 February and 29 March, and at a weekend's services in Glasgow on 7-8 February, I have no other preaching engagements listed between now and the end of April. With several more writing projects waiting for attention, this would have been an unusually long (but ideal) opportunity to make good progress on them.

So much for long-term calculations, as there has been a life-changing development — *I am planning to get married in April!* The lady concerned is Pam Robertson (née Ellis), who lives in Woking, has known my family for over fifty years, and whose husband, Vic, died two years ago. She has faithfully supported me in prayer ever since we first met and in the past year or two has heard me preach several times when I have been in her area. In extraordinary circumstances we found ourselves drawn closely to each other just before I left for a tour in South Africa in mid-September, and by the time I returned three weeks (and numerous emails!) later we were both convinced that God was calling us to unite our lives in marriage.



Pam is a remarkably gifted lady who loves the Lord, loves the doctrines of grace, is an experienced Bible teacher, has a passion for evangelism, and as a Board member of Transforming Europe Now (previously Eurovangelism) has a particular interest in supporting Christian work in Eastern Europe. Those of you who know me well may have detected a few similarities! — and beyond these there are *many* more.

Pam and I were engaged on Christmas Eve, and the wedding is planned for 1.30pm on Saturday 11 April at Guildford Baptist Church (Millmead Centre), Buryfields, Guildford, Surrey, GU2 4AZ. We would greatly value your prayers on that day, and you would be most welcome to join us. Car parking in Guildford is a *major* problem, so please visit www.guildfordbaptist.org for help. The great desire of Pam's heart and mine is that together we might effectively serve our Saviour, and be enabled to do 'as much as we can, as well as we can, for as long as we can.' May God graciously answer our prayers!