



Weekly Newsletter: 30th January 2024

Reflection: What are people asking?

By Lorna Ferguson

"But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect." (1 Peter 3:15)

In 2009, David and I started planting a church in Sapporo, in the north of Japan, with two OMF colleagues, How Chuang and Kaori. God was gracious and gave us a new believer, Naomi*, who was baptised at our Christmas service that year, bringing our little church up to 5 adults. Valentine's Day in the following February fell on a Sunday. That morning (our worship service was in the afternoon), Naomi called to say that she was bringing a friend, Kei*, because "he really needs Jesus". We were delighted but now faced a dilemma. David was preaching through the book of Joshua at the time, and that day's message was to be on the first part of chapter 5 on circumcision, not something we thought would be helpful for someone's first ever visit to a church.

We called How Chuang who said he had a sermon on friendship and we all agreed that would be better for a newcomer. Kei sat through the service and we were praying for his heart to be touched by what he heard. We always had a time of discussion afterwards, thinking about the Bible passage and asking how to apply it to our lives. Kei was honest. He hated the message! It turned out that he had been betrayed by friends in the past and been bullied. The last thing he wanted was to hear about friendship and how Jesus could be his friend.

One month later was White Day, a Japanese day when guys who got chocolate from girls on Valentine's Day give back something in return. Naomi called that morning, saying she had invited Kei again. David was due to preach that day from Joshua 7 about the sin of Achan at Ai. We decided not to change the message this time. I prayed through the whole sermon, wondering what Kei would be making of it. It turned out that he loved it! At our sharing time, he said it was good to know that God does not overlook evil but rather judges it. The fact that God cares about right and wrong spoke to Kei who had been on the receiving end of many wrongs in his life, and God used that to start to open his heart. Over the next months, Kei started to study the Bible, believed and was baptised.

I learned an important lesson that day. Although some parts of the Bible may indeed be easier for seekers to understand, God can use any part of his word to speak to people and open their hearts. Rather than focusing on what we want to communicate, it is important to try to understand the needs and questions of

the person listening so that we can share in a way that speaks to them. While we do want people to understand the whole gospel eventually, the entry point for each person might be different.

We can see that Jesus did this. When he spoke with Nicodemus in John 3, he talked about the need to be born again of water and the spirit. In the next chapter, however, he spoke to the Samaritan woman about living water, addressing her personal life and spiritual needs. Paul did the same thing. You can compare how he spoke to the Jews in Antioch in Acts 13, the Gentiles in Lystra in Acts 14, and then to the Athenian philosophers and intellectuals at the meeting of the Areopagus in Acts 17 when he referenced their altar "To the Unknown God". It is not that Paul changed the gospel on each of these occasions, rather that he approached it from a perspective he knew would speak to his audience.

Peter wrote that we should be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks us to give the reason for the hope that we have, and to do this with gentleness and respect. It is important that we listen, both to the person asking and to the Holy Spirit, so that we can answer in a way that is appropriate for that person, rather than answer something that they are not actually asking. It's been great hearing of all the different events at the Community Week and of the different conversations which were happening. May the Holy Spirit guide each of the ongoing conversations so that people's hearts may be opened to hear and understand the wonderful truth of the gospel.

*Name changed

Prayer Meetings

We're meeting to pray this Wednesday at 7pm on Zoom and our prayer focus will be giving thanks for all that has happened during our Community Week. Please join us and contact Liz@holyroodevangelical.org if you would like the Zoom codes and do not already receive them.

Our prayer meeting next week (Wednesday 7th February) will be in person at 7pm. Tea, coffee and home baking will be served from 6.45pm.

Mission Prayer Meeting

Our next mission prayer meeting will be this Saturday (3rd February) at 9am on Zoom. Come along and hear updates from those serving overseas and spend time praying for them.

Book Group

The Book Group will meet on Saturday (3rd February) at 9 Craigentenny Avenue at 3.30pm. We are reading *Bouncing Forwards* by Patrick Regan. If you have any questions, please contact Anncris.

Letter from Euan Dodds (Kilmallie and Ardnamurchan Free Church)

On behalf of our congregation can I thank the HEC congregation for their remarkable generosity. We are humbled by your partnership and grateful to the Lord for this gift. Nathan, Lauren and Lydia have thrown themselves into the life of the fellowship with Nathan cheerfully doing whatever is asked of him. Thank you for supporting him in this way and please continue to pray for them – and us – in the months ahead. Every blessing, Euan.

Save the Date: Children and Youth Discipleship Workshop at HEC

We all long to see our children and young people grow in their faith. What does it look like for us as a church family to disciple and evangelise our children and youth well? What are the spiritual needs of children and youth? These are questions that we need to keep asking as parents, Sunday Club leaders, and church members.

On **Saturday 16th March** David Kunzi, the UK Director of the International ministry *Word of Life*, is going to do a workshop at HEC. There will be two sessions with a coffee break and Q&A after. This event will help us refine our vision for youth discipleship both as individual families and as a congregation. Whether you are a parent, grandparent, volunteer with children's ministry, or just a member of the church family, please feel welcome to attend. If childcare is an issue for the morning, please let Liz know.

- Date: Saturday, 16th March
- Time: 9:30am-12pm.

Events in HEC

There are a couple of events to highlight that we are hosting at HEC. It would be great to support them-

- **CARE's Protect Life Tour: Thursday, 7th March** at 7.30pm. The new assisted suicide legislation will soon be debated at Holyrood. At this event we will consider a theological and medical response and provide tips on political engagement. Everyone is warmly invited to attend.
- **Biblical Fatherhood: Saturday, 23rd March** from 9.30am to 3.30pm. A day to be equipped, challenged and encouraged in the God given calling of fatherhood. Joe is speaking at this event along with Andy Murray, Kevin Wong and Adri Van Den Broek. For tickets and more information go [here](#).

Church Calendar

For your prayers and info:

- Monday:
 - Baby and Toddler Group from 10 – 11.30am
 - Warm Space from 12noon – 3pm
- Tuesday: Pickleball and Table Tennis at 7pm in the church
- Wednesday: Prayer meeting at 7pm (on Zoom)
- Thursday: Session meeting at 7pm (in person)
- Saturday:
 - Mission Prayer Meeting at 9am (on Zoom)
 - Book Group at 3.30pm (in person)
- Sunday:
 - Communion Service at 10.30am (and live streamed). Joe Barnard preaching.
 - Hope Explored at 6pm in the church. There will be no Equip this week, please continue to pray for the Hope Explored course. We will get back to our normal routine later in February.



www.holyroodevangelical.org

Incorporated as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, Scottish Charity Number SCO44820