

Weekly Newsletter: 27th August 2024

Reflection: Moving Forward Together

By Joe Barnard

Imagine being an Israelite long ago. You've been camped out for a number of years in the desert. Egypt is a distant memory. You've learned to feel at home in a tent, and you happen to be settled, for the moment, in one of the nicer bits of wilderness in the Sinai Peninsula. Then, suddenly, it happens: the cloud lifts and there is movement across the camp. It's time, once again, to pack up the tent and get moving.

It's not just the ancient Israelites who lived a pilgrim life. This is the constant state of the church through history. We are a people that always need to be ready to keep moving. Whenever the Spirit of God begins to do something new, we need to be willing to follow His lead, regardless of how comfortable we may be with the status quo.

I say this because this is a season when HEC is on the move. We are in a dynamic phase of making adjustments so that we can be more prepared to fulfil the mission of God. No doubt, for some of us, this will be uncomfortable. Just as we come to enjoy a familiar view from a sitting room window, we equally enjoy church looking the same week-to-week. There is comfort in having a preferred seat, in being surrounded by old friends, and sitting through services that like an old t-shirt have grown snug and comfortable through repeated uses. But we need to be aware that this clinging to the comfortable is a danger for any church serious about the mission of God. There are too many lost people in Edinburgh for us sit back and prematurely rest. Like the Israelites under Joshua, now is the season of mission and conquest.

Now, what does it look like for us to *move forward as a congregation* this Autumn? It looks like several things.

First, in October we will be launching new home groups. I can't overemphasize how important this is for us as a church family. Pastorally, I realise that, for many, these changes are difficult. It's a sign of our affection for one another that there is emotional resistance to the idea of joining a new group. Nonetheless, we each need to embrace change with a stout heart of faith. One of the great challenges of churches experiencing numeric growth is integrating new members with old ones. Often, though unintentionally, there are inner circles within congregations. New people subtly feel as if they are on the outside of an impenetrable fence. We need to make sure that HEC is porous and that new people feel as if they can find their way into the very heart of our community. One of the best ways to do this is to freshen up our home groups. The beauty of a home group is that it quickly becomes a new nexus of friendships. And the stronger our friendships are within the congregation, the more united we will be as a single people.

Second, *moving forward* means more community outreach. I've said many times that Edinburgh doesn't need preaching stations any longer; there are sufficient evangelical churches in most parts of the city such that no one needs to travel for church. Instead, Edinburgh needs congregations that work strategically to reach local parts of the city.

In the next two months there are three events, in particular, that we can be praying for. One is the picnic on September 7th. This will be an opportunity for our community to be more visible in the park. Let be praying that the Spirit uses joy and fun as attractive lights for people in the area. Second, we will be partnering with Word of Life to run a holiday club over the October holidays. This is a special chance for us to figure out the interests and needs of families along Easter Rd. We will be casting bread on the water and seeing what happens. Third, we will be doing more to invite university students to our services. Please be praying for all of these outreaches and, as always, looking for new faces on Sunday mornings to greet and welcome.

Third, *moving forward* means more hospitality and more eating together. So much of Jesus' discipleship happened over meals. This is not surprising. Few things promote friendship more effectively than food. It only takes a bowl of soup to turn a stranger into a neighbour.

There will be lots of opportunities to eat together this Autumn. Dates to put on the calendar include the first prayer meeting of each month, HEC's 10th birthday (October 27th- see below for more details), and, of course, the hog roast on September 7th (i.e. Community Picnic). Please come out as often as possible and take part in these occasions. But let's take things one step further: let's make hospitality and food one of the core values of HEC. Let's act on the principle that, the more we eat together, the more like family we will feel – and the more strangers we will welcome as friends in our community.

Much more could be said about *moving forward*. We've started a ministry apprenticeship; we've relaunched the evening service; and we are rethinking what it looks like to be a disciple-making community (many of us are reading [The Trellis and the Vine](#)). But the key point is simply to note that the cloud has lifted and now is the time to be moving forward, not sitting back and clinging to the status quo. I realise this movement may come at a cost, but it also comes with a possible reward. How wonderful would it be if soon at HEC we are seeing more discipleship, more evangelism, and more lost souls being brought into the kingdom. I believe this will happen, but only as we move forward *together*.

New Members Classes

In September there will be membership classes for people interested in committing themselves more formally to the mission and communal life of HEC. These classes will be run on Wednesday evenings before the prayer meeting, starting on 11th September. This time will be used for a particular reason: the prayer meeting is one of the most important elements of our shared life as a church. On Wednesday nights, prospective members will be able not just to learn more about HEC, but also experience the prayer meeting itself. If anyone has questions about the new members class, please contact Joe.

Sunday Evening Refreshments

Sam Allen is organising tea and coffee before and after the Sunday evening service. Please come along from 5.45pm or stay on after the service for a hot drink and a time of fellowship.

Wednesday Evening Meals

We're looking forward to having a meal together on the first Wednesday of the month before the prayer meeting. Our first meal will be on **Wednesday 4th September**. Come from 5.45pm and we'll eat together at 6pm followed by the prayer meeting at 7pm.

Community Picnic – Saturday 7th September

We're looking for an idea of numbers for the picnic. Please sign up [here](#) and there will also be a hard copy sign up sheet in the church foyer on Sunday.

Please bring a blanket to sit on or if you have any garden fold out chairs, please bring them along. If you have garden chairs, but are not able to come and are happy for us to borrow them, please contact Gilly (gillianpickering@ymail.com).



HEC's 10th Birthday

Holyrood Evangelical Church is 10 years old this year! To mark the occasion we're going to have a congregational lunch after the morning service on **Sunday 27th October**. Please save the date!

Edinburgh Theological Seminary – Saturday Courses

Open to anyone, the Saturday Courses are an excellent way of gaining more than would normally be offered in church on Sunday whilst being less demanding than a full-time theological course.

One Saturday a month, from September through to April, three lectures are delivered by visiting speakers. These lectures, which are also available to access online, are specially designed to stretch the Christian mind and deepen an understanding of God's word. **Lectures in 2024/2025**

- David Nixon: *Unashamedly Christian*
- Zachary Purvis: *The Parables of Jesus: What Are They and Why Are They So Misunderstood?*
- Daniel Sladek: *"Bizarre Food" or Spiritual Feast? Understanding Leviticus*



For more details and to register, go here <https://ets.ac.uk/courses/saturday-courses/>

Cornhill Scotland – Conferences 2024/ 25

The following conferences are planned for next year:

BOOK IN A DAY

- Mon 25th & Tue 26th November 2024– Amos in a Day, Haggai in a Day with Andrew Sach
- Wednesday 19th March 2025 – Proverbs in a Day with Gwilym Davies
- Tuesday 6th May 2025 – 2 Corinthians in a Day with Paul Clarke

HIS WORD IN MY HANDS

- Saturday 1st March, 2025 – Glasgow

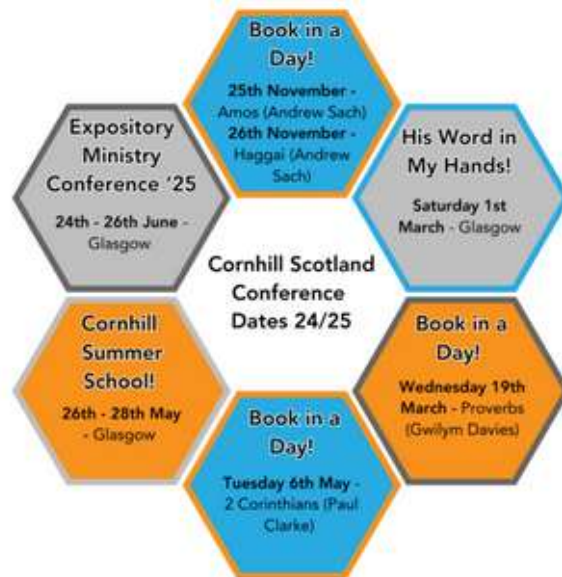
CORNHILL SUMMER SCHOOL, 2025

- Monday 26th – Wednesday 28th May, 2025

THE EXPOSITORY MINISTRY CONFERENCE, 2025

- Tuesday 24th – Thursday 26th June, 2025

For more details, speak to Jon Gemmell or keep an eye on the website - <https://cornhill.scot/2024/07/22/conferences-2024-25/>



Church Calendar

For your info and prayers:

- Wednesday: Prayer meeting in person at 7pm (and on Zoom)
- Saturday: Men's Curry Night at 6pm at the Manse
- Sunday: Communion service at 10.30am and Evening Service at 6pm - Joe Barnard preaching (live streamed)
- Monday: Baby and Toddlers at 10am



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