



GRACE & TRUTH

Ebenezer

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen and called its name Ebenezer; for he said,

“Till now the LORD has helped us.”

1 Samuel 7:12

Editor's Desk

We welcome you to read and profit from 'Grace & Truth', a publication of Trinity Baptist Church, Nairobi.

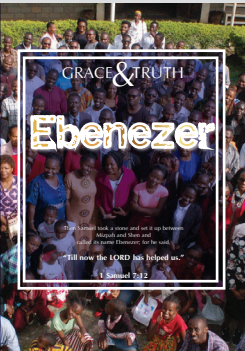
We believe there is a very great need for serious Biblical literature to be produced in our country of Kenya. We trust your soul will be fed and that you will be challenged from the Word of God. We welcome feedback from you by letter, phone or email.

Please also visit us on the web at:

www.trinity.or.ke

Keith Underhill

GRACE & TRUTH Magazine



Cover: After 40 years, we agree with Samuel: "Till now the LORD has helped us" (1 Samuel 7:12). This is the Ebenezer edition of G&T. And all this by the grace

of God through our Lord Jesus Christ who is, "full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). As the gospel of the grace of God is preached in our church, may He, by His grace, save sinners and cause them to identify with His church.



TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH
N A I R O B I

No. 130 2018

1	Grace and Truth
4	Progress of grace
8	A Brief History of Trinity Baptist Church
13	Salvation is of God Alone! Ephesians 2:8-9
17	The Life of David (6)
20	Shepherding the Flock at Trinity Baptist Church
25	Common Question #11: What is the Gospel?
28	Personal Reflections of a TPC Teacher
31	Reformed Baptist Association of Kenya
35	Why I Joined Trinity Baptist Church
38	Young, African, Restless & Reformed
41	Growing Up as a Pastor's Son
45	The Experience of Riper Years
49	God is Using Trinity Baptist Church
52	Growing Up in Trinity Baptist Church (1)
55	Growing Up in Trinity Baptist Church (2)
58	The Future of Trinity Baptist Church

Scripture quotations are taken from the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible.

By the grace of God Keith started Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi in 1978, and a few years later Grace & Truth began publication primarily as a teaching tool. Many of the articles you will read in this issue confirm the vital importance of such teaching in the lives of God's people.

This issue of *Grace & Truth* is a specially enlarged one on the occasion of the 40th. anniversary of the founding of Trinity Baptist Church. We wish to give God all the glory for whatever has been accomplished of spiritual benefit. There are many reminiscences included as many of you who read this were not around such decades ago. A number of long-standing church members have contributed, including the two present Pastors, Murungi and Abwao. Two brethren from U.K. have also written, Geoffrey Thomas who has been involved with ministry in Kenya since the early 1970s, and Oliver Allmand-Smith who is a relative newcomer! We have also continued with some of the usual articles of an expository and doctrinal nature. We trust that reading what follows you will be encouraged and blessed by the Lord.

Grace & Truth first saw the light of day in 1984. It was a simple foolscap sheet, duplicated on both sides. In this digital age you may never have seen a Gestetner duplicator, or even have heard of it. It involved cutting a stencil on a typewriter and then duplicating it by putting the stencil on the machine. It was a messy job!

Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi began assembling in February 1978. One of the early members was from the south-west corner of Kenya, an area we knew as South Nyanza, where Dholuo is the vernacular language. A church plant was started in this area in 1983. Together with sending this brother to lead the work and putting him through a course of training, we decided to give regular monthly teaching in a written form. We actually produced the sheet in three languages – Dholuo, Kiswahili and English!

From the beginning of the Church we saw the essential need of Biblical teaching. Religion was everywhere, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism of various kinds, and a multiplicity of African Independent Movements. Yet as the adage says: 'In Africa Christianity is a mile wide but only an inch deep'. We knew there were errors at the very heart of the Christian faith, especially about the way of salvation. Our prayer was and continues to be that multitudes might come to the assurance of salvation in Christ alone, through faith alone.

We had a two-pronged approach, positively dealing with what the Bible says, but also dealing with the prevailing errors leading people away from Christ. Since 1984 *Grace & Truth* has been published in four formats.

(1) Issues 1-43 (1984-1988). First it was simply a single duplicated foolscap sheet both sides, on a monthly basis. We called it a Bulletin. The first 23 issues had a verse by verse exposition of Galatians in which the Biblical way of salvation is clearly explained and defended. Issues 26-40 contained a verse by verse explanation of 1 Corinthians 12-14. (It is still hoped that one day these will be updated and separately published.) On the reverse side there were also articles on various doctrinal topics: salvation, the church and sacraments, the Holy Spirit, Sunday, healing, prayer, grace, and 9 studies on the question ‘Who is God?’ Many of these studies were edited versions of preaching in Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi.

(2) Issues 44-72 (1989-1995). The digital age had arrived, and *Grace & Truth* was expanded to 4 pages, a large sheet folded in half, produced bi-monthly. As a basic positive teaching approach there were expositions of Colossians (16 issues), studies in Genesis and Psalms, and of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ from Luke’s Gospel. The second study of a specific topic of immediate relevance included, the Christian Life (6), Marriage (3), What is True Conversion? (8), How to Overcome the Devil (5), and the Sovereignty of God (6).

(3) Issues 73-113 (1995-2007). With the addition of Sam Owen as an editor, it was further expanded to 16 pages, and produced quarterly. There was a specific statement as to the rationale of *Grace & Truth*, ‘A bi-monthly magazine to promote a serious knowledge of the Bible’. That has ever been the purpose although we found it hard to keep up the intended regularity. A larger magazine made possible a wider variety of content. There were articles, not only expository and doctrinal, but also on Church History, book reviews, testimonies and news from other Churches. A regular presentation of the 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, to which we subscribe as a Church, was also started.

<http://www.trinity.or.ke/grace-and-truth/>

(4) Issues from 114 (2011 ongoing). After a 4 year hiatus publication was resumed, now 28 pages in length, and professionally printed. We aim for a minimum of 2 issues annually. All of these issues can be found and read at

www.trinity.or.ke/grace-and-truth/. We look for contributions from various church members who are able to write. As the editor from the start I (Keith Underhill) have some on-going series – an exposition of Ephesians, Conversions in the New Testament (116-121), the Life of David (from 125), and Biblical Answers to Common Questions (from 120). Murungi Igweta writes regularly on issues to do with the Church.

We believe the need for such a publication remains. Ignorance of basic Biblical truths is pervasive. False teaching abounds. It is not just a matter of knowledge. Without the truth there is no salvation! The Bible refers to a person who becomes a Christian as one who comes “to the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). Saul of Tarsus was a man supremely full of religious zeal, determined to please God as he thought, yet he was wrong, not knowing the truth. If you are reader of *Grace & Truth* and you appreciate its ministry we request you to do at least three things:

Ignorance of basic Biblical truths is pervasive. False teaching abounds. It is not just a matter of knowledge. Without the truth there is no salvation!

- Pray for those who write articles, for its wide distribution, and for its usefulness in building up the saints and bringing the unconverted to know the truth and be saved.
- Get other people to read by giving your copy, getting them to contact us for their own copy, or directing them to the website where they can read it.
- Giving in order to contribute to its publication. The magazine is distributed for free through the offerings of the church. If it has been a blessing to you, you may also be involved to be a partaker of this blessing.

PROGRESS OF GRACE

Geoffrey Thomas

For 50 years, 1965-2015, Geoffrey Thomas was the pastor of a church in Aberystwyth, Wales. He has made frequent visits to Kenya, and still comes annually to teach in the Trinity Pastors' College (TPC).

In the year 1965 I began my ministry as the pastor-preacher of Alfred Place Baptist Church, Aberystwyth. The previous year I had graduated in divinity after three years studying at Westminster Seminary in Philadelphia. I had married Iola, the girl back home and a couple of months before commencing my fifty years' preaching in Aberystwyth the first of our three daughters, Eleri, was born.

Aberystwyth is a small town of 20,000 people, half of whom are students. It is on the west coast of Wales, and it can claim the title of being the cultural capital of Wales. It is set half way between North and South Wales and chosen as the mediating spot between the extremities, placating the tensions and rivalries between the top and bottom of the nation by honouring the middle of our land. Such a division is experienced in many countries. So little Aberystwyth was selected as the site of the first Welsh university, the National Library of Wales, various trade union headquarters and the Plant Breeding Research centre. They were all placed in Aberystwyth.

In my first weeks in November 1965 many students swelled the congregation. Their numbers reflected a reviving of evangelical Christianity in this self-consciously academic and intellectual community where the degrees that followed the name of the minister were considered the mark of authority and trustworthiness for the opinions he expressed in the pulpit. We do not know of a conservative evangelical ministry in any of the many churches in Aberystwyth during the first fifty years of the 20th century. The seeds of inevitable declension were sown during those years, and Aberystwyth was a sample of every community in the Principality of Wales. Our town in particular was a hotbed of ecumenism, a movement which insisted that every congregation had the right to interpret religion in its own way, and all were to accept one another's views so that eventually a hyper denomination could be established with a single sentence confession of faith, studiously vague, held together by bishops. No other system of church government could be tolerated but episcopacy.

The new minister at Alfred Place Baptist Church in 1965 swiftly upset that rotten apple cart, but so also did the Inter Varsity Fellowship, a vital religious organisation at the university. It had a ten point doctrinal basis, the fundamental doctrines of historic confessional Christianity. Its speakers and officers were asked to sign their assent to that statement of trust.

When Keith Underhill applied to study geography at Aberystwyth he knew nothing of any of this. He had a connection with a Methodist Church near Watford, knew little of the teachings of the Bible, but had an earnest and sensitive conscience. He was allocated a room in one of the best college halls of residence (or dormitories as they are called in the USA). The university registrar who determined where he should spend his first year determined (unknown to him) that he should share a room with a student from Cardiff who attended Heath Evangelical Church. His name is Brian Williams. They met in that room and in a while Brian asked Keith if he were a Christian. Keith affirmed he was, according to his own light and insight. "Good, we must pray together," he said, which was a new thought for Keith. He encouraged Keith to come with him to the university Christian Union (the I.V.F.) and he continued to pray for him each day.

I did not meet Keith when I arrived and began my ministry in November 1965. He had begun to attend the town's Methodist church, but he got his teaching from the Saturday night meetings of the University Christian Union, and from its conferences, books and travelling secretaries and his new friends like Brian Williams, Austin Walker and Nigel Faithfull. Austin remembers long discussions with Keith at such unusual times as 'Geography practical' afternoons. Before his second year at university Keith had left the Methodist Church and joined the congregation in Alfred Place. Increasingly we became close. He spent four years at Aberystwyth, firstly obtaining an excellent degree and then another year gaining a diploma in education, his equipment to become a registered school teacher.

He was increasingly concerned about the church worldwide and his mind gradually became focused on Kenya. Soon he applied to a school in the countryside of Meru and was accepted there, flying to East Africa in 1968 to teach in that nation until the end of 1970. He immediately loved the land and its people, and his students loved him. He saw the dire effects of modernistic unbelief in the Wesleyan church and the absence of clear evangelical preaching. His own preaching and the Bible studies he held with a group of

schoolboys were enthusiastically welcomed and his longing to serve the church of Jesus Christ in East Africa grew until it was a burden on his heart.

Keith knew that he would need the best theological training. I had spent three years at the prestigious Westminster Theological Seminary in Pennsylvania, and so had his close friend Austin Walker, graduating in 1971. Keith determined to follow our examples and so in 1971 as Austin left the Seminary Keith began his studies there, profiting greatly from the teaching of the faculty and seeing the possibility of training men in the historical Christian faith, what it would cost in terms of the commitment of teaching and marking, and how it could be accomplished. On Sundays in Philadelphia he sat at the feet of Wayne Mack, and one summer he went to Montville New Jersey, learning from the pastor, Al Martin. But the greatest gift he picked up from there was the woman who became his wife and the mother of their three children, Priscilla.

I had shared a room at Westminster Seminary for a year with a Kikuyu named Leonard KaguruGuchu, who returned to Thika in Kenya to pastor the Bible Fellowship Church. It seemed natural for these two theological graduates, Leonard and Keith, with many similar ideals, to work together. Keith and Priscilla moved to Thika, and the attempt was made to cooperate, but they had different visions of the future direction of the church and so they parted company, Keith moving on to Donholm in Nairobi and founding, along with some friends made in Miathene and Thika, the Trinity Baptist Church.

That was the founding of this congregation. It began with a student's testimony to his new room-mate of the saving work of Christ. It progressed through the preaching of the whole counsel of God in a gospel church and a university Christian Union. It developed in an on-the-ground hungry knowledge of the state of Christianity in Kenya itself. It was honed by vision of a historic biblical Christian church, a confessional congregation (like the 39 articles of the Church of England), but with this new church, the 1689 London Confession of Faith was adopted as its understanding of New Testament Christianity. Keith Underhill was given patience, righteousness and love for the congregation as it grew and the curious came hoping that this church would be their kind of church, but while some left others stayed and changed grasping a grander understanding of the glorious body of Christ than what they once had.

As the years passed the congregation out grew the home of Keith, Priscilla and their three children. A church was built, a pastor's house was built, an extension and lecture rooms were added, watchmen were employed, a regular magazine was published, outreach into the students' world was enthusiastically addressed, and churches were planted so that an association was formed. Today there are about fifty Reformed Baptist churches in Kenya.

Whereas in Zambia the work was more on a university level in Kenya the movement was of working men and women and it had many churches in rural areas very remote from city life in Nairobi, places in which city dwellers had little or no interest. There have been tough times. Western missionaries who came to work alongside Keith were not always the most helpful and created tensions and new divisions that are taking a long time to heal. There is a fine unity and some wonderful new leaders have emerged. It is now a wholly Kenyan movement commenting on the spread of error and the biblical teaching with Kenyan fresh insights. Recently I was sent from rural Kenya, from an area dominated by Islam, a book written by a local pastor about sermons and preaching which is most fresh and powerful. Soon it will be in print.

Keith Underhill has completed his forty years of labours in Kenya and has returned to settle in Liverpool. His counsels are sought by Kenyan Christians and he returns a couple of times a year to teach future pastors. He kept a long and faithful testimony to the very end. He could have been a professor of geography in a red brick university but he was invited to East Africa by a church that kept issuing calls to him to continue for another year, and another year, and another year. That call of the Trinity Baptist Church was the call of God to Keith, "Stay on in Nairobi and help us." A committee of six men who have called themselves TRAIN(Kenya) is now helping raise support for the training of men of the Reformed Baptist Association of Kenya. Accountability by the East African congregations to the supporting churches and individuals in the USA as well as those in the U.K. is essential, and for the first few years the sheer mechanics of the support is working out well, as well as the growing generosity of Christians recognising an important and God-blessed work this is.

FOR I DECIDED TO KNOW NOTHING AMONG YOU EXCEPT **JESUS CHRIST**
AND HIM CRUCIFIED.

(1 Cor. 2:2)

A BRIEF HISTORY OF TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

John Muketha

John is a founder member of Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi, and has served as a Deacon for many years.

We celebrate forty years of our existence as a church with gratitude to God who providentially brought us together and caused us to see our own needs for fellowship and a better understanding of the word of God. Our brother Keith Underhill initially came to Kenya in 1968 as a teacher in Miathene Secondary School in Meru County, where I had been a student until 1967. I got to know him through some student friends and appreciated the doctrine he held. Even that early, he upheld the truth of the word of God and identified himself with the “revival brethren”. He also served as the Area Representative for the Kenya Students Christian Fellowship (KSCF) for the secondary schools in that part of Meru. We maintained contact even when he joined Westminster Theological Seminary in 1971. After his theological studies, he came back to Kenya and settled in Thika from 1975-1977, where he was teaching in a Bible School, and also serving the church there – The Bible Fellowship Church. When Keith and Priscilla left the country in August 1977, it was clear that they were going to come back to start a church in Nairobi.

Why start a new church? Two spiritual needs led to the start of Trinity Baptist Church. In the first place, there was a desire for an in-depth study and understanding of the Scriptures. A majority of believers had grown either in the Christian Unions in schools or in churches where there was little emphasis on sound biblical teaching. Having had a little exposure of the doctrines of grace through the Bible studies conducted by Keith Underhill, we felt this indeed was Biblical and what we needed – an in-depth understanding of the Word of God. Preaching in the church where I belonged was given little attention as the preachers lacked sound biblical training. The Church Minister, who was in charge, was responsible for many congregations and could sometimes visit the local church only once a year for the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. Preaching was the responsibility of a few of the brethren drawn from different churches, with basic knowledge of the Bible, who followed a text schedule made for all the churches. Preaching of the gospel of salvation was limited to occasional conventions organized by the revival brethren. There was this disconnection between the Minister and the church members, since the church was a hierarchy with control and centre of authority at some remote place away from the local congregation.

The second need was for closer fellowship that was grounded on the word of God. Again we had been brought up in churches where fellowship meant meetings for singing and giving testimonies. The previous church experience for most of us depended on the church where one had come from. For those of us in the University, we found ourselves more committed to the Christian Union than to the churches where we were members. Also it was easy to roam from one church to another without being committed to any particular church, the motive being to listen to different preachers or taste some experience.

So when KU left Thika in 1977, and having benefitted from his teaching of the Bible, it was not difficult to convince us of the need to start a local church – a church where we would be responsible for all of our affairs without reference to some remote head office. During that time, those of us sharing that vision were attending Sunday Services at Nairobi Baptist Church. The Underhills came back to Kenya in February 1978 with the sole purpose of starting a Reformed Baptist Church in Nairobi. On 19th February 1978, we had the very first service in my house at the Kenya Institute of Administration (now Kenya School of Government). I cannot remember what was taught during that first Sunday but I had the strange feeling that I didn't go to church, may be because that first Sunday Service took place in my house. The following Sunday service also took place in my house, but when the Underhills settled in Buru Buru the church moved to his house from the beginning of March 1978. The Church continued to meet in Buru Buru until 1980 when the Donholm Estate was opened up and the Underhills settled there. Why Donholm and not Buru Buru? Nairobi Baptist Church was already in the process of planting a church in Buru Buru, as early as 1976. Since we were meeting under the cover of Nairobi Baptist Church, we did not consider it proper to compete with a friendly church.

In April 1979, Trinity Baptist Church was constituted with ten members. Six of the members were from the church in Thika where Keith had been serving. These included Keith and Priscilla Underhill, Joseph and Teresia Mutua, Naphtally Ogallo and Haile Tamrat. Three of us, John Muketha, Ruth Imwati and Isaac Inoti, were from Meru. Isaac had been a student of Keith in Miathene. The tenth, Paul Otieno was a relative of Naphtally Ogallo. The members were from different denominations – Baptist, Methodist and Africa Inland Church. Even though we were only ten members, we represented four nations (Kenya, Ethiopia, UK and USA). On the Sunday the church was formally constituted, four of us who had not been baptized as believers were baptized at the Nairobi Baptist Church. This was followed by the celebration of the Lord's Supper in Buru Buru Estate, Nairobi.

We started meeting under the cover of the Nairobi Baptist Church, but for all practical purposes, we were an independent congregation. It was therefore necessary to develop our own church constitution to guide our operations as a church. This required many consultative meetings. Since Trinity Baptist Church was pioneering in the introduction of the reformed faith in Kenya, it took time for the members to understand what was involved and come up with a good constitution. Through the leadership of Keith Underhill, we were taken through the Confession of Faith in order to understand the key doctrines of the Bible. The Constitution clearly spells out the kind of church government adopted and the requirements and responsibilities of members. Those received into membership of Trinity Baptist Church are believers who profess faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As a local church, we are responsive for running our own affairs.

Upon the completion of the church constitution and the formal constitution of the Church in April 1979, the next step was to apply for registration with the Government as an independent local church. This was granted in November 1981. The two years of waiting with the initial refusal was a real test of faith, but even in this, the Lord was teaching us to persevere and to continue to trust Him.

Trinity Baptist Church was the first church to start meetings in Donholm. Yet when we submitted an application for the allocation of the only plot set aside for a church in that estate, we were not granted it. However, even in this failure, we learned that lack of an appropriate meeting place was not necessarily an impediment to the Lord's work. We continued to learn the doctrines of salvation and new hymns which were very uplifting. Singing William Cowper's hymn, "Jesus where're Thy people meet", was delightful and full of meaning especially since we were meeting in a home setting. The failure to secure the available church plot meant that we had purchase one. The church therefore embarked on the process of buying the current church plot which initially was a residential area. The Kshs 300,000 required for purchase of the plot was at that time a lot of money given the low level of our giving. For example in 1982, Sunday offering for the whole year was only Kshs.17,356. Pastor Keith Underhill was able to mobilize resources from abroad for the purchase of the church plot and later on for the construction of the church building, besides the Pastor's house. We are truly thankful to the Lord for the brethren and churches abroad who gave generously for the work in Kenya.

Trinity Baptist Church from the beginning adopted an elder-led form of church government and this was anchored in the Church Constitution. The church took off with Keith Underhill as the only Pastor, until 1984 when Naphtally Ogallo was set apart as an elder. Later he was requested to leave his formal employment so that he could devote himself to study and full time ministry. Naphtally served the church as an elder, until 2006 when he relocated to Eldoret and started a church – Grace Baptist Church. Although Keith Underhill left Kenya in 2015, the church retained him as an Elder till 2018 when he was formally released. We are thankful to the Lord for the two elders – Murungi Igweta and Eric Abwao who continue to run the church in the manner already established.

During the first decade, the church functioned without deacons although part of the diaconal duties were performed by some members serving as Secretary or Treasurer. Later on Joseph Masunga was recognized as the first deacon. He was later set apart as an elder but left the church in 2008 to join Injili Bible Church. The Lord has graciously brought into our membership many able men who have been recognized and set apart as deacons. I am thankful to the Lord for giving me the opportunity to serve the church as secretary and treasurer, even when I was not a deacon. I also thank the Lord for many opportunities to preach and lead the Adult Bible Study in our church.

The church constitution points out that a local church is recognized by true preaching of the word of God, proper administration of ordinances and the exercise of spiritual discipline. The elders at Trinity Baptist Church place a lot of emphasis on expository preaching and teaching. In September 1984, Pastor Underhill started a monthly two page Bulletin with one page devoted to explaining a passage of Scripture until the whole book was expounded. This was to ensure that no teaching in a book of the Bible was avoided because it was hard or unfamiliar. This also allowed the text to be put into its proper context so that it is understood in harmony with the teaching of the whole book. The second page of the Bulletin covered a particular doctrine or teaching because Biblical doctrine was considered to be very important. Thus Bulletin No.1 of September 1984 began an exposition of Galatians and also covered the Doctrine of Salvation according to the Bible. It took 23 bulletins to cover the whole of Galatians. The Bulletin was later expanded to four pages and renamed Grace and Truth. Further expansion saw inclusion of more topics by different authors. Over the years the Grace and Truth publication has been distributed free of charge because of the generous contributions of other Christians.

The growth of Trinity Baptist Church was rather slow especially during the first 20 years with only 34 members joining the church during the first decade (1979-1988) and another 39 joining the church during the second decade (1989-1998). Since members were also leaving the church (some to start ministry elsewhere), the membership at the end of 1988 was 23 and at the end of 1998 was 40 resident members. During the third decade (1998-2007), the church experienced tremendous growth as over a hundred new members joined the church and membership stood at 85 resident members in 2007. The period 2007-2008 was the most difficult period as more than a third of the members left the church – some to start new congregations elsewhere. The Lord has been very gracious as we have witnessed a huge increase in membership from 53 resident members in 2008 to 116 resident members at the beginning of 2018.

Trinity Baptist Church has, over the years, supported efforts to start reformed churches outside Nairobi. In early 1980s the first such effort was in Thimlich, in what was known as South Nyanza, through a member from there, Paul Oyomno. Then there were opportunities in central Nyanza, Migosi and Ihonje. In the early 1990s Joseph and Teresia Mutua, who were founder members, were assisted to start a church in their home area of Kiatuni in Machakos County. Another church was also started in Miathene, Meru County, where Keith first taught. The Church has provided cover for churches in Western Kenya, Rift Valley, Coast and Eastern Region. Some of the churches have been granted registration as independent churches. By the beginning of 2018, there were 35 churches operating under the Trinity Baptist Church constitution.

As we celebrate 40 years of our existence, let us pray to the Lord for greater impact especially in the Donholm area which has witnessed a massive increase in population. Since those who seek membership in Trinity Baptist Church are already believers, we must plead with the Lord to save those who come who are not saved, especially the children and the young in our midst. With the bulk of the membership being youthful, there is future for Trinity Baptist Church. May the Lord continue to bless our church to the glory of His name.

FOR WHAT WE PROCLAIM IS NOT OURSELVES, BUT **JESUS CHRIST AS LORD,**
WITH OURSELVES AS YOUR SERVANTS FOR JESUS' SAKE.
(2 Cor. 4:5)

Keith started expounding this letter of Paul to the church in Ephesus in Grace & Truth 114. These written expositions are from sermons preached to the Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi in the course of normal Sunday morning worship from 2010-2013.

EPHESIANS 2:8-9

Repetition can be used to convey a sense of emphasis and urgency. For example, if a child is reluctant to do what it has been told, then the command may be repeated. Good teachers repeat what is most important, wanting to be sure that the hearers have understood. Under the inspiration of God, Paul is such a good teacher so that what is repeated in his letter to the Ephesian Church is **most** important. Paul continues to hammer home that salvation is of God, but His grace alone.

“We are here face to face with one of the most crucial statements that is to be found anywhere in Scripture” (Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *God’s Way of Reconciliation*, p. 128). If there is God, and if we are sinners, then there is nothing more important that we receive salvation from sin and be reconciled to God. And we must know how this can be obtained. Because it is so important there are also many counterfeits, many false doctrines, for the devil wants to deceive. As we look carefully at Ephesians 2:8-9 in this article we shall clearly see that salvation is of God, of God alone, something that Paul has been repeating up to this point. God’s sovereign election is involved (1:5); he has repeatedly written that it is “in Christ”; God’s power is needed (1:19); it is denied to the sinner’s ability (2:1-3); it is the result of God’s grace (2:5). We shall reflect on the four reasons given why salvation is of God.

1. OF GOD – BECAUSE “BY GRACE YOU HAVE BEEN SAVED”

The role of God’s grace in salvation has already been emphasized (see 1:6,7, 2:5,7). If something is received as a result of grace, it means it was totally undeserved. More than that, the opposite was deserved. If someone asks you for help, and looking closely you recognize the person who robbed you, you might justly call the police. To show grace would be to give the help requested notwithstanding the evil done. Before God no human being has done anything that can be called truly good; all are sinful in His holy sight (Romans 3:12). In court the accused might plead for leniency, ‘This is my first offence, and I have not broken other laws’. But we have sinned from the beginning; we have repeatedly broken every

commandment. As Paul wrote to Timothy about his life in sin before he became a Christian he saw that the only possible cause of salvation was God's overflowing grace (1 Timothy 1:14). "By the grace of God I am what I am" (1 Corinthians 15:10). This is completely true of the religious Jew as well as the idolatrous Gentile (Acts 15:11). If you are to be saved it can only be because of God's grace towards you giving you the total opposite of what you deserve. This is why Christians approach God in humble worship ever amazed at His grace. We sing, 'Amazing grace'! If you were to rescue your enemy from death you would expect constant and profuse words of amazement and gratitude. And God has rescued us from eternal death in hell.

2. OF GOD – BECAUSE “THROUGH FAITH”

Here there is so much misunderstanding. Some say: 'Grace is God's part, faith is our part'. In this way, faith is made something that the sinner does, something presented to God as a reason why God should bestow salvation. Others teach that, instead of the Ten Commandments as a rule for life, in the new covenant God just requires faith. Yet still others declare that God foresees those who will believe and chooses to save them. However, it is very clear that faith and grace go together. Those in Achaia "through grace had believed" (Acts 18:27). Abraham would receive the promised inheritance by "faith, in order that the promise might rest on grace" (Romans 4:16). What did Abraham *do* when he believed? Despite all evidence to the contrary he received as true what God said and lived in expectation of its fulfilment (Romans 4:16-21). In other words, he did not *do* anything; he did not even deserve to receive such wonderful promises.

What then is **faith**? Faith is a unique grace that receives, but gives nothing. Love gives. Note the precise language of "through" faith as an instrumental means. It is never "because of" faith. When a tow truck pulls a lorry out of a ditch, it is the power of the tow-truck's engine that is praised, not the strength of the tow rope! It is true that it is the responsibility of every person the exercise faith in the gospel. But faith cannot be exercised unless:

- the message of the gospel is first received, and
- the Lord opens the heart to give heed to the message (Acts 16:14).

It is false to think that because of so-called 'free-will' we can choose to believe anytime we want. Those dead in sin (2:1) are unable to so choose; the will chooses, but always in the direction of sin as a willing slave. You say you are saved? Don't say it is because *you* decided to believe, because

you responded in a meeting. Ask yourself: Why was it you and not someone else? Apart from God's grace can you really give any reason why you believed?

3. OF GOD – BECAUSE “NOT YOUR OWN DOING... NOT A RESULT OF WORKS”

How the word of God repeats itself to prevent anyone going away with wrong teaching! There has been much discussion as to the precise reference of the word “this” (and *this* is not your own doing). Does it refer specifically to faith, or to the whole preceding phrase? It has often been pointed out, and it is true, that “this” is in the neuter gender, but faith is feminine, and the conclusion has been drawn that “this” cannot therefore refer to faith. So if I say, ‘Sarah is going to town and she is beautiful’, you know the beauty is Sarah’s as the ‘she’ and not the town’s. Yet, the Greek language is different. In Matthew 4:9 “all these” is neuter, but refers back to the kingdoms and their glory (v. 8) which are feminine! In conclusion, the gender difference is not a sufficient reason why “this” cannot refer to faith. Two arguments can be put forward for “this” referring to faith: faith is the nearest antecedent, and there is no doubt that faith is a gift of God (v. 9, Philippians 1:29, cf. Acts 18:27).

Actually it makes no difference whether “this” refers specifically to faith or the whole of verse 8. Either way faith is included as not something coming naturally out of the sinner. It is “not your own doing”. It is “not the result of works”. Never look on faith as something that you yourself produced, making you different from others who have no faith. Faith is not a work bringing salvation as a reward; for works are the result of salvation through faith (see verse 10). So whether works are the Jewish works of the law, or any human performance whatever, they have nothing to do with salvation (see Philippians 3:4-6, Romans 9:11,16, 11:5-6). No matter how hard you try to be good and to avoid sin, and no matter how much you multiply religious ceremonies, there is no work you can do, there is no pile of works you can accumulate that can in any way contribute to your salvation. This is confirmed by the conclusion, “so that no one may boast”. In salvation there is no room for boasting. If you have done something others have not done then it is possible to congratulate yourself (see also Romans 4:2). But if you have done nothing to earn salvation because you are as unworthy as everyone else, then you receive salvation not because of anything in you.

4. OF GOD – BECAUSE “IT IS THE GIFT OF GOD”

Finally, that salvation is of God, is again put positively. Here is the fourth nail in the coffin to kill for ever that idea that salvation is in any way due to what you do, even the exercise of faith. It is God’s “gift”, not something owed to you by what you have performed (Romans 4:4). God has given us faith unto salvation by first graciously bringing the message of salvation to us, and then by giving a new heart, which includes opening our spiritual eyes to see and desire that message of salvation. When a beggar is given something it is ridiculous to think that he might congratulate himself! Do we need to go on and on? Surely salvation is of God, and God alone.

So why is this important? This very point was the great controversy that threatened to divide the apostolic church (Acts 15). It is the substance of the letters to the Roman and Galatians Churches. Everywhere there was but one conclusion – if salvation is of works in any way, then it is another gospel (so Galatians 1:6-9), and those who follow it are accursed. If you come to God like the Pharisee in the parable of Luke 18:9-14 you will never be justified. You must come like the tax collector with nothing worthy. “Nothing in my hand I bring; simply to Thy cross I cling”.

How can you be sure you have come to God depending only upon Christ? Are you always thanking God that He gave you salvation, asking why He chose you one so unworthy? Are you always praising God for giving you His Son, knowing it is the only way you can come to God and be accepted?

How can you obtain this salvation? Receive the invitation God has given you in the gospel of Jesus Christ. You are newly employed as the lowliest cleaner in a great company employing thousands. You receive a written invitation from the manager to go to his house in the evening for supper. If, when the door is opened, you are asked why you have come to the manager’s home with the sneer, ‘Don’t you know who you are!’ you will humbly and even tremblingly reply, ‘It is because I was invited, and here is the invitation’. At that you will be welcomed as readily as the most distinguished guest. Do you have a good reason for refusing this gift of salvation even now? You know you need it. It is free, for it is a gift, and of God’s grace. Hold out the empty hand of faith. It is ALL of God so that if you ask Him in humility He will give it to you.

Salvation belongs to the LORD; your blessing be on your people! Selah.

(Psa. 3:8)

(Compare, Jonah 2:9; Revelation 7:10)

A chief cause of false teaching is the wrong approach to the Old Testament. It is so often interpreted without reference to the New Testament, as if there is no new covenant that fulfilled the old! This series on the Life of David from 1 and 2 Samuel is designed to show how David is spiritual example, and especially how his life points us to Christ.

DAVID BECOMES KING OVER ALL ISRAEL AND JUDAH (2 Samuel 1-5)

Samuel had gone to the house of Jesse the Bethlehemite to anoint a king over Israel instead of Saul (1 Samuel 16). The youngest of his sons, David, was anointed, yet he did not become the king immediately. In fact for about the next 10 years he suffered under Saul. And even when Saul was slain in battle it was still another 7 years before he actually reigned over “all Israel and Judah” (2 Samuel 5:5).

1. HOW DAVID BECAME KING OVER ALL ISRAEL AND JUDAH

(1) Negatively. Saul and Jonathan were dead; the army was defeated and fleeing. This was surely David’s great opportunity to take by force of arms the kingdom promised by God to him! ‘Let him encourage all those who had rebelled against Saul and rejoice because his great enemy is dead! Let him strengthen his forces for all-out war to gain the kingdom!’ As the man after God’s own heart, David did *none* of these things.

(2) Positively.

- David began by seeking the will of God (2:1), so taking nothing for granted. He knew that the will of God was to be sought not only in difficulties and deep distress, but also when there was a wide-open door of opportunity with providence sweetly smiling.
- David patiently waited until God providentially removed every obstacle to his becoming king. He played no active part in their removal and was genuinely grief stricken at what took place. Despite Saul’s hatred David deeply lamented the death of Saul and Jonathan (chapter 1). Ish-bosheth, Saul’s son, was made king by Abner, who later turned against him in favour of David; when Abner was murdered by Joab David wept (chapter 3). He put a curse of Joab’s house for the murder. The murderers of Ish-bosheth thought they were serving David, but he has them executed for so vile a deed (chapter 4).

- David was proclaimed king only when it was the will of the people, God having worked in their hearts; first Judah (2:4), then Israel (5:3). He did not force himself upon an unwilling people but awaited God's time.

2. GOD'S MESSAGE FROM THESE EVENTS

(1) *About David.*

- David had learned much from the sufferings of the previous years. He knew he must patiently depend upon the Lord to fulfil His promises, without taking things into his own hands. Have you learned anything recently from the difficulties you have experienced? Is God's dealing with you bearing any fruit, giving evidence that you are a true son of God (so Hebrews 12:11)?
- David showed himself a good ruler in his great displeasure over the murders of Abner and Ish-bosheth. This much pleased the people, along with everything else that David did (3:36). What a contrast to Saul! David would not rejoice at wrong, even when done to his enemies, even when the result was in his favour. He was a ruler full of faithfulness and justice. Do you have this love which does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right (1 Corinthians 13:6)?

(2) *About God.*

- Many centuries earlier God had promised that Israel's king would come from Judah as a preparation for the coming of Christ (Genesis 49:8-10). Some 15 years earlier Samuel had anointed David. Finally he was king over Judah and all Israel, though often there seemed only one step between him and death. God is not only faithful; His promises will certainly come to pass in His own time.
- David's acceptance by all Israel was a great step forward in God's redeeming purposes. It was necessary that there be a king in Israel after God's own heart as a type of Christ, the great King over the people of God. It was through David that great blessing came to the people of God as they were rescued from all their enemies and brought together as one people. When we see God's purposes slowly but surely coming to pass, how wicked to let any distrust intrude. So Jesus often spoke about the need to patiently wait for His return.

(3) *About Christ.*

Christ sits on David's throne as David's greater Son and Lord (Luke 1:32-33). He was born in Bethlehem in the land of Judah and in the line of Jesse. Like David, Christ also obediently and patiently suffered after He was anointed at His baptism. Only afterwards did He sit on the throne (Philippians 2:7-11). Now He reigns at the Father's right hand, welcomed as the Lord of all His people, having authority over all things (Ephesians 1:20-22). Is that how you behold Him, and worship Him? He is no longer in the manger, nor on the cross. The tomb is empty, but the throne is occupied. He is Lord. But His Lordship is declared from the time of His birth by the angels, "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:11), and by the question of the wise men, "Where is He who has been born king of the Jews" (Matthew 2:2) and their subsequent worship (v. 11).

(4) *About Ourselves.*

David was to be submitted to by all Israel as the one anointed by God. As they humbled themselves before David (5:1-2) you must also come to Christ.

- The first plea for acceptance was their physical relation from Jacob (5:1). This is your only hope and plea in Christ, that He was born a human being like you, has died in the place of sinners like you, and now wears your nature as your great Highpriest in heaven (Hebrews 2:17, 4:14-16).
- The second plea finally recognizes all that David had done in times past (5:2). Perhaps until today you have not joyfully recognized what Christ has done for His people, the depths of suffering He underwent for them, and the position of honour to which He is now elevated. Oh! may it melt your heart today, repenting of your unbelief and carelessness, so that you will come with everlasting trust and gratitude to Him.
- The third plea refers to the Lord's appointment of David as the king over all Israel (5:2). Remember that it is God Himself who has appointed His Son as King; the only response is to submit. Your refusal and rebellion not only makes no difference to Him, it simply cannot work (read Psalm 2). No matter how you have rebelled, even if you were one who had shouted "Crucify Him!" He will give you a great reception. See how David received the tribal leaders who had formerly been against him (1 Chronicles 12:23-48). What a great King Christ is to those who joyfully submit to Him! He both provides and protects. But the day of grace and opportunity will one day be gone. But we have seen one way of describing how to become a true Christian now. Submit to Christ who God has appointed for your own salvation (Acts 2:36-39). Christian, renew your joyful submission as you come to Him repeating, "My Lord and my God".

SHEPHERDING GOD’S FLOCK

AT TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH NAIROBI

Murungi Igweta

Murungi is a full-time Pastor serving TBC Nairobi. He usually contributes matters to do with the local church.

The work of pastoring the church of Christ is both a delight and a burden. The call to the ministry is an invitation NOT to “account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). What a privilege to be a witness of the gospel of the grace of God! What could be better than that? I would rather be a pastor at TBC than the CEO of Safaricom (the largest company in Kenya, worth billions). With Paul I can say without any fear of contradiction, “For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!” (1 Cor. 9:16)

Pastoring TBC has been like the air that I have been breathing for the last nine years. I came to TBC in February 2009 for a pastoral internship. I had hoped to gain some pastoral training and experience from Keith Underhill and other Elders at TBC, with a view to church-planting. At the time I had been married for five years. As a family we were not aiming to live in Nairobi for the long haul. But the Lord made it clear, with time, both to the church to and us (my wife and I) that He had work for me to do. By the grace of God, I put my hand to the plough and ever since I have not looked back. I would summarize this work under three headings: The delight, the duty and the distress of shepherding TBC.

1. The Delight of Shepherding TBC

It has been a great joy to pastor the saints at Trinity Baptist. TBC seeks to be a consistently Reformed Baptist. There is not only a desire to be biblical, but there is a genuine upholding of the Word of God. We are not only interested in being theologically upright, but also correct in our orthopraxy. That is, what we believe must correspond with how we live; correct conduct both in ethical and liturgical matters. What more would I want than to serve brothers and sisters who have put a high premium on the word of God? What a joy to serve those who want not only to be acquainted with sacred writings but also desire to be shaped and moulded by it.

It gives me much joy to know that this is a church that loves the objective truth of the Bible and wants to be biblical. This is a congregation that is distinctive in the following ways:

(1) Love for the truth:

Consecutive expository preaching of the Bible makes TBC very different from most of the churches in Kenya. We preach through the Bible, precept upon precept, line upon line. We expound each word, each sentence, each phrase, each verse, each paragraph, each chapter, each book and the whole Bible. At TBC I have had the privilege of preaching through a good number of books both in the Old and New Testaments. My aim is to unravel the mystery of God's whole counsel to His people by the help of the Holy Spirit. Then I would be able to say with Paul how I did not shrink from declaring anything that is profitable to God's people, but I declared the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:20,27). This has been the undying desire of those who pastor this church.

Besides we are a *Reformed* church. We follow closely in the footsteps of the Apostles of the Lord, the early Church Fathers, the Reformers and those who through the centuries believed that salvation is by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone for God's glory alone which is to be learnt in the Scriptures alone. Ours is a historic and confessional faith. We hold that all human beings are totally sinful and depraved without the grace of God. And that the only way out for sinners is the hope held that from the eternity past, God out of His mere good pleasure chose or elected some to eternal life, who through the redemption in Christ are brought to hear the gospel and cannot resist it. And that all those who have been so saved will persevere to the end.

(2) An independent local church:

Trinity Baptist Church is an independent Baptist Church. We are not under any hierarchical leadership or denomination. We are happy to function as we do. The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith forms the basic doctrinal statement of TBC. The church constitution guides the life of the church and every one seeking membership is expected to read it. This provides the necessary knowledge during congregational meetings, where the church members are expected to make decisions on who becomes a member or a leader (elder or deacon), who is removed from either membership or leadership, and how the church finances are used. The church members meet at least four times a year in congregational meetings.

Congregational worship is done under the regulative principle of worship. That is, we primarily gather to meet God, to worship God, to hear from God,

and to speak to God in adoration, praise, thanksgiving and petition as a body. The Word of God forms the backbone of our worship, so that if it is not written and authorized, then it is not for us. The public reading of Scriptures, prayer, praise, and preaching are the most important elements of the worship experience at TBC. We sing scriptural hymns, psalms and spiritual songs only. There is no concert, no music band, no praise and worship team – it is congregational worship. There are voices of the saints, swelling the song of the angels to worship the infinitely transcendent and yet immanent God.

We also give of our substance to show that our God, the Giver, is our focus, not His gifts. This is done secretly, cheerfully and generously. We do not pass the offering bag during the service, but have two boxes fixed on the either side of the main entrance where people put their offerings. There is no coercion, subtle or otherwise, of the congregation to give. We believe that the members are well instructed to know their duty to God and to the church. And yes, they are! We have not lacked – more often than not we have given over and above the annual budget. Being confessional we believe in holding communion with other like-minded churches. So we are part of the Reformed Baptist Association of Kenya (please read about this in a separate article).

(3) Elder-led church:

TBC is an elder-led church. This means that elders (also called pastors/overseers/bishops) exercise oversight by ruling the church through the word of God. Being part of the Eldership at TBC means that the buck does not stop with one man, but with many. It means that the church does not suffer with the shortcomings of one man. It means that the church can enjoy spiritual gifts of many men. It means that there is accountability amongst the elders in the church. The pastors shepherd each other, watching over each other's life and doctrine.

The Elders are at par, which means that there is nothing like 'senior' pastor. Rather we believe in the principle of *primus inter pares*, that is, first among equals. While there is parity amongst the Elders, they defer to the most experienced of the full-time pastors. I have found this a blessing while under this principle and while being the one to be deferred to.

(4) Family oriented church:

We believe it is the design of God to have men marry women in the Lord and by His grace have children, and bring them under His discipline and instruction. We hold to the complementarian position. This means that while God created man and woman as equal image-bearers and equal co-heirs of His grace, yet there are gender-based roles that are divinely assigned. Men are

to *love* their wives and *lead* their families and children. Qualified and gifted men have God-given responsibilities to offer godly leadership to churches. The rest of the men are to lead their families and set example in service both in their homes and in the church. All the women are to provide the necessary support to male-leadership and help in nurturing their children at home and at church. Older women are to teach younger women. This being the case, women will exercise their gifts in all aspects of the life of the church (except leadership either by teaching/preaching to the whole church or being pastors or Elders).

(5) Mission minded church:

We believe in evangelism and missions. Over the forty years that TBC has existed, many churches have been planted across the country. Some of them have grown to be independently functioning local churches which have been registered by the Government separately. Apart from reaching some of the major towns, churches have been planted in villages in Bomet, Bungoma, Busia, Homa Bay, Kajiado, Kilifi, Kisumu, Kitui, Machakos, Makeni, Marsabit, Meru, Migori, West Pokot. We also train men for ministry in the Trinity Pastors' College.

Shepherding TBC is a delight for it is serving the Lord and the Lord gives the necessary grace and gifts by His Spirit. He provides the necessary strength and His word is full of promises to those who shepherd His church. He has promised the unfading crown of glory. What a joy it is to see unbelievers leave their wicked lifestyle to come to Christ, to love Him and live for Him! It is a delight to see new marriages, families formed and children born and raised in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. It is a joy to be there for those who are mourning – to be able to weep with them.

2. The Duty of Shepherding TBC

Shepherding TBC is not easy. The Lord gave the responsibility to tend the flock to pastors, who are to feed them, strengthen the weak, bind up the injured, bring back the straying ones, seek the lost, and to rule them with love. This involves spending hours in study and prayer and faithfully preaching the Bible. It is close shepherding by visiting them, giving godly and biblical counsel and prayer. Each member is to be visited at least twice a year.

Apart from that, I do the work of an evangelist. We believe in preaching the gospel publically and privately. We therefore have different events aimed at getting the gospel across to every person and every land. This means that

mission trips to various places where we have gospel witness and presence is done at least annually.

3. The Distress of Shepherding TBC

Like any work in a fallen world, where there are effects of Genesis 3, thorns and thistles, pests and diseases are a constant nuisance. My duty is to root out sin and evil and plant the banner of Christ. But this is met with constant opposition and sometimes the frictions generate more heat than light! Beginning with my own flesh, it disturbs me greatly when I fall into sin of one kind or another, whether private or public. My offences pain my eyes and make my determination to pastor the church of Christ a heavy burden to bear. Like the high priest who had to offer sacrifices for the purging of his own sins first, I have to deal with my own sins by finding refuge at the cross of Calvary. I have to constantly impress upon my own soul to harbour no sin in my heart. I have to find comfort in Christ. Thankfully, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ.

It greatly distresses me to see believers fall into sin and linger in impenitence. It is painful to recommend church discipline for anyone. But then like a faithful surgeon who has to recommend amputation of a patient's cancerous leg, in anguish I have to do it wishing them eternal good. Unfortunately, I have seen a good number of discipline cases being executed at TBC in the last nine years. Thankfully, some of those have confessed their sins.

I shed tears when believers do not faithfully attend to the means of grace. When they are absent from the church; when they are not part of a prayer meeting and yet live around the corner. It makes me sad to see neglect of the gathering together of the saints. Bickering amongst members is a source of no small heartache for me. Gossip destroys relationships and kills love. Biting and devouring each other is not for Christians. Instead love for one another, patience, bearing with each other and seeking the welfare of others is the Christian way. When one has been offended to handle it in a biblical way.

When people fail to believe the Lord and receive His free grace I'm greatly grieved. It is very heart-rending to see someone reject the gospel. Yet comforting to know that the gospel is God's power of salvation and that once the seed of the gospel is planted it may germinate even decades later. I am greatly encouraged to know the words of the Lord to Paul – keep on speaking for He has many who belong to Him in this city (and in every place).

In conclusion it is a privilege to be a pastor at TBC. I trust that by the grace of God, the Lord may be pleased to use this church in the coming years to extend the saving grace of God to those appointed for eternal life. May it also please the Lord to use us to spread the honours of His name throughout all the lands so that the nations may be glad.

COMMON QUESTION NO.11

WHAT IS THE GOSPEL?

Keith Underhill

This is a series of articles called, Biblical Answers to Common Questions. You can find them in tract form for downloading at www.trinity.or.ke. These are the questions that are asked over and over again.

Most of us know that the word ‘Gospel’ translates a word in the original language of the New Testament (Greek) that literally means ‘good message’ or ‘good news’. Mark calls his writing about the life and death of Jesus Christ “the gospel” (1:1). So we call the four writings about Jesus, the Four Gospels. We conclude that the Gospel is good news about the Person and work of Jesus. Our study begins by considering substitutes for this gospel.

1. *There are so-called Gospels today that are not good news.* What is good news? When your job application is successful. When your exam results are better than expected. When you hear of the safe arrival of the baby. Good news is something that has already happened for which there is rejoicing. There are no conditions to be fulfilled to make it happen. It has happened! For example, it is not good news to be told that you will enter heaven *if* you are good enough. You sadly may prove not to be good enough. Any message that makes the sinner to rely on works of obedience or the performance of religious ceremonies is NOT a gospel. Yet I venture to think that most people calling themselves Christians are hoping to get to heaven on the basis of their performance.

2. *There are Gospels today that are counterfeit.* It is very clear from the Bible that Jesus came for one great reason, to “save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Any message that claims to be the Gospel which does not deal with this central problem in the life of every person is a counterfeit gospel. It may proclaim good things. How many times have we heard, ‘Come to Jesus for your miracle, your healing, your prosperity, etc.’? You may get all you pray for, a spouse, a job, vibrant health, children, and still go to hell. “What will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?” (Matthew 16:26). Because such things are good news in a worldly sense false teachers use them to attract adherents, but they are not the true gospel. The real gospel will announce to me that I am delivered for ever from that eternal punishment for my sins that I fully deserve.

3. *What did Jesus Christ proclaim as the Gospel?* Jesus proclaimed “the kingdom” as His Gospel message (see Matthew 4:23, 9:35, 24:14). Since the fall in the Garden of Eden the whole world has

Jesus came to re-establish God’s rightful reign and this kingdom will ultimately triumph.

been in rebellion against God, under the “domain of darkness” (Colossians 1:13). Jesus came to re-establish God’s rightful reign and this kingdom will ultimately triumph (1 Corinthians 15:24-26, Revelation 11:15). All those who turn from their sins and believe in the gospel (Mark. 1:15) become members of that kingdom. You might ask, ‘What is the difference between the kingdom and the church?’ The kingdom is the powerful rule of Christ in the hearts of all His people, what some have called the ‘invisible church’. The church in the New Testament is usually the gathering of professing believers in a particular place. ‘Kingdom’ emphasizes the power of the King in the lives of His people; ‘Church’ emphasizes the assembling of the people of the King. Both tell us that the Gospel is not just about individual salvation, but the gathering of a new people of God to worship and serve Him for ever. Think of all the parables Jesus told about the kingdom. That God is doing this in Christ is good news indeed. Read Matthew 13:1-52, 20:1-16, 22:1-14, 25:1-30. Are you in this kingdom? Jesus makes it very clear who are the members of His kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount (see 5:3-12, especially vs. 3 and 10).

4. *What did the apostles of Jesus Christ proclaim as the Gospel?* Paul told the Elders of the Church in Ephesus that his one desire was to complete the ministry the Lord Jesus had given him, “to testify to the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24). The Gospel is not about what we have or done or

The good news is that through the plan of the Father, the cross of Christ, and the work of the Spirit within, all Christians will finally have eternal

can do. It is about what God has done and unreservedly promises to do. And He speaks and works not in response to what we do and deserve, but by His grace. The good news is that when we

were lost, helpless and hopeless in our sin, He sent His Son to save us by giving Him as a sacrifice for our sins. The good news is that when we were living lives of rebellion against God, He sent His Holy Spirit to give us new life in order to bring us to faith and repentance. The good news is

that the Spirit of Christ permanently dwells within the Christian keeping him until the last day. The good news is that through the plan of the Father, the cross of Christ, and the work of the Spirit within, all Christians will finally have eternal glory. And all this is of grace. Paul begins his letter to these very Ephesians by blessing God for all the spiritual blessings we have in Christ – election, adoption, redemption, revelation, an inheritance, and the Holy Spirit (1:4-14). He specifically writes that all this is “to the praise of His glorious grace” (1:6), and is “according to the riches of His grace” (v. 7). The grace of God establishes the kingdom – note that Paul preached the kingdom (Acts 20:25, see also 28:23,31).

5. Conclusion: *What is the Gospel?* We have used the Bible to get the evidence. Many people think the Bible is a book of instructions to follow in order to deserve eternal life. This was the attitude of the so-called rich, young ruler when he asked, “What good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?” (Matthew 19:16ff.). The Bible begins with God creating all things good (Genesis 1:31). It goes on to relate how sin entered the world and ruined everything. God could have responded by destroying everything and starting again, but this would have been to grant the devil the victory. Instead He made a promise from the beginning to defeat the devil (Genesis 3:15), in what we call the first gospel message. The “offspring” of the woman will “bruise his head”. The rest of Biblical history is God calling out a people for Himself from those following the devil, until Christ came to get the great victory (see John 12:31, 16:11, Colossians 2:15). With the coming of Christ into the world and this decisive victory on the cross (“It is finished!”), God’s kingdom began to be set up. You do not have to meet certain qualifications to be a citizen in this kingdom. Sincerely confess that it is true that you have been living an evil life under the control of the devil. Believe in your heart that Jesus came from God to save you from your sinful ways by being crucified for your sins and ask Him to have mercy on you (as in Luke 18:13). One of the criminals hanged with Jesus requested as he was dying, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). What good news he heard when his request was granted at that very moment. If you will come humbly trusting in Jesus Christ alone, you will be transferred into His eternal kingdom, on the basis of God’s grace. That is the Gospel!

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS OF A TPC TEACHER

Oliver Allmand-Smith

Oliver is a Pastor of Trinity Grace Church in Ramsbottom, UK. He also serves as a trustee of the charity TRAIN(Kenya). He comes annually to Nairobi to teach in the Trinity Pastors' College (TPC).

It was during my second visit to Kenya in 2008 that I had my first taste of teaching the students in what was then the Pastoral Theological Course, now the Trinity Pastors' College. My primary purpose for the visit was to accompany Keith on a trip to Pokot, but on our return I remained in Nairobi for a few extra days. During this time the students arrived for their studies, and Keith began to teach them on the Doctrine of the Church. On the second or third morning, Keith had to deal with a pastoral crisis that had arisen and I offered to teach the students that day. There was no opportunity for preparation, but the subject was close to my heart and I took it up with relish! What a joy to teach these eager and zealous men from the Scriptures and to realise that such truths had the power to liberate their ministries from the bondage of error and unleash the real gospel of salvation in the places where God had called them to preach.

From that time onwards I sincerely longed to be a part of this teaching ministry, but God's sovereign providence prohibited any return to Kenya for 5 more years. Looking back on that time it still seems strange that the Lord should have hindered this desire of my heart, but God's ways are indeed higher than our ways, and his thoughts are infinitely greater than ours. How we need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, not only because we are sinners in need to saving grace, but also because we are limited and weak and mortal, so that even when our desires are good and right we lack the wisdom and discernment to determine the best path to take. Thank the Lord that he is sovereign in all things, and he will never alter or adjust his perfect purposes even in the light of our best desires and longings.

So it was in 2013 that I returned to Kenya, and spent my time in Nairobi teaching the students. Since that time I have been able in God's kindness to return each year so that I have now taught on five occasions. The subjects I have covered include:

- Biblical ethics, the law of God and Christian living.
- Apologetics.
- Reformation church history.
- Hebrew poetry (Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes & Song of Songs).

- Biblical evangelism and missions.

I can truly say that every opportunity to teach has been a privilege and a delight, and I am full of thanks to the Lord for such rich blessings from his hand. Let me share some of the experiences we have been through together as teacher and students, and thus demonstrate some reasons why the TPC is of such great importance for the cause of Christ in Kenya.

... some reasons why the TPC is of such great importance for the cause of Christ in Kenya

Many of the students come from a “Word of Faith” background, and some of them have been guilty of ministering in an unbiblical manner and teaching false doctrine over many years. When they realise this and begin to see what Biblical gospel preaching should be, they are deeply moved and profoundly changed. What follows is the experience of one student.

Each morning, before we begin formal studies, one of the students leads us in a devotional word. It was the last day of our studies, and this particular student took 1 Corinthians 2:2 as his text: *For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.* It was clear that he was deeply moved even in the reading of his text, and he went on to confess that for many years he had professed to be a minister of the gospel, but had in fact been preaching himself. He would read a text from the Bible, put the Bible down and then proceed to harangue the congregation with soundbites and entreaties designed to make them think highly of him, depend upon him and even give to him! He became so skilled at this that he could manipulate the people into saying or doing what he wanted, all because he felt that as a man of God he had the Spirit of God and was worthy of their honour. Through his tears he confessed to us that the teaching of the TPC had brought him to repentance for his sinful and proud preaching of self; he declared that all he now wanted to do was to preach Christ Jesus and the cross and the true way of salvation; but he also confessed that he had never learned how to do this, and that he needed much further teaching and prayer. Thankfully this student went on to complete three years of study and was wonderfully transformed into a faithful and trustworthy minister of the cross, no longer preaching himself but making known the precious gospel of salvation in Christ alone.

Another student had completed a course of theological study at a reputable institution elsewhere in Nairobi, yet came day after day to the studies shaking his head and tutting under his breath, confessing that he had never been taught the deep things of God and he was learning more in each unit of study than he

had in his entire time at the other institution. He rejoiced to see how the scriptures fitted together and how the Reformed Faith imparted a hermeneutic that opened up God's word in a new and wonderful way. He was especially excited to see how to preach Christ from the Old Testament and how all of Scripture truly does speak of Him. The joy on his face day by day over the three years of study was sufficient reward on its own for all the labour involved in preparation and teaching.

Our method of teaching encourages discussion and on one occasion we spent quite some time talking about guidance. One of the students pointed out that he had been warned about these *Reformed people*, and that God had told him to warn this student not to attend the TPC and not to allow the dangerous things taught there to affect his ministry. What joy there is in discovering that we do not need to be troubled by such falsehood or bound by such proud foolishness because God has revealed to us all that we need for guidance in his precious word. What a privilege to know that we all have access to the same wisdom from God through the completed revelation found in the Scripture. We no longer need special visions and dreams and revelations, since all is fully revealed in Christ Jesus, who is the final word from the Father. Sometimes we have occasional visitors to our teaching sessions, and one lady who attended found the material on guidance so helpful that she put into practice what she had learned and now she is happily married!

God keeps on drawing new students to the College and it is a joy to see how the Lord is at work in a new generation of young men across Kenya, giving them a desire for Reformed theology and Biblical worship. There is growing unease among these young men at the parlous state of so many churches in the land, and a real hunger for truth that can be satiated in the TPC. However, a real cause of concern is that knowledge can lead to pride and we have seen some students fail to grasp the need for humility before the great truths of God's word. This is a great danger and we need great wisdom as teachers to ensure that both head and heart are transformed by the word of God.

So while we thank God for all that he has accomplished through the many years of good biblical teaching in the TPC, we are aware that there is still much more to do and great wisdom is needed. Please join us on this anniversary as we raise our Ebenezer and declare that the Lord has been with us up to now, but also pray earnestly that a coming generation of young men will humble themselves before the word of God and learn to preach and to live Christ Jesus for the glory of the Father in the power of the Spirit and the good of the Churches across Kenya today.

REFORMED BAPTIST ASSOCIATION OF KENYA

Murungi Igweta

We believe in Associations rather than Denominations or Hyper-Independency.

We believe that each local church should be independent so that there is no external control or denominational headquarters to which it is held accountable other than the Head of the church – the Lord Jesus Christ. Yet we also believe in the interdependence of local churches, because there are matters and projects that are beyond the scope of a local church. Independency and interdependency must be held together as Siamese twins. RBAK is an Association of local churches that subscribe to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith (2LBCF) and that voluntarily apply to be a member church and pay the annual subscription fee.

What are the objectives of the RBAK?

1. To uphold the manifold wisdom and glory of God in His Church through the strengthening of the local churches.
2. To provide the local churches with a formal fellowship for mutual encouragement, assistance, edification and counsel, through which they can better fulfil the purposes for which they exist.
3. To provide a forum, through which doctrinal positions can be articulated, propagated and differences settled. This may be through ministerial training and publications, all of which are often beyond the capacity of one local church.

What is the warrant for RBAK?

1. *The Scriptures*: The precedent of churches associating in this way is found in apostolic practice when they gathered in Jerusalem, *The High Priestly Prayer* of our Lord Jesus Christ's as He prayed for visible unity (John 17:20-23), and Christian prudence and wisdom.¹
2. *History*: Numerous historical examples, such as the 1689-92 General Assemblies in England and the 1707 Philadelphia Association in the United States.

¹Preamble of the RBAK constitution.

3. *Confession of Faith*: It is also warranted by the confessional position of our Baptist forefathers, the 1689 London Baptist Confession, chapter 26, paragraphs 14 and 15.

It is clear that the Confession encourages ecumenical² prayers for the promotion of the gospel through planting of new churches, but also for the purposes of holding communion together. It is in this kind of fellowship that peace, love and mutual edification will be solidified amongst believers. The Association becomes a vital tool for handling difficulties and differences in matters of doctrine and administration amongst churches.

How do meetings happen?

Each member church is expected to send one or two of their messengers or delegates who meet to consider various matters in the agenda, to pray for their churches, and to give a report of their progress for thanksgiving.

The Annual General Assembly (AGA) is hosted by different member churches annually over a weekend. This time is also aimed at helping the host church in evangelism and to provide edification for the delegates through the teaching of various truths, fellowship and prayer. The member churches are from different local churches across the country which makes regular gatherings very difficult to organize because of the costs of travelling for the delegates. In past years, the AGA has been held in West Pokot, Meru, Kericho, Migori, Busia and Nairobi. The AGA this year coincides with the 40th Anniversary celebration of Trinity Baptist Church, one of the founding member churches of RBAK. This was agreed as a forum for praising and thanking God in His faithfulness at TBC Nairobi over the last four decades.

How many churches constitute RBAK?

The Association was began in 1995 with a membership of ten churches. Since then it has grown to a membership of twenty two churches. These churches are in at least 13 different counties in Kenya.

What is the authority of RBAK?

RBAK does not compromise the independence and authority of each of the local churches within it. As a voluntary fellowship among local churches, the Association has no authority to make demands of any sort upon any member local church. When requested by a local church, the Association may give

² This word is used in the sense of the communion of like-minded churches bound by the same truths of the Bible.

advice to the church, but it has no power to enforce its judgement. The Association may request a local church to take on a specific responsibility, such as to arrange a conference, but this is always subject to the decision of the local church. If any joint project is considered, such as literature, evangelism, education, conferences, it must be under the direct control of one of the local churches.

The Association does not respond to requests of individuals or groups within churches. However, if a member church ceases to uphold the RBAK constitution, or cease to fully subscribe to the 1689LBCF, then it may be excluded from the Association by a two-thirds vote of the delegates present. When such action is taken, notice of the action and its reasons must be given to the church that has been excluded. This makes the membership of the Association both serious and meaningful. The need to maintain the same faith is highly regarded.

How does a church apply to be a member?

The application form is provided for free but the applying church must be recommended by at least two member churches. The subscription fee is calculated at one hundred shillings for every member in the applying church. This means that if the church applying for membership has fifty church members then it will pay, $100 \times 50 = 5,000$. The subscription fee is paid after the membership is discussed at an AGA and approved.

Conclusion

The need to be affiliated with like-minded churches cannot be overemphasized. There are many benefits that come from such a fellowship. The Association provides the necessary framework for the propagation of the gospel, missions and church planting. A like-minded Association in America (ARBCA) have recently began a new seminary in Texas out of the unity of churches over the many years. This is a fruit of churches holding communion together.

We encourage and invite those churches who are keen to follow the Baptist heritage to join up with us and consider being part of this Association. Delegates sent from sisters churches are always welcome to come and audit our meetings with an aim of joining up with us.

All members of each local church are engaged to pray continually for the good and the prosperity of all churches of Christ, wherever located, and upon all occasions to assist all other believers, within the limits of their own areas and callings, in the

exercise of their gifts and graces. It follows, therefore, that churches should seek fellowship with one another, so far as the providence of God provides opportunity for the enjoyment of such benefits. (1689 Baptist Confession of Faith 26:14)

History of Baptist Associations

Evidence suggests that an association of Particular Baptist churches existed in London as early as 1644. The earliest association of Particular Baptist churches on record dates from November, 1650, when the first "General Meeting" of the churches in South Wales was held. These churches were planted with the help of the London churches and most likely incorporated the same pattern of association modeled in London.

Other associations were born soon afterward in Berkshire (Abingdon) (1652), the West Country (1653), and the Midlands (1655). By far the most fruitful of the English associations was the Northamptonshire Association, which was founded in 1765. It was this Association that provided the nurturing environment that produced the Particular Baptist Foreign Missions Society in 1792. These and similar associations help to reinforce the obvious: that throughout the 17th century and into the 18th, the English Baptists conscientiously organized themselves into geographical associations of churches.

The first association of Particular Baptist churches in America was the Philadelphia Association, formally established in 1707. In the course of time, this Association included churches extending from Connecticut in the north to Virginia in the south. Perhaps most notable among the accomplishments of this Association is how it worked to plant churches up and down the East Coast. So many were organized that the association was able to form "daughter" associations throughout the colonies, including the Baltimore, Salisbury, Delaware, New York, and New Jersey associations. They were all committed to the principle that autonomous churches should join together for the good of the cause of Christ, which expresses the convictions of ARBCA.

Taken from ARBCA website:

<http://www.arbca.com/history-baptist-associations>

WHY I JOINED TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH

Eric Abwao

Eric serves as one of the Pastors of Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi.

‘Why did you decide to join this and not the other church?’ This is a question that you may have been asked by someone. You may even have asked yourself this question.

So what influenced your choice of church? Quality of sermons? Feeling welcomed by the leaders? The style of services? Convenience of location? Education for your children? Friends or family in the church? Or was it availability of opportunities to volunteer? These and many other important considerations play an influential role in the decisions made by many people as they choose where to become church members.

As I reflect back to when I joined Trinity Baptist Church Nairobi, I remember how **a high view of God’s word** influenced my choice to become a member there.

When Christians go to church they are generally pre-occupied with a primary objective of worshiping God. The worship of God is indeed a proper, and one may even add the key, focus that a Christian should have at heart when coming to church. This notwithstanding, Proverbs 28:9 says:

“If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.”

‘Abomination’! What a strong word. It carries with it an expression of something disgusting, offensive and repulsive. Here in Proverbs 28:9 God tells us that ‘*even*’ the prayers of one who turns away from hearing the law – in spite of all his attendant good motives – stinks to high heaven.

Prayer – this high outward expression of worship – becomes a repugnant thing to God if you turn away your ear from hearing God’s law. The word ‘*even*’ used here paints a picture of a highly ranked religious activity in one’s life. If ‘*even*’ this is disgusting, how much more repulsive to God will the other aspects of this person’s life be!

What do we generally do to things that are repulsive? Do we not instinctively turn away from them? Similarly, if you turn away from hearing the law, God says He will turn away from hearing your prayers just like you, generally speaking, instinctively turn away from things that are abominable, repulsive and offensive to you.

When I became a member at TBC Nairobi five years ago, I may not have clearly put it this way but, this was the pivot upon which my decision to join the church turned. A high view of God and His word made TBC Nairobi a spring of fresh water to my thirsty heart.

My heart had been very thirsty for a place where the entirety of God's law, as is found in the Holy Scripture, was viewed highly both in creed and in conduct. By His merciful providence, God guided me to TBC Nairobi and I remain very grateful to Him for being compassionate to me.

When we in our worship "...turn away ... [our] ... ear from hearing the law," we are saying that we do not want to listen to God. The Creator of the universe, the Omniscient One, speaks and we, who are mortal creatures, decide to turn away from His word. We may do this in many possible ways. By despising, ignoring, altering or even blatantly resisting His word we turn away from hearing God's law. We may turn away our ears from hearing the law in public or in the hidden chambers of our hearts. This could be an individual as well as a corporate sin. When we do this very sad thing, God's word in Proverbs 28:9 tells us that all our life including our prayers become an offensive irritant to God and He tells us in His word that He will not have it!

When one has rejected Scripture, his/her religion is not just empty and void. It is not just a waste of time that begs for pity towards one who is oblivious. On the contrary, God says that the worship of those who turn away from His word is much more serious than a pitiable waste of time – it is an abomination to Him.

It does not matter how devout or sincere you are. If you turn away from hearing God's Word then your religion is worse than a waste of time on your part. It is an irritant to God. It is an offense to God.

Any religion that is not based on honouring, hearing, holding to and heeding God's word is false. And, regardless of the sincerity of those worshipers, such religion is disgusting to the only One, True and Living God. Such religion may even have a respectable tag in the eyes of many. It may call itself 'Christian', 'Evangelical', 'Seeker Sensitive', and yes even 'Reformed', but if the Holy Scriptures are not handled respectfully the best religious activities therein offend God.

We may be quick to apply this truth to other religions 'out there', but let judgement begin with the house of God. When Christians turn away from hearing God's Word; when we turn away from truths we have known and we gradually push them away – perhaps not in words but in our deeds – then our religion becomes false. Our worship gatherings become a massive septic tank that terribly offends God.

If we who are in the church have heard God's Word but push it away, effectively declaring it irrelevant; or if we add to it, effectively declaring it insufficient, fail to see everything else; then we must not lose sight of the fact that we offend the God we claim to love and honour. When we strive to fit into our culture more than into God's word, or when the church becomes focused on entertainment even when God's Holy law says 'No' to what we are doing, even our highest acts of religion offend God.

When a church cuts back on the amount of time given to preparing for the reading and preaching of God's Word in its services; when appetite for God's word is lost in the pulpit or the pews; should we be surprised when our prayers are not heard? We pray for revival and nothing happens. We pray for salvation in our churches and nothing happens. Well, something happens...we offend God.

We pray and pray and pray and pray but God is saying we must first get back to a high view of His word. Without His word, the Lord warns us that we are not just talking to ourselves when we pray, we are actually infuriating Him.

Without His word, the Lord warns us that we are not just talking to ourselves when we pray, we are actually infuriating Him.

According to this passage, a major area to look at when making a decision on whether to join this church or another is how they treat God's word. At TBC Nairobi, I found a church that is not perfect but that is serious about 'hearing the law'. The Bible, at TBC Nairobi is not just inspirational or inspiring. It is inspired – the very word of God. The Bible at TBC is the sufficient rule for faith and practice.

In spite of all the possible areas of improvement I saw five years ago, and the many I still see today, TBC Nairobi met (and continues to meet) a very essential requirement for a good church. TBC Nairobi has a proper view of God because, by God's grace, it has a proper view of the Holy Scriptures as God's revealed will.

As TBC Nairobi celebrates 40 years as a church, I'm thankful to God for our founder members. I pray that in the midst of the many good adjectives that could be used in referring to TBC Nairobi, our ethos as a church would continue to be one that can concisely be described as voraciously Biblical. May we continue to grow as a people who consistently turn our ears towards hearing the word of God. If you are a follower of Christ, become and remain a member of a truly Biblical church.

YOUNG, AFRICAN, RESTLESS & REFORMED

Huston Malande

Huston manages the website www.afrocalvinist.co.ke. And works for Skylinedesign.com

It is the folly of youth to be myopic, and that, both futuristically and historically. Young people tend to be oblivious of the past and indifferent to the future.

Such was my state when I walked into Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) on a sunny Sunday morning about 8 years ago. One of my best friends and I had been in search of a Biblical church for almost 2 months at the time. Armed with a recently acquired “reformed” definition of Biblical ecclesiology, we would often split up each Sunday and attend different churches to cover more ground then compare notes. Most sermons were so unbearable we scarcely could endure the butchering of holy writ to the end of the service. Others were less irritating but aberrant enough to make us put on our earphones mid-service and listen to solid sermon podcasts while texting each other across town, quoting the unbelievable things we were hearing the preachers of the day say.

However, for some reason, this one Sunday we decided to go to TBC together. Culture shock is what it was!

They read the Bible. They actually read the Bible. Twice. Before the actual sermon. Which was based on another text entirely. And then they sang hymns. Hymns! Without drums and guitars and a choir. And then the pastor preached from Ephesians 1. We could not believe the fact that straight out of a Kenyan pulpit, a couple of verses could be exposted with riveting unction for almost an entire hour of preaching!

We felt like what we imagined John Speke must have felt when he discovered the source of the Nile in 1858, and we wanted to shout about it from the rooftops. Here was something new, something we had never quite experienced before. Something we couldn't believe we had been given the privilege to discover and to drink our fill from!

But just like it was in the days of Speke – it wasn't as if his discovery of the Nile's source is what validated the existence and knowledge of Lake Victoria; the source of the Nile had always existed, and was always known by ancient African kingdoms around it – so it was with Trinity Baptist Church. This new experience we were so excited to have had been right there for at least 3 decades! Plus, the *modus operandi* it was modelled upon had actually been around for about 500 years and was the very reason why the Protestant Church

broke away and distanced itself from the monolithic Catholic Church in the first place.

See the short sightedness of youth?

Thankfully, God gives wisdom, and much of that came through this old but firmly built church that we soon afterwards became members of. Our youthful but short sighted zeal was soon tempered by the realization of important realities about the true church of Christ, 3 of which I'll share with you:

1. Truth and Love Go Hand in Hand

As we sat under the teaching of God's word every Sunday, and as our faith and knowledge continued to grow throughout each week, the immediate effect of it was something similar to what the Apostle John hints at in the 2nd chapter of his first epistle:

I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one.

Boy weren't we ready for war! We would mount our high horses and traverse the valleys and plains of social media in search of anyone bearing the banner of Arminianism, blowing the trumpet of charisma, or peddling the Word of Faith movement. What we didn't realize is that in our crusades, we were not only driving others away by our speech, but that we were wounding simply misguided troops who were genuinely in our own King's army.

It took the admonition of our elders to calm us down and get us to see that sharp rebuke is reserved for Pharisees and wolves in sheep's clothing. The truth was to be spoken in love and only in love, otherwise we would have been of better use to the cause of Christ if we had taken a vow of silence apart from when we were on our knees pleading with God for the people we hoped divine grace would affect in like manner to ourselves.

2. The Bride is Not Yet Spotless

A wise man once said, "If you find a perfect church, don't join it because you will ruin it with your sin." I don't think we realized just how terribly a Bible-believing and God-honouring congregation can struggle and strive internally.

Over the years, we've seen people excommunicated. We've seen the unity of elders shaken. We've dealt with a painfully devastating suicide. We've parted ways with beloved brethren like Paul and Barnabas did. My best friend eventually felt he needed to go elsewhere. None of this would have crossed our minds as we sat in that first service, and yet, it is precisely why we need Christ as our Saviour and regularly remind ourselves of his cleansing and covering power over our sin.

The bride is clearly not spotless, but I'm happy to be a part of her as she is continuously washed with the water of the word unto the Day of Christ.

3. God's Family is Really Real

Lastly, I honestly did not expect the level of brotherly love and genuine friendship that I would experience over the years. Jesus' words in Mark 10:29-30 have been oh so true:

Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

I have found this to be true in the church. Unlike other churches where the "man of God" is unapproachable and is surrounded by bodyguards, our pastors are open and come to us in our time of need. Our deacons serve humbly and willingly. Brothers open their arms and their homes readily. In fact, an introvert like myself may even be tempted to feel smothered!

Is it not beautiful, what God has done?

Is it not glorious that a place like TBC exists? Where short sighted young people are forged into ever maturing followers of Jesus and become partakers of the solemn fellowship of the saints?

Praise God for his faithfulness!

May he perfect his church, that someday ... we may enjoy perfect wisdom, and perfect youth. Amen.

Editor's note. This is what I wrote a day after the first encounter described above on 14th. November 2010, "We have been in Kenya for about 40 years, but on Sunday we had a 'first'. Two ordinary young men in their early 20s came to the service. Afterwards they seemed so eager to see me. Then they introduced themselves, "We are born again, Reformed and Calvinists!!" In all our years we have only received 2 Kenyans who had knowledge of the Reformed Faith, both having studied in the West. We were eager to learn how they made this wonderful discovery. It was on the internet, where portions of sermons by John Piper were put between Christian 'rap' music. They gave their testimony so clearly as to how the Lord saved them from their sins. I asked them why they were so excited. "Finally we are in a church where the Bible is explained as it is, rather than preachers reading whatever they want into the text!" I preached on Ephesians 1:13-14, the Blessing of the Holy Spirit. They said there are a number of other young men who are serious with the things of God as they are. May this mark a new beginning."

By God's grace it did mark a new beginning!

GROWING UP AS THE PASTOR'S SON

Jonathan Underhill

Jonathan came to Kenya as a little baby, and was 4 years old when TBC started in 1978.

As Pastor Keith Underhill's oldest son, the beginning of my life is part of the fabric of what is known today as Trinity Baptist Church (TBC), Nairobi. My life is, as is the 40 years of TBC, marked by God's grace and truth. Without the work of God's providence, TBC would not exist and the sail of my life would likely be pointing in a different direction.

Forty years ago, God moved in the hearts of a small band of believers led by Pastor and Mrs. Underhill (Dad and Mom) to begin a church that was Bible centred, differing from the typical denominational churches and their African offshoots with this singular focus. Making this commitment was neither easy nor immediately rewarding. The small group and my parents needed a steadfast reliance on the Lord in the midst of the many challenges that arose. My parents' faithfulness to the Lord through these and other difficult times remains a living testimony to me. The greatest benefit of being my father's son is his speaking and living the word into my life.

Even as a 'wee lad', I remember the comradery that defined the first members of TBC, not only a unity of belief and purpose, but that of a family that picnicked together and had outings in addition to Sunday and weekday meetings. During that time, relationships began that God has carried forth even to the present day.

Our preparation for the Lord's Day began the evening before as we converted our home into a public meeting place. In the early years in Donholm, my bedroom doubled as a Sunday School room and a Nursery as well as my schoolroom during the week. A row of metal cots lined the west side of my room extending from my bunk bed to the closet like a bionic arm. Our lives and our home became an extension of the church. I grew up expecting that what I had would be used for the purpose that the Lord intended. Looking back, I praise God for giving my Mom the strength to make the constant changes to her schedule and endure the numerous daily interruptions and emergencies.

I began a typical Sunday by walking to the living room window on the northeast corner of the house and looking out at the line of children at our gate in their Sunday best. Easter and Christmas service days provided the most spectacular view as the children wore their new clothes, as vibrant as peacock feathers. Sunday School began with singing. I loved to sing the songs written on stiff paper and stored in a wooden chest on our veranda. The eager children sang along with me, our voices ringing through the quiet Sunday morning. Finally, with teacher on hand, the time came for the flannel graph characters to tell of David and Goliath and other Bible stories as the listening children strained forward hoping to be chosen to help move the characters. As a child, I found the main service longer and more serious. (It wasn't until I was a teen that I realized the enormous benefit of receiving this solid Biblical food.) A blackboard placed on the table held the message outline inscribed on it point by point. Copying of this outline focused me as it was hard to listen to the word being preached especially on hot or rainy days. My best friend, Oscar and I, took notes with multi-coloured Bic pens in our special "Karatasi" exercise books.

Following the morning service came the tradition of a church lunch as many had no way to get home and then return before the evening meeting. In earlier years, the adults would talk around my sandbox as I made sand houses or pushed me on my swing – a time of fond memories. As I got older, I became involved in food preparation and found a different way to socialize.

Between lunch and the evening meeting, we typically took the opportunity to pop round to the homes of local attenders or visitors. I made quite a few friends this way and I believe that the church was built up by stronger, personal relationships with other believers.

The evening meeting was typically less formal and took the appearance of a Bible study. I and others found this to be a most encouraging and uplifting time as difficult topics were tackled and attenders readily asked questions. This back and forth allowed one to feel connected to the ministry and one's observations or questions of the text became part of the narrative.

The teens eagerly awaited several highlights during the year. The primary of these was the youth retreat. Everyone looked forward with expectation to getting away to RVA or JKUCAT for a time focused on youth and teaching on youth issues. The games, the food, the fellowship – we found everything exhilarating in these new surroundings. We loved our leaders and I am

thankful for their faithful ministry. Part of the adventure included midnight train rides. Many fondly remember the New Year's Eve play production. In order to provide TBC youth with a God-honouring festivity, I would write and direct a play. Those parents who read this will no doubt fondly remember the request for bed sheets to create a curtain for the stage! Finally, we looked forward to VBS time when we would get together to play and study God's word for a whole week. We were so motivated by the bookmarks and other prizes for memorization and the biscuits and squash provided at the end of the session.

Being the son of a pastor meant that I was involved in just about every operation of the church from running the Grace & Truth magazine off the mimeograph printer to unpacking and pricing books for the book ministry. I realized my love of books as I helped with this ministry – now all I need is to love reading them as much as I do collecting them! I also labelled, catalogued and arranged new tapes in the tape library.

Weddings punctuated the ordinary of our lives with sweet contrast. I remember years when the only times we would eat cakes or drinking sodas were during weddings or birthday parties due to the unavailability of flour and sugar. Prior to the appearance of *paparazzi*, I was often counted on to fill that role. Many times Mom and I ended up making cakes, creating flower decorations and bouquets. We did everything we could to make the couple's special day a huge success.

When the time came for the church building to be erected many pitched in to fence the property and then some of us boys became *kibarua* (daily) labourers assisting the masons, pushing wheelbarrows of dirt to fill in a nearby quarry and manipulating window putty to set window panes. It reminds me that as Christians, we are all living stones and part of the building that is the true church.

The home of a pastor is like the inn at Bethlehem, always full, but instead of the guests sleeping in the stable, the children sleep on a cushion on the floor. In a pastor's home, the space for the “unknown guest” is always filled. Some guests ended up calling our house their home and becoming surrogate brothers and sisters, uncles and aunts. When bedrooms were filled to capacity, mattresses were laid out on the living room floor like sacks spread out on the warm grass with the sofa positioned as a hedgerow in front of them.

We had plenty of refugees come through our gate and we thank the Lord for his providence in using the evil of man to bring about his saving work in their lives. Over the years, we cooked many foods from the spicy Ethiopian *doro wot* to the sweet Ugandan *matoke*. I loved not only Kenya, but also our refugees, remembering only that which unifies all men – Christ. This ministry was and remains a huge part of our lives and I thank God for being part of helping them reach physical and spiritual safety.

I had plenty of adventures, and *safaris* were most likely to contain them when Dad would drive off into the bush in his green Ford station wagon navigating dry river beds and stony roads to find the isolated “church” that was eagerly awaiting arrival of the *mzungu* (European) with the new word from God. Of course, as a younger child, I was more interested in the honorary meal and/or tea that I would eat at each hut we visited and I had quite a round tummy.

Being the son of a pastor, it was hard for anyone to imagine that I could not be a Christian. After all, I did the right things and gave the right answers. But I knew in myself, that I did those things to please men, not to please God. A young man from the UK once asked me why I would “do the right things” without professing Christ. Wasn't I a hypocrite? His question stuck with me and I couldn't get any rest until I had made that commitment privately to God accepting the sacrifice of Christ as my only means of salvation, and later proclaiming it publicly in baptism. I heard the Gospel many times growing up in TBC, but it took the quickening work of the Holy Spirit to bring the seed of His Word to the fruit of saving faith in my life.

With a new motivation and a new master in my life, my perspective on life changed and everything that I did, I now did for a new purpose, that of serving Christ. For those readers of this short reflection who have received Christ's sacrifice for their sins, I rejoice with you in your changed life. For those of you who have not made that commitment, I urge you to consider this question: If you have been told that the only way to God is through Christ, why do you continue as Saul did in Acts to “kick against the pricks?”

I thank God that the witness of TBC to Nairobi and different ministries throughout Kenya remains as it started forty years ago – founded on the truth of the Gospel. The faces and facilities may have changed, but His truth remains forever. I pray that it continues so through the coming generations until He returns.

EXPERIENCE OF RIPER YEARS

Margaret Njure

Older ladies, such as Sister Margaret, have been of such blessing to the Church as examples of stability and faithfulness through the various situations of life.

God does move in mysterious ways His wonders to perform! He providentially caused me to hear of this Church at a time when I was desperate for real Christian fellowship. Having moved from my rural home to live near Nairobi, I hoped to find a Biblical church where I could worship God and fellowship with other brethren.

A sister invited me for a Sunday service and when I eventually attended, the lesson in the Adult Sunday School was, "The gospel of God". My immediate thought was: Is there a gospel that is not of God? By the end of that first session my attention had been fully captured and God opened my heart and mind to receive the truths about the gospel that were being taught from His word. There were three more sessions of this teaching and more sermons. By the end of that month, I had found a true spiritual home and my search for a Biblical church had ended.

Of course I had very many questions since I was such a stranger to the doctrines of grace and I am so grateful that the pastors and other brethren willingly sat with me and helped me to understand the many things I had never heard of before. This is a church where the word of God is faithfully taught and preached and being here on the Lord's Day and in the Ladies' Fellowships has been such a delight. By God's grace I have grown in the knowledge of Him and His ways.

I have been a beneficiary of the rich blessings of expository preaching through a number of the books of the Bible. It is all glory to God for the men He has appointed to shepherd His flock in this local church and who faithfully preach the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27). This local church is also blessed to have so many men, besides the Pastors, whom God has equipped to rightly divide the His word. It is amazing to experience the results of 2 Timothy 3:16-17 upon a congregation. So many members are being equipped and are becoming competent for every good work.

As already stated above, I was a stranger to Calvinism and the doctrines of grace when I came to this Church. I struggled a bit with such doctrines as predestination, eternal security of believers, perseverance of saints and others.

After all, I had come across many "backsliders"! However after hearing the teaching on the doctrines, that kept popping up in many sermons based on different books of the Bible, these truths have been settled in my mind and heart. I now know and believe without a doubt that God is not only able to save powerfully but also to keep to the end those He has so effectually and graciously saved. How comforting it has been to know that for sure my salvation is a done deal and that having been chosen by His electing love, effectually called, and justified by grace through faith, I will certainly be glorified! "The work which His goodness began, the arm of His strength will complete" (from *A debtor to mercy alone*, by Augustus Toplady).

The church leadership endeavours to ensure that believers are fully established in the truth of God's word and the gaps we come with as new members concerning the knowledge of biblical doctrines are eventually eliminated by faithful preaching and teaching of these truths in the Bible. We have been made aware that it is by knowing and applying the truths of Scripture in our day to day lives that we attain spiritual maturity and thus God is glorified. We have been assured that we can expect edification from our pastors and other Bible teachers in the church and that although our sanctification is a work of grace by the Holy Spirit we each have a personal responsibility to live in obedience to God's commands as revealed to us from the Scriptures. Each of us has to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12-13). In other words we have to "work out" what God has "worked in" by godly living. For sure this calls for personal diligence in ensuring that I avail myself of the means of grace that God has so graciously ordained for my spiritual growth. I am personally charged to be all the more diligent to make my calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10).

What a real blessing it has been for us to be firmly grounded in the doctrines of the authority, sufficiency and inerrancy of Scripture. We have been helped to have a very high view of God and His word. Knowing that God is sovereign in all things is very comforting especially when trials come our way. He alone becomes our refuge and comfort of our minds. He is 'too wise to be mistaken, and too good to be unkind'! (from *God shall alone the refuge be*, by Samuel Medley). The centrality of preaching is a big thing in this church and as we were reminded recently, to whom much is given, much will be required. It is apt that the theme of this year is evangelism! May the Lord find us all faithful in living out the many Biblical truths we have received and may He be pleased to bring much spiritual growth in all of us together. To God be the glory.

By God's grace I have been stirred to faith and good works as I have continued to fellowship with my brethren in between Sunday services on the Lord's Day, and in the Ladies' Fellowships. I have come to appreciate the blessedness of mutual love and care among true believers as we have heeded the Biblical call. We do have an arena in this local church in which to live out the "one another" concept that is so prominent in the Bible.

Opportunities for spiritual growth are limitless. The hymns we sing are truly edifying and are all gospel. Most of them were new to me but I have come to know and love many, and have been ministered to by many of them?

"Be still my soul, the Lord is on thy side..." (Katharina von Schlegel) has been of immense comfort to me in times of distress and pain.

"Before the throne of God above I have a strong, a perfect plea; A great High Priest, whose name is love, Who ever lives and pleads for me" (Charles Bancroft).

"My name from the palms of His hands Eternity will not erase; Impressed on His heart it remains In marks of indelible grace" (from *A debtor to mercy alone*, by Augustus Toplady).

The list is very long. These songs are beautiful and deeply edifying. I must confess that at first I thought the singing was rather quiet, undemonstrative and with hardly any instruments. I have however come to know the value of hearing myself sing, focus on the words I am singing, and get their message. The songs deeply minister to the soul and focus our hearts and minds on the God we are worshipping.

Finally, I must say it has been a wonderful and rich blessing for me to be involved in the Ladies' Fellowships both in the monthly meeting on the third Sunday of the month, and on Thursdays for the weekly meeting. God has been pleased to reveal Himself to us as we meet to fellowship over His word. We have read books such as, *The Attributes of God*, by A.W. Pink, among others. We have been greatly humbled by the awesomeness of our thrice Holy God. How infinitely holy our God is and how small and sinful we are, and yet how wonderful to know He loves us. In the monthly fellowship we have been reading and discussing Earl Blackburn's book: *Jesus Loves His Church And So Should You*. The Church is the bride of Christ. It comprises those called by God's electing grace who have been saved by grace through faith and are

being sanctified to become more and more like His dear Son. He owns it, having purchased it with His precious blood. He loves it and He is building it Himself. Indeed the church militant will be the perfected church victorious because the sovereign God Himself is building it. The overall admonition is: If I indeed love Christ, I must love what is most precious to Him on earth, His Bride, the Church, which I am a part of! The book clearly spells out what loving His church really looks like and calls us to true churchmanship!

Finally, the African Pastors' Conferences (A.P.C.) are yet another opportunity provided for our edification and spiritual growth. It is such a blessing that they are open for all to attend. I have greatly benefitted from the teachings on various Biblical truths. I have really appreciated the books availed to us and at such subsidized prices! They are of tremendous benefit to any believer seeking to grow in the knowledge of God, and His word. What a treasure the books have been! May the Lord be praised and may He be pleased to bless T.B.C. for His own glory. My experiences in this local church have been rich and varied and I am deeply grateful to God for His mercies to me in allowing me the privilege of belonging to this body of believers.

What is the Reformed Faith?

The heart of the Reformed faith—the heart of biblical Christianity—is God-centeredness: the conviction that God himself is supremely important. We define all our doctrine in a God-centered way. Sin is horrible because it is an affront to God. Salvation is wonderful because it brings glory to God. Heaven is heaven because it is the place where God is all in all. Hell is hell because it is the place where God manifests his righteous wrath. That God-centeredness is the distinctive feature of the Reformed faith. A Christian may say lots of true things, say, about sin (sin is damaging, sin leads to wretchedness, etc.), but if there is not the God-centered perspective, the most important emphasis of all has been missed... God-centered doctrine must work itself out in God-centered piety. Again, this is the distinctive note of Reformed Christianity. We are obsessed with God himself. We are overwhelmed by his majesty, his beauty, his holiness, his grace. We seek his glory, we desire his presence, we model our lives on his attributes. (Stephen Rees)

See also 'A Brief and Untechnical Statement of the Reformed Faith' by that great theologian B. B. Warfield at <https://www.monergism.com/brief-and-untechnical-statement-reformed-faith>.

GOD IS USING TRINITY BAPTIST CHURCH TO BEND MY SELFISHNESS INTO SURRENDER

Myra Muili

Myra has only been part of TBC for 3 years and here she shares with us the particular blessing it has been to be part of the local church. She works as a free-lance writer.

I like to ponder existence. I like to listen to people's accounts of their life stories. It is exciting to imagine how different their lives might have been had they made a different decision at point A or point B. I like to hear the difficult parts, the parts they think about before they close their eyes at night.

Some people are familiar with regret. They re-define the saying '*face your demons*' every night before they shut their eyes. Some people worry. They browse their days' activities or budget their money until the unwanted melody of poverty crescendos and gives them over to sleep. On the particularly happy days, some people get lost in reveries. They replay parts of their days that were particularly enjoyable until excitement dulls to slumber.

If you are like me, you stare into the darkness. On some days you count sheep. On other days, you recite the *Sermon on the Mount* or whatever passage of Scripture you are memorizing. Some days you cry.

I am a writer. Whenever I am interviewing a person for a story, I look for the common threads that bind humanity. Woman, man, rich, or poor, when we strip our experiences bare of the things that stand in the way of truth – the empty cleverness, the desire to please, the intentional obscurity, the tendency to confuse cynicism for sophistication, and the morally-bankrupt irony – you find that we meet in the details of our lives and how we journey through each of them.

We understand pain. We know bitterness, and anger, and happiness, and betrayal, and joy, and all the emotions that make up the full palette of human emotion. There was a time I thought that to be all there was to life and in the words of the preacher, it was all pointless.

In talking to people, I would seek to find that which was relatable and discard the rest. That was the only way their lives could spark any interest in me. As such conversations were about me. Even when someone was talking about something as unfortunate as the death of a loved one, I found a way to bring it around to myself. I was the centre of the universe, and everyone was better for it.

This is where Trinity Baptist Church (TBC) comes in.

I joined the church a little over three years ago. At the time, I was hurting from broken relationships (romantic and otherwise) and I was losing faith in humanity. I needed to see another side to people; a side where sinners are capable of enduring goodness. Having had an inquisitive mind, I had asked all the questions that we ask in our folly when we are going through hard times. I had somehow, by the grace of God, come to the answers.

Yet, those answers were yet to be settled in my heart.

During my interview, one church member asked what it was I hoped to contribute to the church. I remember thinking that the true answer to that question was ‘nothing’. My broken heart could only speak in pieces. As I stood there with festering wounds and echoing fears, I knew that in saying I hoped to care and to receive care from the brethren, I was speaking in faith. I was uttering the proverbial ‘Lord, I believe, but help my unbelief.’

It did not occur to me at the moment what unpacking those words would mean in the days that were to come.

In retrospect, it is difficult to wrap my mind around how short three years is and how long it seems based on my experiences. Less than a year into the membership, I had asked myself countless times why I had been hasty to become a member. But I had also been overcome, on many occasions, by such a feeling of joy that the Lord had led me to the little church 36 kms. from where I live.

My biggest struggle has been forming friendships. It has been learning to open my life to the brethren, to tell them, ‘*This is who I am, and here is how you can help me.*’ It has been picking up the phone to say, ‘*Hi, I am not able to come to church today for reason A or B, please, pray with me.*’ As you might expect, I have received many a scolding. Praise the Lord for the accountability.

Lest I make it seem like I have been struggling through my stay there, there have been numerous occasions that the Lord has used the brethren to minister grace to me in the form of encouragement as opposed to correction. They have helped me to strive to be the best possible Christian I can be. I highlight the negatives because it seems to me, that they are the parts we hardly talk about but need to hear. They are a testament to how the Lord has made his strength known through our weaknesses. They show how universal our stories are, but how differently we experience them because Christ gives us a new hope.

When we suffer, either as a consequence of repented/remnant sin or for righteousness' sake, we do so as people with a hope. We do not wallow, we endure in faith. It may confuse us, but it does not crush us. We do not despair even when all kinds of suffering befall us. We definitely don't go at it alone – we bear one another's burdens. We are sanctified in our distress. We fight to rejoice in suffering, and we remind one another that it is only momentary. This has been TBC for me.

While this is about my experience as a young person in the church, I do not think my youth has made me experience the church differently. If I were to sum it up, I would say that the Lord has been bending my selfishness into the kind of surrender that love requires. When I made an art of falling from grace, He taught me to crawl to His feet. And even though I am still reeling from the pain of relationships that broke before I came to TBC (and continued to break afterward), I can endure with hope. I can see beyond it, to a Saviour who is acquainted with suffering. I can rejoice.

What is Calvinism?

Here, at last, we draw near to the true marrow of Calvinism. The Calvinist believes that God is the Lord of life and Sovereign of the universe, whose will is the key to history. The Calvinist believes that He is free and independent of any force outside Himself to accomplish His purposes; that He knows the end from the beginning; that He creates, sustains, governs, and directs all things; and that His marvellous design will be fully and perfectly manifest at the end of the ages? "For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever" (Rom. 11:36). As Charles Hodge says: "God's sovereignty is to all other doctrines what the granite formation is to the other strata of the earth. It underlies and sustains them, but it crops out only here and there. So this doctrine should underlie all our preaching, and should be definitely asserted only now and then."

(at <https://www.monergism.com> by Joel Beeke)

GROWING UP IN CHURCH (1)

Mark Mujivane

Mark came to TBC 20 years ago as a teenager, and he shares what he experienced as he was brought by his mother. He leads in congregational worship at the church.

My mother brought us to TBC in 1998, in my early teens, having previously attended a large Pentecostal Church in the city. What I seem to remember immediately striking me about the church is how the pastors were very accessible, standing outside and greeting all the congregants after the service. The pastors of the previous church were pretty inaccessible, owing to the size of the church. Then, I had never had to stay at church the whole day before. I think at first it was quite a task, but soon afterwards, whenever I visited other churches and everyone dispersed at 2.00 pm, I would wonder to myself what boring things they were going to do at home in place of fellowship. To this day I am still very grateful that we can spend the whole day with brethren fellowshiping together, sometimes well into the night.

It was also very significant to me that there were people from all walks of life in the church, from university professors to those of 'lowly position' coming from a nearby slum, and the lowly brother being just as comfortable as everyone else. I felt at home. The members were also very kind and caring, going out of their way to be involved in our lives, and it did make a big difference to us.

I think one of the greatest gifts the Lord has bestowed on us at TBC is the faithful teaching of God's word. I had not before encountered a thorough and comprehensive treatment of the doctrine of salvation, though I did not immediately appreciate it. I heard it, and it was at least interesting at the time, but it did not immediately make an impact on my life. At the time I was perhaps only a nominal Christian, even after I had joined the membership; at least sometimes I think so. But the Lord was pleased to use the ministry of the church to bring me to faith, or at least the assurance of it.

I joined high school about that time, and being a professing Christian, joined the CU. It had a charismatic texture to it, as most religious organisations in the country did at that time and still do. I remember one meeting where the CU leader was present, one who was acclaimed to perform signs and wonders. I had heard of him blowing on people and causing them to fall over but hadn't seen it myself. I was very zealous for the things of God and was happy enough to be involved with fellow Christians, but a little scared about what might happen. I had watched Benny Hinn on TV do such things as this man was reputed to be able to do, and although at that time I did not have the resources to tell why Hinn's ministry was false, I always felt rather unnerved whilst at the same time strangely attracted by it. So, this CU leader asked for the lights

to be turned off, and the door locked, and for us to close our eyes. Then he went around touching us. He touched me too. I remember feeling his hands on my forehead... Nothing happened. After sometime, I decided to open my eyes. To my bewilderment, I was looking at the ceiling, yet how I got onto my back I do not know! I had felt absolutely nothing. My mind had missed that event. At the time I wasn't too sure what to think of the event, though shortly afterward I backslid, gave up all my spiritual disciplines and succumbed to mental illness. I may not blame it on having been 'slain', but it certainly did not seem to have done me any spiritual good.

All this while I would attend TBC on Sundays, and when I became a member, one event used to really unsettle me, but in a different way than Hinn would. In contrast, whenever we were at the Lord's table, I felt an air of *mindful* reverence with the pastors and the members, a reverence that came from *understanding* something, not having one's brain switched off like I had had

I noticed also that the pastor kept talking about Jesus Christ. Ok, I knew Jesus is important, but why is he so exalted?

mine 'slain'. I noticed also that the pastor kept talking about Jesus Christ. Ok, I knew Jesus is important, but why is he so exalted? Why is he the centre of this whole thing? I would sit there, puzzled, wondering what these people had that I didn't have. I would pray for the Lord to give me what they have, for I knew I didn't have it... or at least I didn't understand

what I had (though I doubted that I had it). The atmosphere here was the exact opposite of what I had encountered at that CU meeting. There, I do not even remember Jesus being mentioned. It was all about a physical experience that bypassed consciousness. I knew these other people had the real thing. I felt that God was really here, and I was scared.

But by the grace of our Lord, as the word was preached, Sunday by Sunday, and as the gospel was presented over and over again in all its glory, I began to really understand, first, that I was a sinner, and there was nothing I could do to save myself – therefore, I did not need to do anything to receive salvation. And the more I saw my sin, the more precious Jesus became. I began to understand that not only did Christ take my place in judgement, but that I had His righteousness (I had never heard this before anywhere else). And I began to understand that the Holy Spirit sanctifies us and makes us more like Christ, not apart from the mind, but in and through the mind. I came to learn that I do not have to spend the whole day worrying about demons to live a 'victorious' life. I had lived all my teenage years on a diet of demonology, which in many Christian circles is the mark of true spirituality. The more you know about the devil, the more spiritual you are. But now I was free to dwell on the glories of God in Christ, rather than squander my mind on self-imposed fears, or dull it

in search of supernatural experiences. Rather, God calls us to renew our minds through the knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. Through the faithful teaching of God's word at TBC, the Lord granted me assurance of salvation.

An interesting side effect of the church's teaching ministry is that I learnt more about how to think under the pulpit than I did in my six years under the lectern in the university.

Sadly though, as I began to grow in my knowledge and understanding the Scriptures, I also began to notice that many Christians around me in other circles didn't seem to know their Bibles that well, and many held onto error, and I got puffed up, making it my business to bash anyone I thought didn't hold to the truth. Now, our country certainly needs many men to stand up and boldly defend the truth against the incalculable injuries caused by false doctrine, primarily from charismania. And it is another thing that blesses me, to observe how fearlessly committed to truth the members are, so much so that anyone may disagree with the pastor on a point or other after a sermon, and the pastors have the humility and reverence for God's word to listen. This is unheard of in most churches. But it is the motive for this love of truth that went sour in my case. I entered an unfortunate season that many young believers in the reformed tradition go through – the 'young, restless and reformed' phase. I began to glory in knowledge rather than Christ, and delighted in much debate, for the joy of winning. And I do think there was a season when as young believers we would tear at each other as much as we would outsiders.

Yet at the same time, I was yielding to besetting sins in my secret life and having no spiritual vitality. Like the Ephesian Church, one wonders whether doctrinal soundness that arises necessarily from diligent scholarship is also necessarily attended with the danger of becoming puffed up and loveless.

But over the years the Lord has helped me and many others of the young people to come alive to this danger. Mercifully, we have seen among us the growth of a religion that is as much a hearty one as it is a mindful one, as brothers open up and confess to each other their besetting sins, and hold each other accountable and uphold one another in prayer, and exhort one another daily, truly caring for one another, and helping each other to fix our eyes on Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. May the Lord grant to us, as he has been doing, even so more and more, to be a church that is a champion of love as it has been and continues to be a champion of truth.

GROWING UP IN CHURCH (2)

Nelson Munyiri

Nelson came to TBC 25 years ago as a young boy, and he shares what he experienced as he was brought by his parents. He now serves as a Deacon.

I cannot quite remember the first time I came to TBC. My mother tells us that on a certain random Sunday in 1993/4, the year we had relocated to a nearby estate, my father had gone round looking for a church. By God's mysterious providence he came across TBC and somehow he was persuaded that this was the church for us. Contrary to the growing wave of charismatic seeker sensitive churches that were becoming increasingly popular at the time, he was convinced that this church that did not have any musical instrument, or sing contemporary songs, or dance their cloaks off, or pray in tongues, was what we needed. Soon after we started attending Sunday services there and I do not recall having any transition struggles. Maybe this was because I was too young to appreciate the difference TBC had with the other churches we had been to. The earliest memories I have of the church is the Sunday School classes where we would sing through the books of the Bible, learn the children's catechism, and hear the Bible stories; and the Vacation Bible School (VBS) that took place during school holidays. I remember getting very excited at the Bible character lesson aids made of cut out felt that would be stuck to the board as the teacher engaged us. It is astonishing what lasting impressions were made to my juvenile mind. Unbeknown to me, the LORD was gently working in my heart and mind through the faithful labours of these teachers so that as the days progressed, I slowly started looking forward to Sundays, to reciting the memory verses, to playing with the other children after Sunday School, to singing and to sleeping on my mothers' lap as the morning worship service was going on. I believe that this regular exposure to the gospel led and contributed to my conversion. When I was in primary school, the seed of God's word had already been planted at church and when I sat in that Christian Union meeting that Saturday afternoon, this preacher brought the sheaves home, as the hymn writer would say. The dungeon of my heart flamed with light, all the deep dark crevices that only I knew about were exposed. In my brokenness, I pleaded with God to have mercy on me a wretched sinner, and oh how God heard my cry and responded with an overwhelming measure of grace, joy and peace. "My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed" Him.

My journey as a Christian was then marked with swinging between times of confusion when I'd be in school (both primary and secondary boarding) and times of biblical instruction, correction and clarity when I would be at TBC during the school holidays. Though I identified myself as a Christian in school, I always felt out of place; outnumbered by the Pentecostal charismatics

and the terrifying visiting preachers. I would struggle with trying to work out my own salvation with fear and trembling at one time, while at another time struggle with trying to earn my own salvation with fear and trembling. Because of this, I really looked forward to the holidays, as they were sweet times of refreshing as I would go to church and be fed on a healthy diet, void of the drama and floss used in the world to hide the overwhelming barrenness.

With time, Sunday School, and morning worship services were no longer enough; I wanted more. This allowed me to enjoy the blessing of attending the Sunday evening worship service and not count it as a burden because of missing out on other social events. Then there were the annual youth retreats that became the climax of my December holidays. A full week of learning God's word, singing hymns and learning new ones, cooking, playing sports, and enjoying the company of friends. It was at one such retreat that we were introduced to the doctrines of grace, and it was really difficult to accept. The elders and teachers took their time to instruct us patiently; gently compelling us to struggle with the texts that seemed unbearable or imported into the Bible from other sources. We would debate with each other, sleep over it, come back the next day and look at the same text again, ask whatever other questions came to mind, but by the end of that week, I was persuaded of the veracity of the truth in the doctrines of grace. I thank God that the church provided us with such a safe and guided environment to struggle through these things. Subsequent to this period, I was no longer swayed by every wind of teaching as I was before.

Sadly, with the passing of time, my new found knowledge puffed me up and made me to distance myself from other believers in school. This distance made my slowly flickering faith grow dim especially as the onslaught of youthful pleasures and lusts of the flesh came striking at every turn. The means of grace slowly turned burdensome and even serving in the Christian Union seemed unreasonable. My fallen mind went at great lengths to rationalise and legitimize my sins, especially those of omission. But God being rich in mercy and grace called me out and drew me back to Himself. Though I cannot remember the details of the preaching that particular Sunday at church, the reality of the cross was impressed on me afresh and through that week it felt like a fire had been set ablaze in my heart and I could not find rest. I then rushed to one of the TBC Pastors who very gently journeyed with me until some few weeks later I was baptized and joined the church officially as a member. How sweet a thing it was and still is, to know that I'm part of the body and bride of Christ, with whom we shall enjoy the marriage feast of the lamb!

I believe that this renewed grace was divinely timed in preparing me for post-secondary education since in my college years I really engaged with misled

professing Christians and unbelieving classmates and roommates. I did not seek to vainly provoke others having guarded myself with the armour of 'Calvinism' but rather in my little knowledge laboured to gently confront them anchoring my engagements in the word of God and where possible introducing them to the writings of saints of old such as Spurgeon and Ryle. I feared being ostracised on account of the 'Calvinism' title and at times this kept me from speaking even when I knew I needed to. I constantly needed the encouragement from the elders and members at TBC which helped me to serve in the campus fellowship in various capacities for four years, all the while seeking to proclaim and defend the truth.

By God's grace I also came to meet my lovely wife during this time as we were in the same fellowship. As we drew closer, the community of believers at TBC were particularly instrumental in preparing me for the relationship and in keeping us accountable, especially considering the unending waves of temptation to be in the world and like the world. I particularly remember one occasion when I needed to be vulnerable with some dear brothers so that they would help me see if there was any sin or sinful intentions on my part even as I considered courtship. Through this community my wife and I received, and continue to receive, wholesome rebuke, correction, encouragement, affection and support that has given such a loving context to our relationship. Apart from the weddings, funerals, birthdays and tea parties, some of the much cherished moments with this community of believers have been while we celebrate the Lord's Table. This is when our unity in Christ is exalted above all that could discriminate us; men, women, young, old, educated, uneducated, rich, poor, married, unmarried. It is when we share in the bread and cup and remember that we are one body, united in one Lord, one hope, one faith and one baptism.

In recent times I have increasingly come to appreciate that the ministry I have grown under in TBC was not the norm for our times. That the accessibility, concern and godly care I have enjoyed from the Pastors at TBC have been a great privilege. That these do not simple come from better pastor to member ratios that smaller churches enjoy. That the prayers offered and counsel given have not been thoughtless and without conviction. That the sacrifice on their part has been real, costly and yet deliberate. May there be more churches established that are pillars and buttresses of truth and manifest the manifold wisdom of God. And "the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10-11).

It is not enough to look back over 40 years. We must look forward with a mixture of certainty and determination.

Our Lord sent messages to the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia (Revelation 2-3). He threatened to remove one of the churches (= lampstands) from its place (2:5). So the future of any church cannot be taken for granted. Yes, Christ is building His church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). But particular local churches may come and go. Where are the seven churches today? Where are the once vibrant churches of North Africa? So while we are sure that all those for whom Christ died will ultimately be saved, there is no guarantee that TBC Nairobi as a local church will always be there!

(1) Warnings. The following can cause TBC to be removed:

- Growing cold (2:4, 3:1,15). Those of us who have lived long have seen many starting well but not continuing as they began. While it begins in the heart, the first manifestation is so often absences from the means of grace (so Hebrews 10:25).
- False teaching (2:14-15). There are many false and counterfeit so-called gospels. Make no mistake some are so deceptive and they all have an element of attraction. Jesus Christ and Him crucified as the only way of salvation must be the central message. It may not be openly denied, but just ignored. Watch out!
- Toleration of sin (2:20). Christ's church is holy, and the Holy Spirit dwells in it (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). TBC must not make lax the Biblical standards to be friends with the world. Better to be persecuted.

(2) Exhortations. Here are the commands of the Head of the church:

- Repent (2:5,16, 3:3,19). Only the church in Smyrna had no criticism (2:8-11). Be continually heeding the public and private exhortations of your leaders whom God has put over you to watch over your souls. Pray for those who teach to rightly handle the word of truth.
- Be faithful to the end (2:10,25, 3:11). There will be opposition and times of temptation to discouragement. In each of the seven letters the promises are to the ones who 'conquer'. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take the whole armour of God. Look to Jesus "the founder and perfecter of our faith" who triumphed (Hebrews 12:1-2).

SUBSCRIPTION

Grace & Truth is a quarterly magazine that promotes a deeper understanding of the Biblical truth so as to know the Triune God in order to love Him more and serve Him better. It is sent to you free of charge through the generous contributions of the members of Trinity Baptist Church.

You are welcome to participate in this grace of giving by sending your contribution to us. The cost of production is KES 50 per copy and you are welcome to sponsor any number of copies by sending your contribution by M-pesa to Paybill number, 727440 and the account number is 'GandT'.

We pray that the Lord will greatly profit you through this magazine. Please pray that the Lord will use this periodical for His glory.

We welcome your feedback on the magazine sent to you. You may send your subscription and comments by e-mail to: gntmag@gmail.com

Published by:
Trinity Baptist Church
P.O. Box 57907 00200 NAIROBI.
Tel: 0202626016 or 0202626023
Cell Phone: 0728 431067
E-mail: trinityboffice@gmail.com
Website: www.trinity.or.ke

You may send your questions, comments and compliments to:
THE EDITOR,
GRACE & TRUTH MAGAZINE
Using the address above.

You may obtain your virtual copy by logging to our website.