



baptist union  
of scotland



June 2015

Science and Faith

## Faith vs science?



Throughout the United Kingdom, there is an assumption that Science and Christianity are incompatible. Even when people are willing to move past this confusion, they often end up drawing a separation between the world of science and the world of faith: Christian faith concerns a person's inner "spirituality" whereas science concerns the concrete reality of the natural world. When this happens, science and Christianity are seen as non-competitive because they concern two very different spheres.

The Church is called to challenge this dynamic. It is called to proclaim that the Gospel message concerns every facet of reality, including the created world that is the arena for scientific study. This means two things. First, the Church is called to think about what it

means for the Gospel to speak into the natural sciences. But, second, the Church is called to listen to what the natural sciences have to tell us about the creation we inhabit.

Our understanding of God's creation is massively informed by the insights of the sciences. So much of what we know about what it means to be human is informed by modern science. Also, scientific developments have proved fundamental to our understanding of what it means for us to function as an international community: a community that looks after one another and works together to take care of its natural environment.

A major problem currently facing the Church is that it has become isolated from the developments of

***"A major problem currently facing the Church is that it has become isolated from the developments of contemporary science."***

contemporary science. Indeed, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the sciences to find a place within the ministry of the Church. This has undoubtedly contributed to the perception that science and faith are incompatible.

Another reason for this integration is that scientists in the Church seldom have the chance to contribute their expertise to the mission of the Church. Meanwhile, many atheists declare that the sciences undermine belief in God: one might think of Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Daniel Dennett, and the late Christopher Hitchens. But this message is not only communicated by a handful of well-known atheists; it is also promulgated by film and literature, popular journalism and social media.

This apparent friction is easily challenged by giving scientists, as scientists, a voice in the ministry of the Church. Many scientists in the Church have thought deeply about how their vocation relates to their life of faith. Yet they are rarely given the opportunity to help foster a constructive dialogue about science and faith. As

such, these scientists have been present in churches as a vital but often latent resource for helping to create an environment where science and faith can be seen to have a positive relationship.

A programme that has been encouraging scientists to contribute their expertise to the life of the church is Scientists in Congregations, Scotland ([www.sicscotland.org](http://www.sicscotland.org)). By helping to give scientists a role in ministry, this programme is creating a conversation that is not only stimulating for congregations themselves but also for their surrounding communities. SICS is giving churches an opportunity to repudiate the myth that science has made the Church redundant and, at the same time, demonstrate that the Church is a centre for meaningful intellectual dialogue. In the midst of this conversation, the gospel is being proclaimed in new ways that are highly fruitful for the mission of the church: particularly to those who are skeptical about the notion of a positive relationship between science and Christianity.



## Science in the Local Church



**Dr. Andrew Wright is a scientist and member of Debridge Baptist Church in West Lothian. He has taken the initiative in engaging his church with contemporary science.**

### Q. Andrew, what is your science background?

After a Joint Honours Degree in Physiology and Chemistry I gained a PhD in Clinical Chemistry before working at Napier University for 36 years, with an 18 month secondment to the University of Hong Kong. I am currently a Director of The John Ray Initiative, a Christian environmental education charity.

### Q. How did being a scientist fit with your faith and church life?

Science is the study of God's creation, and since God cannot contradict himself, science shows Christians aspects of God's character and of his works; so my understanding of science and faith are complementary. Although some churches and denominations are positive about science, there has been a widespread disengagement from science in many churches; there has been a schizophrenia where we utilise the benefits, but ignore or bad-mouth the actual science.

### Q. Why did you apply for a grant from Scientists in Congregations?

In short, our minister sent me an email about it and said 'Get on with it'. I have longed for years to do something like this; but I am not an organiser and there wasn't support for anything like it in the church earlier. The email was I think 'God sent'.

### Q. What did you hope to achieve in the talks?

I wanted to have scientists talk about their own area of expertise and for the audience to be able to question them about their faith and science. Even when we see science and faith in harmony,

issues can arise about the ethics of scientific research. I had a colleague who worked on the ergonomics of civil aircraft design at Farnborough; when he was asked to move to military aircraft, he resigned because his Christian faith convinced him to be a pacifist. For me, as a Life/Medical scientist, I chose not to engage in a career that would involve embryo research because at the time I did not have a clear understanding of the theology and ethics; and my then church was of no help in considering that issue.

### Q. What did the audience get from the talk?

There was a general interest aspect; people had a yearning to know about navigating a drill head 10,000 ft below ground, to understand the diversity of natural habitats, to understand the work of a Public Analyst and her role as a Chemical Incident Officer with the Fire Services or how we investigate deep space. With one exception, all the speakers were practicing Christians and each integrated science and faith from a personal angle. One lesson I learnt was that many non-scientists have a problem getting their head around concepts of 13,000,000,000 yrs or 0.000,000,000,1 of a metre, and that is a significant cause of disengagement from science. There were a couple of people who stopped coming when they realised that their pet subjects or interests were only going to be dealt with scientifically. There has been some criticism that the speakers didn't deal more deeply with spiritual issues. I felt that the speakers wanted the audience to walk well, rather than chase them to sprint.

**Rev. Amanda Quick, SiC Admin and Assistant Pastor of Leven Baptist Church**



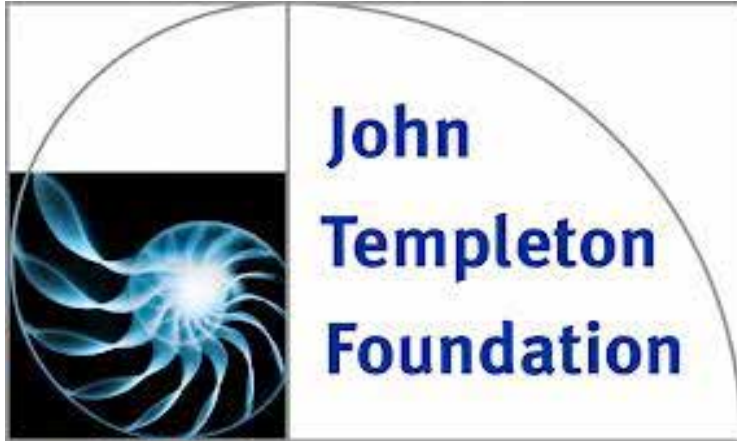
## Listen to podcasts

SiC Scotland puts on talks and lectures throughout the year. Click here to download and listen to them on [iTunes](#). Go to their [Facebook page](#) for news of future events.



## How can you engage?

SICS is an innovative project based at the University of St Andrews and led by Dr Andrew Torrance. It builds on work previously done in the USA. In a nutshell, SICS aims to promote constructive, creative, grass-roots conversation around science and faith. The heart of the project is mission: breaking down perceived barriers to the Gospel in ways that go beyond traditional apologetics.



Generously funded by the Templeton Foundation, SICS is working with 19 local congregations, from Falkirk to Greenock, Ayrshire to Edinburgh, and as far afield as the Church of Scotland congregation in Geneva. Baptists, Brethren, Episcopalians, Independents, Methodists and Presbyterians are all involved. Following a competitive application process, these congregations have been awarded grants of up to £10,000 to develop and deliver unique proposals.

Expert talks and sermons are enlightening people on subjects ranging from food additives and fertilizers to the work of the Public Analyst – and allowing Scriptural insights and theological reflection to emerge. Seminars and reading groups have stimulated thought and allowed significant scientific and theological voices to be heard. Some churches are designing bespoke liturgical resources; one is hacking black globe thermometers to address the perennial issue of heating costs. Tours, pilgrimages and one-off events are engaging with different age groups, enriching worship.

We hope the project will deliver a number of resources, as well as facilitating networks for those who wish to continue the conversation. For more information, including individual project details, see <http://www.sicscotland.org>

**Rev. Amanda Quick**

## Opportunity to make an Impact

The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention desires to partner with Scottish churches in ways which bless the church and help them engage in areas of communities which currently have a less-than-vibrant expression of faith. The church chooses what they desire in regards to what type of volunteer and length of time. A volunteer would come to serve your church for 12 to 24-months in the capacity that best fits your needs. This may be in youth & children's ministry, engaging with adults or all of the above as you reach out into a community. It could be with helping to set up a project within the church or a community project connected to the life of the church. IMB will recruit to suit your request, as well as ensure all recruits have participated in child protection training, received police



**International Mission Board Scotland Team**

background checks and character references. IMB will give cultural orientation and cross-cultural training in making disciples, as well as secondary supervision from afar, so as to ensure both the church and volunteer are experiencing the desired partnership. We will work with you to find the best "fit" for your plans, projects and objectives for having a volunteer. We will also work with you to consider church planting in other areas of your community, as you see God creating a movement to make disciples who make disciples.

For info or questions, please call or email Gena Wilson: 07717-854928; 0141-404-6502; [ImpactGlasgow@aol.com](mailto:ImpactGlasgow@aol.com).

## Next Issue...

Before the summer hits we'll bring you the highlights of an exciting Sports Day, as well as giving a send off to the young people taking part in our Step Out outreach teams. Got a story? Contact: [roly@scottishbaptist.org.uk](mailto:roly@scottishbaptist.org.uk)



# June Prayer Link

## Sunday 7th

**Chris Withers (Chaplain, 1 Rifles)** - I am currently Station Chaplain in Javelin Barracks, Elmpt Germany, moving back to Stafford in summer. Please pray for smooth transition from life in Germany to UK, especially for Dutch or German partners and for children in new schools. Please pray for those giving up jobs here who will have to find alternative work in UK. Please pray for financial stability as the move brings some financial pressures, that connections with Christians Against Poverty will bear much spiritual fruit.

**Ellon Baptist, William Butchart** - Ellon Baptist continues to seek God's leading for a church building. As we wait, we would appreciate prayer for our upcoming children's holiday club. Pray also for God's continued leading of the fellowship as we continue serving Him in a variety of different ministries, and seek to honour Him as we live together in community.

**Erskine, Peter Dick** - This year we have baptised two women, brought four into membership, welcomed a new family to the church, and are just completing the appointment of a part-time community worker. The toddler group has continued to be popular as are the craft and art groups, bringing many people through the building. The art group recently held its first exhibition which proved very successful. In the midst of all this we have a few folks undergoing treatments from dialysis, to chemotherapy, to open heart surgery! As we celebrate God's continued vision and faithful provision please continue to support us in prayer.

## Sunday 14th

**Scottish Baptist Women's Fellowship, Anne Lannigan** Please pray for all members of SBWF as they serve God in various capacities in their churches. We have our National Activities: Day of Discovery; Thanksgiving Rally; ABM and Presidential Rally. This year our annual conference is in St Andrews, 28/30th August where 120 ladies will learn, have

fellowship and fun together. Please also pray for President, Val Bonser, and the Leadership Team as we serve our members.

**Falkirk Baptist Church, Gordon Macindoe** - We are so thankful to God for "one blessing after another out of the fullness of His grace." As with many churches in Scotland, we have been praying now for many years for a mighty move of God's Spirit that will bring many into His Kingdom. In the meantime we continue with many activities and would value prayer for ongoing fruitful outreach into our community. We also seek guidance regarding our buildings.

**Forres: The Lighthouse Church, Jon Mackenzie** - Firstly, give thanks that God has provided our fellowship with a heart for prayer. Pray for us, that as we continue to grow, we would be led clearly into the ministries the Lord is calling us to engage in, that God would be glorified, the gospel would be preached and Forres transformed by his power.

**Fort William, Ian McInnes** - Pray for our new minister and his wife as they settle into the church, having just arrived in March. Pray also for our leadership team and our deacons as we have recently seen some changes in this respect. Lastly pray for the Holy Spirit to empower us as a church with a vision to reach out to our local community.

## Sunday 21st

**Scottish Baptist Lay Preachers' Association, Glen Cartright** - Give thanks for new members joining the Association, for a great conference in May with David Coffey, and for an encouraging take-up of our new mentoring programme. Pray for our residential in September at Gartmore, that RELATE (our regional relational groups) would be fruitful in building relationships and we would serve Scottish Baptist churches well.

**Galashiels** - Two months into vacancy and with a new leadership team in place, we are very conscious of God's guidance as we seek His way forward for our fellowship. We give thanks for a useful congregational meeting to explore our future, for plans for a Holiday Club with a Step Out



team, healthy Bible Study groups and good ministry. We ask for wisdom during this time of vacancy.

## Sunday 28th

### **Beatrice Anderson, Finance Administrator -**

Pray for Beatrice as she deals with the day to day finances of the Union.

### **Gerrard Street, Matthew Henderson -**

Give thanks for effective community outreach, God honouring worship services, a deep sense of unity among the church family and a fantastic church staff. Please pray for our church building project, staff changes as we hire a new Youth Worker and Church Administrator, our thriving youth work and the development of our work among those of retirement age.

**Gourock, Ian Millar -** We give thanks and praise to the Lord for many answers to prayer, for those who pray for us, for evidence of growth both spiritually and numerically with the arrival of some new families. Pray with us that we might find more and better ways to reach out to the surrounding community; that those initiatives already in place might be further enhanced as gifts are realised and used in the Lord's service. In particular pray for our work with staff and pupils of local primary and secondary schools, with armed forces veterans, local mothers and toddlers, and joint work with other denominations. Please pray also that our Lord might guide us and grant wisdom as we explore the possibility of securing land adjacent to the church as an option that would permit is to create good disabled access to the church building.

## The National Team

**Jacqueline -** Colin and I are thankful for a good holiday in Cyprus. Please pray that in the run up to the summer, all the details will be dealt with well. Pray for our churches as they consider their nominations for Trustees and Council members prior to Assembly.

**John -** After two week's holiday, the Scottish Baptist Ministers Conference provides numerous opportunities for me to engage with ministers over two days in St Andrews. Pray for the right contacts

and good conversations during this time. June also sees the start of National Team personal meetings with each pre-accredited minister over the summer, and the first ever Ministry Development Workshops in Stirling from 23-25 June. Pray for these meetings, workshops, and all involved in them.

**Alan -** I look forward to Sports Day and meeting with many younger Scottish Baptists at Stirling. I am also meeting with the Royal Caledonian Curling Club to talk about the possibilities of chaplaincy within this organisation. I will be visiting the churches of Southside and Broxburn as well as meeting many of our ministers at the Scottish Baptist Ministers Fellowship Conference. Pray also for us as a team as we prepare for Assembly and develop our understanding of mission in a variety of key gatherings.

**Mo -** Pray for me while I am on maternity leave. Yvonne Faddes will be covering me, so pray for her while she oversees the organisation of Sports Day and Step Out teams.

**Jim -** This month heralds involvement in a number of conferences, including our Mission Initiative Group, a European Baptist Federation conference on mission to Islamic background peoples, a FBBI Ministry Forum, our Ministers' Annual Conference and a week of special training events for ministers. Please pray that these be visited upon by God, making them significant and inspirational events, reinforcing our BUS mission and ministry.

**Peter -** It's BUS audit time again, we are always accountable to someone. Pray for wisdom in difficult decisions. June is time to enjoy the SBMF conference and then off on a week's holiday.

