

Newport-On-Tay Church Of Scotland

Sermon for Sunday 18th August 2024

900th Celebration of Forgan Church,

Now Newport-On-Tay Church of Scotland

Text: 1 Corinthians 3:10-16

Theme: *Building on the Legacy of Christ: Honouring the Past, Sustaining the Present, and Securing the Future*

On April 23, 2008, Dr. Michael DeBakey received one of the highest honours in the United States, the Congressional Gold Medal, for his extraordinary contributions to heart surgery. During the ceremony, President Bush highlighted Dr. DeBakey's legacy by saying, "His legacy is holding the fragile and sacred gift of human life in his hands and returning it unbroken."

Dr. DeBakey's achievements were nothing short of miraculous. He invented numerous medical devices and procedures, performed the first successful heart bypass operation, and saved countless lives. But what's even more fascinating is the story behind his work. As a child, Dr. DeBakey's mother taught him to sew—a skill that might seem simple and unrelated to surgery. Yet, it was this very skill that inspired him later in life. In the early 1950s, when he needed to design a graft for replacing a diseased aorta, he turned to what he knew best. Using a synthetic cloth called Dacron, he sketched out a design, cut the fabric, and sewed the first prototype on his wife's Singer sewing machine.

Dr. DeBakey's story is a powerful reminder that the foundations we lay early in life can shape our future in ways we may never expect. His mother's simple teachings on sewing became the foundation for some of his greatest medical breakthroughs.

This idea of building on a strong foundation brings us to our reflection today, as we celebrate 900 years of the Forgan Church, now known as Newport-On-Tay Church of Scotland. The apostle Paul, in 1 Corinthians 3:10-11, speaks of a foundation that is essential for every Christian life—the foundation of Jesus Christ. Just as Dr. DeBakey's work was grounded in the skills he learned as a child, our church has been built on the solid and unchanging foundation of Christ.

As we gather to celebrate 900 years of the Forgan Church, we are not merely marking the passage of time; we are standing upon an important legacy. Our church has been a beacon of faith, hope, and community for nearly a millennium, and today's celebration invites us to reflect on the foundation that has sustained us through the ages.

A Legacy Built on the Firm Foundation

The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, speaks of the foundation of our Christian life, which is Jesus Christ Himself. Like skilled builders, those who came before us laid this foundation with care and dedication. They understood that no structure, whether physical or spiritual, can endure unless it is built on something solid and unchanging. For our ancestors, the foundation was clear: the gospel of Jesus Christ. This foundation has withstood wars, plagues, and countless societal changes, and it continues to support us today.

Imagine, if you will, the early days of this church, when our forebears, with limited resources but abundant faith, began to build what would become a spiritual home for generations. They likely faced challenges we cannot fully comprehend—perhaps harsh winters, political turmoil, or even personal doubts. Yet, they pressed on, laying stone upon stone, not just in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense as well, grounded in the belief that their work was not in vain, because it was built upon the sure foundation of Christ.

Honouring Those Who Built Before Us

We remember today the ministers who preached the Word with passion and conviction, the elders who guided the congregation with wisdom, the families who kept the church alive through their attendance and prayers, and the countless unnamed individuals who served in quiet, humble ways—keeping the vision of the church alive. Each of them contributed to building upon the foundation that Paul speaks of. Their work has not been lost to time; it is seen in the very fabric of our church community today.

But let us also reflect on our role in this ongoing work. The foundation of Christ remains unchanged, but we are the current builders. What kind of structure are we adding to that foundation? Are we building with the enduring materials of faith, love, and truth, or are we tempted by the fleeting materials of this world—seeking security in wealth, status, or comfort?

A Story for Our Times

Let me share with you a story. There was a man who inherited a beautiful old home from his grandparents. The house had been in the family for generations, and though it showed signs of age, its foundation was as strong as the day it was built. The man, eager to modernize, began making changes—installing the latest gadgets, painting over the old wood, and even altering the original layout to suit his tastes. He spent all his money on these upgrades, thinking they would make the house perfect. But one day, a storm came, stronger than any before. The new additions were the first to go—windows shattered, the roof caved in, and the walls buckled. Yet, as the man stood amidst the wreckage, he noticed something remarkable. The foundation was still there, unshaken, just as his grandparents had left it. It was then that he realized the true value of what he had inherited. The foundation had endured, and because of it, he could rebuild, not just a house, but a home.

Building for the Future

As we celebrate 900 years, let us commit ourselves to preserving the legacy of our church. The foundation has been laid—Jesus Christ, our unchanging cornerstone. But the work is far from over. We must continue to build with care, using the materials of faith that will endure. We are not just maintaining a building or a tradition; we are nurturing a living community of believers who will, God willing, continue to gather here for another 900 years.

Let us enjoy the fruits of those who laboured before us but let us also plant seeds for those who will come after us. May we build in such a way that when future generations look back on our time, they will find that we, too, were faithful builders upon the foundation of Christ.

As we go forth, let us ask ourselves: On what is my life built? If all else falls away, will I stand firm on the foundation of Christ? For no other foundation will stand the test of time, but the one laid by Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

Prayer of Approach and Confession

Gracious and Eternal God,

We come before You this morning, grateful for the night that has passed and for the light of a new day. As the dawn breaks, we gather to worship and glorify Your holy name, acknowledging Your steadfast love that has guided us through the centuries. We thank You for the foundation laid so many years ago, for the faithful witness of those who established Forgan Church, and for the countless generations who have built upon that solid foundation.

As we celebrate 900 years of Your presence in Newport-On-Tay, we are mindful of Your servant Paul's words, that no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. We are deeply thankful for those who have

faithfully built upon this foundation, each one contributing to the beauty and strength of this sacred community.

O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, We confess that there have been times when we have not lived up to the expectations set before us. We have faltered in carrying forward the vision of our forebears, allowing the worries of the world to cloud our faith. Forgive us, Lord, for the moments when we have failed to build with care, for the times when we have neglected the precious gift of Your grace.

Renew our hearts today, O God. Help us to be faithful builders, using the gifts You have given us to strengthen this community and to glorify Your name. May we continue to build upon the foundation of Christ with wisdom, humility, and love, so that Forgan Church may stand as a testament to Your faithfulness for generations to come.

In Jesus' precious name, we pray,
Amen.

Prayer of Dedication of Offering

Heavenly Father,

We come before You with humble hearts, offering these gifts as a token of our gratitude for all You have provided. We dedicate these offerings to Your service, asking that You bless them and multiply them for the work of Your kingdom. May they be used to bring hope to the hurting, light to the lost, and strength to Your church as we seek to share the love of Christ with the world. Guide us in the wise stewardship of these resources, that everything we do may glorify Your holy name.

Prayers of Intercession

Heavenly Father,

We gather today with hearts full of gratitude as we remember and give thanks for the journey that has brought us to this significant milestone in the life of our church. We thank You for the blessings You have poured out upon us, guiding us through the years. Loving and Eternal God,

As we stand in this sacred place, celebrating 900 years of faith, we pause to remember with deep gratitude all those who laid the foundation of this church in Forgan, now Newport-On-Tay Church of Scotland. We give thanks for the ministers who preached Your Word with conviction, the elders who guided with wisdom, and the countless men and women who laboured in quiet, humble ways to build this spiritual home. They laid a foundation upon the solid rock of Jesus Christ, a foundation that has endured through the centuries.

We thank You that these faithful servants are now resting in Your eternal embrace, experiencing the joy and peace that only You can give. We trust that they are in Your presence, where there is no more pain or sorrow, only the fullness of joy. As we continue to build upon the legacy they have left us, may we honour their memory by living faithfully, just as they did.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

1. Prayer for the United Kingdom, Scotland, and Christian Witness

Gracious God,

We lift up to You our nation, the United Kingdom, and especially Scotland. We ask for Your wisdom and protection over this land, that we might walk in Your ways and uphold the values of Your kingdom. Strengthen the Christian witness across our communities, so that in a world often filled with darkness, we may

shine brightly, pointing others to the truth and hope found in Christ. May Your church in Scotland remain steadfast, rooted in the foundation of Jesus, boldly proclaiming Your Word with love and compassion.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

2. Prayer for War-Torn Countries and Peace

Merciful Father,

Our hearts are heavy as we think of the suffering in war-torn regions around the world. We pray especially for the Middle East, where conflict and pain seem never-ending, and for Ukraine and Russia, caught in the turmoil of war. We ask, Lord, that You bring an end to the violence and heal the wounds that have been inflicted. Let Your peace, which transcends all understanding, fill the hearts of those who are hurting, and may the nations lay down their weapons to embrace reconciliation and unity.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

3. Prayer for Leaders in Secular and Church Communities

Sovereign Lord,

We lift up to You those who lead us in both our secular and church communities. We pray for our politicians, the King, and all in positions of authority, asking that You guide them with wisdom, justice, and a spirit of service. May they lead with integrity and compassion, seeking the well-being of all. We also pray for our church leaders, that they might shepherd Your people with humility, wisdom, and deep love, always pointing us towards You.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

4. Prayer of Thanksgiving for Forgan Church

Faithful God,

We are deeply grateful for Forgan Church, which has been a beacon of Your faithfulness for 900 years. We thank You for the small mustard seed of faith that was planted so long ago and has now grown into a thriving community in Newport-On-Tay. We praise You for the lives and families transformed by the gospel of Christ here. As we honour those who laid the foundation and built upon it with care, we ask for Your continued blessing as we work to nurture and grow this legacy for future generations.

Lord, in Your mercy,

Hear our prayer.

Eternal God,

As we celebrate this momentous milestone in our church's history, we recognize the responsibility we bear to honour the past, sustain the present, and secure the future. Help us to continue building upon the unshakable foundation of Christ with faithfulness and love. May our witness shine brightly, not just in our community but far beyond, as we seek to fulfil Your will on earth. Let Your kingdom come, and Your will be done, in our lives and in the world around us.

Rev Dr. Amos B. Chewachong

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