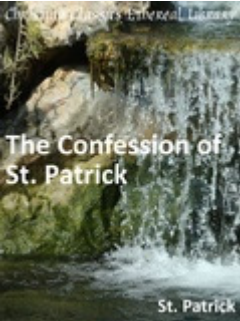




Christian Education—Reuben Larson’s Adult Class

If you haven’t attended Reuben’s SS class for a while, you are in for a special treat...(check it out!)

We have been reading “The Confession of St. Patrick,” written by St. Patrick, in our adult SS class. We also used the book “The



Real Saint Patrick,” authored by J. M. Holmes, as a reference—plus the DVD “Patrick.”

The “Confession” is of exceptional value because so few documents from the fourth century have survived.

Here, St. Patrick reveals his life story and tells of his trials and how the Holy Spirit led throughout. His writing is simple and without pretense. He tells how he rebelled against God as a youth, was taken to Ireland and enslaved for six years, then was convicted and converted by the Holy Spirit. Finally, he escaped from his enslavement, returned to his family in Wales, then became a priest before returning to Ireland to live out his remaining days ministering to the Irish. In all of this, he concludes, “It was the Holy Spirit working in my life.”

In our class when we read his words from the “Confession,” David Peterson remarked, “It’s like reading something from the Apostle Paul.” I would urge all who read this to get a copy of “Confession” and read it. I’m certain you will be amazed and blessed by Saint Patrick’s life.



L-R: Lori Johnson, Gerry Larson, Audrey Peterson, Dave Peterson, Marlene Dramdahl, Reuben Larson, and Jerome Payne. (Not pictured: Russ Maki, Manley Marcellus)

This class offered first-hand insight from Reuben’s and Gerry’s September 7-17, 2009, trip to Ireland...

Preface:

Gery and I had wanted to go to Northern Ireland for some time. Tour guide books told us that we wouldn’t be able to rent a car if we were more than 70 years of age. This caused us concern because it was our intention to research Gerry’s Ulster-Scot ancestors who came to Northern Ireland (Ulster) during the Plantation era, i.e., in the 16 & 17th centuries. We also wanted to visit the sites where St. Patrick had lived and ministered. Assuming that we couldn’t rent a car, we looked for tours that would accomplish some of our intent. To no avail. Most tours either avoided North Ireland or provided only a glimpse. Fortunately, we found a tour operator who said she could arrange for us to rent a car. All I had to do was; (1) get a physical and get a doctor to write a letter saying I was physically and mentally able to drive; (2) show that I had adequate medical insurance; (3) purchase the

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**Beginning Early
December, 2009**

“Book of Daniel”

**9:00—10:00 a.m.
Sunday Mornings
Fireside Room**



Reuben and Gerry Larson's trip to Ireland (cont)...

rental company's full insurance package; and (4) rent a car with an automatic transmission. I did all of this, but when we arrived in Dublin we were still told that the insurance company wouldn't insure me because I was 80 years old. To make a long story shorter, we prayed about it and the Lord answered our prayers. We were able to rent a car by putting money down as escrow against any damage to the car.

Each day we looked to the Lord to guide us. We, of course, had to drive on the left side of the road, using roundabouts, and often traveled on roads so narrow that if two cows met they would have locked their horns. The Lord was with us as we drove 780 miles and didn't put a scratch on the car.

For those of you who like to read about Ireland, may I suggest two books: first, two historical fiction books by Edward Rutherford, "The Princes of Ireland" and "The Rebels of Ireland;" plus a historical treatise by Thomas Cahill titled "How the Irish Saved Civilization." I also suggest that you go on-line and get "The Confession of Saint Patrick," which was probably written at the end of his life. You will be amazed by how the Holy Spirit used Saint Patrick to spread the Gospel to Ireland. The DVD "Patrick," starring Liam Neeson and Gabriel Byrne, is also well worth seeing.

The real Saint Patrick

Saint Patrick lived during the fifth century, and likely was born about 390 AD. By the eighth century had come to be revered as the patron saint of Ireland. Much has been written about him, but, unfortunately, much is also based on stories without foundation. The "Confession" is considered an *authentic* story of St. Patrick."

Patrick grew up in the home of a well-to-do deacon of the church. His home was in western Britain, probably Wales. He was a rebellious youth, and in his "Confession" he says, "I did not know the true God...I had turned away from God and His commandments."

When he was around 14-16 years old, he was captured from Britain by Irish raiders and taken as a slave to Ireland, island. During his enslavement, he tended sheep and lived outside year-round — for six long, miserable years. St. Patrick says that even then "God watched over me before I knew Him."

Gerry and I drove, on a very narrow road up to Slemish Mountain, where St. Patrick tended his sheep. As we neared the site, we were able to see

sheep grazing and a cave with people standing by it. The mountain is treeless and the only shelter would have been the cave. When we were there, it was warm and sunny, but, in Ireland, this is not typical weather. Weather would have more often been rainy, and in the winter, a damp cold.



Slemish Mountain, where Saint Patrick tended sheep on the mountain when he was a slave of the pagan

It was here that Patrick says, "Many times a day I prayed...the love of God and his fear grew stronger and stronger and my faith increased." Patrick continues, "I was like a stone lying in the mire; and He came and His mercy lifted me, and raised me up."

After six years in captivity, Patrick heard a voice saying, "Soon you will see your own country...see your ship is ready." Patrick heeded that voice, and after fleeing his master, he traveled to a port, two hundred miles away, where he found a ship. Finally, after some misadventures, Patrick reached home.

He chose to return to his studies and ultimately became a priest. After several years, he again heard a voice, this time calling him back to the land of his enslavement. And so he returned to Ireland carrying his Latin Bible, with only a little support from Christians back home.

Ireland, at that time, was a bleak, hostile place. It was isolated and untouched by outside invaders. The people who lived there were Picts (descendants of the Celtic tribes from Scotland) and Druids (who had been driven out of their land in Europe centuries before). The spoken Pictish language was a Celtic tribal form that was never written, therefore, the people were illiterate.

The people lived in wretched houses with walls built

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Reuben and Gerry Larson's trip to Ireland (cont)...

of woven branches, and the roof of thatch. Each house was warmed by a fire in the center and the smoke would seep out through the woven walls.

Gerry and I were able to see a replica of their housing at Navan Fort in the settlement of Armagh (there were no "towns" in all of Ireland). The people on the land lived as family units, using the [slash and burn technique](#) to provide for fertilizing (ash) their vegetables, and to create fields for raising their sheep. Those living on the shore sustained themselves by fishing and often raided neighboring Britain to obtain slaves.



Replica of housing at Navan Fort in Armagh: (top) women weaving by the side of the house; (left) a man tending the fire inside the house.



Their government was loosely formed into five tribal units with a High King who lived in Armagh. Their religion evolved from sun and moon worship to include Druid rites. Human sacrifice was occasionally a part of their religious practice. Fighting between tribes and keeping slaves was normal. This was the environment to which Patrick returned. The Dolmen stone (see photo, top right) was evidence of their early religious practices.

After Patrick returned to Ireland, except for Patrick's "Confession" and his "Letter to Coroticus," little is known of Patrick's life. The evidence of his life are the monasteries and abbeys that resulted from his evangelism.

We visited the Saul Church where Patrick was said to have established his first church. The word "Saul" means "barn" in Irish, and Patrick is said to have been given a barn on this site to begin his ministry.

Although Patrick's church in Britain wanted him to use Latin in his ministry, Patrick refused, and he spoke to the Irish in their own language.

To the right is a picture of the Celtic Cross at



Dolmens, stone tombs, were usually covered with earth or smaller stones to form a barrow, though in many cases that covering has weathered away, leaving only the stone "skeleton" of the burial mound intact.



Saul Church, located in the village of Saul

Monasterboice, an early Christian settlement. The Cross has carvings representing stories from the Old and New Testaments (at the time, there was no written language).

Patrick's evangelical passion for the people of Ireland—and their response to the saving grace of Jesus Christ—are evident throughout his "Confession."

He says, "How did it come to pass in Ireland that those who never had a knowledge of God, but until now always worshiped idols and things impure, have now been made a people of the Lord, and are called sons of God."



Muiriedach's Cross, the finest high cross in the whole of Ireland, is named after an abbot, Muiriedach mac Domhnaill, who died in 923 and features biblical carvings of both the Old and New Testaments of the Bible.

Christian Education—Dick Robertson’s Adult Class



The Class Offers a Look at the Bible as a Book of Symbol and Metaphor, as well as a Book of Faith and History.



(Photo by Denna Dick)

L-R: Betty Brandt Passick, Barbara Lutter, Dick Robertson, Jacky Jones, Brenda Robertson, Diane Albright, Catherine Satriano, Mike Scantlin. (Not pictured: Abby Stone, Dan Larson and Helen Curphey-Larson)

We have been studying “Saving Jesus” — video based from the “Living the Questions” series. This series features leading religious voices of our day. Join Marcus Borg, John Dominic Crossan, Matthew Fox, Amy-Jill Levine, James Forbes and a host of others for an exploration of the relevance of Jesus Christ for the third millennium

“Saving Jesus”
9:00—10:00 a.m.
Sunday Mornings
Emmaus Room

Here is Dick’s “Faith Journey” (why this class may be for you)...



“Robby,” came the shout from the boys outside, muffling the thump, thump, thump of the basketball on the concrete driveway. “Get out here right away. We still have time for a couple more games.”

“Richard,” my father’s voice overwhelmed the calls from outside. “Read the next five verses of John 3. THEN, we can all kneel and pray.” My heart sank, because, once again, devotions were going to keep me from basketball.

My faith journey began right there in the living room of every house we lived in. Family devotions versus, not just basketball, but pool halls, movies, dances, girls, and every other thing that a normal kid wanted to do, but couldn’t. Why? Because “God must be first place in your life,” or “That would set a bad example,” or “Jesus will forgive your sins, but you must pray for that forgiveness.” As a preacher’s kid

in small towns in Mississippi and West Virginia, I grew up with sin, salvation, heaven and hell, atonement and redemption, the way some kids grow up with profit and loss, football, fishing and hunting or the price of corn and beans. Those subjects were the topic of conversation around our dinner table. As the oldest son of four children, I was destined for the pulpit. I was groomed for the mission field. I was God’s gift to my parents. I was born to be a “man of God.” If my father had been Abraham, you know what would have happened to me!

So, one can easily guess, how such a background might be a deterrent to any kind of faith much less the brand of fundamentalism that my family embraced. Nor was it just our immediate family’s view. My grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins and all relatives in between believed the same things. It was simply understood that I would also believe. No doubts were allowed. Questions went

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Dick Robertson's "Faith Journey" (cont.)...

unanswered. Dissent was not tolerated. Disbelief was not an option.

Somehow, I survived. I stayed a Christian. I went to a Christian college. I kept my faith through a difficult time in the military. I kept in touch with all my family. AHP became my church. Brenda and I raised our kids as Christians here. But, all the while, lurking somewhere in the back of my brain, was this radical and subversive thought. "I'm not sure I believe any of this." "This" is all that I had been taught both as a child and as an adult. But there were these questions. Was the Bible truly the authoritative and inerrant Word of God? Is it really the record of actual geological events which show us the world is only six thousand years old and tells us that God destroyed His entire creation by a flood save for Noah's family and, of course, the animals? Did incredible events like the parting of the Red Sea, the fall of Jericho, and Moses receiving the Ten Commandments actually occur? Much more importantly, were the stories of Jesus' birth and resurrection and his role as God incarnate plausible in today's world? Were the only people saved from eternal damnation those who accepted Christ?

Sure enough, as I grew older, I could no longer ignore these thoughts and I begin to ask questions of anyone who would listen. Most people wouldn't listen. They didn't want to hear skeptical questions about something as vague and illusory as faith. At some point, not so long ago, I begin to wrestle with the fact that I might be unable to remain a Christian and be true to myself as a rational, thoughtful human being who lived in the 21st century.

Sue Tucker (wife of Rev. David Tucker, pastor at AHP

2000-2008) was willing to listen to me. She said she had the same questions. She, too, she said, was somewhat skeptical about what we are asked to believe. She too, found herself disagreeing with much of the dogma of traditional Christian theology. But she also said, handing me a small book, "Here is an author who has been very helpful to me." My faith journey was about to take a dramatic turn.

Through Sue and later, David, I found Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan, Bart Erhman, Karen Armstrong and others who are writing about a different way to study the Bible and a different way to believe. They write about reading the Bible as symbol and metaphor rather than fact and history. They explore God through the eyes of other religions and other cultures. For them, Christianity is not the exclusive way to understand God. There is not, as I had so often heard, "one way." For them, there are many ways to God. They write about the importance of trying to understand how Jesus asked us to live on this earth, and to not "set our sights on heaven," above all else. For them, and now for me, the message of Jesus is intended to teach us about life on this earth. It is a message about how we are to live for the time we are given. We are to celebrate joy together. When we suffer pain, sickness, bereavement and loss, we are to help sustain each other in those difficult times. His is a message to teach us to love one another as we love ourselves.

My faith journey now seems no longer to look to heaven and away from hell, but it looks to my fellow journeyers, today, tomorrow and for every day that I am given on this earth.

PULPIT SUPPLY



Rev. Scott Cartwright provided pulpit supply on Oct. 25th. His sermon, "Squeezing the Most Out of Life," was full of humor, and hopefully, we will have the pleasure of another visit in the not too distant future (Scott also lead worship at AHP in July). He presently serves full-time as the Director of Spiritual Care at the Cerenity Care Center of White Bear Lake, and on-call chaplain for HealthEast and for Children's Hospitals of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

Rev. Jean Greenwood

provided pulpit supply on Nov. 15th. Photo L-R: Comfort Ndiappi, Pastor Greenwood, Ezia Kum, Comfort Nde, Brian Kum (boy), and Emily Kum (girl). Granmother Ezia, Brian's and Emily's great grand ma has been visiting AHP for several weeks and will be returning to Cameroon in the near future.

