

Beautiful Feet (2022)

Fiona Stewart

Beautiful feet scale mountains
Ascending the glorious heights
Then, slipping and scrambling,
Down through the scree
Carry stories to share
Of what has been seen
And what yet will be.

Beautiful feet are toughened and sore
From the long, steady pace
Of forgiveness and grace,
Roughened and worn from plodding care,
They long to immerse in the cool of the day
Soak in pools of glacial melt,
But instead are restored
In simpler ways
By living water that streams
And makes beautiful once more.

Then, as evening returns,
So do beautiful feet,
To be washed and made clean once again,
Steeping in basins of

Beautiful Feet

Tender invocations
Whispered affirmations:
You have a part with me still,
Come apart with me,
Be still.

Then, dried and prepared,
They step out again
In steadfast pursuit of good news.
For beautiful feet are just feet
Made beautiful—
Ordinary feet
In pursuit of the true.

Faithful follower's feet,
They carry good news,
These pedestrian proclaimers of peace
Tarry and ramble,
Accompany and amble,
Sharing good tidings,
Striding through challenge,
They signal salvation
Kickstart liberation
By means of the good news they bear.

Everyday feet made beautiful
step
by
faithful
step—

How beautiful are such feet.

Foreword

It is a particular privilege and pleasure to write the foreword to this *festschrift* for my friend and brother in Christ, Jeremy Middleton. I first met Jerry when, as a student in Edinburgh, he started to attend Holyrood Abbey where James Philip ministered. Jerry was one of a number of students who, after a Sunday evening service, came to our home for food and fellowship. Among these students was Susan who was later to become his wife. I well remember a comment from that time made about Jerry by one of his friends, “His spiritual discipline is frightening!” I took that to be intended as a huge compliment. I, along with many others, have borne witness to the intensity of Jerry’s commitment to Christ and to the Christian gospel throughout the varied ministries of his life.

Jerry’s first parish ministry was in Kildrum Parish Church in Cumbernauld. This was a tough and difficult challenge. Three months ago I had the pleasure of meeting a former member of that church, now a very active and committed worker in the Free Church in Cumbernauld. She spoke so warmly of Jerry’s faithful pastoring and care of that congregation and of his passionate biblical teaching to which she owed her conversion under God.

Several chapters in Part I of this tribute will provide details of Jerry’s subsequent and strategic ministry at Davidson’s Mains Parish Church in Edinburgh and at Gilcomston Church in

Aberdeen. This follows the introductory chapters which provide fascinating insights into Jerry the man, from the perspective of family members.

Parts II and III of the *festschrift* contain essays covering a range of theological, biblical and pastoral issues contributed by a variety of friends and fellow ministers who are involved in evangelical leadership today. The inclusion of these important and stimulating chapters in this book are further expressions of gratitude and respect for Jerry as a co-worker in the cause of advancing God's kingdom in this secular age.

My personal contact with Jerry in recent years has been in his wider Christian responsibilities. His gift of spiritual leadership was recognised by the Trustees of the Crieff Ministers Fellowship and so, as Chair, I was able personally to pass on the baton to Jerry at the close of the January Conference of the Fellowship in 2013. This was not an easy period in the history of the Fellowship as it approached fifty years of its existence at a time of uniquely difficult and divisive issues in the Church of Scotland.

Jerry worked hard to promote "Crieff" priorities. Especially in the current context, he has sought to emphasise unity around the gospel, despite differing denominational affiliations. Crieff exists to pastor the pastors through the core activities of biblical exposition, corporate prayer and sympathetic support through the sharing of needs and news. This has been followed rigorously at every conference. Jerry's leadership, marked by humility and graciousness, energy and discipline, has along with the support of other Trustees, allowed the Conference to continue, despite added financial challenges and lockdown restrictions. For two years the Conference went online resulting in the largest attendances worldwide in the history of the Crieff Fellowship!

Jerry, we salute you as Mr Valiant for Truth. This *festschrift* highlights a special birthday celebration organised by your family. It is also a marker of the esteem and respect in which you are held by many. We thank you for modelling single-minded,

Foreword

wholehearted Christian discipleship and leadership. We trust that, along with Susan, you will experience God's ongoing hand of blessing upon you in the days which lie ahead in His will.

Martin Allen
2023