



# ***GRASPING THE NETTLE***

## **NEWSLETTER**

**Spring / Summer 2024**

### **Easter: the Death of Death**

As Easter 2024 draws close, with its message of resurrection and hope, the world continues to experience an ongoing epidemic of suffering, death and various forms of oppression. The devastation to life and property resulting from wars in Ukraine and the Middle East continue to appal; the western economy is being punctured by attacks on shipping in the Suez Canal; life in Afghanistan



sees the continuing suppression of the life chances of women; Lebanon and Haiti are being



Ukrainian Resistance. Photo credit: [www.mil.gov.ua](http://www.mil.gov.ua).

torn apart by conflicting political factions; Taiwan trembles for its future. Meantime, the UK and USA are increasingly polarised along political lines. In normally stable Europe, apprehension about war on an unthinkable scale stalks the land. Happy Easter?

Imagine an alien band of space travellers discovering the cosmic jewel that is earth. Situated in the so-called Goldilocks

zone, they deduce it has given birth to intelligent life, technological sophistication and even space travel. How privileged its inhabitants must feel; how they must relish and treasure the wonder of their existence.

In reality, earth's population in masochistic fashion attacks and destroys neighbours, while systematically harming the planet. Imagine the appalled and mystified reaction of the aliens on encountering the truth. Humanity's leaders—who must bear the burden of responsibility for the fate of the planet and its population—are driving it closer and closer





The Garden Tomb in East Jerusalem

to annihilation. If a futurist were to chart earth's likely trajectory, it would predict utter disaster.

And... in the midst of such torment... the celebration of Easter. It is the ultimate assurance that destruction of the creation is not part of God's ultimate plan.

The resurrection is the means of rescuing creation and humanity from itself.

In East Jerusalem, there is a walled garden which contains a tomb, around 2000 years old, carved from rock. The tomb is empty. None of these characteristics make it truly unique but it is typical of the kind of tomb on loan to Jesus over a weekend. In the face of world crises, what it represents seems a paltry tool with which to rescue humanity. That it will, is the astonishing Christian claim. The reason for believing the truth of the resurrection is not that it brings a powerful political peace-keeping strategy but that it deals with the world's root problem: death.

Writing about the resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul states it memorably: "*Death has been **swallowed up** in victory!*" The victory is decisive and comprehensive and that forms the basis for rejoicing amidst the current perils of life. In that sense there can be a Happy Easter that is deeply worth celebrating!

*Examining evidence for the resurrection is a central part of the cinematic film Against the Tide, featuring John Lennox. Read on to discover how the film is expanding its reach across the country.*



# A View From The Chair

By Very Rev Dr Martin Fair



It seems as if not a day goes by when there's not another scientific breakthrough of one kind or another being announced. Whether it's the discovery of a new galaxy or plans being revealed for the developing of a bigger and better particle accelerator, there's always something to keep us interested – that is, those of us who take an interest in the advancement of knowledge and the deepening of understanding.

But this happens alongside the endless slaughter that is beamed into our homes every evening from the world's trouble spots. And it happens in the context of the ongoing warming of the earth's atmosphere and the struggles for daily survival endured by those at the bottom of the economic heap.

And there you have the ultimate conundrum.

We humans: capable of so much alongside so much harm.

We humans: fantastic yet flawed and fallible.

I'm glad to have scientific thinking to help me towards a better understanding of the material realities I see around me and when I gaze into a star-studded night sky. But I'm gladder still to have the cross – not to explain the mixed-up mess of the human condition but to stand in the middle of it. Life and death, sin and salvation, despair and hope, light and darkness, all caught up in the cross and in the empty tomb that followed it.

Friends, if you're a supporter of Grasping the Nettle and a regular at our online events, you'll know that we cover an incredible range of subjects – and that we bring together some of the best and brightest minds. That's what we'll continue to do as we seek to offer deep and thoughtful responses to life as we know it, in all its complexity.

But everything that we do has its start and finish in Jesus—the one who is the resurrection and the life. May you know his peace and presence this Easter and even in the midst of all that life amounts to, his joy.

Easter blessings,

Martin

## Grasping the Nettle Online

Visit the Watch section of the website to experience the variety of topics addressed by visiting experts.

[www.graspingthenettle.org/watch](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/watch)



GTN is an interdenominational initiative of churches in Scotland, using Exploring the God Question as its key resource.

It is administered by Search for Truth Charitable Trust (Charity No: SC039465. Company No: SC340300),

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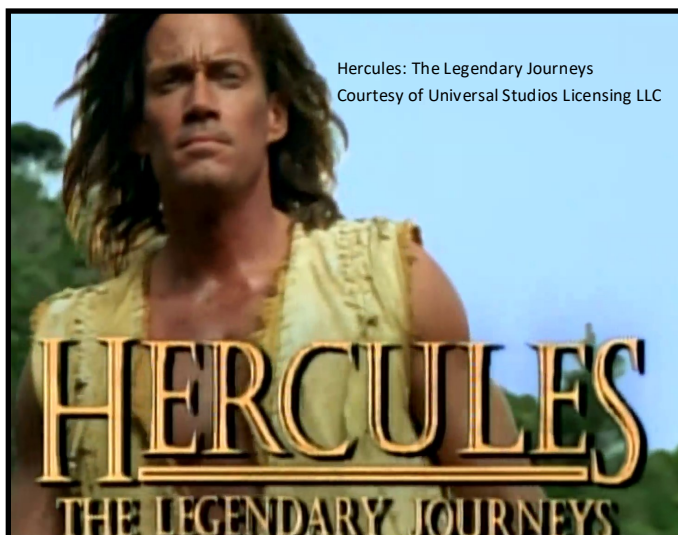


## Join the Rising Tide

***Against the Tide*** is well out of its box in Scotland as Christian leaders across the country increasingly grasp the opportunity to screen the movie in churches and in cinemas. Produced by Hamilton based *Kharis Productions Ltd*, the film was commissioned by *Pensmore Films* of Virginia, USA for release in cinemas across America.



The multi-award-winning film features Hollywood actor **Kevin Sorbo** (best known for his starring role in the international TV series *Hercules: The Legendary Journeys*) and Oxford Professor **John Lennox**, famously the representative of Christianity in an international series of high profile debates with atheists across the world.







## High Tide in Helensburgh

In mid February, the Scottish town of Helensburgh saw the first 2024 screening of the film with the event held in **The Tower Digital Arts Centre Cinema**. Organised by Bethesda Evangelical Church, this followed an earlier screening in their church building.

*“Having decided to hire the local cinema, we wanted to ensure that not all the seats were taken up by church members,” said elder Jim McLatchie. “Our prior screening allowed our congregation to see the film and motivated them to invite friends to the cinema.”* In the cinema 75% of the seats were occupied by people from the wider community.

The event drew the interest of the Helensburgh Advertiser, heightening the profile of the local church and the screening initiative in the area.

### Against the Tide documentary to have screening in Helensburgh Cinema

1st February

CINEMA ENTERTAINMENT EVENTS LEISURE HELENSBURGH

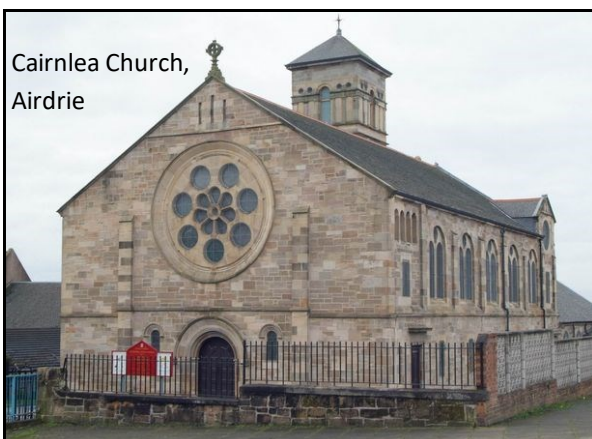


The documentary explores Christianity through a historical and scientific lens  
(Image: Bethesda Christian Fellowship)

# HELENSBURGH ADVERTISER

## A Wave of Interest In Airdrie

Meantime in Airdrie, Cairnlea Church of Scotland was the venue for Against the Tide on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March. Other churches also advertised the event. The Airdrie and Coatbridge Advertiser gave welcome coverage of the event in



Cairnlea Church,  
Airdrie

response to a press release.

The church's 7000 lumens projector gave high quality resolution on the screen. Where possible, Blu-ray is the best source of projection outside cinemas.

[www.againstthetidemovie.org](http://www.againstthetidemovie.org)

### Airdrie & Coatbridge ADVERTISER



## Surging onto the 'Big Screens' in Hamilton and Kilmarnock



During Holy Week, Hamilton's VUE Cinema will host two screenings of ***Against the Tide*** on 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> March. An initiative of ministers in Motherwell, the initial booking was for a theatre with a capacity of 100. It was immediately sold out and a second evening was arranged but demand continued to outstrip capacity and so both theatres were upgraded to larger ones within the cinema complex. Now the film will have an audience of over 350.

*"In days when the general narrative that people read about church is one of shrinking and closure of buildings it is essential to have a series of activities*

*that tell a different story,"* said Rev Derek Pope of North Motherwell Parish Church. *"The impressive uptake of tickets shows that there is a real interest in exploring the foundations on which Christianity rests."*



A cinema screen at Vue in Hamilton, awaiting *Against the Tide* and its capacity audience

### The Tide Flows On

The day following the second screening in Hamilton, the film moves on to the Odeon Cinema in Kilmarnock—27th March.

Kilmarnock organiser, Rev George Lind commented, *"This film brings into focus the evidence for the truth claims of Christianity. Our aim is to share it as widely as possible across Kilmarnock, with the support of churches in the community. To date, tickets are selling so well that should the Kilmarnock Odeon screening be sold out, arrangements are in place for a screening in a Kilmarnock Church a few evenings later."*

Rev George Lind is the GTN Liaison Officer. Anyone considering arranging a screening of the film in their local cinema is invited to contact him for advice via [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org).





## Stimulating Waves of Interest



The case for Christianity...  
... in cinematic technicolour...  
[www.againstthetidemovie.org](http://www.againstthetidemovie.org)

*"Faced with the question 'why do you believe what you believe?' many Christians might struggle to offer a convincing response," said the film's Producer/Director Iain Morris. "We believe that Against the Tide provides an answer well worth considering, by believers and sceptics alike. It puts Christianity back firmly on the public agenda."*

### Checking Out The Evidence

In *Against the Tide*, we follow the story of why John Lennox is so convinced that Christianity is true but also experience how he has publicly stood up in opposition to some of the world's most famous contemporary atheists. Narrating the film, and accompanying John on his journey, is Hollywood actor Kevin Sorbo.

### The Itinerary

Made initially for cinema in the USA, the multi-award-winning film was shot in the UK, the USA and, notably, in Israel which is the context for the whole of the second part of the film, with evidence for the resurrection of Jesus being a prominent feature. But before the focus switches to the Middle East, viewers are taken on a journey through time and across the universe to consider how the wonders of our existence point to the mind of a creator.

### Against the Tide and You

As more and more people across the UK are given the opportunity to view the film why not arrange a screening in your area in a cinema or a local church? To begin the discussion write to [info@kharisproductions.com](mailto:info@kharisproductions.com) or [info@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:info@graspingthenettle.org).

## Current Options

While the custom made environs of a cinema provide the best viewing and audio experience, *Against the Tide* is also accessible on DVD/Blu-Ray as well as to web-stream.

DVD is the route selected by Rev Klaus Buwert for a Maundy Thursday screening of *Against the Tide* in Dunnichen, Letham and Kirkden Church, Forfar. As with many other screenings all churches in the community are invited to combine to make it a joint event.



### The Two-Part Option

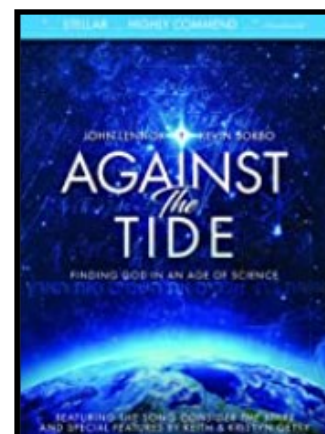
Exclusively in web-streaming mode, users can select to view the film in two distinct parts—a two episode television documentary series format. This makes it easy to show the film over two evenings, whether consecutive or otherwise, or take a break for refreshments before settling down to watch part two. Where viewing is from the legendary discomfort of a traditional pew, the two-part option has obvious advantages! However the location needs to have Wi-Fi in order to access the internet for online streaming of the two part version.

### Waves of Enthusiasm

The award-winning film, also with a 71% five-star rating on Amazon, is being increasingly screened across the country. Rev Alison Meikle of Zetland Parish Church, Grangemouth commented *"It was a brilliant compelling informative film. All who came along thoroughly enjoyed it so much they would ... watch it again."*

### Practical information

Public screening of *Against the Tide* should have official permission granted by applying for the inexpensive screening licence. Simply give the details of the event to [filmlicensing@equippingthechurch.com](mailto:filmlicensing@equippingthechurch.com). Electronic promotional material is available and your event's publicity can readily be customised. Electronic or physical tickets can be supplied. Screenings in cinema require a Digital Cinema Package (DCP). This can be supplied free of charge, on request, from [info@kharisproductions.com](mailto:info@kharisproductions.com) or from [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org). Do also explore the website for further information and the opportunity to view John Lennox in interview in Jerusalem during the making of the film.





## GTN Online: Behind the Scenes

When GTN Chairman Martin Fair appears on screen at 7.30pm on an evening with GTN Online there is much behind the scenes that has preceded the event. None more so than for the GTN session on 20th February: *How Marvellous Muscles Keep Us Moving*—part of the WOW series from GTN.

Some weeks before the event, presenter and medical research scientist Prof Chris Packard met with the production team to consider format and content.



Step 1: Presenter Chris Packard brain storms content with Karen Rollins. The presentation is subsequently edited and structured along with a list of additional material required.



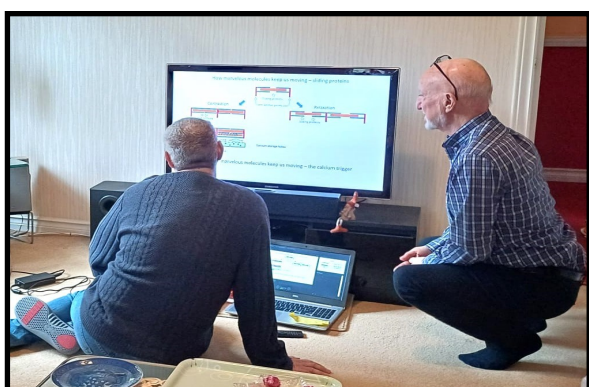
Step 2: After detailed discussion, there is the production of the PowerPoint slides and video inserts with Martin Morris—including the fascinating Bodies Exhibition from New York, courtesy of Kharis Productions' archive.



The Bodies Exhibition, New York—where muscles are on display!



Step 3: Filming of additional content—in this case a waltz and a jive! Performing the waltz: co-presenter Kevin Lafferty and Karen Rollins. Complementing Prof Packard's explanation of how our muscles work, sports coach Kevin taught how to keep them in good order.



Step 4: A review of the presentation and final amendments

You can visit or re-live any of GTN's online events at [www.graspingthenettle.org/watch](http://www.graspingthenettle.org/watch).

## From Global...

### The God Question Series Travels The World



The God Question series was designed for television broadcast.

With the exception of the UK—where the BBC claims to have ‘already done programmes on God’—the extent of television broadcast of The God Question across the world has exceeded all expectations.

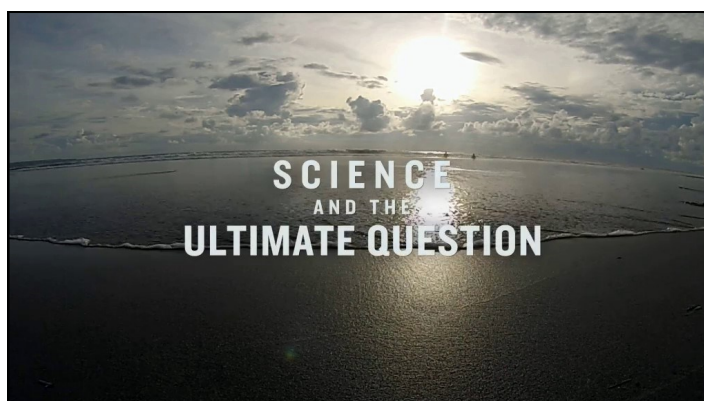
#### Worldwide Transmission

From the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation to NRK Norway and SVT Sweden, to the Czech Republic’s FTV Prima, Thailand’s Next Steps Company and the South African Broadcasting Corporation, and many more, hundreds of millions of people have had the opportunity to view the series in their living-rooms. Many Video-on-Demand companies with worldwide coverage have also bought the series. This information is based on the latest report from The God Question’s international distributor Abacus Media. Where the programmes require dubbing or subtitling the national broadcasters take care of it themselves!

Chairman of Search or Truth Charitable Trust, Prof John Spence, said, *“The Board is thrilled by the extent to which a speculative idea many years ago has become a worldwide reality. While it’s very gratifying to be making an impact internationally, our ambition is to see our own country of Scotland fully benefitting from the use of our resources.”*

#### New Global Series

Abacus Media is now distributing the much more recent **Science and the Ultimate Question** series. It has already been sold to Australia and New Zealand, the Czech Republic, Croatia, Serbia and more.



With the series available with Chinese subtitles an important target territory remains the Far East.

#### The Global Series For All

The non-broadcast version of the series, **Science, God and the Search for Meaning and Truth** can be accessed at [www.thegodquestion.tv/global](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/global).



## ...To Local

### Supporting the Church in Scotland

*GTN Liaison Officer Rev George Lind writes...*

It was a pleasure to be invited recently to an introductory evening with a group in Bellshill, about to launch into our Exploring the God Question series. Such evenings offer valuable preparation for the encounters groups are about to face with our fascinating (and admittedly fast-paced) series. There is the chance to explain who the various film personalities are and how their names are colour-coded on screen to match their



Rev George Lind with the group exploring the God question in Bellshill

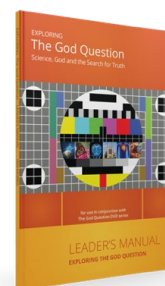
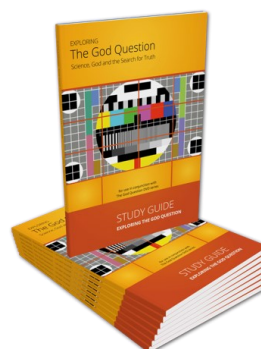
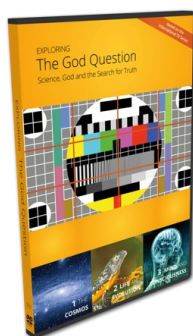
respective worldviews (for we give a fair hearing to quite a variety of contributors).

Further, this session provides the opportunity to explain why the Study Guide (available as PDF and/or physical product) is set out as it is, with its system of coloured 'dots' each time the film presentation moves on to deal with a fresh aspect of the subject matter. These evenings also give the opportunity to reassure groups that whatever worldview or belief system might be represented in the company, these will be heard with respect.

Encouragement is given throughout the whole series to follow where the evidence leads. I was welcomed most warmly into this group and felt right away that I was among friends. They all seemed to relax when I divulged that, like them, I am not a high-powered scientist and that also like them, I like to open my mind to evidence-based material.

I would urge prospective ETGQ groups to design their programmes so that the series runs for 7 evenings, the first being solely an introductory evening which I should be delighted to facilitate, whether in-person or, if the distance is too great, online. Contact me via [office@graspingthenettle.org](mailto:office@graspingthenettle.org). Access the series at [www.thegodquestion.tv/explore](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/explore).

The programmes of the series are available on DVD/Blu-ray or to web-stream. The Leader's Manual and Study Guide are available as PDF or as books.



Exploring the God Question resources

## Bridge Building in Queensferry



Most think of Queensferry as the location of three parallel bridges but there's more than one kind of bridge being built in the vicinity. Fittingly it's two engineers who are involved in constructing an ecumenical partnership focused on unpacking

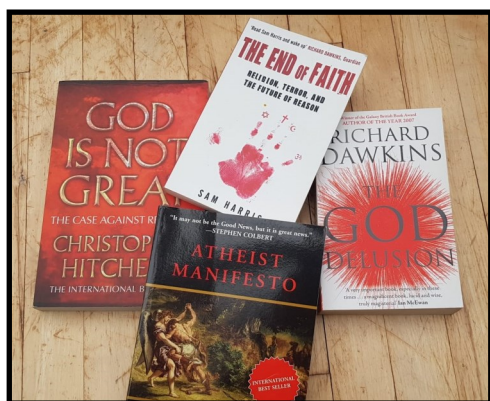
Exploring the God Question with a group of up to 21 participants drawn from three churches in Dalmeny and Queensferry. They include the local Episcopal church and two Church of Scotland congregations. Co-organiser Guy Douglas comments *"Most of the group is already church-connected, but a few participants have brought along their less-church-connected partners."* Guy and 'fellow' engineer Liz Laing lead the group.

### The Evening's Format

Guy comments further:

*We're using a pleasant carpeted church hall with a large TV screen. We offer tea/coffee, etc from 7pm with chat and welcome; intro and watch the episode theatre-style from 7:30pm; a break to refill cups after the programme and then discussion. The usual starter has been, "Do you have any immediate reactions to the viewing, anything you agreed with or that struck you as challenging?" Starting discussion this way has not been difficult. Various reactions usually follow quickly and easily, revealing some interesting observations that open up other questions and avenues to pursue. We also have available questions in the accompanying Study Guide which are very helpful.*

### Book Table with a Difference



The atheist worldview

Perhaps a unique feature of this group's operation is the availability of a table with books to borrow. They represent contrasting worldviews from Dawkins and Dennett to Lennox and Collins.



The Christian worldview



## For Starters and Para Principiantes

Although The God Question series began life as documentaries, subsequently a reformatted 'fast-track' version was produced. Known as 'The God Question for Starters', and just released in Spanish, it comprises three programmes, each of them containing 10 extracts from the related God Question series. Sharp and punchy, each short segment ends with an onscreen question.

The English version of For Starters can be found at [www.thegodquestion.tv/explore](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/explore).



### Onwards to Spain



Toledo—the ancient capital of Spain

On a recent visit to Spain, Producer Iain Morris was able to share how the new resource could be used within ministry initiatives there. The full documentary series, 'La Cuestión de Dios', and the 'Para Principiantes' (For Starters) version are both available at

[www.thegodquestion.tv/es/explore](http://www.thegodquestion.tv/es/explore)

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## Supporting GTN Financially

Thanks to all who support GTN by participating in events, promotion of activities and, not least of all, with financial support. Donations to GTN can be given at

[www.graspingtenettle.org/donate](http://www.graspingtenettle.org/donate).

