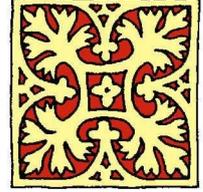




PORTREE PARISH  
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



SUMMER  
2023



## Church Office Bearers

		<b>Telephone</b>
Minister	Rev S Fazakas	611868
Session Clerk	Mr W Marshall	650405
Roll Keeper	Miss D McEwan	612266
Treasurer	Mr W Marshall	650405
Clerk to the Congregational Board	Mrs M MacKay	612690
Fabric Convenor	Mr N Bruce	612480
Hall Convenor	Mrs H Quaye	612071
Crèche	Mrs S Beaton	613075
	Mrs M Gillies	01470 532378
	Mrs A Smith	611061
Safeguarding Coordinator	Mrs F Marshall	650405
Sunday School	Mrs M Mackenzie	613007
	Mrs K MacKinnon	612159
	Mr C Reeve	650252
Prayer Secretary	Mrs C Sutherland	640318
Prayer Fellowship Convenor	Mr L Gillies	611837
Life & Work Organiser	Mrs M MacLaren	612749
Church Officers	The Elders	
Magazine Coordinators	Mr W Marshall	650405
	Mrs F Marshall	650405

## OUR REFORMED CHRISTIAN FAITH

After hundreds of years of persecution, and then victorious expansion, Christianity gradually developed into a strong hierarchical institution rather than remaining the faithful fellowship of Jesus' disciples. The Church became **deformed** by earthly challenges of power, money, and ceremonies, neglecting its real call to be the Body of Christ in the world. It had to be **reformed** to its initial mission. The main intention of the Protestant Reformation movement of the 16<sup>th</sup> century was no more than to **restore** the Church's fundamental biblical and spiritual values. It all started on 31<sup>st</sup> October 1517, when a monk-priest called Martin Luther nailed 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg (Germany), wanting to challenge the abuses of his church, and call it back to the Scriptures. As the Rome-centred leadership (Vatican) refused any changes by excommunicating Luther from the Church, the Protest-movement gradually became what we know as the **Protestant Reformed Church**. The Reformers like **Luther, Zwingli, Calvin, Melancton, Cranmer, Knox** and many others began to define the fundamental truths of a biblical Reformation. This process was finalized during the following hundreds of years into five statements of the true biblical faith named **The Five Solas** – in Latin, meaning: “ONLY” – **By Grace alone, Through Faith alone, In Christ alone, According to Scripture alone, and For God's Glory alone.**

My magazine message this time wants to remind you all these five fundamental truths of our Protestant Reformed Faith.

1. **– BY GRACE ALONE.** – GRACE is the cause of our Salvation: *...it is by Grace you have been saved, through faith – and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no-one can boast...* (Ephesians 2: 8-9). Salvation is a free gift of God to man. It is given by God's Grace alone, and not through any merit on the part of the Christian; as Martin Luther said: - *God alone by His grace through Christ justifies sinners.*

**GRACE = God's Riches At Christ Expense.**

2. **– BY FAITH ALONE.** – FAITH in Salvation is a free gift: *Clearly no-one is justified before God by the Law, because “the righteous will live by faith”* (Galatians 3: 11). We are judged righteous in the sight of God purely on the basis of our faith. Salvation is not based on any human effort or good deeds. Martin Luther argued: - *...this is the chief article of the whole Christian doctrine, which comprehends the understanding of all godliness.*

**FAITH = Forsaking All I Trust Him.**

3. **- CHRIST ALONE.** Emphasises the role of Jesus in our Salvation: *...you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light* (1 Peter 2: 9). Protestants insist that no other special form of priesthood is necessary to replace Salvation through Christ because Jesus is the One who offers access to God, not a human leading power. Jesus is our “HIGH PRIEST” who intercedes on our behalf before the Father, being able to sympathize with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4: 15).

4. - **SCRIPTURE ALONE.** THE BIBLE is the only infallible source of Divine revelation and the final authority for matters of faith and practice in Church. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3: 16 -17).* The Bible is clear to all people regarding the essential truths of the Christian Gospel of Salvation. Through the Holy Spirit, individuals can, by themselves interpret the Scriptures responsibly, as Salvation is contained within the Bible alone. Since Reformation, the Bible has been translated into 724 languages, the New Testament into 1,617, and smaller portions of the Bible into other 1,248 languages (from: Wicliffe Global Alliance,- September 2022).
5. - **TO THE GLORY OF GOD ALONE.** The Glory of God is the goal of human life. So, *whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10: 31).* In essence, this summarises the other four statements. Our Christian attitude should always be of total humility, whether it is in our secular vocation or our praise on a Sunday morning: - TO GOD ALONE BE ALL THE GLORY. As our Salvation is by Grace alone then God shall receive all the Glory. Ulrich Zwingli, the Swiss Reformer once said: *We cannot but admit that not even the least thing takes place unless it is ordered by God...Indeed, nothing is too small in us or in any other creature, not to be ordered by the all-knowing and all-powerful providence of God.*

While the Reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century wrote of all these FIVE SOLAS in various period writings, they are not all together until the 20<sup>th</sup> century through our Protestant Reformed Systematic Theology.

Within all the changes, chances, and challenges , either in personal, family and church life, I just hope and pray that these five fundamental TRUTHS of our Christian Faith will always have the final say... if we truly believe in Him: **The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, Holy Trinity, one, eternal God. Amen.**

Sandor, your Minister.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **A Prayer for September**

Dear Father in heaven,

September is a time of change, a change of season, changes in many areas of our lives as a new term begins and new opportunities present themselves. It can be a time of challenge and uncertainty for many of us as well as excitement.

Thank you Lord, that You never change, Your promises never change, Your Holy-Spirit inspired Word never changes. You are constant and rock-solid, always.

Help us to remember that You make all things new when we put our trust in Jesus, You give us new life and new ways of understanding, but help us also to remember that You never contradict Your revealed self. Help us always to check out our thinking with what You say in Your Word. Help us to be faithful to You as we take each step forward, each new day.

In Jesus name, Amen

*By Daphne Kitching*

## **SESSION CLERK'S REPORT**

Since the publication of the Easter edition of the church magazine, Kirk Session has met on five separate occasions – one of which was a joint meeting of the Sessions of Portree and Kilmuir & Stenscholl. The sole or main topic of discussion at each of these meetings was the forthcoming Union of Portree with Kilmuir & Staffin.

In addition to the above, the presbytery of Lochcarron-Skye met on three occasions to discuss arrangements for Unions and / or boundary changes for seven of the eight parishes in the area. Only Strath & Sleat parish is to be unaffected by changes.

We are now at the stage where the Basis of Deferred Union for Portree, Kilmuir and Staffin has been approved, and with permission to call a minister *pro tem* of Kilmuir and Stenscholl, the next step will be to constitute a Nominating Committee for the vacant post.

The successful applicant would initially be minister of Kilmuir & Stenscholl until Sandor's retirement, after which the person would become minister of the united parish of Portree, Kilmuir and Staffin Church of Scotland. The agreement has also been reached that the Portree Manse will continue to be the manse for the parish.

At this important time in the life of our church we ask for the support of all worshippers in our three churches to be united and that all pray for a successful outcome to our search for a new minister.

Another matter that has been discussed is the lack of young people in church - especially in our Sunday School.

We are blessed with a wonderful team of leaders who make the teaching about Jesus and his life an exciting and enjoyable experience for our young people.

We are equally blessed with another team who are available to operate a crèche facility which allows parents to attend morning worship while their child or children are at Sunday School.

Two of our elders are hoping to arrange a visit to Bun-Sgoil Ghàidlig Phort Rìgh to talk to the young people about the church.

Young people are the future of our church, and we would ask members of our congregation – and any others who read this article – to encourage any children or grand-children to come along to the church at 11.00 am on any Sunday during school term time.

God bless you all.

Bill

## **TREASURER'S REPORT**

Continuing with the forthcoming Union of Portree and Kilmuir & Stenscholl parishes, and looking at the financial situation, the following are agreed :-

- The property and funds belonging to or held on behalf of each congregation shall belong to the united charge and transference of funds to accounts under the new name of the parish will be effected.
- For the interim period until October 2027, Kilmuir & Stenscholl has confirmed that it has the funds available to meet the costs associated with the appointment of a minister. After the Union, the *Giving to Grow* contributions for the joint charge will be met from the combined assets of the two former parishes.

The current financial position of Portree Church continues to be sound.

For the first seven months of the year our General Fund income has shown a very slight increase on that for the corresponding period in 2022, At the same time, expenditure from the General Fund has decreased by 6%.

Increased usage of the Church Hall has been very welcome and has generated increased income compared to 2022. The reduction in frequency of cleaning and sanitising the church has led to decreased expenditure.

Income to the Renovation Fund is similar to that for 2022 with expenditure to date being our donation to the DEC Turkey-Syria Earthquake Appeal and the cost of flowers in church.

A full financial report is issued to all Trustees of the church (Kirk Session and Congregational Board members) at each meeting held, with trends and explanations of any necessary items detailed by the Treasurer. In addition, the finances for each full year are published in the Annual Accounts which are made available to members of the congregation and posted on the church website.

We are extremely fortunate to have such a generous congregation who give not only for our commitments to the Church of Scotland, but also to the upkeep of our church buildings and to charitable causes.

For this, and your continued support, I thank you.

Bill

## **“I HAVE A DREAM”**

Sixty years ago, on 28<sup>th</sup> August 1963, Dr Martin Luther King Jr delivered his famous “I Have a Dream” speech from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial during the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom. The civil rights rally was attended by about 200,000 supporters, including many A-list film celebrities released temporarily by their studios.

His words influenced the Federal government to take more direct action to create racial equality, in for instance the Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Fair Housing Act of 1968.

King had been advised not to use the Dream format at Washington. He had used the idea before, and his adviser, the Revd Wyatt Tee Walker, described it as “hackneyed and trite.” The idea was to use a new speech with the theme “normalcy never again.” But King was prompted by gospel singer Mahalia Jackson to re-use the Dream idea, and he went ahead with it, much to Walker’s dismay. But it had an enormous impact and is now regarded as perhaps one of the most influential speeches in American history.

Martin Luther King Jr, born in 1929, was an American Baptist minister who became one of the most prominent leaders in the American civil rights movement from 1955 until his assassination, apparently by James Earl Ray, on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1968, in Memphis, Tennessee.

The autopsy revealed that although he was only 39 years old, King “had the heart of a 60-year-old”. He had said shortly before being shot that he was not afraid of dying.

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1964, King had won the Nobel Peace Prize for combating racial inequality through non-violent resistance.



## THE COMMUNITY FOODBANK

In Matthew 25 v35&36 we have these words 'For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me'.

Powerful and thought-provoking words. As Christians we have a duty to look after the physical well-being of others as well as the spiritual well-being of those around us. This leads us the words 'Do unto others as you would have them do to you'. This is a central teaching of Jesus, often referred to as the Golden Rule. These words are a command based on the words of Jesus in The Sermon On The Mount. Jesus summarises the sermon by stating that the kingdom is not just about feeling empathy but living it out. Matthew 7 v 12 has these words 'so in everything, do to others as you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets'.

We are called by Christ to speak the gospel while also administering and caring for the less fortunate. Christ sees our acts of kindness and mercy, no matter how big or small. It is about acts of kindness, compassion, and gentleness we do without having to think about them. What we do for others we do for Jesus. We will then receive God's mercy and love. We should remember all our possessions are a gift from God. We are custodians on our earthly journey. The Lord gives but he can also take at any time. We should pray with thanks for physical and spiritual blessings we receive.

Does society at times look at those in need and not help because they believe they deserve the situation they are in? Yes, some are in the situation they find themselves in because of their actions. We however are not to judge or condemn them. Only God can judge because his standards are perfection. Our role is to show God's love by showing compassion towards them when we do we become Christ-like. Our service towards others reflects the condition of our hearts. In service we are ministering to Jesus himself.

We are still surprised how often we get asked 'Do we really need a Foodbank in Skye?'. The answer sadly is a very definite, YES. It takes courage to ask for help and certainly we have not had anyone come to us who did not merit assistance. People tend however to leave requests to times when it is approaching desperation. We would prefer earlier intervention so that they could use funds they have for heating etc. While we are happy to receive direct requests for help, it is preferred when 'clients' go directly to agencies we support such as Citizens Advice Bureau. They are trained to assist with other support such as possible grant fundings.

The last year has been challenging with the economic crisis, fuel costs affecting many. We have witnessed a number of new clients, many who are in employment. Worrying is the number of households who require long term support while historically support tended to be short term.

We are fortunate in having a strong bank of volunteers, with some also being on management committee acting as Trustees. The group work well together and indeed have built a strong friendship carrying out this work. We have a North Skye Branch, based in Portree and a South Skye Branch based in Broadford.

We all like statistics and here are figures for bags issued over last few years.

2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
383	358	723	1076	3406	2766	2890

Frightening figures. We hopefully will see a slight drop post pandemic, this year, never the less the worrying trend is upwards.

One of our greatest assets is the use of premises at 'Togamaid', the Church Hall. We are most grateful to the Church for this facility. Our Church is represented in the Foodbank by Mogie Gillies, Mary Cameron and Roddy Beaton. The box is still available at the Church door for non-perishable foods, and we are so thankful to have such a supportive congregation.

Please pray for the work we do locally, also Foodbanks further afield. Also please prayerfully remember those starving in other parts of the world. By giving and praying we can make a difference as the Lord provides.

May the Lord bless each one of you.

Mary, Mogie and Roddy



*Some famous hymns of praise and thanksgiving were written in astonishing circumstances of pain and distress. 'Now Thank We All Our God' is no exception.*

## **THE STORY BEHIND THE HYMN: NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD**

Now thank we all our God  
With heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done,  
In whom His world rejoices;  
Who, from our mother's arms,  
Hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love,  
And still is ours today.

Oh may this bounteous God  
Through all our life be near us,  
With ever joyful hearts  
And blessed peace to cheer us;  
And keep us in His grace,  
And guide us when perplexed,  
And free us from all ills  
In this world and the next.

All praise and thanks to God  
The Father now be given,  
The Son, and Him who reigns  
With them in highest heaven,  
The one eternal God,  
Whom earth and heaven adore;  
For thus it was, is now,  
And shall be evermore.

*By Martin Rinkart*

The joy and serenity of this hymn are staggering when you learn the circumstances in which this was written. Martin Rinkart was a pastor at Eilenberg, Saxony, during the terrible Thirty Years' War (1618-1648).

As a walled city, Eilenberg offered some protection to the inhabitants. No wonder that political and military refugees of all sorts poured into the city, making it dangerously overcrowded. Soon the water supply was fouled, the sanitation overwhelmed, and the food ran out – leaving people famished and diseased.

In 1637 a terrible pestilence swept through the city, killing some 8,000 people, including Rinkart's beloved wife. By that time Rinkart was the only minister left in Eilenberg because the others had either died or fled for their lives. Rinkart alone conducted the burial services for 4,480 people, sometimes taking as many as 40 to 50 funerals a day!

Eilenberg was besieged and overrun three times – once by the Austrian army and twice by the Swedes. When a Swedish general demanded the town pay him 30,000 thalers, Martin Rinkart pleaded that the impoverished city could never meet such a levy, but the general scorned him. At that, Rinkart turned to his companions and said: 'Come, my children, we can find no mercy with man; let us take refuge with God.' On his knees there and then, Rinkart led his friends in a fervent prayer and in the singing of a hymn. The Swedish commander was so moved that he decided that the levy be not 30,000 thalers, but instead 1,350 thalers.

Somehow, out of the hell of the Thirty Years War, came this lovely hymn of peace and total trust in God. Martin Rinkart had had to dig deep into his faith to survive, and the result was utter, serene dependence on God – despite chaos and destruction all around.

### ***Some Observations on our Christian faith***

They stand best who kneel most. – *Anon*

Prayer moves the hand which moves the world. – *Anon*

What we know of God encourages us to trust Him in all we don't know. – *Anon*

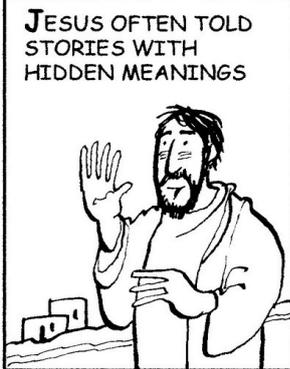
The Kingdom of God is simply God's power enthroned in our hearts. Faith in the Kingdom of God is what makes us light of heart and is what Christian joy is all about. – *John Main*

Love is the only force capable of transforming an enemy into a friend.  
– *Martin Luther King*

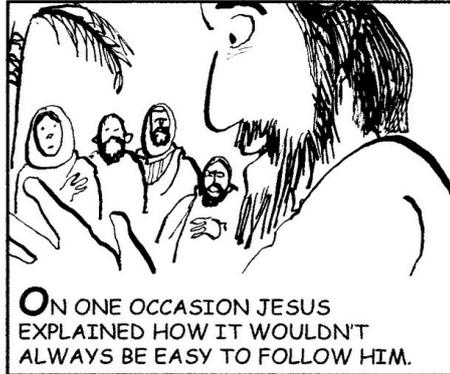
Certain thoughts are prayers. There are moments when, whatever be the attitude of the body, the soul is on its knees.  
– *Victor Hugo*

**PICTURE PARABLE**

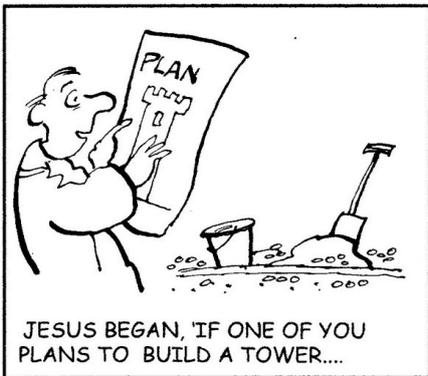
The tale of  
the  
Tower  
Builder



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



ON ONE OCCASION JESUS EXPLAINED HOW IT WOULDN'T ALWAYS BE EASY TO FOLLOW HIM.



JESUS BEGAN, 'IF ONE OF YOU PLANS TO BUILD A TOWER....



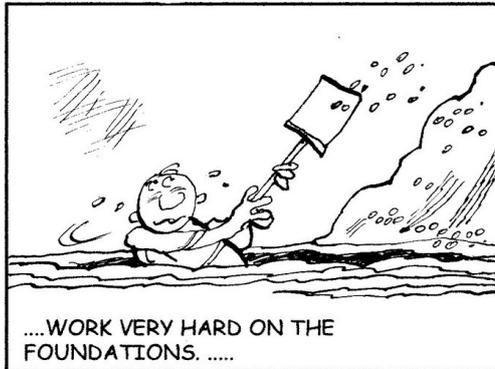
...YOU'LL FIRST NEED TO WORK HOW MUCH IT WILL COST.



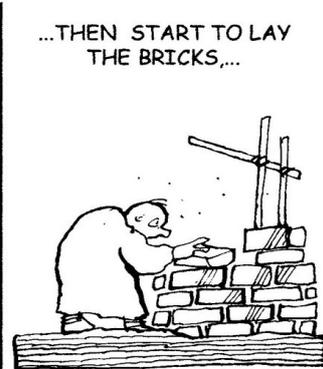
IF YOU DON'T DO THE SUMS....



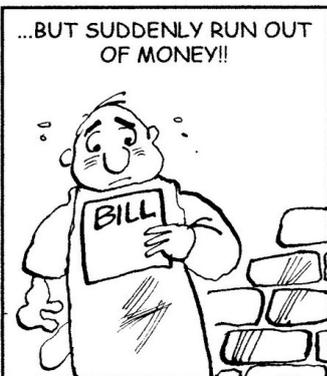
...YOU MIGHT MAKE A START, ....



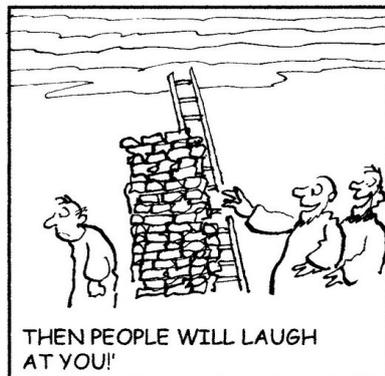
....WORK VERY HARD ON THE FOUNDATIONS. ....



...THEN START TO LAY THE BRICKS,...



...BUT SUDDENLY RUN OUT OF MONEY!!

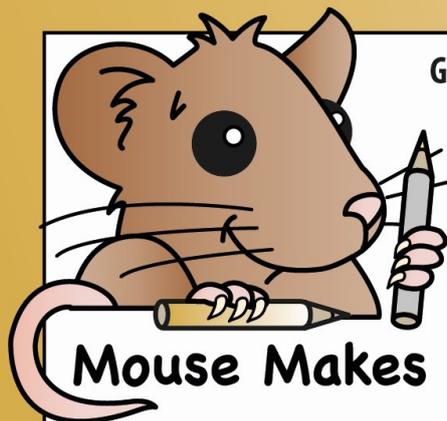


THEN PEOPLE WILL LAUGH AT YOU!



WE NEED TO REALISE THAT ALTHOUGH FOLLOWING JESUS IS THE RIGHT THING TO DO, IT'S ALSO A GREAT CHALLENGE.

Once you have read the story, why not colour it in.



**Goliath**, the champion of the Philistine army, taunted the Israelites.  
*"Choose a man to fight with me and if he kills me then we will be your servants!"*

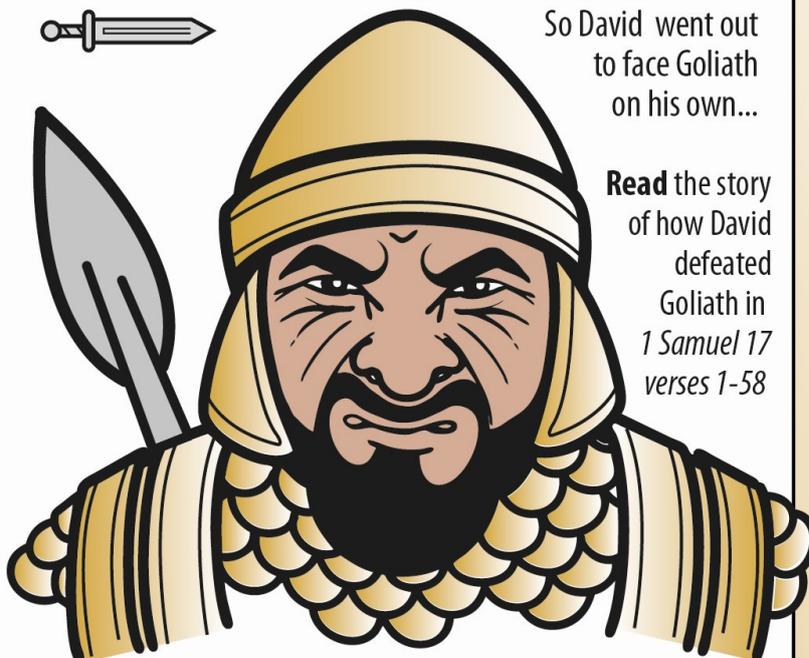


The Israelites were afraid, but **David**, a shepherd boy who had come to bring food to his brothers on the battlefield said:  
*"The Lord who delivered me from the lion and bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine."*



So David went out to face Goliath on his own...

**Read** the story of how David defeated Goliath in *1 Samuel 17 verses 1-58*



**Where did Goliath come from?**



\_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 17:4*

**How tall was Goliath?**



\_\_\_\_\_ cubits.

*1 Samuel 17:4*

**What was Goliath's armour made of?**

\_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 17:5,6*

**What weapons did Goliath carry?**



a JAVELIN,

a \_\_\_\_\_

and a \_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 17:45*

**How many stones did David take from the stream?**



\_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 17:40*



**Where did David's stone hit Goliath? On his**

\_\_\_\_\_

*1 Samuel 17:49*

I L A D E S W O R D B K L  
 P A C A M P L I O N A D B  
 H I F I V E S L I N G A R  
 I T L E B A T T L E O V O  
 L E B E A R J A V E L I N  
 T S S I X M K H C F I D Z  
 S T A F F O R E H E A D E  
 T R U I I U P L A L T L G  
 O U L S G R I M M L H O O  
 N C P R H S H E P H E R D  
 E K G A T H I T I D E D O  
 S H I E L D G R O U N D M  
 P H I L I S T I N E S O U

ISRAEL • SAUL • DAVID • LORD • GOD • PHILISTINES • BATTLE • CAMP  
 CHAMPION • GOLIATH • HELMET • ARMOUR • JAVELIN • SHIELD • FIGHT • BEAR  
 LION • SHEPHERD • STAFF • STONES • BAG • SLING • STRUCK • HIT • FELL • GROUND

## **PRAISE YOU IN THIS STORM**

A song I regularly play in the pre-service worship is "Praise You in This Storm" by the American worship band Casting Crowns.

Great songs do not just come out of nowhere, and there is quite a story behind the Casting Crowns hit, "Praise You in This Storm." In a book called *Lifestories*, Mark Hall, the band's frontman and chief songwriter, tells the stories behind the songs—including this one about a little girl dying of cancer who never gave up her trust in Jesus . . . and her mother who literally stood on the promises of God through the whole ordeal. The following story has been adapted and condensed from the book.

### **He Gives, and Takes Away** by Mark Hall.

Laurie Edwards watched her little girl gasping for air and wanted to breathe for her. She wanted the Maker of breaths to swoop in and fill her child's lungs and dissolve every tumour with His mere glance. She wanted another miracle.

It was the early morning of Saturday, October 30, 2004. Ten-year-old Erin Browning lay in a hospice bed in her home, in such pain and shortness of breath that, in fear and exasperation, she could manage only one request of her mother.

"Just read the Scriptures!" she said.

So, Laurie began reading the Scriptures. She included Erin's favourite passage, Proverbs 3:5-6. From 1 a.m. until 5 a.m., loved ones took turns reading aloud the Word of God over a child in the last, cruellest stages of cancer's grip. Little Erin had battled for more than three years.

And now the end was near. Laurie tried to refuse to believe it, but her trust in the Lord remained steadfast. She was frightened and faithful all at once. She prayed for an eleventh-hour miracle. And she kept reading the Scriptures, as Erin had asked.

At one point, Laurie placed her Bible on the floor and stood on it, literally standing on the Word of God as she read over her child. Finally, after the long night of reading Scripture followed by another long night of hopeful prayer, Laurie consented for a hospice nurse to administer an IV with medicine that essentially placed Erin in a painless coma on Sunday afternoon. There would be no more gasping for breath.

I met Erin Browning on Valentine's Day, 2004 at Westover Church in Greensboro, North Carolina. Erin loved Casting Crowns, and, after six years of dance lessons, had choreographed a dance to our song "Here I Go Again." When Laurie initially contacted us, we made arrangements to meet their family before that concert. Three months later, Erin danced for the last time as her mother and two sisters joined her for a performance of "Here I Go Again" at The Carolina Theatre.

I was gripped by the imagery of Laurie's standing on her Bible and quoting Scripture over her sick little girl. After all the e-mail updates and prayers, that moment melted my heart and sparked the lyrics to this song.

I kept up with Erin's condition through Laurie's e-mails detailing the family's wrenching ordeal. Every e-mail described a change in Erin's condition. One e-mail would offer hope: "There is a new treatment, so please be praying." So, we would pray, and then the next e-mail would report, "It's not working."

Sometimes Laurie had questions: "What's going on? I feel like I'm all alone in this." But her love of Jesus remained fervent even though she questioned what was going on and did not really understand the reasons. It was raw, rare faith, and it was inspiring.

On June 21, 2004, I e-mailed Laurie to tell her that I was writing a song for Erin entitled "Praise You in This Storm." Upon the news, Erin screamed so loud that it hurt Laurie's ears. Erin never got to hear the song, but Laurie heard it for the first time when her mother bought the CD on the day it was released and took it to the school where Laurie works. The two women sat in the car, listened to the song, and "cried and cried and cried."

"Erin would be so happy to know that other people were being touched by something written for her, because she was never about herself. She was about other people," Laurie said. "Other kids at school would say 'I want to be like Erin.' And she would say, 'No, you do not. You want to be like Jesus.'"

I was impressed with Laurie's faith, but Laurie will tell you how much she was impressed with Erin's faith. Erin was six years old when she prayed to receive Christ. She was diagnosed with cancer when she was seven, and by the time she was eight she was visiting area churches to give her testimony.

Four months after Erin was first diagnosed, a second bone scan revealed that the cancer was gone. Doctors called the results remarkable. Laurie and Erin called it a miracle. Emboldened by the Lord's clear hand in her life, she began regularly sharing her faith and giving her testimony.

"She had a desire to reach people to let them know there is no hope or joy without God. And even though she had reason in her life not to be happy, she was joyful because she had Jesus in her heart," Laurie said. "She wasn't afraid. She let the Lord speak through her, and when she would get up and speak it was like I was not listening to my own daughter. He would put words in her mouth, and it was just awesome."

But the cancer eventually returned, and this time, it did not go away. The tumours grew so large that they displaced organs and created a visible bulge in Erin's chest. They pressed down on her spleen, pushed her heart to the right, and deviated her trachea, straining her breathing.

Near the end, Laurie's e-mail updates were desperate. Her last one before Erin's death was a simple request in all caps: "PLEASE PRAY FOR ERIN!" It was the night in which Laurie stood on her Bible during the four hours of Scripture reading. The weekend crept into Saturday, when at 1:15 a.m. the hospice nurse told Laurie that Erin's vital signs and statistics suggested she had only approximately 20 minutes to live.

Fifty-one hours later, [she] finally gave up her fight. Erin Browning went home at 4:24 a.m. on November 1, 2004.

Laurie still does not fully understand what happened next. She remembers only a tremendous peace and describes it as being under the shower of the Holy Spirit. She held Erin's body for 90 minutes while her daughter played in heaven.

"It was not like how I expected her last minutes to be. I thought I would be hysterical, but I wasn't," Laurie said. "But she was where she always wanted to be. She told me when she was six years old that she could not wait to get to heaven. She said she had felt an emptiness in her heart, but when she asked Jesus into her heart, she never felt it again because Jesus had filled her and would never leave her. For the 10 years she was on this earth, God used her in a remarkable, powerful way.

"I've learned that He can use an average, ordinary family to do extraordinary things and that He continues to use us despite ourselves," Laurie said. "How He has done that is beyond me. But He has a plan and purpose. A lot of times I may not like His plan, but I accept it. I'm just honoured that He chose to use Erin and this family as He has."

Through it all, I was captured not just by Laurie's faith but also by her worship. She had the worship of Job:

The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. (Job 1:21)

I have a son and two daughters, and I was amazed at how Laurie faced a parent's greatest fear. It does not mean that she wasn't angry. It does not mean that she wasn't sad or doubtful, but at the base of it she was leaning on God even if she was angry, sad, or doubtful. I was reminded once again that just because we cannot see God's purpose does not mean He does not have one. I was reminded that God is faithful, regardless of the circumstances. I was reminded that God is sovereign, and we are not. Finally, I was reminded that we cannot control how long our lifesongs last. We only can control how loud we sing them. Little Erin lived out loud for Jesus.

### Praise You in This Storm – Lyrics

I was sure by now  
That You would have reached down  
And wiped our tears away  
Stepped in and saved the day  
But once again, I say amen  
And it's still raining

As the thunder rolls  
I barely hear Your whisper through the rain  
"I'm with you"  
And as Your mercy falls  
I'll raise my hands  
And praise the God who gives  
And takes away

And I'll praise You in this storm  
And I will lift my hands  
For You are who You are  
No matter where I am  
And every tear I've cried  
You hold in Your hand  
You never left my side  
And though my heart is torn  
I will praise You in this storm

I remember when I stumbled in the wind  
You heard my cry to You  
And raised me up again  
But my strength is almost gone  
How can I carry on if I can't find you

I lift my eyes unto the hills

Where does my help come from?

My help comes from the Lord

The maker of heaven and earth.

Every time I read this story I feel moved by the Holy Spirit. Laurie's faith always shone when she dealt with the storms of her life. But that is not always the case! When some of us go through trials, our faith deserts us. But God does not forsake us. He is always patient and perseveres with us until we open our hearts and ask him into our lives. It is only then we realise that he was always by our side, guiding us through the 'Storms of Life.'

In my humble opinion, when you look at Erin's story, it does not matter whether you are old or young, if you accept the Lord as your Saviour, he will use his Holy Spirit to do wonderful things through them.

As you reflect on this story and the lyrics, can you take time to consider this question (which also happens to a line from another Casting Crowns song)

*'IS THERE ROOM IN YOUR HEART. FOR GOD TO WRITE HIS STORY?'*

David Meikleham

### **The Water of Life**

She came to the well around midday,  
To avoid all the gossip she came alone,  
She met a Man there who told her all things  
Five husbands she had and one not her own.

He asked for a drink and they started to talk,  
A Samaritan woman there with a Jew  
Breaking all barriers to meet her need  
He told her how she could be made new.

The water of life that He would give  
Would mean that she never would thirst again  
This transforming draught He offers to all  
Once tasted you never will be the same.

At Cana He turned the water to wine  
A miracle no-one but He could do  
Just as the water was wondrously changed  
If you drink from this Fount it can happen to you.

*By Megan Carter*



## CHURCH EVENTS

On Sunday 18 June we had been expecting a visit from the minister, Rev Greg Allen-Pickett, and members of the congregation of the First Presbyterian Church, Hastings, Nebraska, USA . with the Rev Allen-Pickett expected to preach the sermon.

This church had a special significance for the Fazakas family as their children, Szende, Szerena and Tamas had stayed with members of the church while they were on a scholarships in Hastings. Szende and Szerena had travelled from Hungary, and Tamas from Edinburgh, especially to meet up with them.

Regrettably, due to a mix up by the group's travel company, the American party did not arrive on Skye until Monday 19 June.

However, as the church was hosting a concert featuring pianist Catherine Nardiello on Wednesday 21 June, the Hastings party arranged to attend the event and meet up with friends old and new.

At the concert, Catherine played a selection of sacred arrangements, plus pieces by Aaron Copland and Edward MacDowell which were much appreciated by those in attendance.

Tea and coffee was served at the end of Catherine's performance, giving an opportunity for everyone to meet and mix socially.

Following this Greg and his former Session Clerk presented to Sandor and, on behalf of the church, to Bill items of stained glass which had been made by a member of the Hastings congregation. The church was celebrating the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding and Greg explained that the glass used in the items came from the stained-glass windows of the original church. The gift to the church has been framed and is now displayed on the wall of the church to the left-hand side of the exit door.

Greg and his family hope to visit Portree again next year when we will be able to hear his sermon.



*Catherine Nardiello*



*Members of the First  
Presbyterian Church, Hastings,  
Nebraska, USA*



*The Fazakas Family*

*Greg presents Sandor with his gift*



*Sandor's gift*

*The gift to the church*



***A letter from Rev Allen-Pickett to his and our own congregation is printed on Pages 36-38 of the magazine***

### ***SOME OBSERVATIONS ON LIFE***

Love does not consist in gazing at each other but in looking together in the same direction. -*Antoine De Saint-Exupery*

What is the best government? That which teaches us to govern ourselves. - *Goethe*

As I sat opposite the Treasury Bench, the Ministers reminded me of those marine landscapes not unusual on the coasts of South America. You behold a range of exhausted volcanoes. - *Disraeli*

If a man does not make new acquaintances as he advances through life, he will soon find himself left alone; one should keep his friendships in constant repair.  
- *Samuel Johnson*

## THE APOSTLE JAMES

Jesus, fresh from His baptism and fired with His new calling, bursts into Galilee. Coming upon four fishermen working on the shore of the lake, He says to them, 'Follow me.' Without further ado or even a second thought, they abandon what they are doing and set off with Jesus, they know not where.

In the case of two of them, James and John, (the 'sons of thunder,' as the gospel writers describe their impetuous characters and fiery tempers) they leave their poor old father alone in the boat with the hired crew.

That is how Mark's Gospel records the recruitment of four of the apostles of Jesus. Talk about a sudden change of life !

All our understanding of human behaviour tells us that this is not how people normally respond to such a peremptory invitation: no questions, no explanation. Take it or leave it. Just 'Follow me.'

That however is on a superficial reading of the text. In fact, because we have four Gospels rather than just three, we know from John that one pair of brothers, James and John, and the other two called on the same day, had been disciples of John the Baptist, who had pointed Jesus out to them as the 'Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'.

Subsequently two of them had sought Him out and spent some time with Him in the Jordan area. This was not quite the instant 'conversion' described by Matthew and Mark, though undoubtedly it evoked an instant response.

For many of us on the journey of faith the experience of James and John - and the other two, Peter and Andrew - mirrors our own experience. First, we know about Jesus, perhaps as children at Sunday school, or later as adults. Then we begin to ask questions and look for answers. Finally, there may come a time when we hear His voice, as it were, calling us to accompany Him on a life of love, service, and commitment.

For James, this moment was to turn his whole life upside down. He became a leader of the church in Jerusalem after the resurrection and was the first apostle to be martyred, being put to the sword by Herod Agrippa in 44AD. His brother John, in contrast, lived on as a senior figure in the life of the emerging Church. For all four who were called by the lake that day, nothing would ever be quite the same again. But then all those who set out to follow Jesus wherever He leads them are usually in for a few surprises.

James stands out on three accounts: he was one of the three disciples who witnessed the Transfiguration of Christ. Jesus took him, along with Peter and John, to 'watch' with him in the garden of Gethsemane. Finally, he went on to be the first apostle to die for the Christian faith, when in AD 44 King Herod Agrippa put him to the sword in Jerusalem at Passover time.

In the centuries following his death, James became associated with the evangelising of Spain, and as a powerful defender of Christianity against the Moors. The heyday of the cult of Santiago de Compostela was from the 12th to the 15<sup>th</sup> century, and the pilgrimage to Compostela became one of the most important of medieval Christendom. This in time transformed the iconography of James, and his emblems became the pilgrim's hat and the scallop-shell of Compostela.



## TRUTH

Brothers and sisters, I write to you this day as a man renewed. From whence I walked the earth as a broken and sorrowful man, now I find myself as a man at peace and with a purpose. But where did I find such a peace and a purpose? For the world seeks such a peace but places its trust in the false idols of technological advancement and wealth. But we brothers and sisters know the true source of peace and it is of this source that I write to you today.

It is to me a great mystery that the peace and purpose of which I long sought for would be ignited in my very darkest moment. For there was a time in my life that I found myself in a dark pit from where there seemed to be no escape. But enveloped in that darkness with a life in ruins – I found a clarity that many who walk this earth seek.

It was in this deep dark pit of despair that I realised the Lord was the only one I could call upon. The realisation is as real now as it was then. I knew with every essence of my being that the Lord was the only one there with me in the darkness. When all had abandoned me, the Lord remained true and loyal to me even in my worst possible moment.

Brothers and sisters, I often wonder how this realisation came upon me at this moment. How could I have at that instant been imparted with the answer which so many have asked? That being “What is the truth?.”

I have come to understand that this realisation was a gift from God, given to me at precisely my lowest point and emphasised with the clarity that a life in ruins can bring. For the moment this knowledge was presented to me, a turning point would be marked. A spiritual arm had reached down to the dark pit where I lay and offered, if I was willing, to pull me back up to the light.

*“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”*

– John 8:32.

From that moment in the pit, I knew that the Lord was the ultimate truth, the only one on who could hear my cry for help. Spiritual kindling had been set and flame slowly began to grow.

From that moment I would seek the Lord’s guidance in full knowledge he was the absolute and only truth. Father Son and Holy Spirit. Eternal God. Creator of the heavenly lights. Infinite in love and power. Everlasting. Omniscient. Omnipresent creator of all that is, has been and will become.

In this modern age the sons and daughters of men speak of “Own Truth”, “My Truth”, “Multiple Truths”, “Each to his own truth”. I say to thee brethren this is the ultimate folly.

There is only one truth and that is the Trinity divine. The Alpha and the Omega. Father, Son, and Holy spirit.

In this age many construct their Towers of Babel of technology. They bask at their self-perceived intelligence and yet it profits them nothing for they know not the spirit of truth.

*“For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”*

– Mark 8:36

*“And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”*

– 2 Corinthians 3:4

But brothers and sisters the world also seeks a peace. A spiritual longing that cannot be filled by wealth and material possessions. That peace which I once sought has found me. From my knowledge of the truth and growth in my spirit I have come to know the Lord and his love for me. A peace that is beyond any measurable value and yet freely offered by our Lord Jesus Christ who acts as a bridge to the Father.

*“But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

– Galatians 5:22-23

*“For the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth.”*

- Ephesians 5:9

How shall we define peace? What does it mean to find peace in one's life?

*“The Lord gives strength to his people, and the Lord blesses his people with peace.”*

– Psalm 29:11

*“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

– Philippians 4:7

The peace I speak of is not of an earthly peace such as between nations. It is a spiritual peace given to us by the grace of God through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is a spiritual peace of restoration that brings renewal of the soul and alignment with the divine. For there is no other way to peace and our eternal heavenly home than through the Son of Man.

And what brothers and sisters are we to do when such a peace is acquired? For this is not only for our own benefit but for others also. For by being at peace with ourselves and God, we can become advocates of the singular truth by loving others.

*“How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’*

– Isaiah 52:7

And so, brothers and sisters, in a world which seeks to distort and confuse by inventing alternative truths, let us embrace the one singular truth of the universe of the Father Son and Holy spirit. He who formed the outside formed the inside also. And from his protection can also come spiritual renewal. A renewal offered to those who believe in our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ. For it is written:

*“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.”*

– John 14:16.

Written By Hugh Campbell – Portree Church of Scotland

## **I AM YOUR SHIP**

Lord, I am your ship.  
Fill me with the gifts of your Holy Spirit.  
Without you I am empty of every blessing,  
And full of every sin.

Lord, I am your ship.  
Fill me with a cargo of good works.  
Without you, I am empty of every joy,  
And full of vain pleasures.

Lord, I am your ship.  
Fill me with love for you.

*By John Sergieff (a priest in Russia; lived 1829 – 1908)*

## GOD'S GARDEN

Plant three rows of peas:

Peas of mind

Peas of heart

Peas of soul



Plant three rows of squash:

Squash gossip

Squash grumbling

Squash selfishness



Plant three rows of lettuce:

Lettuce be faithful

Lettuce be obedient

Lettuce love one another



Plant three rows of turnips:

Turnip for services

Turnip for meetings

Turnip to help one another



Plant three rows of thyme:

Thyme for God

Thyme for Bible study

Thyme for prayer.



Finally –

Water freely with patience,

Cultivate with love,

And remember – you will only reap what  
you sow.

## THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT - a true story

In the city of Bath, during the eighteenth century, there lived a barber who made a practice of following his ordinary occupation on the Lord's-day.

As he was pursuing his morning's employment, he happened to look into some place of worship, just as the minister was giving out his text "Remember the Sabbath-day to keep it holy." He listened long enough to be convinced, that he was constantly breaking the laws of God and man by shaving and otherwise attending his customers on the Lord's-day. He became uneasy and went with a heavy heart to his Sabbath task.

At length he took courage, and opened his mind to the minister, who advised him to give up Sabbath work and worship God. He replied that beggary would be the consequence as he had a flourishing trade and it would almost all be lost.

At length, after many a sleepless night spent in weeping and praying, he was determined to cast all his care upon God, as the more he reflected, the more his duty became apparent. He discontinued Sabbath work, went constantly and early to the public services of religion, and soon enjoyed that satisfaction of mind, which is one of the rewards of doing our duty, and that peace of God, which the world can neither give nor take away. The consequence which he foresaw actually followed. His customers left him, as he was nicknamed a Puritan or Methodist.

He was obliged to give up his fashionable shop; and in the course of years became so reduced, as to take a cellar under the old market house and shave the common people.

One Saturday evening, between light and dark, a stranger from one of the coaches, asking for a barber, was directed by someone to the cellar opposite. Coming in hastily, he requested to be shaved quickly, while they changed the horses, as he did not like to violate the Sabbath. This was touching the barber on a tender chord: he burst into tears, asked the stranger to lend him a halfpenny to buy a candle, as it was not light enough to shave him with safety. He did so, resolving in his mind the extreme poverty to which the poor man must be reduced.

When shaved, he said, There must be something extraordinary in your history which I have not now time to hear. Here is half-a-crown for you: when I return, I will call and investigate your case. "What is your name?"

"William Reed" said the astonished barber.

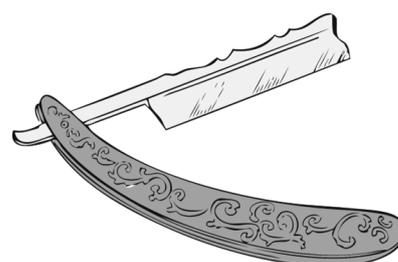
"William Reed !" echoed the stranger: "By your dialect you are from the west?"

"Yes, sir; from Kingston, near Taunton"

"William Reed. From Kingston near Taunton! What was your father's name?" asked the stranger

"Thomas"

"Had he any brothers?" "Yes, sir, one after whom I was named; but he went to the Indies, and as we never heard from him, we suppose him to be dead."



“Come along, follow me,” said the stranger; “I am going to see a person, who says his name is William Reed of Kingston, near Taunton. Come and confront him. If you prove to be indeed the man you say you are, I have glorious news for you; your uncle is dead and has left an immense fortune, which I will put you in possession of, when all legal doubts are removed.”

They went by coach, saw the pretend William Reed, and proved him to be an imposter. The stranger, who was a godly attorney, was soon legally satisfied of the barber’s identity, and told him that he had advertised for him in vain. Providence had now thrown him in his way, In a most extraordinary manner, and he had much pleasure in transferring a great many thousand pounds to a worthy man - the rightful heir of the property.

Thus, was man’s extremity God’s opportunity. Had the poor barber possessed one halfpenny, or even had credit for a candle, he might have remained unknown for years; but he trusted God, who never said, ‘Seek ye my face in vain .....

This story reminds me of the old saying: “A Sunday well spent brings a week of content...But a Sunday profaned brings a week that's ordained.”

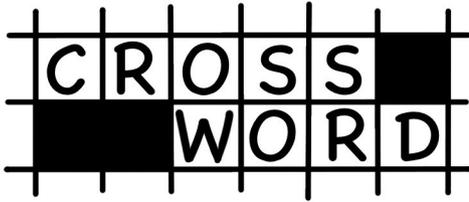
## **THERE**

There, in that other world, what waits for me?  
What shall I find after that other birth?  
No stormy, tossing, foaming, smiling sea,  
But a new earth.

No sun to mark the changing of the days,  
No slow, soft falling of the alternate night,  
No moon, no star, no light upon my ways,  
Only the Light.

No grey cathedral, wide and wondrous fair,  
That I may tread where all my fathers trod.  
Nay, nay, my soul, no house of God is there,  
But only God.

*by Mary Coleridge (1861-1907)*



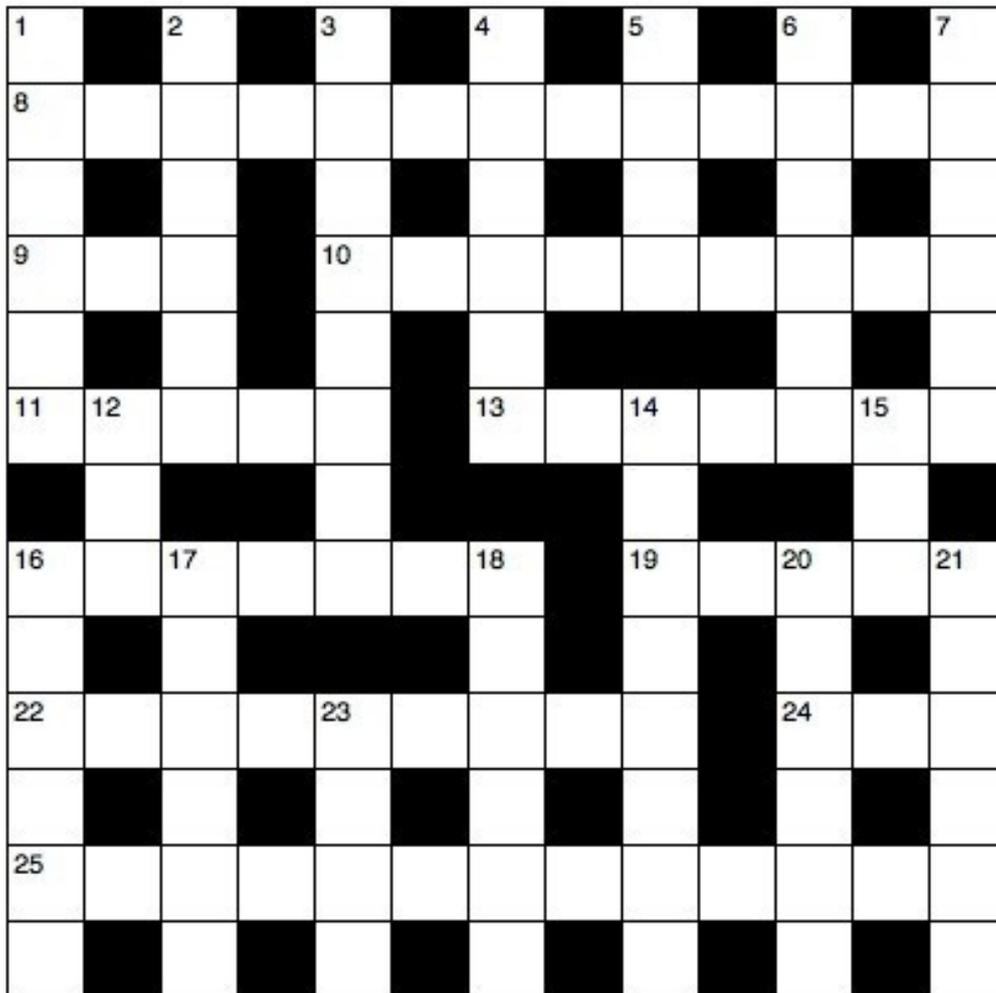
### Across

- 8 Where the Ark of the Covenant was kept for 20 years (1 Samuel 7:1) (7,6)
- 9 One of the parts of the body on which blood and oil were put in the ritual cleansing from infectious skin diseases (Leviticus 14:14–17) (3)
- 10 Uncomfortable (3,2,4) 11 ‘Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have — ’ (Malachi 1:3) (5)
- 13 Where Paul said farewell to the elders of the church in Ephesus (Acts 20:17) (7)
- 16 ‘Jesus bent down and — to write on the ground with his finger’ (John 8:6) (7)
- 19 Prophet from Moresheth (Jeremiah 26:18) (5)
- 22 Comes between Exodus and Numbers (9)
- 24 and 2 Down ‘Then Elkanah went home to Ramah, but the boy ministered before the Lord under — the — ’ (1 Samuel 2:11) (3,6)
- 25 There was no room for them in the inn (Luke 2:7) (4,3,6)

### Down

- 1 Rough drawing (2 Kings 16:10) (6)
- 2 See 24 Across
- 3 Underground literature (including Christian books) circulated in the Soviet Union (8)
- 4 Lo, mash (anag.) (6)
- 5 The Bible’s shortest verse: ‘Jesus — ’ (John 11:35) (4)
- 6 ‘Can a mother forget the baby at her — and have no compassion on the child she has borne?’ (Isaiah 49:15) (6)
- 7 Can be seen in a dying fire (Psalm 102:3) (6)
- 12 ‘Send me, therefore, a man... experienced in the — of engraving, to work in Judah and Jerusalem’ (2 Chronicles 2:7) (3)
- 14 Second city of Cyprus (8)
- 15 United Nations Association (1,1,1)
- 16 One of the women who first heard that Jesus had risen from the dead (Mark 16:1) (6)
- 17 Braved (anag.) (6)
- 18 — of Evangelism, outreach initiative in the 1990s (6)

- 20 'Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and — in their own sight' (Isaiah 5:21) (6)
- 21 'Neither — nor depth... will be able to separate us from the love of God' (Romans 8:39) (6)
- 23 What Jesus shed in 5 Down (4)



***The solutions to the Crossword and other Puzzles can be found on Page 40***

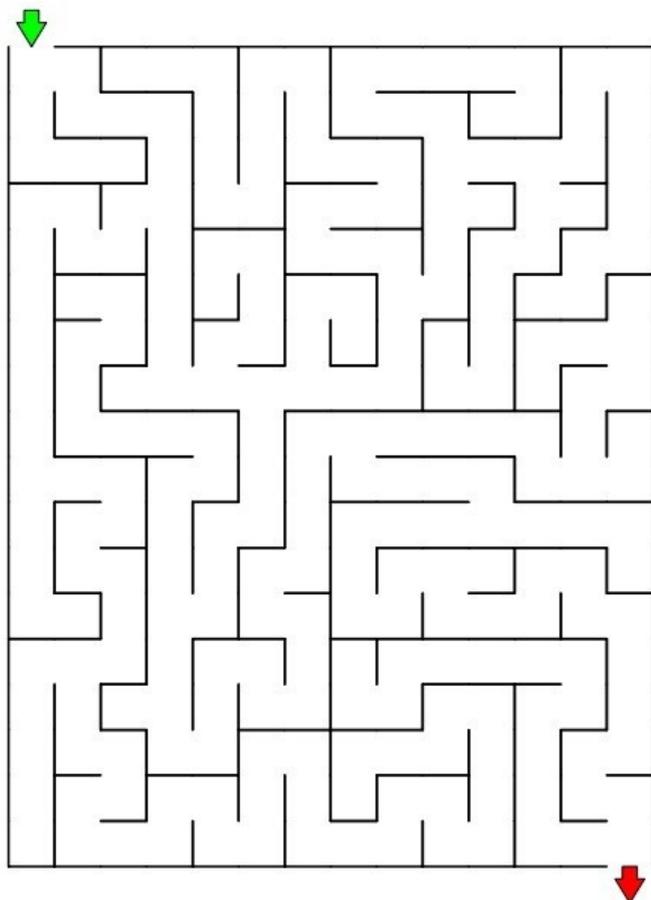
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# MAZE

Find your way through the  
Maze



## WORDSEARCH

For some reason, the Church gives thanks for angels in September. The 29<sup>th</sup> is the feast day of Michael and All Angels. Since the days of Genesis, these messengers of God have been sent many times to intervene for the good in human affairs. Angels guarded the Garden of Eden, they led Lot away from Gomorrah, they helped Gideon, they stopped Balaam, they closed the mouths of lions for Daniel, and, most important, the archangel Gabriel was sent to tell Mary that she would mother the Messiah. Angels sat in the empty tomb of Jesus, and told of His Resurrection. Revelation is teaming with angels, sent on all sorts of missions by God in the last times. Today, many Christians in the world's hot spots report having had angels help them when in mortal danger.

Thanks Angels Church Feast Michael All Genesis Messengers  
God Sent Intervene Garden Eden Lot Gideon Balaam  
Mouths Lions Daniel Archangel Gabriel Mary  
Mother Teaming Revelation danger



## GOD AND THE ARTS

*Michael Burgess continues his look at great works of Christian art. You can see the image described by googling 'The Golden Fish' by Paul Klee or going to <http://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/aelbert-cuyp-a-herdsman-with-five-cows-by-a-river>*

### **'He gave us eyes to see them': The Golden Fish by Paul Klee**

A few years ago, I was sponsored by the Mothers' Union in my diocese to go 'swimming with sharks' at the Blue Planet Aquarium near Chester. The prospect seemed daunting, but it proved to be a magical, memorable experience. When I went down into the water, it was like entering a new world – somehow both alien and attractive at the same time. Manta rays swam lazily by, and small fish gathered at my feet, inquisitive and waiting to be massaged by falling stones from my hand. The magic of that water-world is caught vividly in this month's painting, 'The Golden Fish' by Paul Klee.

Paul Klee was a Swiss painter who lived in Germany until he was expelled in 1933. He died seven years later, but in his lifetime produced some 9000 works of art, each one displaying inventiveness and versatility. 'The Golden Fish,' painted in 1925, portrays a unique creature gliding serenely through its underwater kingdom. The gold scales, the red fins and the powerful eye provide a sharp contrast to the deep blue sea where other smaller fish are swimming to the edges of the canvas.

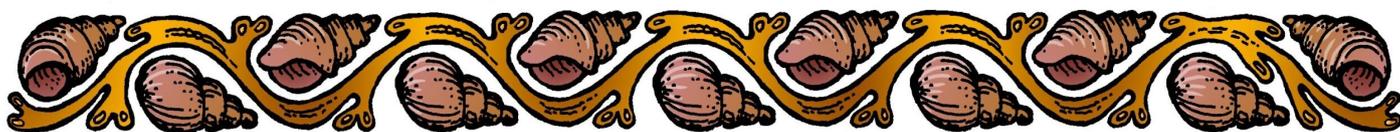
Is the artist showing us that secret, mysterious world that lies beneath the surface of the water, or is it simply an aquarium in his own house? Whichever it is, he is introducing us to a world that we, who live on the solid land beneath our feet, take for granted. Seven-tenths of our world is water, and our planet is really one gigantic aquarium. We can travel to the coasts of our island and see the great sea stretching out before us. It may bring to mind sandcastles and summer holidays, or a boat trip when the choppy waves made us feel queasy, or the memory of pirate stories about galleons and treasure, or the squawk of seagulls over our heads. Here in this painting, Paul Klee is telling us something of the nobility and wonder of this primeval element.



The opening pages of Scripture introduce us to the great waters of Creation, when the wind of God swept over the face of the deep, and separated the seas from the dry land. On the fifth day God said, 'Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures,' and God saw that it was good. Rupert Brooke in his poem, 'Heaven,' imagines that world of fishes and sea creatures pondering what is beyond this element of water, just as we on land ponder the future of our world.

'Somewhere, beyond Space and Time,  
Is wetter water, slimier slime!  
And there (they trust) there swimmeth  
One Who swam ere rivers were begun,  
Immense, of fishy form and mind,  
Squamous, omnipotent and kind.  
And under that Almighty Fin  
The littlest fish may enter in...  
And in that Heaven of all their wish,  
There shall be no more land, say fish.'

Poet and painter invite us to ponder the majestic glory of this element of sea and ocean which is part of God's good creation. In 'The Golden Fish' we glimpse something of the wonder of life it contains and find ourselves echoing the psalmist in Psalm 104: 'Here is the immeasurable sea in which move creatures beyond number. Countless are the things thou hast made, O Lord. Thou hast made all by thy wisdom.'



## JOSEPH OF ARIMATHEA – THE MAN WHO BURIED JESUS

Have you ever suffered from gossip? Ever discovered that people are saying some really wild things about you? If so, Joseph of Arimathea would understand – and sympathise with you. This decent, godly man of the gospels seems to have fired the imaginations of all sorts of odd people down the centuries.

Joseph was a rich, prominent member of the ruling Jewish council – the Sanhedrin. Mark's gospel describes him as having been 'waiting for the kingdom of God' for years, and even being a secret disciple of Jesus. He played no part in the trial or crucifixion.

When Jesus was pronounced dead, Joseph had the seniority needed to approach Pilate for the body – and get it. Near to where Jesus had been crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, cut deep in the rock. Joseph himself already owned it – and it was still new and empty. So, Joseph laid Jesus there, and wrapped him in a linen cloth, according to Jewish burial custom. Joseph did not bury Jesus alone - Nicodemus helped him, while some women who had followed Jesus trailed miserably behind.

Matthew tells us that the last thing Joseph did for Jesus was to sadly roll a big stone across the entrance to the tomb, and then go away.

With that, Joseph passes out of history - and into legend. For in the centuries that followed, Joseph was swept up into the Legend of the Holy Grail, the Legend of Glastonbury, and even bits of the Arthurian legends. It was said that the Holy Thorn, which flowers at Christmas, had sprung from his staff.

The mind boggles at what Joseph would have made of it all. One suspects he would have preferred to stick to the simple, but far better, true story: as having had the immense, unique privilege of laying the body of Jesus Christ in the tomb. Even if Jesus didn't stay very long!



## YOUR SHALOM

Don't you see what I see  
As the clouds float on by  
And the tides lap the shores  
Don't you ever think  
There must be more

I can't show you the truth  
But I can point your eye up  
As the patterns emerge  
On the vapours and thermals  
And on acorns and kernels  
Lying on the canopy floor

All around there are signs  
Of intricate measure  
The creators pleasure  
In making each moment  
A joy to the senses  
Showing us our gifted home

Yet He sits and He waits  
Your name on his scarred hands  
His book full of your plans  
He tightly holds close to his heart  
Showing you the stairway  
That leads to your Shalom

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*Alison is the daughter of Liz and Murdo Macdonald, former stalwart members of this church.*

## GOD IN THE SCIENCES

*This series is written by Dr Ruth M Bancewicz, who is Church Engagement Director at The Faraday Institute for Science and Religion in Cambridge. Ruth writes on the positive relationship between Science and Christian faith.*

### **Parable: The Strength of a Seed**

At this time of year, we enjoy the fruits of our gardens, fields and hedgerows: vegetables ripen, crops are harvested, and berries begin to show bright among the leaves. Much of this growth started with a few seeds in spring: the miracle of life coming from small dead-looking things. There is a league table of long-lived seeds. The winners so far are from the narrow-leaved campion, buried by squirrels in the Siberian permafrost over 30,000 years ago. When those seeds finally germinated, they became healthy plants that flowered and produced seeds of their own.

The Bible contains many links between seeds and spiritual growth, and the parable of the sower is the most famous (in Matthew 13). A person may hear or experience something of God which has the potential to germinate into a life of following Him, resulting in the fruit of others coming to know God too. But things can happen that snatch that seed away, killing it before it has finished germinating, or choking its growth.



What about the knowledge of God that gets trampled, churned too deep in the mire of life to receive the warmth and light it needs to develop into faith? Buried seeds don't always die, but they can lie dormant, remaining alive but inactive until the earth is turned over. The possibility of that moment of connecting with something divine, scrap of knowledge, or snatch of conversation resulting in a changed life may seem infinitesimally small, but it's not zero. The seed may be incredibly tough, just waiting for a chance to grow.

The Gospel narrative plays on the fact that it took a long time for the disciples to understand the full implications of Jesus' teaching: a germination process that took many of them three or more years. They could have been discouraged, but Jesus was not. I don't think it's too much of stretch to draw out of the parable of the sower to include the observation that it can take a long time, sometimes decades, for people to work their way through the various barriers, sticking points, and phases of forgetfulness that may keep them from following through on their spiritual experience. When we finally receive – or are open to – the encouragement, challenge, or experience that helps our faith in Christ grow, we can experience the rich fruit of a transformed life.

Dear First Presbyterian Church of Hastings Family and Portree Parish Church Family:

A warm and heartfelt greeting in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! In Galatians Chapter 3, Paul writes, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." To Paul's list, I might add that there is no longer American or Scottish, for we are all one in Christ Jesus!

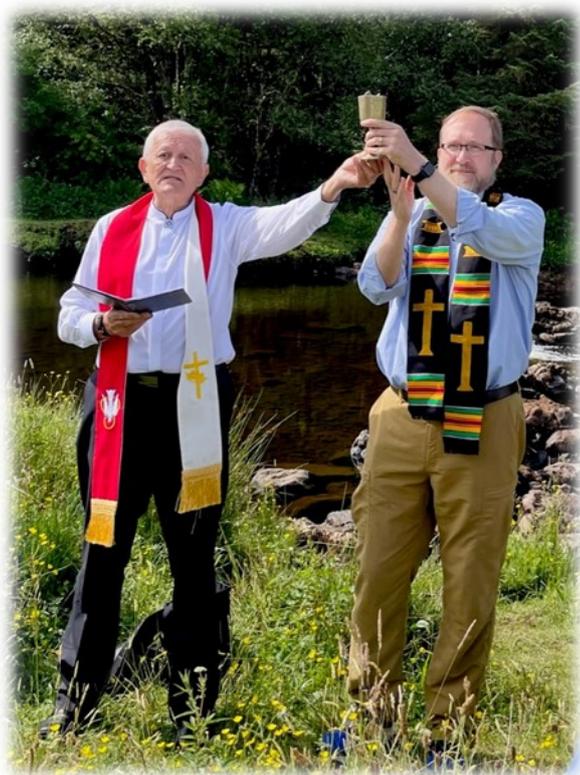
The group of 21 spiritual pilgrims from First Presbyterian Church of Hastings has returned safely to Nebraska, but I believe we left part of our hearts in Portree with our sisters and brothers in Christ at the Portree Parish Church. We are still basking in the joy that we shared with you on Wednesday, June 21. Thank you for the warm welcome that you offered to us at the concert and afterwards as we shared cookies, coffee, tea, and fellowship with you. Your gracious hospitality made us feel like we were part of your family of faith, and our spiritual pilgrims from Nebraska continue to reflect fondly on the time we spent together, with our only regret being that we couldn't spend more time together and share a Lord's Day service with you on Sunday.



During our visit, we shared a symbol of our unity as members of Christ's church and the partnership between our two congregations. We gave the Portree Parish Church an ornament that was made from stained-glass from our church building in Nebraska. Our church experienced a fire in 1911 and many of the stained-glass windows were destroyed in the fire. The glass was salvaged and put into storage. In honor of our church's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, we have taken those pieces of salvaged stained-glass and made them into ornaments for our church members and our ministry partners. We consider the Portree Parish Church one of our ministry partners and we were honored to be able to share this special token of our church history with you during our visit and hope that it symbolizes our unity in Christ and a partnership that will continue.

We also want to offer special words of gratitude to Rev. Sandor Fazakas. Thank you for your patience as we planned our trip, and your flexibility as the schedule changed, and thank you for the warm welcome that you and your wife offered to our group.

On Thursday, June 22, Rev. Fazakas took our group to St. Columba's Island on the Isle of Portree. There he explained the history of the ancient burial ground, the arrival of St. Columba to the Isle of Skye, and the site of the Cathedral Church of the Bishop of the Isles from 1079-1498. While we were gathered on the island, we celebrated Holy Communion together and were reminded of the joy of the heavenly feast and the unity that draws us together as brothers and sisters in Christ. Many of the spiritual pilgrims from Nebraska counted our time with the Portree Parish Church, and this celebration of Holy Communion on St. Columba's Island as a highlight of our trip to Scotland.



I hope we will be able to stay in touch and that our churches can grow in partnership and mutual affection for each other in the years to come. Hymn number 624 in the Church of Scotland Hymnal and 317 in the Presbyterian Church (USA) hymnal reads:

*“In Christ there is no east or west, in him no south or north,  
but one great fellowship of love throughout the whole wide earth.”*

Our visit with the Portree Parish Church and Rev Sandor Fazakas proved the truth of those lyrics. May we continue to embrace our unity and recognize that we are all indeed one in Christ Jesus.

Your Servant in Christ,



Rev Greg Allen-Pickett  
Senior Pastor  
First Presbyterian Church of Hastings

## **A STRONG HOLD**

Should I slip and lose the way  
The Lord will hold me fast,  
Should I choose to walk away  
I'm firmly in His grasp.

Though I walk through death's dark vale,  
His rod and staff are there  
I would not dare to walk this path  
Without His loving care.

Although my hold on Him is light  
His loving arms are wide,  
What He's begun He will fulfil  
Till I am safe on Canaan's side.

What God is this who loves us so?  
Our future He has planned,  
We're ever safe in His embrace  
And none can snatch us from His hand.

*By Megan Carter*

## ALL IN THE MONTH OF AUGUST

It was:

400 years ago, on 6<sup>th</sup> August 1623 that Anne Hathaway died. She was William Shakespeare's wife.

125 years ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1898 that the British Antarctic Expedition set off from London and became the first to spend winter on the Antarctic mainland and cross the Ross Ice Shelf. It was the first British expedition of the Heroic Age of Antarctic Exploration. The expedition returned to London in June 1900.

100 years ago, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1923 that Richard Attenborough, British film actor and director was born. Best known for his roles in *The Great Escape*, and *Jurassic Park*. He also directed films including *A Bridge Too Far*, *Cry Freedom* and *Gandhi*. Died 2014.

80 years ago, on 17<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> August 1943 that the RAF bombed the Peenemunde V1/V2 rocket research centre in Germany, in the first air raid of Operation Crossbow. The raid caused 'severe damage'.

Also 80 years ago, on 25<sup>th</sup> August 1943 that British Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten became Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia.

75 years ago, on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1948 that the World Council of Churches was founded in Amsterdam.

70 years ago, on 21<sup>st</sup> August 1953 that the UK premiere of the romantic comedy film *Roman Holiday* took place. It featured Audrey Hepburn in her first starring role.

65 years ago, on 26<sup>th</sup> August 1958 that Ralph Vaughan Williams, British composer, died. Among his famous compositions are: *The Lark Ascending*, *Fantasia on a Theme by Thomas Tallis*, and *A Sea Symphony*.

Also 65 years ago, on 29<sup>th</sup> August 1958 that Cliff Richard's first single *Move It* was released. It reached second place in the UK charts, and John Lennon would later call it "the first British rock record".

60 years ago, on 8<sup>th</sup> August 1963 that the Great Train Robbery took place on the West Coast Main Line at Ledburn, Buckinghamshire. £2.6million was stolen in one of the UK's most infamous robberies. The bulk of the money was never recovered.

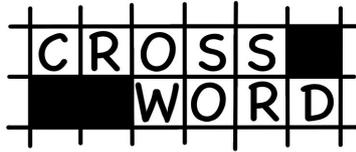
25 years ago, on 15<sup>th</sup> August 1998 that a car bomb in Omagh, Northern Ireland, killed 29 people and injured 370. It was the deadliest act of violence in the 30-year history of the Troubles.

20 years ago, on 11<sup>th</sup> August 2003 that NATO took over the command of the international peacekeeping force in Kabul, Afghanistan. It was its first major operation outside of Europe.

15 years ago, on 1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2008 that the K2 Disaster took place. 11 mountaineers from several international expeditions died on K2, the world's second-highest mountain. Four others were injured. It was the worst single accident in K2's history.

10 years ago, on 31<sup>st</sup> August 2013 that David Frost, British TV presenter and journalist, died. Best known for hosting the satirical series *That Was The Week That Was*, as well as *Breakfast with Frost*, and the game show, *Through the Keyhole*. Also known for his political interviews, including the Nixon interviews.

Solutions to Puzzles on  
Pages 28-31



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7	6	9	5	3	1	4	8	2
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# SUDOKU

# WORDSEARCH

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*Nigel Beeton writes: September, of course, is the time of the autumnal equinox, that point in the calendar when the nights become longer than the days, and the summer is technically over, and it can be a poignant moment, but should it be?*

## **When Autumn Comes**

Should we be sad  
When autumn comes  
And winter looms ahead?  
Is it so bad  
That days grow short  
And verdant leaves grow red?

We'll miss the sun  
And long, hot days  
We'll miss the sea and sand;  
But soon will come  
The starry nights  
And wintry landscapes grand!

Perhaps it's best  
That nature sleeps  
And things no longer grow;  
We get a rest  
From vibrant weeds  
And grass we need not mow.

So celebrate  
The equinox  
The autumn season's here!  
It is a date  
To mark, with joy  
The turning of the year.

*By Nigel Beeton*





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