



PORTREE PARISH
CHURCH OF SCOTLAND



SUMMER 2024

Church Office Bearers

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RESPONDING TO GOD'S LOVE

For God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3: 16). This wonderful verse speaks of the amazing love of God for His creation and for humanity itself. The greatness of God's remarkable love is seen in that He gave what was most precious to Him. Such was His care for those whom He had created that He gave His only Son, knowing full well that humanity would reject Him, abuse Him and ultimately crucify Him. But this enormous cost did not stop God from caring. As we face an increasingly difficult world, full of uncertainty and trouble, there is a growing temptation to draw in upon ourselves and shut out others, to stop caring because caring hurts. But if God so loves the world, we must love those whom He loves, those for whom His Son died also. We must go on caring with compassionate hearts, knowing that caring is costly – for that is what true compassion is about.

On Mount Sinai God came to Moses and proclaimed to him who He really is: - ***The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin*** (Exodus 34: 6- 7). This initial divine self-revelation was an important source of reflection for later Old Testament writers. The psalmist said: - ***The Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and rich in love. The Lord is good to all; He has compassion on all He has made*** (Psalm 145: 8- 9, and Psalm 103: 8). It is important how the gracious character of God, initially revealed as a part of God's relationship to Israel, is then extended to ALL creation, a strong indication of God's main intention of SAVING whoever believes in Him. – ***Yet the Lord longs to be gracious to you; He rises to show you compassion. For the Lord is a God of justice. Blessed are all who wait for Him!*** – proclaimed prophet Isaiah (30: 18). It is important to know the original Latin meaning of the word COMPASSION: - ***COMPATI*** means “suffer with”. Indeed, God suffers with us in Christ, as our suffering becomes His suffering. How can we truly reflect our compassion towards others as Christ-like people?

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity – said Apostle Paul to the Colossians (3: 12- 14). To put it in even more practical terms, remember Jesus' parable on *The Good Samaritan* (Luke 10: 25- 37). The Good Samaritan gave his time, his love and his treasure to restore a broken person. He was willing to cross political, racial, cultural and social barriers because he saw someone with a need, and he had the resources to meet that need. When we love God with all our hearts then nothing we have should be held back to be freely available for the Lord to use. The world today seems a far more tumultuous, dangerous and poorer place than it has been just a short while ago. Natural, and man-made disasters, Covid-19 pandemic, economic crises, ethnic-conflicts and even wars are resulting in widespread anxiety and even panic. We live in a world of worry in which children are the most disadvantaged, especially in the so called Third World like Africa, South America or Asia. To have pity on them in compassionate prayers is not enough. God wants us to do more, far more. He continues to ask for the practical compassionate love Jesus prescribed in the parable of the Good Samaritan, and

when His audience acknowledged the right reaction of the man, Jesus said – and still says : - **GO AND DO LIKEWISE !**

May the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all for evermore. Amen.

Sandor, your Minister.



SESSION CLERK'S REPORT

Since the publication of the Easter edition of the Church Magazine several changes have affected the composition of the Kirk Session and Office Bearers.

The first of these was the very happy event on 31 March of the ordination of Hugh Campbell as Elder in our church. Hugh has already proved to be a highly diligent and motivated Elder.

However, this happy event was quickly followed by the extremely sad news of the passing of Fiona Marshall and Mary Cameron. These sudden losses were felt acutely by both the Session and the congregation. Tributes to both these dear ladies them will be found later in this magazine.

After serving as Presbytery Elder for Portree since August 2011, I stood down from this post with Donna McEwan agreeing to take on the role.

Fiona's passing left a vacancy for a new Safeguarding Coordinator. Until a new person was appointed, church regulations are that the Session Clerk assumes responsibility. Kirk Session was delighted when Mhairi MacDonald volunteered to take on the role and approved her appointment. All necessary forms have now been completed and sent to the Safeguarding Service of the Church of Scotland and we await notification of Mhairi's clearance before she officially takes up post.

In terms of our vacancy for a new minister to serve the forthcoming united charge of Portree, Kilmuir and Staffin, which will take effect from October 2027, the re-advertised post attracted interest from one minister, but unfortunately that person did not submit an application form. The Nominating Committee will reconvene soon to consider the situation and decide on the next steps.

It was with great joy that we have been able, once more, to open the church to visitors during the Summer months. This has only been possible thanks to the willingness of a number of our congregation volunteering to be involved in the opening. We have been unable to operate the scheme on the scale that we did pre-Covid, but the number of visitors from all over the world entering our church has demonstrated that it is a very worthwhile and welcomed initiative.

Our Audio-Visual Committee approved the quotation from a Peterhead company to instal large screens and recording equipment in the Church and the Church Hall which would see the operation of sound and video equipment being moved from the front of the church to the balcony. This should all be completed by the time this magazine is published.

And finally, following a suggestion made at a recent meeting of the Congregational Board, a Compassion Committee was set up to look at ways in which the church, or individual members of the congregation, could sponsor a child or children in some of the world's poorest communities. Full details of this project will be released at the Morning Service and Soup & Pudding Lunch on 8 September. An invitation to attend this launch was made to the congregation of Kilmuir and Stenscholl and they have indicated that they will be delighted to join us for the event.

God bless you all,

Bill

TREASURER'S REPORT :

We only need to look around us at a Sunday service to notice empty spaces where dear friends once sat. Age, infirmity and passings have all made an impact on the size of our congregation.

Reduced numbers attending services has a consequential knock-on effect on the general income of the church. This has been the trend for several years.

Regrettably, this decline in income is accompanied by steady increases in expenditure.

For example, if we were to look at the first 7 months 2024, we would see that general income currently stands at £32,300 while general expenditure stands at £38,000.

This means that the accounts for January to July 2024 show a deficit of £5,700.

We are all noticing similar strains on our household budget ,and we cannot expect all to be able increase their weekly givings to the church, but where this is possible, we would ask you to consider this.

In recent years I have used three approaches to our congregation and I do not mind repeating them. This year, I have also added a fourth suggestion :-

- Think of the price of a newspaper. Multiply that by 6 or 7 to get your weekly expenditure on that item and think of all the bad news these papers contain. Compare that with your giving to the church and the Good News that you hear there every week.
- Our annual expenditure for the church is a considerable sum - £55K to £60K is normal. We rely on our weekly offerings to pay for this. Our overhead costs for the church are exactly the same whether or not you are present in church on a Sunday. So, if you miss a Sunday's attendance, please put your weekly offering amount aside and put in two weeks offering the following Sunday.
- If you have not already done so, link your givings to Gift Aid. This means, that for anyone who pays Income Tax – even on pensions - a no cost to yourself and without having to do anything, every donation of £20 to the church becomes £25 !
- If you are physically unable to attend church, you can still send in your donations via someone who does attend. Remember that at some later date you will most likely be wanting the services of the church !

Please consider these suggestions and, if you are able to do so, put one or more into practice.

Thank you.

Bill

Fiona Marshall and Mary Cameron

It is with great sadness that I write this article following, since the last publication of our magazine, the sudden loss of two of our much-loved elders.

I am sure we are all worried at times by the brevity and uncertainty of our time on this earth. This becomes more real in our minds when people dear to us pass away. Death indeed is a subject that is too painful and indeed we feel quite vulnerable to talk about it with honesty. As Christians however is it good for us to hide from it and indeed act as if it doesn't exist? As Christians we should hate death but yet be unafraid of it, when we thoughtfully think of it, we should rest in hope of a better time in glory.

Death is an enemy to the end and is no friend. Yet while death is an enemy, we should not fear it because it is a defeated enemy. Death was conquered as Jesus tasted death on the cross, was resurrected, winning permanent victory over death. A day is coming when death will no longer exist. That is precious comfort. We can still hate death and importantly grieve for those lost to us but should remember we do not need to fear it as due to the sacrifice by Jesus everlasting happiness ends the day.

With these thoughts in mind, we can reflect on our time spent with Fiona and Mary who both loved life, were conscious of its brevity and were prepared in that assurance that as their earthly life would close, they would pass into an eternal life with their Saviour.

We were blessed to have had Fiona and Mary in our congregation carrying out their duties as elders. They were regular attenders always giving a warm welcome to those that entered the church doors. They enjoyed their role in the church and carried it out with a smile.

The office of eldership is a spiritual office and only a person who has the spirit of God within can fill it in a worthy way. These wonderful ladies possessed that certainty through their love for Jesus. They had that inner conviction that nothing could sway. Though they had different personalities neither was afraid to speak up about their faith, irrespective of the company. The wonderful words of Paul come to mind "neither death, nor life, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus".

Any that have a position of authority in Church must lead their life in a special way and I can confirm we have to accept we will let ourselves and our saviour down. People can stop going to church due to the actions of people with positions of authority. Fiona and Mary didn't need to speak about their religion or indeed force it on others as they were like a mirror reflecting the light. Others in the congregation saw it and indeed I feel I can with confidence say that their welcome and love attracted and maintained members of the congregation.

They were prayerful women, readers of God's word, active in duties and attending worship, they also had self-discipline in order that they could deepen and enrich their devotional life.

Reflecting on each of them individually. They were very different, but I speak on behalf of all the Kirk Session when I say they were equally loved and will be equally missed.

Fiona was so disappointed, due to health issues, to miss our Easter Sunday service as it incorporated our Communion Service and the induction of Hugh Campbell as an elder, which gave her great joy. We prayed for Fiona and indeed discussed after the service with Bill how the Kirk Session worked well together, and the important contribution carried out by her. Little did we realise she would so cruelly be taken from us the following morning.

On moving to Skye in 2006, Fiona's health took a turn for the worse when she contracted a

condition called Amyloidosis which affected her kidneys, leading to her eventually needing Renal Dialysis. Fiona did not allow this to weigh her down and indeed a large number in the congregation would have been unaware of her health issue.

Bill and Fiona were very much a team. Indeed, the two of them were the driving force to make sure our magazine was published. Team Marshall. The phrase 'joined at the hip' is one we are all aware of and it certainly springs to mind when we speak of Bill and Fiona. It still saddens us on a Sunday when we see that gap at the front of the Church beside Bill when he carries out music duties. Fiona loved the HymnalPlus system, picking the hymns for a Sunday and providing it for services.

Fiona was also involved with providing floral arrangements for the church. While Fiona tended to be quiet at meetings, when she took on a role such as Safeguarding Coordinator she spoke with passion. She was extremely well organised with every avenue covered.

Bill is very much a leader in the church with his roles as Session Clerk and Treasurer. I am sure however he would agree, in a marriage one couldn't carry out such time-consuming roles without the full support of one's partner. The support was evident in both directions with each role they carried out.

Fiona however will be best remembered, for simply being Fiona. She was so welcoming to EVERYONE that came to church. She treated everyone as an equal. Someone that was home in Skye for Christmas and attended church said to me once, your church is so welcoming, but Fiona Marshall gives that extra welcome and really makes you feel she is pleased to see you. I believe that describes what Fiona meant to us all.

Fiona is sorely missed by us all and our love and prayers continue to go with Bill, Blair, Marion, all their family and friends.

We were struggling to come to terms with the loss of Fiona when we heard on 19th April the devastating news of the sudden death of our other dear friend, Mary. It was an unbelievable shock as she appeared so full of life and active in all her duties.

Mary, along with Neil and family returned to her beloved, Skye in 1985. She was very much loved in her role as a nurse at Portree Surgery along with her friend Peggy MacFarlane. She took pride in her work and was missed on her retirement.

As Christians we are required not to just look at the spiritual needs of those around us but also the physical needs. Mary showed love and compassion to others as she immersed herself in voluntary work. Mary displayed her Christian values in her interaction with people on a daily basis.

She was an active volunteer at Crossroads. She looked at the work as a privilege and built up a great friendship with other volunteers.

I was fortunate to carry out the role as a volunteer and trustee with Mary at the Foodbank. She really cared deeply for those that were struggling with food poverty and I am aware she made it very much part of her prayer life. She was very much an action person, sleeves up and get on with matters. We have a lovely group of trustees who have become firm friends and Mary loved that time spent after meetings with coffee and cake (usually home made by someone). On reflection you realise how precious is that time of laughter as a group. These times we take for granted. You can imagine Mary, Mogie Gillies and others laughing together. We should treasure these times and thank the Lord for them.

Mary also loved the Ladies' Bible Study group. As a mere man I cannot comment much on it, but I am aware how much she enjoyed it and also took so much from it.

She enjoyed her role as a church elder and was very much a person with a view 'let's get this done'. She would have been delighted to see the new kitchen in hall completed. She was also a

great encouragement to one when conducting a sermon or spending a time in open prayer.

She really cared for those less fortunate and those that struggled with life.

Like Fiona Mary is sorely missed by us all. Our love and prayers continue to go out to Neil, Graeme, Eilidh, their families, sister Robina and all other family members and friends.

We do thank the Lord for the lives of Fiona and Mary and the Christian lives they led. As a congregation, as we still struggle with the loss, we need the Lord to help us accept what we see as life's hardships are part of his ways.

They most certainly will not be forgotten, and we do need to cherish the Lord's goodness to us and that special bond of love we have with Christian brothers and sisters.

Written on behalf of the Kirk Session
Roddy Beaton

Confidence in God

Alone with none but Thee, my God,
I journey on my way.
What need I fear, when Thou art near
O King of night and day?
More safe I am within Thy hand
Than if a host did round me stand.

A prayer of St Columba

WORLD POVERTY: CAN WE DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT?

Child poverty

The facts about world poverty can seem overwhelming. UNICEF estimates that 333 million children under the age of 18 years are in extreme poverty, living on less than USD 2.15/day. Children aged 0 to 9 years are the most vulnerable, especially those living in rural settings and where the head of the household has little or no education.

Children account for one third of the world's population, but more than half of the extremely poor. Growing up in poverty has many adverse effects on a child's wellbeing due to factors such as inadequate nutrition, poor hygiene, ill health, poor access to healthcare, psychological stress, disrupted or no education, child marriage or child labour.

The statistics and the images we see on TV and in the news can seem overwhelming and we can feel helpless to do anything about it, especially when we don't have any direct connection to those so affected.

But is there anything we can do? Yes! We can begin with a child.

What the Bible says about helping the poor

Compassion for those in need is a strong theme in the Bible, both in the Old Testament and in Jesus' teaching. In Matthew 25 Jesus describes the priority that He gives to actions that respond to those in need:

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. 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.'

Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?

The King will reply, I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me."

Sponsoring a child

Compassion UK is a Christian charity based on child sponsorship. It is Christ centred, Church driven and Child focused.

It works through sponsorship of individual children that enables them to join a programme run in partnership with a local church.

The charity started in 1952 and now has 16 fundraising offices globally, including one in the UK. It works in 29 countries with children living in poverty.

Sponsorship of individual children gives them access to a programme providing nutritious food, access to education, health checks and support from the local church. This not only benefits the child but also the child's family, and can even bring resources to the local community.

Sponsors have regular contact with their sponsored child through letters, assuring them of their prayers and encouraging them. This helps to build the child's self confidence and affirm their worth in Christ. The emphasis on raising the child's self esteem and aspirations is a key feature of Compassion's work and videos on the website emphasise how much it means to a child to have contact with a sponsor from another country who can help them access support, education and healthcare that they otherwise would not have.

How much does it cost?

Sponsoring an individual child costs £32/month. The sponsorship can be provided by an individual, a family, or a group of individuals or an organisation such as our church.

Soup and Pudding lunch Sunday 8 September 2024

Portree Parish Church Kirk Session has agreed to sponsor a child, to be chosen by the Sunday School. The child will be of a similar age to the children in the Sunday School and this will be ideal since they can write to the child, sharing information about their daily lives and getting to know about the child's life, family and community.

It's possible that others in the congregation might also wish to get involved and more information will be provided at our Soup and Pudding lunch on Sunday 8 September which has been chosen as our Compassion Sunday.

Compassion UK

There's a lot more information about Compassion, the countries it works in and the impacts of the sponsorship programme on their website that can be accessed here:

<https://www.compassionuk.org/about-us/who-we-are/>

We'll be sharing some of this information at our Compassion Sunday service on 8 September and look forward to sharing some fellowship with an opportunity to ask questions and find out more at our Soup and Pudding lunch after the morning service. Please do join us then!

Catriona MacDonald

Sea Sunday – 14 July 2024

Sea Sunday is celebrated on the second or third Sunday in July. As both an island parish, and part of an island nation, we are heavily reliant on the sea for many things. It provides us with food, transport, leisure, defence and trade. The many vessels which sail the seas include fishing boats, Lifeboats, Coastguard, fish farmers, ferries, cruise ships, transport tankers, Royal Navy craft, anglers and leisure boats. Sea Sunday is a time to recognise the work of these crews and the safety services also provided. It also gives us a chance to look at the work of various Christian support services for those at sea, and who are often away from home and family for long periods of time or may be facing a crisis of circumstances.

Sea Sunday was traditionally celebrated in Portree on the pier after the main church services on the designated Sunday morning. But the first service of this kind since 2019 (because of the Covid pandemic), was held in St Columba's Episcopal Church. Ironically this was because one of the biggest cruise ships, the MV Nieuw Statendam whose 2600 passengers were visiting Portree that day, and the pier was rather busy.



I had the privilege of attending this year's service, led by Stephen Plant, chaplain to the port of Portree, joined by the local Fisherman Mission's port officer for Portree & Kyle. We heard the Word based on the lectionary readings which included Psalm 24 –

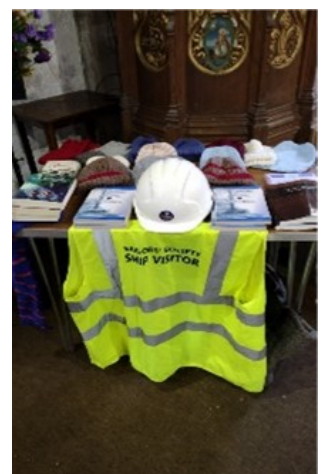
“The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it,

The world and all who dwell therein.

For it is he who founded it upon the seas

And made it firm upon the rivers of the deep.”

We also heard about the work of the port chaplain, who often takes and stall onto cruise ships to meet with the crews, who often can't leave the ship due to not having warm weather clothing, or who are away from their homes for almost a whole year at a time and might need support to deal with an emergency at home. So help can be prayer, phone access, a woolly hat or warm jacket, or the Bible in their own language. It was enlightening to hear about all the work that goes on, often unseen, in support of those who allow our island life to flourish.



It is hoped that next year's service will be back on the pier and so many more will be able to join in thanksgiving for those who serve our community on the sea.

Donna McEwan

A Just Peace

It has been over 10 months since a music festival and an Israeli village were attacked from over the border with Gaza and over 1,000 people were killed and hundreds more taken hostage. Since October 7th it has been estimated that over 40,000 people, mostly civilians, have been killed with seemingly no end to the horror and hardships experienced by all sides. Millions have been displaced and made homeless without adequate health facilities or access to food, water and shelter. Towns and cities in Israel and Gaza and in surrounding countries are living in fear of air strikes and ground attacks. In fact, I imagine that by the time you read this the casualty figures will be hundreds higher. With all the news that we are constantly fed it can be difficult to work out what to think or what to do to help.

In the August edition of "Life and Work" there is an interesting and thoughtful article which I found helpful. It suggests how we can better inform ourselves of the facts of the Gaza situation and on the situation in the Middle East in general.

Christian Aid has published a set of online resources called "A Just Peace" which has been endorsed by the Church of Scotland. They include first-hand accounts of life in Israel and Gaza, the history and background behind the current conflict and facts about the barriers to peace. Importantly there is also advice on how we as individuals can make a difference through campaigning and prayerful support. In the article a former Moderator of the General Assembly asks, "Are we in danger of becoming bored with, turned off by, the daily spread of dreadful news from Gaza?" It is all too easy to do so, but as part of the worldwide Christian community we cannot allow that to happen.

To access these resources go to christianaid.org.uk then click on "*Get Involved*", then under the heading "Campaign with us" click on "*Take Action*" and finally use the scroll down menu under "What are you looking for?" and select "*Just Peace Campaign*" followed by "Go"

Heather Quaye

Smile Lines:

Cucumber -

A small boy asked his mother for a cucumber to take to Junior Church. A slightly puzzled mother complied. Later she asked what it had been used for. "Sorry, mum," he confessed. "I got it wrong. We were supposed to bring a newcomer."

Could have been worse -

A very long train with two engines was making its way across America. While crossing the Western mountains, one of the engines broke down. Slowly, the train chugged on. Farther along, the other engine broke down, and the train shuddered to a halt in the middle of nowhere. Not to be discouraged, the train driver announced: "Ladies and Gentlemen, I have good news and bad news. The bad news is that both engines have failed, and we will be stuck here for a couple of days until the additional engines arrive. The good news is that we are

The Olympic Games

This month saw the start of the 2024 Olympic Games in Paris. In describing the Christian life as a marathon race, the writer of Hebrews (12:1-2) challenges us to finish well.

‘throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles’ (1)

As in a normal race, we have to get rid of any burdens that weigh us down (eg possessions, worries, what others think of us) and besetting sins (wrong habits or attitudes). We can cast our burdens on the Lord (Ps 55:22) and be assured of His forgiveness (1 John 1:9).

‘run with perseverance the race marked out for us’ (1)

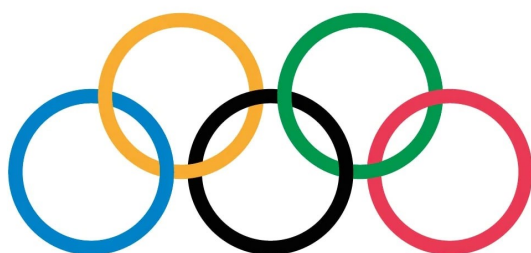
The Christian life is like a marathon not a sprint race, which calls for endurance. The course is *marked out* for us, as we all have a unique race to run, with its opportunities and difficulties. God knows our path and will provide all that we need to complete the race.

‘fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith’ (2)

The runner keeps their focus on the finishing line and avoids all distractions. Our focus is on Jesus, who has run the race before us (*‘author’*), but is the one who can show us how to finish well (*‘perfecter’*).

We are also surrounded by a ***‘great cloud of witnesses’ (1)***. These are God’s people, both past and present, who are cheering us on!

During the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, the British athlete Derek Redmond was running in the 400 metres semi-finals. About 250 metres from the finish his hamstring tore, and he fell to the ground in pain. However, his father ran on to the track to support him in completing the race. Let’s not forget that whatever we face, God is there beside to enable us to finish the race!



Canon Paul Hardingham

Nigel Beeton writes: Psalm 30 is one of those uplifting psalms, which tells of the faithfulness of God, how long He loves us compared with how short the duration of His anger, and how He turns our weeping to joy and our sackcloth to clothes of celebration!

I will exalt You

I will exalt You, faithful Lord
For You have raised me from the deep
You saved me from the heathen horde
And from my foes You did me keep;
I called, O Lord, to Thee
And You have rescued me!
You spared me from the grave,
From Hell You have me saved
So I will praise Your holy name!

Sing to the Lord you saints of God,
Sing praises to His holy name!
For moments feel His angry rod
For all your life His love proclaim!
His favour comes always
His love throughout your days;
You'll maybe weep at night,
But soon will come the light,
You will rejoice when morning comes!

When once we wept such bitter tears
He causes us to dance with joy!
Our clothes of sackcloth are removed
His faithful love in us is proved!
We live within His light
In radiant clothes of white;
Our hearts shall sing to Thee
We'll never silent be,
O Lord we'll praise Thee ever more!

HOW GREAT THOU ART !

Over the summer holiday I was trying to think of something we could discuss when the Ladies Bible Study returned after its short break. I then had a Julie Andrews moment and thought “Let’s start at the very beginning” and indeed when it comes to the Bible, it is a very good place to start! In the first chapter of Genesis, we hear how God created the world and everything in it and on the seventh day when He rested “God saw all that He had made, and it was very good”. The second chapter focuses on the creation of the first man and woman, Adam and Eve, and how perfectly they fitted in with the perfect world God had created. These two chapters fill me with wonder and awe that God could in his love and wisdom have made such a beautiful place where we are chosen by Him ,created as we are in His own image, to become stewards of all that He has made. It also made me marvel how such a great God should shower so much attention and love on us when we are nothing compared to His power and majesty.

In rereading these two very familiar but always striking chapters the hymn “How great though art” kept popping into my head together with another wonderful chapter of the Old Testament Psalm 8 .So I decided to try and find out more about this modern hymn and to my surprise I found that the writer also had Psalm 8 in mind when he wrote his verses. That man was a Swedish poet and lay preacher called Carl Boberg who composed “O Store Gud” (O Great God) in 1885.He had been to church and on walking home had been caught in a sudden storm with violent thunder and lightning. When he got home, he opened his window and looked out on a now peaceful and quiet scene save for the sound of church bells and birds singing in a nearby wood.

The version we sing today was translated from Russian by Stuart Hine and has since gone on to become one of our most popular modern hymns, most notably in the Billy Graham rallies of the 1950s.He included it in all his meetings saying “The reason I like How Great Thou Art is because it glorifies God. It turns Christians’ eyes towards God rather than upon themselves. I use it as often as possible because it is such a God- glorifying song”. I myself am very fond of the Elvis Presley version which also helped to popularise this hymn which in 2019 was voted by Songs of Praise viewers as their second favourite hymn(Amazing Grace was first). There are many ways Christians can express their love and thankfulness to God for all that He has done and continues to do for us and singing is just one way. The Bible tells us to sing and shout and glorify His name and this hymn certainly encourages us to do just that.

O Lord my God when I in awesome wonder
Consider all the works Thy hand have made,
I see the stars, I hear the mighty thunder,
Thy power throughout the universe displayed;

*Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!
Then sings my soul, my Saviour God to Thee,
How great Thou art, How great Thou art!*

When through the woods and forest glades I wander
And hear the birds sing sweetly in the trees;
When I look down from lofty mountain grandeur,
And hear the brook, and feel the gentle breeze;

And when I think that God His Son not sparing,
Sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in,
That on the cross my burden gladly bearing,
He bled and died to take away my sin:

When Christ shall come with shout of acclamation
And take me home, what joy shall fill my heart!
Then shall I bow in humble adoration
And there proclaim, my God, how great Thou art!

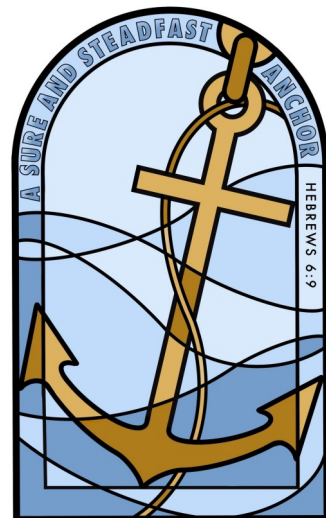
Heather Quayle

As we remember Sea Sunday last month

Men of the Sea

Your first disciples, Lord, were men of the sea:
Hardy fishermen from the shores of Galilee.
They knew from experience the perils of the deep...
They also knew Your presence with them in their darkest hours.
We pray for those who face like hazards today...
Lord of the sea, be near to guard them in every danger...
And let them hear Your voice above the tempest,
'It is I, be not afraid'
So bring them to their haven in peace.

From a prayer by Frank Colquhoun



A Personal Reflection 30/07/24

"He thought that in the beauty of the world were hid a secret. He thought the world's heart beat at some terrible cost and that the world's pain and its beauty moved in a relationship of diverging equity and that in this headlong deficit the blood of multitudes might ultimately be exacted for the vision of a single flower."

These astonishingly arresting thoughts come from the protagonist John Grady Cole near the end of Cormac McCarthy's novel "All the pretty horses" in the famous Border Trilogy.

I do however think that McCarthy has things backwards here.

Saint Paul says in Romans 8 verse 18 in the Bible that: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us."

And building on that theme of the diminished significance of suffering CS Lewis states in his essay The great divorce that :

"All Hell is smaller than one pebble of your earthly world: but it is smaller than one atom of this world, the Real World. Look at yon butterfly. If it swallowed all Hell, Hell would not be big enough to do it any harm or to have any taste."

This corresponds too with the theological teaching of Karl Barth who argued:

"Nothingness is the past, the ancient menace, danger and destruction, the ancient non-being which obscured and defaced the divine creation of God but which is consigned to the past in Jesus Christ, in whose death it has received its deserts, being destroyed with this consummation of the positive will of God which is as such the end of His non-willing.

In Jesus Christ, both God and creature have acted and defeated nothingness."

As I look out my window this morning, my mind and soul grapple with the seeming overwhelming evil and pain and injustice of the previous days events in Southport where anger, bitterness and revenge all lay claim to my heart, especially in the light of a false and manipulative media narrative on one hand and a barrage of social media outrage and self righteous anger on the other.

I recall the lyric of "The Future" by Leonard Cohen:

"And now the wheels of heaven stop you feel the devils riding crop"

And yet..

As I look at the roses in my garden I can reach out and see that we must not be overwhelmed and distracted by the apparent victory of atrocity. It seems so all encompassing and omnipotent and engaging, all there is...

And yet in hope I say:

The Beauty of these new bloomed roses seems to rise above it all in a restorative apocatastastical hymn of Love and Hope. Rising in a Triumph of forgiveness and a sure and certain promise of future restoration.

"All shall be well" they cry aloud to the Son. Every tear shall be gone, all life renewed, even the memory of evil forgotten.

Vengeance is mine says the Lord, it looks like petals...

“Remember especially that you cannot be the judge of anyone. For there can be no judge of a criminal on earth until the judge knows that he, too, is a criminal, exactly the same as the one who stands before him, and that he is perhaps most guilty of all for the crime of the one standing before him. When he understands this, then he will be able to be a judge. However mad that may seem, it is true. For if I myself were righteous, perhaps there would be no criminal standing before me now.”

Father Zosima from the Brothers Karamatzov by Dostoyevsky

Submitted by Colin Reeve

A Grape, a Well, a Spark, a Seed

Lord, how much juice You can squeeze from a single grape.

How much water You can draw from a single well.

How great a fire You can kindle from a tiny spark.

How great a tree You can grow from a tiny seed.

My soul is so dry that by itself it cannot pray;

Yet You can squeeze from it the juice of a thousand prayers.

My soul is so parched that by itself it cannot love;

Yet You can draw from it boundless love for You and for my neighbour.

My soul is so cold that by itself it has no joy;

Yet You can light the fire of heavenly joy within me.

My soul is so feeble that by itself it has no faith;

Yet by Your power my faith grows to a great height.

I thank You for prayer, for love, for joy, for faith;

Let me always be prayerful, loving, joyful, faithful.

By Guigo the Carthusian (d.1188)

Canon Paul Hardingham looks at the 'easy living' of August.

Summer Holidays

'Summertime and the living is easy.' George Gershwin's words could be aptly applied to August, when many of us take holidays. It's a month to focus on summertime (weather permitting!!): family and barbeques; the beach and ice cream; long days with no school! It's a time to wind down from the hectic pace of normal routine.

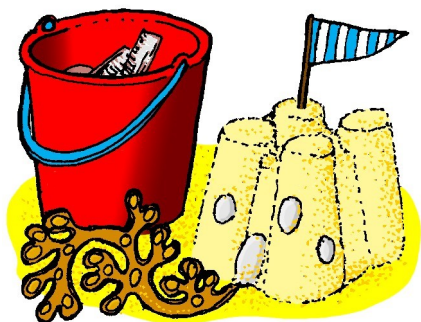
However, while summer is a season, it is also a state of mind. We all have periods in life, which are summer-like, when life goes well. How can we walk by faith in the summers or good times of our spiritual lives?

Summer Distinctives: When we go through times of sickness, financial pressure, difficult relationships and other problems, we more easily focus on God. In a spiritual summer season, we can subtly find ourselves enjoying the gifts without acknowledging the Giver! The greatest danger in the summertime season of life is to forget the One who is responsible for the good things we are enjoying.

Summer Distractions: Our normal routine revolves around clocks and calendars, but we can easily get distracted when we break these disciplined routines. In the spiritual summer seasons of life, there is a temptation to miss out on our regular times with God in Bible reading and prayer! Things that make summer seasons enjoyable can also become big distractions.

Summer Directives: How can we make the most of this summer season and keep focused on God? We need to maintain a gratitude attitude: thankful to God for all His blessings: 'When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the Lord your God for the good land He has given you. Be careful that you do not forget the Lord your God.' (Deuteronomy 8:10/11).

So let's stay close and stay grateful to God in this summer season of life!



The Good Shepherd

Psalm 23 is well loved, and its paraphrased words are often sung in the popular hymn *The Lord's My Shepherd*.

At the time of Jesus, these labourers were everywhere, as sheep were a common commodity. So when Jesus described a shepherd, He was referring to someone the people all knew about.

Our Lord's description of a shepherd helped His hearers to understand Jesus, as they were aware that sheep were valuable. A good shepherd made sure sheep were protected and fed. If they got into danger, they had to be rescued. A hireling would not be so considerate. He would abandon the sheep when faced with dangerous animals or aggressive thieves! Only a good shepherd would risk his life in caring for the flock.

In His parable (John 10:1-18) Jesus goes a step further talking about a good shepherd as He is speaking about Himself. Sheep know their owner and follow him, and Jesus wants us to know and follow Him. Sheep can get lost and end up in trouble. Jesus came to our rescue and is indeed our Saviour. A shepherd knows each sheep by name and Jesus knows *us* individually too. We can trust Him with our lives.

Jesus said that just as a shepherd is willing to die caring for his sheep, He too would die – looking ahead to His crucifixion. This would secure our salvation and provide a Home with Him. Jesus also said that there are other sheep of interest to Him! He speaks of being the shepherd of all nations, not just the Jews. His love extends to everyone.

These words of Jesus are so important. Give thanks that Jesus died for us and now awaits for us to be with Him. We belong to Him, we are His people, we are His flock.

Lester Amann

A Clean Sweep ?

Friday 20th September has been designated by the United Nations as World Clean-Up Day 2024.

I thought this is something any of us could support and even do it as a sponsor for a charity.

But remember we can litter pick any day and encourage others to put their litter in a bin or take it home.



Mairi Nicolson

Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill - March 2024.

Imagine the following situations:

- You are so ill that you will die from your illness within the next 6 months. You have been led to believe that there will be such pain and suffering that you will be glad to accept the option of a 'quick end to it all' i.e. '**assisted dying**'.
- You have severe mental health problems that just never improve, and you want release; a 29-year-old Dutch woman said recently "I aim to step out of life", and has been granted the right to '**assisted dying**'.
- You feel that you are a burden to your family, you need a lot of hands-on care, and the cost of care is using up much of your legacy – perhaps it's time to pass on, at least leave the family a little money. You are seen as selfless, and your death is easily arranged i.e. '**assisted dying**'.
- you have a life-long disability, with no prospect of improvement – you request death as there seems no point in continuing to live i.e. '**assisted dying**'.

Don't be misled by that phrase 'assisted dying' – it can sound so helpful and caring. When you strip it back, it is in fact a suicide request by the patient, with a doctor helping them to kill themselves. The death is not just 'assisted' but hastened. That doesn't sound so helpful and caring, does it? But that's what it is. Surely nowhere on earth would such things happen? But they do, right now - in Canada, Holland, Belgium, and in some other countries as well. The shocking fact is that people can commit suicide in any of the above scenarios, after making the appropriate requests to their doctors.

Should we be worried? Yes – very worried. The Canadian law started out in 2016, strictly for people who would die very shortly from terminal illness; but look at it now, only 8 years later. The 'slippery slope' is not a figment of imagination anymore. And consider these awkward realities that might develop – for instance, will a person who developed dementia be allowed to cancel their previous request for assisted dying, will their change of mind be honoured?; will someone with severe depression be given time to get better?; will people be under pressure to request Assisted Dying because of their long-term costly disability? Will Scotland do any better than Canada?

Supporters of the Scottish Assisted Dying Bill say that Assisted Dying 'is certain to become law' in Scotland later this year. Recently it's been approved in principle in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. And Labour plan to introduce a Bill like this in Westminster. We're also assured that 78% of Scots want 'Assisted Dying'. And an important aside – the 2022 national census reports that 51% of Scots now say that they have no religious beliefs.

The people behind all this tell us that deaths from terminal illness are full of pain and suffering, and we're all "just one bad death away from supporting Assisted Dying". Therefore, they say, **the truly compassionate person** will seek a quick and easy end to such a situation. Which also means that **we will be in control** of our time of death and method of dying. It all seems very caring and reasonable.

So what about the '78% who want Assisted Dying'? Well, it depends on who you ask and how you ask – in that poll, most respondents were in good health. In contrast, studies show that when it comes to the personal need for end-of-life care, most people don't want the hastening of their death (assisted dying), just relief of symptoms. When we read in the papers that 'most people want it', don't believe it.

But perhaps it is true what they say – that the only real options are either 'assisted dying' or terrible pain and suffering? No – not true! We are not blind to the harsh reality of disease, distress and death. But we are very clear about God's gifts of pain-relieving medicines, and of skilled doctors and nurses who provide palliative care until a person reaches their natural end-of-life.

And what about the 'control thing' (or 'personal autonomy', the posh term). As one journalist put it, "surely it's my right to choose to end my life, so you need to respect that and stay silent". But we cannot stay silent, because (i) God has made us in his image, therefore **we have no right to take away the life that he's given us**, either our own or someone else's, (ii) **he instructs us to look after each other, particularly the less able, to the natural end of life**, and (iii) **we can do the looking-after with great skill and compassion**, so that people simply will not feel the need to request 'assisted dying' (whether they believe in God or not).

What can we do? Pray that the Bill will fail. Ask your MSP's to vote against the Bill, and to leave the law as it is – it protects us from ourselves. You'll easily find your MSP details at www.parliament.scot, or write to them at The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh EH99 1SP.

Dr Charles L Crichton

FRCGP, DipPallMed.

Quotes

We receive more than we can ever give; we receive it from the past on which we draw with every breath, but also – and this is a point of faith – from the source of the mystery itself, by the means which religious people call GRACE.
– *Edwin Muir*

If we fail to feed the needy, we do not have God's love, no matter what we say. Regardless of what we do or say at 11am on a Sunday morn, affluent people who neglect the poor are not people of God. – *Ronald Sider*

Feel for others – in your pocket. – *Charles Haddon Spurgeon*

In a recent sermon, Sandor referred to William Holman Hunt's painting "The Light of the World" and the door having a handle only on the inside and, if we want Jesus to come into our lives, we have to open the door of our hearts. This reminded me of a very close and treasured Christian friend of mine who made a recording of the following song. Her name was Sadie MacLeod. Sadly, she passed away five years ago. I treasure the memory of the recording.

Catherine MacLeod

You Must Open the Door

There's a Saviour who stands at the door of your heart,
He is longing to enter - why let Him depart ?
He has patiently called you so often before
But you must open your heart

Chorus

*You must open the door
You must open the door
When Jesus comes in, He will save you from sin
But you must open the door*

He has come from the Father, salvation to bring
And His name is called Jesus, Redeemer and King.
To save you and keep you, He pleads evermore
But you must open the door

He is loving and kind, full of infinite grace
In your heart, in your life, will you give Him a place ?
He is waiting to bless you, your soul to restore,
But you must open the door

He will lead you at last to that blessed abode,
To that city of God, at the end of the road,
Where the night never falls, when life's journey is o'er
But you must open the door.



All in the month of August :

It was:

300 years ago, on 25th August 1724 that George Stubbs was born. This British artist is best known for his paintings of horses.

250 years ago, on 1st August 1774 that oxygen was discovered by British chemist Joseph Priestley. He was the first scientist to publish his findings on the discovery.

125 years ago, on 13th August 1899 that Alfred Hitchcock was born. This British-born American film director, producer and screenwriter was known as the Master of Suspense. Known for his films *The 39 Steps*, *Dial M for Murder*, *Rear Window*, *Vertigo*, *Psycho*, *The Birds*, and many more.

100 years ago, on 11th August 1924 that the first newsreel of US presidential candidates was filmed. The candidates who appeared included Calvin Coolidge, John W Davies and Robert La Follette.

90 years ago, on 19th August 1934 that in a referendum in Germany, voters approved the creation of the position of 'Fuhrer', which combined the roles of Chancellor and President into one and gave Adolf Hitler sole power.

80 years ago, on 1st August 1944 that 15-year-old Jewish diarist Anne Frank made the final entry in her diary while hiding from the Nazis in Amsterdam. On 4th August her hiding place was raided by Nazi police following a tip-off. She and her family were taken to Auschwitz concentration camp, and she was transferred to Belsen in October. She died in February 1945.

Also 80 years ago, on 25th August 1944 that Paris was liberated from the Nazis. The Germans had occupied the city for four years. General Charles de Gaulle (later President of France) entered the city in triumph.

75 years ago, on 24th August 1949 that the North Atlantic Treaty came into effect, establishing NATO.

65 years ago, on 7th August 1959 that the USA launched the Explorer 6 satellite, which sent back the first images of the Earth from space.

Also 65 years ago, on 21st August 1959 that Hawaii became the 50th state of the USA.

60 years ago, on 12th August 1964 that Ian Fleming, British novelist and creator of the character James Bond, died.

50 years ago, on 8th August 1974 that US President Richard Nixon announced his resignation, effective from noon the following day. He was facing impeachment over the Watergate scandal.

30 years ago, on 31st August 1994 that the IRA agreed to a complete ceasefire after 25 years.

25 years ago, on 16th August 1999 that Vladimir Putin became Prime Minister of Russia. He became President in May 2000.



THE TAPESTRY

It is human to suffer. It is something we all share that forms who we are and who we will become. Inside ourselves we all bear hidden scars and pains that we have acquired through this life. Scars that - more often than not - are known only to two people – ourselves and the Lord. Why must we bear such pains? Why do we suffer so much in this life?

In my article I would like to try to respond to one of the most difficult of questions for those of faith – why do we suffer? When we read the Psalms we see these very same questions being asked. People from ancient history - of strong faith - trying to reconcile their suffering with a faith in a God who loves them.

In Psalm 73 the Psalmist questions the Prosperity of the wicked. *“They have no struggles; their bodies are healthy and strong. They are free from common human burdens; they are not plagued by human ills. Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence.”*

We can all empathise with the feeling the Psalmist is showing here. Why me? Why are these horrible things happening to me and not others? Why do you not answer my prayers for lighter burdens?

A recent conversation in Church with two friends led me to write this article today. In that conversation we discussed this very topic and the concept that everything that happens to us -both good and bad - helps to form who we are and who God has intended us to be. This is a troubling and most difficult concept I must admit brothers and sisters – some pains and sorrows seem so hard to bear and yet we carry them with us day by day. Whether it be a sense of great loss or of great injustice – all who walk the earth carry hidden scars.



As you probably know, I am a big fan of the TV show Star Trek. In the Next Generation episode “Tapestry” this very topic is addressed. A Tapestry is created by weaving mixed coloured weft threads together to create a work of art – usually an image. Every thread used in a tapestry contributes to the finished image and yet as it is being formed it is unclear how all the threads will link together.

In the episode, Captain Picard of the Starship Enterprise has been shot in the heart and dies in the sickbay. Before he passes on, he is intercepted by a highly evolved entity named “Q” who can control space and time. Here Q explains that Picard has died but offers him a second chance. A way that he can go back in time to change the mistakes he made that led to his death.

Picard is then transported to his Starfleet academy days in the past before he was involved in a fight that led to him being stabbed through the heart. Before the fight occurs, this time Picard “plays it safe” and talks his friend down from the fight. As a result of that decision, Picard’s life takes on a totally new trajectory. Instead of rising through to the ranks to become Starship Captain, Picard finds himself working as a scientist in Astrophysics on the same ship.

This new life horrifies Picard. He is bored and unfulfilled. Despite attempts to seek promotion, his superior officers remain unimpressed by him.

Q then begins to explain to *Picard* *“The Jean-Luc Picard you wanted to be, the one who did *not* fight the Nausicaans, had quite a different career from the one you remember. That Picard never had a brush with death, never came face to face with his own mortality, never realized how fragile life is... or how important each moment can, and should, be. So, his life never came into focus. He drifted through much of his career, with no plan or agenda, going from one assignment to the next, never seizing the opportunities that presented themselves. He learned to play it safe... And he never, *ever,* got noticed by *anyone.*”*

Picard then comes full circle and wishes to be returned to sick bay in modern time to die as the man he was. Q returns Picard however this time, the doctor is able to save his life – and Picard has now learned a valuable lesson. Picard summarises his experience as: *“There are many parts of my youth that I'm not proud of. There were... loose threads - untidy parts of me that I would like to remove. But when I... pulled on one of those threads - it had unravelled the tapestry of my life.”*

Each soul on earth is living tapestry created by the Lord. And each tapestry contains many threads that come together to form who we are as human beings. There are threads of success, threads of love, threads of joy and threads of faith. But there are also threads of pain, threads of suffering and threads of hopelessness. None of us would choose to have had the negative experiences however we must ask ourselves brothers and sisters – were we to remove them – of what value to the soul would that be? Would we be better people? Would our faith in the Lord be stronger or weaker?

Romans Chapter 5 Paul states: *“Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.”*

And in Hebrews chapter 12 we read *“For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”*

Suffering teaches us reliance on the Lord and as Paul writes, it teaches us the spiritual qualities of perseverance and hope. Why then must we bear pain in this life? To live with pain is to live with courage. Courage because it takes great strength to continue to live day to day. The deeper the pain, the greater the strength and courage required to live with it. And where does that strength come from brothers and sisters? It comes from the Lord.

Psalms 73 continues *“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.”*

When I look back on my own life, I can see many threads I too would have liked to remove. But I can also see – just as Picard did – that these very threads were what formed the foundation of my faith. How I was given a great gift when I lost everything, and my life was falling away, and I found myself in a dark pit. A gift of **clarity**. For in that pit, I became aware of the presence of the Lord and called out to him to save me.

Were I to remove this experience – what faith would I have? How would the course of my life have changed had I not been offered this gift of clarity? These are questions I cannot answer. But I do know who the author of the tapestry of my life is – and there are no accidents in his designs.

Another thread of my life involved suffering a great injustice. Events in my life then led to a point where the person who had wronged me was suffering and in need of help. It was one of the hardest things I had ever done, but in a moment, I forgave that person and helped them in their time of great need.

Here I learned the thread of forgiveness – but most importantly - my capacity to forgive. As difficult as it is for me accept – another gift was given to me that day. Sometimes in the moments of our deepest sufferings and pain we can learn the most valuable aspects about **our character**. It was as if the Lord was asking me “How far can you go to forgive?” “Is there a limit to your forgiveness?” I would never have known the answer to those very questions were I not asked and tested in the way I was.

In return, I find myself asking the Lord. Who Am I? What should I do for you? Who do you want me to become? These are entirely human questions. We try to make sense of all our experiences - both good and bad - and why they had to happen.

Ultimately, we always return to the tapestry of our lives and indeed – the tapestry maker who is the Great King of Heaven and Earth. We can never truly know how all the threads will bind together to form who we are to become.

The Psalmist in Psalm 73 concludes: *“Yet I am always with you; you hold me by my right hand. You guide me with your counsel, and afterward you will take me into glory. Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. But as for me, it is good to be near God. I have made the Sovereign Lord my refuge; I will tell of all your deeds.”*

This life is only temporary. We have immortal souls in mortal bodies. We are here – in my opinion – to experience these many threads that will come together to form the tapestry of our lives. **Everything** we experience in this life is relevant to who we are destined to be – not in this life – but the next.

We are being prepared to join our Lord in his renewed Kingdom of Righteousness – where suffering pain and death will be at an end. We will have grown spiritually in this life – as the Lord intended for his elect – so we might join him in the next. What a wonderful knowledge to possess. That death is not the end, for those who believe in his name.

My message is this brothers and sisters. When you see a thread in your life that you wish was not there – stop and realise that perhaps there is good reason for it to be there – whether we understand it or not. And hold strong to our faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, for he holds the expanse of eternity in his hands.

Amen.

Remembering the eightieth anniversary of the Normandy landings -

A Distant Grave

A distant grave, a foreign land
Kept neatly, with respect
Though not at all what they'd have planned
Yet what they did accept.

These youthful lads were wrenched from home -
No one of them was old -
Joined thousands of their fellow men
Fought up a beach, named 'Gold'.

And some survived, though many died
Some fought their way through France
And, though quite likely terrified
To Holland they advanced.

Then 'Market Garden' – a quaint name
For brutal deeds of war;
But no-one heard those troops complain
In darkest forty-four.

And yet more soldiers met their fate
Their lives cut short too soon;
As shells fell close, to detonate
In war's demonic tune.

And so they lay, so far from home
So far from kith and kin.
But they, with fallen comrades showed
The way to fight and win.



By Nigel Beeton

THE GOD WHO ANSWERS PRAYER

There is a God who answers prayer
Who intercedes before the throne,
The Son of God who ever cares,
Do not believe you walk alone.



When life seems hard, no answers come
He knows the path that you now tread
Believe on Him though all seems lost
He knows about the tears you shed.

Hold on to Him who is your strength,
Although it seems there's no way through,
Though pain and heartache both are near,
Who holds the world holds also you.

There is a day when all is clear
A day when we all understand
That all our lives but marked a way
That led us to the Promised Land.

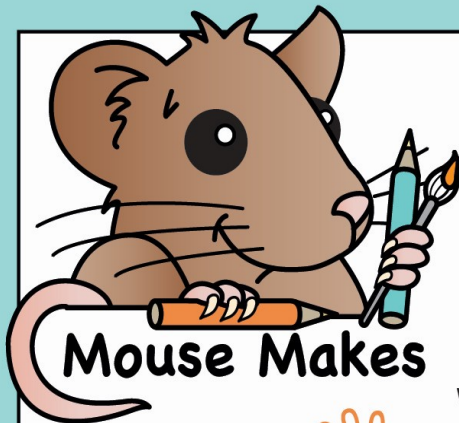
By Megan Carter

SHIELD ME

O may God shield me, and may God fill,
O may God watch me, and may God hold;
O may God bring me where peace is still,

To the King's land, eternity's fold.
Praise to the Father, praise to the Son,
Praise to the Spirit, the Three in One.

From The Creed Prayer, poems of the Western Highlanders



"AND WHEN YOU PRAY,
PRAY THEN LIKE THIS ..."

Where does Jesus say
to go to pray?
Matthew 6:6



What does God know
before you ask Him?
Matthew 6:8



What can we ask God
to deliver us from?
Matthew 6:13

If you forgive others
what will God do?
Matthew 6:14

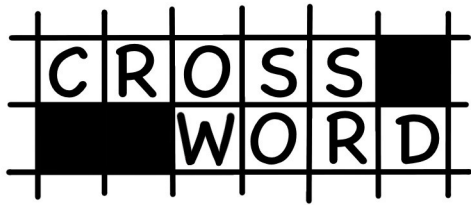


"Always be full of **joy**.
Never stop praying.
Whatever happens,
always be **thankful**."
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

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ROOM • PRAY • ASK • NEEDS • HEARD • JESUS
LORDS PRAYER • OUR • FATHER • HALLOWED • HONoured
NAME • THY • KINGDOM • COME • YOUR • WILL • DONE
EARTH • HEAVEN • DAILY • BREAD • FORGIVE • DEBTS
SINS • TEMPTATION • DELIVER • EVIL • AMEN

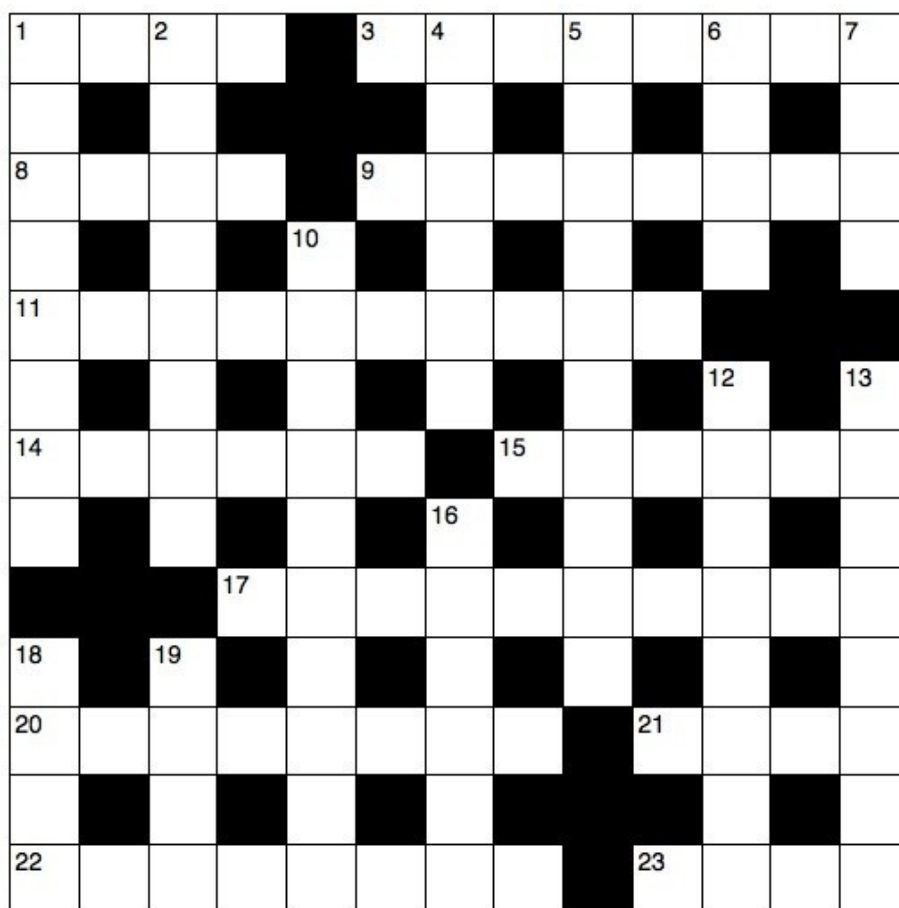


Across

- 1 and 3 Two of the disciples who witnessed the transfiguration of Jesus (Luke 9:28) (4,3,5)
- 3 See 1 Across
- 8 'Let us draw — to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith' (Hebrews 10:22) (4)
- 9 O Simon is (anag.) (8)
- 11 Form of government under the direct rule of God or his agents (10)
- 14 How Jesus found his disciples when he returned to them after praying in Gethsemane (Luke 22:45) (6)
- 15 In The Pilgrim's Progress, the name of the meadow into which Christian strayed, which led to Doubting Castle (2-4)
- 17 Glad sin rat (anag.) (10)
- 20 Spinal column (Leviticus 3:9) (8)
- 21 Valley of the Balsam Tree with a reputation of being a waterless place Psalm 84:6) (4)
- 22 'The oracle of Balaam son of Beor, the oracle of one — — sees clearly (Numbers 24:3) (5,3)
- 23 Adam and Eve's third son (Genesis 4:25) (4)

Down

- 1 David's great friend (1 Samuel 20:17) (8)
- 2 'The Lord... will bring me safely to his — kingdom' (2 Timothy 4:18) (8)
- 4 'I, Daniel, mourned for three weeks. I ate no choice food; — — or wine touched my lips' (Daniel 10:3) (2,4)
- 5 Seeking to vindicate (Job 32:2) (10)
- 6 Female servant (Isaiah 24:2) (4)
- 7 'For Christ died for — once for all' (1 Peter 3:18) (4)
- 10 'Offering spiritual sacrifices — to God through Jesus Christ' (1 Peter 2:5) (10)
- 12 Jesus said that some people had renounced this 'because of the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 19:12) (8)
- 13 One of the three men thrown into the furnace for refusing to worship Nebuchadnezzar's golden image (Daniel 3:20) (8)
- 16 'You have — of good things laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry' (Luke 12:19) (6)
- 18 'There before me was a white horse! Its rider held — — , and he was given a crown' (Revelation 6:2) (1,3)
- 19 Equipment to Charity Hospitals Overseas (1,1,1,1)



SUDOKU

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God is faithful

Ana Ivonia was one of the stars of 2023. A young woman from a small town in Timor-Leste, she travelled across the world to New York so she could stand in front of world leaders and diplomats at the United Nations.

With gritty determination and through bitter tears, she told them of the pain of leprosy discrimination and the desire of millions of persons affected by leprosy to see their rights achieved through the UN's Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability. This is her story of illness, discrimination, determination, success – and how Christ has been with her throughout.

I was born in 2000 in the Municipality of Baucau in Timor-Leste. I'm the fourth child of two brothers and four sisters. My parents are Moises Vital and Aurelia Filipe and they raised me in a loving environment. However, in 2019, The Leprosy Mission and the government's National Leprosy Programme diagnosed me with leprosy.

Upon confirmation of my condition, I faced a lot of discrimination from my neighbours solely due to my leprosy diagnosis. Unfortunately, there were misconceptions surrounding leprosy, with people considering it a severe and divine punishment.

Despite these challenges, I diligently followed the recommended treatment that the doctors prescribed. The treatment required me to take medication for one year, during which time I experienced strong reactions, including changes to my skin and damage to my hands.

Fortunately, with the support and care of doctors from The Leprosy Mission Timor-Leste and the health workers at Baucau Health Centre, I successfully recovered from my poor

health. My parents played a crucial role in my journey to recovery, providing unwavering support throughout the process.

Following my recovery, I received an opportunity to join The Leprosy Mission Timor-Leste's administrative services team as a volunteer. Now I support an association of individuals affected by leprosy.

During my time working with TLM, I was granted the opportunity to pursue a degree in Public Health at Universidade da Paz. This chance to further my education was a significant milestone in my life, allowing me to contribute to the well-being of my community and those affected by leprosy.

In June 2023, I received another incredible opportunity. The United Nations selected me to represent women affected by leprosy at their annual disability rights conference (the CRPD Conference) at their Headquarters in New York. This opportunity filled me with immense joy and gratitude.

Confident in my abilities, I was determined to represent the voices of individuals affected by leprosy and persons with disabilities in Timor-Leste, advocating for their rights at the conference. At the conference I told my story and called for persons affected by leprosy to be included in the wider disability movement. My speech received a huge round of applause from the delegates.

My journey showcases my resilience in overcoming adversity and my dedication to making a positive impact in the lives of those affected by leprosy and disabilities. In all of this, I am grateful to God and I feel this is summed up by 1 Corinthians 10:13.



Submitted by Mairi Nicolson

Need a Painkiller ?

Do you ever take pain killers? If so, do you take one for your shoulder, and another one for you knee? Of course not – once the painkiller enters your bloodstream, it goes everywhere, soothing and damping down the pain, and hitting all the right spots.



God works a bit like that on the pain in our lives. He has a prescription for ALL the problem areas of our lives. Most of us carry emotional scars, or a burden, or some heartache, around with us. It may be the trauma of loss, it may be anxiety for our family. It may be uncertainty over our jobs, and our futures.

Whatever it is, God offers us a prescription to help the pain. The psalmist writes: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.” (Psalm 46:1) Jesus added: “Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28)

This kind of help is real and immediate and there for the asking. We don’t have to put up with our dis-ease and struggle alone. God, our heavenly Father, is only a prayer away. Not just twice a day, after meals, but whenever we need Him.

Two People

Two people read the same Bible.

One sees reasons to love.
One sees reasons to hate.

One sees unity.
The other division.

One finds prejudice.
The other equality.

One discovers compassion.
The other, indifference.

One goodwill.
The other malice.

Two people, one book. One book, two views.

The book is a mirror.
The reflection is you.



N.W

Miscellaneous observations on daily life...

The secret to a clean kitchen is simple. Don't cook. Ever.

The probability of being watched is directly proportional to the stupidity of your act.

Microchips: What's left at the bottom of the bag.

The inventor of the doorbell obviously did not own a dog.



Peel the Seal

I purchased a meal for my tea,
That looked rather tasty to me.
The film must be peeled –
But it would not yield!
How hard could this really be?

I searched for a corner to peel
I searched by sight and by feel,
I searched round and round
It could not be found
No edge could I find for that seal!

But I was concerned not to fail
And I caught up an edge with my nail
And with time and with care
I had enough there
To pull, but it tore and I wailed!

With the film I could not get to grips,
And a knife just tore it to strips,
There was really no way
To cook it that day
So I went for some nice fish and chips!

By Nigel Beeton



Solutions to the Crossword and Sudoku on Pages 32 and 33

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| 3 | 9 | 1 | 8 | 7 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 4 |
| 5 | 8 | 9 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 6 |
| 4 | 6 | 2 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 1 | 8 | 5 |
| 7 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 4 | 9 | 2 |
| 2 | 4 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 1 | 8 |
| 1 | 3 | 6 | 5 | 9 | 8 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| 9 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 3 |

The Glory of Creation

This poem is most often used as a hymn. It was written to the tune Ewing (Jerusalem the Golden), but it can also sung to Stand up Stand for Jesus.

The glory of creation, throughout the universe,
So wonderful in essence, delightfully diverse.
Antarctica to Asia; the jungles of Brazil,
Established by the Father, with loving care and skill.

From mountain tops to valleys; in forests and in parks,
We watch the playful squirrels; we hear the joyful larks.
Wild orchids so unusual; bright parakeets so loud,
Rare butterflies so fragile; the tiger standing proud.

Deep mysteries, of oceans and unknown outer space,
Migration paths of swallows, the eagle's nesting place.
The more we gain in knowledge, the less we understand
This world so rich and complex, created by God's hand.

But crisis looms upon us; the planet's under threat,
The global climate's changing, the balance is upset.
The melting of the ice caps; diversity declines,
Extinction of key species; we're overwhelmed with signs.

So Father please forgive us for spoiling Planet Earth,
Give us a chance to change it; to instigate new birth,
Let's care for Your creation, in details and in whole
Protect, preserve and cherish; may this be our new goal.

By Denzil Walton

Denzil Walton is a writer living in Belgium. He is a member of the International Baptist Church of Brussels

THUMBPRINT OF THE CREATION

