



Galashiels Old Parish and St Paul's Church

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Dear Friends,
 Religion is a frightening thing – we're seeing a lot of it just now on the news and it doesn't make happy viewing. Before you think I'm going to come round to defending it let me disabuse you right now, I agree, it is dangerous. We have seen the response around the world of Islamic societies to the cartoon's published in Denmark and then trawled across other European publications. We have seen the bombing of the shrine in Iraq; less well known but equally disturbing the terrorizing of Christian communities in a number of countries. Who would have thought that the 21st Century would start with religion being centre stage yet that is what has happened.

The Western world has been moving towards a more secular view of everything and has been caught off guard by the way religion far from dying has regained a new lease of life. Secularism seems to have missed the point about the importance of spiritual matters to most people as well as missing the results of trying to get rid of religious beliefs.

The University of Wales in the most extensive survey of its kind of 13-15 year-olds found that teenagers with no religious belief were much more likely to feel bad about themselves and their relationships with other people than those with faith. They were also uncommitted to their

relationship with the rest of the world, with 41 per cent unconcerned about world development issues. And, most interesting of all, *they tend to allow their lives to be ruled by irrational beliefs and superstitions* proving the old saying, that if you don't believe in God it's not that you believe nothing but that you'll believe anything. Trying to get rid of religion just gives rise to ?... *worse religion!*

The truth is the West's way of dealing with religious issues is not working and if there is to be any hope of getting out of this mess it will have to look at the spiritual again. In truth it has been trying a little but refusing to look at what has been the founding staple of its spiritual roots, Christianity. The mood is that whatever the solution, it can't be there.

What we are called to do in the Church is to pray and live in such a way that shows the light even if it will not be received. Interestingly half of teenagers who had no religion agreed that those in a faith community were much more likely to feel their life had a sense of purpose – so a message is getting through. To that has to be added that holding a religious conviction made them more likely to be bullied but then that has always been the way of the cross, hasn't it. Let's pray for light and for courage.

*With every blessing,
 Leslie Steele.*

Two important practical matters to do with the Church building:

HEATING Someone has interfered with the time switch for the boiler in the kitchen causing the boiler to operate ALL DAY EVERY DAY. The switch is programmed to suit times of most hall users and these are shown on the inside of the cupboard door. If heating is needed outwith the times shown it can be switched on by pressing the 1 hour button and heating will operate for an extra hour. If organisations are unhappy with the current timings or need extra time please contact Ian Forsyth. The boiler controls the heating in the passageway and the toilets as well as the hot water.

FLOODLIGHTS There have been signs of damage being done again to the floodlights, presumably with the aim of stealing them. If you happen to be passing the church at any time please just cast your eyes towards the building you might just spot someone acting suspiciously. Don't take action but report any suspicions to the police.

NEVER ENDING GARDENS PROJECT

Hopefully by now I will have spoken to you about my experience in South Africa or maybe you came along to the presentation evening on Sunday 5th March. But I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to those who contributed and tell you a little more about this project.

The first place we visited to start planting gardens was Phumlani orphanage. There were 134 orphans living in basically 3 warehouse style buildings. One of the warehouses was for the boys, another was for the girls and the third was the kitchen / dining room. All these orphans were looked after by *one* lady named Esther Nkozi. Esther was helped by some other widowed mothers or mothers with learning difficulties. On visiting the orphanage, Esther told us that a local church had donated food the day before we arrived, if she had not received this donation, the children would not have anything to eat that day. This was a far cry from the benefit state we have over here in Scotland. Even in the midst of this, Esther had very strict rules for cleanliness and hygiene. She told us "You can be poor, but you can still be clean".



The next day we all went to Phumlani Church where we met the congregation of approximately 400 people, who did like to sing. The one thing that will always stick in my memory about this service was when the Sunday school did a short drama about getting raped. This was the something that we soon found out that children were taught from early age. It was explained to us that although Aids is responsible for killing of an entire generation in South Africa, there is still a lack of education and it is still widely believed by the men that they can be cured from Aids by having sex with a virgin, therefore very young children are being raped over in Africa.

The week continued with us working in different townships in the region of Mpumlanga where we asked people if they would like us to plant vegetable gardens for them, we then encouraged them to come out and work with us and showed them how to continue to look after the gardens. As well as planting the gardens we visited an Aids clinic and also met amazing people who were either missionaries or just people who were giving themselves to serve God's purpose in South Africa. At the end of the week I even sat down with the Police Commander in the area where we were planting the gardens.

There is not enough space in a newsletter to tell you everything about South Africa, but if you would like to experience this for yourself, then log onto the website: www.heartforafrica.org. The organisation has a new name but the Never Ending Gardens project is still there. There was a wide variety of people on this trip and I'm sure that most people in the Church could cope with it.



Robbie Noble



"Religion that God our father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world."

James Ch. 1, vs. 27

Death

Jesus said "I am the Resurrection and the Life."
Jan. 30th Kathleen Florence Roberts, St. Ronan's Home, Innerleithen.

We extend our sincere sympathy and the assurance of our prayers to the bereaved families.

Minister's Holiday

On Sundays 26th March and 2nd April the services will be conducted by Rev Warner Hardie during the minister's absence on holiday. Some members may remember Warner, son of the late Tom and Mrs Betty Hardie, from his Gala days.

The Guild



I write immediately after our Soup and Sweet Lunch on Sunday, February 26th. Our warmest thanks to all who helped in any way – particularly to members of the ‘Tea Ladies’ who helped with the teas but also found themselves helping in other ways as we needed kitchen assistance! Above all – thank you to all who came and shared in the lunch – it would have been wasted effort if no one had supported us. We trust that everyone enjoyed the food and a good time of fellowship.

It is hard to believe that once more we are nearing the end of our meetings for this session, with a speaker from L’Arche on Wednesday 1st March and our Spring Tea and A.G.M. on 15th. We hope to have some sort of Summer Outing in May – discussions are still under way about this and we hope to have definite plans in the April Newsletter.

Fairtrade Fortnight

† **Can you spare some time?** In conjunction with Fairtrade Fortnight, the following events are being held in the town, some of which are in need of some voluntary help: Please contact Jim Tennant for further details (Tel: 751003) thank you.

† **Monday 6th March** – Tearfund Borders support group host an open evening of prayer, information and action on “Make Fairtrade Your Habit”, to be held at Gala Baptist Church from 7:30 to 9:00 pm.

† **Saturday 18th March** – As many donations of home baking as possible, preferably made from Fairtrade ingredients (recipes are available), also some helpers for the Coffee Morning, which is being held in Trinity (formerly St Ninian’s) Church Halls between 10 and 12 am, including a Traidcraft and Tearcraft stall and then handing out leaflets to the public into the early afternoon.

† **Sunday 19th March** – Traidcraft and Tearcraft “Bargain Box” stall in the large hall after the morning service and finally, the evening service of worship to give thanks for the close of our local campaign in the small hall at 6:30 pm, both in Old Parish & St Paul’s.

CARE

Care is an organization known to some of our members which exists to promote Christian values in society by many different methods, including providing information about government legislation affecting family life and other areas. They rallied opposition to the recent Racial and Religious Hatred Bill which was recently debated in Parliament. Their latest Newsletter has some interesting comments about secularization some of which are reproduced below.

“It is important that we continue to stand against the increasing tide of secularization in our society. Two of the most outspoken critics of what CARE is seeking to achieve are the British Humanist Association and the National Secular Society. Both these organizations are committed to seeing the removal of all traces of Britain’s Judaeo-Christian heritage from our statute books, school curricula, the BBC’s programme schedule and other national institutions... It seems that committed secularists are not content to reduce the impact of Christianity in our national life, but in fact wish to go one step further and even ridicule Christian truth... Have some of us been guilty of taking for granted our Judaeo-Christian heritage, and forgetting that Christian principles have formed the basic building blocks of our society? The first governors of the BBC modelled their vision for public broadcasting on Christian values. Each day’s Parliamentary business is opened with prayer. But in our post-modern society these precious traditions are in danger of being lost or eroded, which is why CARE was set up in the first place – to undertake Christian action, research and education, standing up for the truths of our faith and to demonstrating the compassion of Christ to the most vulnerable in our society.”

Stated Annual Meeting

The Stated Annual Meeting of the congregation will be held in the Hall on Tuesday 14th March at 7.00 p.m. at which the Church accounts and work of the Congregational Board over the past year will be reported on. A good attendance is requested.

Annual Quiz – Saturday 18th March

Prizes will be available for the familiar categories

1. Family team, consisting of no more than two adults and (any number of) children under the age of twelve.
2. Adult team, consisting of no more than four adults.

The rounds will consist of the usual variety of general knowledge, and others will offer more specific areas of challenge:

• **Stampede!** • **Behind the headlines** • **Music** • **Great Scot!**

Costs have been held at exactly the same as the previous three years – £5 per team – this year’s receipts will go to a project in Malawi.

The quiz will start at 7:30 pm.

QUIET TIME

“Does God always give us what we ask in prayer?”

Sometimes his answer is no. He knows what we do not know. He knows everything and his negative answer is part of his plan for our lives.

My life is but a weaving, between my God and me.

I do not choose the colours, he worketh steadily. Oftimes he weaveth sorrow, and I in foolish pride,

Forget he sees the upper, and I the underside.

Not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly,

Will God unroll the canvas and explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful in the skilful weaver’s hand,

As the threads of gold and silver in the pattern he has planned.

I know O Lord that thy judgements are right, And that in faithfulness thou hast afflicted me.

Psalm 119:75 rsv

Lord, it is hard to accept a negative answer, but keep us humble enough, patient enough, faithful enough to trust. Thank you that you always answer our prayers in your way with yes or no. How good it is to know that you never make a mistake.

Taken from Simple Reflections by Corrie Ten Boom

Christian Aid 2006

The local Christian Aid committee has decided to try a different way of arranging the street collections this year so as to encourage as many people as possible to collect from an area of their own choice, however large or small.

Instead of allocating areas to each church, we now simply have a complete list of all streets in Galashiels, Clovenfords, Stow and Heriot. Members of any church are now invited to offer to collect from whatever number of houses in whichever streets or farms suits them.

We will do our best to allocate houses/streets you request on a first come first served basis.

We also require collectors for B&Q on Wednesday and perhaps for supermarkets the rest of the week as well as street collectors on Saturday 20th. If you can help with this, please book your street or supermarket through Robert Fraser, tel. 752375 or myself 755316.

We would love to hear from you soon – the effort is so much worthwhile, not just for those in desperate need throughout the world, but also in terms of demonstrating real Christian concern and out-reach.

Please help. Thank you.

Angela Miller

Treasurer’s Report

JANUARY 2006

Income

Offerings 5 weeks (Weekly average £791.72).....	£3,958.59
Dividends, Bank Interest, Retiring Offerings, etc ...	£280.98
Donations	£2,421.75
Transfers from CoS.....	£225.79
	<u>£6,887.11</u>

Expenditure

Electricity, Gas & Church Telephone.....	£778.74
Organ/Music.....	£410.00
Advertising, Printing, Stationery.....	£83.98
Fabric, etc	£598.29
Donation	£118.97
Church of Scotland – Life & Work costs.....	£116.28
Standard Monthly Expenditure.....	£110.00
	<u>£2,216.26</u>

STANDARD MONTHLY EXPENDITURE OFFERINGS

Organist	£80.00	4th	£712.28
Cleaners (5wks)	£30.00	10th	£702.30
		17th	£524.04
		24th	£562.63
		31st	£440.34
			<u>£2,941.59</u>
		Paid through Bank	£1,017.00
	<u>£110.00</u>		<u>£3,958.59</u>

OFFERINGS UPDATE

		2006		2005	
January	5wks	£3,958.59		£2,821.16	4wks
		<u>£3,958.59</u>		<u>£2,821.16</u>	



The Barnabas Fund is launching a campaign under this title calling for Christian minorities to receive just and equal treatment with non-Christian majorities. Over the next year, petitions will be circulated asking for signatures to support this campaign.

Some may ask “What is the Barnabas Fund” Information is available on their web site www.barnabasfund.org but for many who do not have access to this, you might like to know that the Barnabas Fund provides practical aid for persecuted Christians in over 50 countries. Feeding programmes, children’s schooling, small businesses to enable Christians to support their families, help for victims of violence, care of converts and their particular needs, leadership training, buildings, Bibles and Christian literature, support for Christian workers ministering in their own countries – these are just some of the ways in which Barnabas Fund seeks to transform the lives of Christians suffering for their faith.

It is hard for us to imagine what it can be like for Christians in some countries today. Many examples could be quoted but there is no space to do this – so one will suffice. In Indonesia, three Christian women have been imprisoned for allowing Muslim children to attend their after school Christian children’s club. The children’s Muslim grandmother had asked if they could attend. The wave of protests over the cartoons offensive to Muslims which were printed in a Danish newspaper has put Christians even more at risk of reprisals. When they turn to police and security forces for safety, protection, justice – they often find only further injustice. Please remember these brothers and sisters in your prayers – and do please sign the petition when it comes your way.