



Galashiels Old Parish and St. Paul's Church

Newsletter ♦ October 2006

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Letter from Leslie

Dear Friends,

You have to be careful what you say today. The Pope got into a lot of trouble last month for a quotation he made in the course of an academic lecture on violence and religion. It didn't matter that the words were not his: his citing of them was taken to be an extreme insult to Muslims and caused demonstrations around the world. Western society, so used to criticism of all sorts, found itself baffled to understand the emotional outrage it released.

I mention this because I was contacted by a local newspaper and subsequently by Border Television in connection with a showing of the film "Jerry Springer and the Opera" at the Wynd Theatre in Melrose. It was obvious that the media were looking for a "minister condemns showing" headline or one of the other usual newspaper shorthand "attention grabbers" - "blasts", "slams", "damns", etc. It makes for good copy and stimulates the public to buy. My comments weren't properly reported then, so I'd like to take this opportunity to say a little more in detail about my attitude to these things.

First of all let me say that I am not in favour of the denigration of Jesus in the film (I saw most of it, though not the beginning): I think it is sad and unworthy, but the use of words such as "condemn", "slam", "blast", etc., reflects a vindictive and vengeful response that would seek to judge the perpetrator here and now, and that I would stand back from. Let me explain why.

Jesus taught his disciples that he would be lied about, cruelly treated, spat upon, and humiliated; this was to happen to him and they were not to be surprised at it. Initially, of course, they were, and Peter even rebuked Christ for saying such things, and even drew his sword in fierce defence when the soldiers came to take Christ away. Christ, however, repudiated this response, and declared clearly that he was to suffer offence, eventually to be crucified. The offence was against Christ, not against Peter, though it hurt him.

Christ suffered insult without complaining because he was taking into himself all the insult against God that we give (whether consciously or not) through our Godless lives and offensive behaviour. On the cross he even offered forgiveness to those who had crucified him. As John says in Chapter 3 of his Gospel, God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.

Christians down the ages therefore have seen in the cross - the supreme insult against their Lord - something to honour and revere, and a path to follow so that when men revile us and treat us cruelly we pray for them and do not seek bitter revenge. That's why you will never see a headline "Bishop blasts the Crucifixion", or "Christians engage in a Day of Outrage at Easter time".

What our own culture does not seem to realise in its condemnation of those it sees on the television who seem to fall about like eight-year-olds with a hissy fit in the playground whenever their religion is offended, is that its own cultural tolerance has come about through long years of Christianity. We are very fortunate in our history, but remove that influence and we are just as liable to kick, scream and rage at others who might seem to offend our supposedly prized new liberal values: if you don't believe me try calling homosexual behaviour by any names that aren't nice and supportive and see what happens! There are many religions whose followers become personally insulted when their own little god or cultural belief is offered offence; only Christ shows the way of the cross.

The surest way to test a person's eternal salvation is to rub them up the wrong way and see what spirit manifests itself. Those who belong to Christ share His suffering, those who don't become enraged at their own suffering. Think of the offence you have given God and stop taking offence at others who offend you; in fact be careful not only in what you say but also in what you think!

With every blessing,
Leslie Steele



"After 10 years of faithful service, Galashiels Christian Aid Group's Treasurer has decided to retire. Not only did he look after the money side of things, he also co-ordinated the house-to house-and supermarket collections, as well as doing the minutes of our meetings and attending to publicity posters. He is obviously going to be a hard act to follow but it would, of course, be possible for the task to be shared by 2 or 3 people. These jobs are not as intimidating as they might first appear, so if you think you might be able to take on one of these posts, please come along to our group meeting in the B.B. Chapel on Monday 4th September at 7.30pm and find out more. Please give this careful consideration. If we don't find a Treasurer, Christian Aid in Gala will fold, and as we have remitted nearly £65,000 over the past 10 years, this would be a tragedy for the needy in poverty-stricken areas of the world."

The above was placed in the Intimation Sheet for two weeks. Sadly no one came forward to express an interest in doing something to help the situation. However, it is not too late and if you would like to know just what is involved, PLEASE speak to me at church or give me a ring on 755316. No pressure - honest!

Angela Miller

The Gate Youth Project

The Gate Youth Project has now managed to move into larger premises in Ladhope Vale, having at our disposal the ground and basement floors, next door to where we have been for the last few years. In time the project hopes to develop the other two floors for much needed office space as well as a multi-purpose room.

The move has proved to be popular with the young people of the town and increasing numbers are attending the "drop-ins", with up to 80 on any given night. The project works closely with the Community Police, and joint detached work takes place fairly regularly. The project also continues to receive referrals from the Academy to assist students who are at threat of either exclusion or expulsion from school because of behavioural difficulties.

One other exciting new development has been the creation of a young mums group, who meet under the guidance of a community midwife, and there is a fledgling young dads group too.

As you can see the project tries to live up to its name (Galashiels Action for Teenage Enablement) in striving to help teenagers fulfil their potential within the community, and to do this takes considerable time and effort from the staff and volunteers who work at GATE.

Those who are involved directly can see the potential that the new premises offer, and we are looking for the support of local Christians in helping us to fulfil that potential in three ways:

1. **10@10 prayer time:** we invite members of the congregation to join those involved in the project to spend 10 minutes at either 10 am or 10 pm, to pray for the ongoing work of GATE and the young people of the town. A monthly prayer focus leaflet is being drawn up and copies will be sent to each of the churches.
2. **Volunteers:** we would like it to be known that more volunteers are needed to assist with the drop-ins, and other work of the GATE, and those with building/DIY skills would also be most welcome in helping finish the refurbishment work in the premises.
3. **The cost** of moving to the new premises had stretched the project's limited resources, so financial assistance of any kind is also most welcome. Your GATE representative, Rev Milton Cashman, can furnish you with information if required.

Thank you.

Rev. Duncan McCosh (Chairman)

Carpet Bowling

A note has been sent by the Baptist Church to say that they are considering purchasing a bowling carpet and accessories. They are asking if any of our members would be interested in taking part in bowling activities, either in an inter-church league, or as a leisure activity for beginners and regular players. If anyone is interested please let Hugh Bain know so that he can pass on the information. A number of members of the Session and Board have already expressed an interest.

The Divine Chocolate Poetry Competition

In association with **Christian Aid**

This year's Divine Poetry Competition is inviting entries which put the best case for supporting Fairtrade and choosing Divine Chocolate. It can be subtly persuasive ... or outspoken and challenging ... a cry from the heart ... or a serious demand. It can address chocolate-lovers, chocolate makers, governments and/or decision makers. Your persuasive poem should feature either Fairtrade or chocolate (or both!) and aim to put an argument no one could say "no" to. Your poem can be in any poetic form, from sonnet to limerick, haiku to epic.

All entries must arrive by 20th December 2006

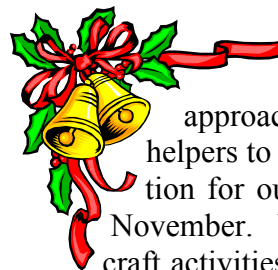
There is no limit to the length of poem or the number of entries

All entries should be sent to:

**Divine Poetry Competition,
4 Gainsford Street,
London SE1 2NE.**

Entry details can also be found on:

www.divinechocolate.com,
www.christian-aid.org and
www.globalgang.com.



Ho, Ho, Ho!

As the Festive Season fast approaches it's time for Santa's helpers to get their skates on in preparation for our Christmas Fair on the 18th November. Whether you're busy with craft activities, collecting books or toys, or wondering what delicious confection you'll make for the Cake and Candy Stall, please keep in touch with Louise Johnston or Lynn Beswick, so we have an idea of what will be needed in order to set up the Hall. Also, any offers of help will be greatly appreciated in either running a stall or in setting things up for this fun and fundraising event!

The Guild will recommence on Wednesday, 4th October at 2.15 in the Small Hall. The theme for the next 3 years is "Let's live - Body, Mind and Spirit" and the Rev. Leslie Steele is the opening speaker. Our second meeting is on the 18th, when we will have a speaker from the Children's Hospice Association. New people are always welcome (men as well as women!).





GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE CHURCH OF SCOTLAND ... continued from September Newsletter

I am grateful to Jim and Peter for adding photographs to my last article on the Assembly as they helped to illustrate my introduction to the General Assembly.

On Saturday 20th May 2006, accompanied by our Minister, the Rev. Leslie M. Steele, I attended the Assembly Hall, Edinburgh, for the opening of the General Assembly. As instructed, we were seated by 9.45 a.m. Through television pictures being transmitted to large screens within the Hall I was able to see the Lord High Commissioner, Lord Mackay of Clashfern, arrive and enter the Hall. The Lord High Commissioner is appointed by the Queen as her representative at the General Assembly and resides in the Palace of Holyroodhouse during the week.

At 10 a.m. the Assembly opened with the singing of Psalm 24, *The Earth Belongs to God Alone*, followed by a reading and prayer. There is no musical accompaniment, the hymns being led by precentors. The Right Reverend Alan D. McDonald, Minister of the Fife Parishes of Cameron and St. Leonard's in St. Andrews, was then elected as Moderator. During the week of the Assembly, the Moderator is responsible for chairing the daily business of the Assembly, and at times when he has to be absent from the debating chamber, a former Moderator takes the Chair.

There then followed a very formal procedure where a Commission to the Lord High Commissioner and a letter from the Queen were read, an address was given by the Lord High Commissioner, and a reply given by the Moderator. Several items of business and reports were then received, including the appointment of a Committee to prepare an answer to the Queen's letter, and the presentation of a bible by the Scottish Bible Society to the Moderator. The morning's business finished about lunchtime. During the afternoon, I attended an Afternoon Party for all commissioners, visitors and guests in the Garden of the Palace of Holyroodhouse. After a very relaxing afternoon, it was back to the Assembly for the evening session. Luckily there were only two items of business, so I was able to get home at a reasonable hour.

The following day, I attended the General Assembly Service in St. Giles Cathedral at 10 a.m. Unfortunately, it started to rain on my arrival, and I felt sorry for the members of the Boys' Brigade who were forming a Guard of Honour at the entrance. In addition to fellow commissioners and guests, members of the Judiciary, Academics and high-ranking officers of H.M. Forces were in attendance, their robes and uniforms presenting a very colourful spectacle. The entrance of the Lord High Commissioner, the Moderator, Clergy and guests was quite regal. The Minister, Gilleasbuig Macmillan, conducted the service, with lessons read by the Moderator's two Chaplains and the sermon given by the Moderator. At the close of the service, I went to the Assembly Hall, where I spent most of the afternoon reading and meeting with other commissioners before the Assembly was constituted at 6.30 p.m. In addition to the normal opening service with the singing of Paraphrase 18, readings, reflection and prayers, the retiring Moderator, the Very Reverend Dr. David W. Lacy, gave a very interesting address on his duties during the past year. The singing of the West Indian hymn *Halle, Halle, Halle* preceded the presentation of Delegates and Visitors to Assembly. The evening closed with Psalm 145, *O Lord thou art my Lord and King*.

The service on the third day of the Assembly included the Sacrament of Holy Communion. I had been told that this service was quite special: in particular, the serving of the bread and wine by a large group of well-organised volunteers. I also learned that the volunteers have a rehearsal the night before, and this was evident on the day. The wine was served in Communion Cups and replenished from splendid silver flagons, which come from various churches in Edinburgh. Without detracting from the solemnity of Holy Communion, the serving of the bread and wine to such a large congregation was very impressive. Following the singing of a South African hymn, the Assembly moved to the business for the day.

The remainder of the week followed a similar pattern with opening services followed by business matters. The business included reports from various councils, committees and visitors. During the proceedings I was introduced to deliveries, motions, counter-motions, amendments, addendums, overtures and petitions. Fortunately I had Leslie at my side to explain these legal terms and terminology. I found the whole week of the Assembly to be most interesting and this included attending various presentations during the lunch breaks.

The final day of the Assembly was on Friday 26th May. Starting as usual at 9.30 a.m., the full morning was taken up with various business matters.

The close of the Assembly took place at 7 p.m. Included in this service were presentations to the Moderator and addresses by the Lord High Commissioner and the Moderator.

It was agreed that the 2007 General Assembly would open on Saturday 19th May and close on Friday 25th May. As members of the public can gain admittance daily (the first day is a bit busy) I would recommend a visit, or if you have access to a computer, you could follow the proceedings on the Church of Scotland website. You can even watch this year's video highlights and download "podcasts" on the website, at www.churchofscotland.org.uk/generalassembly/index.htm.

I would like to finish with a prayer which was used at the closing service:

We leave this place with gratitude for all that has passed.
We walk in the streets scandalised by the injustice of the present.
We return to our homes with a renewed determination for the future.
We rejoice in the example of those who have gone before us.
We steel ourselves to take up the task of bringing good news.
Venturing! Striving! Hoping! Daring!
Until the end of suffering.
Until the reign of peace.
Until the coming of the Kingdom.
We are those who seek new and better ways.
We are those who work and pray for the end of poverty.
We are the people of God.
Venturing! Striving! Hoping! Daring! We are the people of God.



Treasurer's Report - August 2006

Income	£
Offerings - 4 weeks	3,773.85
Dividends, Bank Interest, etc.	1,651.53
Donations & Bequests	1,947.00
Total Income	7,372.38
Expenditure	
Electricity, Gas & Church Telephone	324.51
Short Term Loans repaid	500.00
Advertising, Printing & Stationery	53.94
Fabric, etc.	94.97
Sunday School	7.99
Standard Monthly Expenditure	
Stipend	4,348.70
Pulpit Supply	161.00
Organist	125.00
Relief Pianist	20.00
Cleaners - 4 weeks	32.00
Total Monthly Expenditure	4,686.70
Offerings	
7th	506.42
14th	833.25
21st	547.53
29th	634.65
Total Weekly Offerings	2,521.85
Paid through Bank	1,252.00
Total Offerings	3,773.85

Blythswood Care Shoebox Appeal 2006

Small but beautiful: shoebox gifts bring perspective.

The Kovacs family, like so many others in modern Romania, has one of the parents away, working in another European Union country. Both parents have suffered unemployment since local factory closures, and so take it in turns to travel to neighbouring Hungary for work.

"Last year when we delivered the shoeboxes, the mother hung the scripture calendar on the kitchen wall" says Paul Jansen of the Bonus Pastor Foundation. "This year, the children said they would replace it with the one for 2006. They said that when they saw it hanging there they thought about me and were thankful for the people who donated the gifts.

It's a challenging question: Why would some unknown people in other countries send such things to us? I think those who are Christians can understand the motivation and I hope that those who are not can think about it too." Paul reckons that acts of kindness represented by gifts inside a Blythswood shoebox help families in Romania to get things in perspective. "Some families feel stressed at Christmas when they can't afford things they might like. But then they realise that a small but beautiful gift, given with kindness, is much more special than having money or things you think you want. It helps to defuse comparisons with richer neighbours or between Romanians and those from countries that are better off".

The deadline for Blythswood shoeboxes this year is **Monday 6th November**: that's the day the lorry will pick them up. As usual, the items should only be those on the Blythswood checklist (the checklists will be available at the Church): once packed you should tick the items off, wrap the lid and box separately, secure it with a rubber band, tape the checklist to the top of the box (to comply with Customs regulations) and **bring the box to the Church by Sunday 5th November**. If you need any more information, please speak to Jim Tennant or look at the Blythswood Care website at www.shoeboxappeal.org/page.cfm?id=70.



Offerings Update

	2006		2005	
	Monthly Total/s (£)	Weekly Average (£)	Monthly Total/s (£)	Weekly Average (£)
January - July (31 wks 2006 / 30 wks 2005)	23,582.80	760.74	25,016.90	833.90
August (4 wks 2006 / 5 wks 2005)	3,773.85	943.50	4,336.77	867.35
Total (35 wks)	27,356.65	781.62	29,353.67	838.68

The Place of Christianity in the Christian Square

Sponsored by the Kuyper Foundation, to be held on Saturday 28 October from 10:15 am to 5:00 pm, at Hamilton College, Bothwell Road, ML3 0AY.

Speakers

Stephen C Perks
Rev Prof ATB McGowan BD STM PhD
Esmond Birnie BA PhD MNIA
Contact: a.kuyper@blueyonder.co.uk



One World Week - 22-29/10

Mind the gap

TRADE TALKS FAIL WORLD'S POOR!

Mind the gap between winners and losers

HOLE IN OZONE LAYER IS BIGGER THAN EVER!

Mind the gap between words and actions

INCREASING VIOLENCE IN A DIVIDED WORLD!

Mind the gap between 'friends' and 'enemies'

www.oneworldweek.org

Events

- † Sunday 22nd ~ Joint service – Trinity Church @ 6:30 pm
- † Monday 23rd ~ Prayer Vigilantes – Old Parish & St Paul's @ 12 noon
- † Wednesday 25th ~ Holy Communion and lunch – St Peter's @ 12 noon
- † Thursday 26th ~ International Evening @ Heriot-Watt University, Scottish Borders Campus, Netherdale
- † Thursday 26th ~ Taize worship - Our Lady & St Joseph's, Selkirk @ 5-6 pm
- † Friday 27th ~ Bible study with Father John Creanor – Our Lady & St Andrew's, Galashiels @ 7:30 pm in the "front room" of the Parish House.