



Galashiels Old Parish and St. Paul's Church

Newsletter ♦ November 2006

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Letter from Leslie

Crisis: which crisis?

Dear Friends,

You will read elsewhere in this Newsletter about our crisis in connection with the financing of the Church and the heating of the building. The crisis is how can we maintain the work of the Church and also maintain the building we have? The heating system needs a complete overhaul, at the very least, because we are already being told by the gas authorities that our present arrangement must end, and the Board feel that new boilers are the only sensible way forward. Our financial resources, however, show that we are not paying our way at present, and with little reserve funds available all the options seem impossible. This is concentrating the minds of many in the Church at the moment. However, we know that those things which seem impossible for us are not so to God. We would ask you to pray, and if in your prayers God's word is "Give", you will know what to do.

Another kind of crisis is also approaching, though. Throughout the Church of Scotland discussions are taking place on the issue of ministers conducting services to mark the newly introduced Civil Partnerships between homosexuals. Presbyteries are being asked to vote on whether a move by the Legal Questions Committee to permit ministers to conduct such services should be agreed or not. This is an ethical crisis on whether a minister should be allowed to do what he or she feels, or whether the Church has a standard on the matter. So which crisis is the more significant? Which has more danger attached to it?

The debate has often been turned into an issue of acceptance or rejection of people, with the use of words such as 'homophobic' - which always has a pejorative sense - coming into the language.

The traditional view of the Church in all ages - with Biblical reference for it - is that homosexual acts are wrong, i.e. they are not in agreement with the will and intention of God for men and women. This does not mean that the close bonds of loving friendship between people of the same sex are not to be had, just that sexual libido should not be a part of it. This view has been challenged by those who say that loving, committed partnerships between people of the same sex should include a homosexual element, which should be considered right, i.e. in agreement with the will and intention of God. If that were the case we would expect to see a Divine provision for it in both creation and revelation. As far as nature is concerned there are at least three arguments against this.

First, the argument from design: male and female bodies have a complementarity to them, which means that the sexual organs are designed to work male to female.

Second, a related one: the argument from health and well-being. When parts of the body are used in ways not natural for them there is a severe health risk for the body, though this isn't the place to go into detail about those risks. Mental health is a connected element - there being a far higher incidence among homosexuals of mental health problems than average. Homosexuals put this down solely to issues of social exclusion, but that is quite untested and indeed probably unprovable.

Thirdly, arguments of the "I'm made this way" category have two things against them. The first is that there is no evidence for the so-called "gay gene". Any genetic trait that reduces a person's chance of procreating has what is called a "fitness cost". A fitness cost of only 1% will cause a trait to essentially disappear within 100 years. Since homosexuality has a far higher fitness cost and has not disappeared, researchers speculate that the trait is at least partly determined by some outside agent. Thus, though heredity may have a part to play, so does environment and personal choice.

As far as revelation is concerned, the Bible's view of sexuality is not defined by a few verses which mention homosexuality itself as being contrary to God's will (such as Lev. 18:22; Lev. 20:13; Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Cor. 6:9); rather the Bible's whole view of sexuality is cast in the gender relationship of what every human being in the world has - a father and a mother. This is the given for understanding sexual relations and also the given for understanding the relationship of Christ and His Church, and at the heart for understanding the basic building block of society, which is not the individual but the family.

Next, the arguments for an equivalence of sexual life between two people, whether homo- or hetero-sexual, are fallacious. First, all the arguments for a civil partnership - people loving, caring, and committed to each other - are equally applicable to three people or more, and can't be limited to two. The only reason for a partnership of two is the gender one: there are two sexes. Go beyond that and three, four or more are possible.

Arguments about sexual orientation leading to sexual permission are nowhere grounded in God's revelation of his will for man. Some men have a sexual orientation towards children but that does not mean they should practise that lifestyle. Sexual orientation is a broad spectrum involving height, weight, hair colour, and race, amongst other things; that the homosexual lobby wish to highjack it solely for gender preference alone is wrong.

These are but a few of the many arguments against the acceptance of the practice of homosexual sex. The Church's decision on this is by far and away the bigger issue for us in Old Parish and St Paul's, and I hope that many of you will make this a matter of great prayer. The Presbytery debates and votes on the matter on Tuesday 7th November.

Let me say finally that to be against the acceptance of homosexual acts does not mean - although our opponents will always imply it - to be against homosexual people. In fact, the truth is the opposite: it is because we care about those who find themselves embroiled in a maelstrom of homo-eroticism that we seek to hold up God's truth, not Man's ideas, and in case any think this is the view of only heterosexuals, let me close with a quote from one homosexual Christian: "It causes many of us profound distress and hurt to witness the extraordinary spectacle of spiritual leaders charged with leading or ruling the flock of God apparently encouraging same-sex practices". There is another way, a healthful way, and a hopeful way. With God's help that way can be taken, and inestimable joy be found. I hope any who read this and find themselves in the predicament of such a battle may know that this is true.

With every blessing, Leslie Steele.

Flower Rota 2007

The Flower Rota for next year has just been prepared and it seems there are a number of dates still available to be filled. If you would like to put flowers into the church on 29th April, 13th May, 12th & 19th August, 9th September or 11th November, then please give me a ring on 755316.

You don't have to be an expert in flower arranging. The blooms are simply put into the vases at the front of the church and then delivered to the recipients. Can I urge you to consider donating flowers either to the sick, elderly or housebound? The flower calendar receives no funding apart from the generosity of folks who faithfully donate regularly each year. This ministry means a lot to so many people.



Angela Miller

1st Galashiels Boys' Brigade



Officers and boys of our Company, the 1st Galashiels, attended their Enrolment Service at our Church on Sunday 22 October 2006. Unfortunately, several boys were absent, due to them playing in a rugby tournament. Despite this, there was still a large number on parade, and they were well supported by parents, relatives and friends. The service was conducted by our Chaplain, the Rev. Leslie Steele, and included readings and prayers by our Captain, David Nightingale, and Lieutenants Gordon Smith and Rodger Glenfield. Four boys from the Company Section uplifted the offering. All the boys present received their Boys' Brigade membership cards from the Chaplain. Captain Nightingale informed the congregation that a total of fifty-five boys were in the three sections of the Company this year. Our Annual Boys' Brigade Carol Service will be held in our Church during the evening of Friday 15 December 2006, when a warm welcome will be extended to all!

Ian Forsyth, President

Christian Aid

Despite articles in the newsletter and intimation sheet no one has come forward to help co-ordinate the supermarket or street collections for next year. It is not a difficult task and would only take a couple of hours or so in May. If you have a telephone, a car, and a little time on your hands then please give me a ring on 755316 for the sake of the needy, in poverty stricken areas of the world

Remember: "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.'"

Angela Miller

World Mission Stamp recycling

Collecting used stamps raises several thousands of pounds every year. British first-class and second-class stamps and even international stamps are gathered together and sent to us. We then sell them to collectors. All money raised is used to support the work of a project around the world.



This year World Mission is collecting for the Church of Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee Project, which looks after elderly people who have been abandoned by their families.

Once a month, the project organises meetings in towns and villages in different locations across Bangladesh so that these 'golden' aged people can meet, have tea and a simple meal in the company of their contemporaries. They sing songs and hymns and talk to each other

Simple foodstuffs are relatively cheap in Bangladesh and a meal for one person can cost as little as a first class stamp. So please continue to put your used stamps in the box in the Church and support the Church of Bangladesh's "first class care". All we ask is that you cut stamps from envelopes or parcels leaving at least a quarter of an inch of paper all around, as damaged stamps have no value. Thank you in advance for your valued support.

The Guild



has got off to a good start with two most enjoyable October meetings. At our opening meeting, our Minister spoke on our theme for this year "Honouring the Body" as the first part of the three year strategy – "Let's Live – Body, Mind and Soul". We continued to think about this as we heard of the work of the Children's Hospital Association Scotland, supporting and providing respite care for children and their families sadly affected by long term and often incurable illnesses. It was a sad subject to consider, but our speaker spoke positively about the excellent work they were doing, and the joy and relief experienced by hard pressed families.

On a practical note – we would like to thank all those who supported us in our Soup and Sweet Lunch after the service on Sunday 29th October. £189.00 was raised for Church Funds – and this could not have been achieved without the help of those who made desserts, and above all by those who attended and made it a very enjoyable occasion.

On November 1st, we are looking forward to hearing from Mrs. Pin Teh. Each year, we invite a member of the congregation to share their story with us, so we can get to know them better, and it is always a most enjoyable meeting. We have a new venture on November 14th – we are going to Trinity Church Guild for a Joint Meeting on their regular meeting day, Tuesday. There are now only two Guilds in Galashiels, and instead of a joint Dedication Service at the beginning of the Session, we have decided to combine for a regular meeting. Next year, we will have the pleasure of welcoming Trinity members to Old Parish and St. Paul's. We conclude the month with a Bible Study on November 29th. We will be responsible for the Cake and Candy Stall at the Church Sale of Work on November 18th, and we would be most grateful for donations for this stall from the many skilled cooks we know are in the congregation!

Church Heating

As mentioned in the intimations over the past few Sundays, a problem with the Church heating occurred during the summer. The problem is due to the lack of ventilation in the boiler room and the introduction of new gas regulations regarding this. The heating will be operating as normal during the winter months - and hopefully will be even warmer! - as work recently carried out on the gas pipework should increase the efficiency of the old boilers. However, the following needs to be specially noted.

Our Church will be 125 years old this month and so is the main boiler which heats the pipes under the pews. This boiler was originally a coke burner, but over the years was converted to oil burning, and in more recent years has been fuelled by gas. Another boiler, which is about 25 years old, heats water, which then runs through the six fan heaters facing the aisles of the church.

Because of the thickness of the church walls, and the fact that the boiler room is situated in the basement, the installation of ventilation to and from the outside of the building would be both difficult and expensive. An estimate obtained for this work was in the region of £14,000.

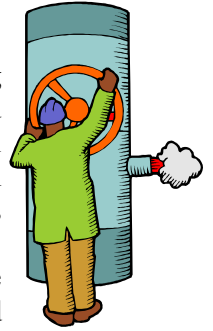
The Congregational Board agrees that it would be foolish to spend this amount of money when both existing boilers could break down and require replacement. We had a heating survey carried out this year by a heating consultant employed by the Church of Scotland, and he recommended that early consideration be given to the replacement of the main boiler, as it is very inefficient.

The Property Committee has investigated the possibility of replacing the boilers with new modern condensing boilers, which **do not** require ventilation in the boiler room. The replacement of the boilers would require the services of various contractors and will be expensive. Estimates received so far range from £30,000 to £85,000. Due to the massive difference in the cost, and possible number of boilers required, the Congregational Board have agreed that the Church of Scotland heating consultant should be engaged to design, plan, and cost the type of installation which would meet our requirements.

The old boilers, due to their inefficiency, have struggled to heat the Church, especially in cold weather. New boilers would greatly enhance the heating and comfort within the Church and make considerable savings on our energy costs.

When the heating consultant completes his design and cost I will notify you in a future newsletter.

Ian Forsyth



Work a Miracle

Tearfund has a vision to stop the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015 – Why?

Firstly, because the virus is moving swiftly through the world's poorest communities, creating a generation of orphans – nearly a million adult deaths per year since 1980.

Secondly, Tearfund's main aim of lifting people out of poverty will be undermined if the pandemic is not halted in its tracks.

Local churches have a unique opportunity to make this vision a reality, by providing care for sufferers and a biblical basis for healthy relationships.

Five specific aims have been identified:

1. Preventing mother-to-child HIV transmission
2. Supporting HIV affected women and children
3. Facilitating access to treatment
4. Ending stigma and discrimination
5. Promoting behavioural change amongst children and young people

The cost of this vision is huge - £60 million over the next 10 years – but Christians believe in miracles and God will multiply our “five loaves and two fishes” offered in faith.



The minimum figure of £7 per month (taking away the risk of mother-to-child transmission) is based on the experience of Tearfund's partner in Zimbabwe. Because such partners need regular support over a long period, Tearfund is

challenging us to present this work as a long-term commitment.

Let's be positive when passing on this challenge and asking other people for financial support.

Theologian Henri Nouwen puts it like this: "We have a vision that is so exciting that we are giving you the opportunity to participate with the resources that God has given you".

The launch of this campaign in the Borders will be at Old Parish & St Paul's on World AIDS Day, Friday 1st December, when we can join in a day of prayer and reflection (there will be a programme repeated every hour, lasting for 60 minutes, starting at 9:00 am through to 8:00 pm) and find out how we can take action to help “work a miracle”, by being the miracle workers ourselves.

Jim Tennant

Welcome!

The Kirk Session is pleased to welcome the following new members into the church family:

- ◆ **Sylvia Dobson, Upper Flat, 21 Church Street**
- ◆ **Rona Young, Tweedbank** (pictured right, who of course may be familiar to you as our Organist!)



Treasurer's Report - September 2006

Income	£
Offerings - 4 weeks	3,262.08
Dividends, Reserve Funds	261.12
Dividends - Helen Ferguson Trust	220.66
Retiring Offering (Mission & Service)	73.72
Refund - World Vision Child Sponsorship	75.00
Donation - Church of Scotland - Bible Bus	500.00
Donation - Rainbows	49.00
Donation - Wedding	40.00
Permanent Fund	00.00
Bank Interest	6.88
Total Income	4,488.46
Expenditure	
NPower Direct Gas	239.01
British Gas (Electric)	6.57
BT - Church Phone Rental	13.00
Border Weeklies	51.48
Heriot-Watt Uni. (Newsletter photocopying) ...	53.54
Bible Society - Bible Bus	500.00
I. Glenfield - Sunday School Prizes	74.02
Donation Envelopes	164.19
Church of Scotland Investors Trust (Sybil Barker Sunday School Prize Fund	1001.28
Faith Mission (Sunday School materials)	87.55
Dell Financial Services (final payment-laptop)	767.06
St. Paul's Residential (Sunday School Craikhope Weekend)	300.00
Brian Ker (earthing gas pipes)	67.23
Standard Monthly Expenditure	
Stipend	4,348.70
Organist	125.00
Cleaners - 4 weeks	32.00
Total Monthly Expenditure	4,505.70
Offerings	
4th	761.30
11th	405.15
18th	447.76
25th	695.87
Total Weekly Offerings	2,310.08
Paid through Bank	952.00
Total Offerings	3,262.08

Offerings Update

	2006		2005	
	Monthly Total/s (£)	Weekly Average (£)	Monthly Total/s (£)	Weekly Average (£)
January - August (35 weeks)	27,356.65	781.62	29,353.67	838.68
September (4 weeks)	3,262.08	815.52	3,221.64	805.41
Total (39 weeks)	30,618.73	785.10	32,575.31	835.26

FINANCIAL SITUATION

You will notice from the September financial statement on the left that our expenditure has exceeded our income – for the seventh time this year. This, coupled with a continued fall in the offerings from the congregation, has resulted in a financial crisis. The Congregational Board gave permission, at the October meeting, to cash in our Reserve Fund to alleviate the immediate state of affairs.

While the Christmas Fair has been organised as a fund raising event, it must be remembered we have already had a 'Gift Day', and yet we still find ourselves in this situation. This predicament affects all of us who worship in St Paul's, and all who see it as 'their' church. If we wish to continue as an independent congregation, we must all consider how this situation can be rectified. We have no further reserve funds to fall back upon, and I would ask each member of the congregation to seriously examine the amount they give regularly. Do you believe the amount you give is still a realistic figure? How much of an increase should each of us be making weekly?

For prayerful consideration.

David Leckey (Treasurer)

Christmas Fair - 18th November *Fundraising, Fun and Fellowship*

With just under two weeks to go, the following is a list of stallholders that you may find useful when donating contributions, especially if you're wondering who to contact or when to bring things along:

Books/CD's – Peter & Shirley Sandison

Toys – Irene Glenfield

Cakes & Candy - Lillias and Guild Ladies

Crafts – Nancy Bain, Lynne Prhal, Ishbel Adamson & UGC

Produce – Lynn Beswick

Woodwork crafts – Gordon Smith

Kids crafts – Sunday school "family"

In the gallery - Sporting challenges + quiz - Jim Tennant

This is an important event in our Church, whether you're working on a stall, selling tickets, making crafts or baking or looking forward to coming along for a browse and a coffee.... **Your Church Needs You!**

Let's make it a great success, giving support in any way we can.

The Hall will be open for donations on Friday 17th November between 6:00 and 7:00 pm, and again on Saturday between 8:30 and 9:30 am, to allow the stallholders to get set up

Tickets are now available from Louise Johnston and Lynn Beswick.

Entrance Ticket Price (£1.25 for adults, children free) includes coffee or tea with fresh homemade scone!

Death - June 21st 2006

"I am the Resurrection and the Life"
said the Lord.

Margaret (Peggy) Turner
25 Cornmill Court, Galashiels

We extend our sincere sympathy and prayers to the bereaved family