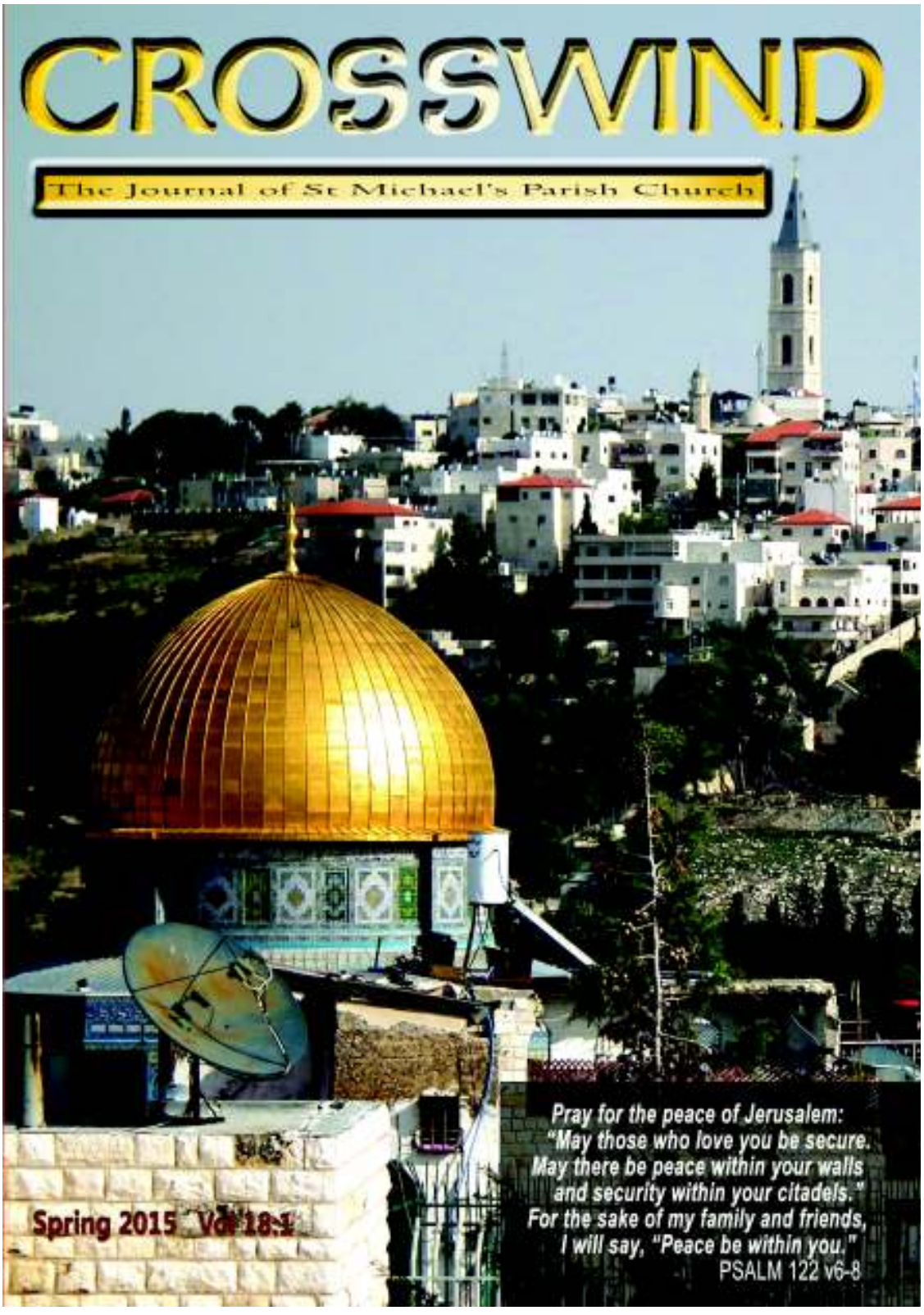
CROSSWIND

The Journal of St Michael's Parish Church



Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
"May those who love you be secure.
May there be peace within your walls
and security within your citadels."
For the sake of my family and friends,
I will say, "Peace be within you."
PSALM 122 v6-8

Spring 2015 Vol 18:1

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Communion

Sunday 26th April

All-Age Communion at 9:30am.
Traditional Communion at 11am
in the church
3pm in the Kirk Hall
with common and individual cups

Weekly Services

9.30am First Morning Service
Crèche in Cross House

9.45am All-Age Worship
Term time in Springfield School

11.00am Second Service

6.30pm Evening Service
in Kirk Hall

Monthly Communion

Sunday 31st May
at 12:15pm
Individual Cup

Front cover photograph courtesy of Alan Miller

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View from the Manse

Dear Friends,

The 2020 Vision Report on change at St Michael's was adopted by the Kirk Session in February. What began as a 'five-year plan' to meet the requirements of a Local Church Review by Presbytery is on the road to becoming, God being our helper, a home-grown set of new initiatives aimed at being a Welcoming, Evangelising, Loving and Learning Church. In what follows I wish to set the scene and highlight some of the steps we have begun to take together to meet the challenge of change.

The maxim 'change or die' is no longer a subtext in the Church of Scotland; it has been the explicit stuff of successive General Assemblies since the beginning of this millennium. Thinking of our own membership, though the decline in our numbers has been slow it has also been steady. Over the past ten years we have had an average net loss of 1.05% per year. Even in our best year in this period, 2006, in which we added 22 new members, we lost 35, through death and transfer, for a net loss of 13. Regarding worship, though we rejoice in new people coming along we have seen a steady decline in the overall numbers. The Junior Church has seen a more dramatic drop in numbers, particularly in the younger years. That said, the Youth Fellowship and the Boys' and Girls' Brigades have held their own, though challenged constantly by the need to recruit and train new leaders and officers. Baptisms are holding, though we continue to struggle to liaise the journey from baptism to participation in the Junior Church.

Nor will it help us to say St Michael's is a good-going church, financially healthy, with hundreds of people engaged in its life and work in response to the grace of God in their lives. This is true, but it will not continue to be true if we do not bite the bullet of change.

As with the penguins in John Kotter's bestseller, *Our Iceberg is Melting* (Macmillan, 2006), the alarm has been sounded and a resetting of sights begun. Kotter's fable features a well-settled colony of penguins in Antarctica. When one curious penguin discovers that their iceberg is melting no-one listens. Then a small prophetic group takes up the cry. From there it is a tale of overcoming critical obstacles on the road to a new future. A sense of urgency is created, a guiding team formed, a vision is agreed and a strategy developed, communications achieve understanding and buy in, many are empowered to act, short-term wins are produced, they don't let up and in the end create a new culture. Even if change management gurus are not your thing it rewards attention.

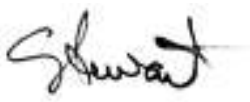
It may help to note what we have begun to do differently so far. A year ago Cheryl initiated Seedlings, a creative church for tots and toddlers that meets on Thursday mornings at 10am, and followed it with A Time of Stillness, which meets in a reconceived St Katherine's Aisle on Thursday afternoons at 2pm. In each of these she is supported by an excellent team of volunteers. Tuesdays see her leading Dementia Sensitive worship in Linlithgow Care Home and St Michael's Hospital. Early last autumn Music @ St Mike's was formed, a new group concerning young people in worship, led by John and Alison Parkinson and Sarah Gillan. Their Open Mike event in October drew 50 young people from Linlithgow, Winchburgh and Edinburgh, and they have begun to contribute to our Sunday worship. On Saturday 21 February we began our version of Messy Church, an informal approach to worship for people for whom Sunday mornings do not work, through which we seek to reach out to younger families. The previous Saturday morning, we had our first Session of the Bible at Breakfast, enjoying Middle Eastern fare and studying the theme, 'Loving and being loved in a suffering world.' Teas between services are now held in the Kirk to encourage fellowship.

Our twinning with Holy Family Episcopal Church in Reineh, Galilee is enjoying renewed energy and vision. Their new Rector, the Rev Hanna Dally, is fully committed to the relationship and will be visiting in August with his wife and daughter, Lord willing. A new aspect of our joint vision is that we establish a Peace Garden, a place in which to seek stillness within and peace without. We have identified the drying green to the north of the manse as a possible site, and Session has agreed to explore the feasibility of its development.

Rev Hanna Dally with his wife, Anita, and son, Khaled

'Handle the challenge of change well,' says Kotter, 'and you can prosper greatly. Handle it poorly, and you put yourself and others at risk' (*Iceberg*, 3). The Church is no stranger to risk, but it is the Spirit-inspired risk of loving in a dangerous world that is our calling, requiring of us a diligent, discerning and dynamic approach to change.

Your friend,



Time to Consider Stewardship

by Anne Law

If you're like me you cannot believe how quickly time seems to be passing. I find it hard to believe that we haven't specifically focussed on stewardship since our Stepping Out in Faith campaign back in 2011.

In 2011, the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland instructed congregations to get involved in what is now known as the National Stewardship Programme which was intended to give stewardship a regular and ongoing place in the life of every congregation, rather than being a 'one off' event every four years. The Programme allows us, as a congregation, the opportunity to think about how we use our time, our talents and our treasure in serving God. How do we cultivate these gifts, share them sacrificially, and return them to God with increase? It is based on the biblical principles of Christian giving – that we give of our time, our talents, and our treasure in response to the generous giving of God. We give to enable the sharing of the gospel through the work of the Church. Every congregation is now expected to take some action with regard to stewardship every year.

So, what are we at St Michael's going to do with regard to an annual stewardship programme? Following our last traditional stewardship campaign, Stepping Out in Faith in 2011, the Stewardship Team was still dealing with commitment card offers of help during 2012. By 2013, however, when it became clear to the Kirk Session that we needed to undertake a major project to rewire and light the church, attention became focussed on that. And what a huge undertaking that became, involving the time, talents and treasure of so many!

The Kirk Session has now agreed a draft timetable for our ongoing stewardship programme as part of the 2020 vision. We will ask members of the congregation to review their personal stewardship of time starting in the summer of 2015, and again in 2018; we will then consider our financial giving in 2016, and again in 2020; and we will review how we use our talents for God's church in 2017 and 2019. This pattern may have to change of course if something unforeseen occurs.

The Stewardship and Finance Team has started to think about the content of this year's programme on Time. We are keen to celebrate God's gift of time to us as part of His creation and we want to reflect on how we use the time that God gives us. There will be more information on this over the next few months.

Under the Spotlight

For this edition Elma, our Session Clerk, is 'under the spotlight', so let's begin!

Bright Sparks

Elma, what exactly does a Session Clerk do? *I'm involved in a lot of legal matters. I endeavour to support the elders and the Ministers. I do my best to help everything in St Michael's run smoothly.*

Do you have any other jobs apart from Session Clerk? *Yes, I'm a teacher and I still find time to do some teaching at Armadale Academy. I also run the Nurture Group in the school, encouraging those less fortunate to flourish.*

What do you like best about Linlithgow? *The Church, the Palace, the people and the history of Linlithgow. I believe Linlithgow is a great place to live.*

Tell us something about yourself that we don't know! *Well how about I tell you that my name is not actually Elma! My name is Elizabeth Mary Pattison Birrell. So not too hard to guess why I am called Elma.*

Which country in the world would you like to visit and why? *I'd like to visit Australia because I have often thought that the land is naturally beautiful and unlike anything I have ever seen. I would love to discover the main cities but also discover the fascinating native creatures of the country.*

What CD is in your CD player right now? *I have a CD in my car just now which has some of the music on it which is used at Time of Stillness. Time of Stillness is on in our church on a Thursday and it is something I try not to miss.*

If you could meet anyone apart from Jesus, from history, who would you meet and why? *If I could go back in time then it would be to the 1960's to meet John F Kennedy. In his inaugural address he said 'Ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country'. I believe he was asking all of us, all the nations of the world to join together to fight what he called the 'common enemies of man: tyranny, poverty, disease, and war itself'.*

If you could play any musical instrument, what would it be and why? *I'd love to be able to play the harp. It is such a beautiful instrument to look at, and there is something quite captivating and spiritual about it. Who knows maybe one day I will learn to play it.*

What is your favourite knock knock joke?
Knock Knock!
Who's there?
A broken pencil!
A broken pencil, Who?
Never mind, it's pointless! ☺

What did you want to be when you were growing up? *I had planned to study Economic History at university. However in the end I decided to choose a career in teaching because of my love of children and desire to make a difference even if only small, in the lives of those who are still very young.*

What one modern convenience could you not live without? *Probably all of them! However I have to say that I've got a new steam mop for my wooden floors and it has changed my life!*

What is your favourite hymn? *That would be 'I the Lord of Sea and Sky'.*

What is your favourite animal? *Right now I would have to say a miniature Schnauzer! If you have not met Alvin, the Manse dog, then you need to. He is adorable.*

What's the kindest act you have ever seen done by another? *I see acts of kindness on a daily basis and no matter how little or small each act is they are all important as they all make such a difference to each and every one of us.*

What makes you laugh? *It's good to laugh and I always look for a TV programme called Outnumbered. It makes me laugh out loud!*

And our last question!!! If you had one extra hour of free time every day, how would you use it? *Well I am pretty busy being Session Clerk, teaching and leading my nurture group, but if I had an extra hour, I would go for a walk! I'd go for a walk round the loch. Our loch is simply quite beautiful.*

And last but not least are you brave enough to answer our PS question from our Sunshine Starters?

Yes I think so!

P.S! What's your favourite colour? *It's a colour called coral – it's nice and bright.*

So who will it be next edition of Crosswind……? That is for us to know and you to find out! See you next time from The Junior Church.

Mary Slessor

by Ann Mellon

Now here's a potential quiz question – who is the Scottish woman pictured on the Clydesdale Bank £10 note whose death 100 years ago was commemorated in January 2015?

The answer is Mary Slessor. If, like me, you know Aberdeen, the name Mary Slessor may bring to mind a plaque on the wall in Belmont Street in the city centre, marking the site of the church where she worshipped as a young girl.

Mary Slessor was born in 1848 in Aberdeen to a poor working-class family, the second of seven children. The family moved to Dundee where her parents worked in the jute mills where, aged 11, Mary also began work. By the age of 14 Mary was a skilled worker, working from 6am-6pm. Her work helped support the family as her father, an alcoholic, had died of pneumonia along with two brothers, leaving behind only Mary, her mother and two sisters. Her mother was a committed Christian who read each issue of the Missionary Record, (a monthly magazine of the United Free Church of Scotland). Aged 17, Mary heard that David Livingstone, the famous missionary and explorer, had died and she decided she wanted to follow in his footsteps.

After training in Edinburgh, Mary was first assigned to the Calabar region in Nigeria. She worked at town-based missions at first, but following a period back in Scotland recovering from malaria, she was sent further into Calabar. At that time missionaries worked under a very strict regime. Mary Slessor was different in that she realised that to become effective, she had to break some of those moulds.

She ate the native food – a necessary economy as she sent a large portion of her salary to support her mother and sisters in Scotland. She quickly learnt and became skilled in the Efik language. In 1965 an 89-year-old colleague of Mary's – Mina Amess – recollected that Mary's eyes 'twinkled with amusement' when she saw Mina studying an Efik grammar book and dictionary. 'Leave these books alone...' Mary told Mina '....listen to the folks'. Mary Slessor had realised that living with people and learning their language would change things – not being in a distant missionary house. She changed the whole meaning of missionary work and how to serve the church abroad.

One aspect of the Efik people's traditional beliefs that affected Mary deeply was that they considered the birth of twins a particularly evil curse. They believed that the father of one infant was an evil spirit, and that the mother had been guilty of a great sin. Unable to determine which twin was fathered by the evil spirit, the natives often abandoned both babies to die in the bush. Slessor adopted every child she found abandoned and sent out people to find twins and cared for them at the Mission House. Mary herself adopted an abandoned baby girl as her daughter and called her Janie.

Mary returned to Scotland for a three-year period for health reasons taking Janie with her. During this period she looked after her mother and sister (who had also fallen ill), raised Janie, and spoke at many churches, sharing stories from Calabar.

During her next and third mission to Calabar, Mary heard that her mother and sister had died. Overcome with loneliness, she wrote, 'There is no one to write and tell my stories and nonsense to.' However her independent pioneering spirit surfaced and she wrote 'Heaven is now nearer to me than Britain, and no one will worry about me if I go up country.'

In August 1888, Mary bravely travelled north to Okoyong, an area where previous male missionaries had been killed. She thought that her teachings, and the fact that she was a woman, would be less threatening to unreached tribes. Again through her willingness to integrate herself with the community Mary made close personal friendships wherever she went, becoming known for her pragmatism and humour. Rather than evangelism, she focussed on settling disputes, encouraging trade, establishing social changes and introducing Western education and became known as the 'white queen of Okoyong'.

In 1892, Mary became vice-consul in Okoyong, and in 1905 she was named vice-president of Ikot Obong native court. Although suffering intermittent fevers from the malaria she contracted on her first mission to Calabar, she never gave up her mission work to return permanently to Scotland. The fevers eventually weakened Mary and after a particularly severe attack, she died on 13 January 1915. She was given the colonial equivalent of a state funeral with flags at government buildings flying at half-mast.

To commemorate 100 years since her death there are a number of events planned, particularly in Dundee where a bronze plaque was unveiled in January 2015. But for a woman whose down-to-earth attitudes gained her so much love and respect, her commemoration on an everyday £10 note is very fitting.

Membership

by Rev Thom Riddell

In an article in the January edition of Life and Work, the Moderator, the Rt Rev John Chalmers issues a membership challenge to the Church of Scotland. In setting a target of 100,000 new members in the next ten years, he recognises that the real challenge is for the Church to redefine membership in a way that allows us to include women and men, old and young who do not fit into the model of membership with which we are so familiar. The fact is that people are no longer joining Clubs, institutions and organisations as they did in the past. All 'membership' organisations are struggling to maintain their numbers and are having to find new ways to attract, and involve, new members.

The membership roll of St Michael's currently stands at 1374, but many in that number are not regularly involved in our life or worship. However, there are a significant number of people who are fully engaged in our faith community, making a valuable contribution to its work and witness, who are not included in that number. To be included on the roll as a 'communicant', a person requires to have made public profession of their faith and taken vows which commit them, among other things, to regular worship and giving financial support. Most will have done this at St Michael's while others have come to us from other congregations.

The other category of membership recognised by the Church is that of adherent, defined as 'people who are associated with a congregation without becoming communicant members'. There are a number of adherents in the fellowship at St. Michael's and they include those who have been brought up in another denomination, eg Methodist, as well as those who have not felt it necessary to proceed to formalise their position.

This model of membership is based on the traditional premise that people 'believe before they belong', ie people develop an understanding of what they believe, and profess a faith in God, before they are drawn into belonging to a faith community. If that was ever an accurate model, it is certainly not the experience of most people, be they communicant members or adherents. A better model would be that people 'belong before they believe' and that they keep on developing what they believe throughout their lives. People are drawn into a Church community for a wide variety of reasons. Some will have been invited by a friend, some may have attended a Church service or event, and some may come out of curiosity.

Whatever the reason, they will have felt comfortable or at home with the surroundings, or the people, or the welcoming atmosphere – all the things that go to make up what our faith community represents. As they become involved in the activities, and maybe but not necessarily, the worship of the Church, they develop a sense of belonging. That may lead them to go on to consider 'membership', but it may not. However, their contribution to the life and work and witness of St Michael's is no less valuable.

During 2015 we will be looking at the Stewardship of Time, and all those who come together as the congregation of St Michael's, whether members or adherents, will be invited to consider how they use God's gift of time to us.

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St Michael's Vision for 2020

A WELL Church

Welcoming	Inclusive, accessible, inspiring in life and worship
Evangelising	Growing, by hearing and sharing the Good News
Loving	Caring for each other, and for those in need
Learning	Supporting every stage of the journey of faith

Knowing Christ better, Serving Him together, Making Him known to others

FROM VISION TO REALITY

St Michael's 2020 High-Level Action Plan to become a WELL Church

Vision Element	High-Level Actions	Session Team(s) [**Lead**/other]
Welcoming	***1*** Develop and maintain good 'welcome disciplines' for all services, groups and events held in the Church, in Cross House and elsewhere.	**Door duty teams** Evening managers All group leaders
	2 Develop and sustain effective operation of all media (print/website/social media/audio/visual etc) and the personal and follow-up support required.	**Communications**
	3 Warmly welcome all new and potential new members, and visitors, and engage with each to the level that is appropriate.	**Fellowship**
Evangelising	***1*** Devise and implement a programme of initiatives to reach out with the Good News to those who are not members.	**Mission & Outreach**
	2 Devise and implement a programme of initiatives to re-engage those who are members but do not attend worship or contribute to our life and work.	**Mission & Outreach**
	3 Introduce a range of new activities to provide opportunities for others to engage with us and with the gospel.	**Mission & Outreach** Fellowship
Loving	***1*** Sustain a range of actions to address social need and social injustice in our local community, across Scotland and throughout the world; and tell the story of what we do.	**Social Justice** International
	2 Develop a graduated range of specific pastoral supports.	**Pastoral Care**
	3 Develop a range of events for the church family.	**Fellowship**
	4 Develop ways to maintain contact with our young adults.	**Fellowship**
Learning	***1*** Implement a modular, multi-media programme of Christian education.	**Education**
	2 Ensure that services are family-friendly and that preaching is accessible.	**Worship** Ministry
	3 Continually refresh the junior church and our young people programme.	**Education**
	4 Develop our understanding of the difficult circumstances of Christians in some other countries, particularly through our partners in Holy Family Episcopal Church, Reineh in Israel/Palestine.	**International**

This high-level action plan shows the key actions we need to take to deliver on our Vision. Other supportive actions are contained in the plans of the various Session teams.

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21st -23rd May 2015

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	6.30pm - 8pm
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Trip to Israel December 2014

by Elma Birrell

After an 8-hour delay coffee-less in Charles De Gaulle Airport, perilous driving and an Israeli Pea Souper we finally arrived to the tranquillity of St Andrew's Hotel Jerusalem at midnight on 2nd December 2014. At breakfast the next morning we met members of a delegation from 121 George Street (Church of Scotland headquarters) who were attending a World Mission Council conference.

Nazareth Hospitality

Later we did some sightseeing. Alan and I visited the old city walls and found ourselves the only tourists there. We saw a number of school groups (some Muslim, some Jewish) displaying exactly the same behaviour as the world over – boys kicking a football or coke can. We even spotted two playing truant! Walking down into the Arab quarter we were frequently asked if we would like a guide but we felt confident enough to lead ourselves. However, this was the livelihood for these men. Tourists, apart from a colourful group of Nigerians, were in short supply. This we felt was a result of problems in Israel over the summer. Special moments from Jerusalem – the service at the Lutheran church, The Wailing Wall and our visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum.

The overwhelming feeling of peace belies the actual situation. The view from the hilltop of the St Andrew's Hotel let us glimpse the huge wall dividing the communities: a plume of black smoke suggested there had been an incident.

The next day we began our business in Reineh, travelling by local bus to Nazareth and enjoying the scenery. The area around Jerusalem is very hilly and takes the visitor by surprise.

On arrival in Reineh, 10 minutes by car from Nazareth, we were met with great warmth by Father Hanna, his wife Anita and their family of three sons and a daughter. Almost immediately we became immersed in the work and life of The Holy Family Church. Our first task was to engage with the young people and help decorate the hall and church for Christmas. There was a real sense of family during all these activities. The highlights of our visit to Reineh were Sunday worship with Stewart and Hanna leading our service in the church. Meeting and discussing with Nabil Ibrahim, a famous human rights lawyer who lives in Reineh, about the needs of Palestinian Christians. Travelling to Tiberius and visiting the Church of Scotland Hotel there; the Reverend Colin Johnston,

minister in Tiberius, took us to a number of the Holy sites around Galilee. Sailing on the Sea of Galilee as Jesus did 2000 years ago. The main difference being that we were on the disco boat!

The Church of Scotland has a formal partnership with the Lutheran and Episcopalian churches in the Middle East and we met Archbishop Suhail Dawani of the Episcopal Church of Jerusalem. Dining with Archdeacon Samuel Barhoum and his wife Susan in Nazareth and reminiscing about their visit to Scotland and life in general for Palestinian Christians. Experiencing the kindness and hospitality shown by our hosts – we hope to return the favours in June and August.

Actions from the trip

1 Agreement from Linlithgow Academy's Head Teacher that two young people from Reineh will attend a week's science and technology classes in June. They will hopefully learn about our culture through school and mixing with local young people and help our students understand about life in the Nazareth area for Palestinian Christians.

2 Father Hanna, his wife Anita and their daughter Dareen will visit Linlithgow in August. Hanna will preach in St Michael's and the family will experience our hospitality and see the local sights. Anita, a qualified teacher of the deaf, would like to visit Donaldson's.

3 Hanna would like a young man to go to Reineh to teach English to young male school leavers to raise their skills and as a result their job opportunities.

4 While school leavers from Reineh have the opportunity to go to University on the West Bank aged 18, Hanna would like St Michael's to support one young man whose parents cannot afford to give him the financial support necessary.

5 The Peace Garden – the inspiration for which came from the RC church in Cana, where we had bible study with Hanna, with the Wedding Feast as theme. The local heritage group is very supportive of the Peace Garden in Linlithgow. This would be situated at the top of the minister's garden and Historic Scotland is looking at accessibility. The Peace Garden in Linlithgow would become a place to benefit everyone. A place to find inner peace, a place to pray and to reflect on a need for World peace.

Cana Peace Garden

6 The Christians in Reineh are not poor – they have homes, good food, family life but they do need support. Fiona Hyslop our MSP has stressed the importance of advocacy and will give advice in this area.

DAVID S HENDERSON

An Appreciation

by Gordon Young

David who died in February was 91 and one of our oldest elders. David his wife Margaret and their 4 sons came to live in Highfield Avenue, Linlithgow in 1960 and he was admitted to the eldership in St Michael's in 1962 (having been ordained in Newton Stewart in 1951). David served with dedication and vigour in the establishment of Deeds of Covenant and later administering Weekly Freewill Offering envelopes and record keeping. When I came to Linlithgow David was the first elder who visited us, in his WFO capacity, and he was a great ambassador for the church making us feel welcome and getting us 'signed up'. Most of us would at the very least know David by sight or by good reputation or, if you were fortunate, you knew David personally. If you had met him he would remember you, he would greet you with warmth and he would chat to you. I was aware of a sense of humour and sometimes even a twinkle in his eye but, until I heard Stewart's eulogy at his funeral, I was unaware of a mischievous humour and great practical jokes including turning the washing up into an apparently Herculean task by returning clean plates to the water causing his sons to wonder if the task would ever be complete! We will miss him.

The Big Sing

Come and join in with choirs from near and far on

Sunday, 28th June 2015

from 4pm to 6.30pm in

St Michael's Parish Church.

Alzheimer Scotland
Action on Dementia

Proceeds in aid of Alzheimer Scotland.

PARISH

BAPTISMS

Let the children come to me

December

Lyle Robert Tavern, Belsyde Court
Harris John Tavern, Belsyde Court
Molly Catherine Tavern, Belsyde Court
Sophia Anna Ferrario, Deanburn Park
Rhyley Notman Grenfell, Livingston
Struan Alistair John Munro, Edinburgh

February

Lilah Theresa Colquhoun McLucas, Edinburgh
Innes Riley Garft, Bathgate
Jack William Bennie, Preston Road

BLESSING

Elliott Arthur Holm, Priory Road

NEW MEMBERS

For we are all members of one body

Mrs Joyce Riddell, The Maltings

REGISTER

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life

December

Mrs Kathleen (Kate) Keane, St Ninian's Road

January

Mrs Mary 'May' Taylor, Archview Lodge, Dalkeith (formerly Listloaning Road)
Mrs Catherine Walker, Blackfaulds Nursing Home (formerly Water Yett)
Mrs Anne Boyle, St. Andrew's Court, Uphall
Mr Scott Carson, Laverock Park
Mrs Phoebe Peacock, The Vennel
Mrs Elizabeth (Betty) Stewart, Linlithgow Care Home (formerly Priory Road)
Mrs Sarah (Sadie) Dickson, Linlithgow Care Home (formerly Braehead Terr)

February

Mrs Margaret Crawford, Grange View
Miss Margaret Melville, Pardovan Holdings
Mrs Agnes (Nancy) Clark, High Street

March

Mr David S Henderson, Highfield Avenue
Mrs Gwen Hendry, Preston Crescent
Mr Helfred Bye, Baronshill Court
Mrs Ruby Mackie, Livingston Care Home (formerly St Ninian's Way)
Mrs Mary (May) Temple, St Michael's Hospital

Dates for your Diary

Coffee Mornings

All from 10am to 12 noon in the Kirk Hall

Sat 11th April	Project Trust Malawi
Sat 18th April	West Lothian Foodbank Coffee Morning
Sat 23rd May	Holiday Club
Sat 30th May	Friends of Chernobyl's Children – Forth Valley Group

Other Events in the Church

Sun 26 April	West Lothian Scouts Annual Church Parade
Thurs 21 - Sat 23 May	Flower Festival
Sun 24 May	Girls'Brigade & Boys' Brigade End of Year Service
Sun 7 June	National Youth Choir of Scotland
Sun 28 June	Big Sing in aid of Alzheimer Scotland

ANNUAL INTERCHURCH DINNER

This year's Annual Interchurch Dinner is being held in the Rugby Club on Saturday, 2nd May 2015. Tickets priced £14 are available from Fiona Duke (842669).

Mothers Behind Bars in Kenya's Prisons

by Rev Sheena Orr

Sheena worked as a Prison Chaplain in Kenya from 2011 to 2014. She recently returned to Edinburgh to become full-time Chaplain in HMP Edinburgh. In this article she reflects on the situation of one particular group of women in prison in Kenya.

Prisons are awful places to be no matter what the reason. For parents, whether mother or father, prison often means a sudden and heart-wrenching separation from their children. In most cases, imprisonment of the mother leads to a scattering of the family as grandmothers, aunts and sisters are drawn upon to care for various family members. Rarely do fathers keep the family together when the mother goes to prison. Indeed, in most cases the mother is on her own in any case leaving no option but for her children to go to other family members. Women, on the other hand, will invariably keep the children together if the father is imprisoned.

One group of women that I got to know particularly well were a group of 'foreigners', mainly from other African countries, who had been arrested in Kenya, usually trying to pass through Jomo Kenyatta International Airport (JKIA), Nairobi on the way to countries like Zambia, Uganda, Nigeria or South Africa. The majority of them were given harsh sentences for carrying drugs – anything from 10 years to life. All without exception were trying to earn money to give their children a better life. They were all promised fast, easy money. In fact, on reflection most of them realised they were the decoy for the main carriers carrying much larger amounts of drugs. They probably never stood a chance. But, they did not know that as they arrived at JKIA for the last leg of the journey home. Having said goodbye to their children 2 or 3 weeks ago by the time they arrive in Nairobi they are expecting to see their precious children in a few hours' time. Just one last connecting flight and they will be home.

The shock of imprisonment is clearly visible when I meet with someone newly arrived. Not only are they shocked at being in prison but they are in prison in a foreign country. Often the court appearance has passed in a blur with little understanding of what is really happening. Before they know it they are in the remand (untried) section of the prison with extremely basic conditions and food very different from home.

This is a place where people live in limbo waiting for their case to come to trial, which can take two or three years due to the corrupt and inefficient system of criminal justice. Communication with the family is virtually impossible unless there are family connections in Kenya, which is rare. Phone calls to places outside Kenya are not allowed and even local phone calls are done by passing messages through the prison officer. (Unlike UK where prisoners are free to make their own calls to family and friends.) The greatest angst is over children. They are usually already with the grandmother or sister or friend who was looking after them during the trip. But the stress now is about what will happen to the children now the mother is not returning. And then the awful realisation dawns that they may not see their children for many years.

Photographs and letters become important and alongside listening to the painful personal stories of dashed hopes, regret and sheer anguish, the Prison Chaplain is able to help in small ways which make a big difference. Contacting the family, especially in the early stages of imprisonment, is appreciated by both the person in prison and the family outside. Pictures of children can be sent by email and printed out – a great source of comfort. Messages can be passed at Christmas time. A letter to an elderly mother or a husband becomes a precious link with the outside world, often the only link due to the distances involved. The Chaplain is often the only visitor that the foreigner receives, and to have someone who cares for them and is in touch with their family can be a source of encouragement and hope in a dry and foreign place.

The 15th of May 2010 is a day Ann often thinks about – it is the last day she hugged her sons before being arrested. Since then she has seen them once but only through the prison visiting window – no hugs, no time to really talk. She is now looking forward to the next Family Reunion Day when they will be able to spend the day with her... if her husband manages to bring them from Uganda. Last time he didn't manage it. 'Just one hour with them will keep me going through the whole year!' says Ann. Meanwhile, she looks at a recently sent picture and thinks about all she is missing.

There are two short video programmes involving Ann on the church website.

Soul Survivor: Breaking our Trend

by Russell Shields

Soul Survivor has been a major talking point in the YF and a real highlight of the year for many of them and I can now see why. I had never been to Soul Survivor before but I know people who have been and they could never quite bring to words what they experienced. So, as I headed down to Shepton Mallet for that first taste of this massive event I didn't really know what to expect.

What I found was a great deal of friendship. Soul Survivor runs different seminars aimed at young people and youth leaders. They have amazing food vans and activities, they run main meetings with speakers from around the world and the bands leading the sung worship really help engage young people with the music as they worship God. We spent a week with more than 10,000 young people exploring questions about faith and Christianity. What was more important to me, however, was the time back at the campsite. We'd be up late discussing what the speakers had said that day, we'd be throwing a frisbee or rugby ball about and getting to know each other; I saw the young people from our group just enjoying have a place to be themselves with each other.

Last year, however, we decided to try a slight change. We didn't go to Shepton Mallet, instead we turned north. Soul Survivor was leading their first ever Soul Survivor Scotland in the Thainstone Centre outside Aberdeen. Here we found Soul Survivor stripped back. They didn't have the 10,000+ young people we were used to; we found about 600. Instead of having to see the main speaker from a distance or on a screen, they walked among us. Down south we would mainly see each other in the evenings but as they couldn't offer the same number of activities, we got to spend more time together, doing our own thing with each other.

Despite all the things we noticed were missing, it was a great week. We still had the time together. We still had the late night chats. We still had a safe place to talk honestly about what's going on in our lives and what we believe. We even had Darth Vader leading the band one night... maybe it's just me that liked that bit.

With all that goes on in the week, it really is hard to pick a highlight or even fully explain what Soul Survivor is like – especially as it can be so different for everyone. There is a lot of laughter; there are occasionally tears but I found that this is a great opportunity for groups of young people, trying to understand who they are and what they believe, to support each other and grow stronger friendships.

When you compare the Shepton Mallet event to the Scotland event there are massive differences. So what is the appeal? Why keep going back? For leaders it's obvious, the young people explore and grow so much at this event that we want to support, encourage and celebrate with them. For young people? See what they say:

'The people!'

'The relaxed attitude appealed to me.'

'I like the atmosphere, especially during the morning and evening sessions.'

'Just the time to chill and chat.'

'The worship music was particularly good!'

'The fact that you can talk to pretty much anyone.'

'The fact that there isn't a set schedule that you have to stick to during the day.'

'The relaxed atmosphere.'

'All the talks and meetings are relevant to young people and easy to understand.'

This year we're mixing it up again! We're going back down south but this time to Stafford, from the 24th - 29th July. If you, or someone you know, would like to know more or if you'd like to join us then please get in touch! Even if you've never tried it before. I'm already excited about this incredible week and can't wait to see what God has planned for our young people. Please contact me by telephone on 07702 798435 or email Russell@stmichaels-parish.org.uk.

Hope in the Township?

by Alison and Alan Miller

Perhaps the word 'township' conjures up images of South Africa in your mind: tin shacks, poverty, running street battles. The good news is that it's not like that now. But there are still real needs to be met.

Paul, Mama Louisa and Debbie

Our older daughter Debbie and son-in-law Paul have now been in Soshanguve Township, South Africa, for a year. They have committed to live and work there for 3 years, financially supported by family and friends including a number from St Michael's. They are part of a team from InnerCHANGE, a worldwide family of people who seek to live out the Good News among the poor. The organisation's watchword comes from the Bible: 'Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:8)

We went to visit in September 2014. We took Debbie and Paul with us on safari and sightseeing for a week, which was amazing! Then we spent a week with them in their wee house, which was also amazing, but for different reasons.

Soshanguve is a township of between 0.5-1 million people (estimates vary!), almost all black South African. Most people now live in brick bungalow-type houses, fully supplied with electricity, water and sewerage services. Soshanguve has its own university, a brand new hospital and (recently opened) its first shopping mall. We saw many strengths of the township community: the real warmth as people greeted us; great spiritual openness; the care shown by Debbie and Paul's landlady and neighbour Mama Louisa, who keeps a discreet motherly eye on them; the way the community wrapped around a bereaved family with prayer and practical support.

We also became aware of some of the challenges: the terrible public transport that can add 4 hours to people's working day; erratic power and water cuts; the lack of educational support for those who struggle with the set curriculum.

More deeply, the bride-price cultural traditions leave many young people unable to marry. Fathers of young children were rarely to be seen. AIDS remains both a killer and a taboo subject. Churches range from mainstream to distinctly maverick. Politically, although it is 22 years since the first open elections in South Africa it is taking a long time for change to trickle down: the African National Congress party remains hugely popular but seems to have lost its way.

After our visit, we feel better placed to answer some of the questions that many have asked.

Where do they live – what is it like?

Debbie and Paul live in Soshanguve 'Block HH', in a small government-built house with 2 bedrooms, bathroom and living room/kitchen. They have water, electricity and internet – most of the time! Their house shares a piece of ground with Mama Louisa's house.

What do they do?

Debbie and Paul work as part of the small InnerCHANGE South Africa team. They are the only white members. They spend a lot of time with local children, who are often at a loose end while their carers are working. That extended into a wonderful, but exhausting, weekend away with 60 young people! They support and encourage children at a huge local orphanage. They are tutoring young people who can't (or couldn't) keep up with the school curriculum. Paul and their team leader, Luc, have honed a group of young men, who might otherwise have little focus in their lives, into a well-drilled and successful basketball team. Debbie is building relationships with women neighbours, who are often young single mothers living in the family home. In all they do, they seek to support people to be all they can be.

Is It safe?

Walking along their street in daylight felt very safe; but it is a poor area with drug and alcohol problems never far away. So, as in similar communities in the UK, people don't walk about after dark.

When will we see them again?

Skype is a wonderful thing so we 'see' them regularly on the computer. But they hope to be home on furlough for 3 months towards the end of 2015.

Would YOU like to keep in touch?

You can find out about InnerCHANGE at: www.innerCHANGE.org.

You can follow their blog with photos at:
www.horrockshappenings.wordpress.com

Just scroll down on the right hand side of the website, enter your email address and click the 'follow' button. The posts will arrive in your inbox.

If you would like to receive prayer newsletters, drop Debbie an email at deb.c.horrocks@gmail.com.

And please do remember them in your own prayers. We feel very proud, but also very humbled, by the way they are seeking to change the world for the better, one friendship at a time.

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Golden Charter
Funeral Plans

Thursday Coffee Mornings

by Pat Brough

Many years ago, when Linlithgow had a Post office at the eastern end of the High Street, people would be in and out of the building, perhaps several times a week. These were the days before emails took over from letters and Pensions were collected over the counter instead of appearing as an entry in a bank statement. On Thursday, when those of pensionable age collected their cash, the Post Office was very busy. Some people had to walk quite a distance to collect their pensions, queue for a while and then walk back home, often collecting shopping on the way.

Someone thought that it would be a good idea to provide a cup of tea or coffee for the older members of the congregation so that they could have a rest before the walk home. It would also be an opportunity to meet like-minded people, catch up on local news and put the world to rights. At the time St Michael's had a Young Wives' group, who were asked to provide volunteers, who would welcome the older generation, make tea and coffee and provide some home baking. A small charge would be made.

The Thursday Coffee Morning was a great success; it was a good opportunity for different age groups in the Congregation to meet and get to know one another. Gradually the Young Wives grew older as did their children and the world of employment beckoned.

The Young Wives' group folded, but St Michael's still managed to provide volunteers to continue the Coffee Mornings.

In 2015 things have changed, the Post Office has become a bar-restaurant, pensions don't have to be collected weekly, but the Coffee Mornings continue. Even if the scones, biscuits and tea loaves might be made by fellow Senior Citizens, the welcome and the conversation are still there. As Room 1 is used, there are no stairs to be climbed. Unfortunately the main access to Cross House from the Cross has to remain closed for security reasons. Don't be put off by this, as there is always someone more than willing to welcome anyone when the bell rings. The charge for tea or coffee accompanied by home baking and conversation is only £1.00.

If you are in the vicinity of Cross House on a Thursday morning between 10.00am and 12 noon, give it a try!

Just a Minute

Donald Burgess continues to dip into the pages of the Kirk Session minutes .....

100 years ago

Tues.16th Feb. 1915 A letter was received from Mr. Robert Cassels, Organist, asking permission from the Kirk Session for the use of the organ on behalf of Miss Janet McKay, who desires to take organ lessons from him. The Kirk Session granted this request and further resolved that Miss McKay be not asked to pay any charges towards defraying costs of Water Rent.

Sun. 4th Apr. 1915 The Moderator explained that he had called this meeting for the purpose of affording the members of Kirk Session an opportunity of saying Goodbye to Mr. Gemmell, who had for several years been one of their number, and who was about to leave the parish to take up his duties as Assistant Rector and principal Science Master at the Grammar School of Keith. He congratulated Mr. Gemmell on his appointment and spoke of the esteem in which he had been held by his fellow members of Session, alike for his enlightened churchmanship, his personal integrity and his good works' sake. On the motion of Mr. Forbes, seconded by Mr. Alex. Dougal, the Session unanimously resolved to put on record its most grateful sense of the many services Mr. Gemmell had rendered to the Church of Scotland in Linlithgow, especially among the Young and as a body they wished Mr. Gemmell every success in his new sphere and much health and happiness in his new home.

50 years ago

Tues. 19th Jan. 1965 [*New Church Hall*] Mr David Morrison presented a report of the first meeting of the New Church Hall Committee and the Session agreed to the following recommendations:

1) that the Session agrees to proceed with arrangements for the building of a New Church Hall.

2) that the Session appoint Messrs. Wilson and Wilson as architects for the New Church Hall and ask them to prepare sketch plans.

3) the Session apply now to the County Planning Authority for permission in principle for the erection of a New Church Hall.

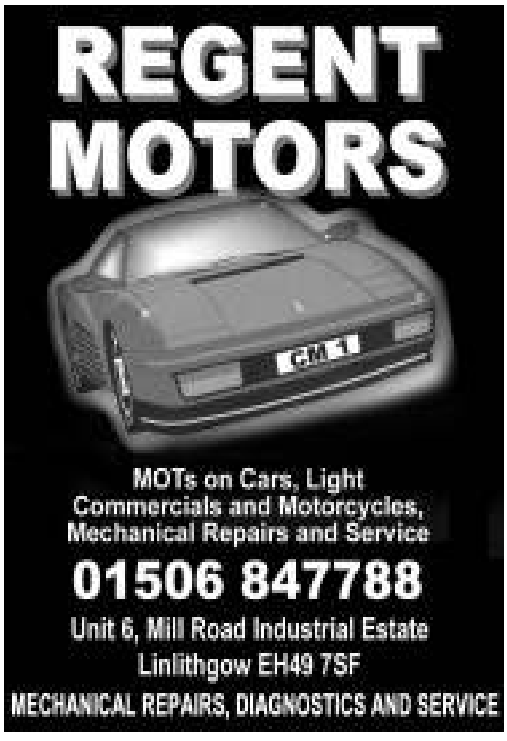
4) the Session noted that a legally binding agreement had been made with the owner of the Cross House for the sale of 0.340 acres of ground to the rear of the Cross House for £250.

Tues. 16th Mar. 1965 The Moderator reminded the Session that he would be in America on an exchange visit from 19th April for 3 months. His place in St. Michael's would be taken by Dr. William MacIntosh from the Mountain Boulevard Presbyterian Church, Denver, Colorado.

25 years ago

Tues. 20th Feb. 1990 [*Overseas Missionary*] A letter had been received from Miss Brenda Galloway thanking Kirk Session for sponsorship of a course held in Pitlochry on Missionary work. Miss Galloway would soon be going to Indonesia to carry out Missionary Work there, and Kirk Session wished her 'God's Blessing' in her work there and would give more tangible expression of its support at a later date. The session Clerk was asked to write to Miss Galloway to convey its good wishes to her.

Tues. 20th Mar. 1990 [*Stewardship and Finance*] Mr. Bruce Yeaman suggested that a Working Party be set up to investigate the possibility of St. Michael's acquiring a computer to assist the administration of church business, reporting back to Session its findings and costs….Session agreed to this suggestion.



‘Why do people mumble these days?’

by Caroline Ewing

Do you or someone you know say something like this? Or do you have the television louder than normal? It takes a while to realise your hearing is not what it was because losing some degree of hearing usually happens very gradually and although you can still hear sound it is not so clear. Why is that?

Over the years, the wear and tear on the nerves in the inner ear causes a reduction in hearing some tones and frequencies. It usually means you can hear the low sounds but not all the high sounds. What are the implications of this for hearing speech?

It results in being able to hear the vowels, which are in the low tones, but not all the consonants, which are in the high tones. So taken to extreme, or if you become severely deaf, you may hear your friend in the street saying to you ‘ e o ow a oo o ay ‘ – you’ve heard sound but it is not meaningful – you’ve heard the vowels but not the consonants. When you add them you have ‘Hello how are you today?’ Or it may be that it is just one word in the sentence you can’t make out. ‘I’ll meet you at the ……’. It’s just one word but it is the key meaning to the sentence.

All this causes confusion and embarrassment and can affect a person’s social confidence. Many people retreat from everyday conversation at the shops (can’t hear the prices), at meetings (can’t hear the speaker), at family gatherings, going to the cinema, and it can cause problems at work and in all relationships.

Communication is essential to human beings and its loss a great deprivation. It can cause social withdrawal and even depression affecting the person’s whole life,

That’s the bad news, but here’s the good news!

There is a lot you can do to help yourself. Having accepted you may have a hearing loss, be it ever so mild (but unfortunately probably progressive), you can make an appointment with the audiology department at the hospital via your GP. They will assess your hearing and probably give you a hearing aid. For some, hearing aids make the difference but for others it can be difficult to maintain and get used to. So what else is out there?

There are groups in West Lothian who teach managing a hearing loss and whose main aim is to restore social confidence with communication.

How do they do that? They meet weekly (maximum of 12 people with a trained lip-reading tutor). The tutor uses special personal listeners and written back-up so that everyone in the group can follow what is being said. The tutor will meet you in a one-to-one beforehand and chat about your hearing problems. The groups are friendly and no one is put on the spot but everyone learns together.

The tutor will offer lip-reading practice, which is a visual back up to hearing, determining lip shapes, body language and facial expression. You will also learn how to maximise the use of a hearing aid, and coping strategies in everyday situations to build up your confidence. The tutor will demonstrate special equipment to help you hear the television, the phone, the front door bell, and an essential, the smoke alarm. Other agencies who deal with problems related to hearing loss such as tinnitus (noises in the head), vertigo and Menière's Disease will be discussed.

As a lip-reading tutor, I have seen people arrive in the group shy and hesitant due to the hearing loss. As they attend and meet others and learn they blossom and regain their social confidence. I know how they feel because initially I was a class member and although my hearing has deteriorated I am able to cope with it and not be left out.

Fortunately there are free West Lothian groups run by WL's Adult Basic Education. There are day-time and evening groups and an initial six-week taster group to try it out. To meet with a lip-reading tutor to discuss this contact:

Adult Basic Education
South Bridge Street
Bathgate
West Lothian
EH48 1TS

Tel: 0800 731 1831

Email: adultbasiceducation@westlothian,gov.uk

For other parts of the country contact
www.atlalipreading.org.uk

Hearing Link Scotland
The Eric Liddell Centre
15 Morningside Road
Edinburgh
EH10 4DP
Tel: 0131 447 9420
Email : Scotland@hearinglink.org

True Happiness

by Rev JunSoo Park

Thirst for Happiness

Whenever I turned on the TV in the absence of Bora and my wee boy Daniel last year, Pharrell Williams' music video, *Happy* (2014), frequently appeared. This music video was variously parodied in many countries and uploaded on YouTube. Watching these videos, I was convinced that we all certainly desire to live happily regardless of race, age, and religion. The song seems to show that one could achieve happiness through controlling the mind like Buddhism and harmoniously living with other people, in particular, family as Confucianism does. From these perspectives, Linlithgow could be one of the best towns for a happy life.

Family without God?

Contrary to Scotland, many parents in South Korea heartbreakingly bring up Down's syndrome children due to an unmethodical social welfare system and prejudice. A Korean movie, *Count Down* (2011), depicts how a desperate father looks after his son who has this condition after his wife has run away. For him, at least, family life does not bring him happiness and, controlling the mind does not help to improve his relationship with his son who keeps asking questions. In this hopeless situation, he loses his son as a result of his neglect and then he is soon sentenced by liver cancer. Before his death, he listens to an important conversation with his son through recorded tapes as follows;

- Son: 'Daddy! I went to church today. Do you believe in God?'
- Father: 'I do not believe in God. But, thinking of you, I wish there really is a God.'

Just after acknowledging God, he happily accepts his death, hoping to play with his son in Heaven.

St Augustine's Advice on Happiness

How can we obtain true happiness in Linlithgow? About this question, St Augustine (354-430) replies happiness is in the enjoyment of one's supreme good. According to him, two conditions of the supreme good are clear;

- First Condition: Nothing is better than this.
- Second Condition: It cannot be lost against your will.

Given that God only consents to these conditions, St Augustine would advise us that the best method for a happy life in Linlithgow is following God; 'Always obey the Lord and you will be happy' (Proverbs 28:14).

Prayer: Almighty and everlasting God, I have everything I need in Linlithgow since you are my shepherd. I shall not be in want. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Useful Contacts

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Russell Shields
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Visiting Minister, South Korea
Rev JunSoo Park
tel: 07983348331

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John Shaw (Team Bible Class S2-S3)
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Stephen Marshall (YF S4-S6)
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Anne Bennie
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Rona Molloy
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Bereavement Support Group
Sheila Rae
tel: (01506) 847538

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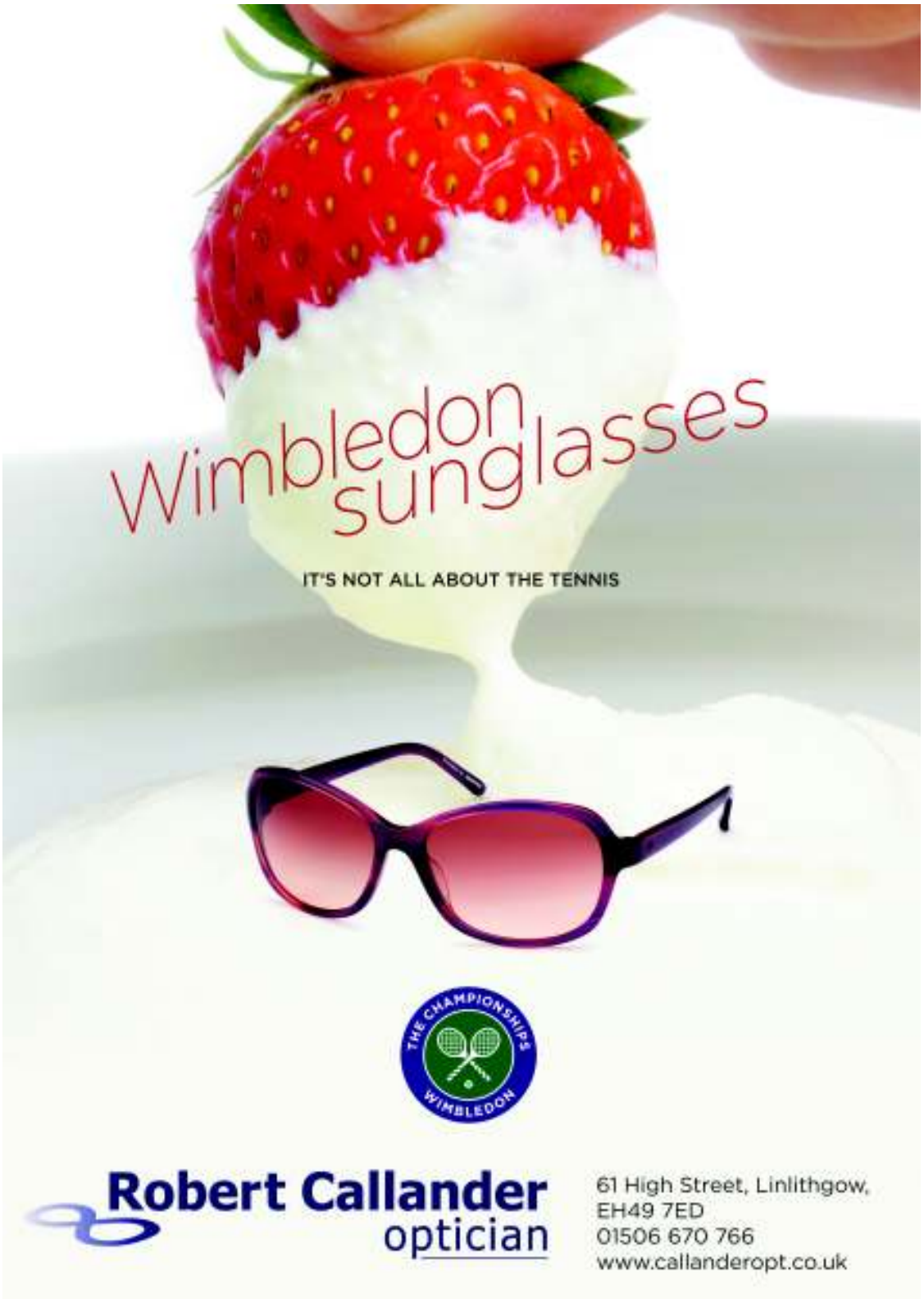
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