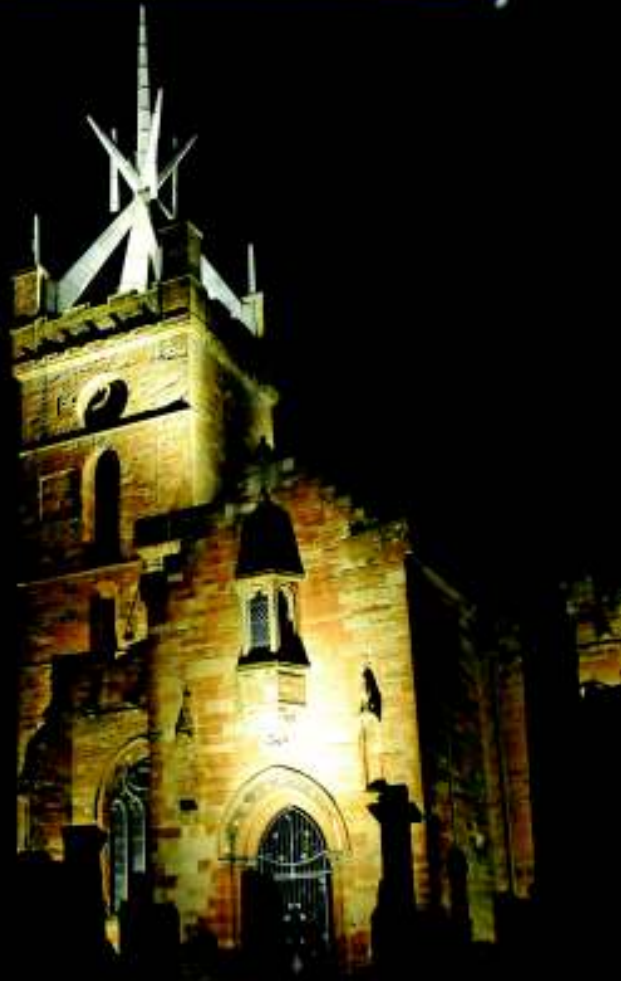


CROSSWIND

The Journal of St Michael's Parish Church



A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven MATTHEW 5 v14

Spring 2016
Vol 19:1

CONTENTS

View From The Manse <i>Rev Dr Stewart Gillan ...</i>	Page 3
Wednesday Prayers? <i>Ruth Middleton ...</i>	Page 5
Under the Spotlight <i>Jim Rae ...</i>	Page 6
Alpha: Youth Film Series <i>Russell Shields and Others ...</i>	Page 8
Financial Review 2015 <i>Stewardship and Finance Team ...</i>	Page 10
LandTrust Projects <i>Jim Rae ...</i>	Page 12
A New Elder <i>...</i>	Page 14
Time of Stillness <i>Jim Clark ...</i>	Page 15
The Seed Must Die <i>Photos by Ian Musgrave ...</i>	Page 16
CrossReach 2016 Part 1 <i>Tom Chadwick ...</i>	Page 18
Guardians of Ancora <i>Russell Shields ...</i>	Page 21
Why I am a Bad Girl! <i>Claire, Doreen and Sarah ...</i>	Page 22
External Floodlighting <i>Rory Cameron ...</i>	Page 25
Just a Minute <i>Donald Burgess ...</i>	Page 26
The 'Challenger' Window <i>Professor Iain Woodhouse ...</i>	Page 28
In God's Image <i>Gordon Wardall ...</i>	Page 30

SUNDAY SERVICES



Communion

Sunday 24th 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 29th May
at 12:15pm
Individual Cup

Cover photograph courtesy of
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VIEW FROM THE MANSE

Dear Friends,

It is the season of birds and bees, buds and blossoms, longer light and shorter nights. The great annual reawakening. But before all this light there was a season of darkness to get through. I write during the run-up to the equinox we call Spring, a week before Holy Week, on the morning after our weekend performances of the passion play musical *The Seed Must Die*. There is darkness here, and light, death and life.

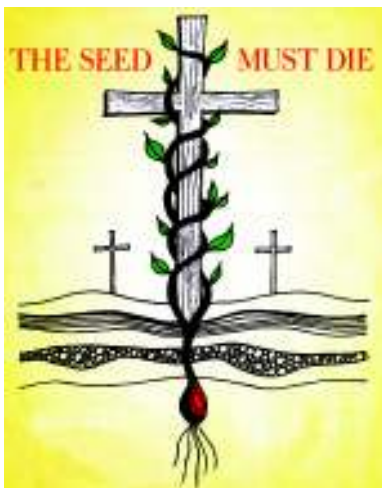


Take for example, the opening line from T S Eliot's celebrated poem, *The Waste Land* – 'April is the cruellest month.' Mixing 'memory and desire,' its spring rains stir 'dull roots' that had been happier under cover of 'forgetful snow.' Eliot's April perpetrates the return to life of a dead land. He plays on the root of the word cruel (*crudelis*) as he imagines the reluctance of a crude (*crudus*) natural state to have its life pulled from it again. The mud will melt, photosynthesis will have its day, and brides will have bouquets to carry. April is cruel that May might be merry. I expect Mr Eliot knew this.

In a slightly different light, April is the land on the other side of an early Easter. A season that beckons. A light that comes after darkness. A seed whose shoots are surfacing. It is an image that brings us to *The Seed Must Die*, whose script was written by acclaimed Scottish author Jenny Robertson and music by our own Alan Miller. The title is taken from Jesus' words to Andrew and Philip: 'Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains just a single grain: but if it dies, it bears much fruit' (John 12: 24). It is a challenging response, not least for Jesus who is speaking of himself.

Posters for the show featured a leafy vine wrapping itself around an empty cross, its subterranean seed having grown roots. The blurb ran:

Is Jesus of Nazareth actually the Son of God, or just an upstart illegitimate son of a teenage mum? A 24-hour news channel covers the events of Holy Week as they build to a shattering conclusion – and beyond.



One of the joys in performance came on Saturday afternoon when Jenny Robertson was introduced and presented with a brilliant bouquet by John Parkinson, who played Jesus. It had been more than thirty years since the play had been produced. As Alan Miller was to say in his thank-you to cast, crew and band:

'For over 30 years *The Seed Must Die* has existed only as a fading memory. Now with your hard work and commitment ... we have pulled off a miracle of resurrection!'

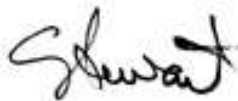
Audience responses were indeed encouraging. Among those who came were members of the original cast: four on Friday night and two on Saturday afternoon. A deeply moving experience for them. One told the story of meeting her future husband (beside her as she spoke) on the set all those years ago. 'Being part of *The Seed Must Die* changed my entire life,' she said. Little did we know when we started out that such precious moments awaited, their gifts kept secret until the day. I think it would have been difficult for anyone who attended to go away unmoved.

I played Caiaphas – a baddie with the blues. He got the best song (thanks, Alan) and best costume (thanks, Sheila). I fear I may have enjoyed it too much. But it was my role as the man in black that gave me a new experience of the story. My job was to carry the Cross on stage, keep it steady as Jesus was crucified, and then dismantle it and carry it off at the end of the scene. (The Director had wanted someone with ballast for this.) The thing was, just standing there, anonymous in my balaclava, I felt like an alien spying on events from the shadow of the Cross. Inches behind Jesus in his agony, but insulated from his experience. The soldiers changed this when, taking Jesus' body from the Cross, they hit the back of his head against the crossbeam, which I felt in my hands. This minor thwacking brought me round to the front of the Cross, where it was all happening. A gift. Talking with Jesus backstage, as one does, I found he hadn't noticed it.

The resurrection scene, when it comes, begins with a voice offstage singing 'Corn King 2,' a song that, like Jesus, weaves affirmations of physical and spiritual rebirth. Sung by Sarah on Friday night and Hannah Miller on Saturday, its final three lines form a fitting conclusion, and beginning:

Grain buried deep, today, tomorrow sleep,
Then Godward, light-ward, lark-ward, skyward leap
Bright from death!

Your friend,



WEDNESDAY PRAYERS?

by Ruth Middleton

What happens at 12.30-1pm every Wednesday in the Queen's Aisle? Well, Wednesday prayers. But what happens there? Although Wednesday prayers have been happening for over 12 years, it has been doing so very quietly and unobtrusively, maybe too quietly in that many do not quite know about it.

In the Queen's Aisle there is a Communion Table under the window on which is a Cross, a Bible, a box with some prayer request forms beside it, and a folder. Beside the table is a stand with a candle and beside that another stand, made by Frank Cooper, which holds tea-lights and tapers. In front, is a circle of chairs.



During the week, many people come into the Church looking for a quiet place, maybe because of loneliness, a loss of some kind, worry about themselves or a loved one, or just in need of quiet. Because the Queen's Aisle is out of the way, and more private, many just sit there for a while. Some may light a candle, some may pray quietly, others see the prayer request forms and place a prayer in the box, in the knowledge that 'someone' will pray about it.

Every Wednesday a group of people meet, open the box, and share the prayer requests which have been made, and any other local concerns. After a short worship time, sometimes with Communion, most of the rest of the time is spent in silent prayer, and ends with a prayer which gathers all the various prayers together. The group who meet – some who have been coming for years, others who come and go, and yet others who come because they have a specific need, feels very privileged to be entrusted with some very real concerns by people who have no idea who we are. The folder on the table outlines some of the kinds of things for which prayer has been requested and made.

Anyone is welcome to join us at any time.



Under the Spotlight

This time our 'victim' is Jim Rae, our Property Convenor – how did he respond to our questions?

Describe your role as property convenor in three words. *Challenging, Unpredictable, Satisfying.*

If you could try out any job for a day, what would you like to try? *Motoring correspondent for a national newspaper test driving performance cars.*

What kind of music are you into? *A mixture of folk music, as well as 60's 70's and 80's (showing my age now), a bit of classical and music of today, providing it has good lyrics and tune.*

How did you meet your wife Sheila? *I was at Edinburgh University Students' Union at a Saturday night dance when I met Sheila, a student nurse on a four month training secondment to the old Edinburgh Infirmary from her hospital in the Borders. A long distance courtship took place and the rest is history!*

Who are some people you'd like to meet someday? *Any of the astronauts who have spent time on the International Space Station.*

If someone asked you to give them a random piece of advice, what would you say? *Don't do anything that you wouldn't be able to tell your mum and dad about!*

*Spending time with our four grandchildren and see them laughing.
Producing a good watercolour painting.
Seeing the completion of a job well done.
Continuing good health of someone very dear to me.*

What are some things that make you really happy?

If you could learn one random skill, what would you learn? *I would relish the challenge of skilfully driving a combine harvester at harvest time, cutting the fields in neat rows, and discharging the crop into the accompanying tractor and trailer.*



What is your first memory of St Michael's? *Moving to Linlithgow in 1981 from a small village in Midlothian that had two small country Churches, Crichton and Cranston, I was amazed at the size of St Michael's when entering for the first time. The whole of my two previous churches could have easily fitted into St Michael's without trouble.*

Who in your life has influenced you the most? *My father's work ethic, generosity, considered advice and the offer to help others at all times had a tremendous influence on me.*

If you were an animal, what would you be and why? *Something fast and sleek like a cheetah – I was never built for speed so it might be nice to try out running fast.*

What's one of the strangest things you've ever done? *I drove an army tank on an off road course near Stirling. Fast, bumpy and difficult to control when steering a ten ton tank with only with two levers at forty miles per hour.*

What's the best decision you ever made, apart from deciding to answer these questions? *The decision to move to Linlithgow has been one of the best that we have made. Its location, transport links, local amenities, schooling and wide range of activities on offer, has made it an ideal location to bring up our family and now, also our grandchildren.*

Who's your best/closest friend? *Without a doubt – Sheila, my wife.*

What is your favourite knock knock joke?

Knock knock

Who's there?

Henrietta

Henrietta who?

Henrietta worm that was in his apple.

What's something most people don't know about you? *I have always enjoyed drawing and especially painting with watercolour or acrylic paints. Since retiring last year, I have attended an art course in Edinburgh and am about to start a second course in late February. I switch off and am totally absorbed when creating a painting.*

Would you ever sky dive or bungee jump? *No – I like my feet firmly on the ground at all times.*

What do you think is one of the most undervalued professions right now? *Probably a profession within the area of Learning Disability.*

If someone were to make a movie about your life, who would you hope would play you? *Perhaps Paul Newman – but does he know about boilers, lighting, listed buildings and drains?*

ALPHA: YOUTH FILM SERIES

*by Russell Shields
(with comments by others)*

If you could ask God one question, what would you ask? It's a big question with lots of possible directions and probably as many different follow-up questions. But that's life!

In life, we have questions. There's no point in hiding from it and it's incredibly unhelpful to avoid asking them. We want to know more, we want to explore and we want to know that we're not alone in asking.



Alpha is set up to embrace our questions and enable us to discuss possible answers, with a Christian input. The film series is one way that Alpha encourages young people to think about what questions they have and to actually seek some answers. The series consists of 12 video sessions designed to engage people in conversations about faith, life and Jesus. It addresses topics such as: What's the point to life? Who was Jesus? Why is there evil in the world? Is the Bible relevant? Does prayer do anything?

'It's a good experience... it makes you really think about what is happening in the world, the food is good too.' 'It really helps you think about different topics involving what it's like to be a Christian in today's society.'

Each topic has a 20-minute film led by 2 presenters that give some life experience and encourage young people to openly discuss what they feel and believe. The questions range from light hearted 'What's your favourite viral video?', to quite challenging 'Why do you think people don't always get what they pray for?', with some open questions thrown in to make sure that the conversation can go anywhere. 'What questions come to mind when you hear about the Holy Spirit?' Most of the questions offer input from people from around the world either expressing what they believe about God or why they don't believe in God. 'The Alpha nights have been really interesting and have engaged my mind within different topics of the Christian faith. Not only is the food gourmet, but the questions and discussions brought up have been really fun. I enjoy going.'

For Alpha, food is a very important part. We've always started out Alpha nights with pizza and had some great fun talking as we eat together. The group met once a week, on a Tuesday from 6.30-8.30pm, and I would regularly have to set an alarm to make sure that we finished on time.

Conversations always seemed to flow in the group! It's been a fantastic place to get to know each other better and have fun together. 'I really enjoy coming to Alpha, mainly because of the pizza, but especially because each week focuses on a specific aspect of Christianity and the videos take you through it in a way that's easy to understand, which means you learn a lot more. And being there with your friends makes it 100 times better, 'cause there's more of an open discussion about all the questions and topics that come up, plus we all have great banter.'

We split the course in 2 for our first try of Alpha. We started the course in early November with the intention of running until Christmas. We hoped to run the full course but wanted to see how interested the young people coming would be in doing this. By Christmas they agreed that this was something they enjoyed and wanted to continue, so we picked up where we left off in February. One young person joined the group for the second part of the course and found it very easy to join. The topics are not dependent on being at every session so if someone misses a week or joins in part of the way through then they can fully participate in the group, which has been a large bonus for our group as life can get pretty busy for young people.

As much as the Film Series offers a basic structure to the evening, conversations can go anywhere once young people start talking. We've spent time together discussing questions about God and Christianity, identity, sexuality, perceptions, heroes, villains and fictitious cats on a mobile app.

I've been sad to see this group come to the end of the course. I feel that the fun and discussions have been a good experience for everyone who's been there, but most of all, I'm excited to see what God's got planned for this amazing group of young people.



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FINANCIAL REVIEW 2015

by the Stewardship and Finance Team

Wilkins Micawber famously said :

'Annual income twenty pounds, Annual expenditure nineteen pounds nineteen shillings and sixpence – result happiness. Annual income twenty pounds, Annual expenditure twenty pounds and sixpence – result misery.' He also had undying faith that 'something would turn up.' If Mr Micawber was a member at St Michael's he would undoubtedly conclude that 2015 was a very challenging year financially for our Church. We need to look at why, and at our stewardship of God's gifts to us. Hoping that 'something will turn up' is not an option.

In broad terms we had an annual turnover of £330,000 and a deficit of £16,000. Putting the figures on a weekly basis – income per week £6,304, expenditure per week £6,602. These figures are for general income and expenditure only. They do not include special initiatives, (eg Messy Church, or property projects such as Empowered) that come from what is known as restricted income – raised for a specific purpose.

Put simply we need another £298 income every week of the year to break even (or a cost reduction of the same amount).

By far our largest item of expenditure is the Ministry & Mission contribution of £3,269 per week. Most of this money goes to the Ministerial fund, which pays all Ministers and Associate Ministers, including our own, irrespective of the ability of each Parish to contribute sufficient to cover the cost of their Minister. Stewart and Cheryl can confirm that our contribution to the fund, one of the largest in Scotland, does not reflect their own stipends but provides significant help for many other parishes. After stipends, about 14% of our contribution supports other programmes of the National Church.

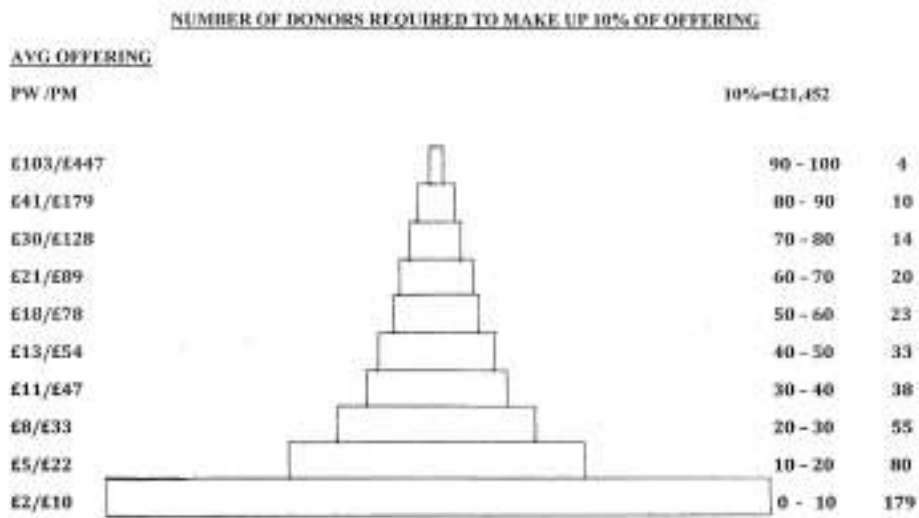
Staff, property maintenance, insurance, heat and light, cleaning, LYPP, rates and water rates and Springfield all consume considerable weekly amounts.

Now to the big question. Is our 2015 performance a blip or a portent of things to come? It is 5 years since the last Stewardship of Treasure campaign. There is usually a spike in offerings following a campaign, and then offerings tend to plateau or even decline gently until the next campaign provides another spike. However there are more worrying trends over the past 10 years. These are:

1. Sudden sharp drops in income. The 'wedding cake' graphic opposite shows the number of donors needed for each 10% of our income, which you can see is bottom-heavy.
2. An actuarial projection based on the age of our congregation could see the number of donors drop to below 200 in the next 15 years.

- At the other end of the spectrum, we have 225 standing orders that have been in place for 10 years or more. Many, just over 50%, have found it difficult to increase the amount of their orders over these years for various reasons, including retirement and changed circumstances, and some have found it necessary to reduce the amount.

How will 2016 turn out? Nobody wishes to see another deficit of £16,000. There is too the matter of the matching £25,000 we need to match to access a £25,000 LandTrust grant to do energy saving work on the Church and Cross House. Drawing down on our reserves to cover deficits and/or grant obligations is not a sustainable practice.



What's to be done?

- Our forthcoming Stewardship Treasure Campaign will allow us to consider our giving with a view to increasing our overall General Funds. Details to follow as the campaign takes shape.
- Project Fundraising. It is proposed to have a permanent fundraising team looking at both internal events and financial help from outside bodies.
- Cost efficiency. Every item of expenditure will be scrutinised for possible reduction eg, changing the nappy disposal company resulted in a saving of £1500pa.
- If you haven't signed a Gift Aid form, could you consider that?
- Increase the number of active members.

Difficult challenges lie ahead, but that is no new thing for Christ's Church. As we give thanks for the remarkable ways in which our members and all those who view St Michael's as their spiritual home have supported its life and work over the years, we must commit ourselves anew to taking the story of God's love in Christ forward on its journey among us and through us to others.

LANDTRUST PROJECTS

by Jim Rae

We have a duty to preserve the fabric of our Church and associated properties, ensuring their continued use into the future. As well as weekly Sunday services, the Church is used for baptisms, weddings, funerals, Christmas, Easter and civic events and contains Linlithgow's War Memorial. A branch of West Lothian Foodbank is located within Cross House, which is also used for a wide range of activities and services. Not only do we maintain the Church, office and meeting areas in Cross House, but there is also the Kirk Hall, Manse and the upkeep of two flats to consider. All of these locations require regular repair and maintenance.

In 2013-14, St Michael's Church, an ECO church and part of Eco-Congregation Scotland, received a grant from LandTrust to support the first phase of work recommended by the Energy Savings Trust to increase energy efficiency. This recommendation resulted in The Empowered Lighting Project. Continued improvements in energy consumption to lower our carbon footprint are essential.



Above the Nave Ceiling

As the LandTrust was closing down, the last opportunity arose at the end of 2015 to apply for financial project assistance and this would be the last tranche of money available for distribution. David Henderson was approached to lead the application process and in consultation with the Business and Property Team Convenors, four projects were identified that met the submission criteria. The grant available to us was £25,000 and if St Michael's proved successful, we were to provide a similar matching amount.

At the end of December 2015 the team was advised that our submission had been successful.

The four projects are:

1. Additional insulation to the nave roof space in the Church will contribute to minimising heat loss and so further reduce the building's carbon footprint and heating bills. Additional insulation will also be installed above the Kirk Hall. All of this will be completed by our own Property Team.

2. The repair of leadwork on the vestry roof, with remedial lead lining work on the rainwater gully above the vestry, will ensure a watertight building. Without repair it will continue to deteriorate and more damage will occur to the fabric of this historic building, as well as jeopardising the safe storage of vestments etc. Appointed contractors will carry out this work through a tendering process.

3. The lighting fittings in the Kirk Hall and Cross House will be changed to energy efficient LED units. The Church Office and the Associate Minister's Flat are not included for change at this stage as these areas are not used for letting purposes to the public.

4. The gas supply meter will be relocated from its current internal position behind panelling in the entrance vestibule of Cross House to an external position in the bin storage area in close proximity to the Kirk Hall. This will allow the later rationalisation of the three individual heating systems in Cross House and the Kirk Hall into one high efficiency gas fired modular system covering all of our buildings in this area.



The Vestry Roof

Project managers from the Property Team have been assigned to run each of the projects. We are at the costing stage at present, with each project manager procuring three quotations for all necessary materials and installation costs where applicable. Final decisions, based on cost, quality, availability, contractor experience and value for money, will be taken to ensure we have the most satisfactory products and installers that meet our requirements. A progress report is submitted to LandTrust on a monthly basis informing them of progress. The projects start date is spring 2016, completion being later in the year.

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A NEW ELDER



photo by Ian Musgrave

Ian Fowell was admitted to the Kirk Session of St Michael's in December. He brings a wealth of experience having served as an elder in six previous parishes.

35 THE GARDENER'S BIRTHDAY

Are you 35 this year, or do you know someone who is?

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A TIME OF STILLNESS

by Jim Clark

A burning candle, beautiful musical harmonies, simple poetic prayers and light shining through stained glass washing St Katherine's Aisle with vibrant colour. Yet in this feast of the senses, a small group sits – calm, quiet and still. This is the Service of Stillness at St Michael's.



A fine September day and the desire to walk round the loch and Peel brought us to Linlithgow. Enjoyable as always, but it was a small yellow poster attached to the metal gates of St Michael's Church that proved remarkable. A Service of Stillness was advertised and, not being from Linlithgow and of a different Christian denomination, we approached the service somewhat timidly. However, the friendly open welcome immediately set us at ease, a feeling that has grown stronger with each visit. The service itself was deeply satisfying, with the peaceful positive message of what is truly important to us all. Taking the form of contemplative stillness, the service left us feeling spiritually rested and refreshed, and the simple hospitality of sharing tea afterwards complemented and completed the whole experience.

To sit in contemplative stillness for any period of time is not easy. The external distractions and the much more insistent internal distractions fight for attention. But the Service of Stillness has three main aids to a receptive state. The magnificent surroundings of St Michael's Church with the intimate atmosphere. The moving and inspiring music, carefully chosen to complement the service. The simple, clear and guiding words of prayer, focusing on what really matters. These all blend together to act as a complementary path to concentration.

However, is this service merely an emotional experience, a self-indulgent exercise, an excuse to sit and do nothing? Very many spiritual thinkers have underlined the importance of silence and stillness. The importance of listening to hear the small, quiet, internal voice of God's guidance. This is something the Service of Stillness does wonderfully well for me. I would like to paraphrase a writing from the spiritual author Thomas Merton – 'Not all are called to be hermits, but all need enough silence, solitude and stillness in their lives to enable the deep inner voice of their own true self to be heard, at least occasionally.' I would also like to thank all who have made this Service of Stillness at St Michael's Parish Church possible, and so important to me.

A Time of Stillness is held every Thursday at 2pm and all are welcome.



*Photographs by
Ian Musgrave*



*Scenes from the performances
of 11th and 12th March*



The play followed Jesus through the events of Holy Week to His death on the cross...



...and climaxed with His resurrection and appearances to Mary Magdalene and His disciples.





PARISH

BAPTISMS

Let the children come to me

December

Lewis James William Park, Sydney, Australia
Timothy Park, Kirkgate



January

Charlotte Kendra McKirgan, Acredales



March

Olivia Molly Bell, Ashby-de-la-Zouch

WEDDINGS

They are no longer two, but one

January

Amanda Rogers to Craig Yeaman

Febuary

Karen Stewart to William Rarity
Hillary Spencer to David Spencer (Blessing)
Karen Anderson to Gordon Morrison



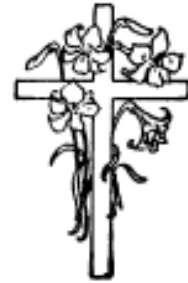
March

Joanne McTavish to Gavin Park
Coral Condeco to James Halley

REGISTER

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life



December

Georgean Hodsdon, Peacock Nursing Home (formerly St Ninian's Road)



January

Aileen Collinson, St Ninian's Way
Catherine Hardstaff, Back Station Road
John McIntosh, Friars Way
June Ferguson, Springfield Road

February

Janet Hughes, Carmelaws
Jim Gibson, Deanburn Park
Mollie Hardie, Ivy Bank Care Home, Polmont (formerly Station Road)
Iris McGowran, MBE, Kinloch View

NEW MEMBERS

For we are all members of one body



Ella Mitchell, Templars Court
David Rae, Laverock Park

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

COFFEE MORNINGS

All Saturdays from 10am to 12 noon in the Kirk Hall

16 April	Outreach International
7 May	Kenyan Women Aid Scotland
14 May	Linlithgow Reed Band
21 May	music@stmikes
11 June	Friends of Chernobyl's Children



OTHER EVENTS IN THE CHURCH

- 24 April West Lothian Scouts Parade
- 14 May Linlithgow Rugby Club/Choeur des Rugueux Male Voice Choirs (joint concert)
- 15 May The Big Sing in aid of Alzheimer Scotland

‘FGM - THE CRUELLEST AND MOST UNNECESSARY CUT OF THEM ALL’

Kenyan Women in Scotland African invites you to a Coffee Morning in aid of African women and girls who have been subjected to FGM and to prevent it happening to others. Saturday 7 May 10am – 12:30pm in the Kirk Hall.

YOUR CHURCH NEEDS YOU!

The Stewardship & Finance Team is looking for anyone with experience of completing applications for grant assistance who would be willing to share their expertise with them.

The type of grant application that they may have submitted is not relevant. Please contact Margaret Henderson (tel 01506 844787) for further information.

NEED A ROOM?

Looking for a venue for a children's party? Need a room for a meeting? Have you thought of using the Kirk Hall or Adam Room or one of the smaller meeting rooms in Cross House? The rental rates are very reasonable. Please contact the Church Office to discuss availability – phone: 01506 842188 or email: info@stmichaels-parish.org.uk

INTER-CHURCH FORUM DINNER

Sat 30th April in Linlithgow Rugby Club, 7 for 7.30pm. Tickets £15 for 3 course meal and welcome drink from Fiona Duke (842669) or Barbara Thomson (845705).

www.stmichaelsparish.org.uk – See Crosswind in full colour! Also find podcasts of sermons, current intimations, details of upcoming events and all other church activities.

www.helpcentre.org.uk – For information on support available for most situations.

CROSSREACH 2016

PART 1

by Tom Chadwick

CrossReach – In Christ's name we seek to retain and regain the highest quality of life which each individual is capable of experiencing at any given time. CrossReach is the operating arm of the Church of Scotland's Social Care Council.

I was recently at a graduation ceremony for recovery volunteers – people in control of their addictions now working to help others. Each had a chance for a few words and most took it. Not just individual lives turned round but tragedies averted for whole families. One youngish man said no-one had ever said they loved him until he was referred to a CrossReach unit. For a 50-ish man it was the first certificate he had ever received. He wanted to find out more about education and what he might achieve. It was hard to hold back tears. There was good family support present. A father's train from Milton Keynes was delayed, so his daughter's bit of the ceremony was repeated.



There are lots of stories from all sorts of people. Rt Rev John Chalmers, spending a week of his Moderator year visiting CrossReach said 'It is a real privilege to do this on behalf of the church, but it's a double privilege to enter into and see at close quarters the kinds of things CrossReach's services are providing. All service users are regarded as people of full value (and are given full value) and those who deliver that service do it with a real sense that this is a vocation – something

that God has called them to do and you can see that in their eyes.'

David from Kirkhaven (Glasgow): 'At last my life has stability. I have no immediate family in Glasgow but keep in touch via my laptop. I spend time in my room playing guitar, listening to music and I've begun painting again – all thanks to the encouragement of staff here. I recently received good news of a house offer – the future looks bright again.'

After spending the day with us, Scotland's Chief Social Work Adviser Alan Baird tweeted: 'Excellent visit to Morven (Kilmarnock). Small steps = great strides for those with Mental Health challenges. Loved the passion and endless determination to change lives.'

Tam from Gaberston House (Alloa) 'Before Gaberston, I was in hospital and in bed for a month – that's how bad it was. By contrast, I feel that everyone here always helps me whenever I require support. They've helped me to achieve my goal – to be independent in the community. I don't earn much but I'm happy.'

Following a major refurbishment Bellfield Care Home in Banchory was given a completely new look, with 34 en-suite bedrooms and a full decoration makeover. 'It's most enjoyable and makes me feel treasured. I'm very pleased to live here.'

Cameron House in Inverness offers enhanced support for people who have dementia and has established an innovative partnership with their local Gaelic primary school, Bun Sgoil Gàidhlig Inbhir Nis. Pupils visit to chat with Gaelic-speaking residents, improving language skills and breaking down generation barriers. The House won 'Best Innovation in Continuing Care' at Scotland's Dementia Awards.

A wonderful exhibition of work by participants in our 'Heart for Art' project was held in House for an Art Lover, Glasgow. The event showcased the talents of over 40 artists from CrossReach care homes around Scotland who have dementia, demonstrating that dementia does not end participation in their community, or their opportunities to live a fulfilling life.

Gwen Anderson, Activities Co-ordinator at Queens Bay Lodge in Edinburgh, was named 'Instructor of the Year' by Oomph (Our Organisation Makes People Happy). Our Activity Co-ordinators have introduced Oomph's inclusive and interactive exercise and dance classes across our services.



CrossReach employs 1996 people and spends just under £50 million providing probably the broadest range of social care in Scotland. The Church of Scotland provides less than 2% of this, partly to fund the pension deficit of the old Church scheme. Christian service is at the heart of all of its work and its award winning staff are highly qualified and its services highly rated by the Care Inspectorate. Finalist in the Dementia and Specialist Care Award

Category (The Elms) and a winner in the Care Home of The Year Category (Balmedie House) of the Scottish Care, Care Home Awards 2015.

My two four-year stints on the Social Care Council were mostly spent chairing the Finance and Resources Committee of CrossReach. We conducted major reviews, replaced the Chief Executive and recruited almost an entirely new finance team. An overdraft of £8.5 million has been eliminated and major progress made towards a sustainable future. Some services have had to be closed, staff made redundant, and a major loss-making unit sold as a going concern.

Some important issues of concern for the future will be discussed in the second part of this article.

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by Russell Shields

Have you ever wondered what the world would be like if all of a sudden we ran out of electricity? We'd have to rethink how we live and work. I imagine we'd be desperate to solve the issues and get what we need back.

This year's Holiday Club will be diving into a fantasy world called Ancora. The people of Ancora have harnessed the power of stories to provide light to their city but they're running out of stories to tell. The Guardians are tasked with seeking out new stories to bring light and power back to their city. One of these Guardians follows a man named Jesus and hears all about the things He does – bringing incredible stories back to Ancora.

We'll be meeting new characters, hearing about the world they live in and exploring the life of Jesus in a completely new way. We'll use our usual mix of games, stories, songs, crafts, drama, challenges and more to have fun while learning more about Jesus. And if your children have loved being part of the Holiday Club in the past, then you can start exploring this new world now! Scripture Union has created a game that can be downloaded now, for free, on to a smartphone or tablet to help us explore Ancora. It's available on the App Store, Google Play and for Kindle Fire. Just search for 'Guardians of Ancora' to start exploring this wonderful city.

Holiday Club is changing this summer. We've stuck to the same format for quite some time and this year we've decided to mix it up. The biggest change is in the dates. The club will run from Wednesday 17 to Saturday 20 August when we'll have our Holiday Club Family Day! Many volunteers have struggled recently to commit to a full week so hopefully running from Wednesday to Saturday will help. This change will also enable us to provide more fun activities for all on the Saturday. So if you can help then please sign up at: www.linlithgowchurchesholidayclub.org.uk

If your children are about on any mornings from the 17 to 20 August then please do bring them along! We run from 10am to 12.30pm in Cross House. If you would like to know more about the Club or the Family Day then please contact me at: russell@stmichaels-parish.org.uk

I hope you have a fantastic summer and I really hope you'll join us in Ancora!



WHY I AM A BAD GIRL!

by Claire Cameron, Doreen Eaglesham and Sarah Gahagan

In September last year Bad Girls of the Bible began. It is an informal Bible Study Group meeting on the last Tuesday of each month in our Adam Room. All are welcome no matter what your Bible knowledge is! Below some of the Bad Girls share their experience of this new group.



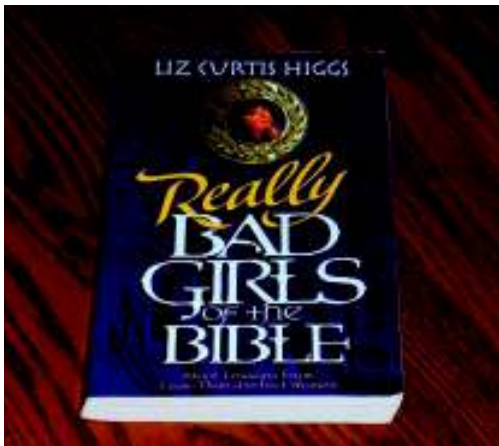
My name is Claire and I'm a Bad Girl because it's an oasis. In a busy life full of family, work, tasks and arrangements, it's a place to come, sit, and hear how God meets us in all of this. Meeting once a month makes coming manageable, and focuses efforts to go.

Women of the Bible can seem very distant, living in different contexts, with very different concerns. The book we're reading through draws out the connections, by re-setting them in contemporary situations. For example, reading about the Medium of Endor (Samuel 28) and how Saul asks her to 'bring up Samuel' may seem obscure, but take the key elements, of our temptation to seek special insight into our lives by the wrong means and from the wrong people, and you soon see how this continues to speak to us about God, and what are, and are not, his ways. Reading by yourself already brings the stories alive, but sharing discussion together makes them even richer. We can share as much or as little as we like, and reflect on our thoughts anonymously. Having a similar format each time gives it a feeling of security; with no worries about the unexpected. The last few minutes of music, prayer and reflection in the candle-lit darkness are always the calmest of my month. Deep peace.

My name is Doreen and the question 'why am I a bad girl?' is a question that grabs your interest and so it was for me when I heard about the 'bad girls of the bible' study group. What can we learn from bad girls.... just what not to do? No! We have been learning much more and having fun while doing it. The group has a wide age range and meets monthly. We begin with some nibbles and a drink and the opportunity to get to know one another. As someone fairly new to St Michael's this is important. After settling into smaller groups, our 'warm up' gets us all thinking, chatting – and invariably laughing.

The main content of the evening is to look at one particular bad girl from the Bible (we have usually read the story at home) firstly by hearing her story in a contemporary setting and then from Scripture. Cheryl directs the discussion which follows with some searching questions and I particularly enjoy this because they are relevant to our daily lives. Our 'cool down' allows us to reflect on our week and give thanks aloud if we feel comfortable. Cheryl also shares some of the thoughts which we have written down earlier and so they remain anonymous. We finish with a short 'time of stillness' and leave for home with more of a sense of God's hand on our lives and having made new friends in the process.

My name is Sarah and I am happy to be one of Cheryl's Bad Girls and have really enjoyed coming to a Bible study (not something that would have been my cup of tea in the past!). There is a lot to learn from stories of women in the Bible who have struggled....just like me. So a personal invitation is always a nice way to be encouraged to go along to something new. That's exactly what Cheryl gave me as well as a warm welcome when I arrived, friend in tow to the first 'Bad Girls' evening. We were greeted with a glass of wine, some lovely nibbles and a room full of over 41 friendly women of varying ages. We were all intrigued as to what the next hour held in store. What followed was a relaxing, sociable opportunity to share our life experiences, learn from God's word and be guided by Cheryl in our study and reflection and have a laugh too.



Using the Bad Girls of the Bible book to aid our discussions gives a focus to each week, even if I haven't managed to read the chapter in advance! The sessions are beautifully paced, reassuringly of a similar format each month and finish with peaceful music and a quiet time. A lovely end to often a busy frantic day. We are reminded of what we have been grateful for that day and thank God for our time together. I have 2 small children and have struggled with post-natal depression. I have benefited hugely from attending

Seedlings too on Thursday mornings for the last two years. The warmth and love shown by all those involved with these activities is wonderful.

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EXTERNAL FLOODLIGHTING

by Rory Cameron

The church was originally floodlit on the tower and south side about 30 years ago. The fittings used have stood the test of time with only minimal damage and faults in that time. As part of the church relighting and rewiring the property committee received a potential grant to extend the project to the external lighting.



We also received a generous donation of £1500 (£1800 with Gift Aid) from Mrs Margaret Vallance and her brother Robert in memory of their mother, Mrs Anne McLellan – to provide 'light to shine in the darkness'.



The proposal was to upgrade all the external lighting to LED, thus saving on maintenance and energy costs. A bollard light to illuminate the south access was also included, and we used the existing positions to avoid any need for planning or archaeological investigations. Trials of various fittings and lenses were carried out in the autumn and installation tenders drawn up and issued. The competitive tender was won by Michael Brash. The

fittings chosen were by Urbis, whose lights at Linlithgow Palace have given about 20 years' service with no damage or faults.

There are 14 new Sculpdot Floodlights (each with 16 LEDs) consuming 35w each, with a protection system minimising potential repair costs; different optics have been used for lighting the Crown, the tower and the south façade. They can operate at -20 to +50 degrees Celsius, thus able to withstand any weather conditions. In addition, upgraded cable connections ensure the whole installation is waterproof.

Energy savings are considerable. Depending on switch-on times, for an average of 8 hours per night during the winter months, the electricity used to cost about £305 per annum. The equivalent cost with the new LED lights will be approximately £71 per annum. This coupled with longer-lasting light bulbs will save considerably on our revenue budget.

Installation was carried out late November and the new lighting was operational for December. The project is complete, except for one special lens being manufactured in Belgium.

My thanks go to Stephen Blake, Phill Ratcliffe and Jim Rae, also Dave Duncan of Urbis, all of whom have given considerable amounts of their own time to assist in the project, and to Michael Brash the electrical contractor who efficiently carried out the contract and did some work inside the church at no extra charge.

JUST A MINUTE

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



100 years ago

Sun. 9th April 1916 The Moderator referred to the musical treat in the form of a recital rendered on the Organ in church by Trooper Irwin Hunt, lately Organist in Manchester Cathedral. Having joined the Colours as a Trooper he was wounded in the Battlefields, and at present convalescent at Bangour Hospital. The Session unanimously agreed that in the circumstances some useful memento be presented to Mr. Hunt. The Moderator undertook to ascertain what might prove most suitable, and further agreed that £2. 2/- be expended for this purpose.

Sun. 24th April 1916 Regarding the Roll of Honour of Church Members and adherents, it was reported that neither Mr. Wm. M. Scott, architect, who had written the names, nor Mr. John Brock, joiner, who provided the frame, would accept payment for their services. The Moderator stated that he had tendered to these gentlemen the thanks of the Kirk Session.

50 years ago

Tues. 18th Jan. 1966 The Moderator reported that he had been asked to be Senior Chaplain to the next year's Moderator of the General Assembly, the Rev. Dr. Leonard Small, and that this would entail his attendance at the General Assembly throughout the whole period of its duration from 24th May to 1st June, and his accompanying the Moderator on his visit to the Assembly of the Church in Ireland from 6th to 10th June.

Tues. 15th Mar. 1966 Dr. Steel reported that in accordance with the decision made by the Kirk Session he had carried out negotiations for the appointment of an Assistant Minister for the year 1966-67, and he was pleased to be able to report Mr. Ronald S. Seaman, M.A... had accepted the appointment as from 1st July 1966. The salary would be as determined by the Home Board. On the motion of Mr. Alexander Anderson, seconded by Mr. Beattie, it was agreed that Mr. Seaman would be given occupancy of 32 Highfield Crescent rent free for 12 months from 1st July 1966.

The Moderator also reported that the morning service on Easter Sunday would be televised by S.T.V.

25 years ago

Tues. 19th Feb. 1991 The Moderator of the General Assembly's visit to Presbytery is underway at the present time. There was a united service in St. Michael's at 7.00 pm on Sunday 17th Feb., with further visits this week to Beecraigs and Oatridge on Wednesday and Springfield Primary School, Sun Micro Systems and Linlithgow Palace on Friday.

On the first Saturday of March, April and May there would be a prayer breakfast for Elders held in Cross House at 8.30 am. Dr. McClusky would be speaker at the Breakfast on Sat. 1st March.

The Rev. W. A. McLean-Foreman would leave the post of Associate Minister at the end of May. Session agreed to seek approval to fill the post again and to place an advertisement for new applicants.

Session Clerk, Mr. Derek Henderson, had been invited to attend the General Assembly and indicated that he would take up the invitation.

Kirk Session homologated the decision to hold the AGM after the 11 am Sunday morning service on 24th March 1991.



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THE 'CHALLENGER' WINDOW

by Professor Iain Woodhouse

Most people wouldn't normally associate Linlithgow with great adventures of exploration, let alone the greatest exploration of all — outer space.

Scotland's influence on the space race is wide reaching, and one of those influences is celebrated in the church of St Michael: the Challenger Window, which marks an adventure of such scientific importance that it led to the formation of oceanography as a discipline, and was subsequently marked by two spacecraft that bore the Challenger name. The 19th-century expedition was heralded at the time as '...the greatest advance in the knowledge of our planet since the celebrated discoveries of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries'.



The influence of Scotland on both historical and contemporary space exploration should not be underestimated. The first UK rocket that made it into space (yes, the UK did at one time have a space programme) was launched from South Uist in 1968. In modern times, Glasgow is now home to one of the most exciting satellite manufacturing companies worldwide (Clydespace, who make tiny Cubesats), while Edinburgh hosts a number of institutes and companies that use satellites to map the Earth. One of those is my own institution, The University of Edinburgh, which has also been lucky enough to graduate one student (so far)

who went on to become a shuttle astronaut — Dr Piers Sellers, who flew on three shuttle flights in his distinguished astronaut career.

The Space Shuttle Discovery was named in honour of a long line of Discoveries (the most recent RSS Discovery was launched in 2013), that includes the RSS Discovery currently moored as a visitor attraction in Dundee. (And we shouldn't forget the space shuttle Enterprise, named after Star Trek's Starship Enterprise. I'm sure many of you know that the Chief Engineer of the USS Enterprise will be Montgomery 'Scotty' Scott, who will be born in Linlithgow in the year 2222!)

The window in St Michael's Parish Church celebrates the Challenger Expedition, which travelled the oceans of the world from December 1872 to May 1876. HMS Challenger, a converted Royal Navy corvette, was the scientific vessel that led the Expedition. During their time at sea they sailed 70,000 miles, discovered 4,500 new species of marine life, and made hundreds of soundings, trawls, dredgings, and temperature observations. It was the most comprehensive survey of the oceans ever conducted, and the deepest part of the ocean still bears its name – the Challenger Deep in the Pacific Ocean is almost 36,000ft deep.

The Challenger Expedition was seen as the first major scientific survey of the ocean, and so it is fitting that the lunar module of the last Apollo mission to the moon, Apollo 17, was named Challenger, given that this vessel carried Dr Harrison Schmitt to the moon's surface – the only scientist to set foot on the moon. In 1983, the second Space Shuttle also bore the name Challenger. That space shuttle saw the first spacewalk of the Space Shuttle program, as well as the first deployment of a satellite by another space vessel. The Challenger also carried the first American woman, Sally Ride, into space and was the first to carry two US female astronauts.



The crew of the Challenger, 1874. Wyville Thomson is the seated man in the white suit.

The leader of the Challenger Expedition was Sir Charles Wyville Thomson, who was born in 1830 in Bonyde House, Linlithgow. After academic posts in Aberdeen, Cork, Belfast and Dublin, he ended up as the Regius Chair of Natural History at the University of Edinburgh in 1870. Following the expedition, he wrote up the findings of the expedition, but by 1879 the pressure to publish the extensive results led to his ceasing to perform his university duties. In 1881 he finally gave up overseeing the reporting of the expedition, and he died at Bonyde on 10 March 1882. His final resting place is in St Michael's churchyard.

Following his death at a young age, a group of friends and colleagues decided to commemorate his contribution to our body of knowledge about our world, and in 1885 they commissioned a new stained glass window which is now the centre window of the apse of the church.

The window is inspired by Psalm 104 that focuses on the variety of life on Earth. It appropriately ends with:

There is the sea, vast and spacious,
teeming with creatures beyond number —
living things both large and small.
There the ships go to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you formed to frolic there.

IN GOD'S IMAGE

by Gordon Wardall



Recently an article appeared on the BBC website entitled 'What did Jesus really look like?' Reviewing evidence from various sources, the author, a professor of Christian Origins, concludes that Jesus would most likely have been short-haired and with a slight beard, wearing a tunic with short sleeves and, over this, a himation (mantle), with sandals on his feet. She may be right, although this is not how He has always been portrayed.

Much of the greatest art in history has been inspired by Jesus. In art and elsewhere the picture presented has varied considerably. Commonly in the western world, Jesus is portrayed as tall, white-skinned (both improbable as a first-century Jew, living in the hot climate of Palestine) with long hair and a beard. In other cultures, Jesus has been depicted as oriental or Afro-Caribbean. Although unlikely to be literally correct, this is useful in helping other peoples to relate to Jesus and his message, and to appreciate that His life, death and resurrection are for all.

Curiously, when we turn to the Gospels, we find a striking lack of information on Jesus' appearance. Generally, when we read a book about someone, one of the first things the writer tells us is what he or she looked like. Not once do the Gospel writers do this for Jesus. In contrast, mainly by describing His words, His teachings and actions and His response to the people around Him, they tell us a great deal about Jesus' character. We learn of His compassion, His love for all; His wisdom, humility, faithfulness, and obedience; His strength coupled with vulnerability, his patience and approachability.

The reason we are told so much of these things is clear: they let us see what God is like. To emphasise Jesus' physical appearance would simply be a distraction. As Paul says 'Christ is the visible image of the invisible God'. Jesus' words and example also let us know how He wants His followers to be – the attitudes and qualities that are important in His kingdom. To follow Christ's example is, of course, easy to talk about but much more difficult to do. But Jesus doesn't just leave us to struggle and fail by ourselves: He has helped us through His death on the Cross for our sakes, and by sending the Holy Spirit to guide us in becoming more like Him.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, may we be your witnesses through the power of your Spirit; and may others, especially those who don't yet know you, see you in us. Amen

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