

CROSSWIND

The Journal of
St Michael's Parish Church

November 2022
Vol: 25:3

*Let us talents and tongues employ,
reaching out with a shout of joy*

WORDS BY FRED KAAN, MUSIC BY DOREEN POTTER (Adapt.)

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SUNDAY SERVICES

Communion

Sunday, 27th November

10am in the Kirk*

and

3pm in the Kirk Hall

***livestreamed on St Michael's
website and Facebook
Available to view later on YouTube**

Weekly Services

10am in the Kirk*

and

**9.45am (during term time)
in Springfield Primary School**

***livestreamed on St Michael's
website and Facebook
Available to view later on YouTube**

Cover: Courtesy of Stephen Blake

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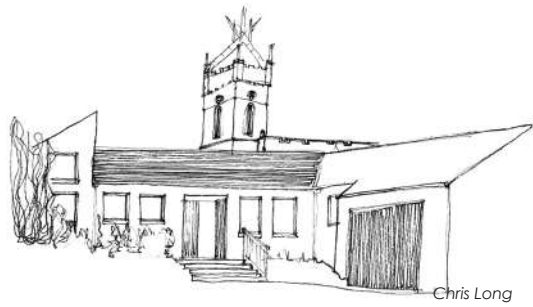
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The deadline for the February 2023 issue is 1st January 2023.

VIEW FROM THE MANSE



by Rev Dr Liam J Fraser

What is the greatest gift God could give you?

Early on in our relationship, I was rather surprised to receive from my girlfriend – now wife – two presents at Christmas: a harmonica and a ship in a bottle. To put it mildly, these were not the gifts I was expecting, and while I was grateful for the thought, I had no idea what to do with them. They sat on various shelves and were secreted in various cupboards for years to come; too precious to give away, too impractical to be used.

Perhaps that's a little of how faith feels like to you. Perhaps it is something precious and not easily discarded, but something that you didn't really ask for, and are not sure what to do with. It was taken in with your mother's milk, or acquired at school or Brownies or BBs, and now – rather like my harmonica and ship in a bottle – forms part of the bric-a-brac of life but is rarely if ever used.

Faith, then, is sometimes a gift that we don't know what to do with. Yet what is the *greatest* gift God could give you? Not just the gifts that you have received from Him so far – if you think of them as such – but the *greatest* of all possible gifts?

This is a question that might not have occurred to you before, perhaps because you think you know what God is offering and don't fancy it. Younger generations are increasingly likely to see big differences between what Christians and non-Christians want. Whereas in the past everyone was taken to be a Christian, now it is seen to be something exceptional, strange, unusual, and it is sometimes thought that Christians and non-Christians want different things. Yet while there are fundamental differences between Christians and non-Christians, in important ways, there is not so much difference as first appears. That is certainly true of what Christians and non-Christians most hope for. *All of us* want love, and joy, and life, and all of us want to be free from shame, suffering, despair and death.



These aren't things that are dependent on the belief system you hold, but are part of the warp and weave of human nature. No - the difference between Christians and non-Christians is not what they want, but whether they believe it is possible for these desires to be met and these evils overcome; whether life is a hodgepodge of success and failure until the day you die or whether in the end, to quote Julian of Norwich, 'all shall be all, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well'.

For the Christian belief is that God *really has* given us the greatest gift we can think of, that in the birth, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, God has given us a way to leave behind shame, suffering, despair and death and receive forgiveness, love, hope and eternal life. These are the greatest gifts that *anyone* could receive, and they are freely offered to anyone who would take them from Christ's hands. If they do, they will discover that faith and Church and belief are not irrelevant bric-a-brac cluttering up our lives, but what billions of people throughout the world know them to be: the greatest gifts that God could ever give us.

May God surprise you this Christmas, and in the busyness of the day or the quiet of the night, may you hear his word and respond to it, and in so doing, receive from him the greatest gift you could ever receive.



CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP UPDATE

by Rev Dr Liam Fraser

While some of you may be regular or occasional churchgoers, others may not be. Like many Scots, you may have drifted away from the Church over the years, and now come – if at all – only for big events like Christmas. At least part of that drifting away might come from a sense that Church is boring, irrelevant, or fails to meet you where you are. Society has changed so much in the past fifty years, but the Church seems to adapt far more slowly, with only snails and glaciers moving slower!

Well at the end of September we had an event to see what could be done about this, and how we might develop a new contemporary worship service at St Michael's. Facilitated by Ashley Johnston of the Worship Team, we considered the following questions:

Can you share a time when you had a meaningful experience of God?

When has your involvement in worship with others been particularly memorable?

What was going on within you and around you to make it memorable?

When has worship felt less than what you longed for?

Those who attended had a wide range of responses to these questions. Yet how would you answer them? Are they the sort of queries that come to mind from time to time, or have you never asked questions like this before?

Well guided by these and similar questions, we are seeking to develop a form of worship that is informal, interactive, creative and – dare I say! – fun. It is also a form of worship that may begin or end with food, whether it be lunch or dinner. This last element should not be too much of a surprise, given that what we now celebrate as Holy Communion originally took the form of a fellowship meal with prayer and thanksgiving. It may have been 2000 years, but we may have come full circle again!

What will not change, however, is the message of Jesus Christ. People mess up, get sick, pass away, and struggle to find hope as much today as any other time in history, and Christ offers the same forgiveness, love, hope and eternal life yesterday, today, and forever. The tunes may change, but Christ does not.

We are planning to give this new service a 'soft launch' in early 2023 and develop it until we find the right format and rhythm. While we have lots of ideas, if you are interested in a contemporary service at St Michael's and want to get involved, please get in touch at lfraser@churchofscotland.org.uk

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH

by Allan Kennedy

What does this mean to most people? Images of crowds of people shouting, burning buildings, court rooms with aggressive officials staring at a brow beaten and traumatised individual?



Persecuted church does lead you down the path of organisations such as Open Doors or Barnabas Aid. The former has the World Watch List which ranks the countries where Christians face the most persecution. Unsurprisingly, Afghanistan has risen back to the top of countries where it is least safe to be Christian, alongside North Korea, Somalia, Libya and Yemen.

What has possibly changed over the years is why there is the level of persecution. We already know that the Taliban and North Korea treat Christians as their lower level of citizens – both considering them a threat to their own ideological structures – but the other countries have moved up the list in recent years.

Though by percentage, Christians make up only a tiny part of the population, their situation in the other three countries is more threatening due to the current political and social structure of the country. Yemen is currently in the middle of a civil war, with the differing elements of tribal conflicts and Al-Queda also in the mix. Somalia has a government which does not fully control all of the country and Libya has no central government. In these situations, there can be no guarantee for the safety of the majority Muslim population, so the few Christians that live there have even less rights. In Somalia, the fundamentalist Al-Shabaab considers the killing of Christians 'high value'.

If the picture painted at the start of this article seems familiar, there are in many countries moving up the list more subtle ways of persecuting those who do not follow the state faith. Many people are unaware that is forbidden under most interpretations of Sharia law to convert from Islam to another faith. A lot of the Arabian countries which appear on the list, and which many might be surprised to see, are there because of their stringent enforcing of this law. For example, Qatar, which will have the eyes of the world on it in a month or so, does not recognise conversion. Anyone who does will lose their status, be ostracised from their families or tribes, and be put under house arrest.

Even the workers who moved there 'for a better life', building football infrastructure and converted, are pressurised and barriers put in place to stop worship, even though the law should only be for Qatari-born people.

Though countries which have Sharia law make up the bulk of the list, Christians (and Muslims) are also persecuted in southeast Asia, either by military juntas or by the majority Buddhist population. India also is on the list, with a more aggressive militant Hinduism targeting non-Hindus, who they feel should not be in their land.

Persecution of Christians can also happen in Christian countries involved in civil war, or where people of faith speak out about violent crime. Central African Republic, DR Congo and Mexico all fall into this category.

This may sound very pessimistic. We cannot, obviously, as individuals create regime change or enforce our views on large countries where the majority of people are not of our faith. We can pressurise to stop wars but, in an increasingly secular society, Christian voices might APPEAR selfish. But this does not mean we should simply read the stories and feel pity. This would be the last thing that the Christians of these areas would want.

Helping can take the form of signing up to newsletters, emails or bulletins to be kept in touch with world events. Some websites ask for donations, but others have to be more secretive in order to keep people safe.

All websites which highlight persecuted Christians within their sections which say 'What can I do to help?' always share what we are taught at a very young age as Christians, to care and to not turn a cheek and TO PRAY. Pray for the victims, pray for those who suffer, pray for their persecutors, pray for those whose very faith in Jesus puts them in danger of harm or death. There can be nothing which reinforces a person's belief more than to think someone far away is praying for them. You are virtually standing beside them in prayer, and we all know how powerful that is. As the founder of OPENDOORSUK says 'our prayers can go where we cannot'.

Considering what these people do for their faith, please remember them in one of your prayers.



Websites – www.opendoorsuk.org

www.barnabasfund.org

Faith impact forum updates – sign up at churchofscotland.org.uk

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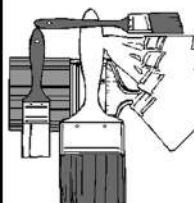
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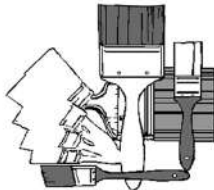


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CHRISTMAS UNWRAPPED

by Lorraine Orr

St Michael's and St John's Church are delighted to be hosting Christmas Unwrapped again this year. It is being held in our church on 22 November.

It's a day where the church is abuzz with the sound of around 200 Primary 5 pupils from the 5 Linlithgow primary schools!

We split the schools up and have a morning and afternoon session.

The event is kicked off by a Christmas quiz and a magical story from the front which is guaranteed to engage the children and make them laugh!

The children are then given the opportunity to visit around 5 different stations. There's a Craft station where they make a Christmas tile, Snack station (a firm favourite), Drama station, Story station and a few others added in for good measure. From experience, the teachers and helpers mostly enjoy the snack station too for a hot cuppa and a biscuit!



Our aim is to tell the Christmas story in a way that's memorable and fun for the children, teachers and helpers that attend. We work alongside the schools to provide this event for them – it's a great way to cover their religious studies curriculum and also have everyone in the church building!

We have now been running this annual event for 10 years and it has been a huge success and lots of fun. If you feel like you'd like to volunteer on the day for either morning, afternoon or both sessions please get in touch with Lorraine on lorr@churchofscotland.org.uk

MORE HARD TEACHINGS —

THE STORY OF THE ‘TALENTS’

by Gordon Wardall

I wrote previously about the ‘hard sayings’ of Jesus, looking at some challenging short statements. Jesus presented further challenges to us in his parables. The story of the ‘talents’ or (bags of) coins – depending on version – in Matthew 25:14-30 is often viewed as among the most difficult.

In this story, a rich man is about to go on a journey. Before doing so, he delegates the management of his wealth to three servants. To the first, he gives five talents (a talent was a huge unit of money), to the second two talents, and to the third, one. The first two servants successfully double the original sum, but the third hides the money in the ground and earns nothing, saying that the master was a harsh man and that he feared him. The rich man returns, rewards the two who increased the investment (interestingly, he rewards them with greater responsibility) but severely punishes the servant who did nothing.



Challenges arise for various reasons: notably in understanding what is being said and its application; and a sense of unfairness concerning the fate of the third servant. So often in Jesus' parables and other teachings, it's the high and mighty, the rich and powerful, who come in for criticism and receive dire warnings. We tend to approve of this: rightly or wrongly, human nature likes to see the proud and the powerful get their come-uppance. In this parable, however, it's the little man, the servant who has the least to start with, who comes out very badly.

What then are we to make of this puzzling story?

Undoubtedly, the parable tells us something about what God expects from his followers, and about how he judges the world and his people. It has usually been interpreted as showing how we should work hard to develop the gifts (time, talents and treasures – not just money, although the 'talents' in the story are actually a substantial unit of money, amounting to around 20 years' wages) that God has given us, using them to serve God and our neighbour.

This interpretation places emphasis on the importance of our actions; in particular, the perils of failing to be productive for God, as did the third servant. This is a useful way of looking at the story and relevant to the Church today and to individuals. So often we fail to use what God has given us; to reach out and share his gifts with others. We may simply hide his gifts deep within our own lives; so these resources, whatever they may be, do little or no good for God or others. 'Use it or lose it'; that's one of the messages of this parable, particularly the harsh treatment of the third servant.

Another approach to interpretation emphasises instead the different attitudes of the three servants. According to this approach, there are dangers in being focussed purely on productivity and our achievements for Jesus, with the quantity or even the quality of our good works. One risk is that of pride. Another is that we become afraid of failure, afraid to take chances, and in doing so, risk inadvertently becoming more like the third servant.

God wants us to use his gifts and multiply them for the good of his Kingdom, but what matters most to God is not the quantity or quality of our work, but our attitude: by our gratitude to God or lack of it, by our willingness to trust God and do as he wants us to do, and to be willing to take chances when necessary for the sake of God's kingdom.

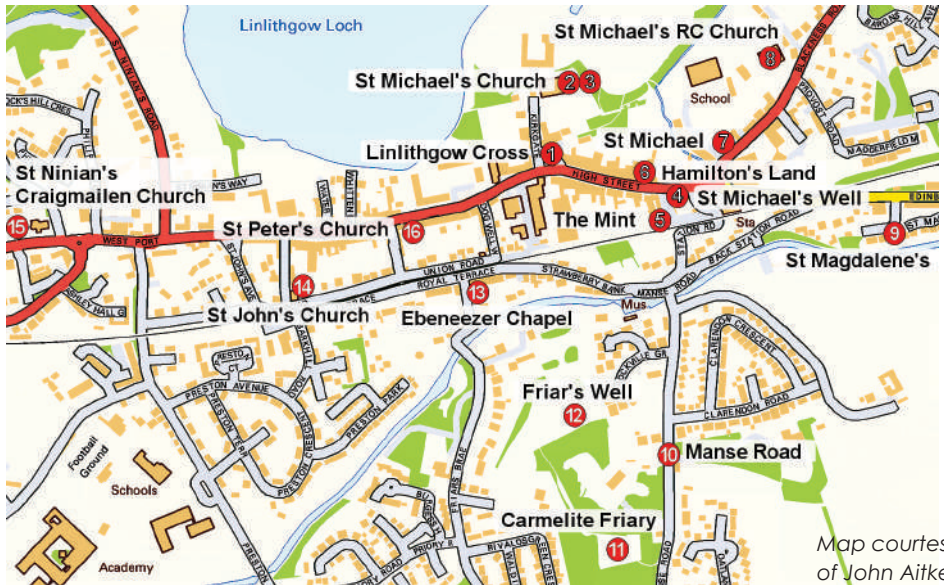
Thus the underlying failure of the third servant lies in his resentful and ungrateful attitude. He neither likes nor trusts his master; is fearful and unwilling to take any risks, even blaming the master for his own response. It is because of this attitude that his actions are unsatisfactory.

We are sometimes told that what matters is not whether we win or lose, but how we play the game. This can apply to our spiritual lives too. Whatever resources or abilities we have, many or few, what matters most to God is not that we achieve what other people consider to be success, but that we try our best to use our gifts in his service.

St Paul tells us that we can't be saved by our own actions. Rather we are saved by God's grace, his infinitely generous love. If we accept this message, we need not fear making the same mistake as the untrusting servant. Out of love and gratitude, we'll use what resources we have to serve God and each other. He will help us to do so if we're willing to trust him. He gives us his Spirit, he gives us the Bible, and gives us other believers to help and support us.

A LINLITHGOW PILGRIMAGE PART 2

by Bruce Jamieson



Map courtesy
of John Aitken

10. Manse Road is named after the residence built for the Rev James Dobie in 1804. A dispute with the heritors saw the house built as far from St Michael's as allowed – at the top of a steep brae. 'By wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established; by knowledge the rooms are filled with all precious and pleasant riches.' (Proverbs 24)

11. Half-way up Manse Road is the **Carmelite Friary**. Today, only the foundations are visible. 'Lord, you assembled the holy hermits of Mount Carmel as a family of pilgrim people, seeking to live in allegiance to Jesus Christ. Like them, inspire us to build your kingdom.'



*Fiona Hyslop unveils an
information plaque at the
Carmelite Friary*

12. Rosemount Park - site of the **Friars' Well** and a cedar of Lebanon. 'The righteous flourish like the cedar in Lebanon, like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither.' (Psalm 92)

13. At the foot of Friars Brae is a house bearing the words '**Ebenezer Chapel**' – one-time meeting place of a group of dissenters. Turn right along Strawberry Bank and through the tunnel under the railway line. Just past Dog Well Wynd is the Brethren's tiny, whitewashed chapel. 'Come, Holy Spirit, show us your fraternal beauty reflected in all the peoples of the earth, so that we may discover that all are just different faces of the one humanity that God so loves.' (Fratelli Tutti)

14. Walk Union Road to **St John's Church**. 'Lord make us all into a fellowship of believers, made in God's image and called as disciples of Christ to share the Good News with everyone.'

15. Go down St John's Avenue and turn left towards the spire of **St Ninian's-Craigmailen Church**, opened in 1875. 'God of light, who led Ninian to establish a community that shone in the dark, help us to pray with courage that we may bring healing and light into the dark places of our time.' (Ray Simpson)



St Ninian's Church in 1910. It became St Ninian's-Craigmailen in 1955.

16. Proceed eastwards along the High Street and finish at the newest religious building in town – **St Peter's Scottish Episcopal Church**, opened in 1928. Admire, on its front façade, carved depictions of the creatures from the Revelation of St John the Divine. 'And the first beast was like a lion and the second like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man and the fourth was like a flying eagle.'



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MECHANICAL REPAIRS, DIAGNOSTICS AND SERVICE



FINANCIAL UPDATE

by Linda Jamieson

I do hope that you and your families are well.

As the nation faces real economic challenges, we continue to be incredibly blessed in St Michael's in terms of the ongoing regular financial giving of members. Income from freewill offerings and regular standing orders for the nine-month period to September 2022 totalled £187,200, and if we include other income such as weddings and tax in the form of gift aid, this figure increases to £254,400. This income does not quite cover our general expenditure for the same period and this needs to be addressed.

As mentioned in previous Crosswind articles, our contribution to the national church to meet our ministers' salaries, Church of Scotland initiatives and help to enable ministry to take place in other parishes in Scotland, where they could not pay for a minister, remains our largest expense and is roughly half of our income. This is being replaced with 'Giving to Grow' in 2023, and we hope to be in a position to share how a new calculation will impact our contribution in due course.

We are conscious that our donations rely too much on a small number of generous donors. This is a concern to us, particularly at a time when our expenditure is increasing. The rising energy costs are a particular concern and, whilst we are on a fixed tariff, this will soon come to an end and we will be faced with a significant increase. Our average energy costs are currently in excess of £1,000 per month.

We are fortunate at St Michael's to have a great team of volunteers supporting the general maintenance work on our buildings, thus helping to reduce costs.

We are extremely grateful for the help from members and the wider community in supporting the fundraising events in connection with the 'Aspire Linlithgow' appeal. Our thanks to Alan Miller and his team for all their hard work.

The Stewardship and Finance team at St Michael's needs your help. If you have financial or management skills and some time to volunteer with us, we would love to hear from you. This is not an onerous commitment, but it is important to ensure the church looks after everyone's money properly. To arrange a chat over a coffee and find out how you can help, please contact Linda LJamieson58@aol.com

Our thanks to Tim Brown for his work in preparing monthly income and expenditure figures and to the wider Stewardship and Finance team for their work in this area.

Christian stewardship is our response to God and all that he has given us. Thank you to all those who work tirelessly in Christian faith.



**ST.
MICHAEL'S**
Parish church

Parish Register

WEDDINGS

They are no longer two, but one

August

Kate McKerrow to Stuart Rankine
Faye Oughton to Adam Docherty
Annie Gaffney to Gary McIntyre
Alison Gardiner to Michael McKenna
Sarah and Iain Torrance (Blessing)



September

Elaine Moore to John Shaw
Olivia Oryem to Jamie Paton

October

Margaret Paterson to Mark Jenkins

FUNERALS

I am the resurrection and the life

August

Catherine Harris, Linlithgow
David Walker, Linlithgow

September

Nina Wallace, Linlithgow
Jean Russell, Linlithgow
William Scullion, Linlithgow
Robert (Neil) Balmer, Linlithgow



October

Isabella Kerr, Linlithgow



Christmas Services 2022

Sunday 11th December, Third Sunday in Advent

9.45am

Carol Service at Springfield (School)

Wednesday, 14th December

7.30pm

Blue Christmas Service

Sunday, 18th December, Fourth Sunday in Advent

10.00am

Family Service with Sunday Club Nativity

7.00pm

Festival of Lessons and Carols

Saturday, 24th December, Christmas Eve

7.00pm

Christingle Service

11.00pm

Community Carol Singing

11.30pm

Christmas Eve Watch Night Service

Sunday, 25th December, Christmas Day

11.00am

Christmas Day Service followed by
Holy Communion

Sunday, 1st January 2023

11.00am

Morning Service

Sunday, 8th January 2023

10.00am

Epiphany

Christmas Trees 2022

by Margaret Johnston



For one weekend in December, St Michael's Parish Church will once again be filled with beautifully decorated trees as the annual Festival of Christmas Trees comes back for its fifth year. This year the event will take place on Friday 2nd, Saturday 3rd and Sunday 4th December.

Last year, we used a quote from 'The Grinch' as our theme, 'Maybe Christmas, he thought, doesn't come

from a store. Maybe Christmas, perhaps, means a little bit more.' With 64 trees expertly decorated by different church and community organisations, it was certainly an amazing spectacle!

This year, we are looking to 'A Christmas Carol' for inspiration and so our theme is 'Past, Present and Future'.

'I will honour Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present and the Future', Ebenezer Scrooge.

We will be in contact with those who have previously decorated a tree; however if you would like to take part, please drop me an email for more information maggij@sky.com

As always, events like this cannot go ahead without our amazing volunteers to assist at various stages, leading up to the weekend and throughout the event itself. If you would like to get involved, we would love to hear from you. We require assistance on:

Wednesday, 30 November 10am till 4pm

To help receive the trees and set them in their places for the event. This is a hard shift, however if you could spare a couple of hours to assist with this, please let me know.

Thursday, 1 December 10am till late

This is the day that we decorate. Not only will the organisations be coming in to decorate their trees, but we will also be decorating the Church.

Friday, 2 December 9.30am to 7pm

Saturday, 3 December 9.30am till 7.30pm

Sunday, 4 December 12.30pm to 7pm

Help will be required throughout each day to assist with tickets, stewarding and at the Hot Chocolate Bar.

The last admission on Friday and Sunday will be at 5pm. This is to allow the Linlithgow Day Care Concert to take place amongst the Christmas trees on Friday 2 December at 7.30 pm. CHAS Candlelit Service will be held in St Michael's on Sunday 4 December at 7pm. This is a service for bereaved families and CHAS staff who attend this quiet reflective event. Any volunteers able to assist us by serving refreshments after the service, would also be greatly appreciated.

If you feel you are able to help for an hour or two on any of these days, lists will be available in the Church from October to put your name down. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions, maggij@sky.com

Santa's Workshop

News just in from the North Pole! Santa will once again be relocating his workshop to Cross House over the weekend of 2nd – 4th December and you might be able to grab a glimpse of his workshop through the ground floor window. If you are lucky, you might observe some Elves hard at work or if you're **really** lucky you might see Santa and Mrs Claus!



Gift Appeal



Following the success of last year's collection, we are asking for donations of gifts which will be passed on to the Salvation Army who help disadvantaged families have a better Christmas. They will be matched up to families and delivered in time for Christmas. We are looking for donations of new unwrapped toys, chocolates, sweets, hats, scarves, puzzles,

games, makeup, toiletries etc for children aged from 0 to 17 years. If you can help, please drop them off at the door of Santa's workshop in Cross House between Friday 2nd to Sunday 4th December and they will be passed on.

Opening times for the Festival are:

Friday, 2nd December 10am to 5pm

Saturday, 3rd December 10am to 7pm

Sunday, 4th December 1pm to 5pm

Ticket Prices

Adults £5.00,

Children under 16 - £3.00,

Children Under 3 - Free

Family Ticket (2 Adults & 2 children) £10.00



Dates for your Diary

COFFEE MORNINGS 10am to 12 Noon in KIRK HALL

Saturday, 18th February 2023

The Rotary Club of Linlithgow Grange

EVENTS IN THE CHURCH

Friday, 2nd December	7.30pm	Linlithgow Day Care Concert
Friday, Saturday, Sunday	2nd to 4th Dec	Festival of Christmas Trees
Friday, 9th December	7.00pm (TBC)	NYCoS Christmas concert
Saturday, 10th December	7.30pm	Linlithgow Arts Guild Concert – Brass Quintet
Sunday, 11th December	3.00pm	Linlithgow Ladies Choir Afternoon Christmas Concert
Friday, 16th December	7.30pm	Bathgate Concert Orchestra

2023

Sunday, 29th January	3.00pm	Occasionally@stmichaels Song Recital
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OTHER EVENTS

Saturday, 10th December	3pm	Messy Church (Kirk Hall)
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2023

Saturday, 4th February	3pm	Messy Church (Kirk Hall)
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All events are conditional upon what Scottish Government / Church of Scotland COVID guidelines and regulations are currently in place.

WEBSITES

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

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

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WE'LL MEET AGAIN!

by Norma Costley

What joy there was in the Kirk Hall when the Singalong for Memory group met again on 10 March 2022, two long years after the last Singalong in March 2020.



We were delighted that our visitors were brave enough to return despite Covid-19 still being prevalent. The resilience of this group of people living with memory loss is quite remarkable as they had suffered greatly during this time. The social isolation which occurred as a result of Lockdown had a huge impact on both those with memory loss and their carers. Familiar faces no longer visited and support networks on which they depended disappeared. Many carers were not able to visit their loved ones in hospital or in care. Worst of all, some were not able to spend time with a loved one in their final days. In the words of one of our elderly visitors, 'It was worse than the war years, at least then you could be with other members of your family'. For this reason, it was incredible that it was such a joyful occasion when we came together again in March – and it has remained so.

We started with smaller numbers than previously and with various mitigations in place to try and keep everyone as safe as possible. We invited local visitors from the community and Linlithgow Day Care only and kept the number of volunteers to a minimum. Volunteers were asked to take a lateral flow test before attending. We changed the layout in the hall so that tables could be well spaced out in a semicircle around the perimeter of the hall with only four people to a table. Windows and doors remained open and masks were worn unless it caused distress. Church of Scotland guidelines on food preparation meant extra work for our lunch team. Savoury food was plated for each person, sugar and milk were served and cakes were distributed with tongs from trays. All went well and, despite masks being worn, the singing in the first month was quite amazing, as were the smiles on the faces. It felt really good to be up and running again.

With each subsequent Singalong, the number of local visitors has gradually increased and in addition to Linlithgow Day Care, Linlithgow Care Home now brings a small group of residents. Last month the Sunshine Singers also returned to support the singing. There is no longer a need for masks to be worn and we have progressed to six people at a table. Also, we are able to make use of our musical instruments again, which our visitors enjoy.

The savoury food remains plated for each person and the home baking continues to be served. We are very grateful to Mannerstons for donating their award-winning ice cream in both July and August. This is a highlight for our visitors who love polishing off a delicious ice cream cone in the summer months. Also, we are indebted to May for supplying her delicious meringues every month. Thanks must go to all our home bakers and those who make flower arrangements for the tables. We are blessed with a great team of willing volunteers.



It is lovely to witness the warm fellowship again over lunch and the delight when singing well-known songs. There is no doubt that music makes a difference to those living with memory loss, prompting recall of past times and encouraging speech. In addition, our visitors feel the warmth of welcome provided by our volunteers. In this safe and welcoming environment, they can relax, enjoy themselves and above all feel valued. In this way St Michael's is showing that we care about this vulnerable group in our community.



If you feel you would benefit from joining us or you know of someone living with memory loss whom you might like to bring along, you can be sure of a warm welcome. If you would like further information, please contact Norma Costley on 01506 843255.

FINDING SATISFACTION IN OUR TOIL

by Paul Davidson



I really enjoyed the first 10 years of my working life, programming computers. I was doing a job that I loved and was good at, and for which I was well paid. I always enjoyed problem solving, and that was exactly what I was doing every day. Progressively over the next 20 years, however, I slowly moved away from programming and more on to business analysis, acting as a bridge between technology and the business. And while computers do exactly as they are programmed to, interacting with people can be a lot more complicated. Add to that shrinking team sizes and extended workloads, plus two years of pressure caused by Covid, and I find my attitude to work and my enjoyment thereof is rather different in 2022 from what it was in 1989. To cap it all, a number of my friends have retired recently, leading me to think seriously about the nature of work, probably for the first time.

My Bible reading recently was Ecclesiastes 3 verses 12 and 13 where it says 'I know that there is nothing better for men than to be happy and do good while they live. That everyone may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all his toil – that is the gift of God'. Finding satisfaction in my toil – that's what I need! I looked for books on the subject on the Eden website and ordered 'Working it Out' by Ian Coffey. Having now read through it, I have to say I found it really very helpful. It covers subjects like

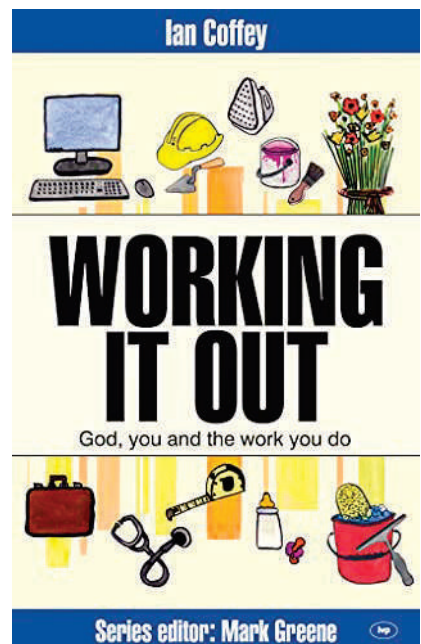
- Work – is it a blessing or a curse?
- Is God interested in what I do during the week?
- What to do if you don't like your job.
- What if you don't have a job but are looking for one?
- What do you do if you think you are in the wrong job?
- How should we behave at our workplace?
- How should we approach retirement?

There are two particular examples from the Bible which Ian Coffey uses, which stuck out for me – Daniel and Joseph. These were two young men who found themselves in a foreign country (one taken off into exile, one sold into slavery) doing jobs they never expected to be doing, but who trusted completely in God and excelled in every task they were given.

When it comes to Daniel's attitude to the position he finds himself in, there is a telling phrase at the start of the book of Daniel – '...Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. And the Lord delivered Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand'. Daniel saw the exile as being part of God's plan, so he didn't question it, rather he got on with doing his best in the job he found himself in. He didn't let his surroundings compromise his faith in any way, or quietly try to blend into the background – on the contrary he refused to eat food that had been sacrificed to idols. And later, under a new king (Darius), when a decree was made to worship only Darius, Daniel disregarded it and continued to pray to God. He ended up in the Lion's Den for that, but God was still with him and kept him from harm. Daniel is a great example of someone who sees his work and his life as a way to serve God.

Joseph also ended up doing jobs he hadn't chosen (see Genesis 37-50 for the whole story). A stand-out part of Joseph's working life is his integrity, and his trustworthiness. After being sold into slavery (by his brothers, no less!), he didn't mope about but rather got on with the tasks he had been given. When Potiphar saw that 'the Lord gave him success in everything he did', he left Joseph in charge of his household. And despite her attempts at seduction, Joseph steadfastly refused to be led astray by Potiphar's wife. This led him to be falsely accused and put in prison but again, no moping, just hard work which led the warder to put Joseph in charge of the prison. Joseph was a man of complete integrity, who could be utterly trusted in any situation.

The Bible doesn't tell us explicitly that Daniel and Joseph found satisfaction in their toil, but they did make it to the very top in their careers, and when they did, they credited God with their gifts and abilities (Genesis 41 v16 and Daniel 2 vs27 & 28). I find inspiration in their lives, and in their amazingly positive attitudes to their work. If you are questioning the role you find yourself in just now, I can thoroughly recommend 'Working it Out' by Ian Coffey as a very good read indeed.



JOLLY BABIES AND TODDLERS

by Fiona McCracken

'A sweet friendship refreshes the soul' Proverbs 27:9 (MSG)

Jolly Babies

We have recently started a new group, aimed specifically at mums with new babies up to 9 months approx. We are open on a Wednesday between 11am and 1pm for a chat and a cuppa or some homemade soup. We are working with the Health Visiting team to reach out to new mums. Due to Covid and staffing shortages, the ante-natal and post-natal groups do not operate how they once did, and many new mums feel very isolated. We want to help reduce maternal stress and strengthen social bonds. Seeing a welcoming face after a bad night, having other mums to talk to and compare notes or just have a laugh or a moan should not be underestimated. A content, more relaxed mum helps make a happier baby.



Toddlers



We held our four summer special sessions at Longcroft Hall, and they were a great success. Being able to make use of the garden was fantastic and we were very fortunate with the weather each Thursday. The change in venue and date meant that we welcomed some new faces as well as our regulars. We tried a couple of different things Springfield – Tracy Curle from NYCOS came along and led a music session and another day we played with bubbles in the garden.

We welcomed a couple of volunteers from Linlithgow Academy who are studying for a childcare course. This partnership is continuing throughout the year, enabling the students to get practical experience.

We are now back in our Kirk Hall and Toddlers is as popular as ever. Why is Toddlers so important? Joining a toddler group helps create social integration for both the carer and the child. Toddlers is a great way to let children experiment with independence. It lets children learn to share as well as make friends. Spending time with others in a relaxed, fun environment gives lots of opportunities for positive interaction which is so important in building a child's confidence and self-worth.

It is equally vital for adults to socialise with their peers. For a start it is the opportunity for some quality time away from home, where, let's face it, there are always jobs to do! It's also a nice treat to have a hot cuppa and a biscuit!

As we approach a winter that looks likely to present challenges for most of us, we are happy to be able to provide a warm and welcoming space for families in the town. If you want to come along to take part, or join our band of happy volunteers, please contact me on fiona@stmichaels-parish.org.uk



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MUSIC IN THE KIRK

by Bill Jones

As I write, members of the church have been reflecting on and discussing the future of worship at St Michael's. Naturally, we are concerned about our outreach and making our worship as accessible to as many people as possible without diluting the quality of what we deliver.

My experience as a Christian musician has included music from across the centuries and in a wide range of styles, sometimes within the same service. I am aiming to enthuse our congregation and provide music and performance that support and enhance the message of the service. As was witnessed so powerfully in the recent Royal funeral, music can play a vital communicative, emotional and spiritual role in our lives; at St Michael's I hope that our music can enhance everyone's experience in worship. 'I couldn't stop smiling!' said someone after the Harvest Festival which featured performers with an age range of around 80 years! If we are managing to put a spiritual spring in your step as you leave church, then we must be heading in the right direction.

What part can you play?



I also aim to provide opportunities for our singers and players and I hope that you might ask yourself how you can participate. There is no barrier to taking part in the music we provide. I would like our choir numbers to grow and we especially need to improve the balance of younger and older singers and men and women. If you are an instrumentalist, please volunteer yourself to take part.

It obviously helps if you have already developed some musical skills (such as having played an instrument or the ability to read music) but it is not essential.

You might have developed a life-long conviction that you cannot sing!* Having a good ear and a natural feel for rhythm might well be something you are blessed with without ever having learnt an instrument. For us involved in music-making at St Michael's, the most important thing is that you are enthusiastic and are willing to have a go! We have some exciting services coming up including the Advent Christmas services and I would be thrilled to see our choir numbers grow before then.

You might be worried about the level of commitment involved: One weekly rehearsal of 1 hour (on a Thursday evening) and a short pre-service run-through is all that we presently do. If you have child-care issues, then please remember that the choir could become an excellent family activity: come and sing together!

I would be delighted to hear from you (billjonesjazz@gmail.com) if you would like to discuss how you might become involved.



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YESTERDAY ONCE MORE



by Iain Harrison

Going back 100 years to 1922, it was on the whole a positive year. On the negative side there was civil war in Ireland, in Italy Mussolini and the Fascist Party came to power and Mahatma Gandhi was sentenced to 6 years in prison for civil disobedience. On a happier note, the BBC was formed and the Reader's Digest was created, both still with us today. In Egypt, Howard Carter discovered the tomb of Tutankhamun and the fabulous treasures contained therein, one of the most exciting finds of the 20th century. Nearer home a young lady, Georgina Ballantine, (pictured), caught a record breaking 64 pound salmon on the River Tay on a rod and line. A hundred years later she still holds the British record and it is highly unlikely that this record will ever be broken.



What was happening in Linlithgow and in our Church 100 years ago? Another delve into the Kirk Session Minutes provides some tasty morsels:

Tuning of the Church Organ

The annual contract for the tuning of the Church Organ had been fixed at £8.50 (eight pounds and ten shillings in those days). This was increased to £12.50 due to 'various rates and charges having increased'. In addition to the contract, insurance of the organ amounted to £1.25 a year (one pound and five shillings to those of us born before decimalisation).

Retiring Collection

It was agreed that for the last Sunday in March 1922, the retiring collection would be on behalf of the coal account. Given the dramatic rise in electricity, gas and oil prices in 2022 maybe this might be reintroduced!

New Admissions

It was noted in April 1922 that a list of 91 persons had applied for 'first admission to the communion'. It was unanimously agreed to admit them, and it was also noted that many of these applicants were 'young communicants'.

Kingscavil Church: Presentation to Rev Kenneth Dunbar and replacement of the Church Organ

The Rev Dunbar who was based at Kingscavil Church was moving on to St Mungo's Church in Leith. It was recorded that a presentation would be held and that it was hoped that the funds raised for this purpose would reach £50. This seemingly modest sum equates to £3,157 today! The Rev Carmichael Marr took over from the Rev Dunbar and it was agreed then that alternate services on a Sunday evening be held at Kingscavil Church.

The Church organ at Kingscavil was replaced by one obtained for £10 from Craigmaiten Church in Bo'ness. A sale was held at the Church 'to defray all the costs in connection with the replacement organ'.

Elders Sought

In June the Moderator asked from the pulpit on successive Sundays for members to nominate 12 persons whom they considered fit for eldership. The following month potential elders had been found and their admission would take place in front of the congregation on Sunday 8 October.

Woodwork

There was concern at the state of the woodwork in the communion and choir stalls, presumably woodworm or dry rot. An estimate of between £5 and £10 was suggested although as it turned out at least 7 choir stalls were affected and the actual cost was £16, over 3 times the lower estimate.

Death of Church Officer

It was noted with great sadness in July 1922 the death of Mr Andrew Bell Ritchie, Church Officer of St Michael's Church for 43 years. It was agreed that a letter of condolence be sent to Miss Ritchie on the death of her father and at the same time to 'express their appreciation of his faithful and loyal service to the Church during his lifetime'. It was further agreed that a gratuity of £7.50 be sent to Miss Ritchie this being the exact sum that would have fallen to her father as salary.

Finances

At the end of the year the Church was overdrawn to the extent of £42.14 and incurred overdraft interest amounting to 7 pence (one shilling and four pence in old money) which suggests the account was only overdrawn for a few days.



A CALL TO JERUSALEM

by Rev Dr Stewart Gillan



I have felt called to the ministry of the Church in Israel and Palestine since my first visit in October 2007 with the then World Mission Council. We landed on 1 October, my 49th birthday, which had me trying to imagine what a jubilee year (7x7) might mean in my own life, and that of the people of Israel and Palestine. Our later visits introduced me to the life and work of St Andrew's Church in Jerusalem and Tiberias, our three institutions (Tabeetha School in Jaffa, the Scots Hotel in Tiberias, and the Scots Guesthouse in Jerusalem), and some of our Church and Human Rights partners in the Land of the Holy One. A humbling and invigorating experience.

Together with Sarah I set out on a journey towards application for the post of Mission Partner Jerusalem in November last year and it has run from there. Already the learning curve has been a steep one, with a long way to go. I look forward to sharing in ministry with the Rev Muriel Pearson, a proud Glaswegian, based in Tiberias. Together, we ask for your support in prayer and partnership in this deeply spiritual and strategic ministry with people who have been working for peace and justice in God's name all their lives. God being our helper.

In February Sarah, Imogen, Alexander and I visited Jerusalem and Jaffa for five days, during which we worshipped at St Andrew's Jerusalem, meeting the Rev Dr Richard Sewell, Dean of St George's College who led the service, and his wife JulieAnn, whose black leather jacket led Sarah to think there would be sufficient freedom to express herself! Though we ventured into the Old City, our children found it challenging, and were happier when we moved on to Jaffa/Tel Aviv.

At Tabeetha School we met Mona Ashkar, Executive Director, and Trish Izchaki, Head of Secondary, regarding options for Sarah and the children. Imogen and Alexander enjoyed their taster day in classrooms, finding it a very friendly school. They also enjoyed the beach and gelato, it must be said, and the blue skies of the Mediterranean. An exam year upon us with Imogen, however, we decided in the end that Sarah and the kids will stay in Scotland for the time being. That said, we look forward to trips out to visit as a family, when we can explore Israel and Palestine together, seeing the sights, meeting its people, sharing hospitality and stories.

It was good to reconnect with Susan and Samuel Barhoum, formerly of the Holy Family Church in Reineh. They now live in Nazareth, where Samuel is Head of Christ School. We returned home with a more focussed sense of what we needed to be about, a clearer sense of place and people.

I spent most of May in Jerusalem, living in the Guesthouse, gaining an introduction to the Manager, Liliane Lepejian, and her staff, having initial conversations concerning shared goals and ways of working between Church and Guesthouse.

I had arrived on 5 May, Independence Day for Israel, a day of dancing and singing for many, and of harrowing memories of displacement for many others. I felt anew the challenge of our calling to care for all, to seek the peace and healing of all, in the knowledge that there can be no peace without justice for all. On such a day I found myself thinking of the Apostle Paul's call to rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep (Romans 12.15). How to do both with integrity? A question that will be with us always in our ministry. We pray for the peace of Jerusalem and Ramallah, seeking the blessing of Shalom and Salaam.

My reunion with Hosam Naoum, Archbishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem, was a happy one. Bishop Hosam spoke of sharing in Good Friday prayers along the Via Dolorosa in the Old City, and we discussed the importance of the Study Pilgrimage programme of St George's College for Scottish folk. This in the context of the ongoing need of Christ's Church in the Holy Land and around the world to deepen our communion and strengthen our partnership in his name.

I enjoyed leading worship and preaching over the three Sundays in May for which I was present, celebrating the sacrament and conversing with people afterwards, assisted by our ecumenical associates Angleena Keizer (British, Methodist), Doug Dicks (American, Presbyterian), and Anita Venter (South African, Baptist), together with Marc Falconer (Scottish, Lutheran). Attendance varied between 6 and 20, as the congregation seeks to recover from Covid-era restrictions. Seeking to broaden participation, I added an item, 'Hearing the Word Together', allowing time for people to ask a question, make an observation or tell a brief story. Three or four people did each Sunday, enriching our worship and fellowship.

Just that Clergy Visa, then, and it's on to my Commissioning Service and the move – so blithe a statement of the road ahead. The Lord be with us through testing times, here in Britain, in Israel and Palestine, and throughout the world.

*Wall art at
Tabeetha School, Jaffa*



FAITH IN ACTION

by Rev Thom Riddell



The death of Queen Elizabeth II marked the end of a life devoted to the service of others. The Queen has rightly been globally praised for doing an outstanding job since she came to the throne aged 25. For 70 years she did her work as Queen, and Head of the Commonwealth, with amazing diligence, great grace, astute intelligence, deep humility, and tremendous effectiveness. Some commentators have expressed the view that her passing has left us without a source of inspiration to guide our lives. An idea which I am sure she would not have supported. While she led by example, her devotion to serving was inspired by her faith.

While we know little about her thoughts on a host of issues, she was extraordinarily clear about where her guiding principles came from. Her answer can be summed up in one word: Jesus. It was, as she testified, Jesus' teaching that shaped her, Jesus' example that inspired her, and Jesus' power that enabled her to do the job God called her to do. We can see it in her actions and hear it in her words.

She repeatedly communicated the reality of her own faith in Christ, and the difference he made to her life, in a clear and winsome way, notably in her Christmas addresses. Almost every time the Queen spoke about her faith, she related it directly to Jesus, the Servant King.

In the eyes of popular culture, the most influential and important people are those who have celebrity status. The New Testament flips that perception. In God's story, the common people take centre stage. It is not a king's command that makes Jesus stop but rather the blind beggar who desperately called out his name. As others rushed past and ignored him, Jesus saw his value. The widow who donated two copper coins, which was all she had to give, is praised for her actions. The gospels are full of accounts of people who are not named, like the paralysed man, and those who showed great faith to bring him to Jesus to be healed. What a contrast to other stories in popular literature, and the news media, which feature celebrities and those who lead glamorous lives. God does the opposite to what we might expect; he does not see as the world sees and looks beyond the surface to see what is in our hearts. He asks us to do the same.

Prayer

God of love, help us to look beyond what the world counts as success. Open our eyes and enable us to see the true value of all people, and to love them as you do. AMEN

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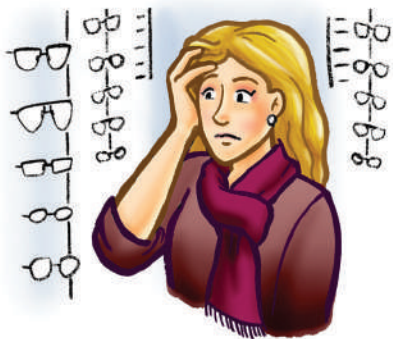
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