

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 10 September 2021

Dear Friends:

I hope to have an announcement by Sunday on our return to the sanctuary. Thank you for your patience as we work through the challenges.

Long-awaited guidance from the Church of Scotland is also expected within the next few days, and I hope that will provide a helpful framework for understanding the requirements and expectations for how we live together safely, kindly, and hospitably.

Last Sunday I used the "fruits of the Spirit" passage from Galatians as the call to worship:

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. [Galatians 5: 22-23]

We've lived with many restrictions over the last eighteen months, but none of the virtues mentioned in the letter to the Galatians is, or ever can be, restricted. We're always free to embrace the gifts of the Spirit.

Of course, as we seek to live in the way of Christ, we may face struggles within ourselves or conflicts with others. But more about that in this Sunday's message in worship...

Warm regards,
Jeff

Worship Live Stream

Please join us for worship at eleven o'clock on Sunday:

<https://youtu.be/kGOHyhBmK7U>

From Our Prayer Team

This past weekend (5 September) was Climate Sunday in the UK, where many churches hosted services about God's call to care for creation. Thank God for churches who took part. Pray that even more churches will take up the call to care for creation through prayer and action to help protect people living in poverty, which the climate crisis is affecting most.

Please continue to pray for all the people who are unwell in our own church family and if they are in hospital, please also pray for the care teams that treat them.

The prayer team continues to meet weekly. If you would like to join us or have a prayer request, or would like to pray with a member of our team then please contact either

Jeff Martin - 01334 656181

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

or

Janice Geddes - 01334 652957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Communion: In-Person and Zoom

We will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion at both services on Sunday 12 September. We will use the same method as our July celebration, using hygienic all-in-one cups.

If you prefer to celebrate via Zoom, we will have a communion service on Thursday 30 September at 4:00pm. Please contact Jeff Martin to receive the link.

You may also contact Jeff to bring communion to your home at any time.

Crowdfunder Appeal by Fife Voluntary Action

Fife Voluntary Action has launched a Crowdfunder campaign to raise funds for Afghan families coming to Fife. All funds will be used to buy needed items to support families. If you'd like to donate, please visit

www.crowdfunder.co.uk/donations-for-afghans-coming-to-fife

If you would prefer to donate goods, you may see the list of current needs at www.fva.org/crisis. Our local donation centre is the Howe of Fife Rugby Club, Duffus Park, open to receive gifts Monday through Friday 10-2pm, and Tuesday and Thursday, 7-8pm.

You may also call on 0800 389 6046 to volunteer your time or find out other ways you can help.

Reflection from Peter Meager

A disgruntled churchgoer wrote a letter to the editor of a newspaper and complained that it made no sense to go to church every Sunday. "I've gone for 30 years now," he wrote, "and in that time I have heard something like 3,000 sermons. But for the life of me, I can't remember a single one of them. So, I think I'm wasting my time and ministers are wasting theirs by preaching sermons at all."

This started a real controversy in the "Letters to the Editor" page. It went on for weeks until someone wrote this clincher: "I've been married for 30 years now. In that time my wife has cooked some 32,000 meals. But, for the life of me, I cannot recall the entire menu for a single one of those meals. But I do know this: they all nourished me and gave me the strength I needed to do my work. If my wife had not given me these meals, I would be physically dead today. Likewise, if I had not gone to church for nourishment, I would be spiritually dead today!" (The same, hopefully, applies to Reflections.)

The reason I start with this story is that, when I looked at the suggested reading for this week from Mark chapter 8, which my

Bible captions 'Peter's Declaration about Jesus,' I had a sneaky suspicion that I had used it in a Reflection already. Sure enough, when I checked, I found that in February this year I written about Matthew's version of this passage. So, I've gone back and studied the story again and would like to share a little of what I've learnt.

Jesus asks first of all who other people are saying he is. Then he asks the most important question that any human being can ever answer, 'Who do you say that I am?' Peter replies, 'You are the Messiah.' This is a watershed moment. Jesus accepts this accolade and from here till the end of the gospel will teach the disciples and the crowd what it means. In verse 31, he begins by telling them what kind of Messiah he intends to be – Yes, he is God's chosen deliverer; greater than all who have gone before; unique. But he is not going to conform to the expected stereotype of a military and political leader who will overthrow the Romans. Rather, he will walk the way of rejection, humiliation, suffering, death and resurrection to break the power of evil and redeem the world.

It's as if Jesus has lobbed a grenade into their midst. It's too much for Peter, who protectively pulls Jesus aside and has a go at him for contemplating such an incomprehensible course of self sacrifice. Jesus then rounds on Peter and calls him 'Satan', or 'opposer', for trying to make him deviate from God's plan for him.

As I studied this story afresh, I came across a comment by a man called Andy Page, drawing attention to what came between Peter taking Jesus aside and Jesus rebuking Peter: ' "But turning and looking at his disciples, Jesus rebuked Peter." I believe Jesus was greatly tempted to listen to his dear friend Peter and turn aside from the difficult road he felt led to take, but then he turned and saw his disciples. He loved them utterly and knew that the only way they could be saved and forgiven was if he went to the cross, died and rose again. But equally important, he says (in verse 34) that he expects the same level of self sacrifice from everyone who will follow him.'

I hadn't spotted the significance of this before. Theologian C. F. D. Moule points out: 'Jesus is not using cross-bearing just to describe the human experience of carrying some burden through life. It is much more comprehensive than that. People carrying crosses were people going to execution.'

Another writer, Donald English takes this up: 'Cross-bearing as a follower of Jesus means nothing less than giving one's whole life over to following him. And here comes another surprise. This is the way of total freedom. If you clutch your life wholly to yourself, protecting it against all others, asserting all your rights, needs and privileges, you lose it because it isn't life any longer. If, however, you acknowledge that life is not yours by right, that it's all a privilege, and that it is to be lived in the love that the gospel story reveals, self-giving love, then you possess it wholly. The apparently gloomy news of the cross is actually the way to total freedom and fulfilment. The purpose in Mark telling this story is to help people to be clear about the kind of discipleship Jesus calls them to. (The Message of Mark, page 161, Inter-Varsity Press)

During the Paralympics, we were amazed at the total dedication and commitment of the athletes, some of them over several decades. This is the kind of discipleship Jesus expects: totally focussed; our reason for living; but, at the same time, a privilege and a joy; never a burden; something akin to the honour of being selected to represent your country at the Olympics.

It's a tremendous ask but we are promised the help of the Holy Spirit. In our own strength we're bound to fail. Mother Theresa once said, 'God does not ask that I am successful, only faithful.' Jesus said, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.'

Reading: Mark 8: 27-38

Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say that I am?' And they answered him, 'John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets.' He asked them, 'But who do you say that I am?' Peter answered him, 'You are the Messiah.' And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, 'Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.'

He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, 'If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.'

Hymn: In Christ Alone

by Keith Getty and Stuart Townend

<https://youtu.be/8kvFtXphmMU>

In Christ alone my hope is found,
He is my light, my strength, my song;
This Cornerstone, this solid Ground,
Firm through the fiercest drought and storm.

What heights of love, what depths of peace,
When fears are stilled, when strivings cease!
My Comforter, my All in All,
Here in the love of Christ I stand.

In Christ alone! – who took on flesh,
Fullness of God in helpless babe.
This gift of love and righteousness,
Scorned by the ones he came to save:
Till on that cross as Jesus died,
The wrath of God was satisfied –
For every sin on him was laid;
Here in the death of Christ I live.

There in the ground his body lay,
Light of the world by darkness slain:
Then bursting forth in glorious day
Up from the grave he rose again!
And as he stands in victory
Sin's curse has lost its grip on me,
For I am his and he is mine –
Bought with the precious blood of Christ.

No guilt in life, no fear in death,
This is the power of Christ in me;
From life's first cry to final breath,
Jesus commands my destiny.
No power of hell, no scheme of man,
Can ever pluck me from his hand:
Till he returns or calls me home,
Here in the power of Christ I'll stand.

Prayer

Lord our God, we are amazed that you want us to follow you. We don't feel worthy of such an invitation; we are also struck by your frankness in spelling out exactly what it will cost if we decide to do it. We praise you that we can hope to meet the daily challenge of being your disciples because you walk with us through your Holy Spirit.

Father, we thank you that you meet us afresh every time we read your word in the Bible and you are a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. Lord, as your love penetrates deeper into our souls, may we see where we should be heading and how we can get there; may we surrender our lives completely to you and become more effective in your service.

Father, we are conscious of the great and complex needs of Afghan refugee families. We are grateful for those who are safe and free, but we pray for all who will be involved in making preparations in Fife for them to be housed, clothed, fed, cared for in body and soul, and integrated into our society. May they receive a genuine and warm welcome and settle quickly into our communities. Show us how best we can respond and share our resources with them.

After so long a break, we are grateful, Lord, that so many of our church activities are gearing up to begin again. Bless their leaders and organisers and all who will go along. May there be fun and laughter, learning and growth, love and fellowship, for Jesus' sake. Amen

A Prayer of St Francis

Eternal God,
who is the light of the minds that know you,
the joy of the hearts that love you,
and the strength of the wills that serve you:
grant us so to know you
that we may truly love you,
and so to love you
that we may fully serve you,
whom to serve is perfect freedom,
in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

As always, you are welcome to get in touch at
meager52@btinternet.com

Befrienders Training: 11 September

The training for our new Befrienders ministry begins on Saturday 11 September, from 10:00 to 11:30 am, with fellowship beginning at 9:30. Although we are hopeful people will want to become part of this ministry, anyone is welcome to attend any of the Saturday workshops for personal benefit.

11 September Listening Skills

18 September Bereavement

25 September Alzheimer's

2 October The How and Why of Befriending at Cupar Old

Please inform Hazel York or Jeff Martin if you plan to attend. If you would like to participate in our Befrienders Ministry, but are unable to attend this series, please let us know, and we'll work to schedule another round after Christmas at a different time of day.

Guild Restart: 15 September

We're very happy to announce that the Guild will meet again on Wednesday 15 September at 2:30pm in the lounge in the Old Parish Centre. The first meeting will be a chance to renew friendships. Masks, 1-metre distancing, and track-and-trace will be necessary, but these small obstacles won't get in the way of catching up with one another and having a look at the coming term together. The Guild is open to all--women and men--and is a great group for learning, fellowship, and service. Please contact Eileen Spurr (01334 655 010) for more information.

Coffee & Chat

After many months of waiting, we have finally had the opportunity to meet with others. Yesterday we went to Muddy Boots for our first outing. Forty of us enjoyed wonderful scones and refreshments. The staff catered for us with such willingness. It was uplifting hearing the buzz of conversations and great to see people mixing with others.

We have decided to try and maintain this form of fellowship on the 2nd Thursday of the month for the rest of 2021.

Dates for your diaries.

Thursday 14th October

Thursday 11th November

Thursday 9th December (Christmas lunch)

Please let me know if you would like to come along.

Jill Logan 655528 / jill.logan1955@gmail.com

Worship In-Person

Please join us for gathered worship in the Old Parish Centre:

Sunday 11:00am

Sunday 4:00pm

Sunday Club meets during the 4:00 service.

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated at both services on 12 September, using hygienic, individually packaged communion cups.

Worship Online

Live stream of our 11:00 service on Sunday 22 August:

<https://youtu.be/kGOHyhBmK7U>

The service will be available afterward at our YouTube channel:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ

Sanctuary First, an online faith community of the Church of Scotland, has a live stream service each Sunday afternoon at three, which is available to view afterward:

www.sanctuaryfirst.org.uk