

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 16 April 2021

Dear Friends:

A year ago at this time, I had just begun doing a short message each week for our new YouTube channel. Since I was feeling uncomfortable with the new medium, I wrote my messages out in full and read them. To provide something more visually interesting than a screen of me reading, I paired the voiceover with slide shows of photos I had taken on my walks.

At the end of April last year, the message featured a series of photos of the camellia in our garden, which was blooming prodigiously at that time. To be honest, I hadn't paid close attention to it before last year, but in the early days of the first lockdown, I spent a lot of my time on the telephone, and the camellia was just outside the window from where I often sat. I was dazzled by the show of blossoms, which lasted several weeks.

I've been eagerly anticipating this year's flowering, but there won't be a single blossom: the late, hard frosts nipped every bud. The camellia is still holding on to the buds for now, but they've turned brown, and they crumble at the touch.

Perhaps it's a metaphor for this last year: people had plans, dreams, and expectations, and many of those things shrivelled up with the advent of the coronavirus. Many beautiful moments, large and small, did not happen. I regret the lack of camellias this year, and I mourn many moments of life and love that did not happen in 2020.

But there's another metaphor in this as well: as I mentioned, I hadn't really noticed, **really appreciated**, the camellia before last year. I have no idea how the bloom was in previous years; it never got anything more than an "Oh, that's nice" from my quick observation. But because of the lockdown, I was in a position to witness the camellia's gift, and to savour the daily changes.



Many things were lost in this last year, but with our eyes and hearts wide open, we've also had opportunity to appreciate many surprising acts of love and compassion, things worthy of our praise, gratitude, and wonder. And often, they're right under our nose.

Warm regards,
Jeff

Worship Live Stream

Join us for a live stream of our eleven o'clock Sunday worship service live via

<https://youtu.be/G3sEnDwPKiA>

From Our Prayer Team

- Please pray for the violence in Belfast to cease and that peace will return to this city.

- Tropical Cyclone Seroja has caused flooding and landslides in Indonesia. Bridges and roads have been damaged, and there is no electricity or network coverage in the area, making it hard to reach those in need. Pray that those who are missing will be found safe.

The prayer groups continue to meet weekly through Zoom. If you would like prayer for yourself or someone else, would like to join us or would like someone to pray with then please contact either -

Jeff Martin - 01334 656 181

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

or

Janice Geddes - 01334 652 957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Reflection from Peter Meager

The death, last Friday, of his Royal Highness, Prince Philip, seems to have given a focus for all the grief and loss experienced around the world over the last year. As well as reflecting on his long life of selfless service and duty, many have been led to reflect too on the universal issues of life, death, suffering, faith and hope. I expect that most of us will tune in to join with Her Majesty the Queen and her family for his funeral on Saturday. They are all very much in our thoughts and prayers as we extend them our sympathy and commend them to God's gracious comfort and care.

I'm sure that many of you met the Duke of Edinburgh at some time. Please, will you permit me to share something of my two meetings with him? On the first, he was visiting an Army unit I was serving with. When he spoke to me, it was immediately apparent that he had been well briefed on who I was and was not interested in merely exchanging pleasantries. His conversation was direct and purposeful and you were left with the feeling that you were the sole focus of his attention for the couple of minutes he spent with you.

On the second occasion he had arrived after a long-haul flight. Christine and I were invited to an informal supper with half a dozen others. Whereas you or I might be feeling jet-lagged and wishing we could just go to bed, he was charming and animated, didn't seem to mind at all when Christine questioned him on something, and couldn't have been a more genial guest. Both of these instances speak volumes about his attitude to very ordinary people. A lesson for us?

Many have spoken about the importance of his faith and how it sustained him. His humour is also legendary, although it sometimes got him into trouble. I love the quote about long sermons which he is said to have used, 'The mind can only absorb what the seat can endure.'

It's interesting that last Sunday, Jeff was preaching about Philip, the disciple of Jesus, HRH's biblical namesake. The name means 'Lover of horses'.

One of the lovely photos which have appeared in the press this week was taken at Balmoral when Prince Philip was cooking a barbecue for his family. The passage that comes up in our study guide this week also involves a meal cooked over charcoal. You'll find it in John 21:

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Galilee. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (also known as Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realise that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped

his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught." So Simon Peter climbed back into the boat and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

After Jesus' resurrection appearances in Jerusalem, some of the disciples have gone back to the Sea of Galilee. Peter encourages them to go fishing. They've cast their nets all night without catching a thing when a figure hails them from the shore. When they tell him they haven't caught anything, he tells them to throw out their net once more, this time to the right of the boat. You might have expected a sharp reply about amateurs giving professionals advice, but they do as he directs and are amazed to find their net full to bursting with fish. John suddenly realises that it's Jesus on the

beach. Peter jumps in and wades ashore to find that Jesus already has a fire going with some fish cooking on it.

After breakfast, a major point in the story occurs. Peter had publicly denied Jesus three times. Now, in front of them all, Jesus restores Peter and recommissions him. His task is to shepherd Jesus' flock. People are Jesus sheep. In a lecture in 1911, Oswald Chambers, a Scottish Baptist preacher, reflected on the shepherd image from the perspective of having been a shepherd in the highlands of Scotland as a boy. He said, "When you have to carry across your shoulders a dirty old goat and bring it down the mountain side, you will soon know whether shepherding is poetry or not." He called shepherding "the most taxing, the most exhausting, and the most exasperating work."

The hard work of shepherding people is what Jesus entrusted to Peter. Chambers reflected, "To whom did he say, 'Feed my lambs'? To Peter. Who was Peter? A very wayward sheep." As a result of his bitter experience Peter learned how to be a caring and tender pastor.

Like Peter, we fail Jesus time and time again. But He seeks us out, forgives us, restores us and gives us a new commission—to care for others – to 'feed his sheep'.

A modern day fisherman casts his net on the sea of Galilee



The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Right Reverend Dr Martin Fair, offered this prayer following the death of Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh:

“Almighty and everlasting God, ‘the life of mortals is like grass, they flourish like a flower of the field; the wind blows over it and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more.’

But you are forever, from everlasting to everlasting, and we put our trust in you, for you have promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

Loving Lord, in this last year, through the worst of a global pandemic, we’ve been face to face with our fragility and vulnerability, perhaps for some of us as never before.

Against that backdrop of hurt and loss, we give you thanks for the life and service of Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh. Some are called to the front of the stage, others to supporting roles, and we rejoice in the way he supported Her Majesty the Queen through all of the years of her reign.

We remember, too, his work supporting charities and, perhaps most memorably for young people for over sixty years, his patronage of The Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

In this hour of loss, we offer our heartfelt prayers for Her Majesty and her family. Comfort them in their loss, bind up their wounds, and grant them the consolation of a store of treasured memories. Grant Her Majesty the peace that comes from knowing you and which passes all understanding.

These and all our prayers we ask in the name of Jesus, who through his life, death and resurrection offers us hope instead of despair, life instead of death. Amen.”

Here is a link to the hymn, ‘We Cannot Measure How You Heal’
<https://youtu.be/exr0oxZwZKA>

I can be contacted at meager52@btinternet.com

Church Bells

We wish to reinstate the ringing of the church bells on Sunday mornings but need to establish a team of bell ringers to do the job.

After a few minutes practice you will find that it is not difficult nor is it physically strenuous. If you can help with this joyful work (several neighbours have commented on how nice it has been to hear the bells over Easter) please contact the minister, 01334 656 181, or Arthur Martin 01334 652 100, or Liz Nelson 01334 652 007.

Gardening Group

The weekly gardening group will recommence on Thursday 29 April, beginning at 9:15, and work for about an hour. Tasks generally include light pruning and weeding, nothing too strenuous. New volunteers are most welcome, and you're welcome to come to work and wear your gardening clothes to the 10:30 worship service.

For more information, please call Arthur Martin, 01334 652 100.

Worship In-Person

Please join us for gathered worship in the Old Parish Centre. Reservations are not necessary.

Thursday 10:30am

Sunday 11:00am

Sunday 4:00pm

Worship Online

We now live stream our Sunday eleven o'clock service. This week's service will be available at:

<https://youtu.be/G3sEnDwPKiA>

You may also watch the service afterward at our YouTube channel, Monimail and Cupar Old:

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

The Moderator of the General Assembly, Martin Fair, has provided a worship service, drawing on participants from across the Church of Scotland. This week's service, **The Road to Emmaus**, will be available from Sunday morning at:

https://youtu.be/Y_94guaUCs

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

Donations

If you would like to make a financial gift to the congregation, you may do so securely via the Church of Scotland website. Just click the red 'Donate' tab and follow the instructions to direct your gift to Cupar Old Parish Church.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk