

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 16 July 2021

Dear Friends:

We drove to the airport on Monday morning for our 'fit to fly' covid tests. The staff were all incredibly friendly, and we were grateful for their patience with us.

Since I had just preached four sermons on the impact we have within our spheres of influence, I was more aware of the gift the staff had given us through their attitude of friendly, calm competence. Now I feel more at ease with the travel ahead of us, and the hurdles we may encounter.

That brings me back to reflect on the people I meet in daily life--medical professionals, shopkeepers and other business people, employees at the crematorium and cemeteries, teachers and school staff, and co-workers in the church--all of the people along the way who perform their jobs with caring competence, and who utilise their position in ways that build up.

Sometimes I fail to recognise the gift, but when I'm reminded to take notice again, I'm always amazed to see the power of the small act of kindness, and the ripples of positive effect it can cause.

So my challenge for myself and for you this week is to encourage others and treat them with full respect and kindness, especially those we do not know and may not ever see again, that perhaps it will help them to meet their challenges in a better frame of mind.

If you're in need of support during these weeks that I'm away, please contact your district elder or the Prayer Team janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

You may also contact Liz Nelson liznelson48@aol.com or Jean Martin jeansmartin1968@gmail.com for the details of those who are handling funerals or other pastoral emergencies.

I'll look forward to seeing you again when I return in August!

Warm regards,
Jeff

Worship Live Stream

Please join us at eleven o'clock on Sunday for worship:
<https://youtu.be/qPGU1JBvZEA>

From Our Prayer Team

Amid a surge of coronavirus cases in Bangladesh, the country is currently under lockdown. Pray for provision for people who have lost their source of income due to the lockdown and are facing real hunger.

Please pray that as restrictions are lifted in our own country and more movement and travel is allowed, that people remain vigilant and sensible and follow the restrictions that are in place.

The prayer groups continue to meet weekly through Zoom. If you would like to join us or have a prayer request for yourself or someone else or would like a member of the team to pray with you then please contact:

Janice Geddes

01334 652957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Reflection from Peter Meager

Joe, (not his real name) was a regular patient on the ward. He would be in the community for several months, then there would be an acute psychotic episode and he would be back in hospital. We had built up an easy rapport over the years. He had a faith of sorts and what he didn't know about the devil wasn't worth knowing.

One day he greeted me with the question, 'Peter, do you believe in the devil?' Sensing I might be walking into a trap, I replied, 'Yes, Joe, I do, but maybe I don't think of the devil in the same way as you do.' 'Well,' he said, how does the devil work?' 'That's easy, Joe,' I replied, 'He makes you take cannabis and you end up in here.' He gave a great belly laugh, hugged me and went off chuckling.

We've lost touch since I retired, so I don't know if he has been able to break the vicious circle of addiction and vulnerability to those whose business was to sell him drugs.

We are all aware of evil at work in the world, whether it be those who exploit the vulnerability of folk like Joe; individuals committing violent crimes; gangs terrorising communities; or regimes oppressing and persecuting those who don't share their religion, politics or ethnicity. How do we respond to this ever-present blot on God's good creation? A little boy came home from church and was asked by his granny what the

sermon was about. 'It was about sin,' he answered, 'and the minister was against it.'

We may not understand why evil exists nor agree on what the devil's precise nature is, but we can agree to combat evil where we are able. When we do, we might be surprised by what happens.

In the early nineties the plight of the people in Sarajevo featured in the tv headlines for several months. Everyone agreed it was awful, but what could we do about it? In Elie, Kilconquhar and Colinsburgh, some of our members came up with the idea of sending out a bus to bring back a group of refugees. Contact was made with a bus company whose founders were committed Christians. They agreed to provide a coach, drivers and fuel for the trip. A group of refugees in Sarajevo was identified and a team, including a nurse, was selected to travel on the bus and tend to the Bosnians on the return journey.

So that the bus could be utilised on the outward journey, an aid centre in Romania was contacted. Relief supplies would be taken there before picking up the refugees at the Bosnian border. The BBC sent a reporter and cameraman to post daily bulletins.

Our garage was the collection point for the aid and it was soon completely full. We met each day to pray for the Spirit's guidance, protection and enabling for the trip. There was some local opposition because the refugees would have to be housed and this might displace local folk on the housing waiting list. This was understandable and justified criticism, but we decided to face that difficulty if we had to.

On the day before departure, I phoned the aid centre and asked if there was anything in particular that they needed. 'Shoes,' they said. Many of those crossing the border had left with just

the clothes on their back and shoes had disintegrated by the time they got there. Before I had a chance to do anything about it, I had a call from a local businessman. 'I've got dozens of pairs of shoes in a warehouse. Can you use them?' he said. He explained that they were fire damaged stock but were perfectly serviceable.

There were many heart-stopping moments along the way, but the objectives were achieved. The local community came together to offer temporary accommodation, food and clothing while the necessary formalities for rehousing were gone through. The ripples of goodness and hope continued over the next few years, but that is a story for another day.

Of course, several of you have your own experience of how the Spirit enabled you to act against the evil of child poverty in Peru.

Paul tells us in Romans 12: 21 *'Do not be overcome by evil but overcome evil with good.'* We may have to wait till we get to heaven to understand why there is still evil in the world, but we don't have to wait to show that we are against it and throw in our weight with those who resist it. Above all, we know that Jesus has won the decisive battle against the evil one and he sends us his Spirit of power to give us courage, strength and indomitable hope for the fray.

Reading: Romans 12: 9-21

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honour one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervour, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practise hospitality.

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.
Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.*

Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord.

On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Song

Here's a link to the hymn, 'Soldiers of Christ, Arise'

<https://youtu.be/44GUiMdFApA>

Prayer

God our Father, when you finished creating your world, you looked at it and concluded that it was good. You made women and men in your likeness and gave them all they needed to live in fellowship with you and in harmony with creation. Yet, we see countless examples in our own lives and in the history of the world of pure, unadulterated wickedness and we sometimes doubt that you are in control.

Father, forgive us for our part in all that mars your world. Give us the desire, the courage and the perseverance to resist what is evil and pursue what is good, peaceable, uniting and uplifting. Help us to believe that you have won the victory and that your purposes of love will not be thwarted by any wicked being or power. So may we be part of the solution rather than part of the problem and know that, always and everywhere, we are yours and you will bring us home.

Lord, we have had an abundance of sporting events in recent weeks. We thank you for the way different nations can be brought together in friendly rivalry by such tournaments. We admire and marvel at the devotion and effort participants display as well as their skills and stamina. We have felt the agony and the ecstasy; the euphoria and the heartbreak of the winners and the losers. Help those who win to be gracious and those who lose to bounce back to try harder the next time around.

May all sports be more inclusive and give children and young people of all backgrounds the opportunity to benefit from healthy exercise and wholesome competition as well as learning to work as members of a team. We thank you for giving us these sources of enjoyment and means of developing fitness and character and ask that you will free them from the influences of all who would cheat to gain an advantage and destroy the true spirit that sports are based on. We have also seen, with shame, the hurt of those who have suffered abuse in the cesspit of social media hatred. We pray that sport may be rid of this evil and those affected may be able to recover and rise above it.

Father, in our work and in our leisure may we always be found worthy of you, for Jesus' sake. Amen

Feel free to get in touch at meager52@btinternet.com

Worship In-Person

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

Sunday 11:00am

Sunday 4:00pm

Worship Online

Live stream of our 11:00 service on Sunday 18 July:

<https://youtu.be/gPGU1JBvZEA>

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

Online Donations

We are very grateful for your continued generosity throughout these times. If you would like to set up a standing order, you may speak with David, our treasurer. You're also welcome to make a one-off donation through the secured giving at the Church of Scotland home page:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Just click on the red 'Donate' button and follow the instructions to direct your gift toward our congregation.
