

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 17 June 2022

Dear Friends:

We're beginning to slide toward summer, and I invite you to take note of some changes in worship next week and beyond: on 26 June, we will have a family service in the sanctuary at 11:00am to mark the end of term for our Sunday Club. Everyone is then invited to Craigtoun Park on the outskirts of St Andrews for a bring-your-own picnic lunch starting at 12:45, followed by games and an informal outdoor worship service to close our time.

We will continue to have two Sunday services throughout the summer. The afternoon service will always be a kid-friendly family worship. The service will move into the lounge in the Old Parish Centre for the summer.

Though our schedule changes a bit during the summer holiday, we continue to gather as a people centred in Christ. I will be gone for a few weeks for a holiday in America, but we are well supported with members of the congregation who will lead worship services. When you are not away for your own holidays, I invite you to join in, and remain connected in our fellowship of disciples in Christ.

Warm regards,
Jeff

From Our Prayer Team

Janice: janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

In the world's poorest countries, slightly more than one in five children are trapped in child labour. Across Sub-Saharan Africa, many children end up working long hours in mines, or in other hazardous work, and they miss out on school. Please pray for the work various organisations are doing to help people start their own businesses so they can lift their families out of poverty and are no longer forced to send their children to work.

Please pray for those with poor mental health within our church family and in the community.

The Prayer Team continues to meet weekly through Zoom. If you would like to join us, have a prayer request or would like a member of the group to pray with you then please contact either Jeff Martin or Janice Geddes.

House Group News

Shena and Brian: 01334 653 561

The Kildene House Group met this past Tuesday for the first time 'in the flesh' since the initial lockdown. We all enjoyed an evening meal at Pitlessie Inn and people were really pleased not to be on Zoom! We are taking a break now until August. We normally meet fortnightly on Tuesday evenings at Kildene, Westfield Road (home of Brian and Shena Porteous) and we would be delighted to have some new members in August. Our present age group ranges from 30+ to 70+ so there's plenty scope for all age groups! If you would like to find out more, please contact Shena and Brian, 01334 653 561

19 June: Worship

Please join us for gathered worship this week at 11:00 in the sanctuary, and at 4:00 in the Old Parish Centre. The afternoon service includes our last regular Sunday Club gathering before the summer holidays. Our reading this week is Luke 8: 26-39. The morning service will be recorded and available for viewing later Sunday afternoon on our YouTube channel:

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

21 June: Memory Café

Shena: shenaporteous@hotmail.com

Our Tuesday Memory Café meets at 2:00pm on 21 June to welcome in the summer with chat and activities for 'summer holidays'. People with dementia and their carers are welcome for an afternoon of conversation and support.

22 June: Coffee and Chat [and Gardening, too!]

Jill, Coffee and Chat: 01334 655 528 or 07929 444 246

Arthur, Gardening: 01334 652 100

Come along for our weekly gathering of friendship from 10:00 to 11:15 each Wednesday morning in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre. As an added bonus, you can come at 9:30 and join the gardening group that works faithfully to keep our grounds in good order.

22 June: Social Evening

Jill Logan: 01334 655 528 or 07929 444 246

These long summer evenings are such a blessing in this part of the world. The longest day is upon us next week, but we still have lots of glorious light. How about an evening walk at Birnie and Gaddon Lochs with a snack picnic. We will meet at the car park on Wednesday 22nd June at 7pm and have our refreshments half way round. If you would like to come along and require a lift, or could offer someone a lift, please give Jill a ring. Hope to see lots of you then. Also, please do bring along friends and neighbours.

25 June: Annual Meeting

The stated annual meeting of the congregation will take place in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre on Saturday 25 June, beginning at 10:00am. Coffee and tea will be served from 9:45. We will receive the financial report for 2021 and discuss the state of the presbytery plan that has recommended the closure of our sanctuary within five years.

26 June: Worship and Craigtoun Picnic

We will have a family service at 11:00am in the sanctuary to mark the end of this year's Sunday Club. After the service, we'll meet up at Craigtoun Park for a picnic and games. Please bring your own picnic and dress comfortably. We do not have the shelter this year, but will meet up in that vicinity. Everyone is welcome to attend. **There will not be an afternoon service** in the Old Parish Centre, but we will conclude our time at Craigtoun with an informal time of worship.

Reflection from Peter Meager

Peter: meager52@btinternet.com

"You've got the seven devils!" This was my aunt's exasperated response to one of my particularly bad bits of behaviour when aged six or seven. (Is there something in the Scots psyche that caused an instant response like this? Or is it just that my family was a bit weird?)

My memory has long since erased the nature of the misdemeanour. That's as it should be; when God forgives he also forgets. Once we have repented of a wrong, confessed our fault and asked for forgiveness and, if appropriate, made amends, we are freed from beating ourselves up with feelings of guilt.

It was much later that I learned that the original subject of the phrase was Mary Magdalene. In Luke 8:2 we are told of several women who followed Jesus who had had demons or evil spirits cast out by him (the Authorised

Version uses 'devils' while most modern translations use 'demons'). Among them was, 'Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out'.

Coincidentally, our reading for this week comes from later on in the same chapter and there we meet a man who habitually self-harmed and was violent towards others. (Luke 8:26-39) He attributed his behaviour to demon or devil possession – not just seven demons, but six thousand, if we take his words literally. He told Jesus his name was Legion. There were six thousand soldiers in a Roman legion and it looks as if he felt completely overwhelmed by his understanding of what controlled his life. We would see his condition as being caused by psychiatric illness.

A few weeks after leaving school, I started working as a nursing assistant in a one hundred and twenty bedded, locked ward in a large psychiatric hospital. One day there was a staff shortage in what was known as 'The Sick Bay,' and I was sent to help. This was unlike anything I had ever experienced. There were twelve beds; six down each side. The windows were screened in thick metal mesh and the staff sat at a table near the door. All the patients were in bed and heavily sedated. I was assigned to one of the three seats and told to follow the lead of the two burly male nurses when things started kicking off.

A few minutes later, without any preamble, one of the patients threw back his covers with a blood curdling, ear-splitting roar, jumped out of bed and launched himself down the ward like a bat out of hell. The other two nurses took off after him, with me bringing up the rear. He was tackled to the floor and restrained. His strength was phenomenal and it took the combined power of all of us to hold him until an injection of strong sedatives could be administered and he eventually lapsed into a comatose state and was safely tucked back into bed. It was pretty barbaric, but the hospital was trying to move away from the use of the padded cell and straight jacket and this was the alternative then for those who were prone to such uncontrollable, violent outbursts.

Legion had been subject to similar violent episodes for years. He had been banished from normal society and endured a wretched existence, naked, chained hand and foot and watched over by guards. He too possessed this superhuman strength that has to be experienced to be believed and which enabled him to snap his metal restraints as if they were nothing more than paper chains.

Coming at this story from our modern perspective, we have another problem: As Luke describes it, Jesus allows the host of demons to enter a nearby herd of pigs who career down the hillside, drowning themselves in the lake below. The owners experience a big financial loss which is not addressed. Professor Barclay suggests the following scenario. (**The Gospel of Luke**, page 108, The Saint Andrews Press) Legion lets out a heart rending yell as the psychotic episode overwhelms him. The pigs are spooked by the noise and take off down the slope to their watery demise.

Barclay comments that we shouldn't be distracted from the main point of this story: that a needy human being is restored to health and well-being and this matters more than the loss of some pigs. He suggests that the man will only be convinced of being cured if he has visual evidence that the spirits have left him. That is provided by the sight of the pigs taking flight and being drowned in the lake. This episode follows hard on Jesus stilling a violent storm in the lake. Here we see that, just as he is the Lord of nature; he can also calm the most disturbing and intractable of human conditions. Does this justify the destruction of a herd of pigs? You decide.

But there's more going on here. Luke's framework is to show the good news of Christ's kingdom radiating out by degrees from its Jewish base to reach the whole world. In landing on the eastern side of Lake Galilee, Jesus enters Gentile territory and shows that his message of whole of life salvation is for them too.

Let's finish by seeing how it ended for Legion. Surely one of the most important points that Doctor Luke makes is his description of the healed man in verse 35. When the crowd arrives, they find him sitting at Jesus' feet, 'dressed and in his right mind'. For Luke the complete antithesis of being demon possessed is being 'in our right mind' – at one with Jesus; at peace with ourselves; whole; ready to re-integrate with society and live a constructive life which is full of meaning.

Legion asks Jesus if he can go with him. (verses 38 and 39), *'but Jesus sent him away, saying, "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him'.*

It's relatively easy to go where you're not known and share your faith journey. Much harder to do it where everyone knows all about your 'seven devils.'

Song: Colours of Day

https://youtu.be/_bZPRHlyVBA

Colours of day dawn into the mind,
The sun has come up, the night is behind.
Go down in the city, into the street,
And let's give the message to the people we meet.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Go through the park, on into the town;
The sun still shines on, it never goes down.
The light of the world is risen again;

The people of darkness are needing a friend.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Open your eyes, look into the sky,
The darkness has come, the Son came to die.
The evening draws on, the sun disappears,
But Jesus is living, His Spirit is near.

So light up the fire and let the flame burn,
Open the door, let Jesus return.
Take seeds of His Spirit, let the fruit grow,
Tell the people of Jesus, let His love show.

Reading: Luke 8:26-39

They sailed to the region of the Gerasenes, which is across the lake from Galilee. When Jesus stepped ashore, he was met by a demon-possessed man from the town. For a long time this man had not worn clothes or lived in a house, but had lived in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out and fell at his feet, shouting at the top of his voice, 'What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg you, don't torture me!' For Jesus had commanded the impure spirit to come out of the man. Many times it had seized him, and though he was chained hand and foot and kept under guard, he had broken his chains and had been driven by the demon into solitary places.

Jesus asked him, 'What is your name?' 'Legion,' he replied, because many demons had gone into him. And they begged Jesus repeatedly not to order them to go into the abyss.

A large herd of pigs was feeding there on the hillside. The demons begged Jesus to let them go into the pigs, and he gave them permission. When the demons came out of the man, they went into the pigs, and the herd rushed down the steep bank into the lake and was drowned.

When those tending the pigs saw what had happened, they ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. When they came to Jesus, they found the man from whom the demons had gone out, sitting at Jesus' feet, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. Those who had seen it told the people how the demon-possessed man had been cured. Then all the people of the region of the Gerasenes asked Jesus to leave them, because they were overcome with fear. So he got into the boat and left.

The man from whom the demons had gone out begged to go with him, but Jesus sent him away, saying, 'Return home and tell how much God has done

for you.' So the man went away and told all over the town how much Jesus had done for him.

Prayer

'Father in Heaven, we thank you for giving us a living demonstration of your love in the life of Jesus. We thank you that in him we see that you are concerned for every one of your children, that you reach out to heal the sick, and that death itself cannot kill your love for us.

May we know that same power of love active in our lives and fellowship now, that its glory may be focussed with new intensity upon everyone of us.

We are like the crowds who gathered around Jesus long ago; wandering souls lost and lonely, attracted by the Light of Love in his face. We are seeking souls, weary with trying out our own answers, turning to find the eternal truth of your love. We are sick souls and diseased bodies, coming to find out if the power you demonstrated to heal long ago is still available through your church today.

Lord, have mercy on us for sins committed openly and knowingly and for those that were unintentional and unwitting. As we confess them now in silence, may we feel your cleansing Spirit coursing through our souls. May we accept the chance of new beginnings and go forward gladly, relying on your power for the future,' (After Iain Cowie page 79. People Praying. The Saint Andrew Press)

Father, as we commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the end of the Falklands War, we remember all whose minds are still blighted by horrors they experienced there, as well as those who still bear physical scars of that conflict. We pray to for the families of the 255 service personnel who gave their lives there whose pride is overshadowed by their loss.

We pray too for all who still encounter similar atrocities today, in Ukraine, in Yemen and elsewhere. Lord of Peace, bring an end to conflicts and restore broken individuals and communities for Jesus' sake. Amen