

# Cupar Old Parish Church

*Where Everyone Matters*

## Newsletter 19 November 2021

Dear Friends:

During most of the church year, we're looking back at the life of Jesus, or to God's call to us in the present, but at the end of November, we have one Sunday that invites us to look ahead, to a future when all that we know of creation falls away, and we are gathered in God's holy presence for an eternity of praise.

The mystery of what lies ahead is counterbalanced by our trust in the Holy One. We don't know the fulness of what eternity looks like, but we know it will be good, because God is good. And that's really all we need to know for now.

Warm regards,  
Jeff

### From Our Prayer Team

Janice: [janice.geddes2@btinternet.com](mailto:janice.geddes2@btinternet.com)

Please pray for those in our community who are unable to get out of doors because of health issues or because they may still feel very uneasy due to coronavirus.

Cocoa farmers in the Ivory Coast are set to lose one fifth of their income next year due to the decrease in the price of cocoa beans. Large chocolate companies are reporting higher profits but are not paying farmers more for cocoa. Please pray that farmers will be assisted to join Fairtrade initiatives so that they can be paid a fair price for their work.

Love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.  
~ First John 4 :7

## **Flower Delivery**

Jill: 01334 655 528

Would you like to be involved in taking flowers to someone after the morning church service? Recipients are local members and friends of the congregation. Some are no longer able to attend church services in person, and others have had a bereavement or time in hospital. This is a really good way to let people know that they are not forgotten, and it's a reminder of God's love that we share with one another. The brief chat at the door also gives people a chance to get to know people we might see only in the distance on a Sunday. Volunteers normally deliver flowers once every four to six weeks.

If this aspect of pastoral care is something you would like to help with, please contact Jill Logan (01334 655 528).

## **Amnesty International: Your Words are Powerful**

Celia: [gandc.armitage@gmail.com](mailto:gandc.armitage@gmail.com)

Every year the Cupar Justice and Peace Group invites us to join with them in supporting Amnesty International's annual Write for Rights campaign and showing our solidarity for people and organisations enduring human rights abuses.

It will only take a few minutes to write a letter or card or send an email or social media message, but for an environmental activist facing a long prison sentence, a citizen journalist detained for reporting on the pandemic, or an LGBTI organisation suffering homophobic attacks, these simple gestures have a powerful impact.

Past campaigns have shown that messages of solidarity – alongside those of fellow Amnesty supporters across the globe – are a great source of comfort and support for people doing the difficult and often dangerous work of standing up for human rights. Our letters, words and actions also put pressure on the authorities to take action to free prisoners of conscience and protect the vulnerable.

You can join the campaign online at: <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/write-for-rights>

Or you can take a sheet which will give information to help you write a letter or card. These sheets will be available to pick up at worship services over the next few weeks. Please contact Celia Armitage for more information: 01334 656 611 or [gandc.armitage@gmail.com](mailto:gandc.armitage@gmail.com)

### **19 November: The Chosen**

Gloria: [gloriamcferguson@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:gloriamcferguson@yahoo.co.uk)

Movie night continues every Friday night in the Old Parish Centre until 17 December, as we enjoy weekly instalments of **The Chosen**, the internationally-distributed series on the ministry of Jesus. We begin with tea/coffee in the lounge from 7:30pm before viewing the new episode in the hall

You can catch up with the link below.

<https://watch.angelstudios.com/thechosen>

### **20 November: Safeguarding Refresher**

Morag: [dandmscott@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dandmscott@hotmail.co.uk)

Church of Scotland guidance on Safeguarding advise congregations to ensure their volunteers attend training on appointment of their volunteering role and then this should be updated every three years. A refresher training has been arranged for Saturday 20th November in the Old Parish Centre from 9.30am to 12noon.

Almost all of our volunteers will require refresher training. There are a few volunteers who require to attend an initial training and we have also arranged a training date on Saturday 8th January 2022 in the Old Parish Centre, 9:30am to 12noon.

Please email Morag Scott ([dandmscott@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:dandmscott@hotmail.co.uk)) to join one of our training sessions or to enquire about your specific status.

### **21 November: Worship**

Please join us for gathered worship. This is the last Sunday in the church year, the celebration of the Eternal Reign of Christ. We honour Jesus as the Sovereign of our lives and of all creation, but we remember that he is the Sovereign who serves.

#### **11:00am on Sunday, in the sanctuary**

The reading for the morning service is Revelation 7: 9-11.

#### **4:00pm on Sunday, family service in the Old Parish Centre**

In the afternoon, we have a family service, as the children share their learning from the story of the woman who shows her love and gratitude by washing Jesus' feet with her tears. The story is from Luke 7: 36-50.

The morning service will be available for viewing online on Sunday afternoon at our YouTube channel:

[https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ\\_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ)

## **Mark Your December Calendars:**

### **9 December: Church Lunch**

Jill: 01334 655 528

All are welcome to come to Caulders Garden Centre on Thursday 9th December at 12 midday for Christmas lunch, a time to catch up with those you may not have seen for a while. Lunch will include starter and main course, plus coffee or tea with a small sweet treat. Price £17.

Please contact Jill Logan (01334 655 528) to sign up and give menu choices. Lifts are available.

### **16 December: Fellowship & Carols**

Jill: 01334 655 528

This time last year we couldn't meet together in large numbers, so let's never take it for granted when we can. How about coming along to the Old Parish Centre on Thursday 16th December, from 10.15 to 11.15am for coffee and tea, mince pies, shortbread and lots of fun singing carols and chatting. Please invite neighbours and friends to this time of fellowship. Lifts are available. Please contact Jill Logan (01334 655 528) for more details. Looking forward to raising the roof of the big hall!

### **Reflection from Peter Meager**

When our children were in boarding school, we only saw them three times a year, except when we were in the UK. Then we could have them home for half terms and a couple of what were known as 'Exeats', when we could take them out for a weekend. These were very precious and special times.

During the autumn holiday, we established the tradition of making our Christmas cake. Then at the end of November, our daughter Liz's birthday often coincided with 'Stir Up Sunday', the last Sunday before Advent, and this was the time when we added the marzipan to the cake that had been regularly infused with brandy in the intervening weeks. That left the icing for when they eventually arrived home at the end of term. I realise we were being a bit heretical as we should have been making our Christmas pudding on 'Stir Up Sunday'.

This custom arose in England after the 1549 introduction of the English Book of Common Prayer. The prayer that was set for this Sunday each year was, 'Stir up, O Lord, the wills of your faithful people, that richly bearing the fruit of good works, they may be richly rewarded by you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.' [This modernisation is from the 1980 Alternative Service Book.]

Supposedly, cooks, wives and servants would go to church, hear the words 'Stir up, O Lord...', and be reminded that it was about time to start preparing the puddings for Christmas. All the family would take a turn of stirring the heavy mixture, making a wish as they did.

All of this is just to remind us that this Sunday will be the last one before the beginning of Advent.

The Bible passage set for this week is from the Book of Revelation 7: 9-17. When I looked at it, my first thought was that we have already studied very similar themes at least three times so far this year. When I asked myself why this might be, it occurred to me that if something is important it needs to be stressed or emphasised, and one way of doing this is by repeating it. Heaven is vastly important in Christian teaching so, it shouldn't be surprising that we frequently come back to think about it.

We are now very familiar with the video referee at major sporting events. When there's a disputed try during an international rugby match, the referee calls for the Television Match Official. The TMO can then follow the play from several different camera angles to help the referee come to a full understanding of the facts. Similarly, when the Bible writers are describing heaven, they give us different perspectives or insights that help us not only to understand the history but also to inspire and encourage us as we live in the present and move forward into the future.

This passage probably has part of its background in Jesus' statement in John 16:33, *'I have said this to you, so that in me you may have peace. In the world you face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!'*

In some translations the word 'persecution' is given as 'troubles.' So, in verse nine, John has a vision of a vast multi-national, multi-lingual, multi-cultural throng of people. In verse 14, we learn that this enormous crowd are those 'who have come out of the great ordeal.' Again, for 'ordeal', we might understand 'persecution' or 'trouble'.

Going back to verse nine, we see that they are 'robed in white'. John's readers would take two things from this: when new Christians were baptised, traditionally, they would wear white robes as a sign of their being made pure. Equally, they would picture a Roman general leading the parade after a notable victory. He would be wearing white robes to denote a great win. As the general processed, the cheering crowd would be waving palm branches. Think of the Palm Sunday story.

So, those in John's vision have not just survived troubles or persecutions, they have come through them triumphantly. Again, we remember Jesus' resurrection. Having gone through the slow, agonising death on the cross, we find him on Easter morning, not in Intensive Care on life support, but gloriously, vibrantly alive. This is the Christian hope. But it's not only hope for heaven. It's hope for here and now, too. Regardless of the difficulties we endure and the heartbreaks we suffer, we are assured not only of survival, but of rising above all that would make us shed a tear and break our spirit. We thrive as well as survive.

This brings us to the closing verses of our passage; The picture of all God's people surrounding his throne, singing his praises and being protected and sheltered by him. Then the image changes to one of a shepherd; echoing the 23rd Psalm. The shepherd leads his flock to good, green pastures and an abundance of all that they need. And finally, there is the picture of the loving parent, soothing the troubled brow and wiping away every tear from our eyes.

In the song, 'When the Saints Go Marching in', we have the line, 'Lord, how I want to be in that number when the saints go marching in.' The Gospel's resounding message is that we don't have to wait till we get to heaven to be part of that number. We all can be part of it straight away by coming humbly to Jesus, throwing ourselves on his mercy and accepting all he longs to give us.

When looking for an appropriate hymn for today, I thought first of all of the lines from verse four of Hymn 511, 'Your Hand, O God Has Guided':

'Thy mercy will not fail us, nor leave thy work undone;  
with thy right hand to help us, thy victory shall be won;  
and then, by all creation, thy name shall be adored,  
and this shall be their anthem: one Church, one Faith, one Lord.'

I then thought of the last verse of Hymn 439, 'Look, You Saints, the Sight Is Glorious':

'Hark those bursts of acclamation!  
Hark, those loud triumphant chords!  
Jesus takes the highest station –  
Oh, what joy the sight affords!  
Crown him! Crown him! Crown him! Crown him!  
King of kings, and Lord of Lords!

While looking for a recording of it, I came across a hymn that's not in our hymnal, 'Who Are These, Like Stars Appearing', which paraphrases the passage we've been looking at. I've included a link below.

If you read this on Friday, you've got two days to get your Christmas pudding ingredients together. But don't forget the real thrust of the prayer: to shake off any lethargy that's been creeping in over the months of lockdown and over the shortening days of autumn. Maybe it's time to re-vitalise and get your Christian living back into top gear, and be ready for all the excitement of the coming Advent season.

### **Reading: Revelation 7:9-17**

*After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. They cried out in a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!' And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshipped God, singing, 'Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honour and power and might be to our God for ever and ever! Amen.' Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, 'Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?' I said to him, 'Sir, you are the one that knows.' Then he said to me, 'These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them. They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat; for the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.'*

## Hymn: 'Who Are These Like Stars Appearing'

from Wakefield Cathedral

<https://youtu.be/L3V6tb3vg5s>

Who are these like stars appearing,  
these before God's throne who stand?  
Each a golden crown is wearing;  
who are all this glorious band?  
Alleluia! Hark, they sing,  
praising loud their heav'nly King.

Who are these of dazzling brightness,  
these in God's own truth arrayed,  
clad in robes of purest whiteness,  
robes whose lustre ne'er shall fade,  
ne'er be touched by time's rude hand?  
Whence come all this glorious band?

These are they who have contended  
for their Saviour's honour long,  
wrestling on 'til life was ended,  
foll'wing not the sinful throng;  
these, who well the fight sustained,  
triumph thro' the Lamb have gained.

These are they whose hearts were riven,  
sore with woe and anguish tried,  
who in pray'r full oft have striven  
with the God they glorified;  
now, their painful conflict o'er,  
God has bid them weep no more.

These, like priests, have watched and waited,  
off'ring up to Christ their will;  
soul and body consecrated,  
day and night to serve him still:  
now in God's most holy place  
blest they stand before his face.



## **A Prayer**

Father God, as the nights creep in and the desire to shut ourselves away for the winter in a safe, cosy spot becomes an alluring prospect, we ask that your Spirit will stir up and revive our flagging spirits. Give us a vision for the days ahead. Give us love for our families, our Church, our communities and, not least, for ourselves that will morph into caring acts that will reflect your love and gladden the hearts of all who cross our paths. So may we be worthy of all you have done for us in Jesus and, at the last, may we be united with all who have gone ahead and join that great choir which revels in your presence and thrills to sing the song of heaven.

Lord, we are mindful of the needs of others, especially at this time, the needs of children. We thank you for all who have been motivated to engage in fundraising activities and we pray that you will bless their efforts and ensure that all disadvantaged, differently-abled and vulnerable young folk may have the support, acceptance, encouragement and resources they need to live full and fulfilled lives. These things we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Should you want to be in touch, I can be contacted at [meager52@btinternet.com](mailto:meager52@btinternet.com)

## **Reflection from Angus Allan: Remembrance**

The First World War, which started on 28th July 1914, ended on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month 1918. It was known at the time as Armistice Day. In 1931 Parliament changed the name to Remembrance Day. It was first observed as such on November 11th, 1931. It was among the deadliest conflicts in human history, with 23 million wounded and 15 – 22 million deaths. The fighting took place mainly from trenches, with soldiers living and dying in pretty awful conditions. The poet John McCrae, himself a soldier, grips our attention in the poem, **In Flanders Fields**:

In Flanders fields the poppies blow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; and in the sky  
The larks, still bravely singing, fly  
Scarce heard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead. Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow,  
Loved and were loved, and now we lie,  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe:  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch; be yours to hold it high.  
If ye break faith with us who die  
We shall not sleep, though poppies grow  
In Flanders fields.

My father-in-law Edward Murray took part in the war and lived to tell his story. After he returned home in 1919, he married Helen Mitchell and they had a family of five, including twins Helen and Robert. The family attended St Stephen's Parish Church in Glasgow, the minister latterly being John R Gray. Edward never shared his wartime experiences with his wife or family; they were probably too painful, hidden away in the recesses of his mind. But his faith remained and he was an active elder in the church.

Little did we expect that in just over 20 years time we would be into another war, fuelled by Nazi hatred resulting in the Holocaust and many lives being taken in fighting, prison camps and the bombing of civilians. The D-Day landings on 6th June 1944, which included American and Commonwealth troops, marked a turning point. Further wars were to follow, in Korea, Vietnam and Afghanistan.

The Chelsea Pensioners with the Bedford School Chapel Choir have recorded a single, "White Doves of Peace", which concludes with the well-known Kohima epitaph:

"When you go home tell them of us and say,  
For your tomorrow we gave our today."

Today we have a fragile peace maintained by nuclear submarines. The Cold War is still with us. As we look forward we give thanks for the freedom we enjoy and the words of Jesus, *"If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free"* (John 8: 32-33). He is speaking about being a "slave to sin" and being set free from its power to follow "the light of the world" (John 8:12). None is perfect and we stumble through life aware of our

failures and shortcomings. Wars and quarrels are often started through selfish ambition; they can only be stopped by extending a hand of peace, reconciliation and forgiveness.

Lord, forgive us for past sins and help us to look forward with faith, hope and love.  
Amen