

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 24 June 2022

Dear Friends:

The roses in our garden are the best they've ever been in the seven summers that we've lived in Cupar.

Unfortunately, my spouse, the true gardener and rosarian, is back in the States for most of this summer. She doesn't get to experience the full rosy glory of it all, but she's enjoying the photos I've been sending. If only I could text their fragrance as well!

My grandmother loved roses, too, but she specialised in hybrid tea roses, which require a lot more work than the old roses that we have. They had to be pruned, sprayed, and wrapped and covered for the cold Iowa winters. 'Mr Lincoln' and the 'Peace Rose' were two of her favourites.

My mother always thought that she hadn't inherited my grandmother's green thumb, but since she retired twenty years ago, she's nurtured a large, lush garden as well. Over the years she's collected a variety of hostas, which aren't as labour intensive as roses, and allow her more time for card-playing with friends and serving as a volunteer to help seniors with their health insurance needs.

We all have our preferences and our priorities, and we each choose the ways we want to focus our attention and invest our energies and resources. Whether in the garden or in other areas of life, it's a good feeling when we've nurtured plants, people, purposes, and endeavours of any kind that are beautiful and life-giving, that magnify God's love in the world.

Happy gardening, in whatever sense you choose to nurture life into beauty.

Warm regards,

Jeff

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

From Our Prayer Team

Janice: janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Monday 20 June was World Refugee Day. Let us keep refugees in our prayers and reflect on the ways we, as the church, can help them.

As the cost of living continues to rise, please pray for families who may be finding feeding their children very difficult.

The prayer group 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

25 June: Annual Stated Meeting

The annual meeting of the congregation will take place at 10:00am on Saturday 25 June. We will receive the audited return of the treasurer's report for 2021 and discuss the presbytery mission plan for our congregation and the Cupar cluster. Coffee and tea are available from 9:45.

26 June: Worship

Please join us for a united, family service in the sanctuary at 11:00am this Sunday. The service will celebrate our Sunday Club as they conclude this term of learning, and will feature children of our congregation.

You may also join in worship via our YouTube channel:

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

In order to maintain the privacy of our children and families, the YouTube worship will be prerecorded, and will not include any identifiable images of the children in our care.

There will not be a worship service in the Old Parish Centre this Sunday. Please see the next entry for the reason why.

26 June: Family Fun at Craigtoun

Everyone is welcome to join together at Craigtoun Park this Sunday, beginning at 12:45. Please bring along your own picnic. We'll meet near our usual shelter [come into the grounds from the car park and follow the main path to the left until it turns to the north. We're just a little farther on.] After we eat, we'll have some games--including tug of war!--and close with an informal time of worship.

29 June: Coffee and Chat

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

Arthur, Gardening: 01334 652 100

Friends old and new gather in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre from 10:00 to 11:15 for conversation and refreshments and, at that one table in the corner, a good game of Scrabble. Everyone is welcome! The Gardening Crew would also welcome your help. They begin at 9:30 on Wednesday, then join the Coffee and Chatters as a reward for their labours in the garden.

15 July: Coffee and Chat Outing

Jill: 07929 444 246

The Coffee and Chat fellowship group will have an outing on Wednesday 15th July to Caulders Garden Centre. Please call Jill to confirm your attendance so the restaurant is prepared, and to request transportation if needed.

Coffee and Chat is always a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and to get to know others better. Normally the group meets in the Old Parish Centre, but they enjoy monthly outings to have an adventure and support the community.

3 July: Worship

During the summer holiday, we continue to have two Sunday worship services: a more traditional service in the sanctuary at 11:00am, and a family service in the lounge of the Old Parish Centre at 4:00pm.

Reflection from Peter Meager

Peter: meager52@btinternet.com

Don Camillo is the imaginary, hotheaded priest of a small, imaginary town in the Po Valley in northern Italy, in the years immediately following the Second World War. He is constantly at odds with the Communist mayor, Peppone and is also on very close terms with the crucifix in his town church. Through the crucifix, he hears the voice of Christ. I haven't read all of the 347 stories by Giovanni Guareschi, mainly because they haven't all been translated into English.

One of my favourites tells how Peppone has pipped Camillo to the post in opening a cinema in the town, when a violent storm knocks out the electricity supply and disrupts the performance. Camillo is delighted and gleefully kneels before the figure on the cross to pour out his gratitude. "Lord, I thank You..." he began. "What for, Don Camillo?" Christ asks. "For sending a storm and disrupting the electric current." "Don Camillo, I had nothing to do with the lights going off. I'm a carpenter not an electrician. The Christ in the crucifix

often has far greater understanding than Don Camillo of the troubles of his flock, and has to constantly but gently reprimand the priest for his impatience and intolerance.

In this week's reading from Luke 9, we find two of the disciples, James and John, asking Jesus' permission to let loose a heavenly fire bomb on a town that has shunned him. The background was that Jesus had decided that he must get to Jerusalem as quickly as possible since he knew that was where his destiny would be fulfilled. The normal routes for Jews travelling from Galilee to the capital would avoid going through Samaritan territory. This was because of a centuries old feud about where it was best to worship God. The Samaritans thought it should be at their holiest shrine; the Jews believed it should be in Jerusalem. In verse 51 Luke said, '*Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem.*' The quickest route was straight down through Samaria, and that was the way he headed. He had sent word ahead to try and arrange a stop over for his group, but when the people realised that his face was set on heading for Jerusalem, they took offence and did not welcome him. (Verse 53)

This is what prompted James and John, known as 'The Sons of Thunder', (Mark 3:17) to ask if Jesus wanted them to call down fire from heaven as Elijah had done in Second Kings chapter one. Last week it was the people in the Gerasene territory who had rejected Jesus and told him to leave. Now it's the residents in this Samaritan town. Might it not be natural for Jesus to feel anger and resentment? If he did, he had more important things on his mind than wasting his energy on revenge. And so, just like Don Camillo earlier, it is the two disciples who find themselves on the receiving end of an ear wiggling from Jesus.

Today's society is divided at so many levels. There is a lack of tolerance on all sides. There is bullying, intimidation, harassment and coercion with people being 'cancelled', shamed, and ostracised by those who don't hold the same views as them. Jesus is teaching us the basic virtue of **Tolerance** here. Once again we have to learn how to walk a tightrope. We have to learn what truths are worth going to the barricades for or leaving our church for and those where we should accept that there will be differing opinions and where we should try to get on with those who see things differently to us.

Jesus' overriding principle was **Love**. Professor Barclay tells that, 'When Abraham Lincoln was criticised for being too courteous to his enemies and when he was reminded of his duty to destroy them, he gave the great answer, "Do I not destroy my enemies when I make them my friends?"' Barclay then adds, 'Even if a man be utterly mistaken, we must never regard him as an enemy to be destroyed, but as a strayed friend to be recovered by love.' (**Commentary on Luke**, page 132, The Saint Andrew Press)

There follows a section in which Jesus responds to three wannabe followers. (verses 57-62) Jesus is brutally honest in outlining the cost of being a disciple. He does not want us to be under any illusion that discipleship will be easy, cheap or undemanding. We do would-be church members a great

disservice if we let them believe that Christian faith and church membership can ever be just an add-on to their present life. Jesus doesn't want what's left over when we've met the demands of family, school, work, or community. He will always demand to be our highest priority, with first call on our time, loyalty and resources. To the first man Jesus says, 'Count the cost of following me.'

Hymn writer Isaac Watts put it like this:

'Were the whole realm of nature mine,
that were an offering far too small;
love so amazing, so divine,
demands my soul, my life, my all!'

The second man says he must go and bury his father before starting to follow; Jesus' words are not as harsh as they seem at first. (verse 60) The man was not necessarily saying that his parent had just died. It is likely that what he meant was, 'Once I have no family responsibilities, I'll think about following you.' It's a fact of life that every time we put off starting a new venture, the less likely we are to undertake it and the glowing spark that once burned so brightly with hope and optimism will gradually dim until it is extinguished.

Professor Barclay paraphrases Jesus' words to the third aspiring believer, 'You cannot be walking into the future with me if you are always going to be hankering after all you're leaving behind you.' The Christian marches on, not to the sunset, but to the dawn.... To this man Jesus did not say either, "Follow," or, "Return." He said, "*I accept no lukewarm service,*" and left the man to make his own decision.' (**Commentary on Luke**, pages 133-134, The Saint Andrew Press)

Reading: Luke 9:51-62

As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem. When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, 'Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?' But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.

As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, 'I will follow you wherever you go.'

Jesus replied, 'Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.'

He said to another man, 'Follow me.' But he replied, 'Lord, first let me go and bury my father.'

Jesus said to him, 'Let the dead bury their own dead, but you go and proclaim the kingdom of God.'

Still another said, 'I will follow you, Lord; but first let me go back and say

goodbye to my family.'

Jesus replied, 'No one who puts a hand to the plough and looks back is fit for service in the kingdom of God.'

Song: Dear Lord and Father of Mankind

<https://youtu.be/YAxiN0egN-I>

Dear Lord and Father of mankind,
forgive our foolish ways;
re clothe us in our rightful mind,
in purer lives thy service find,
in deeper reverence, praise.

In simple trust like theirs who heard
beside the Syrian sea
the gracious calling of the Lord,
let us, like them, without a word
rise up and follow thee.

O Sabbath rest by Galilee,
O calm of hills above,
where Jesus knelt to share with thee
the silence of eternity,
interpreted by love!

Drop thy still dews of quietness,
till all our strivings cease;
take from our souls the strain and stress,
and let our ordered lives confess
the beauty of thy peace.

Breathe through the heats of our desire
thy coolness and thy balm;
let sense be dumb, let flesh retire;
speak through the earthquake, wind, and fire,
O still, small voice of calm!

Prayer

Lord, we have chosen to follow you because we love you and want to serve you. Forgive us when we become disheartened by the reaction of those around us. Help us to remember that we are part of a vast, worldwide family, united in love, calling and service; reliant on your Spirit's strength and guidance.

Forgive us when we are ridiculed or ostracised because of our faith and we burn to retaliate and seek revenge. Help us to remember that following you is a free choice that we have embraced and found to be a priceless gift and may

we continue to pray in love for those whose hearts are hardened and whose eyes are closed to the possibility that you are real and able to do what you promise.

Forgive us when we care too much about what others think, and live in fear of what they might do to us. Help us to remember that, if we are committed to doing your will, you are for us and no power in heaven or earth can thwart us.

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Father, at this time of rocketing inflation and industrial unrest, when many despair of continuing to make ends meet and some aim to use their united strength to ensure that they at least will be all right; we pray for wisdom and insight for all industry heads and financial planners that they may discover innovative solutions to break out of the downward spiral that currently leaves so many in despair.

Father, when even famine is being used as a weapon of war, we pray that world leaders may see a way forward to protect the most vulnerable. We ask that they may put aside self interest and work together to ensure that all can be fed, heat their homes have an adequate reward for their labour, proper health care and, above all, hope.

Lord, give us the unwavering faith, the clear vision and the steadfast courage that will keep us loving, following and serving until our day on earth is done and we join you with all the redeemed in your everlasting kingdom. Amen

+ The first portion of this prayer was developed from ideas in **Companion to the Lectionary**, Volume 5, pages 90-91, by Peter Sheasby, Epworth Press.

Reflection from Angus Allan: Ruth

Today thousands of people are moving in and out of the UK. There is a constant challenge to accept strangers as part of a wider family and to break down barriers of race, colour or creed.

The Ukrainian crisis continues to dominate the news. The football match against Scotland was a happy diversion and good news for the Ukrainian side. But of course the migration from Ukraine continues as people search for new life, hope and sustenance in Europe and here. We hope and pray that the British soldiers held captive by the Russians will soon be released.

It was a matter of necessity that made Elimelech and his wife Naomi move from Judah to the pagan country of Moab. There was a famine in Judah and they moved to find food. While there Elimelech died and the sons married Moabite women. Then the sons died and Naomi was left with two daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah. When she discovered that the food situation at home in Judah had improved Naomi decided to make the journey back home suggesting to her daughters-in-law that they stay on in their home country of

Moab. Orpah readily agreed but Ruth insisted on going with Naomi back to Judah. Her answer was, *“Where you go I will go and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God”* (Ruth 1:16). So Ruth returned with her mother-in-law and eventually married the Jewish farmer Boaz. They had a son Obed, the grandfather of David. Matthew in his gospel traces the genealogy of Jesus back to Obed. The story emphasises the importance of family life, including in-laws and the faith which helps us to overcome division.

Prayer:

Grant O God, that your church may increasingly become a force among the people witnessing to the unity of all the family of one Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

(Adapted from “ New every morning” BBC 1983).

Warm father God hugging every child,
Feeling all strains of human living,
 Caring and forgiving
 Till we're reconciled;
 Hail and Hosanna,
 Warm father God.

Ch4: 134 by Brian Wren (B.1936)