

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 29 July 2022

Dear Friends:

This is still 'Past Jeff' writing to you from before my holiday in America. By the time you're reading this at the end of July, I should be back from America, but just barely, and undoubtedly still groggy with jetlag. My past self wanted to do a favour for 'Future Jeff' and have things ready for Jim to edit and send out, so that Jim and I could both avoid the stress of pulling it together hours after I get off the plane.

If you could do a favour for your future self, what would it be? Of course, that might depend on which Future You you're wanting to help. For tomorrow's future self, you might choose to go to bed a little earlier, so you're better able to cope with the day. For your next month self, you might make a commitment to improve your diet, and to nourish yourself more healthfully. For your next year self, a daily habit of walking or exercise would be a lovely gift.

Any of your future selves would probably thank you for resolving conflicts in broken relationships; making choices that promote well-being; leaving a legacy of kindness for both friend and stranger; and embracing, honouring, and enjoying the fullness of God's creation.

And I'll bet all of your future selves would be grateful to Past You for opening yourself fully to God's Spirit, to the healing, challenging, empowering presence of the One who transcends time and every boundary. God takes our past and, with compassion and creativity, fashions us into our future selves, more and more reflecting the love and purpose of the One who holds the whole of our lives, past, present, and future.

I look forward to planting seeds with you for our good future in Christ.

Warm regards,

Jeff

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

From Our Prayer Team

Janice: janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Trees are being cut down in the Amazon rainforest at an alarming rate to make way for crops and livestock. Indigenous people are losing their land and their way of life. Local groups are helping Christians and churches take practical action to prevent environmental destruction. Please pray for the success of these groups and for their voices to be heard in places of power.

Please continue to pray for those who are travelling over the summer particularly families - that there will be no delays in travel and no disappointments with holiday bookings and arrangements.

The prayer groups continue to meet weekly through zoom. If you would like to join us, have a prayer request, or would like to pray with a member of the team then please contact either Jeff Martin or Janice Geddes.

31 July: Worship

Our wandering minister returns to worship this week. The reading is from Luke 12: 13-21. Please join in worship, either for a more traditional service in the sanctuary at 11:00am, or for a family friendly worship in the lounge in the Old Parish Centre at 4:00pm.

The morning service will be recorded and available at our YouTube channel: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCdOxFrZ_kg94DYogyIFAVEQ

4 August: Gardening and Coffee and Chat

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

Arthur, Gardening: 01334 652 100

Start your Thursday with some work in the gardens that surround the Old Parish Centre, beginning at 9:30, then head into the lounge to join the Coffee and Chat group, from 10:00 to 11:15. You could also show up just in time for coffee, but be sure to compliment and thank the gardeners for their labours!

11 August: Coffee and Chat Outing

Jill: 07929 444 246

The Coffee and Chat fellowship group will have an outing on Thursday 11 August 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.

Reflection from Peter Meager

Peter: meager52@btinternet.com

'Feel as ugly as sin?'

This was the question posed by the poster on our church notice board. The answer to the question was given below.

'Come to Jesus for a FAITHLIFT!'

All Christian believers can empathise with the wretched feeling of realising that you are away from God. Like Adam and Eve in the garden, ashamed, not wanting to look God in the eye; not wanting him to look at us; conscious of our guilt; lost and miserable; feeling unloved and unlovable. But we also know the fantastic joy of being found by God; admitting our lost state; being forgiven; accepted; redeemed; restored; discovering that God made us in his own image - Genesis 1:27. Since this is so, we are the best that we can be. In Psalm 139:14 we read, '*I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*' 1 Samuel 16:7 tells us, '*The Lord does not look at the things people look at. People look at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.*' God makes us beautiful through and through. Continuing with this theme 1 Peter 3:3 says '*Your beauty should not come from outward adornment, such as elaborate hairstyles and the wearing of gold jewellery or fine clothes. ⁴ Rather, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.*' This verse was describing women, but it applies equally to men. This inner beauty which radiates through lives that have been touched by God is the only beauty that matters.

We are beautiful in God's eyes; we should never think of ourselves as ugly. I accept that this refers to our inner self and many people have to live with all kinds of disfigurements. Others perceive themselves as ugly because they don't fit the stereotype of what our modern world portrays as beautiful. We need to be conscious that many carry this unseen burden and, through our understanding, acceptance, assurance, encouragement and love, embrace all

of these folk and help them to know that in God's eyes and in ours, they are truly beautiful.

I started thinking about this a few weeks ago after a lady we have known since she was wee came to see us. She has said that she is happy for me to share what she said in the hope it may help someone else who has had, or is still having a similar experience. As I recall, she was a very pretty little girl with sparkling blue eyes and blond hair. She told how, she had lots of freckles on her face which she perceived as scars. She hated them, felt that they made her ugly and that she could never be beautiful. Each year on her birthday, as she blew out her candles, she would make a fervent wish that her freckles would be gone before her next birthday. It was only after she had children that they did disappear but by then the damage to her feelings of self worth were done and she still felt she could never be beautiful.

Earlier in the summer a classmate from school got in touch with her. He had been living abroad for many years and, while back in Scotland for a holiday, had contacted several of his old school friends. Over the course of dinner, he told her that he had always fancied her when they were at school. 'The thing I especially loved,' he said, 'was your freckles!'

Song: https://youtu.be/F4ScBPE9v_I

O God, you search me, and you know me.
All my thoughts lie open to your gaze
When I walk or lie down, you are before me:
Ever the maker and keeper of my days.

You know my resting and my rising.
You discern my purpose from afar.
And with love everlasting, you besiege me:
In every moment of life or death, you are.

Before a word is on my tongue, Lord,
You have known its meaning through and through.
You are with me beyond my understanding:
God of my present, my past and future, too.

Although your Spirit is upon me,
Still I search for shelter from your light.
There is nowhere on Earth I can escape you:
Even the darkness is radiant in your sight.

For you created me and shaped me,
Gave me life within my mother's womb.
For the wonder of who I am I praise you:

Safe in your hands, all creation is made new.

By Bernadette Farrell

Prayer:

Gracious God, it's hard to take in how wonderful your love is. It's incomprehensible that I should be made like you. I thank you that I don't have to understand how this works in order to experience it. I am beautiful in your eyes. Don't let any physical blemish, disfigurement or any hurtful or hateful comment by any person convince me otherwise.

Father we echo the words of the song writer when he says:

How deep the Father's love for us
How vast beyond all measure
That He should give His only Son
To make a wretch His treasure
How great the pain of searing loss
The Father turns His face away
As wounds which mar the Chosen One
Bring many sons to glory (Stuart Townend)

Lord we remember too your words given in the Communion Service:

My body broken for **You**

My blood shed for **You**

Such love leaves us silent. No words are adequate. Help us to rejoice that it is true; that in you I find myself and my destiny.

At times I know I let you down and tarnish your image. Help me to see when I fail. Help me to accept that you rejoice to forgive a repentant child and are happy to restore me to that state of grace that once I knew. Father, may I revel in your presence and bask in the light of your smiling face. Help me to worship you in the beauty of your holiness; to bow down before you; your glory proclaim; with gold of obedience and incense of lowliness, may I kneel and adore you, for the Lord is your name. Amen

Reflection from Angus Allan: Eating Words

I must confess to having honey on porridge more or less every day. The word honey can also be used as an endearing word. A man and his wife might be sitting down to breakfast and he might say "Honey, could you pass me the honey please". Honey in various forms is used extensively as a food.

The prophet Ezekiel is called by the Lord to speak to the Israelites who are described as a "rebellious nation". He is not sure what to say but he has a vision of a scroll being handed to him and he hears a voice asking him to eat this scroll. So he does that and declares, "*So I ate it and it tasted sweet as honey in my mouth*" (Ezekiel 3:3). Then he is commanded to go to the people of Israel and share the message with them.

We see the same emphasis on the Word in John's gospel. At the beginning there is no mention of birth stories but simply: "*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ---The Word became flesh and lived for a while among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only son who came from the Father, full of grace and truth*" John 1:1 and 14. And so we see that the Word is digested and communicated to the world through His followers. Today people are still eager to hear the word through preaching, hymn singing, the reading of scripture and personal friendships.

Hymn: CH4 605: v 1 and 2

Thanks to God whose word was spoken
in the making of the earth.

His the voice that called a nation
fired her vision, tried her worth.

God has spoken:
praise him for his open word.

Thanks to God whose word incarnate
came to save our human race.
Deeds and words and death and rising
testify to heaven's grace.

God has spoken:
praise him for his open word.

Words: Reginald Thomas Brooks (1918 – 1985)

Music: George Clement Martin (1844 -1916)

Prayer:

O Lord, we thank you:

For the word of scripture written down over the centuries.

For the word made flesh in Jesus Christ who came into the world to show us your way.

For the word for today communicated to us through the work of the Spirit in our hearts and minds.

Amen.