

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 2 July 2021

Dear Friends:

Next week we'll have something both ancient and new: we will celebrate the sacrament of Holy Communion in person at all three of our worship services at Cupar Old, on the eighth and eleventh of July.

It will be a little different, in that we will use prepackaged elements, an all-in-one that includes a wheat wafer and non-alcoholic juice in a double-sealed container. Distribution will also be unusual, in that participants will be asked to uplift one of the little cups from a table at the entrance to the hall after sanitising their hands.

But we will all commune together in the meal of life that Jesus shared with his disciples. Transcending distance and form, Jesus comes to us through the sacrament to share the intimacy of God's love with each of us.

Whether in a cathedral setting with communicants streaming forward to the table or in the familiarity of our own church or sitting in our homes connected via Zoom; whether drinking from an historic silver chalice or a small plastic thimble; whether sourdough, gluten-free, or individual wafers; it is still Jesus who invites, Jesus who feeds us, Jesus who binds us together, Jesus who in this sacrament brings us into life.

Warm regards,
Jeff

Worship Live Stream

Please join us at eleven o'clock on Sunday for a live stream of our worship service:

<https://youtu.be/ZQMg9x8fg-M>

From Our Prayer Team

A sharp rise in gang violence has forced thousands of frightened Haitian families from their homes. But local churches are rising to meet the needs of people who are hungry and traumatised. Please pray for the situation here.

Please pray and give thanks for all the house groups in Cupar Old. They kept going during lockdown through Zoom and thankfully they are now beginning to meet up again outdoors.

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

Jeff Martin 01334 656181

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or

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Reflection from Peter Meager

The morning service had come to an end and the congregation was emerging from the cool interior of the church into the warm spring sunshine. Tables were set up at the door with tea, coffee, orange squash and biscuits and looking after it all was Eddy. He was a middle-aged expat who, with his family, had made the Garrison Church in Stanley Fort his spiritual home. He was ensuring that children and adults were being looked after and it was all done with a warm smile and cheery word for each one. This is a scene replicated in churches around the world – before Covid 19. Thank God for all the Eddies who enrich our fellowships by their generous, unassuming service; and don't let's forget all those unsung heroes who then do the washing up and tidying away.

On Monday morning Eddy would be back at work in Hong Kong Government's Engineering Department and, at the time I'm referring to, that included involvement in at least 2 multi-billion Hong Kong \$ engineering projects – one of them the building of the second Cowloon – Hong Kong Island tunnel. He would have been embarrassed, if he was still alive, to know that I was holding him up as an example of Christian service. He would have agreed with Robert Browning when he said, 'All service ranks the same with God:' (in 'Pippa Passes')

John the Baptist was sent to prepare people for Jesus' arrival. (John 3:20-26) He was a national celebrity attracting great crowds to hear his challenging message. Then, when Jesus came on the scene, the crowds deserted him. When asked about it, his response was, 'He (Jesus) must become greater: I must become less.' It was as if he was a finger post pointing towards Jesus. His message was 'Don't look at me; look at him.' There was no resentment in his heart that his days in the limelight were over. Rather, he rejoiced that he had been able to be of service in God's greater plan. When we start following Jesus, we embark on a life long quest to bring our ambitions into line with Jesus' will for us. That's where true fulfilment lies.

To become the 'invisible man/woman', so that people only see Jesus can be a difficult for Christians in a leadership role. Let me give an example of what I mean. We began a new posting and soon got close to a family with two children. They had the children christened and were regular in the life of the congregation for the rest of their posting. Then they were moved on and we lost touch. Two postings later they turned up where we had moved to and we took up where we had left off. However, in the course of a conversation it came out that they had had no church connection in the intervening years. Was it that my relationship with them had hindered their relationship with Jesus rather than facilitating it? At least I had a second chance to get the balance right.

There's another side to living a life of service which Christians should be wary of. When we commit ourselves to leading a life devoted to serving Jesus, it's easy to become ambitious and want to promote ourselves. On the other hand, as we try to develop and

use whatever gifts we have and become the best we can be whether it's in the home, at school or the workplace, in church or in public life, our character; our work ethic and integrity will often mean that we rise to positions of authority or leadership. It's another situation where we must always be examining our motives. This kind of success is a by-product of our wanting to serve Jesus faithfully. The Old Testament story of Joseph rising from the status of a falsely accused prisoner to being Pharaoh's right hand man is probably the prime example of this kind of thing. (Genesis 40 - 41)

Professor Jason Leitch has become a household name with his regular TV appearances on Scottish Government briefings throughout the pandemic and has been acclaimed for the calm and clear advice he has given. It was little surprise to see him on Reflections from the Quay the other Sunday and hear him talking about his growing up in a Christian family and the importance of his faith to the whole of his life.

In Philippians 2 we learn that Jesus did not think equality with God was something to be used to his own advantage but rather took on human nature and the form of a servant. He washed his disciples' feet and said that he came to serve rather than be served. We have the privilege of being called to a life of service. We can succeed in life by finding out where God wants us to serve him and, with the Spirit's guidance and help, getting on with whatever task he gives us, humbly and cheerfully.

John 3:26-30

They came to John and said to him, 'Rabbi, that man who was with you on the other side of the Jordan – the one you testified about – look, he is baptising, and everyone is going to him.'

To this John replied, 'A person can receive only what is given them from heaven. You yourselves can testify that I said, "I am not the Messiah but am sent ahead of him." The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete. He must become greater; I must become less.'

Philippians 2:5-8

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death – even death on a cross!

You may enjoy the following two worship songs from Graham Kendrick:

Meekness and Majesty <https://youtu.be/4tK1hQpacs8>

The Servant King https://youtu.be/A0FSZ_iSYO8

You may wish to join in the following prayer:

Merciful God, we confess our failings and failures. We have been half-hearted disciples of Jesus. We have sung his praises but we have not followed in his steps. We have not been willing to take up the cross. We have not served others as he has served us. We ask you to forgive us and to help us to be better disciples; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Eternal God, we thank you for your goodness and mercy which follow us all the days of our life. We thank you for the world you created and for making us, male and female, in your own image. We thank you for your patience with us and your kindness towards us:

Though we rebelled against you, you sent your Son to draw us back to you. Taking the form of a servant, he humbled himself, accepting even death on a cross. In his living and his dying he showed us the greatness of service, the strength of weakness and the power of love. You have raised him from death and exalted him in heaven. In his name you have sent your Holy Spirit to strengthen us for service. For all your acts of grace and love we praise and thank you now and for ever; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

You give us so much, Father: life itself, our time, talents and resources; our families and friends; and you have given your Son to serve and save the world. In gratitude for your many gifts, we offer our lives to you that we may serve you and others to the glory of

your name; through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen

And now, take up your cross and follow him. Be servants of others as Christ was the servant of all. And know that he is with you now and always. Amen (Taken from *Companion to the Lectionary Volume 6. Edited by Michael J. Townsend: Epworth Press*)

Should you wish to get in touch, I'm at meager52@btinternet.com

Reflection from Angus Allan: For Those in Peril

A rumour was going around the beautiful garden city of Jericho that a notable prophet by the name of Jesus was passing through (Luke 19: 1-10). A wealthy chief tax collector, Zacchaeus, was determined to get a glimpse of this man so he climbed a tree to get a better view. As Jesus passed he noticed this man up the tree and beckoned him down because he was heading for his home to share in any offered hospitality. Zacchaeus was delighted and gladly welcomed his special guest. But Jesus' critics began to mutter that he had gone to dine with a 'sinner'. Zacchaeus assured the Lord that he would make amends for any wrongdoing he had committed. Jesus accepted his word, reminded him of his Jewish background, and stated that "The Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost."

The Saviour was there to carry out this work and, of course, today and every day he needs helpers.

Recently I received a parcel by post. I opened it and discovered a note from my cousin Mary in Port Ellen, Islay, entitled, "The Drowned and the Saved," by Les Wilson. When lockdown came, Mary and her sister Janette and husband James decided, sadly, to close the shop permanently that been handed on to them from parents.

I had shared with them and been part of the family while attending secondary school in Islay. The book was part of surplus stock and tells the story of a passenger liner, the Tuscania, built on the Clyde as a luxury cruise liner for the Anchor Line. She was commissioned a month after war was declared and was altered to act as

a troopship. On the 24 January 1918 the Tuscania left New York with 2336 American soldiers on board. Because of security they were not allowed to wave goodbye. The captain was Peter McLean from Perth.

The ship headed northeast to join a convoy near Nova Scotia. The crew consisted of merchant sailors, some as young as fourteen. The weather was stormy as the convoy turned east to cross the Atlantic. Sickness was rife amongst the soldiers, some on whom had never been to sea before. On 4th February they were joined by eight British destroyers. That night the soldiers were enjoying entertainment while, at the same time, submarine UB77, under the command of Kapitän Wilhelm Meyer, was prowling around the north channel between the island of Islay and the north of Ireland.

The submarine saw the destroyers coming and kept out of their way. But towards evening, a huge two-funnel cruiser belching smoke appeared on the horizon. Meyer, in UB77, came closer, took aim, and fired the torpedo.

On board the Tuscania there was a large explosion which ripped a hole in the side of the ship causing a list to starboard. An S.O.S. was sent out and soldiers and crew ordered to take up positions at the lifeboats, which had to be launched. The drill had been practised but not the launching. However, some lifeboats did manage, very fully loaded, to pull away from the ship.

Meanwhile, the convoy had continued its on way, but three destroyers were ordered to turn back and pick up survivors. Each took on five to six hundred soldiers and crew and headed for Londonderry. Some of the lifeboats made it to the rocky windswept west coast of Islay. They were mostly smashed on rocks but men from nearby homes came down to the rocky seashore and pulled them ashore, some still alive.

Those who survived were given hospitality by the islanders. Malcolm McNeil, the local police sergeant, was given the task of identifying the living and the dead. All eventually were repatriated to America except one, Roy Muncaster, whose family

requested that he be buried in the cemetery at Kilnaughton near Port Ellen, where a gravestone was erected.

Altogether about two hundred men lost their lives in the disaster. People thought that this would end America's dreams of taking part in the war. In fact, it had the opposite effect and eventually over one million American soldiers crossed the Atlantic and played a decisive part in bringing a very bloody and dirty trench warfare to an end. So there we have it. "Saving the lost" can be used in a very practical or in a more spiritual way. Today we might think more of the possibility of a divine spark in any life which can be kindled and set on fire.

Notes

1. An American monument has been set up on the Mull of Oa to commemorate the U.S. dead in the Tuscania and later Otranto disasters.
2. When the family were young we often had summer holidays in Port Ellen, staying in a caravan in Mary and James' garden. A favourite outing was a car run to the Oa with a stop at Kilnaughton beach.
3. Letters of thanks were sent from parents in America to Sergeant McNeill and families in Islay who had provided hospitality for the survivors and arranged funeral services for the dead.
4. My father-in-law Edward Murray took part in the First World War but did not talk about it.
5. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast." (Ephesians 2:8 NIV)

Worship In-Person

Please join us for gathered worship in the Old Parish Centre:
Thursday 10:30am
Sunday 11:00am
Sunday 4:00pm

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated at all three services next week on 8 and 11 July.

The service on 8 July will be the last Thursday worship until after the school summer holiday. We hope that you are able to join in one of the in-person services on Sundays, or from home through the live stream of the morning service.

Worship Online

Live stream of our 11:00 service on Sunday 4 July:

<https://youtu.be/ZQMg9x8fg-M>

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