

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 30 April 2021

Dear Friends:

Our Session members have met in small groups over the last week to discuss our dreams and ideas for the shape of our ministries as restrictions are eased and we move into new phases, and to pray for God's Spirit to work powerfully among us to reshape us into effective and faithful instruments of Christ's love in the world.

We talked about "returning" to certain ministries, and we looked forward to being able to do familiar and comfortable things together again. We also talked about letting go of activities that have served a good purpose and can now come to an end. And we talked about the new things that God may bring about in our midst, if we are open, willing, and ready to follow.

The elders and I welcome your thoughts on these things as well. We solicit your ideas, your energy, and your involvement. We covet your prayers and your support, that the love of Christ may be known and felt among us and through us.

Warm regards,
Jeff

Live Stream Worship

Please join us for worship at 11:00 this Sunday:

https://youtu.be/ZkAQIPQ_kmM

From Our Prayer Team

In Lebanon, the rising cost of food is a huge problem for families. Food prices are the highest across the Middle East and North Africa region, and the World Bank shares this is the worst economic crisis for Lebanon to date. Please pray for provision for the people of Lebanon.

Please pray for the Church of Scotland as churches open up again and that the church can find ways to connect more with the community.

I will strengthen you and help you.

Isaiah 41:10

The prayer groups continue to meet weekly through Zoom. If you would like to join us or would like prayer for yourself or someone else or would like to pray with one of the team then please contact either -

Jeff Martin 01334 656181

jmartin@churchofscotland.org.uk

or

Janice Geddes 01334 652957

janice.geddes2@btinternet.com

Reflection from Peter Meager

Knock, knock.

Who's there?

Lydia.

Lydia who?

Lid'i'a teapot!!

For many of my generation this playground joke would be our first encounter with the name of the lady who appears in the opening verses of our focus Bible passage for this week, Acts 16:11-40. Paul and other apostles have been planting new churches and helping them grow, mainly in the Roman province of Asia which roughly coincides with present day Turkey.

Then in Acts 16:9 we read, *‘During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.”* Macedonia was up in the north of Greece and included the city of Philippi, to the west of modern Thessaloniki. Paul and his companion, Silas, respond to the call and arrive in the city a few days later.

On the Sabbath, they sought out an audience who might be amenable to hearing their Good News and they knew just where to look. From the beginning of time, rivers had featured among places that were sacred to the Jews. In Genesis 2:10 we are told that, *‘A river watering the garden flowed from Eden.’* Early Christians were mindful of Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well in John 4:13-14 where he said to the woman, *“Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”* Throughout the Bible there are more than 150 references to rivers. The final one is In Revelation 22:1-5, where we learn that a river flows through the new, heavenly, Jerusalem. It has miraculous powers, including being able to heal the nations. God’s people had been scattered throughout the known world from the time of the first exile in 597 B.C. and had often taken to gathering by a river. Remember the opening verse of Psalm 137, immortalised in the ‘70s by Boney M, *‘By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yeah, we wept, when we remembered Zion.’*

So Paul and Silas went down to the river that flows to the south of Philippi and, as they expected, found a group of Jews at prayer. Among them was a successful entrepreneur called Lydia. She is described as a *‘dealer in purple cloth.’* This was a highly prized and highly priced fashion essential. She heard the story of Jesus gladly, believed and was baptised, with her household. She then took them back to stay in her house during the rest of their sojourn in Philippi.

Despite her business acumen and wealth, Lydia is still very much a second class citizen in Roman society. As a Jew she owes her first allegiance to God rather than the Roman emperor and this doesn’t go down well with the authorities. Paul shows that believers must

identify with those who are treated unjustly or unfairly by society and champion their cause. This becomes clear in the case of their next convert, a slave girl who had made money for her masters by telling fortunes. When she experiences the refreshing, renewing, spiritual water of life that Jesus gives to those who come to him, she finds peace and freedom from the spirit that had been exploited by her owners. They, on the other hand, are incandescent with rage.

This leads to the climax of the passage; Paul and Silas being thrown in prison and their jailer finding faith in amazing circumstances. This whole passage reminds us that, if we wish to share our faith, we need to be able to identify those who are longing to hear the Good News; learn to speak their language; find ways of communicating with them and let them feel the embracing warmth of Jesus' love channelled through us. Secondly it reminds us very powerfully that our witnessing for Jesus may well bring us into conflict with individuals and systems who exploit and mistreat the weak and the vulnerable. Brian McLaren concludes, 'As we move forward together in this partnership for peace and freedom, injustice at every level of society will be confronted, and people at every level of society will be set free!' (p232, **We make the Road by Walking**)

Today the river near Philippi is more of a burn but there is a beautiful little chapel with many lovely paintings, including the icon of Lydia seen below.



The Baptistry of Lydia is set in very pleasant grounds and contrasts to the desolate ruins of Philippi nearby.



You may wish to join me in this prayer adapted from ones in **New Parish Prayers** edited by Frank Colquhoun (Hodder and Stoughton):

Lord our God, as we head towards the election next week, we pray that you will grant discernment to all who will vote that the country may be wisely governed; the rights of all may be protected and your Church may be free to serve and witness In obedience to your word.

Lord, you have called your Church to shine as light in the midst of a dark and needy world: bless us as we seek to be reflectors of that light for justice, truth and freedom.

May we bring help and hope to the poor and powerless, to the ostracised and the oppressed; May we maintain a bold and fearless witness in the face of tyranny and wrong; And may we never be ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, but point to him as the liberator of humankind, the source of life and the giver of peace. We ask this in his name. Amen

The hymn, 'And can it be that I should gain,' has a verse which echoes the Philippian jailer's experience:

<https://youtu.be/Tu2uA6U4Fyg>

The full text of Paul and Silas' ministry in Philippi is recorded in Acts 16: 11-40. You can read it here:

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts+16%3A+11-40&version=NRSVA>

Feel free to get in touch: meager52@btinternet.com

Sunday Club

Our Sunday Club begins again next week, Sunday 9 May, at 4:00pm. We'll follow the same procedures as we did before Christmas: a parent or carer should bring the child, check them in at the track and trace desk, and remain in the building for the worship service, or have a designate in case of emergencies. Following the service, adults will circle back through the hallway to retrieve their children. Complete information will be included in an email to all families in the next several days. If you don't receive something by Monday, please contact Jeff.

The Lighthouse Reopens

Our local centre for Christian resources and a good place for fellowship with friends, The Lighthouse has reopened this week, from ten to two each day. Stop in when you're in town!

Five Marks of Mission

The Reverend Dr Donald MacEwan, chaplain at St Andrews University and convener of the Theological Forum for the General Assembly, gave an engaging presentation to the Fife Presbytery last week. You can watch the talk and follow-up questions, just under an hour, here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sj0xlqy4r4>

If you would like to receive the Fife Presbytery's weekly mission bulletin to learn about more events and resources available for ministry, you can send a request to the presbytery office at fife@churchofscotland.org.uk

Volunteers Needed

Our activity level is gradually increasing, and there are several ways you can help out. Please contact the person listed for the task you're able to help with:

Welcome Team: (all three worship services) Jill Logan, 01334 655528

Church Bells: (before the 11:00 Sunday service) Arthur Martin, 01334 652 100 or Liz Nelson 01334 652 007

Gardening Group: (Thursdays 9:15-10:15) Arthur Martin, 01334 652 100

Worship In-Person

Please join us for gathered worship in the Old Parish Centre. Reservations are not necessary.

Sunday 11:00am

Sunday 4:00pm

Wednesday, 10:30am [5 May only; we're back to Thursday the following week]

Worship Online

Live stream of our 11:00 service on Sunday 2 May:

https://youtu.be/ZkAQIPQ_kmM

The service will be available afterward at our YouTube channel:

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

The Moderator of the General Assembly, Martin Fair, has provided a worship service, drawing on participants from across the Church of Scotland. This week's service will be available from Sunday morning at:

<https://youtu.be/3QJ4QLRtFzQ>

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

Donations

If you would like to make a financial gift to the congregation, you may do so securely via the Church of Scotland website. Just click the red 'Donate' tab and follow the instructions to direct your gift to Cupar Old Parish Church.

www.churchofscotland.org.uk