

Cupar Old Parish Church

Where Everyone Matters

Newsletter 30 July 2021

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

~ Romans 8: 38-39

Minister on Holiday

Jeff is on holiday through 10 August. If you're in need of support during these weeks that he is away, please contact the Prayer Team janice.geddes2@btinternet.com or your district elder.

You may also contact Liz Nelson liznelson48@aol.com or Jean Martin jeansmartin1968@gmail.com for the details of those who are handling funerals or other pastoral emergencies.

Worship In-Person

Please join us for gathered worship in the Old Parish Centre.

This Sunday our services at 11am and at 4pm will be led by Rev David Sinclair.

Social Distancing

Now that we have moved to Covid Level Zero distancing for our seating arrangements in the Parish Centre has reduced from 2 metres to 1 metre, creating increased capacity. This took effect from Sunday 25th July and means that there should be space for everyone.

Worship Live Stream

Please join us at eleven o'clock on Sunday for worship:

<https://youtu.be/Fq6x0OMBofM>

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

From Our Prayer Team

Heavy rainfall across India has triggered flooding and landslides. In Bihar, east India, 800,000 people have been affected. Thousands of villagers are displaced and forced to live on elevated roads or embankments to avoid the rising water levels. Please pray for people's safety.

Please pray for those in our community with mental health issues which can often go unnoticed and because of Covid 19 find it difficult to obtain the treatment they need.

The prayer teams continue to meet weekly. If you would like to join us, or have a prayer request for yourself or someone else or would like a member of the team to pray with you 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

My grandfather used to ask me a conundrum. 'Who was the oldest man who ever lived yet died before his father did?' The answer, of course, is Methuselah. The key to understanding the puzzle is to be found in Genesis 5:24 where we read about his father, Enoch. (Get in touch if the penny doesn't drop after reading that verse)

During the Olympics opening ceremony there was a very touching tribute to all those who have died during the Covid Pandemic. Talking about death is usually taboo in our society but in the last eighteen months it has become a staple of our daily news bulletins. Many people who would previously have avoided talking about it like the plague have brought it up in conversation quite openly. Others use humour to duck the issue – like Woody Allen who famously quipped, 'I'm not afraid of death, I just don't want to be there when it happens.'

It has been suggested that the last time so many 'Mortality' questions were asked was in 1945/46 following the end of World War 2. Interestingly and perhaps significantly, that was also a brief period of major growth for Britain's churches. Are people more open to hearing what we have to say and more eager to have answers to this ultimate question about life – what happens when it ends? Is there a brief window of opportunity here for Christians to contribute to the dialogue in a *win win* way? A win for those who ask because they can have a chance to hear the answer to one of life's most important questions; a win for the Church because it might gain an injection of fresh blood.

Without being morbid or becoming obsessed by it, it is good for us to be clear about what we think about death and dying. When I say, 'We,' I mean Christians. What is the Christian understanding of death? St Paul addresses the issue in several passages. Among them is Philippians chapter 1. In just a eleven words he says, '21 *For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*' Paul is writing from a prison cell in Rome, facing trial before the mad emperor, Nero. Death is on the cards but his total belief in Jesus' power to bring him to paradise convinces him that, if he's only thinking of himself, then this is the best outcome for him – it's hitting the jackpot.

I once asked the children in church a question. Quick as a flash a hand went up and I said, 'Yes?' A smiling face replied, 'The answer's Jesus.' They were two steps ahead of what I expected so I asked, 'Why?' 'In here, the answer's always Jesus,' shot back the reply. That's how it was with Paul too. Jesus was always at the centre. His life had been transformed when he encountered Jesus on the road to Damascus. Every area of his life had been changed – for the better. This is it. While the Bible addresses the theme of Death, it majors on Life. The Bible doesn't underestimate the significance of Death. In 2 Corinthians 15:26 Paul says it will be the last enemy to be destroyed. But the Holy Spirit we've been learning so much about is primarily the Spirit of life.

In John 10:10 Jesus said, '*I have come that they (all who come to me) may have life, and have it to the full.*' The word translated as '*to the full*', actually means 'Abundant. The life the Holy Spirit gives is abundant in its quality and in its duration. Eternal life has already begun for us and death is the gate we have to pass through to enter that realm where all that stops life on earth being perfect, will disappear. There's a danger here. When I was speaking to people who might be suicidal, I was always very conscious that what I was saying might be construed as condoning suicide. Nothing could be further from the truth.

In v 23 of Philippians 1, Paul talks about being torn between his, '*desire to depart and be with Christ*' and staying in this world. He decides that his readers in Philippi still need him and submits to God's will and commits to continue in the marathon of life until he crosses the finishing line God has set for him. (See 2 Timothy 4:7)

At the moment we are in our campervan and every few days, we pack everything up and travel on to pastures new. The word Paul uses for '*depart*,' is a camping word. It means to strike camp; pull up sticks and move on to a new location. Death is a moving on but it is moving on in union with Jesus for a reunion with all those who have gone before. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. (Hebrews 13:8) He was there in love at the beginning of our lives, he is here in grace accompanying us on each step of life's journey and he will be there in protective power, holding us close, as we pass through death into the light of his presence.

After the first Easter, Jesus came back to show us that he was able to defeat death and assures us that we will too. This is our hope and our confidence. So let us, as the author of Hebrews put it, (12:1) *'run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith.'*

Bible Reading:

Philippians 1:21 *For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

Prayer:

Father God, you have made us for life and given us all we need to live it to the full. We know that death will come to each of us one day and it is natural that we are fearful when we wonder if your promises are really too good to be true. You understand our doubts for you have shared our human experience in Jesus who was tested in every way that we are. Let us not be ashamed to express our fears and make us approachable, sympathetic and supportive to all who wrestle with their feelings over departing this life.

Father we pray for all who are struggling with overwhelming grief. Still the storm of their emotions. Surround them with loving support and help them to find, in Jesus, comfort, hope and strength to carry on.

As a church, may we be able to witness joyfully and authentically to your ability to transform lives and live and love so transparently that others may be encouraged to trust you for themselves and experience your liberating power that is able to bring peace of mind, joy and courage in this world and in the life to come.

In Jesus. Name we pray. Amen.

Song: with Phil Moore and Glen Scrivener and the worship team from the Cornerstone Church in Nottingham. (This is the only recording of this song I could find. I think this may become a favourite praise song. What do you think?)

<https://youtu.be/mtgeTLQA6bc>

Please don't hesitate to get in touch at meager52@btinternet.com

Online Donations

We are very grateful for your continued generosity throughout these times. If you would like to set up a standing order, you may speak with David, our treasurer. You're also welcome to make a one-off donation through the secured giving at the Church of Scotland home page:

www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Just click on the red 'Donate' button and follow the instructions to direct your gift toward our congregation.