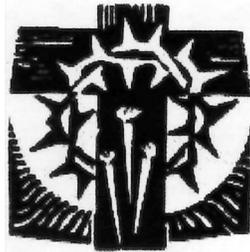


St. John's Parish Church, Kirkcaldy

"Echoes" March 2006



HOLY WEEK AND EASTER SERVICES

PALM SUNDAY

9th April at 11a.m.

A traditional Palm Sunday service with procession of palm branches

WED. OPEN CHURCH

12th April Noon-1 p.m.

The church and prayer room will be open/or those who would like a quiet place to pray or meditate; brief selection of prayers and readings at 12.30 p.m.

MAUNDY THURSDAY (Joint service at St. John's Church)

13th April at 7.30 p.m.

*An informal evening communion service when we remember
Jesus' last supper with the disciples*

GOOD FRIDAY (Joint service at St. Andrew's Church)

14th April at 7.30 p.m.

An evening service recalling Jesus' passion

EASTER SUNDAY

16th April at 11a.m.

A joyful family celebration of the resurrection of our Lord

Dear Friends,

Spring is finally upon us. The snow is gone and the manse garden is awash with colour and signs of new life. Crocuses, primroses and heathers add colour; daffodils and tulips are well on their way.

It is not an unusual picture for this time of year, but a world apart from the wilderness landscape of Yellowstone National Park that I saw whilst on holiday last month. There, snow covered much of the ground; elsewhere the landscape looked dry and faded, badly in need of moisture from melted snow and rain. For all that, Yellowstone had its own beauty and signs of life, albeit subtle rather than colourful.

Sometimes, in our spiritual life, it is subtle rather than vibrant signs of the presence of God which speak to us. The bible often tells of the wilderness, perhaps most notably in the context of the Israelites wandering in the wilderness for 40 years before being led into the promised land, When the Israelites were at their lowest ebb, God made his presence known, offering sustenance for their bodies and encouragement for their hearts and minds,

Evelyn Underhill once said that no Christian escapes a taste of the wilderness on the way to the Promised Land. Many a Christian has endured dry times in their spiritual life, when God seemed remote or even absent.

Scripture reminds us that no matter what direction our life may take, whatever sadness, difficulty or hardship may befall us that God walks with us and refuses to leave us to ourselves. The Psalmist asks, "Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there, if I make my bed in the depths, you are there."

James Healy writes, "Whether we gaze with longing into the garden or with fear and trembling into the desert, of this we can be sure- God walked there first! And when we who have sinned and despoiled the garden are challenged now to face the desert, we do not face it alone. Jesus has gone there before us to struggle with every demon that has ever plagued a human heart, Face the desert we must if we would reach the garden, but Jesus has gone there before us."

In Holy Week, we will be remembering Jesus' own struggle in the Garden of Gethsemane, his last days with the disciples, and his suffering upon the cross. It is sometimes tempting to move straight from the jubilation of Palm Sunday to the joy of the resurrection, but without Good Friday there can be no Easter.

May God grant us his grace this coming Holy Week that we might have the courage to journey to the cross, assured of the life changing and life giving miracle of our Lord's victory over death.

Wishing God's blessing upon you and your loved ones this Easter.

Nicola

Your box made a world of difference!

During the months of September, October and November many of the congregation were again busy covering shoe boxes for the Operation Christmas Child Appeal, a project of the Samaritan's Purse International Relief, The shoe boxes were filled with gifts for children from 2-14 years old, Thanks to you and thousands of people like you up and down the length and breadth of the UK over 1.15 million children had an unexpected surprise to brighten their Christmas. Children in places as far away as Mozambique and Kyrgystan and as close as Romania and Serbia are smiling because of a simple gift filled shoebox, You may never meet them, but thanks to you they know that someone cares for them, that they are not forgotten and that God loves them. St. John's sent approx. 200 boxes and made 200 children smile, Thank you all very much.

Angela Stewart

Church of Scotland Guild

Isobel Grimshaw

The Guild have had a successful year with a varied and interesting syllabus which included a concert by the East Fife Ladies Choir but only one Coffee Morning due to the work being done in the kitchen. Our new Session starts on Monday, 25th September 2006 at 7 p.m. and as in the past will alternate with afternoons at 2 p.m. New members, both male and female will be made most welcome as will visitors to any meeting where there is a speaker you would be interested to hear.

A NOTE FROM THE TREASURER

It is Budget time again, and for the benefit of members who may not have uplied a copy of the Financial Statement for 2005 (including the Budget for 2006) I detail below an abbreviated farm of the Budget for 2006.

BUDGET 2006

INCOME	£	£
Offerings	58,345	
Other Ordinary General Income	11,203	69,548

EXPENDITURE

National Ministry, Mission and Wider Work	41,701	
Local Staffing Costs	12,656	
Building Costs	15,900	
Other Local Costs	5,520	75,777

ESTIMATED GENERAL FUND DEFICIT **£6,229**

A significant part of the estimated deficit is the large increase in our heating and lighting costs as from 1st April. So that we may obtain the cheapest costs possible for gas and electricity we are part of the Gas and Electricity Arrangements with Preferred Suppliers arranged by the General Trustees of the Church of Scotland and made through the Agency of Argyle Energy acting as our Energy Consultants, To date these costs have not been finalised but initial figures available show that these will be excessive.

To break even and eliminate the deficit of £6,229 requires an increase in our offerings of around 10%. The average weekly offering required for 2006 is £965. Please give prayerful thought to your offerings.

We therefore face many interesting challenges, but as usual, I am confident that with the leadership, of our Minister and the continued commitment and support of the congregation, these challenges will be overcome

Your financial support in the past has been greatly appreciated.

And finally if your offerings are made monthly by direct debit, please, please advise myself or Audrey O'Malley of the revised amount.

Thank you all for your continued support.

Brian Booth

Treasurer

The Choir

Brian Booth

At the end of December, the Church received a generous donation of £1,000 from Mr. & Mrs. W. Blake. After considering the wishes of Mr. & Mrs. Blake, it was agreed to purchase copies of the new Church Hymnary CH4 for the Choir. The hymn books were dedicated at morning worship 5th February. We are greatly indebted for this donation, and the books are being well used Sunday by Sunday and at weekly choir practice as we introduce some of the interesting items from CH4 which are so relevant to the age in which we live. Part of the donation is unspent, but this will be used to provide suitable shelving under the choir seats for books and music. This will improve the appearance of the Choir Range, which can sometimes be very untidy at the moment with books having to be placed on the floor. This job will be undertaken over the next few months.

Four years ago we received an anonymous donation of £400 to be used by the Choir for the purchase of music. At the time there was uncertainty about the future of the Church and no purchases were made. However, we have now purchased copies of Classic Melodies for Choirs Book 2. This lovely book is a further collection of some of the world's best-loved melodies expertly turned into choral pieces by Christopher Tambling, with the additional attraction of Nick Fawcett's fine texts. We hope that, just as the original compositions such as the Trumpet Voluntary Marche Militaire and some music

by Vivaldi have taken hold of generations of music-lovers, these new choral versions will become loved by the choir and the congregation. I am now delighted to inform you that the anonymous donor was Mrs. Beth Millar, and the books will be dedicated in April to the memory of Rev. Jack Millar who was a much loved and respected member of the Choir. On that Sunday we will sing to you one of the pieces to a tune that you will instantly recognise.

I am also pleased to report that, on the advice of Nicola, I have become a full individual member of the Royal School of Church Music, The RSCM is an ecumenical Christian Charity which aims to encourage and inspire both the good use of music in worship and the development of church music. It is dedicated to raising standards and promoting music in every style of Christian worship and every denomination. Although the people of God worship in different ways and enjoy different musical styles, we all share the belief that church music, used effectively, greatly enriches our worship experience. I think we will all benefit.

Weekly practices continue until the end of April, and resume at the beginning of September at 7.15 p.m. in the New Hall. A warm welcome awaits any new members.

Be Still

Time for myself. . . Why is it that I find it so hard to take time for myself? Time to be, rather than to do. Time to think, to talk to God, and most of all to be silent in his presence while he talks to me.

You know it is Lord! There is always so much to be fitted in. People to be seen ... work to be done obligations to fulfill. It is so difficult to distinguish between the urgent and the important. Often what is urgent elbows its way to the forefront of my day and the important gets trampled on in the rush.

Slow me down, Lord. Teach me the art of creating islands of stillness, in which I can absorb the beauty of everyday things: clouds, trees, a snatch of music. Prompt me to lift up my heart to you in a moment of thankfulness. Impress upon my mind that there is more to life than packing every moment with activity, and help me to fence in some part of my day with quietness. And please talk to me and help me to listen, so that I take your peace rather than my confusion back with me into the hurly of a hurting world.

- Marion Stroud, *The Gift of Friends* (Lion Publishing,)

Women of the Old Testament

Mary Sherrard

No. 1 Miriam Prophetess

From Exodus, chapters 2 and 15, and Numbers, chapter 12.

Miriam, sister of Moses and Aaron, lived in the period 1500 B.C. and three episodes in her life are described to us.

We first meet her on the banks of the river Nile, protecting Moses from Pharaoh's command that all Israelite boys be slain. Jochebed, the mother of Moses, hid him in the bulrushes. When Pharaoh's daughter, Bithiah, found him and recognised he was an Israelite child, Miriam offered to find an Israelite wet-nurse to look after him. Miriam brought Jochebed to care for Moses.

Miriam is next mentioned at the Red Sea after the Israelites had crossed safely and their Egyptian pursuers had been drowned, Miriam took her tambourine and led out all the women to dance and "sing to the Lord". She is called 'the prophetess'. Her spirit remained in Israel's memory as a sign of hope, and a symbol of joy being recovered. Her leadership of the victory celebration indicates that the Israelites were familiar with forms of female leadership.

We'll follow the tambourine woman,
We'll join in her tambourine song,
We're riding a rainbow to heaven,
And dancing our journey along.

During the wilderness wanderings, Miriam, along with Aaron, criticised Moses' choice of a Cushite wife. This third glimpse of Miriam is perhaps less well known than the previous two stories of her. Tradition suggests that Miriam might have posed a threat to Moses' authority. Or was the real motive for the complaint of Miriam and Aaron jealousy? "Has the Lord spoken only through Moses? Hasn't he also spoken through us?"

God summoned Miriam and Aaron to the Tabernacle and told them there was no other prophet to whom he spoke so directly as Moses, Miriam was punished by God. She was infected with leprosy for seven days, and was kept confined outside the camp, but the people "did not move on until she was brought back," Why was Miriam punished by God when she criticised Moses' choice of a Cushite wife, and Aaron was not? Or is it that Aaron's punishment was just not recorded?

The Bible gives only a sketchy picture of Miriam, but her part in the life and times of Moses is considerable. In the story of the Exodus, Moses prefigures Jesus as the saviour of his people. Miriam's joyful dance at the victory at the Red Sea embodied what it meant for the people to have moved from slavery to freedom.

Much later in Israel's history, Jeremiah recalled the image of Miriam's tambourines. In Micah we read, "I brought you out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam."

It's clear that Miriam was remembered as a significant leader alongside Moses and Aaron during the time of Exodus, and movement into the Promised Land. Her gift of praise and song kept up the hopes of the people as they made their way through the wilderness.

It seems Miriam never married. Like her brothers, she died just before entry to the Promised Land.

Miriam — a meditation

Miriam, our sister, from ancient times,
We find it hard to let ourselves go;
To abandon ourselves to sheer joy;
To get carried away.
We have forgotten how to dance and shout.
We are too world weary.
The victory you experienced,
Seems far removed from our world,
The chariots that despoil and demean
are out in force trampling on the poor.
And the longed for waters that will gush forth,
carrying them away, seem to have dried up.
Miriam, show us how to discern the signs of
life around us;
To proclaim the possibility of freedom from oppression.
Help us to discover that even now — God is dancing with us,
A dance of hope and joy;
A dance of resilience and resistance.
Then we will take up our tambourines and join you.
Voices buried deep will shout out.
Song will burst forth
And our feet will dance.

Helen Richmond

Taekwondo Club

This time next year we expect to have the first ever World Traditional Taekwondo Asociation black belts in Scotland. We are starting to gear up for our very special black belt testing in March 2007 by raising funds so that we can bring over a Senior Master from the States.

One of our students has a weigh in each week with classmates donating 10p for every pound lost in weight. We have also entered a team in this year's Edinburgh Marathon and we are hopeful that we will be able to enter a second team as well. Teams of five run between 3 and 8 miles to complete the full marathon distance, Training is underway but we are not expecting to break any records! Breaking boards, well, that's much easier. Those gearing up for the challenge include St John's members Audrey and Stuart O'Malley, and Lorraine Fairful along with the minister.

This year is proving to be a busy one for the club. We are looking forward to having a visiting instructor lead us in seminars this summer and on 20th April we will be adding a Tiny Tiger class for children aged 5 or 6 to our schedule. Classes will meet on Thursdays from 5-5.30pm, with a maximum of 12 students.

Tiny Tigers is an exciting programme that offers children a strong foundation in essential character qualities such as courtesy, respect, and discipline. In addition, the programme is designed to improve children's motor skills and enhance their ability to pay attention and follow directions. All classes are taught using safe and fun instruction methods for this age group. For further information, please contact the minister on 263121.

FUN PAGE

Not so secret

George's supposedly secret four-digit PIN code is the product of five different prime numbers.

It is also the product of the ages of Fred, George and Herb.

George's age is the average of the other two.

Only one of the trio is a teenager.

What is the PIN?

AND

A numbers puzzle? What are the next two letters?

O	T	T
F	F	S
S		

World Day of Prayer

Sandra Marshall

On Friday 3rd March, in countries all over the world, the annual World Day of Prayer Services were held. The service for 2006 "Signs of the Times" was prepared by a group of Christian women in South Africa, representing many different denominations.

South Africa has had a very turbulent history. Its vast resources of gold, diamonds, coal, iron ore and countless precious gems and metal led to exploitation of its people by the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British. Wars ensued and resulted in devastation of the land and the people.

Since the time of Apartheid (1948-1991) efforts are being made to bring reconciliation among all the people of this 'Rainbow Nation'. The service highlighted the problems still facing South Africans: unemployment, poverty, disease and in particular HIV/AIDS. We all need to give our support in every possible way and keep the people of South Africa in our prayers. The service emphasised how the people themselves are working together, looking forward in faith and hope to a better future.

In Kirkcaldy there were three main public services, with others being held in many of the Residential Homes in the town. St. John's visited Abbeyfield and Marchmont Homes and the older children of the Church enjoyed using the material for the Young People's Service.

GET TOGETHER

Effie Cooper

Our 25th year of the club has come and gone. I was a little disappointed no, not with the celebrations. We had a lovely meal, a beautiful, delicious cake, loads of photographs, but where were the telegrams!

Now we are looking forward to our 'Good Cause' of the year. As usual we will be having a 'Tea Afternoon' to which everyone is invited. Usual rules, £1 minimum, please. This year we hope to give some help to our HOSPICE, on Thursday, 27th April, starting 2 p.m.

Then the drive will be along before we know it. Still, time to come along and enjoy all our meetings, then you can share whatever we are up to. You never know: what's going to happen next. We meet every Thursday from 2 p.m till 4 p.m.

Christian Aid Week – 14-20th May,2006

Angela Stewart

Christian Aid Week is seven amazing days of fundraising, prayer and action against Global Poverty. Door-to-door collectors throughout the country will be knocking on doors and delivering the red envelopes. If you are a UK taxpayer you can add 30% to the value of your donation by filling in the form on the back of the envelope. Please encourage your friends to do this. Christian Aid has launched a new logo this year designed to make them instantly recognizable and to attract new supporters. Please give them your support.

With Hearts and Hymns and Voices

I enjoy a good read! Recently I finished a novel by Pam Rhodes (Songs of Praise) about a fictitious village in Suffolk called Sandford, (Did you know there are ten Sandfords in the UK?) The theme of the book is middle of the road but the content regarding the preparation for a 35 minute 'Songs of Praise' broadcast is excellent. The story centres around St. Michael's church standing on the High Street of the village and the minister in charge is the Rev. Clive Linton. Rev. Clive is a man full of faith, a keen gardener, but also a man sadly lacking in organisational abilities. Clive's wife Helen is largely left to keep her husband on a reasonably organised path.

Pam Rhodes does a fine job explaining the "ins and outs" of producing a programme of this nature and it is relatively easy reading. The main heart and eye catching part of the story for me was Clive's responsibility to compose and deliver a prayer at the end of the programme. He mulled over this for days and eventually came up with what I consider to be a few beautiful lines. Read them carefully and think about them.

Lord of our world — you lived on earth and know its beauty. Lord of our homes — you know our hearts, our hopes, our fears. Lord of forgiveness — you heard our tears turn to derision. Lord of the Heavens you died on the cross that we might live.

Open our eyes to your wonder around us,

Open our eyes to the beauty within,

Be there in our homes, in our thoughts, in our loved ones,

Lord of all love — our praises we bring.

St. John's Guides

Lilian Haig

The Guides are enjoying an active season. Their programme topics give opportunities to widen horizons in various directions. We had an international Christmas, making Austrian Krampus and French Bouches Noel. The Peace topic continued the international theme with songs and dances from various countries, while the one on keep fit gave plenty healthy activity.

Outside visits included evenings at Burntisland pool, the Ice Rink and the KYMT performance of the musical "Disco Inferno", all of which proved very popular. The Hallowe'en party was a happy leisure night, as was an evening spent with the Rangers making and eating pancakes.

We look forward to welcoming new Guides from the Brownie Pack after the Easter holidays.

Prayer Group

Mary Sherrard

We are a small group who meet each month to remember in prayer the needs and activities of St. John's and of the wider church and community. This is a new venture and we would welcome any member of our congregation who would care to join us. Our next meeting is on Wednesday, 19th April at 10.30 a.m. in the Prayer Room of our church and we spend one hour together. We would be happy to have you with us.