



Galashiels Old Parish and St Paul's Church

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Dear Friends,

Shortly before leaving to go over to the States on holiday and Study Leave I was caught on the phone just before leaving the house (– that's how it goes) by a reporter asking for a comment upon some report in the Herald about declining Church numbers. I stated that decline in Church members shouldn't be mistaken for decline in Church attendance because we know that there are many people on Church rolls whose church attendance is negligible and when they die or are removed from rolls the seeming great reduction in the Church is not always as it seems. The truth is that those people's interest or involvement died a long time ago and their removal from the rolls by death or otherwise does not contribute a great removal from the regular worshipping community. However having said that it is true that over the last 50 years the numbers of people actively interested in and involved in the life of the Church has greatly decreased.

In connection with this I asked the reporter why he was phoning round Clergy to ask their reasons why people didn't go to Church, wasn't the obvious thing to ask the people themselves? After all why ask us when the answer can come straight from the horse's mouth; ask round the office or the club? However I offered him a hunch that it was because people no longer believed in a big Truth or a big Story behind the world and because of this there was no great interest in *any* group or philosophy that claimed a 'big Truth'. People believe in their own little inner voice today and everyone to their own.

If that is the case (but I stand to be corrected by any who read this and who want to tell of the reasons behind their own Church free life) it needs to be said that this 'own little voice' philosophy hasn't proved very successful in

establishing a society at rest or at peace with itself and the question is not what will the Church be like without the people but what will the people be like without the Church? The last thing people break away from the Church in is death because they always want to hear something bigger about meaning of life and if possible future to life though they may not have considered it at all through their life. There is a desire for a 'big Story' at death but a disinclination for it to intrude in earlier active life.

I was also asked if I was disheartened or disappointed as if I was in a business which wasn't maintaining it's market share. I answered, 'No', for my confidence in God is quite unrelated to the ups and downs of human history. There is a 'big Truth' and a 'big Story' behind the world and behind our lives and it lies in the work of God in Jesus Christ. This will always be "foolishness to the Greeks and a stumbling block to the Jews" as Paul said (and remains so for many today) but its truth does not depend on the number of people who believe it but on its intrinsic rightness. The shrinkage of the Church in Scotland is in God's hands, that is not a statement of spiritual complacency but of the truth but instead of it being an issue of religious banter, of mocking or defence, perhaps it should be a matter of discussion between the active and the passive. What is God doing in this and why?

Yours in Christ, Leslie Steele.

Church Picnic

A Church picnic will be held on Saturday, 11th June. Meet at 1.00p.m. at Wilton Park Hawick for a relaxed Family afternoon of fun and some games. B.Y.O.G. – for the uninitiated, this means please provide your own picnic. Anyone requiring transport should speak to one of the Sunday School Teachers.

New Beginnings Update

During the May communion visits, elders were asked for an update on what has happened to your "New Beginnings" suggestions.

The current situation is that we have passed your thoughts on to committees within the Kirk Session, but we have been unable to find a **full Session meeting** to go over the committee recommendations.

It has now been agreed that all of this information will be discussed after the Minister returns, at the Kirk Session meeting in August. We will then have a report made up for the September Newsletter and the Minister will address Worship suggestions during a service around that time.

Eddie Oliver

You may have heard the news that our organist who has served St. Paul's so faithfully for so many years has indicated his wish to retire this year. This is not the moment to begin to try to thank Eddie for the way he has enhanced our worship with his skills as a musician, but we are most grateful for all that he has done. An advertisement for a new organist has been put in the local press – do please pray for those responsible for finding a replacement for Eddie, for clear guidance and wisdom in their choice.

Death

Jesus said "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

12th May Arthur Hancock, 3 Balmoral Avenue

We extend our sincere sympathy and the assurance of our prayers to the bereaved family.

Presbytery World Mission Conference

A meeting was held in Innerleithen on April 29th attended by representatives of each parish in the Presbytery. Carol Finlay, the World Mission Department's Assistant Secretary for Local Involvement was present to describe to delegates the changing scene in world Mission. In the 1960s, The Church of Scotland had over 300 missionaries serving abroad. Together with spouses and families, this meant that there were over 500 people serving abroad. She asked us to guess the number employed today – which to the surprise of all, she gave as only 30. There are various reasons for this, but the implication for Presbyteries is that it will no longer be possible to link missionaries with Congregations as a link for the parish to support, as there are insufficient people serving abroad. (Our Partner at present is Bruce Ritchie, serving in Malawi.) It is vital to maintain an interest in the overseas Church, and a plan is being worked out at the moment to link Presbyteries with Presbyteries, or Parish here with Parish overseas. The World Mission representative from Motherwell Presbytery then told us about the way they are working on such a link at the moment. When Bruce Ritchie comes home, we too will need to pursue a different type of link which is an exciting prospect for the future.

To all Contributors

First of all – thank you to those who submit articles for the Newsletter. Please keep them coming! This is to remind readers and contributors that the next edition is to cover July and August, so please bear that in mind when planning your next item.

CAN YOU HELP?

At the end of this year, we are looking for a small team of people to work with David Leckey to complete our final accounts for 2005. To date, we have two volunteers, however we need **a further two helpers** to work with us. If you can help, the work will involve working with David during January until our books are balanced. We will probably have a planning meeting in November but once the books are balanced, the job is finished.

The cost of putting this work out to accountants could be up to £1000, so you can appreciate that help for what would be a limited amount of time would be of great value to the church. If you can help please phone David on tel: 757631 or Colin Hanley on tel: 759402.

Feba – Broadcasting Hope

Some readers will know of the work of Feba – but others will not. Briefly – Feba communicates the Gospel through the use of radio and programme follow up, in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. They broadcast in 60 languages, often reaching with radio into homes which would otherwise be closed to Christian influence. The following is an article by Christine Napier which appeared in their magazine ‘Threshold’, and is reprinted with permission:

Why Drugs?

Huddled in a doorway in Kabul, an emaciated ex-soldier injects heroin. On a campus in Yemen, a group of students get high chewing *qat*; while in a back street in Nairobi, a couple of ragged street children sniff glue.

All over Feba’s listening areas, people are trying to escape from reality by taking drugs. Often, they live in miserable situations, like the people of war-torn southern Sudan and its many refugees. Many of them rely on *bhang* – a form of cannabis – to get them through the day.

It’s easy to understand the despair of those who have been traumatized by war and bereaved, or have lost their homes. But what makes a young person with an apparently stable home and a good education turn to drugs?

Looking for friendship

Researchers tell us that drug abuse is often linked to a lack of parental control. There is evidence of this in India’s big cities. In a booming economy, prices are soaring, and many parents are so preoccupied with earning a living that they don’t pay attention to their children. Young people looking for friendship visit pubs and clubs – and so get drawn into the drug culture.

Once a person in the developing world gets addicted, it’s hard to help. Drug rehabilitation centres are few. That makes prevention all the more crucial – and radio all the more significant. Feba India’s youth programme on one of the FM stations in Bangalore, offers a good platform for some straight talking about drugs, especially as one of its presenters is a recovered addict and speaks from experience.

In the Middle East the Arabic Team has been airing features on the narcotic leaf *qat*. Its widespread use is causing huge concern in Yemen and other countries. Not only is it ruining the health of the workforce, but its cultivation is depleting the precious water supply.

In Mombasa, Kenya, Sam Makenda of Feba’s community station Baraka FM adopts a bold stand

against the city’s army of drug pushers. On his talk show, he encourages listeners to phone in with the names and whereabouts of dealers, and then informs the authorities. This has resulted in a number of arrests.

Offering hope

Feba programmers advise on drug abuse, but, most importantly of all, they make known the power of Christ to change lives. Such as the Sudanese refugee and former drug addict who wrote: “I was completely frustrated, thinking that I am now useless. But one day I heard Feba talking about addictions and giving hope to useless people like me. I decided to throw away my *bhang* and try that life the Feba radio are trying to tell me. Now I am saved, and useful in the community.”

News of . . .

Cathie Aberdour

On the weekend of 4th/5th June when the Church newsletter will be ready for delivery, a special celebration will be taking place many thousands of miles away in a small village in the Amazon jungle. For Cathie Aberdour and Judy King (along with the Apurina Indian people who have helped them) it will be a special joy, probably more than we can imagine, as at last, the New Testament will be distributed to the people in their own Apurina language. What a thrill after 29 years of living and working there, learning firstly how to understand the language and then making an alphabet before ever starting to translate the Scriptures which we so take for granted in our own land.

Cathie and Judy have decided to stay on there, continuing to translate Old Testament books, some of which they have already done ie Genesis and some of the Psalms. Please continue to pray for them – that they would keep as well as possible and as quick-witted as possible too (– to avoid the nasties that live in the Amazon!) And that God would continue to bless them and the Apurina as they seek to live and work for Him.

The minister and his wife in the U.S.A.

Leslie and Lillias should be near the end of their time with Liz, Bill and Fiona now, and preparing for the Study section of their leave. They do not forget us – Leslie sent a letter as usual for the Newsletter, as you will have noticed, and Lillias submitted the news about Cathie Aberdour. Please remember them in your prayers, that this will be a time of refreshment and renewal for them both, as they divide their time between study and some holiday with the family.

The Tearfund Interview

Q) What is **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY**?

It's one of the largest ever campaigns involving the public in the UK and Ireland. Tearfund is joining with more than 150 organisations, including other aid agencies, trade unions and churches, to ask the British and other governments to agree policies that will speed up the battle against poverty.

Q) What do you hope to achieve?

We're asking for trade justice, debt cancellation and more and better aid. We're not hoping to eradicate poverty, but we do believe that this year we can bring about significant policy change, create a greater public awareness of poverty issues and build a platform for further change.

Q) What is the white band for?

It is the **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** symbol – a simple white band worn around the wrist or anywhere it can be seen. The bands are available from **TEARFUND** and many of the coalition agencies.

Q) Why should I get involved?

Relief and development saves lives and restores hope and dignity to many people. But changes in global policies on aid, trade and debt could potentially lift millions out of poverty. We believe Christians should be calling for these changes and we need our volunteers to engage with supporters and public alike in this campaign

"2005 is our chance to go down in history for what we did do, rather than what we didn't do. This campaign is critical and is coming to a stadium and a pulpit near you" Bono, U2.

There are many ways to get involved, but here are some:

1. Support the G8 rally in Edinburgh on July 2nd, either by being there in person, by praying for the event or by writing to your MP, your MSP, the Prime Minister, and the other world leaders involved in the G8 summit at Gleneagles during July 6-8th. There will be information on these opportunities, in Old Parish & St. Paul's church hall, Galashiels on Sunday, June 19th, after the morning service and throughout the afternoon.
2. Give a supporting toot or a wave, if you happen to see Jim Tennant out running (or what seems like walking quickly) as Jim has entered the Great North Run again, and this year's fund-raising, through Tearfund, is for **MAKE POVERTYHISTORY**.
3. A group of 12 walkers, led by Simon Topping, are making the journey from Birmingham where the first UK-based G8 summit was held. They will be

Treasurer's Report

APRIL 2005

Income

Offerings 4 weeks (Weekly average £837.09).....	£3,348.47
Dividends, Bank Interest, etc.....	£1,117.15
Donations and Fundraising.....	£1,804.68
	<u>£6,270.20</u>

Expenditure

Electricity, Gas & Church Telephone.....	£417.31
Advertising, Printing, Stationery.....	£173.38
Projector Screen, etc.....	£957.50
Repairs and Maintenance.....	£399.42
Donations, etc.....	£213.16
Standard Monthly Expenditure.....	£4,257.80
	<u>£6,418.57</u>

STANDARD MONTHLY EXPENDITURE OFFERINGS

Stipend	£3,262.70	4th	£580.60
Mission & Renewal	£883.10	11th	£468.12
Organist	£80.00	16th	£764.10
Cleaners (4wks)	£32.00	25th	£518.55
			<u>£2,331.37</u>
		Paid through Bank	£1,017.00
	<u>£4,257.80</u>		<u>£3,348.37</u>

OFFERINGS UPDATE

	2005	2004	
Jan-March 13wks	£10,824.68	£9,615.34	13wks
April 4wks	£3,348.37	£3,141.15	4wks
	<u>£14,173.05</u>	<u>£12,756.49</u>	

staying in St. Ninian's church halls, Galashiels overnight on Thursday June 30th, and as many supporters as possible are invited to join them on the penultimate leg of their journey, from Galashiels to Gorebridge on Friday July 1st.

4. Just wear a **MAKEPOVERTYHISTORY** wrist-band.

Why should I get involved, again?

- 2.8 billion people live in poverty today
- 30,000 people die every day from preventable poverty-related diseases
- 800,000 people suffer from chronic hunger
- 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water
- More than half the world's population exist on less than US\$ 2 per day

African Children's Choir Stop Press

On Sunday, 29th May those who came to St. Paul's Church were treated to a feast of music from the African Children's Choir. The energy and commitment of the youngsters was most impressive, as well as their musical ability. We hope to include a full report in next month's Newsletter, as the event was too near going to press to give it due notice this time.