



Galashiels Old Parish and St. Paul's Church

Newsletter ♦ March 2007

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Letter from Leslie

Dear Friends,

“The truth is what you make it” was one of the trailer lines for the BBC programme “The Verdict”, which was about a fictionalised rape case played by actors with a jury of celebrities invited to debate the evidence and decide if the accused was guilty or not. In that case it was just a made-up story but I fear that the slogan has something more to say about the way we run our society today, and it will cause a backlash sooner or later.

During the French Revolution and in the early Communist regime in Russia alternative lengths of the week were tried: 10-day in France, 5-day, then a 6-day week in Russia. None of these worked, and the durability of the 7-day week says something about its inherent rightness for human beings, however arbitrary its choice may seem to be... It's true that people may force their lives into another pattern but the resting or default pattern is the 7-day cycle. The same could be said about sleeping at night and working during the day. The thing is that we are given such liberty in our minds and societies that unless we live under dictatorships we are free to choose a wide variety of ways and styles of living. What we must be careful of is believing that whatever way we choose must be true. Possible, yes; true, no.

Societies often find out through experience or, if they are wise, through history, that there are better and worse ways of living. At the moment our Government feels that gambling is no great issue for our society and we may as well make a lot of money through Casinos, even super-Casinos. However, history has shown that any people who think they can live on something for nothing eventually find out that lack of industry leads to lack of sustenance.

I'm not going to blame the Government for my next point – alcohol. Our society has gone mad on it, and its consumption by ever younger people to greater excess is regularly seen in our papers. As I write, I am reading a headline “Police chief calls on public to help stem drink-fuelled violence”, and such a headline could appear in any regional paper.

To point up another issue, our society has also become brain-washed into thinking that family structures can be made up in whatever way one wants, and sex is a matter of individual choice quite unrelated to committed marriage between parents: “love” is all that counts (whatever that means). There are other things about which we could say, “No, it's not the best way”.

The fact that there are default settings in which societies are happiest keeps coming through and not just from religious leaders but from others who gradually realise that the truth is NOT what you make it, that there are certain things which are innately true, and which no amount of tinkering will change. Sometimes this comes with age, though not always.

You have probably heard of the man who thought he could fly who jumped off a high building, and as he was going past the 10th floor was heard to say, “So far so good!”. For numbers of years now this has seemed to be the view of our declining Western society, though there is no doubt that the cracks are showing. It was Lord Hailsham (the former Quintin Hogg MP) who said a number of years ago that the decline in our society started when people stopped going to Church because the things that ARE TRUE get forgotten about when God's Word is left to gather dust. Perhaps the race is on just now between the spiritual vigour left within the nation and the continuing decadence that feels if we have gone 10 storeys so far and maybe the next 5 or 6 won't do us any harm!

The truth is what you make it? Well, what's your verdict?

Yours Sincerely, Leslie Steele.

Obituary

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who has been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as knowing when to come in out of the rain, why the early bird gets the worm, life isn't always fair, and maybe it was my fault. Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you earn) and reliable parenting strategies (adults, not children, are in charge).

His health began to deteriorate rapidly when well-intentioned but overbearing regulations were set in place. Reports of a six-year-old boy charged with sexual harassment for kissing a classmate; teens suspended from school for using mouthwash after lunch; and a teacher fired for reprimanding an unruly student: these only worsened his condition.

Common Sense lost ground when parents attacked teachers for doing the job they themselves failed to do in disciplining their unruly children.

It declined even further when schools were required to get parental consent to administer Panadol, sun lotion or a Band Aid to a student - but could not inform the parents when a student became pregnant and wanted to have an abortion.

Common Sense lost the will to live as the Ten Commandments became contraband, churches became businesses, and criminals received better treatment than their victims.

Common Sense took a beating when you couldn't defend yourself from a burglar in your own home and the burglar can sue you for assault.

Common Sense finally gave up the will to live after a woman failed to realize that a steaming cup of coffee was hot. She spilled a little in her lap, and was promptly awarded a huge settlement.

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust; his wife, Discretion; his daughter, Responsibility; and his son, Reason.

He is survived by three stepbrothers; I Know My Rights, Someone Else is to Blame, and I'm A Victim. Not many attended his funeral because so few realized he was gone.



Death

10th February: Miss Marion Hall,
14 Ashley Road, Polmont

Grant Coordinator

The Congregational Board are looking for a volunteer who would write to "Grant Giving Bodies" on behalf of the church. This roll would involve the person being responsible for the information concerning these bodies and being clear on what they would support.

At some point in the future, a project could be undertaken by the Church which could qualify for financial support from one of these bodies, and at that point we would ask the person to write to them on our behalf. It should not be a big job to take on: however, it would be very useful to have someone handling these matters for the church!

If you can help, please contact Colin Hanley on 01896 759402.



Helper/s Required

At the recent meeting of the Congregational Board it was agreed to ask members of the congregation if anybody would be willing to assist with brushing out the halls and do some dusting in the small hall while Ian is on holiday for six weeks from the end of February and perhaps on a longer term to help Ian.

If you feel able to help out in any way, please contact Hugh Bain on 01896 756605.

Art 4 God

An innovative project which looks at the use of images in the worship and mission of the Church has been given its own section on the Church



of Scotland extranet site - and is inviting you to take part in an invaluable survey to help shape resources for art in worship for the future! The project, which is carried out in partnership with the Mission and Discipleship Council and artist and art historian **Fiona Campbell**, also provides a range of resources and downloads online to assist in using art in worship. For more information, visit www.churchofscotlandextranet.org.uk and click on the Quick Link to *Art 4 God Project*.

“CONNECTING SCOTLAND” - 50 Day National Prayer Walk Transforming Scotland Step By Step

Many Churches and Christian organisations across Scotland are joining together to fill each island, city, town or village with prayer. Hundreds of people just like you are taking prayer to the streets. To “Prayer Walk” our whole nation is achievable, and every Christian can play a vital part. Simply walk round your neighbourhood, workplace, or wherever you choose and silently pray God's blessings.

Steve Hawthorn and Graham Kendrick in the book *Prayerwalking* describe this praying as follows: “Ordinary believers are stepping out into the streets to pray effectively for their neighbours. With eyes wide open to real needs and with ears open to the promptings of God's Spirit, intercession becomes a real adventure”.

The aim is to make every place in Scotland a “prayed over” place. Can you imagine your local neighbourhood, workplace or locality as a “prayer-saturated” community? If you are interested in this initiative, and would like to learn more about the whole movement, or would just like to get involved, then either visit the website www.connectingscotland.com, or please speak to Jim Tennant. If there is sufficient interest, a viewing of the organisation's DVD will be arranged.

Connecting Scotland is a vision from “Pray for Scotland – praying for revival in the nation”. The mission is to pray for the nation between Easter and Pentecost (8th April - 27th May 2007).



THE MIRACLE IS WORKING!

Tearfund's “Work a Miracle” campaign, launched at the end of last year, is already on target thanks to your efforts!

- The initial target of raising £2 million by the end of 2007 is already well on the way, with churches in the UK and Ireland contributing a massive £1.38 million within 12 weeks of the appeal being launched.
- Some 2,572 individuals or families committed to give regularly; and 252,000 people prayed about the appeal, including our Prayer Vigil on December 1st – World AIDS Day.

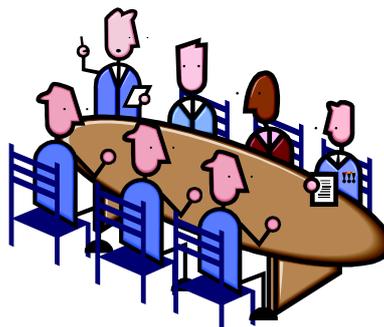
Already Tearfund has been able to fund ten new HIV programmes through church partners in Africa, which means that nearly 185,000 mothers could receive help in the next ten years.

To reduce the risk of infection from mother to baby from 1 in 3 to 1 in 50 costs just £7 per month. Through your giving and prayers, the miracle has begun. Please continue to remember the work, and if you haven't yet signed up, there's still time to do so – the campaign runs until 2015!

Annual Church Meeting

Another reminder that the Annual Meeting for the Congregation will be on Tuesday 20th March at 7.30pm. Please remember this is YOUR Church , and this meeting represents the best place to help decide which direction the Church goes in .

The Church is not a set of buildings, but “the people called (out) by God”.



Resisting the hurricanes

Chus works with Christian Aid partner Aprovehni, putting down tyres and filling sandbags to strengthen the river bank. This vital work helps his community to live with the effects of climate change.

‘We definitely have more hurricanes and floods than we used to. I’ve lived here all my life and it wasn’t like this before. Strong winds and big waves from the sea cause more floods now.’ Dominica Echevarría Jesús Antonio Echevarría, usually known as Chus, is 15 and lives with his sister Dominica and her husband in the San Luis la Herradura area of El Salvador. This area is particularly prone to natural disasters. Hurricanes are a growing threat, and the low-lying land is very susceptible to flooding. Chus’s father died when he was a baby and he sees his mother only occasionally. He has been brought up by his sister and her husband. The family live in three huts close together. Chus shares a hut with his brother and the family’s livestock. Chus’s hut was battered by Hurricane Stan in 2005, and this has left holes in the roof. The family survives on just a few dollars a day.



Chus likes to get involved with his community in a practical way, and has worked on the local river bank with Christian Aid partner Aprovehni. He has always wanted to do this, although he was initially told he was too young. However, his enthusiasm paid off and he was allowed to work, in return for some food. He is seen in the picture to the left strengthening the river bank with tyres and sandbags. In the aftermath of Hurricane Stan he helped to make up food parcels for other families.

Chus is not the only member of his family to be involved with Aprovehni. His sister and brother-in-law play an active part in analysing what needs to be done in the community, organising working groups, and carrying out practical work on the river bank and drainage channels. Even his seven-year-old cousin, Jackeline, participates in Aprovehni’s workshops, which use sport and art to help children forget the trauma of hurricanes and earthquakes. She has also taken part in rubbish-collecting brigades.

Aprovehni encourages people to get involved in, and take responsibility for, protecting and developing their own communities. Its work includes reducing the risks created by natural disasters, reducing environmental pollution and responding to emergencies. The changing climate is creating a situation that calls for an urgent response. The increased frequency and intensity of hurricanes and subsequent flooding demonstrate the catastrophic effects that climate change is already having on some of the world’s poorest people.

Archbishop Oscar Romero memorably referred to the 80 per cent of El Salvadoreans living in poverty as a ‘crucified people’. Romero worked tirelessly on behalf of poor people, speaking out against injustice and oppression. This brought him into conflict with the government and the military. He was assassinated by the army in 1980. Chus is just one of these ‘crucified people’. Yet with the help of Aprovehni, he is helping to save lives. Although he is poor, he is helping people to adapt to climate change and to live with the effects of natural disasters.

Christian Aid Week. 13th – 19th May 2007 ~ “We believe in life before death”

TREASURER’S REPORT – January 2007

The Congregational Board has agreed that the Treasurer’s Report for the Newsletter should now be presented in the following format as this will give a more accurate picture of the financial situation month by month.

For St Paul’s to meet all its regular commitments in 2007 we need sufficient income over the year to equal the projected expenditure of £76,585.

This breaks down to £6,382 expenditure each month (£76,585 divided by 12), which means our income should - **at the very least** - also be at that level.

In January 2007 our income was £4274, meaning that the “running budget” is in deficit by £2108. Therefore, in order to meet all of our financial commitments in 2007, that deficit will only be wiped out by extra income in other months.

In summary:	Targeted Budget Income (January 2007)	£6382
	Actual Monthly Income (January 2007)	£4274
	Deficit:	£2108