



Old Parish and St Paul's Church of Scotland, Galashiels

Old Parish and St Paul's Church of Scotland, Galashiels, is a Charity registered in Scotland, No: SC010389

Newsletter ♦ February 2017

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It was a Christ-Centred Church

We hope that every member had a wonderful Christmas time and may we all have a blessed new year. I continue this month again on the subject of the Church.

What is God's vision for the church? In the last newsletters we saw that the church was devoted to teaching and fellowship. The third mark of God's vision that we find in the early church was a Christ-centred Church.

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. (Act 2:42)

The first church was not only a saved church: they were a studying church and they had spiritual fellowship together. Their fellowship was symbolised by obedience to the spiritual duty of the breaking of bread, a reference to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, or Communion. This duty is not optional, since our Lord commanded it of every believer (cf. 1 Cor. 11: 24–29).

- ♦ In Communion, all believers meet on common ground at the foot of the cross, since all people are sinners saved by the grace of God in Christ. The cross is that which brought peace and which reconciled us to God. It also reconciled us to each other and then it becomes a symbol of our fellowship. We are one with Christ at the cross.
- ♦ Communion acknowledges the wondrous work of the Lord Jesus on the cross.
- ♦ Communion further represents the unity of believers, since in it all partake together symbolically of the same Lord (Eph. 4: 5). Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10: 16–17, *"Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread."*
- ♦ Communion is not only the outward ritual or ceremony but it calls for self-examination and purifying of sin. Nothing is more vital to the health of the church than regular confession of sins and the thoughtful expression of devotion in the remembrance of the cross.

Leon Keller

Getting into the Habit of Doing Everything with Jesus

By Max Aplin

John 15:1-8 contains Jesus' well-known teaching about the vine and its branches. He states:

1 I am the true vine and My Father is the gardener. **2** Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He cuts off, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, so that it might bear more fruit. **3** You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. **4** Abide in Me, and I in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. **5** I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, he is the one who bears much fruit, because without Me you can do nothing. **6** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown out like a branch and dries up. And they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned. **7** If you abide in Me and My words abide in you, ask for whatever you want and it will be done for you. **8** By this My Father is glorified, in your bearing much fruit and being My disciples."

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In this passage the Lord portrays Himself as a vine and His followers as the branches of that vine.

Actually, strictly speaking He must mean that He is the trunk of the vine and His followers are the branches. He surely doesn't mean that He is the whole vine, both trunk and branches, and that we are also the branches. That would hardly make sense of verse 2, where He says that God prunes the branches that bear fruit. Pruning here symbolises God's discipline, and the perfect Jesus clearly needed no disciplining. So the metaphor, strictly speaking, must involve Jesus being the trunk of the vine.

The importance of abiding in Jesus

In verses 4-7 Jesus instructs His followers to abide in Him as the branches of the vine abide in the vine, i.e., in the trunk of the vine. And in verses 4-5 He tells us that our abiding in Him is accompanied by His abiding in us. The picture here is one of great intimacy between the Lord and His followers, one in which He and each Christian are bonded to each other very closely.

In verse 4 Jesus tells us too that unless we abide in Him we cannot bear fruit. And in verse 5 He says that those who abide in Him will bear much fruit. The fruit that He refers to in these verses should be interpreted broadly as symbolising everything we do that is profitable in God's sight. Abiding in Jesus is therefore obviously extremely important.

Degrees of abiding

Although the passage speaks only of abiding, and says nothing about greater or lesser degrees of abiding, it makes sense to think that Christians can actually grow in their ability to abide in the Lord.

It is true that a literal branch cannot grow in its ability to abide in the literal trunk of a vine. So someone might want to argue that we should not understand a symbolic branch, i.e., a Christian, to be able to grow in his or her ability to abide in the symbolic trunk of the vine, i.e., Jesus.

This, however, would be to read more detail out of the symbolism than is appropriate. Most biblical symbols don't correspond precisely to reality in every respect.

It is reasonable to think, then, that Christians can grow in their ability to abide in the Lord. And because abiding in Him leads to bearing fruit, this means that the better we abide in Him the more fruit we will bear. In other words, the better we abide in Him the more we will please God.

Obeying Jesus

So, how do we achieve this goal of abiding in Jesus more and more deeply?

Well, firstly, there should be no doubt that the better we obey Him, the better we will abide in Him. We should therefore be asking Him to show us all in our lives that which displeases Him. And as He reveals this and we aim to put it right, we will be able to abide more deeply in Him.

Doing everything with Jesus

As well as aiming to obey Jesus better, there is something else that can help us to abide in Him more deeply. This is quite simply for us to make it our goal to do everything we do with Him.

In fact, in this passage the Lord Himself points us in this direction. In verse 5, after saying that our abiding in Him will lead us to bear much fruit, He actually says, 'Without Me you can do nothing'.

Every day numerous little problems, and some big ones, usually crop up in our lives. I don't know if you are anything like me, but I find that my reaction to a problem I face is often something like the following. First, I worry a little about it. Then I try in my own strength to solve it. And if that doesn't work, only then do I start praying about it. I think this is probably a bad habit that most Christians, if they are honest, often fall into.

However, it is surely true that the more we can get into the habit of doing everything with Jesus, the more easily we will avoid worrying and trying to do things by ourselves. Instead, we will move quicker to treating a problem as something that Jesus and we will overcome together.

Nor should we aim only to overcome problems with the Lord and in His strength. His words about not being able to do anything without Him in verse 5 suggest that we should be aiming to do all that we do with Him, whether or not there is anything difficult about it. Basically, our goal should be to treat everything we do as a joint venture with Jesus.

That is not to say that we should try to be constantly conscious in our minds of doing everything with the Lord. I think that would be unrealistic and would probably be exhausting. I just mean that deeper down, in our spirits, we should attempt to rest constantly in Him and do everything we do with Him.

It has to be true that the more we learn how to do everything with Jesus, the more deeply we will abide in Him. And as we have seen in verses 4-5, there is a connection between abiding and fruit-bearing. This means that the more we get into the habit of doing everything with Jesus, the more we will be able to please God.

Church News

Deaths

07/01/2017

Joyce Grierson

8 Laidlaw Court, Galashiels

23/01/2017

Williamina ("Minnie") Shiel

9 Oakwood Park, Galashiels

We extend our sincere sympathy and prayers to the bereaved families

Ordination

Congratulations to Louise Mackay, daughter of our Organist, David Mackay, who was ordained into St Nicholas Church, Lanark, on 12th January 2017. Her ordination was covered extensively in the national and local press, and the Church of Scotland issued a press release "Former supermarket worker takes up star role in the pulpit". The picture below shows Louise with her mentor, the Right Rev. Dr Russell Barr, Moderator of the General Assembly.



Wedding

Jamie Adamson, son of Ishbel and Gordon Adamson, married Jane Cleary, who is from New Zealand, on 8th December 2016. The wedding took place in Thailand, which is roughly half way between Scotland and New Zealand!! The wedding and venue were very much enjoyed by those who attended. Jamie and Jane are currently living near Keswick in the Lake District. The happy couple are featured below in this beautiful setting overlooking Kata Noi Beach.



Work Place Chaplains

I am passing on an appeal from the Galashiels Fellowship of Churches for church members to consider training for Work Place Chaplains. The training involves 6 compulsory modules over the first two years with further development as you decide. All are very engaging and none are challenging in terms of time.

We are looking for men, in particular, to work with the Fire Service in Hawick and Galashiels. Our lady pastor has moved into supporting another area. You may also be interested in supporting retail, business, banking or the Post Office: lots of opportunities for both genders! Training will be offered locally by Paul Wilson, East of Scotland Manager.

There are other chances to join training dates elsewhere and meet with pastors Scotland-wide. Please contact Eleanor Simpson by email (kelsimpson@yahoo.com) or call 01896752240 if you'd like more information or if you wish to be put in touch with Paul Wilson.

Treasurer's Report - December 2016

Budgeted Expenditure for 2016		£93,344
Budget for January to December		£93,344
Income from offerings to date	£43,841	
Gift Aided offerings tax reclaimed to date	£8,585	
Investment income to date	£2,181	
		<u>£54,607</u>
Shortfall (voluntary income)		-£38,737
Income from use of premises	£16,042	
Other donations to date	£29,516	
Legacies to date	£0	
		<u>£45,558</u>
Income surplus to date, against budget		£6,821

Actual General Fund income to date £100,913
 Actual General Fund expenditure to date £105,891
Income shortfall to date -£4,978

Average weekly offerings compared: **£913** (January-December 2015)
£843 (January-December 2016)

Heriot-Watt University Chaplaincy
ANNUAL PUBLIC LECTURE

THE GOD QUESTION:
 Is there more to the universe than matter and energy?

Prof. John Lennox
 University of Oxford

Monday 13 February 2017
6.30 pm
 Refreshments from 5.30 pm
 James Watt Centre |
 Edinburgh Campus

Registration required via Eventbrite by 9 February
 at <https://goo.gl/LAA2Tb>
 - or email Ruth.Duncan@hw.ac.uk
 - or call 0131 451 4508

Chalmers Lectures 2017

WATCH ONLINE

Reforming the Kirk

— the future of the Church of Scotland

Rev Dr Doug Gay
Lecturer in Practical Theology, Principal of Trinity College, University of Glasgow

FEBRUARY 1st, 8th and 15th, 2017 • 6.30pm • St Giles Cathedral, Edinburgh

In this series of three lectures, Glasgow-based Practical Theologian and Kirk Minister Doug Gay offers a candid, forthright and bold analysis of the state of the Church of Scotland and the choices facing it.

LECTURE 1	WED 1 st FEBRUARY	LECTURE 2	WED 8 th FEBRUARY	LECTURE 3	WED 15 th FEBRUARY
Walls Without Church?		Call And Response		Grand Designs	
The first lecture explores 'what just happened?' tracing the decline of the Kirk as a national institution since the 1960s.		The second lecture explores the relationship between the church's understanding of its own calling and its response.		The final lecture makes the case for radical structural reform of the Church of Scotland over the next decade.	

Doug describes the lectures as 'hard thinking done with a soft heart' and 'radical thinking offered in a cautious spirit'. He hopes the lectures will both contribute to a broader understanding of the state of the Kirk across Scotland and the international reformed community and to a creative and productive conversation about reform within the Kirk.

The Church of Scotland
FREE to attend, or WATCH online:
www.churchofscotland.org.uk

Heat Settings in the Church

At the moment Max Aplin is the only person in the church who properly knows how to set the heating for the main worship area. So we are looking for someone else to learn how to do this. If you think you can help, please speak to Max.