



St John's News

The Newsletter of St John's Church of Scotland: Carluke

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September 2017

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Pastoral Letter

Dear members

Let me take this opportunity to welcome you back from the Summer holidays. I hope you enjoyed the Summer, and feel refreshed and spiritually fit for the things that God might call you to do in the days ahead.

Apart from our regular worship services, a lot has happened in St. John's since I wrote the last pastoral letter. We had an uplifting 'Let's Get Together' event at the beginning of June and later a fantastic church day-out at Ayr. It was *blashie* at the beach, but the atmosphere was lovely, with different age groups in attendance.

As a church family we have maintained regular giving in support of different Charities locally and internationally, for which I am thankful to our members. You would have read that JAFFA 2 had a great walk up Tinto hill and most recently Grace Notes, for the second year participated at the Rocknations event in Bradford. The Family Olympics was a chance to meet in more informal surroundings to play games together, have a wee blether and get to know each other better.

Sadly, too, over the Summer, we lost a few members by death. Our thoughts and prayer are with the bereaved families and with our members who are ill or recovering from ill-health.

Before breaking for the Summer Joint services, we did conclude our sermon series on the Parables of Jesus. Currently, we are on another sermon series, titled 'the Miracles of Jesus'. We live in a time where we are flooded with suggestions on how to connect with our "spiritual self." The world clamours for miracles. But what is a miracle? Miracle is a discernibly supernatural event demonstrating God's governing power over the world intended to produce faith in God's word. The greatest miracle however, remains the creative, humble, and powerful coming of Jesus. It is because he came that we have access to God. Only God himself could do this and bring the dead to life. Let us trust in God, for with him nothing is impossible.

God Bless.

Rev Dr Elijah Obinna
Minister

Diary: September to December 2017

Regular Worship Times

Sunday Morning Prayers - 10:20 - 10:50 am, before morning service.

Normal Sunday Services are held at 11:00 am.

A short evening service, with prayers for healing, is normally held on the second Sunday of each month at 7:00 pm

A Praise Service is held on the last Sunday of the month, also at 7:00 pm.

A short, mid-week service is held on Thursdays at 10:30 am.

Minister's Vestry Times

Wednesdays and Fridays 9:30 am - 12:30 pm

Forthcoming Special Events and Services

10 September: Evening Healing Service

16 September: Youth Praise Evening (6:00 pm)

17 September: BB Enrolment Service

24 September: Evening Praise Service

30 September: Dessert/Potluck/Music Evening

1 October: Harvest Thanksgiving Service

7 October: Prayer Day in Kirkton Church

8 October: Evening Healing Service

15 October: Psalm Sunday

29 October: Evening Praise Service

4 November: Church Family Ceilidh

12 November: Remembrance Sunday

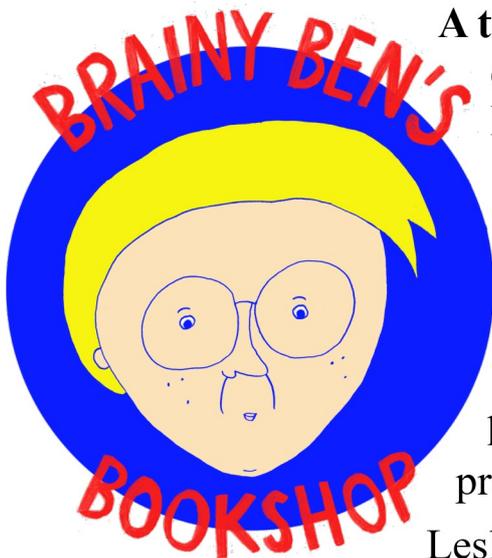
19 November: Guild Service

26 November: Carluke Praise the Lord! (6:30 pm)

3 December: SACRAMENT OF HOLY COMMUNION

Please watch Sunday bulletins, local press or visit the church website for and changes and more information as it becomes available.

Holiday Club 2017



A total of 137 children (many of whom had no church connection) registered for the Holiday Club which was the usual mixture of fun and learning.

This year the material was prepared by the steering group and it was based on five of the parables taught by Jesus: the sower and the seed, the wise and foolish builders, the lost sheep, the Good Samaritan and the prodigal son.

Lesley Ewing (*Dafty Di*) and Euan Robb (*Brainy Ben*) led from the front, telling the stories and keeping everything moving along. The children had a great time and thoroughly enjoyed the stories, the crafts, the songs and simply spending time having fun together.

As usual the week was rounded off by the parents' night on the Friday evening which was very well attended and then the Holiday Club service on the Sunday was a good opportunity for the wider congregation to hear all about it.

There was a great team of adult and teenage helpers and leaders – huge thanks to all of them for their hard work and their very valuable input.

EB

An atheist complained to a Christian friend, "You Christians have your special holidays, such as Christmas and Easter. The Jews celebrate their national holidays, such as Passover and Yom Kippur. We atheists have no recognized national holidays. It's unfair discrimination." His friend replied, "Why don't you celebrate April first?"

Rocknations 2017

Grace Notes once again attended Rocknations Youth Conference in Bradford this summer. The girls and leaders are very grateful for the generosity and support of the congregation of St John's which helped to make the trip possible. So please accept our heartfelt thanks.

Here are just a few comments from the group about our trip:

I went with huge expectations after last year and wasn't disappointed, another fabulous few days of fun, worship, fellowship and a few tears. I left feeling truly blessed to have been part of such an inspirational, faith building event.

...such an eye-opening experience. Seeing so many young people worship in different ways and bond over their faith was breath taking.

...another great year of worship and fun I felt involved this year more than ever and loved every bit of it

...just as positive and inspiring as 2016, tightening our bonds and bringing everyone to worship together and strengthening our faith.

My first year ... and it was absolutely mesmerising. All the different youths from all over the world combining their faith with ours was amazing! The vibes were so positive. I had such an amazing time getting to grips on where I stand with Jesus and how he'll never fail me.

Another brilliant time was had by all. The speakers were very uplifting and the music very loud, which they loved. Although weather wasn't always kind to us you can't keep a good team down and they took part in everything and won.

...just as inspiring and empowering as last year if not more so, it was truly inspirational listening to other people's perspectives and helped me see things in a different light.

When I think of Rocknations, I think of a safe and welcoming environment where I express my religion openly and don't have to worry about being judged. This is my second year of going and every time I go I feel my self being pulled closer to Jesus. Due to this, on August 9, I decided to make a massive commitment and carry my cross. One of the pastors preached that we should lay down our earthly crowns (wanting material things, needing

to be popular, gathering likes on Facebook, etc.) and pick up the cross. The only thing is that your cross will not fit through the door of places that are bad for you. Pete told us that, “*Your cross won’t let you in,*” For example he told a story about going to a club with his friends and for some reason he got the feeling he couldn't enter. While he waited outside for his friends to return he realised that because he had picked up the cross he couldn't enter. Now I think carefully about where my cross will fit.

We hope you have enjoyed this small taste of RN17. If you see any of us in the church please feel free to come and ask us about our experience we would love to talk to you about it.

JH and members of Grace Notes

Street Level

Street Level was established in 1994 as an outreach project in Carluke by six of the town's churches, including St John's, acting together to meet and engage with young people *on the streets*.

The Youth Centre, based at 37 Stewart Street, opened in 1998 in conjunction with Universal Connections - the youth service of South Lanark Council. The fundamental aim was to give the young people of Carluke a safe place to develop. Now, over twenty years later, Street Level continues to provide a vital resource for many local young people.

Services offered by Street Level include: After School groups, Drop In groups and support for Young Carers. It is managed and supported by the churches and receives much of its funding from CHOICES Charity Shop. Financial support is also given by South Lanarkshire Council, and in the past year, the local branch of the TSB chose Street Level as their sponsored charity. Various local businesses, also agreed to have collecting cans on their counters. Two such businesses, who each raised around £500 are The Wee Thackit and James Chapman, Butcher.

Christian Aid

Only a year after Sierra Leone began its recovery from the Ebola crisis, which killed 4000 people, a mud slide swept away homes on the outskirts of its capital Freetown a few weeks ago. Mass graves have been dug for nearly 500 victims,



including 156 children, while rescue workers continue to find and search for more bodies buried in the mud. It's reported that 600 people are still missing, and contamination and disease will spread if these bodies are not recovered. 3000 people are homeless and hundreds of children have been orphaned in what is being described as a humanitarian emergency. In their initial response, Christian Aid's partners distributed food and other essential items, such as malaria nets and basic household items.

16 million people across South Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia urgently need food, as people are dying from hunger and malnutrition across East Africa, in the worst humanitarian crisis since 1945. The situation is deteriorating rapidly as this major catastrophe is unfolding.

It's a sad indictment on the world today, that the food crisis in East Africa, the mudslide in Sierra Leone, the plight of Syrian and other refugees, are yesterday's news, currently dominated by UK and USA politics, lottery winners of 758 million dollars and obscene transfer fees of footballers !

Christian Aid has welcomed Pope Francis' call for more to be done for the massive numbers of people who have been forced to leave their homes due to persecution, violence, natural disasters and the scourge of poverty. This comes as Christian Aid states that the UN agreements are set to ignore the largest group of people forced to flee – the forgotten 40 million people displaced within their own countries, who make up the majority of the 65 million people fleeing their homes worldwide.

This year you raised £13,350 (£12,410 from Christian Aid Week and £938 from the Christmas service) towards Christian Aid's efforts in these areas of deprivation. Thank you for your continued support.

IN

The Murrays in Thailand

Now established in their new home in Chiangmai, the Murrays set to working. Scott started lecturing to Qualified doctors in July, and later including medical students. He is making contact with other medical colleagues in the Medical School and taking every opportunity to share the Gospel.

Plans are in place for Scott to take a trip to the Jungle School of Medicine, in Burma, during the first 2 weeks of October. It will be a 3-day trek to the hospital! Initially, he will train some of the medical staff to do hernia repairs but is prepared to take on anything that presents itself.

Nok, who had been given a job in Grace Elementary School, as a school nurse, has been asked to meet the Principal with a view to moving to teaching, because of a shortage of teachers. As there are two other nurses, Nok feels that the move would be the right thing to do.

Shane graduated high school with *High Honours*, meaning that he scored the equivalent of straight As in the last four years of high school. He had been offered a place in Dnudee University to study electronic engineering, but has decided to accept a place to study Aviation at Moody Bible College instead. He feels that this is the correct choice and that God is leading him. He will need to move to Spokane, Washington, USA. He applied for his Visa in July and, assuming that was successful, his course started in August.

Scott asks for your prayers as these life adjustments are being made by members of his family, including the return of Ray to the parental home for his final year at high school.

One Small Step

It was a real privilege for me to have been asked to organise and lead our Wednesday night fellowship group earlier in the year. The study theme was John Ortberg's "*If you want to walk on water you've got to get out of the boat*". It was split into 6 weekly sessions for study based on Matthew's Gospel 14:22-33 Please read the passage as it will help you to understand what I'm writing about.

1. What's water walking? Well only two people have done it. The story is a parallel of our own lives.

When all is well, we feel secure in our comfort zone. Happy in our normal relationships. Helpful, familiar, content with ourselves. It was no different for Peter and the others. Enter fear. Instead of a nice cosy boat trip it turned into their worst nightmare. Enter Jesus. Knowing how impetuous Peter is, you would expect him to jump overboard and swim to Jesus or call out to Him for rescue. No, he actually engages his brain first. "Lord if it is you, command me to come to you on the water". You might feel that Peter was a failure. After all he panicked and felt safer in the boat.

But think about this: Only Peter knew the glory of walking on water. Only Peter knew the experience of the Glory of God. Only Peter knew the glory of being lifted up by Jesus in the moment of desperate need. Only Peter had that shared moment, that shared connection, that shared trust in Jesus that none of the others had. And there's more: Peter didn't ask for a promise "*Lord promise me I won't sink*". He wanted to be with the Lord. It's the same for us when we face the storms in our lives. Do we seek safety, comfort, help through our own, or do we follow Peter's example when he cried out "*Lord save me*"?

So, what *is* water walking? Well, we have to take that first step. Before that we have to know God, and who Jesus is. We have got to get out of the boat. It's the only way to real growth. After all, the water is where Jesus is.

2. Tragedy of the unopened gift. We all have something in our possession that we don't want to use because of the fear of losing it. It's the same with God given gifts. There are many and varied sinful patterns of behaviour that hinder us or prevents us from cultivating our abilities, gifts or talents that God

has given us. Fear of failure can make us put it off until later. That's when we look back at missed opportunities and see a failure to recognise a world of desperate need and a Great God calling us to be part of something bigger than ourselves. We see the person we could have been. It's never too late to use or develop the gift God has given us. Begin by taking the wrapper off. Take the first step.

3. Find your calling/Get your feet wet. First we must have a personal relationship with Jesus and recognise that God is in control. Good indicators to enable us to discern God's calling are :- ***Fear*** - Courage to take risks and wisdom to know which risks to take. Face your fears; ***Frustration*** - No project or personal journey comes without frustration or anxiety; ***Compassion*** - Deep awareness to bear or suffer; ***Prayer*** - The forefront and the channel that allows us to know and understand God's calling. Daily dialogue with God. Plans can change.

4. Facing our Challenges, Conquering our fear. God never puts us in a position where He knows we are lacking. God always equips us. The reason why Peter started sinking and looked for the safety of the boat is because he took his eyes off Jesus. So we ask ourselves; *Am I going on my own strength, am I being misled by some other spiritual paralysis, have I looked the other way?* Peter may have taken the easy option but he still recognised the Saviour enough to cry out "*Lord save me*" and He did. It wasn't after a period where Jesus thought to himself "*I'll let him swallow half of the sea to teach him a lesson*". It was immediate.

If we take our eyes off Jesus, I'm afraid we will have a lot of calling out to do. We still have to face our Challenges, get over our hurdles. Think of a hurdler. He or she can knock over some or all of the hurdles and still win the race. They don't quit if they down the first hurdle.

Fear of failure is massive. It is instrumental for our lack of success. A barrier rather than a hurdle. It stops us from doing things that can move us forward. Unless we have guarantees of success or perfection, we give up trying. When God leads us to step out in an area to do something new, or leads us to make a bigger commitment, we will feel fear. The time will eventually come when

One Small Step (continued)

we will have to face our fear and not run away from it. Better still, put our trust in Him, take His hand and go forward.

5. Good news for Cave Dwellers. We all know what a cave is. They appear to be dark, dreary, damp and sinister places where we wouldn't like to stay. Our 'caves' can be dark and sinister too. We don't want to be there but sadly we can find ourselves in one so easily. Bad situations, fear of failure, disappointment, low self-esteem. All of these and more can drive us into our 'caves'. We can't fix, heal or escape them. Relationships fall apart, marriages fail, jobs terminate and the list goes on. We feel that there is no way out.

The Good News is God does all His best work when we are in our cave. He doesn't want us to be there in the first place. He didn't put us there, we managed that on our own. Our Great God is a God of refuge, hope, encouragement, a God of Power who never ceases to redeem all things. No matter how deep or dark the cave in which we find ourselves, God is with us. The hand that reached down to pluck Peter from the stormy water is always there too for any one of us in our cave.

6. Learning to wait on our Big God.

When human beings get out of the boat, they are never quite the same. Every time you walk on the water, each time you trust God and seek to discern and obey His calling on your life, your God gets bigger and your worship will grow deeper, richer and stronger.

(John Ortberg)

How big is God? If you look through a telescope the wrong way then you get the picture of how some people perceive God: small and distant. They are not convinced that they are absolutely safe in the hands of an all-knowing, ever-present God.

Fixing our eyes on Jesus was consistent through-out each session and in this last one it makes it so much easier to wait with hope. Stepping out of the boat doesn't mean that immediately everything will be plain sailing. It may mean dark, anxious periods in our waiting. That's when we have to stay focused on our Great Big God. Waiting is part of the process of becoming what God wants us to be. We live in an age where no one seems to want to

wait. We don't want to queue anymore. At a bus stop, people may just to hang around hoping to catch everyone out and get on first. How many times have you been in a supermarket check-out queue only to find it not moving? So you jump into another only to find the one you left is now rapidly moving. It's difficult to wait. That's why if we want to do what God has called us to do, we usually want to do it as quickly and successfully as possible.

God wants us to wait on Him. In the story of Peter and the disciples in the boat, Jesus knew when to wait and when to act. He waited until early morning before He went out to the boat. He acted immediately when He pulled Peter out of the water. By waiting we learn to depend on our Great Big God and we also learn valuable lessons about faith, prayer, obedience and trust that will change our lives forever.

*My God is so big, so strong and so mighty
There's nothing my God cannot do.*

Bigger than anything we can imagine, small enough to fit into our heart. Big enough to answer all our needs, small enough to hear our whispered prayer.

There you have it. 6 easy lessons to put into practice but with degrees of difficulty :- Overcoming fear of failure; Questioning faith; Lack of positivity; Going on own strength; Low self-esteem. All of these things can be overcome by taking that first step, believing and trusting that the hand that reached out to Peter is always there waiting in readiness for each one of us. When Peter got out of the boat he experienced walking at its finest. So then, back to the question: "*What is water walking?*" (You write your own answer!)

Billy Johnston (Trainee water walker)

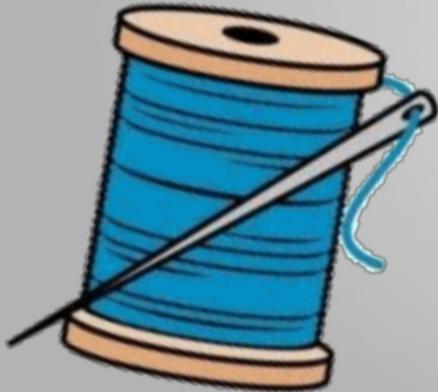
What on earth am I here for?

Starting probably late September or early October over a period of 6 weeks we will meet on Wednesday evenings at 7:30 pm in the Small Hall to try to answer this question.

We will use a DVD-based course, *The Purpose Driven Life* and to participate, it would be better if each person buys a study guide, details at the first meeting.

Hope to see you (with your wet feet!)

LizBeeSewing



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