

Dec-Feb, 2023/24

st John's

Dumfries
a church for everyone



M A G A Z I N E

st John's Dumfries

a church for everyone

The St John's Magazine is published quarterly and is available free of charge.

People occasionally ask if they can contribute to the cost. If you would like to do so, we would suggest £12 per year would be a suitable sum.

There is a facility for doing this on the St J's website, or the office can take card payments. The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editorial team or of the Vestry of St John's, but are intended as a sharing of the life of the people who make up the community there, and those elsewhere whom we invite to contribute.

The next edition of the Magazine is due out in **March, and the nominal copy deadline is 15/02/2024.** Please send comments and/or contributions to pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for articles, please contact the Editorial Team. Copy should ideally be 300-700 words, with supporting illustrations or photographs (these available as separate files), if possible.

Editorial team: Janice Aiton (Rector), David Kerr, Margaret Morton

You can contact us at
pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org,
or 07754 596140.

See www.stjohnsdumfries.org and weekly notices for more information.

worship

As mentioned previously most of our worship services are back up and running pretty much as they did before the pandemic; however we are retaining some of the online provision that was set up during it. See the printed Diary and Notices week by week and also the St J's website (www.stjohnsdumfries.org) for what's going on. With autumn comes the resumption of a number of activities within St John's, including Evensong (fortnightly, alternating with the Contemporary Service) and the Contemporary Services. Posters are published as reminders about each of these, displayed in the Church, the external Notice Board and on St J's website. If you would like to subscribe to an email reminder for either, please speak to the Church Office (contact details below).

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If you wish to contact any individual or group within St John's, please email pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org, or call 07754 596140, stating your name and how we can contact you back. We will pass on your details to the correct person or people, and ask them to contact you.

All post should be addressed via the Rectory/
Office, 8 Newall Terrace, Dumfries DG1 1LW.

from the registers

Memorial Service

14 November, 2023:
Kenneth Albert Sorrell

Baptism

5 November, 2023:
Jack William Hesketh and
Lily Elizabeth Hesketh

getting in touch

The Office is currently staffed Mondays and Fridays, but you can also make contact on 07754 596140 or at pastadmin@stjohnsdumfries.org

St John the Evangelist

Junction of Newall Terrace and
Lovers' Walk, Dumfries DG1 1LW
St John's is a Local Ecumenical Partnership
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Churches.

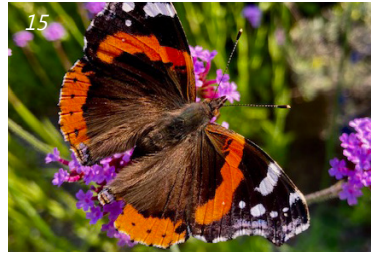
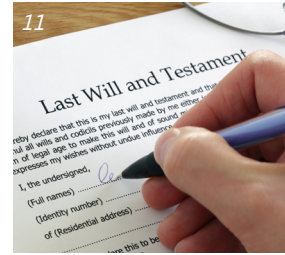
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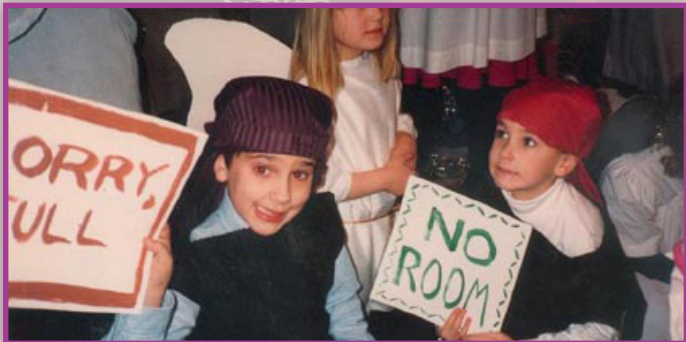


editors' notes

In this edition, the Rector is re-evaluating the wisdom of WC Fields and venturing into the area of The Hotel Inspector; Gloria Brooke and Andrew Ratnam share their experiences of meeting in a group to consider 'troubling' Bible passages, and Sue St Joseph reports on a triumphant reunion of youth choirs from here and Germany, culminating in a magnificent concert. Retired Solicitor Heather Gibbings invites us to consider what we might all do to put our (worldly) affairs in order and simultaneously benefit St John's; Ann Wren, of the St J's branch of Mothers' Union, reports on, amongst other things, the holding of a vigil drawing attention to, and offering support in the face of, gender-based violence; Andy Brooke has been seeing angels, and Fiona Seagrave provides the second instalment, - and some beautiful pictures - of her treatise on gardening. Marion Whitty has been considering approaches to prayer, Peter Boreham describes the recent Awayday with the new Vestry and an example is provided of the Vestry's regular devotional sessions, and how they might practically be applied; this one on Leadership. Edith Leven reports on the regular quizzes held at St J's (last Friday in the month from September to March), and we have our own Christmas Quiz, before finishing with the usual brief (well, not always, but it is this time...) News Roundup. We hope you enjoy it all, and wish you every blessing over Christmas and for 2024. Our cover photos, front and rear are, of course, from this year's beautiful Christmas Tree Festival - ongoing, at the time of writing this - and which will be reported on in detail at another time.

The Rector writes...

INNKEEPER- THERE IS NO ROOM AT THE INN



"Never work with children nor animals" was the wisdom given by W.C. Fields. Nativity plays would bear out this wisdom, for many a laugh has been made by the unpredictable actions and responses of children. One inn keeper when asked by Joseph if there was room in the inn replied: "Sure, come on right in" and another replied: "nay, but you can come to mine." Another child had rehearsed his line "I'm sorry, we have no room." Come the big night, the little boy surprises all by delivering his one line flawlessly ... then chases after Mary and Joseph, calling, "Wait! Wait! You can have my room!" All the above- mentioned children wanted to depict the innkeeper as someone with a heart of care and hospitality. Are they right in their comprehension and, if so, is the traditional view of the innkeeper misguided?

We have grown up hearing the account that the "inn" in Bethlehem was full with "no room" available, so Joseph and Mary ended up in a stable, with Jesus Christ born and laid in manger there. This image has been used to promote the typical nativity scene for generations based on Luke 2:7:



"And she brought forth her firstborn Son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn."

Our minds immediately think of the innkeeper in modern terms-like a hotel manager. While there were instances of a rudimentary form of the modern hotel (with the ground -floor housing animals and the first- floor housing guests) in the urban areas in the ancient world, it is highly unlikely that this sort of inn existed in tiny ancient Bethlehem, with its population of under a thousand.

More than likely the inn would have been a house of a relative of Joseph. To explore this further we need to look at the Greek word used for "inn" in this nativity story. The common Greek word for inn is "pandokheion" and it is used in relation to the Good Samaritan who took the injured man to an inn. Here it means a commercial establishment that provides shelters for strangers. However, in the nativity account Luke does not use the word "pandokheion" but instead "kataluma" which has a completely different meaning. Kataluma means a guest room attached to a private house.

So, bearing that in mind, the scripture should read there was "no room for them in the guest room." This is why the 2010 NIV Bible translates Luke 2:7 like this: "and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them." So, if inn means guest room, what then are we to make of the manger- the cattle trough.

To answer this question, it is necessary to observe the construction of Palestinian traditional one-room homes. Such buildings are "split-level" homes. There is a small, lower level for the animals at one end. About 80 percent of the one room is a raised terrace on which the family cooks, eats and lives. The two levels are connected by a short set of stairs. Into the lower level the family cow, donkey and a few sheep are brought each night. In the morning, these animals are taken out into a courtyard, the area is cleaned, and the house is ready for the day.

This common daily routine is so firmly established in the village home that Jesus can presuppose it while talking to the head of the synagogue in Luke 13:15. He says: "Does not each of you

on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it away to water it? The animals, including the feeding trough (commonly translated as “manger”) which the baby Jesus was placed in, is part of the house. Animals were not

usually far separated from the living quarters. Having a barn far from the living quarters was susceptible to wild animals and thieves. Their livestock was some of their most prized and important property, so they kept it close.

No Room in the “Kataluma.”



There was no “room” available in the “kataluma” or guest room so Joseph and Mary shared the Family Room attached to the “stable.”

With these clarifications, all the cultural pieces of the Gospel story fall into place and a special theological thrust emerges from the story. Joseph finds shelter in a simple, peasant home. This home has a guest room, but it is full. In the honoured tradition of Middle Eastern hospitality, the host provides for his guests. He clears the one-room family living space for the holy family to use. The child is born and placed in a manger to keep it from harm.

If the story is seen in this light, the “mean old innkeeper” evaporates, along with his non-existent inn. “No room at the inn” will no longer be adequate for the Christmas story. The cold, draughty stable becomes a warm, cosy peasant home which the shepherds find fully adequate, for they go home praising God for all that they had heard and seen. If they had found the family in a stable, they would have taken them at once to their own homes!

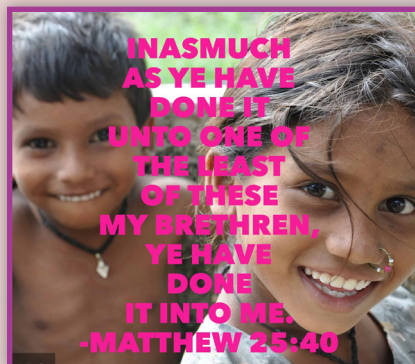
So, the inn and the innkeeper evaporate. Yet much is gained. The Incarnation itself becomes more authentic — Jesus was born in and into a simple peasant home as any other village boy. The shepherds, outcasts from their society, were given a sign indicating this simplicity. They thereby discover that this Messiah comes welcoming the poor and the marginalized.

If this interpretation is acceptable and true, which I believe it is, then the inn keeper was not the villain as so often depicted in the nativity plays but someone who had the Christmas Spirit of care, hospitality, and generosity. He opens his home to the

holy family and goes out of his way to accommodate them. There is no concern about the inconvenience or difficulties this may cause him or his own family. He opened graciously and generously his private home to Mary and Joseph, and no doubt his family would be at hand to help with the birth of the Christ child.



The inn keeper offered what he could- more than likely he had no idea that he was entertaining the Son of God. The innkeeper “did it unto him!” Whatever we do to others who are hungry, thirsty, or homeless, we do it unto Christ; “we do it unto him.” It is Christ himself that we are serving.



The innkeeper served Christ unawares, so we too are encouraged to offer what hospitality we can to those who are refugees or to those who are homeless in our communities. Like the innkeeper we are to do what we can with a heart of care, hospitality, and generosity. We are to

do it unto them, with the same spirit of kindness and love as the innkeeper.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a blessed New Year,

Janice H. Aiton

stj



'Troublesome' passages in the Bible: St John's Zoom Bible Study

Gloria Brooke



It was not only the Bible passages that were troublesome! Zoom can bring us together when we are apart, but it can equally part us when we are together; this was the experience we all had at some time, with one session abruptly ended by the technology. We began each night by reading the Bible passage for the night together, and then Janice opened the discussion with a brief bit of background summary. We moved on to an open discussion, and ended in prayer and the Grace.

I found the sessions very encouraging and helpful; we all have different experiences in life which we bring to the Word, and in discussion these help to make sense of difficult passages. For example, the Passover, the last plague on Egypt sent by God. The Angel of Death took the life of the firstborn in Egypt: several people in our group WERE firstborn children, and took this threat seriously! We discussed the instructions of how to prepare, given by God before the event, so that those who were

protected by the blood of the sacrificed lamb on the doorposts could be saved. We felt that God most likely honoured all who obeyed the instructions, whether they were Jews or Egyptians. This was not something I'd considered before, but it felt right.

We discussed the problem of suffering in the passage from Job, and our beliefs, hopes, and expectations of dying, the state beyond life, and the comfort to us of Jesus' assurance "Today you will be with me in paradise."

So often we may have troublesome readings in private, or in church Bible passages, and it is good to face up to the unease we have, in finding a holy God of compassion between the lines, doing this together.

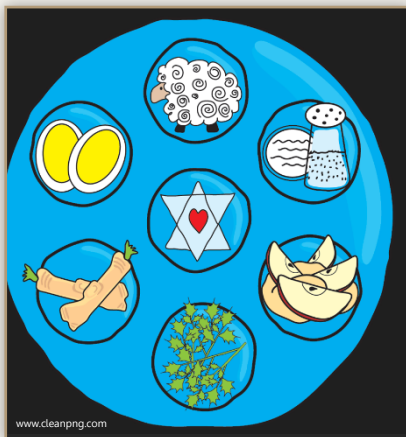
Difficult Bible Passages - Andrew Ratnam considers.

It was an interesting idea from Janice to ask us to suggest difficult, or troubling, Bible passages. The identity of those posing the difficult questions was not divulged! We discussed 5 passages. The first was Matthew 27, 45-54; the second was Exodus 12, 1-28; the third was Job, Chapters 1 and 2; the fourth was Psalm 137 and the fifth was Luke 23, verse 43.

If I were to meditate on these five passages on my own I could not have come to any conclusion of any value; so this group discussion was of very great value; what I'm attempting to communicate here is not my own thoughts, but those of the group.

The first passage Matthew 27, 45-54 is very familiar, but of particular interest was v50: 'he cried out in a loud voice' again it doesn't say what the cry was, but we thought that, as a Jew, he would have surrendered his spirit to God - to his father - this means that the Romans were not able to kill him on the cross, but that he surrendered his spirit of his own will. All the supernatural things that followed led the (Gentile) Roman

centurion to say, 'truly this man was the Son of God'. Normally, to expedite death, they used to cut the Achilles tendon, so that the victim would die quickly, because the whole weight of the body would be hanging on the cross, but, when they came to do that, they realised that Jesus was already dead. So that is when somebody pierced his side. The fact that blood and water came out means he had died more than an hour, perhaps two or three hours, beforehand, because of the changes that take place once the body has died. And that fulfils the prophecy.



The second passage was Exodus 12, 1 – 28. Everything was done in a great hurry; there was no time for the dough to rise, so they used unleavened bread; no time to prepare the lamb, just the whole thing with the head and all internal organs cooked directly on the fire; the blood sprinkled on the doors and the lintels for their protection. All this

could be taken as symbolic of Jesus' blood for our salvation. Eating in a great hurry: we felt that all of this was a test for the Israelites, right to the last, to see how well they followed God's orders to the letter. Similarly, the day of Jesus' atonement and his resurrection is a day of remembrance for us as Christians as the Passover was, and is, for Jews. . The whole premise was a test of their – and our – faith and obedience.

Then coming on to the third passage: Job, Chapters 1&2, it was a bit surprising to think that God was in communion with Satan; but, after all Satan was a fallen angel. So his work was always to challenge God.

Satan travels round the Earth, comes back, and gives a report on what's going on. Then God himself says, 'Have you seen my faithful righteous servant Job?' And Satan says that he's only like that because God has blessed him in riches and prosperity. 'Touch him and see,' Satan says, 'and he'll curse you to your face.' So God gives Satan permission, apart from taking Job's life, to do whatever he wants to do. And everybody knows what happened. The whole business of resurrection and eternal life was not at that time part of the Jewish belief. But Job's faith was so profound that he would not believe that everything just

ends with death. So he affirmed, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth...and I will see him face to face with my own eyes after death.' It was, particularly then, an amazing revelation. It was a challenge to me, and to all of us, though we are Christians, with the hindsight of Jesus' resurrection and so on, to have such faith as Job.



The fourth passage was Psalm 137. Again, this was a good Psalm to choose. It was written long ago but is quite relevant even today, as all Psalms are. We felt the Psalms could even be used as our prayers, as, in fact, people are known to do. The Psalmist fully

trusted that taking vengeance was not their role; it is God's role. But there is a truly shocking point (v.9), where the Psalmist says they would be happy to see children's heads dashed against a rock. It seemed incongruous that it should even be mentioned, or that the Psalmist would even entertain the thought. You don't expect **that** sort of thing to be mentioned in the Bible! But we felt that in their prayers they were not hiding any of their feelings, even – especially – to God. The point is that, 'What you don't feel, you cannot heal.' Only when you feel and acknowledge what you are feeling, can you seek God's healing. Being fully open to God helped them to heal. This is a true way of prayer; not just saying things to God we think he will want to hear, or repeating our 'shopping list.' It also reminded us that just revolving around the same things or same pattern does not allow us to evolve.

The 5th passage was Luke 23, verse 43, 'I truly tell you, today you shall be with me in Paradise.' Janice challenged us, by saying that a change in the punctuation changes the meaning: 'I truly tell you today, [comma here, not after 'you'] Amazing difference, isn't it; a small punctuation change alters the whole meaning. This was a very difficult passage. We started debating whether Paradise is an actual place. At the point in time of this verse, Jesus hasn't even died yet, *or* risen three days later, and yet he appears to be saying, **today** you'll be with me in Paradise. So – did he go down or up that afternoon?? Or was he speaking more figuratively? Eventually we came on to the second coming of Jesus, and we felt that we will all, both the dead and those who are living at the time, be judged, and there was a feeling that, even in judgement, according to how you have lived your life, there may be places available...it seems a bit difficult to believe that there would be a reward system



in Heaven. But it reminded me of the vineyard owner and the labourers. When the labourers started grumbling about the pay when the first and the last on site got the same amount, the owner said, 'How can you question my generosity? How I spend my money is up to me.' So I think I will leave this to God! It's his judgement and his decision.

On the whole we felt that we should have regular Bible studies and also invite speakers to give us discourses on the study of the Bible. This should strengthen our own faith and give us confidence to talk to other people about our own faith. This became quite relevant to me when the Revd Andrew Mackenzie spoke (at an MU meeting recently) about interfaith dialogue, and posed the question, 'Why bother about interfaith?' Unless we have our own faith strengthened, I don't think we'll manage any inter-faith dialogue. And that starts with Bible study.

Ultimately, I would like to add, people often think the Bible is the word of God, and that therefore every word in the Bible is to be obeyed. But my feeling is that it's *intelligence* about the Word of God. God didn't necessarily dictate the words; he inspired humans to write about heavenly things in human language – and that can be the biggest mistake people make – to quote biblically, often out of context. Some things from the Old Testament, for example, do not have a direct application today: I remember, in the context of the current Israel/Palestine conflict, someone mentioning the retribution visited on Amalek and his people 'Go and kill the men, women and children; even the infants...' – this is another difficult Bible passage, but they are often taken out of context. There are so many passages in the Bible that require deep study and, indeed, a faith-inspired context.

Nothing can keep us apart - DGRYC & GTTS

Sue St Joseph on how the Dumfries – Gifhorn link is being kept alive.

'Nothing can keep us apart' is the title for the 2023 & 2024 twinning project between Dumfries & Galloway Regional Youth Choir (DGRYC) and the Gifhorn Twin-Town Singers (GTTS). It started in 2009 and ran highly successfully for a decade, until December 2019 when we last met in Germany. Covid resulted in the closure of schools and the suspension of all singing activities and by 2022, when singing was eventually allowed to take place in a group education setting again, both choirs had lost at least 80% of their members. Despite the world effectively stopping for almost 2 years, children still got older and subsequently left school. But we were determined to rebuild both choirs individually, so that we could then re-build the partnership - having come together, forged a bond and worked so hard to make the project a success, we were even more determined not to be kept apart.

October 2020 should have seen us hosting this annual event and Hartington Hall Youth Hostel in the Derbyshire Peak District was booked, with the local church/church hall offering us a rehearsal and concert venue. After almost four years of communication between Jamie and Liz in Hartington, we finally made it there in October 2023 – 40 members of DGRYC, 28 members of GTTS plus a total of 14 staff, 2 pianos, boxes of music and 'essential' supplies! (Only 3 of those 68 pupils had been in the choir in 2019.) Our itinerary, as ever, was a mixture of rehearsals and activities, interspersed with food and socialising.

Monday 9th – Arrival & getting to know you....singing together; rehearsals every day.



Thursday 12th – Concert in St. Mary's Church, Hartington followed by a ceilidh in the church hall



Friday 13th – final concert in St. John's Church, Dumfries

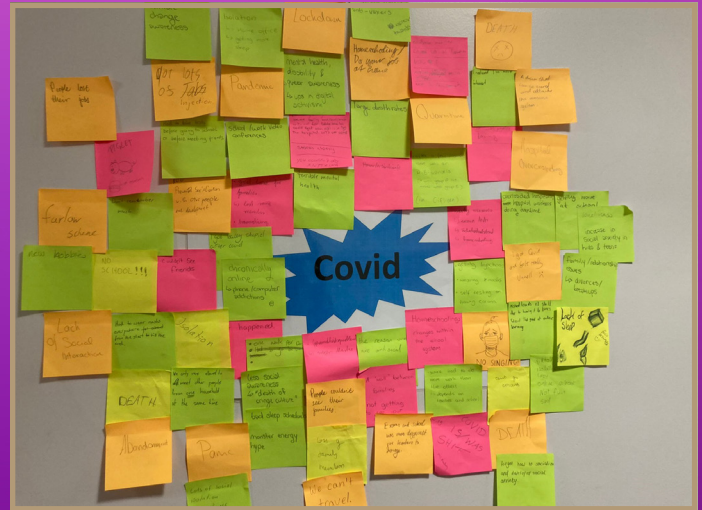


Tuesday 10th – Visit to Crich Tram Museum – who knew trams would prove so popular?

Wednesday 11th – Alton Towers! This was the only day it rained and everyone got soaked. But the silver lining to that cloud was there weren't many people there so there were no queues for the rides!

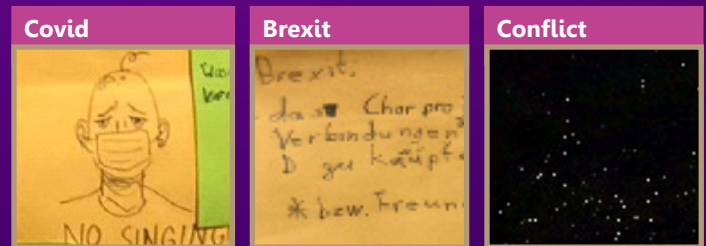


This time our project had an added element. Since the last trip the fabric of European/World society had shifted hugely. We wanted to allow both staff and students to discuss and explore the effects of the following aspects and events on the lives of people in both countries – Covid, Brexit, Conflict, Isolation – and to ask if an activity like singing helped? So, we factored in time for everyone to split into groups, discuss these topics and give us feedback.

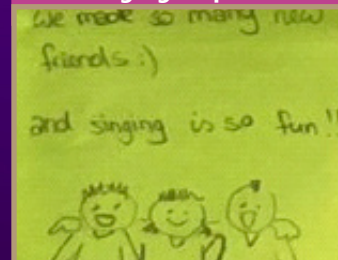


The purpose of these twinning visits is about the young getting to know and understand one another; forging links and building bridges; singing together – the universal language of music speaking where words cannot. For all of us in these troubled times, but especially our young singers, the project gives us hope for the future and something to look forward to.

"We can't change what has happened, but together we remember the past to create a better future in peace and tolerance."



Does singing help



The choir project helps to establish connections and friendships between the UK and Germany

In both England and Germany we do not learn anything that is relevant for our future. We do not feel respected or accepted by our fellow citizens, neither in schools nor in politics.

Prior to our trip, events in Palestine and Israel erupted; the week after saw the arrival of storm Babet and many of the places we had visited were under water. When we got home, we received this message from Liz in Hartington, "I wanted to share with you what happened at church this morning - the vicar, who was at the concert, did a moving service reflecting on the dreadful events in Israel and Palestine. He referenced your combined choir - the wonderful way the young people worked together to demonstrate the power of love and music. You had such an impact - thank you so much."

I Devise and Bequeath

retired Solicitor Heather Gibbings has some timely advice



I am sure most of us have given some thought to what happens to our assets after we have gone.

If we have spouse, children and/ or grandchildren it can appear quite straightforward – make a will leaving everything to family and forget all about it.

However, for those without family, a little more thought is indicated and charities may figure more largely.

It is sometimes overlooked that St John's is a charity and could figure in deliberations, with or without family. If you attended the AGM this year (and this remains true, even if you didn't), you may recall Jennifer McDairmant, our external Treasurer, saying that she was surprised how few, relative to the size of our Congregation, legacies seemed to feature in the accounts. She suggested we bring this to the attention of the Congregation, and encourage people to make provision for St John's in their wills.

Leaving money to a charity such as St John's can have a beneficial effect on the amount of Inheritance Tax for which your estate becomes liable, but you should take specialist advice on this.

Another possibility is to make an *inter vivos* gift – i.e. one that you make while still living. This can still, under certain conditions, have a beneficial effect on one's Inheritance Tax liability, and you'll still be around to see, and enjoy, the improvements to St John's mission, to buildings or equipment. These gifts can, of course, be made completely anonymously: that is to say, probably the Treasurer would know the identity of the donor, (thought this, too, can be got round, if desired) but it wouldn't become public knowledge. The additional benefit to St John's of an *inter vivos* gift, as opposed to one made via a Will is that the former is not subject to the 5% levy which the Diocese takes on **all** bequests made to charges.

If you have not made a will, you should give it serious thought, make an appointment with a solicitor and give your instructions. Trying to do it alone, is false economy. WH Smith and the like often sell so-called Do It Yourself Will forms, but these are often English legal forms and can cause considerable difficulty when they come to be administered in Scotland – aside from any actual errors that may inadvertently be made completing them in the first place. A solicitor will ask relevant questions in order to put together a valid document, covering all your assets from heritable property (land and buildings) to small personal bequests.

It may also be worth mentioning a couple of other things:



- Firstly, that, assuming your Will is deposited with your Solicitor, Accountant, or Bank (all of whom will have secure, fire-proof storage for such documents), it would be worth keeping, at home, and somewhere obvious where next of kin might first look for it, a note confirming where your Will is stored and how to contact the custodians, whoever they are. For obvious, mainly fire-related, reasons, it's not a good idea to store your Will at home, though you might keep a draft or copy of it there, if you want.
- Secondly, that you might want St John's (this would usually be the Rector only, or the Church's secure database) to have details, not of the provisions in your Will, but perhaps a note of the Solicitors (or whoever) who hold your Will, names and phone numbers of next of kin/executors and, perhaps, funeral instructions in the sense of choices of hymns, readings etc. This may be of particular importance if you are single, or live alone for some other reason.

If you have made a will, and it's still reasonably up to date, there is no need to revisit the whole process. A bequest to a charity can be made through a Codicil. This is a stand alone document, made

separately from a will, but read together with it. A Codicil should be drafted through a solicitor and placed with the Will.

An example Codicil is undernoted, showing the intention to leave a bequest to St John's. It is preferable to make the bequest as wide as possible i.e. for general purposes, so as not to tie the hands of the beneficiary. Over a period of time, the needs of the beneficiary may alter and, hopefully, the terms of the Codicil will not be implemented for some time!

This is a very general article to make you ask yourself a few questions:-

- Have I made a will?
- If so, is it up to date and does it reflect my current circumstances and intentions?
- Do I know where it is and will my next of kin know where to look?
- Should I leave a bequest to a charity such as St John's?

If there is already a valid will in place, a Codicil should be considered.

Consider, also, whether you would like St John's to hold some basic details of next of kin, funeral choices etc.

If anyone has any questions or wishes to discuss further, I am happy to help.



CODICIL FORM

I OF

MAKE THIS CODICIL TO MY WILL DATED DAY OF 20.....
(HEREINAFTER CALLED "MY SAID WILL")

I. I MAKE THE FOLLOWING AMENDMENTS TO MY SAID WILL:

- (A) I DIRECT MY EXECUTORS TO PAY AND MAKE OVER THE SUM OF POUNDS (£)
STERLING TO ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH DUMFRIES OF 8 NEWALL
TERRACE, DUMFRIES DG1 1LW (A SCOTTISH CHARITABLE BODY CHARITY NUMBER
SC007742) TO BE USED FOR THEIR GENERAL PURPOSES; THE SUM TO BE PAID AS SOON AS
PRACTICABLE AFTER THE DATE OF MY DEATH AND AFTER CONFIRMATION IN MY ESTATE
HAS BEEN OBTAINED FROM THE RELEVANT SHERIFF COURT WITHOUT INTEREST AND FREE
OF INHERITANCE TAX OR ANY OTHER TAXES OR DUTIES EXIGIBLE IN RESPECT OF MY DEATH.
- (B) I DIRECT THAT (I) IF THE ST JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH DUMFRIES OF 8
NEWALL TERRACE, DUMFRIES DG1 1LW HAS CHANGED ITS NAME OR HAS AMALGAMATED
WITH OR TRANSFERRED ITS ASSETS TO ANY OTHER BODY OR HAS BEEN WRONGLY DESIGNED
THEN MY EXECUTORS SHALL GIVE EFFECT TO THIS BEQUEST AS IT HAD BEEN MADE TO SUCH
OTHER BODY WITH SIMILAR PURPOSES AS MY EXECUTORS MAY IN THEIR SOLE DISCRETION
DECIDE AND (II) THE RECEIPT OF AN AUTHORISED OFFICIAL BEING THE RECTOR OR
TREASURER SHALL BE A FULL AND SUFFICIENT DISCHARGE TO MY EXECUTORS AND IN
WITNESS WHEREOF THIS DOCUMENT IS SIGNED BY ME AS SHOWN BELOW:

WITNESS:

NAME:

ADDRESS:

OCCUPATION:

DATE: PLACE:

MU “Faith in Action”

Mothers' UNION

The Revd Ann Wren, Diocesan Leader and Trustee of St J's Mothers' Union, reports on recent activities.



I write this as a member, leader, and servant of transformation but foremost as a prayer partner with 4 million members of MU in 84 countries world-wide. As I write this the MU branch at St. John's are leading an 8hr. vigil of prayer for people experiencing gender-based violence throughout the world. We pray for change in mind and heart but also commit ourselves to action transforming lives in Dumfries and world-wide.

I thank everyone who contributed to the Bishops' Lent Appeal. Monies raised will provide holidays for families, survivors of domestic abuse, providing them the space to network with one another and with professional agencies providing support and encouragement, building hope for the future. Part of the total raised (£10,000) will support families from our own southern region of Dumfries and Galloway. Thank you, thank you! Please continue to support our local Women's Aid refuge by donating toiletries and personal products. Please place in the box at the back of the hall.

Just two local examples of what Mothers' Union is, a prayerful agent of transformation and **all are welcome to join as a member or as a supporter of our work and mission.** All gifts and talents are needed, some crochet, knit, and sew items for young, old and everyone in-between, bringing comfort, hope and joy. Teaching, training, and practical care skills

bring new joy and purpose to lives often broken by inhumane systems, or by natural disasters, or violent conflict or sheer loneliness. For many years I was a national trainer for the MU Parenting Programme*, and I have seen first-hand how the Course brought confidence and enthusiasm to our members and in turn they transformed lives in parenting groups within local communities.

Do not be deceived by images of cakes, tea and biscuits being our only forte! We have a new Logo **“Mothers' Union: Stopping Violence; Stopping Poverty; Stopping Injustice”** At the annual gathering in York, we heard the Good News and I now share just some of the headlines from 2022. ##

In 2022 MU Projects changed the lives of 3.4 million people worldwide; supported 750,670 people through face-to-face work and community projects and indirectly supported 2.7 million people.

In Burundi, the **Literacy and Numeracy Project** has been running for 20 years, last year 1,289 communities engaged in life changing projects (77% of the participants were women), those taking part saw a 90% reduction in domestic abuse and 90% started their own businesses.

In Rwanda, MU provided empowering economic and nutritional programmes for women-led households; 90% participants created their own businesses; creating income and food security; communities created sustainable crops and fed communities and had extra to sell.

In Britain and All Ireland 2,238 family members enjoyed Away From It All holidays (AFIA). There were 19,834 craft items created; 5,412 acts of nurturing faith through the Metamorphosis course; 26,696 gifts of love; and 11,796 offers of community service.

Looking ahead to 2024, the new **Flourishing Families Programme*** (the new revised Parenting Programme) will be piloted in 3 dioceses; the **Rise Up Project** will raise awareness of gender abuse, signpost victims to professional support and create safe and supportive spaces in our faith communities; a commitment to **clergy support and pastoral outreach....** and much more. Please watch our **“Impact video of 2022”** on the Mothers' Union website.

All lives changed with Covid, for good or ill, but one thing began and has become a force for good, on Facebook, the visual sight of hundreds of members daily joining Mid-day Prayers from all over the world and that is just the tip of the iceberg. Up to 4 million members worldwide join in using their personal MU prayer diary at home. Every hour of the day, some members will be praying together, united in informed prayer and supporting prayerful action. In the Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway we have a Prayer Space on the second Thursday in the month on Zoom: Midday Prayer, and Night Prayer at 20.00. Look out for the Zoom Link on the notice sheet and join us.

“Rise Up”, launched in York, is a call for members and their supporters to pray, encourage and work for change, growth, and transformation for those experiencing gender abuse but it can be our call too..... Join us in prayer and action, Mothers' Union might just change your life too! God is good!



Angels in the High Street

Has Andy Brooke been seeing things?

Recently a group of us from the Quartz group got together with Terri from the Salvation Army and planned an addition to their usual Christmas decorations...

We wanted to bring a fresh way of sending messages to God by using the idea of angels as message carriers. At this time of year, we are all very aware of the fragile state of God's world and we want to respond in a prayerful way. So: we designed and made a host of angels using cut out shapes from different papers and coloured acetates, working with some of the folk who use the Salvation Army drop-in centre on Queensberry Square.

We made all the angels into a frieze of joyful angel hosts, praising God and celebrating the birth of Christ Jesus in Dumfries town centre. We also made a special box for anyone to write a prayer and put it inside to be carried to God as a personal request.

The display and prayer/message box will be in the warm and welcoming drop-in centre until the new year. All are very welcome to visit and write their own prayer to God.

Andy Brooke, for Quartz

stj



A Second Foot in the Compost Heap

Fiona Seagrave has been getting her hands dirty (again) and has more useful and interesting gardening advice.

Last time I wrote about the worrying effects of climate change on our garden and how we, as gardeners, can do our bit to help. Some can involve major change, others just the way in which we garden. Let me divide these into sections.

Driveways

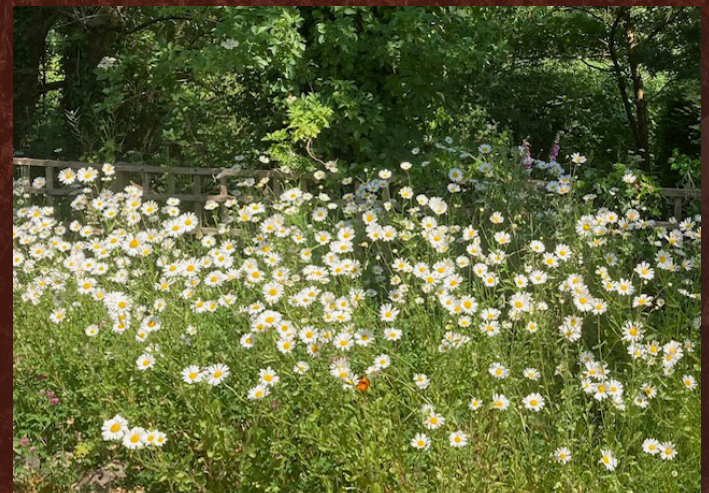
There has been an epidemic of tarmacked and block bricked front gardens recently. I understand the need for people to remove their cars from busy roads for a safety/insurance point of view, but it is generally agreed by environmentalists that solid driveways are a bad idea. Apart from reducing the area where pollinators can live, it can cause huge water runoff to the already overburdened drains, potentially flooding other people's property. If the reason for paving is parking, surely a compromise is a better answer? Partially paved areas if absolutely necessary, gravel to allow drainage and flowerbed/shrubs in the areas not required for vehicles. If the reason for paving is to make your driveway weed free, then you're in for a disappointment. Nature is relentless, and, within a few years, moss and seedlings will start to germinate on your pristine driveway! Of course, altering a driveway can be prohibitively expensive. My driveway is very long and goes more than twice the length of the house. The front area was originally all paving stones. Several years ago we had many of these removed and replaced with areas of red chips. It has definitely improved the drainage.

Lawns

Grass is a valuable asset to any garden, but of course there is a maintenance issue. There are fewer and fewer people who wish their grass to be like a bowling green, but if you do, it is still a valuable place for blackbirds, thrushes and starlings to access worms and larvae in the short grass. In fact, they prefer shorter grass. Grass is more noticeably affected by prolonged hot, dry weather, but there are ways in which one can reduce the problem. Firstly, cutting less often and setting your mower to a higher level are two ways, but the big "no, no" is to water your grass with a sprinkler. Using a sprinkler only encourages the roots to rise towards the surface where they will become

parched unless watered on a very regular basis. If, then, there is a hosepipe ban, your grass will brown pretty quickly. By not watering, the roots are encouraged to travel downwards toward any water source. If the hot spell continues and your grass does become brown, do not despair. Within a week or so of some rain it will become green again, and more quickly, as it will have a healthier root system. You will also have the satisfaction of not adding to a water shortage! I watched a neighbour watering the roadside verge with a sprinkler this past summer. I refrained from commenting, but it was difficult!! Of course, if you have a mossy lawn, you can always allow the moss to flourish. Two advantages are – you will no longer have to spend time, effort, and money in order to remove it (it always comes back anyway), and you will have a beautiful green area even in periods of drought. If you are constantly fighting moss on your lawn, it is nature telling you that the grass does not like it there. There could be a number of causes, including tree shade, poor general light, inadequate drainage etc., but whatever the reason, unless you spend time and money to solve these underlying causes you will never win, so adapt and enjoy your lovely green moss.

Another way of having grass without regular cutting is to create a wildflower area. Big or small they are invaluable for both flora



and fauna. It is not necessarily a question of just letting the grass grow, but even that is valuable in itself. By even halving the number of times you cut an area of grass, you allow small weeds to grow e.g. daisies, speedwell etc. These were commonplace before the introduction of the lawnmower. It is much easier to create a small wildflower area than a large one. Remember, wildflowers prefer poorer soils and are easily overwhelmed by coarse grasses. They also require to be those suitable for your garden soil e.g. if you try and grow meadow flowers suitable for a light sandy soil in a damp area they will not thrive. I have created several wildflower areas in my garden, but it has been a long process and is still not finished. * But that is another story. There is also the option of growing a lawn area of low growing plants such as chamomile noble, oregano, thyme, white clover to mention a few. These do not require to be mown, can be walked on, and have the advantage of producing sweet perfume which attracts pollinators. They do not suit a large area but are lovely in a seating area where you do not wish to have harsh paving or awkward small grassy patches.

One of the most unfortunate introductions of recent times is artificial grass and its use in domestic gardens.

Its advantage is of course that it requires no maintenance, or does it? It collects debris, such as leaves, seeds and even dust, which within a short while create a suitable medium for these seeds to grow and become "weeds". Before you know it, you will be weeding your artificial grass! To avoid this, you will be required to brush or even vacuum your grass on a regular basis, particularly in the autumn when leaves require to be removed before they create leaf mould which makes a wonderful base for weed growing. Those of us with old fashioned grass, however, will have put our mowers away for the winter! If you wish to remove leaves from your natural grass you can use your lawnmower on a high setting instead of raking. Of course, apart from the initial expense of having artificial grass laid properly, it has a life expectancy of only 10 years before it requires to be replaced. My grass/moss on the other hand will last forever. On a more serious note, there are 2 major unfortunate consequences of using artificial grass.

1. They create a sterile area where there is no organic life. It is of no benefit to either flora or fauna. The soil is dead below it.
2. There is growing evidence that micro plastic leaches from this grass into the water system. As a result, there have been calls for it to be banned for domestic use.

Weedkilling

There has been a very marked decline in pollinators of all kinds in recent decades, but it is only recently that the population in general has become aware of the severity of the situation. Mankind depends on pollinators. Without them to pollinate our crops we will starve. It sounds dramatic, but unfortunately it is true. In previous generations wildflowers, and by that I mean everything from daisies to dandelions, abounded in fields, verges and gardens. We didn't expect everything to be "tidy". That is a 20th century concept. Weedkillers and pesticides, other than natural deterrents were not used. Then came the post war mechanisation of farms, and council use of weedkillers to kill everything which wasn't in its "proper" place. Verges became divested of everything other than grass. Farmers used weedkillers and pesticides in fields. The government gave grants for the removal of hedges and trees, and anything that was in the way of the increasingly large machinery we see today, particularly in large arable farms such as those found in places like S.E. England. Gardeners used insecticides and weedkillers to prevent any "damage" to their fruit, vegetables and flowers. We seemed determined to have nature totally under our control. When I read what I have written, I'm filled with horror of what was done in the name of "progress". It reads like a doomsday scenario, and so it was. Not before time, things are changing, but environmentalists and those who care about the damage we are doing to our world are still fighting big business. Unfortunately, profit is still king. Many pesticides and weedkillers are now banned because of the dangers they impose on ourselves, but many are still in use. Once again, the individual can make a difference by not only lobbying our council and government, but by what we can do in our own gardens.

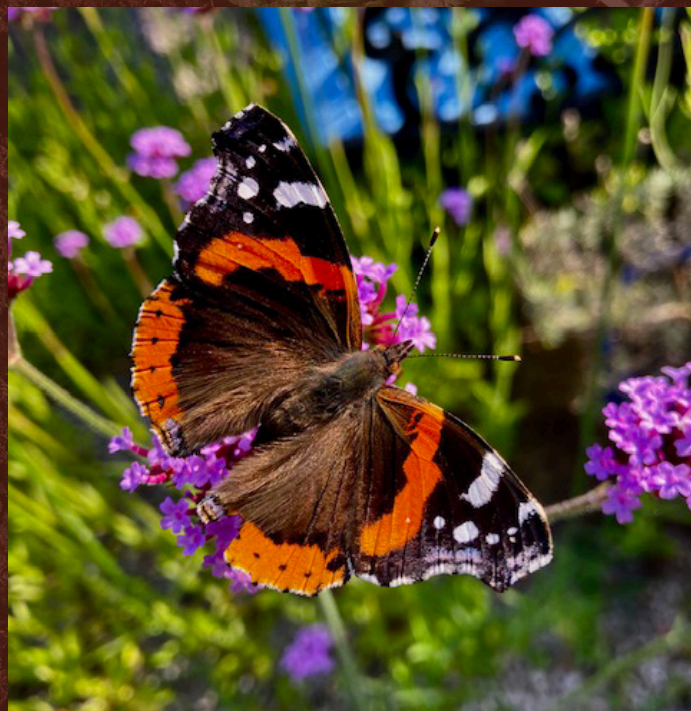


I have a relatively large garden, and weeding is no mean feat. I find that keeping on top of it is best, by hoeing the borders and hand weeding the driveway regularly to prevent seeding. I no longer use weedkillers, but the use of vinegar and hot water is a great substitute for difficult weeds. Washing powder such as Daz or Ariel will also kill moss. I have forgotten about having a pristine garden, although it took a while to get out of the habit of having everything tidy. Now, between my paving stones on the patio grow self set flowers including violas, eschscholzia, and verberna bonariensis. When I walked past the verberna during the summer I was surrounded by butterflies and there were ladybirds and shield bugs everywhere. My rose leaves have



black spot, and they, and my sweet peas, had a good crop of aphids, but all flowered profusely. * To compensate, my garden is full of birds and all manner of pollinators which bring endless pleasure. As I continue to garden in this way, the pollinators will increase, and nature will balance itself out. To help the growth and deter insects on produce, the use of companion plants is most useful e.g. I always grow French marigolds beside my tomatoes, which deter greenfly, and this year I plan to plant them around my rosebed for the same reason. Many of these companion plant ideas are derived from old wives' tales, but with the understanding of modern science many of these ideas are found to have a scientific basis, e.g. the use of banana skin around roses. As they rot below the surface, the skins provide calcium, sulphur, phosphates, sodium and silica. There are endless companion plants and gardening tips to be learned which benefit the environmentally conscious gardener, but too many to mention here. They would provide another article on their own!

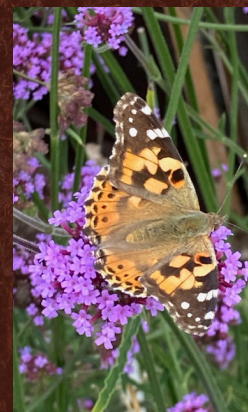
Meantime, what's not to like about nature flourishing in one's own little corner of paradise?



And here is my closing gardening tip...

REMEMBER:
When you
bury a body,
cover it with
endangered
plants so it's
illegal to dig
it up.

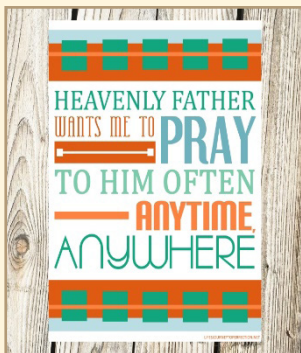
**Follow Me For More
Gardening Tips**



Happy Gardening!!

Prayer

Marion Whitty has some tips



In the Bible, in Matthew 6 v 6, it says ... 'But when you pray, go into your room, close the door, and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.'

That's all you need to know really about prayer.

But I've been asked to write 700 words about it in the magazine!

Why pray? Why not?

Isn't life hard enough without prayer, without being able to talk to God about our worries, cares and problems? Prayer is 'The secret powerhouse' for the Christian. Jesus got up early in the morning to spend time with his Father, praying. And afterwards, healed people! What could we do if we prayed?



Horatio Spafford, a successful lawyer and devout elder, put much of his money into property, until, in October 1871, the Great Chicago Fire reduced his investment to ashes. Two years later he planned a trip to Europe where his friend, D.L. Moody, would be preaching. However, last minute business held him back, and he sent his wife and daughters on ahead. On the 22nd November

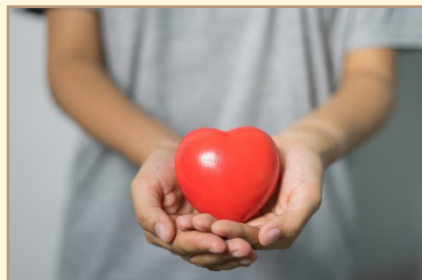
1873, while crossing the Atlantic, their ship collided with another vessel and sank, with the loss of 226 lives, including all four of his young daughters; Annie, Maggie, Bessie and Tanetta. Only his wife survived. Whilst journeying to meet his heart-broken Anna, as the ship passed the point where his children had drowned, Spafford penned the words to a now famous hymn...

*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
When sorrows like sea billows roll,
Whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to know,
It is well, it is well with my soul.*

After their tragic loss, Anna bore three more children, Horatio, Bertha and Grace. But when Horatio, aged four, died of scarlet fever in February 1880, the Spaffords turned from their material prosperity to spiritual pilgrimage. They moved to Jerusalem to establish the American Colony, a Christian community meeting the practical needs of people of all faiths.

For a century and a half, Horatio's hymn has continued to bring comfort to many others whose souls are in deep distress.

In the depths of despair from that terrible tragedy, I'm sure Horatio and his wife, Anna, would have wept much and cried out to God (in prayer), who answered with such love and comfort, Horatio was able to pen those wonderful words, "It is well, with my soul" How hard, well nigh impossible, would it be to do that in our own strength?



Prayer often changes things. It changes things in our own hearts, even if nothing else seems to come of it.

It's the way we talk to God. A two-way conversation and friendship with the

Father above, like Jesus has. What a privilege! Yet as Christians, we're all invited into this kind of relationship. We can pray, in and out of season, when we can, alone or in a party.



For whom? For anyone or anything. Children, parents, pets, people, war-torn countries, friends, family, strangers. Prayer is somehow enabled by God, by his Holy Spirit, to work in and through us. To bless, heal, change, bring acceptance, peace, comfort, help, whatever.

Prayers may be answered but only in God's time, not our own. And if they are answered, Jesus has interceded for us because it lies within his

greater plan.

God loves us and made us, created us to be adopted as his sons and daughters, Christians. Or as the Scots say, 'Christ's One!' If we belong to God, we need to talk and walk with him, and he will do likewise with us. Imagine that: the Creator of the Universe in communion with me!

Prayer can be a joy but it's also a trial, hard work, a discipline, a necessity, forgotten (in the desperate moments of life, until we remember again), an encouragement... all perhaps dependent on the seasons of our lives and what life might be throwing at us.

What can God and Jesus do through our prayers? Incredibly MORE than we ask for or imagine! Don't underestimate Him.

What's to stop us? Nothing really, for the Bible says, even when words fail us- Jesus will use our groans, tears and sighs as a sacrifice of prayer.

Nothing is impossible for God.

Try it and see? What is there to lose when your life and that of those around you could change?

It may be for the better.



St. John's Vestry 'Away-Day'

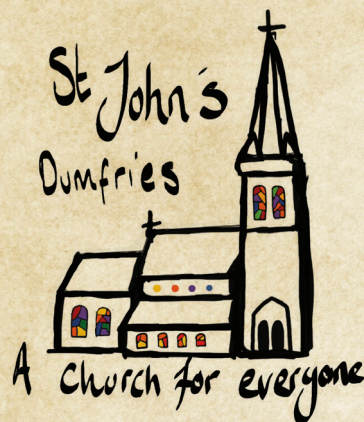
How Vestry member Peter Boreham spent 11th November this year.



As most readers probably know, the Vestry regularly meets on a monthly basis. The meeting agenda may cover a range of issues, short and longer-term. These may be spiritual, financial, organisational, or relating to the church property and buildings.

In addition to these meetings, beginning in February 2022, we have had 'away days' - two scheduled each year. These have been held 'off-site' in Mabie House Hotel and have largely focussed on important themes seen as particularly relevant to our life at St. John's, for example Giving and Receiving (focussing on church giving and fundraising), Renewable Energy/Towards Net Zero and Same Sex Marriage. Generally we have had the benefit of an external speaker to stimulate our thinking processes and development of action plans.

Our recent away day took place on Saturday 11th. November, Remembrance Day, with the central theme of 'Mission'. After welcoming our guest, Rev Diana Hall, Rector of St. Anne's Dunbar, Rev Janice introduced the subject of Mission and illustrated some of the ways the word is used in our lives today, for example the 'mission statements' promulgated by major companies. As Christians, she said that she believed that we all have a mission for which we are accountable to God.



We then broke up into small groups to reflect on and share our understanding of Mission, also referring to a number of short relevant biblical passages previously identified by Janice. This was quite challenging, but it certainly helped to reflect and share our own thoughts about Mission. Importantly, it

was felt that "St John's - A Church for Everyone" was indeed an effective statement of where we wanted to be, albeit we recognised that we had not yet reached that aspirational goal. Comparisons were drawn with the Baptist Church, which appeared to be engaging with the wider Dumfries community more successfully than any of the other churches in the town. These thoughts and others were explored in open session and were a useful precursor to hearing Rev Diana talk about her experiences at St. Anne's, Dunbar.

In this session, Diana asked us to consider what models of mission underpin how St. John's engages with the world outside, and what are our marks of mission, in other words those initiatives and activities which reflect our commitment to mission and indeed how we are actually doing. She asked us to give particular thought to:

1. How does St. John's enable people to be nurtured and grow?
2. Is the church bearing fruit?
3. What one thing might we do to change things for the better?

The general feeling of the small groups and then all together was in fact positive and encouraging, though certainly not

complacent. In terms of nurture and growth, particular mention was made of the diverse nature and number of our services (6 per week). The wide spread of group activities, for example prayer groups, coffee after church, was seen as vital in building trust and support for each other. There were many other encouraging examples.

Bearing fruit was perhaps more difficult to define. There is no doubt that events like the Bear Fest and the Christmas Tree Festival are a real draw for many non-members of St. John's, but they do not appear to lead to an increase in our congregational numbers. An important example, perhaps, was our welcome of Ukrainians and how they have responded.



In terms of one thing we might do to change for the better, there was general agreement that the focus should be on attracting and welcoming young people into our church. This is clearly not easy at the present time, when church attendances are low, but it was felt that a dedicated children and family worker with the ability to relate to diverse external groups

and organisations should be a priority.

The above summary is really no more than a snapshot of a large number of challenging ideas and proposals for action. Janice will be speaking more to us about our mission, but I know that all Vestry members would be more than happy to discuss the processes of the day on an individual basis, so please just ask!

From a personal perspective, I would say that the concept of an 'away day' for the Vestry is excellent. It allows for the wide expression of individual opinions and views, all of which are respected. It is indeed a collegiate and collaborative environment. At this last meeting, it was special and poignant to share the 2-minute Remembrance Day silence with my Vestry colleagues.

My thanks go to Janice for her excellent introduction and leadership, to Diana for a challenging and stimulating presentation and to Margaret for all her hard work and organisation of the day.

Leadership:

The Vestry, as it has previously been observed, is supposed to be an elected spiritual eldership for St John's. But how does that actually work?

There follows an example of the reflective process the Vestry undertakes before each meeting; the process is designed to help us focus not only upon the tasks in hand, but to try to tune in to how God may be guiding us, and to learn what we can from scripture. On this particular recent occasion, we began our meeting with a short look at Nehemiah.

Nehemiah Builds the Wall



It has often been said that St John's Vestry is 'not just a committee that deals with the drains.' We felt that the Rev Diana Hall, [Rector, St Anne's Dunbar and Convenor of the SEC Local Mission Development Committee], who was our Guest Speaker at the recent Vestry Awayday noticed this to her apparent surprise and gratification. Robin

Paisley used to describe the Vestry, probably not originally, as an **elected spiritual eldership**, so we decided we could do worse than have a quick look at one of the more charismatic Old Testament characters, Nehemiah.

In outline Nehemiah gets the call from God to return from where he has been working overseas, to Jerusalem, which has been neglected, and badly led; frequent examples of which we still see both in our own nation and elsewhere.



As the leadership, under God and under Janice, of St John's, we are in a more fortunate position than Messrs Sunak and others. The story of Nehemiah rewards a little further study.

There are five aspects to the story of Nehemiah. They are: Vision, Prayer, Leadership, Problem solving and Repentance/revival.

- **Vision:** although the building of the Temple had been completed in 516 BC, the city walls remained incomplete for the next 70 years. The walls were essential to protect the beauty of the city of Jerusalem, to ensure it looked as important and impressive as it was originally designed to be; also to protect the temple from attack and ensure continuity of worship. God put the drive to rebuild the walls in Nehemiah's heart giving him a **vision** for the work. The question for us is: does God have a **vision** for us? Is there 'construction work' we need to do? God still wants us to be united and trained to do his work. As we recognise needs, God can give us the **vision** and desire to do this.
- **Prayer:** both Nehemiah, and Ezra who supported him, responded to problems that arose with **prayer**. When Nehemiah began his work and encountered opposition or difficulties, he immediately **prayed** and **then** acted on the problem. For us, **prayer** still brings the power of God to our problem solving. Note that **prayer** and action go together: through **prayer** God guides our preparation, teamwork and effort to carry out his will.



- **Leadership:** Nehemiah demonstrated excellent **leadership**. He was spiritually ready to heed God's call. He used careful planning, teamwork, problem solving and courage to get the work done. Although he exercised

great faith, he also did not fail to 'get his hands dirty', and did just as much of the practical work as anyone else. From our point of view, being in **leadership** appointed by God is not just status or being 'in charge'. It requires two way communication with God, planning, hard work, courage and perseverance. Positive expectations are never a substitute for doing the difficult work; and, in order to **lead** others, we need to listen for God's direction in our own lives.

- **Problem solving:** after the work began, Nehemiah faced contempt, 'fake news' and threats from enemies as well as fear, discouragement and squabbles from, and among, his own workers. Although these **problems** must have been frustrating, and would have taken time, effort and endless patience to **resolve**, even with assistance from God, they ultimately did not stop Nehemiah from completing the work. When difficulties come there is always a tendency for conflict and discouragement to set in. We must recognise that there are no triumphs without troubles; no wins without some losses along the way. When **problems** arise we must address them with God's help - but press on to complete God's work.

- **Repentance/ revival:** although God enabled them to complete the wall, the work wasn't done until the people rebuilt their lives spiritually. Ezra instructed the people in God's word and, as they listened, they recognised the failings in their lives, admitted it and **did something about it**. Recognising and admitting sin is not enough; **revival** must result in reform or it is merely the expression of enthusiasm. And it starts with **us**, and, later, others. God does not want half hearted measures. We must not only do a spring clean of our lives but ask God to move into the centre of all we do.



[Adapted from the Life Application Bible notes on Nehemiah]

We praise you, O God; we acknowledge you to be the Lord.

Thank you for the example of Nehemiah and the inspiration you and he provide for those of us called to exercise eldership or leadership. Help us learn from his story and from you every day.

Teach us, Lord your ways, that we may walk in your truth.

Help us all exercise leadership under you, and under Janice, to take St. John's in the directions you want it to go, and in the ways you want it done.

He has shown you, his people, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? It's to act justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God.'

Help us always to do this. Amen



St J's Quizzes:

Edith Leven (and husband George) are fans. They're not alone.



If you happen to be walking along Lovers' Walk on the last Friday of some of the months of the year and hear raucous laughter, then you have found the church quiz.

All who attend the quiz find that it benefits their wellbeing. Maybe you have got an obscure answer, or won a piece of scented soap in the raffle or got full marks in the picture round. Just being with a group of like-minded people is enjoyment in itself.

Around 2006 the Vestry, in an attempt to extend the activities of the Congregation, asked Ashley Cross to start a Quiz night. Since then, on the last Friday of the months from September to March, a motley group have gathered in the church hall to answer six rounds of questions, General knowledge, Food drink and sport, Pictures, the U.K., Film and T.V., and Pot Luck.

The questions are all composed by Ashley. Carolynne Sorrell acts as Master of Ceremonies, as well as providing very acceptable prizes. Getsy Ratnam organises the money and the raffle. The raffle takes place at the tea break between the Pictures and U.K. rounds. It is an all inclusive raffle, as everyone brings a prize and everyone gets one. The feature word of the moment is inclusivity and there we have it without any effort. The aim of the evening is fun! The giggle level is momentous! We all laugh.

There are usually around 40 quizzers. About half are from the congregation and the rest are friends and acquaintances. There is a nominal charge. Initially a charity was identified and a donation was given. Now we gather the money from the season and half is given to the church for expenses and a charity benefits from the rest.

A Christmas Quiz

Since you're at home, we can't enforce the 'No Googling' rule, so go ahead: cheat all you like!

[answers on page 26]

1. In which children's book is it 'always winter and never Christmas'?
2. Who said 'Every idiot who goes about with 'Merry Christmas' on his lips should be boiled with his own pudding and buried with a stake of holly through his heart'?
3. Who most famously sang, 'Merry Christmas, Everybody'?
4. Which famous detective appeared in 'The Adventure of the Christmas Pudding'?
5. Which famous detective spent New Year's Eve ringing a peal of church bells?
6. In which book does a character called Colonel Blount insist on showing a film (in which he appears) on a projector, which malfunctions, thus depriving the Vicar of electricity over Christmas?
7. In which Christmas movie does Michael Caine appear as Scrooge?
8. In the 1951 movie Scrooge, who plays the title character?
9. In which Christmas short story is a life lesson taught to a character called Trotty Veck by some bells?
10. Christmas is the day when Christ's Mass is traditionally celebrated; but when is
 - a. Candlemas
 - b. Lammas
 - c. Martinmas
11. It's the 11th day of Christmas. What might I expect from my true love?
12. Fill in the blanks:
Great Saviour, the tribute of honour we pay/
And celebrate gladly thy ____ day /
We triumph in ____ thy glory to see /
Not ____ nor ____ more happy than ____
(Words: Caleb Ashworth 1722-75)
13. In the medieval carol, what was 'bedecked with bay and rosemary'?
14. Translate from the Latin: Quem pastores laudavere
15. What was in the 'ships all three' which came sailing in on Christmas day in the morning; and where did they sail to (however geographically unlikely)?



16. What is the first line of Watts' Cradle Song

17. What is Santa Claus a 'mishearing' of?

18. Why...

- a. ...do we hang up stockings (specifically) on Christmas Eve?
- b. ...do we expect chocolate coins in them?

19. Who started the tradition of exchanging gifts?

20. Where does the tradition of hanging gifts on the Christmas Tree come from?

21. What day, traditionally, did the Wise Men arrive to visit Jesus?

22. What was the significance of the Myrrh they brought?

- 23.** According to the parody, what domestic task were the shepherds engaged in when the angels appeared?
- 24.** In another parody, fill in the missing word, Most highly flavoured gravy, _____!
- 25.** What, apart from flesh and wine, was on King Wenceslas' 'good page's' shopping, or 'to do' list?
- 26.** In which languages are these the words for Christmas?
- Navidad
 - Weihnachten
 - Noël
 - Jul
 - Nollaig
 - Різдво (rizdvo)
 - நத்தார் (Kiristumas)
 - Craciun
- 27.** Which group brought out a Christmas record called, 'Little Saint Nick' in 1963?
- 28.** According to Johnny Mathis, a child who will grow up to turn tears to laughter...and _____ to _____'s _____
- 29.** In the rather dicey rhyming of The Holly & The Ivy,
- What 'rhymes' with green as the grass?
 - What 'rhymes' with black as the coal?
- 30.** Who was the star of It's a Wonderful Life?
- 31.** Who were the two villains in Home Alone?
- 32.** In which decade did Santa Claus start appearing in Coca Cola adverts?
- 33.** Which film features the song Walking in the Air?
- 34.** In what year was the Queen's speech first televised?



- 35.** Al Martino had the first Christmas No. 1 in 1952. What was the title of the song?
- 36.** Who had the Christmas No. 1 in 1975, and what was the song?
- 37.** Which song, Christmas No. 1 in 1993, has been consistently voted 'most annoying Christmas song ever released' ever since?



- 38.** In which US state would you find the town Santa Claus?
- 39.** What was Frosty the Snowman's nose made out of?
- 40.** What is the name of the Grinch's dog?
- 41.** Name a tree that miseltoe grows on?
- 42.** Which, traditionally, were the 12 days of Christmas [dates]?
- 43.** Who is the hero of The Nightmare Before Christmas?
- 44.** When French people celebrate Epiphany,
- What is hidden in the traditional galette?
 - What is the finder entitled to?
- 45.** Who, at Christmas, famously said, 'God Bless Us, Every One'?

News Roundup

David Kerr

- By the time this publication hits the streets, the Christmas Tree Festival will be over. At the time of writing, it's in full swing, and, though the numbers so far are 'hidden in the heart' of the Dumfries Flower Club Treasurer, the indications are that it has been (again) a huge success; thanks to Lindsay and Tom Florey and their Flower Club team and thanks to Janice and St John's team, with special thanks to Carolynne Sorrell, Margaret Morton, Catriona Appleby Strivens and a whole host of others who pitched in either to decorate trees or to help in a variety of ways! Thank you, one and all! More about this in the next edition, but we're hoping to post some video of the Festival itself on the St J's website, meantime. Look out for it!



- New microphones: with any luck, early in the New Year, we should be adding two new lapel radio mikes, and a bit of general re-calibration to our sound system. Sorry the quality has become less good over recent months, as components age, but you should notice an improvement soon.

been replaced; should make entering or leaving by the 'Tradesmen's Entrance' a bit pleasanter.

- We are looking into the possibility of a warm air curtain (similar to those at the church main doors) at the rear door, to address the problem that, however warm the Hall starts off, the opening of the back door has an immediate chilling effect and only a few minutes suffice to cool the place completely. Watch this space.


- Thanks to everyone who donated items to MOOL's Christmas Appeal recently. The picture shows David Formstone and Sue Downie of MOOL, with the Thornhill collection, which included items from St John's. Generosity much appreciated!




A Very Happy Christmas!

QUIZ ANSWERS

1. The Lion, the Witch & the Wardrobe
2. Scrooge, from A Christmas Carol
3. Noddy Holder/Slade
4. Hercule Poirot
5. Lord Peter Wimsey
6. Evelyn Waugh's Vile Bodies
7. Muppet Christmas Carol
8. Alastair Sim
9. Charles Dickens' The Chimes
10. a. 2 February, b. 1 August, c. 11 November
11. 11 Pipers piping
12. Great Saviour, the tribute of honour we pay/
And celebrate gladly thy festival day /
We triumph in Britain thy glory to see /
Not sages nor shepherds more happy than we
(Words: Caleb Ashworth 1722-75)
13. The Boar's Head
14. [He] whom the shepherds praise
15. Our Saviour Christ and His Lady / Bethlehem
16. Hush my dear, lay still and slumber
17. Sinterklaas/ Sint Nikolaas (Dutch); Saint Nicolas (French),
Sankt Nikolaus (German) and all sorts of variations!
18. The legend is that St Nicholas wished to benefit a poor
family anonymously. Rather than approach them directly,
he decided to drop some money down their chimney. It
happened that there were some stockings hanging up by the
fireplace to dry. The coins dropped into them. That explains
presents appearing via the chimney and why we receive gold
coloured (though chocolate) coins.
19. The Romans
20. The Druids
21. Epiphany / 6 January
22. To anoint the body of someone destined to die. (Though,
actually...)
23. Washing their socks by night
24. Bisto!
25. Pine logs
26. a. Navidad - Spanish, b. Weihnachten - German,
c. Noël - French, d. Jul - Swedish, e. Nollaig - Gaelic
f. Різдво (rizdvo) - Ukrainian, g. கிறிஸ்துமஸ் (Kirstumas) - Tamil
h. Crăciun - Romanian
27. The Beach Boys
28. A child will grow up to turn tears to laughter...and everyone
to everyone's neighbour
29. a. What 'rhymes' with green as the grass? – Who died on the
cross
b. What 'rhymes' with black as the coal? – Who died for us all
30. James Stewart
31. Marv and Harry
32. 1920s
33. The Snowman
34. 1957
35. Here in My Heart
36. Queen/Bohemian Rhapsody
37. Mr Blobby
38. Indiana
39. A button
40. Max
41. Hawthorne, lime, poplar, apple
42. 26-31 December; 01-06 January
43. Jack Skellington
44. a. A bean, or fève
b. Entitled to be King/Queen of the family for a day and get
entirely their own way!
45. Tiny Tim, from A Christmas Carol



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