



The Link

The magazine of Auldearn & Nairn St. Ninian's
Church of Scotland
Easter 2008



From the Minister...Babies and bath water

You will know the little expression, 'Don't throw the baby out with the bath water.'

We are not to get rid of valuable things when we discard the dirty water.

Sometimes in Churches it is difficult to tell the baby from the bath water, and one of the complaints we often hear from people who are not enthusiastic about the Church is that we are so out of touch with real life! This is a fair comment at times, because often it is the baby which goes and not the water.

For example, one of the things that amuses me in today's Church of Scotland is that we have Communion, but do not keep a Communion Season. In my youth, there were special services and prayers before Communion, there was a preparatory service the Friday before Communion, and if you weren't at that, you did not get served on Sunday! There are some elements of that which I am glad are gone, but all we seem to have now are cloths on the pews!

There have been HUGE changes in Church life over my lifetime, but often it is the baby which gets flung out. I can remember a time when the minister could ask any elder, and many others to lead in prayer, and any of them could. Some of the prayers were so simple that kids could rhyme them off after a few hearings ('and Lord, we pray for those lying in beds of sickness.'). Some were so boring, but others... it was like listening in on a conversation - electric. I can remember one prayer meeting where four people prayed, and the meeting lasted two and a half hours - and no, it wasn't boring! I don't think that could be done in many places now outside Brazil, or Korea, or Columbia.

There are changes in our Church - we are doing work to try and keep the building useful and legal, and there is a lot to do. There are changes in the law and how we are treated as a charity. No longer is the Congregation responsible to approve the accounts, but by law, the Session are trustees, and we are held responsible personally, for the financial matters of the Church. This means that accounts no longer come to an AGM for congregational approval, but are approved by the trustees, and are available for anyone who wishes to see them.

The Salvation Army caused a stir when they put Hymns to music hall tunes, and the Methodists scandalised when they did not use pulpits or Church buildings to preach to the masses. Yet their efforts accomplished more than any other Christian groups in their era!

The point of all this is simple. Change is always with us, embraced or forced from within and without. We need to ensure that we change what needs to be changed to be relevant and to communicate to the un-churched peoples and generations and not compromise the pure Gospel of Jesus. We need to narrow the cultural gap between the Church and folk, to enable them to hear and see the Good News of Jesus, and not leave them floundering about because they don't understand our 'in' language and practices. We need to be careful, but we must distinguish baby from bathwater to be a Church which can reach our community with the Gospel.

Ricky.

Guild News

At our first meeting in January we hosted a speaker from Advocacy Highland. This group is based in Inverness. So what is advocacy? It can be defined as standing up for a person, sticking with a person and taking their side. Why have advocacy? Everyone has a right to be listened to and be respected, be involved in decisions which affect their life, and contribute to and participate in society.



Advocates in our area provide support to people of all ages including children. They help people with mental health problems including dementia, those with learning disabilities and frail, older people. Highland Advocacy is provided free of charge and is confidential. Certainly, our speaker was most interesting.

At our next meeting we discussed our topic for this year—Learning through Life. We reminisced about our schooldays and thought about modern education, particularly in the developing world. Jesus was a great teacher. We pondered His methods of teaching. Are we still learning? Had any members new hobbies? How do we keep our minds active?

We all tried a Bible names spiral quiz. Based on our Bible reading we posed the questions: Are you a Mary? Are you a Martha?

February saw us at the Old Parish Church where we all enjoyed evening to Mrs M Davidson. Our next excursion is to the United Reformed Church.

Mary Gillies gave us a very interesting talk on India and showed slides of a visit she had made there with a Free Church friend. She talked of the caste system as our project, Scottish Love in Action, is caring for 340 children who are Dalits, or "untouchable". These people live in abject poverty and carry out demeaning tasks for those above them in the social strata. Some Dalit children are now receiving education from Bible Faith Mission schools and our project school.

Will they be accepted into society now? The Indian government knows that this matter will be brought to light. It will be interesting to see what happens! Anyway, our thanks to all those who

save their pennies for this project and who pray for the work being done to help the poor.

If you have a free Wednesday afternoon, why not join us? Our meeting on 19 March looks at speech therapy. Our final meeting on 16th April is an afternoon tea and fundraiser. All are very welcome to attend.

Isabel Bryce

Background

Scottish Love in Action (SLA) cares for destitute, orphan children in Tuni, Andhra Pradesh, India, by feeding, clothing, housing and educating them.

It developed in 1999 from an outreach activity by the youth group at Greenbank Parish Church, Edinburgh. Most of the children who have tragic life histories, are Dalits. The term means 'untouchable' (referring to their place at the bottom of the caste system) and before coming to the SLA project, these children survived by scavenging in rubbish tips or begging and were being exploited.

Check out Advocacy Highland at:

<http://www.advocacy-highland.org.uk/>

Check out the Guild websites at:

<http://www.churchofscotland.org.uk/councils/guild/index.htm>

<http://www.churchofscotlandextranet.org.uk/xguild/xgdindex.htm>

Why do people stop going to church?

Why do people give up going to church?

A recent survey has uncovered a number of reasons, including:

Loss of faith;
feeling excluded by cliques in the church;
churchgoing was only part of childhood;
had moved to a new area;
work commitments encroached;
new family commitments;
wanted to be sexually active outside marriage;
felt it was an inadequate return for time and money spent;
felt hurt by the minister in some way;
found church irrelevant to daily life;
felt worship too formal (or too informal) or too high (or too low);
felt church leader was too authoritarian (RC) or too vague (Anglican).

What other excuses or explanation have we used, or have heard others using? What can we do to encourage others to see beyond their reasons for non-attendance?

The survey 'Gone for Good?' was done by the Rev Professor Leslie Francis and the Rev Philip Richter, and published by Epworth Press.

Make time for The Passion!

This coming Holy Week, do tune in to watch a major forthcoming BBC television series – The Passion.

Praised by numerous church leaders, it is expected to make a huge national impact over the Easter season – drawing more than ten million viewers. The series, which starts on Palm Sunday 16th March, will be scheduled in peak time on BBC1. It tells the story of the last week of Jesus' life, his trial and crucifixion. The last episode, to be broadcast on Easter Sunday 23rd March, dramatises his post-resurrection appearances.

The Passion has been made by award-winning drama producer Nigel Stafford-Clark, who was responsible for Bleak House and Warriors. The cast includes Cold Feet star James Nesbitt as Pilate and EastEnders actor Paul Nicholls as Judas Iscariot. The part of Jesus is played by the relatively unknown Joseph Mawle, who at 33 is the same age as Jesus during the events of the Passion.

The Churches' Media Council has launched a website to provide resources and information about the series. Visit www.churchesmediacouncil.org.uk/passion. The group encourages Christians to seize this "golden opportunity to contribute to a contemporary public discussion about Jesus." Guidelines on the site encourage the Christian community to welcome the retelling of the stories for a new generation, but to treat it as drama first rather than theology.

Andrew Graystone, Director of the Churches' Media Council, was profoundly moved by early versions of the series. "This is an extremely vivid piece of drama. You feel you are right there, in amongst the Passover crowds, alongside the disciples as Jesus comes out with these simple but earth-shattering messages. And then of course, he's taken away and makes the ultimate sacrifice, and like the disciples, you're left to decide what you are going to do about it."



...er... apart from this little hiccup... it was an excellent church pancake supper.

Christian Basics: Why the Cross?

The cross is the badge of the Christian. Yet it was the cruellest form of execution known in the ancient world until it was eventually banned in the 5th century AD. Paradoxically as a horrifying instrument of torture and death, it is also a symbol of love and peace. The cross is a picture of violence, yet the key to peace; a picture of suffering, yet the key to healing; a picture of death, yet the key to life; a picture of utter weakness, yet the key to power; a picture of capital punishment, yet the key to mercy and forgiveness; a picture of vicious hatred, yet the key to love; a picture of supreme shame, yet the Christian's supreme boast. The cross really is the key to everything!

Like a cut diamond the cross has many facets. On the cross the powers of death and evil were defeated; Jesus identified with our sufferings and set us an example of self-sacrificial love. However, above all Jesus died to deal with the problem of our sin.

Peter writes, 'He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed ... Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God' (1Peter 2: 24, 3: 18). Jesus has made the way into God's presence open to all, symbolised when the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom at the crucifixion. This veil representing the barrier between people and God was torn down by the death of Christ.

How did Jesus achieve this? He died in our place, bore our sins and took our guilt, so paying the full penalty for our sin. Again his final cry on the cross, "tetelesthai", was a cry of triumph, 'It is finished'. It was the word stamped across bills to indicate that they had been paid.

What was the purpose of the cross? Peter answers this question in five short words: 'to bring us to God'. Jesus is like the bridge that provides access between us and God. 'If Jesus Christ is to be our Saviour then he must be able to place a hand upon a pardoning God and another hand on a penitent sinner and draw them together in an act of reconciliation' (Bishop Handley Moule).

Rev Paul Hardingham, Bolton.

The Good Samaritan

A young minister was telling his church the story of the Good Samaritan, in which a man was beaten, robbed and left for dead. He got carried away and described the situation in vivid detail, wanting his congregation to catch the drama of it all. Then he asked rhetorically: 'If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?' A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, 'I think I'd throw up.'

Check your spending – it's a matter of life and debt

The Church of England has compiled a Post Christmas Debt Check for consumers worried about how much their wallets have been hit by Christmas and New Year spending. It has also published a range of prayers for people living with debt.

Coming at a time when 18 per cent of adults in the UK have £10,000 or more of unsecured debt, the release of the 10-point checklist coincides with the launch of a new section of the Church of England website, called Matter of Life and Debt, dedicated to helping people escape from debt problems - and containing sound advice, real-life case studies, useful resources, and helpful prayers.

"If a household can say 'yes' to any of the statements on the checklist, it may be on the verge of encountering serious debt issues, and should carefully consider taking some of the advice included in the pages of Matter of Life and Debt," says the Church of England's National Stewardship and Resources Officer, John Preston, who put together the Post Christmas Debt Check, and co-authored Matter of Life and Debt.

"If a household can say 'yes' to three or more of the signs," he continues, "it would be well advised to talk to a debt counselling service, such as the ones we link to online."

Designed to make consumers think again about how much they spend, the Post Christmas Debt Check can be accessed online at www.cofe.anglican.org/debt.

Your Post Christmas Debt Check - tick as appropriate:

- You need to get an extra credit card or to increase the spending limit on your current credit cards...
- You tried to get a higher credit limit on your cards recently, and have had your application turned down...
- You will only be able to pay the minimum on your credit cards this month ...
- This month you will need to use one credit card to pay off another card...
- You can't face adding up your total debt, because it scares you...
- You are keeping the cost of your total debts, hidden from your partner or your family...
- You often feel anxious about money, in particular, how much you owe...
- You used to have savings, but they've gradually disappeared...
- This month you're having to use credit cards for things you normally pay for with cash...
- You've checked your credit card statement from a year ago - and you owe more now than you did then...

See also the article on page 6.

Because of JesUs

Before U were thought of, or time had begun,
God even stuck U in the name of his Son.
And each time U pray, you'll see that it's true -
You can't spell out JesUs and not include U.
You're a pretty big part of his wonderful name,
For U, He was born; that's why He came.
And his great love for U is the reason He died.
It even takes U to spell crUcified.
Isn't it thrilling and splendidly grand?
He rose from the dead, with U in his plan.
The stones split away, the gold trUmpet blew,
and this word resUrrection is spelled with a U.
When JesUs left earth at his upward ascen-
sion,
He felt there was one thing He just had to
mention.

"Go into the world and tell them it's true
That I love them all - just like I love U."

Church Without Walls – The National Gathering 2008



Building on the success of previous local and national CWW events, this year will see a tented gathering at the Royal Highland Centre, Ingliston, Scotland's premier outdoor/indoor venue. It's an event for all age groups and all churches, and will take place over the weekend of 3 - 4 May.

The two-day event will see a wider variety of activities than any previous CWW event – no mean feat!

The National Gathering has something for young and old alike, and will be an unforgettable opportunity to meet with fellow Christians from a wide variety of denominations.

For more information about the event including a preview video, log on to

www.cwwresources.org.uk/ng/index.htm.

Palm Sunday and Holy Week

This year, Easter Day falls on 23 March. The week leading up to it, which begins with Palm Sunday on 16 March, is very special in the church year, and is known as Holy Week. Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday, the day when the Church remembers the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. The gospels tell us that he had gone up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover, and that when he entered the city, the crowds gave him a rapturous welcome, throwing palm fronds into his path. On this day churches worldwide will distribute little crosses made from palm fronds in memory of Jesus' arrival in Jerusalem.

The next highlight of Holy Week falls on Maundy Thursday. This day focuses on one of the final acts concerning Jesus to be related in John's Gospel – the washing of the disciples' feet by Jesus. The ceremony of the 'washing of the feet' of members of the congregation came to be an important part of the liturgy (regular worship) of the medieval church, symbolising the humility of the clergy, in obedience to the example of Christ. 'Maundy' is an unusual word, and relates to this medieval practice of foot-washing. In the Middle Ages, church services were held in Latin. The opening words of a typical service on this day are based on the words of Jesus recorded in John 13: 'A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.' In Latin, the opening phrase of this sentence is 'mandatum novum do vobis' The word 'mundy' is thus a corruption of the Latin 'mandatum' (or command).

In Britain, in by-gone years, as an affirmation of humility, the monarch would wash the feet of a small number of his or her subjects. This has now been replaced by the ceremony of the 'Maundy money', in which the Queen distributes specially minted coins to the elderly.

Good Friday is the day on which Jesus died on the cross. It is the most solemn day in the Christian year, and is widely marked by the removal of all decorations from churches as happens in the Episcopal Church here in Nairn. In Lutheran churches, the day was marked by the reading of the passion narrative in a gospel, a practice which lies behind the 'passions' composed by Johann Sebastian Bach (1685 – 1750). Both the St Matthew Passion and the St John Passion have their origins in this observance of Good Friday.

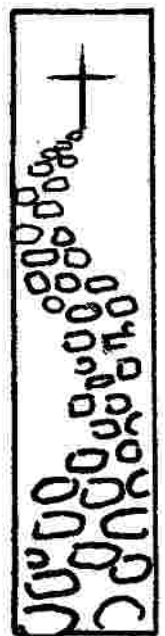
The custom of observing a period of three hours' devotion from 12 midday to 3 pm on Good Friday goes back to the 18th century. The 'Three Hours of the Cross' often take the form of an extended meditation on the 'Seven Last Words from the Cross', with periods of silence, prayer, or hymn-singing.

Lent ends with Holy Saturday. The Eastern Orthodox churches hold the 'Paschal Vigil' – a late evening service which leads directly into the following Easter Day.

Easter, of course, is the day of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Why does the date move around so much? Because the date of Passover moves around, and according to the biblical account, Easter is tied to the Passover. Passover celebrates the Israelites' exodus from Egypt and it lasts for seven days, from the middle of the Hebrew month of Nisan, which equates to late March or early April. Sir Isaac Newton was one of the first to use the Hebrew lunar calendar to come up with firm dates for Good Friday: Friday 7 April 30 AD or Friday 3 April, 33 AD, with Easter Day falling two days later. Modern scholars continue to think these the most likely. Most people will tell you that Easter falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the Spring Equinox, which is broadly true. But the precise calculations are unbelievably complicated and involve something called an 'ecclesiastical full moon', which is not the same as the moon in the sky. The earliest possible date for Easter in the West is 22 March, which last fell in 1818 and won't fall again until 2285. The latest is 25 April, which last happened in 1943 and is next due in 2038.

Why the name, 'Easter'? In almost every European language, the festival's name comes from 'Pesach', the Hebrew word for Passover. The Germanic word 'Easter', however, seems to come from Eostre, a Saxon fertility goddess mentioned by the Venerable Bede. He thought that the Saxons worshipped her in 'Eostur month', but may have confused her with the classical dawn goddesses like Eos and Aurora, whose names mean 'shining in the east'. So Easter might have meant simply 'beginning month' – a good time for starting up again after a long winter.

Finally, why Easter eggs? On one hand, they are an ancient symbol of birth in most European cultures. On the other hand, hens start laying regularly again each Spring. Since eggs were forbidden during Lent, it's easy to see how decorating and eating them became a practical way to celebrate Easter.



Fabric Committee Update

For the perceptive among you, the addition of ladders up the steeple means that the work to stop the birds roosting and nesting within has started. The work entails the fitting of stainless steel mesh inside all the windows, including the smaller apertures at the very top of the steeple. Due to the poor state of some of the windows those identified will require to be totally replaced before the mesh is added.

The completion of this work will be a blessing to the stalwarts (Jim Main and his 'gang') who have regularly cleaned the bird droppings from the bell floor level. I would like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the congregation, to thank them for carrying out a most unpleasant task.

Some of you will also be aware that the cage,

A credit card you can't use

The Methodist Church has produced an alternative 'credit card' which is aimed at encouraging you to 'Buy Less: Live More'.

The card cannot be used to make purchases, but is designed to be placed in a wallet in front of other credit cards, to remind people to think before they spend. The initiative is supported by a website - <http://www.buylesslivemore.org.uk> and a dedicated group on Facebook.

During Lent people signing up will receive a daily email with two challenges or ideas for buying less and living more. These updates will also be available on the website and the Facebook group, enabling people to share their experiences, swap stories, questions and advice. There will be an emphasis on the impact of our behaviour on people around the world threatened by drought, flooding, and other consequences of climate change.



which encased the weights for the mechanical operation of the clock, has been removed. Now that the clock is electrically operated the opportunity has been taken to tidy up that corner of the Church.

The gas supply and meter are now installed in the Church and it is hoped that a contract will be let within the next few weeks for the removal of the oil fired boiler and installation of a gas fired one.

The Fabric Committee has also a responsibility, in conjunction with Auldearn Church, for the upkeep of the Manse. To this end a number of double glazing units

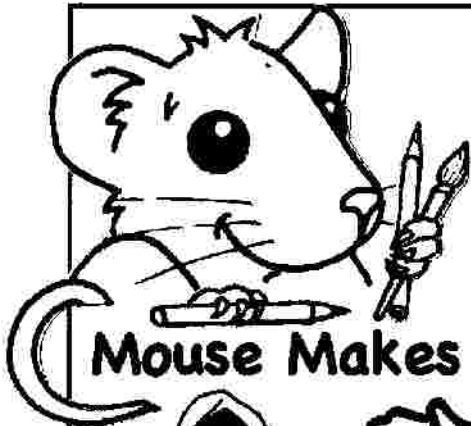
have been replaced allowing Ricky and Yvonne to see the countryside again.

Work will also be carried out to repair an area of the driveway by laying tarmac-adam. This will solve the problem of damage caused by heavy rain and regular vehicle use.

There is still a large amount of work outstanding to Church Property and so I would like to thank Isabel Bryce, Billy Hossack, Jim Main, Andrew Paton and John Waugh for their continuing commitment on our behalf.

Ron Borthwick, Convenor





Mouse Makes



Mary talked to Jesus by the empty tomb.

Read: John 20:10-18

Cleopas walked with Jesus on the Emmaus road.



Read: Luke:24:13-35



Thomas saw Jesus and touched his wounds.

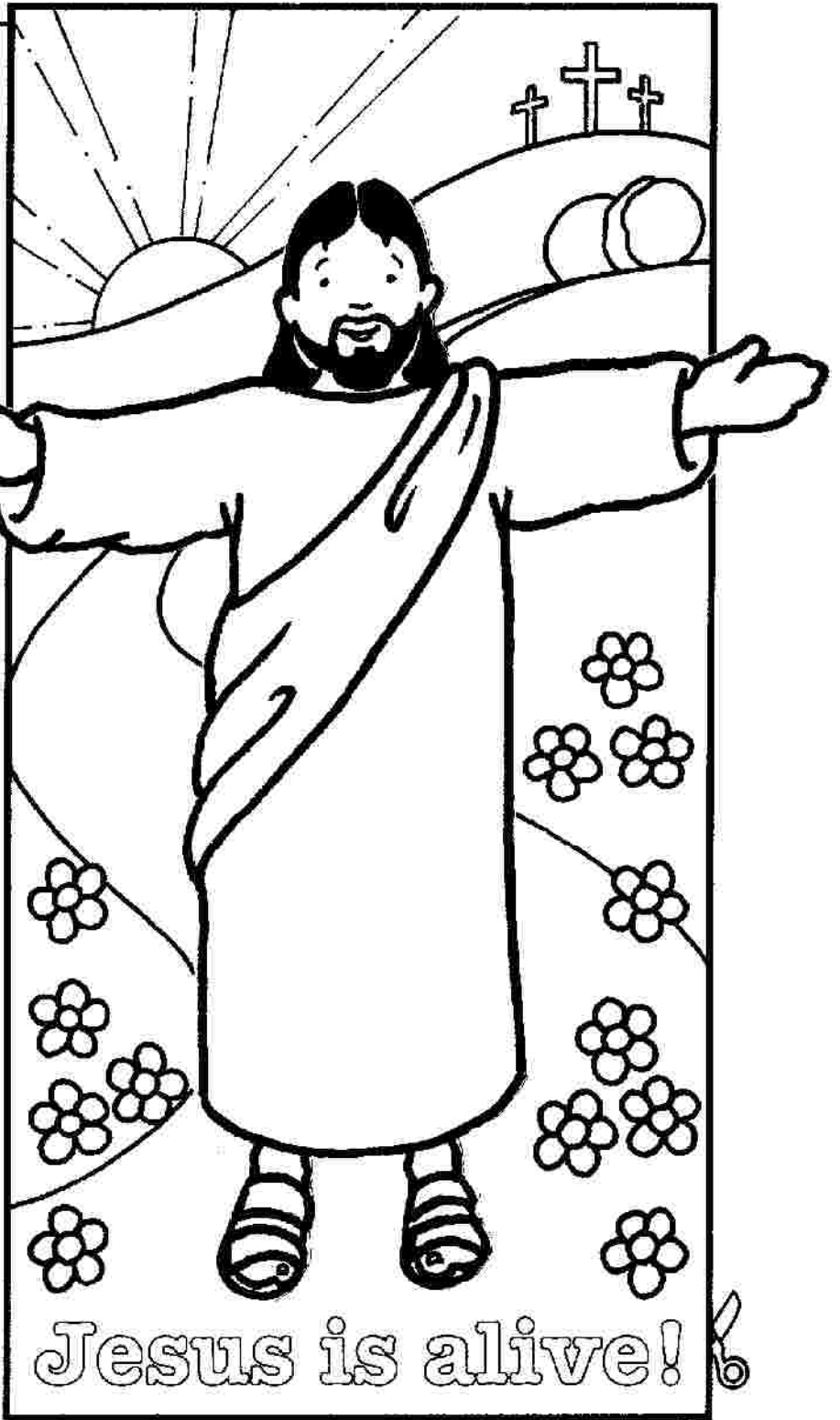
Read: John 20:24-29



Peter ate with Jesus by the Sea of Galilee.

Read: John 21:1-14

Thank you Jesus for being my Saviour and my friend.
Amen



Colour this picture then carefully cut out. Glue onto card to make an Easter greetings card or a window hanging.



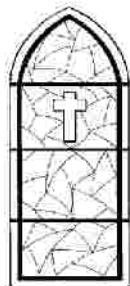


LENT

Lent, before Easter, is like Advent before Christmas, a time of preparation. Lent is when we remember that Jesus prepared himself for starting his ministry by going away by himself for 40 days of fasting and prayer. You can read about it in your Bible: Matthew, chapter 4, verses 1-11; Mark, chapter 1, verses 12-13 and Luke, chapter 4, verses 1-13.

Jesus went into the wilderness, a quiet lonely place away from people where he could think things out. He knew that his work would be hard, that many people would not listen to him, or if they listened, they would not believe him. During these 40 days Jesus made his choice: to work in God's way however hard that might be.

This year Lent starts on 6th February and goes three quarters of March: have you thought about how YOU are going to prepare yourself to follow Jesus this Lent?



SPRING COLOURS

The missing words in this puzzle are all colours which are mentioned with these things in the Bible.

1. Pastures, herbs and olives are all _____.
2. A sea, tents and wine are _____.
3. Hangings in the Temple, pomegranates and doors of tents were all _____.
4. A horse, robes and teeth were all _____.
5. Kings' raiment (clothing), Jesus' robe and the dye that Lydia sold were all _____.
6. One of the gifts to the baby Jesus, candlesticks and spoons were _____.
7. A raven, clouds and chariot horses were _____.
8. Lips, a thread tied to a window and robes are _____.

Answers at the bottom of this page.



What do you do with a green monster?

Wait till he's ripe.



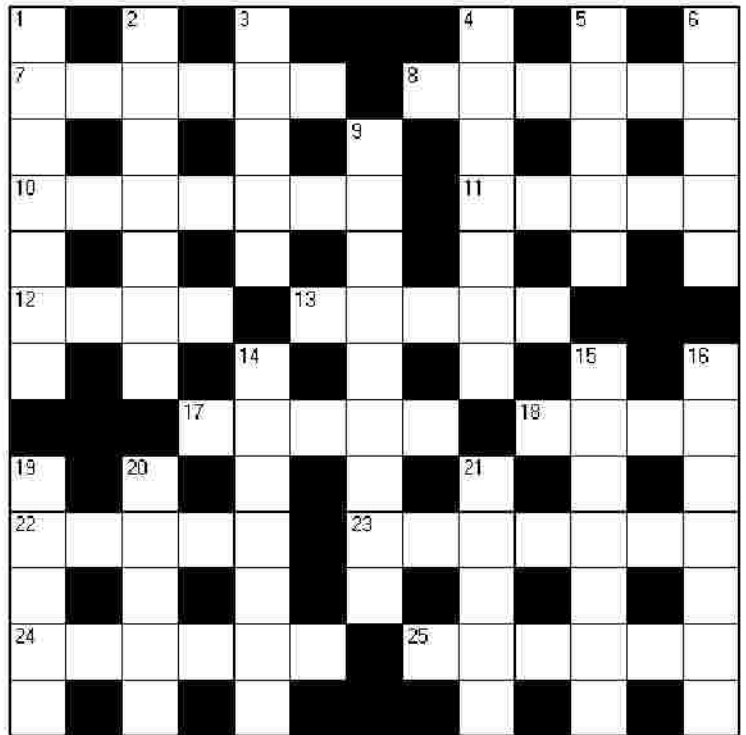
Answers: 1. green 2. red 3. blue
4. white 5. purple 6. gold 7. black
8. scarlet

Across

- 7 Bigger (6)
- 8 9 down having charge of a diocese (6)
- 10 eg Rome or Lisbon (7)
- 11 Mother-in-law of Ruth (5)
- 12 Garden home of Adam and Eve (4)
- 13 Christian symbol (5)
- 17 She _____ no-one (Zeph 3.2) (5)
- 18 Description of the horse ridden by 3 across in Revelation ch.6 (4)
- 22 ..they _____ the winepresses (Job 24.11) (5)
- 23 City where the disciples were first called Christians in Acts ch.11 (7)
- 24 Country (6)
- 25 More hallowed (6)

Down

- 1 Darken (7)
- 2 Fell like the bindings on Samson's hands in Judges ch.15 (7)
- 3 A king's wrath is its messenger, according to Proverbs ch.16 (5)
- 4 Animal whose cubs are scattered in Job ch.4 (7)
- 5 Fire an arrow like Jehoshaphat in 2 Kings ch.13 (5)
- 6 24 across whose 10 across is Madrid (5)
- 9 Priest (9)
- 14 Angel of the Abyss in Revelation ch.9 (7)
- 15 Included in the canon of the bible (7)
- 16 Ropes for fastening animals (7)
- 19 ..the basin with its _____ (Ex 31.9) (5)
- 20 God (5)
- 21 ..observe them on the delivery _____ (Ex 1.16) (5)



Kids' work isn't always child's play

Children's Ministry Network launched

Saturday 26 January saw the launch of the Children's Ministry Network, an ecumenical organisation for children's workers in the church.

The aim of the event, kindly hosted by Letham St Mark's Church in Perth, was to share and enhance the experience of those who work with young people, regardless of their denomination.

The **Rev Linda Pollock**, regional development officer with the Kirk's Mission & Discipleship Council, feels that such a project was long overdue:

"We are responding to a growing need among children's workers for a safe and supportive forum for them to 'move' in.

"Primarily we are a support network for people doing similar work and who are facing similar problems.

"There are also future plans to develop training and resourcing between the different Christian groups."

The Children's Ministry Network is a joint venture by the Mission & Discipleship council of the Church of Scotland, the United Reformed Church, the Episcopal Church, the Baptist Union, the Salvation Army and the International Christian College.

For more information, contact Linda Pollock at lpollock@cofscotland.org.uk

Moderator welcomes launch of Scottish Climate Change Bill

The Church of Scotland will not stay silent on climate change, says the Moderator of the General Assembly.

Speaking after a three-day visit to the Scottish Parliament (29 – 31 January), **Sheilagh Kesting** welcomed the launch of the Scottish Government's online consultation for the Scottish Climate Change Bill.

The Moderator said: *"Climate change is one of the most important ethical questions of the age and we cannot stand by quietly as it leads to damage and destruction around the world."*

"We recognise the enormous challenge of cutting greenhouse gases by 80%, but it is something we have to do."

"Through the work of the Church and particularly through congregations across Scotland we can make a real contribution to this task."

The effects of climate change are already being seen by many people around the world, including our partner churches, particularly in low-lying nations such as Bangladesh.

The Church of Scotland has established the project 'Responding to Climate Change' to take on this challenge and are supporting 'eco-congregations' across Scotland to help them respond.

The Kirk has also signed up to the Stop Climate Chaos coalition to express its support for action.

For more information, please see www.stopclimatechaosscotland.org



Above: The Moderator met with the First Minister during her annual visit to the Scottish Parliament.

Incoming Guild Convener announced

At the last meeting of the Church of Scotland Guild's National Executive committee, it was announced that Esme Duncan from Caithness is to be the incoming national convener of the Church of Scotland Guild.

Esme was born and educated in Aberdeen and taught English and Moral Education. She served for 15 years on the school's staff of Scripture Union Scotland.

A trained reader in the Church of Scotland, she moved to Caithness to do locum ministry following her early retirement. In turn, she retired from locum ministry in the summer to 2007 to devote time to her Guild commitments after being appointed national vice convener.

Esme has held various posts in the Guild, including council convener, a member of National Ex-

ecutive, convener of the Programmes and Resources Committee and is currently national vice convener. Her hobbies are motor caravanning, writing, reading, and the company of her devoted dog Morven, who is registered with Pets As Therapy.

Esme commented on her appointment:

"Being invited to be national convener of the Guild is a huge honour which I hope I can live up to.

"Looking back on my life so far, I feel that many of my experiences have led up to this appointment and I trust that with God's help, and the support of my friends I'll be enabled to fulfil the trust which is being placed on me".

At the same meeting Elizabeth Dunn from Lenzie, Glasgow, was elected as national vice convener. Betty was born and educated in Glasgow, and her career background is in design, manufacture and retail - becoming Sales Director and travelling the world.

Have you walked in the garden?

(Mk14:33-34,42, Jn20:16)

Have you walked in the garden of desolation,
Do you know what it's like to fall down?
Have you trusted and shared and been rejected,
Has the broken heart within you turned to stone?
Have you known the pain of misinterpretation,
Of betrayal by the ones you knew as friends?
Have you pleaded that your nightmare might be lifted,
Just to waken to a night that never ends?
Have you walked in the garden of desolation?

Jesus walked in your garden.

Let him lead you from the garden of your suffering,
Let him show you to the place beyond the night.
He has overcome the darkness by his death upon
the cross,
He has won for you his glorious Easter light.
There is life and joy within his resurrection,
There is freedom and forgiveness for the past,
Let him lead you in the garden of his triumph
As he calls your name and offers peace at last.
Let him lead you from the garden of your suffering.

Daphne Kitching



Henry is making a real effort for Lent –
he's giving up the remote control and
walking to the TV

Easter eggs galore

The UK has the second highest consumption per person of chocolate in Europe, with a market value of £4 billion. And we love our Easter Eggs! An estimated 80 million festive eggs will be sold this year, worth about £220 million.

Last year the Sainsbury's Fair Trade Egg emerged as the top choice in a Daily Telegraph survey to find the ultimate Easter egg. Sainsbury also won approval by cutting the amount of packaging on its eggs - by up to 79 per cent.

The Servant-girl

Mk14:53-72, Mk.14:50, Isaiah 53:3

It was all kicking off in the courtyard,
the courtyard of the house of Caiaphas,
where I work.
They dragged in the man from Nazareth,
took him into the house to face the whole Council –
and those bought to give evidence.
I know half of them, they'd say anything for a few pieces
of silver.
He had no-one to defend him, to speak or stand up for
him.
Even his followers had forsaken him and fled.
His face full of sorrow, but somehow, not for himself.
As I passed, he looked straight at me,
and I knew that sorrow was for me.
I wanted to stay with him,
but I had fires to feed in the courtyard.
And that's when I noticed him,
the one who'd been there that day in the Temple,
the one who had been with Jesus.
I was sure it was him, Peter, I think was his name,
here, now, just when his master needed him.
But he denied it.
He denied being one of them.
He denied knowing Jesus.
And then the cock crowed.
I remembered those eyes,
and I know why Peter wept.

Daphne Kitching

Miscellaneous observations on life

As a child of God, prayer is kind of like calling home everyday.

Blessed are the flexible for they shall not be bent out of shape.

The most important things in your house are the people.

When you get tangled up in problems, be still. God wants you to be still so He can untangle the knot.

A man was collecting the Christian Aid envelopes. Calling at one house he met the response 'Sorry I can't give you anything, the dog ate the envelope.' 'Ah' said the collector. 'Don't worry I have a spare envelope.' Back came the quick reply... 'It's no good he'd only eat that one too!'



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Dear God

I want to thank you for what you have already done in my life.

I am not going to wait until things in my life look better -

I am not going to wait until people say they are sorry -

I am not going to wait until the pain in my body disappears-

I am not going to wait until my financial situation improves-

I am not going to wait until I get the job-

I am not going to wait until the journey gets easier -

I am not going to wait until I understand every experience in my life that has caused me pain or grief; I am thanking you right now.

I am thanking you because I am alive.

I am thanking you because I made it through the day's difficulties.

I am thanking you because I have walked around the obstacles.

I am thanking you because I have the ability and the opportunity to do more and do better.

Most of all, I'm thanking you God because you haven't given up on me.



We believe in life before death

Christian Aid Week is seven amazing days of fundraising, campaigning and worship. It unites 300,000 people in the UK's biggest house-to-house collection. It inspires hundreds of events, brings together thousands of churches and reaches millions of people with messages about poverty. And most importantly, it helps people in poor communities around the world change their lives.

The Christian Aid Week 2008 materials feature inspiring stories of poor communities in Ghana and Bangladesh who have been empowered by Christian Aid to change their futures. Christian Aid Sunday falls on Pentecost this year as Christian Aid Week runs from 11th to 17th May. This year Christian Aid week in Nairn is being organised by St Columba's Church. They are inviting all churches to be involved in house to house collections. If you can assist, please give your name and contact details to Beth Lown.

A Prayer for Christian Aid Week

Ever-present God,
 Fill me with your Spirit,
 And send me out to make a difference
 To the voiceless; the powerless and
 the poor.
 Help me to know that
 I stand with all who seek justice
 And I go with the strength of your
 Spirit.
 Take my prayers, my time and my en-
 velopes.
 Use them with others' to achieve
 amazing things.
 For the sake of your people,
 And to the glory of your name. Amen.

Ten things to know about Christian Aid

1. We believe in life before death – passionate about rooting out poverty.
2. We fund long-term development work, respond to emergencies, and challenge the unjust systems that make and keep people poor.
3. We are the official development agency of 41 church denominations in the UK and Ireland.
4. We help people of all faiths and none.
5. We believe in helping people to find their own lasting solutions to poverty.
6. We work through more than 600 partners – local organisations – in nearly 50 countries.
7. We challenge those with power to change things that have an adverse effect on poor communities, such as international trade rules and climate change.
8. We don't give money to governments – we work directly with local organisations on the ground.
9. We spend money where it's needed most. For each £1 given in 2006/7, 83p was used for direct charitable expenditure. The remaining 17p was used to raise the next £1.
10. You can find out more at www.caweek.org or by calling 0845 7000 300.

The Day the Curtain Tore: The Death of Jesus (Mark 15:33-39)

Early on that first Good Friday, Jesus was given a fraudulent trial before the Jewish Sanhedrin, Governor Pilate, Herod, and back again to Pilate, who acquiesced to the demand of the crowd that Jesus be crucified. After he was flogged, a cruel and often fatal punishment in itself, Jesus was led away to be crucified.

In his gospel account, Mark gives few details about the crucifixion. Most of his audience, the church in Rome, was all too familiar with crucifixion as the cruellest form of capital punishment. Roman citizens were beheaded; Jews were stoned to death; only the worst of criminal foreigners and alien criminals were crucified.

Far exceeding the pain and shame of his physical suffering was the fury of the wrath of God that Jesus received at the cross. The gates of hell opened, and the fury of Satan was unleashed on their enemy, the divine Son of God. The evangelists do not dwell on descriptions of his physical suffering because they understood his passion and suffering far exceeded the realm of the physical suffering of crucifixion, which often drove its victims to insanity. Jesus' agony that he so dreaded in Gethsemane was the suffering for the sins of the world. He knew that he, the sinless one, would become sin for us in his suffering (2 Corinthians 5:21). The gospel writers focus on the reason and the results of Jesus' death, and the way that he died as a victor.

There were signs that accompanied Jesus' death, for nature itself cried out as it witnessed this terrible deed. During Jesus' hours of sin bearing and spiritual suffering, the region around the cross was covered with a supernatural darkness, from noon until mid-afternoon. Graves were opened as an earthquake shook the ground. The crowd at the foot of the cross stopped mocking, and turned to bitter remorse and tearful lamentation (Matthew 27:45-54).

Another accompanying sign was important enough to be mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke—the tearing of the temple curtain. This was the magnificent curtain that blocked the entrance into the temple's Most Holy Place, the inner sanctum which contained the Ark of the Covenant and the mercy seat. The tearing of this sacred curtain made such an impact, in fact, that even the Jewish historian, Josephus, mentions it in his archives. The supernatural tearing of this curtain says much about the death of Jesus. That curtain in Jerusalem's temple 2000 years ago hung there as a reminder of the separation of the people from Holy God. The people were resigned to the fact that every year the high priest had to venture into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain and make a sacrifice that was only a temporary provision for the sins of the people.

As Hebrews says, what was needed was a better, once-for-all sacrifice that would take away the sins of the people and open the Holy Of Holies to all people. Hebrews assures us that Christ himself was that sacrifice – and became our eternal high priest. In his Passover meal with his disciples in the Upper Room, Jesus made the transition to the new covenant meal, the Lord's Supper. He told his disciples that the New Covenant is a covenant that will be ratified through his blood—his suffering and death (Mark 14).

In his submissive suffering and agonizing death, Jesus entered the Most Holy Place in his own body, says Hebrews (Hebrews 6 and 9). During those hours of darkness, when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" He was being offered as our sacrifice. His own blood secured an eternal salvation (Hebrews 9:12).

As a demonstration that Jesus' suffering was acceptable and successful as our sacrifice, the Father tore the temple curtain. The New Covenant was in place – by the blood of Jesus.

Notice that Jesus cried out before he breathed his last breath. John tells us it was his victory cry, "It is finished!" (John 19:30). He had defeated the power of sin.

Now the Lord Jesus could die peacefully into the waiting arms of the Father. Luke tells us that he prayed from Psalm 31:5, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." And, "When he had said this, he breathed his last" (Luke 23:46).

When Jesus died, really died, his body was laid in the tomb. But early on Sunday morning, on the third day, God raised his Son from the grave. He had a real body, but a resurrection body, like the one we will have some day.

It is the risen, now glorified Jesus who invites us in Revelation 3:20 to hear his voice and open the door and receive him as Lord and Saviour.

Rev Dr Roger Roberts, Senior Pastor, International Baptist Church, Brussels



Church Tapes of St Ninian's Morning Service

We now have a small, but dedicated team of visitors who now record and deliver twenty cassette tapes of the service. If you know of someone who is unable to attend and would like a copy, please let Clifford have their name and address. Once listened to, each tape is returned and used again. If you are able to assist with deliveries, we would be delighted to keep your name on file and call on you should numbers rise in the future!

What about the Resurrection?

What if Jesus had not risen from the dead? Despite having his example and teaching, the bottom would drop out of Christianity and four things would remain true:

As Paul says, 'if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins'. (1 Corinthians 15:17).

- We have no hope of being raised either, and must expect to stay dead as well.
- Christ is not reigning in heaven and will not return to bring history to its fulfilment and so we cannot call him Lord.
- We cannot have a relationship with the living Lord, who is identical with the Jesus of the gospels. Although this Jesus might be our hero, he cannot be our Saviour.

So how should we understand the significance of Jesus' resurrection for us today? Here are some key points to consider:

- It affirms that Jesus' death on the cross was not a defeat but a victory over sin, death and Satan, 'But God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was impossible for death to keep its hold on him' (Acts 2:24).
- It confirms Jesus' identity as Son of God, 'who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord' (Romans 1:4).
- It points to our own bodily resurrection, rather than the immortality of our soul, 'The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable' (1 Corinthians 15: 42).
- It guarantees our forgiveness, 'if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins' (1 Corinthians 15:17).
- It ensures that we can know the reality of his risen life today, 'just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life' (Romans 6:4).

The story is told of Russia under the communist regime. A member of the communist party addressed a packed audience at length, seeking to discredit the resurrection of Christ. At the end an Orthodox priest rose and asked if he might reply. He was warned that he was only allowed five minutes. 'Five seconds is all that I require!' he said firmly.

He turned to the audience and gave the traditional Easter greeting: 'Christ is risen!' Back with a deafening roar came the traditional reply: 'He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!'

Christ the Priest

Christ is the Priest above us to reign,
Him did the Being of life ordain
For all alive salvation to gain;
Christ is the Priest of rising again,
Christ is the Priest above.

A Celtic prayer from South Uist



"Easter coming so soon after Christmas has almost turned Anthony into a regular churchgoer."

Update on Alpha !

After completing the Alpha Course absolutely everyone was of one thought - that we should carry on with Nicky Gumbel's follow-up Bible Study on Philippians. For the next nine weeks we watched a DVD and had discussion in two groups. This has been a time of bonding and building on our faith. As time passed we all felt more comfortable to join in (sometimes quite noisily!).

These studies ended midway through February and again nearly unanimously it was decided to continue with a Bible Study using another follow-up from Alpha study called 'Challenging Lifestyle', by the same author. We are all looking forward to these and would be delighted to have anyone, who would like, to join us in the hall at 7pm on Monday nights. We are a friendly group, who enjoy fun and fellowship with a cup of tea / coffee and a biscuit.

Beth

“Fighting the battle - together!”

I almost rang my minister this morning about a matter that had come up in our Bible Study Group. However, on reflection I did not. “Poor man.”, I thought,, “Phone ringing day and night, meetings to attend, sermons, devotions, studies to prepare - endless needs to be dealt with. Emergencies and crises popping up all over the place! What a life!” And, I further reflected, that’s not even the worst of it!

Our minister has been called by God to bring God’s grace and love to us so that we in turn can bring the gospel message of God’s love to others in the community. The Devil wants no building up of God’s people, no communicating of the gospel. And so, within God’s kingdom he will attack, undermine and undo as hard as he can and one of his prime targets will be our minister! I think the hardest part of any minister’s job is spiritual warfare. That’s what makes his job one of the hardest in the world.

When I became aware of this I soon realised that it’s not enough for people simply to feel for him in his struggle. As fellow Christians and co-workers for Jesus Christ, we have also been called by God to DO something. We have the all important task of being right alongside our minister in the thick of his battles by praying for him. The ongoing prayers of God’s people for their leaders will have the Devil scuttling for cover! It is no mean thing to be able to call on all the resources available to us in a God who has all power and authority - especially when He has shown that He is on our side!

We also have the job of playing our part in our congregation’s ministry. Faithfully carrying out what God has equipped us to do within the ministry of our congregation will greatly enhance the life of our minister. Battles are terrible things when you have to fight them alone.

How about we each talk to our minister and tell him we are praying for him? Also, ask him if there is any area of ministry in our congregation in which we might be able to help?

In doing this I know your reward will be great.

Mary Heggie

Editor—if you think you can be of further help and support, please contact either of the session clerks.

"A Friend is...

a push when you've stopped,
a word when you're lonely,
a guide when you're searching,
a smile when you're sad
and a song when you're glad



St Ninian’s Website

You can now find the order of service, back copies of this magazine and lots more at www.nairnstninians.org

In addition, dedicated e-mail addresses have been set up for:

Ricky Reid: minister@nairnstninians.org

Bob & Beth Lown: sessionclerk@nairnstninians.org

Ron Borthwick: clerktoboard@nairnstninians.org

Dorothea Cooke: sundayschool@nairnstninians.org

Donald McLagan: organist@nairnstninians.org

Clifford Cooke: editor@nairnstninians.org

If you have suggestions for what you would like added to the website, please contact the editor.