

St. Peter's & St. Andrew's Church Thurso

NEWSLETTER

ISSUE 4:2006

Winter 2006

MINISTER'S LETTER



Pulteneytown Manse
2 Coronation St.
Wick
KW1 5LS

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Dear Friends,

Time moves on and your Nominating Committee are still not having any success in their search for a minister.

It is a fact that there is a shortage of Ministers of Word and Sacrament throughout the country but many must be wondering why no one has been called after a fairly long vacancy. The shortest and most profound answer is that God knows what is best; and we will continue to pray that he will send forth servant into this part of the harvest field.

At the same time we must give thanks for the members of the congregation who are conducting the Services in such an acceptable way, week after week. Our congregations in Wick and Thrumster have also been greatly benefitting from their ministry.

At the recent Presbytery meeting it was agreed that Reverend Jim Todd could take early retirement at the end of February 2007. At some date after that The linkage with Olrig will take place. When this happens there will probably be an adjustment of the time of the Morning Service. It is important for the congregation to realise the necessity of this and to let the Elders know how flexible they should be when the negotiations are taking place.

At the same Presbytery meeting the issue of whether the church would approve an Overture which would free Ministers from any possible discipline if they conducted a Service of 'blessing' of a Civil partnership. (**n.b.** the issue was not whether the church approved of Civil Partnerships) Presbytery decided not to approve the Overture which had been sent down by the General Assembly. To date a total of twenty Presbyteries have voted against the Overture with only six voting for.

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On a personal level I felt greatly honoured to be short leeted for the post of Moderator of the General Assembly. In the event I understand I came a close second. I have some minor regrets that the position did not materialise but am sure God knows what is best and His plans for us are always good.

May God richly bless you all,

Yours sincerely

Bill Wallace



Communion Sunday

10th December 11.00 am

Communion 2007

11th March 11.00 am

10th June 11.00 am

9th September 11.00 am

9th December 11.00 am

Somebody or Nobody

There once were four people named Everybody, Somebody, Anybody and Nobody.

An important job had to be done, and Everybody was sure that Somebody would do it.

Anybody could have done it but Nobody did it.

Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job.

Everybody thought Anybody could do it and that Somebody would do it.

But Nobody realized that Everybody thought Somebody would do it.

It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have done.

Apology

My sincere apologies to our new Church Officer, Alec Stephen for calling him "Alec Stevens" in the last issue.

Iain MacKillop



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Prayer Chain

A prayer box is now available for written prayer requests. It is on the chair next to the vestry.



Please specify if requests are confidential. All requests which are marked "CONFIDENTIAL" will be passed down the Prayer Chain.

Requests not marked as "CONFIDENTIAL" will also be prayed for at the open prayer meeting held each Wednesday evening at 7.30pm in the Church hall.

Prayer Chain Contacts:

Ruby 892682
Helen 831353
Nana 893676



In Time of Trouble

"There are many that will tell me of their white things, but few to sit down with me in the mire."

Kitty Tait, Quarrycrook

"Joy is very cheap, and if you can help the Poor on with a Garment of Praise, it will be better for them than blankets."

Henry Drummond

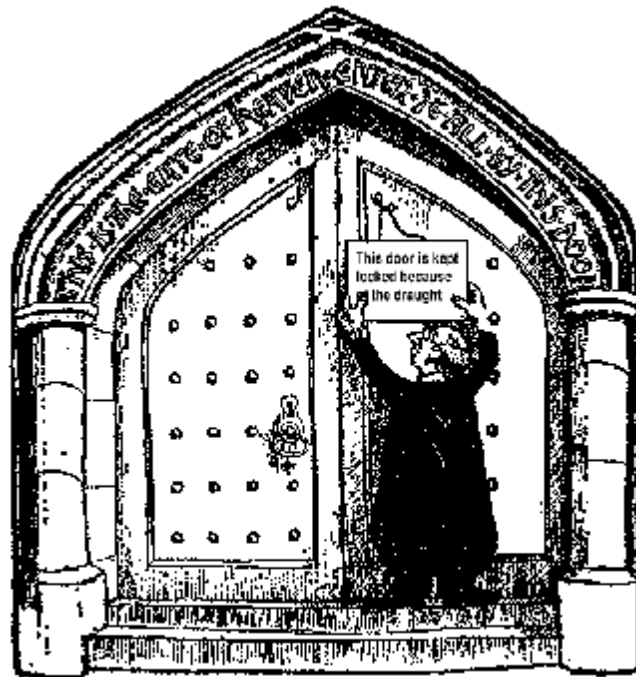
"Only through spiritual transformation do we gain the strength to fight vigorously the evils of the world in a humble and loving spirit."

Martin Luther King, Jr.

"Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning."

Ps 30:5

---oOo---



'THIS IS THE GATE OF HEAVEN: ENTER YE ALL BY THIS DOOR'

This door is kept locked because of the draught

(Notice on a Cumberland Church)

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News from the Kirk Session

At our last Session meeting we had a discussion, prompted by one of the new elders, about the way we conduct our business. There were searching questions, including how we seek God's will when we come to make decisions, how we get to know each other better and how we support each other. One of the issues, which emerged from this discussion, was that we have not been very good at keeping the rest of the congregation informed about our business, so we have decided to start a regular column in the Magazine.



We also thought that it would be interesting to everybody to hear about the work of the Congregational Board, particularly at the moment on the property front. Mike Gordon kindly agreed to cover that and you have the result in this edition. Obviously there are some things that the Session have to deal with which are confidential, but there is a lot else which we can tell you about. So, here are the main things we dealt with at our November meeting:

A Church for All: This is the Church of Scotland's policy for inclusion. It is essentially that the Church is committed to providing the appropriate level of access - physical, intellectual and spiritual - for all people to the services we provide. A copy of the full policy statement will be displayed in the foyer. We discussed what it meant for our church and agreed it was something we must continue to work towards, rather than something we can claim to be fully meeting now.

Evening service: At the last meeting we had begun to think about whether we should make changes to the evening service. We decided not to change it – the format is already flexible and we have been able to try different approaches. One thing we left over for future consideration was whether we should move into the Hall during the winter months. This time round there was a strong feeling amongst elders that moving through to the Hall would be a retrograde step. The light at the front door on a dark winter's evening hopefully encourages visitors to come into what is a warm welcome (particularly now we have our new heating system up and running!).

General Assembly Remits: Every year the Assembly asks Presbyteries and Sessions to consider certain matters. Some of these are instructions; others are just recommendations. We looked at the instructions, which are to do with Child Protection and inclusion, and confirmed that we are complying with these, or will do shortly. We will consider these commendations further at a future meeting.

Linkage with Olig: With the expected retirement of Reverend Jim Todd, Presbytery will set a date for the linkage to take effect. One of the things we have to consider as a result will be the timing of our morning service. We had an initial discussion and will come back to the subject once a date is set. Obviously this is something we will have to agree with the Olig Session.

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Pulpit Supply: After the great success of Doug Anderson's locum appointment we hope we will be able at some stage to find another suitable locum minister. As well as giving our regular preachers a break, Doug brought a welcome continuity to both Sunday services. And of course Beryl fitted in so enthusiastically with the congregation. From our own resources we have been able to cover the morning services without much problem, but the evenings have sometimes been more difficult.

Sound System: A few months back there were some problems with the system and a number of members of the congregation had complained, but we were pleased to note that it had been much improved.

Training for Elders: Presbytery are proposing to hold a training course. These have been very helpful in the past, both for new and experienced elders, so we will support the initiative.

Use of the Church: We approved the use of the church for the British Legion Service, the ACTS Toy Service on 3rd December, the Caithness Orchestra Carol Concert on 17th December and the Women's Institute 90th Anniversary Flower Display in August next year.

I hope you have found this useful, and that it will encourage you to talk to your elder about any issues you think we should be addressing.

Robert Nicol
Session Clerk

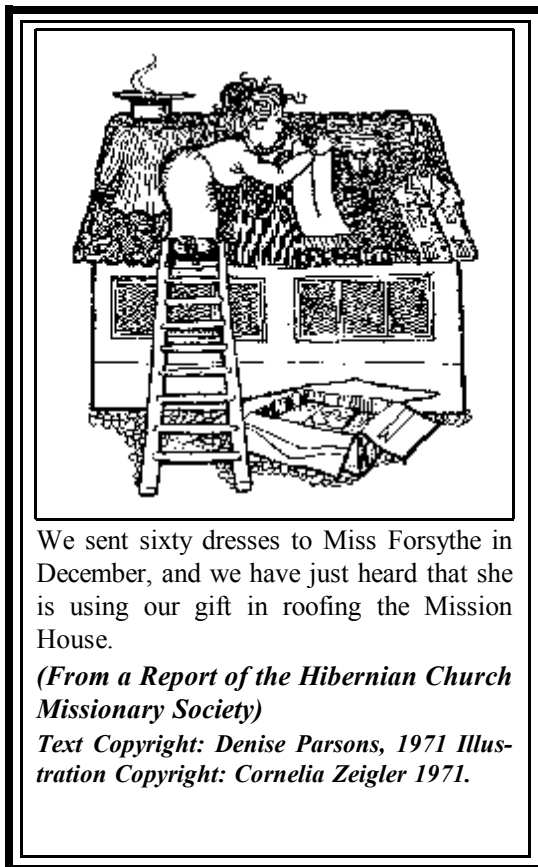
From the Antipodes

James Houston, in his role as Presbytery Clerk, has received an email from Doug and Beryl Anderson in which they send 'warm greetings from not so warm New Zealand!' to 'everyone at St Peter's and St Andrew's, and to all the good folk in the North Coast Parish.'

James has been asked to convey, to the members of Caithness Presbytery, Beryl and Doug's 'sincere thanks for the opportunity and privilege, of serving in not one, but in two parishes in the Presbytery?'

Doug says 'Both parishes were different and so we experienced many new and good things. we learned much, gained new insights, and have a new appreciation of the Church of Scotland, and of Scotland itself.'

It was good to learn that they have arrived safe and well in New Zealand and that they enjoyed their time here as much as we enjoyed having them with us for what was an all too brief stay.



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Property Notes

We realise the importance of living uncluttered lives, holding possessions lightly and recognising that all we have is to be at God's disposal.

(Luk 12:32-34)

We as a committee have been through something of a busy period but, with a lot of hard work from the members we are very close to having a superb manse and a dry, warm church.



The Manse

The new building is to meet the demands of Presbytery that a larger office with a separate entrance be provided for the minister. The extension incorporates that office, which will normally be accessed from Rose Street, but also via a small family room adjacent to the kitchen. Internally the manse has benefited from new electrical wiring, new central heating, new fitted kitchen and new PVCU double glazing to all windows.

It was intended that decoration of the manse – curtains, carpets, wallpaper, etc.- would not be completed but left so that the incoming minister could choose for him/her self. The opportunity to appoint a locum for a short period put paid to that idea and the main rooms had to be fitted out in record time. It also meant the acquisition of some furniture! The hallway, stairs, three bedrooms, a bathroom, toilet, study and the new extension are still to be decorated, curtained and carpeted.

The gardens have been maintained, dare I say improved, mainly thanks to the efforts of its former residents, Donald and Jean Riach. Presbytery insist that the property must be in a “walk in” condition before a minister can be appointed and given the normal notice times we have achieved that goal. All we need now is the minister!

The Church: Central Heating

Although you may not have thought so, we do have a fully functioning central heating system. There **was** an intermittent fault and the controls **do** take a bit of getting used to (come on, be honest! How many of you need help from the children/grandchildren to set the video recorder or turn the computer on?)

The delay in installation was not of the church's making but due to changes in the regulations between the initial quotations and final approval of the scheme. That the gas pipe stopped in the middle of the road rather than at the church itself might sound to be a big problem but was a minor hiccup in the overall scheme! The boilers and controls are located in the left hand cupboard as you come in the front doors. The heating has three zones - upstairs, downstairs and church hall - and the programmer is set to bring the areas up to heat for all known activities in each area. However, there is still a bit of “trial and error” involved in determining how long it needs to be on before the desired temperature is reached and some fine tuning will be required over the coming months.

Decoration

The redecoration of the church was deliberately left until the central heating was installed as we knew that once running there would be an element of drying out leading to some peeling and surface cracking; this is most noticeable at the church hall entrance. Quotations are in the process of being updated and once to hand will be vetted with a view to work starting as soon as possible.

The church buildings are our responsibility as a congregation and if anyone has ideas for improving them please speak to me and I promise you that it will be presented to the Congregational Board for consideration.

Michael Gordon
Property Convenor

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Our Mission Statement



The congregation of St Peter's & St Andrew's has a continuing vision to be a body of believers moving in love and in the power of the Spirit to bring the gospel and presence of Jesus Christ to our community. We have a desire to see the lost saved, the sick healed and the oppressed set free and to be a refuge and place of safety where the broken, the wounded and the hurting can find love, acceptance and care. Above all, it is our wish to see Jesus take his rightful place at the centre of personal, family and community life.

If this vision is to be fully realised, we recognise that we need to be a praying, worshipping, Christ centred church, united by God's love, where people can meet with Jesus and know the life-changing power of that love; a church where services are challenging, joyful and uplifting and where everyone of all ages feels welcome; a church where God's love and forgiveness can be seen in the lives of his people and where the needs of others are more important than our own.

The nominating committee is seeking to call the individual who shares that vision. A Spirit filled pastor who loves the Lord with heart and soul and strength; who will earnestly seek and apply God's will for our congregation; who will preach the word of God in and out of season to the saved and to the lost; who is comfortable with contemporary and traditional worship styles and who will be able to encourage us forward into renewal whilst maintaining unity between members from both traditional and charismatic backgrounds.

Our minister for the last fifteen years built on the Biblical preaching and pastoring of his predecessor (who is still associated with the congregation) and sought throughout his ministry here to bring people to a greater knowledge and understanding of God and his ways. Through his preaching and teaching, believers were encouraged to develop a closer relationship with God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; to ask for and receive the baptism in the Holy Spirit and to move and operate in the gifts of the Spirit.

The fruits of that ministry can be seen in all aspects of the life of the congregation perhaps most visibly in the development of the Sunday evening service, the emergence of the praise group and in the number of members with experience of preaching and conducting worship both in our own church and in churches throughout the county. Others, through following the leading of the Holy Spirit have been called into and encouraged to develop ministries of prayer, prophesy and counselling and a number of members have undertaken (and continue to undertake) formal training in these fields. It is true to say that ours is a congregation that has seen significant changes both in the style and content of its worship over the last fifteen years and as would no doubt be the case in any similar congregation, not all of these changes have been immediately and wholeheartedly welcomed in all quarters.



It is important therefore that our new minister be led by the Spirit in all of his thoughts as regards the future direction of the congregation and be able to show patience, love and compassion to all people whatever their church background or level of spiritual maturity. In drafting this profile, the nominating committee has attempted to the best of their ability to present potential applicants with a full and clear picture of our congregation, where we are and where we hope to be, but of course it is not within the scope of this document, nor is it within the remit of the nominating committee to suggest ways in which all of the stated aims might be achieved.

That said however, it is appropriate to mention that the Kirk Session have recently been discussing the need to review the present arrangements for pastoral care and visitation and has also been considering how we as a congregation might develop and expand our outreach into the community. These are things that we would expect will be addressed whether or not a new minister has been appointed but it would be hoped that our new minister will agree that it is from such basic considerations as these that our overall vision will grow.

In closing, and in case any potential applicant reading this document feels that the Charge is too great for one person to undertake, the committee would like to make it clear that our new minister will find us to be a congregation which believes in the priesthood of all believers and within which he or she will find a significant number willing and able to use their God given gifts and talents to support and share in the ministry of their pastor.

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DREAM DANCER

I used to put people who talked about God speaking to them in dreams in the same category as palm readers. At best, I thought them suspect. At worst, downright spooky. And if I ever got cornered by one at a party or somewhere, I'd gulp down my drink and go darting for the nearest punchbowl. I used to think that way about a person who dreamed. Until that person was my wife.

The dream she had was set in a huge gymnasium. Windows lined the top of the thirty-foot walls, letting in diffused rays of sunlight. She was sitting on the floor with a young man she didn't recognize but somehow felt she knew. The two of them were watching a ballet where hundreds of beautiful dancers in soft gowns were dancing. It was the most wonderful dance she had ever seen. Though her body wasn't moving, everything inside her was caught up in the dance and she felt part of it, one with it, and it filled her senses so fully she felt she would never tire of it.

The young man stood up and walked to the center of the gym. As he did, the ballerinas all bowed before him and floated on their toes to the far walls. Then he made an announcement: "Now I want her to dance."

Judy realized he was talking about her. She got up and walked to where he was standing. Once by his side, she realized she was wearing grubby-looking workout clothes with torn leggings. But her concern was only momentary. When the young man left the center of the floor and sat down to watch, she began to dance. She swung her leg up high, turning her body in the opposite direction as she did, and then danced to the end of the gym. Each time she reached one end, she swung her foot high in the air, pivoted on the other foot, turned and danced to the other end. Then, as quickly as she started dancing, she stopped and sat down beside the young man. He walked to the center of the gym and addressed the ballerinas: "See how beautifully she dances. She has had no training, yet see how she dances. I love her dance."

As little Judy left the gym floor, the ballerinas resumed their places, and the ballet continued. The young man took her aside and showed her a photo album filled with pictures of a beautiful house. The rooms were lavish and the furnishing exquisite. As she marveled over them, he said: "This is my home. I want you to make your home there and dance for me."

When Judy woke from the dream, she couldn't understand it. It was so vivid in her memory, yet so vague in its meaning. She knew God had spoken in the past to people through dreams. Both Old and New Testaments were full of such accounts. But did He still? She didn't know. She got dressed and took the kids to school with little thought of the dream. After she finished her morning routine, though, she was driving home, and the dream came back to her. Vividly came back to her. As she was watching herself dance, her thoughts were interrupted by memories she had long since forgotten. Memories of when she was a young girl.

During her growing-up years when it was her turn to do dishes, Judy would dawdle at the sink. She would dip a dish into the soapy water, blow a bubble, think about something a minute, wash the dish, play with the water, think about something else, rinse the dish. And sometimes this would go on all evening until the dishes were done. But when no one was around, young Judy would leave the dishes and dance back and forth from the kitchen to the living room. Each time she would come to the end of the room, she would swing one foot high in the air, pivot on the other foot, turn, and dance to the other end.

When that memory came back to her, a flood of tears came with it, tears for the little girl who carried so much sadness within her, never letting it come to the surface, never telling anyone her dreams or her heartaches. Then suddenly it dawned on her.

The young man in the dream. It was Jesus. He had been there, watching her dance in that living room during those painful years of growing up. He knew her longing to be a ballerina. He knew she had no training. Knew she had to drop out of college to go to work. Knew the feelings of inadequacy she held so fragilely within her. Feeling that she was nobody special, that her life didn't matter, that other people could teach the Bible but not her, that good things happened to other people but not to her, that other people had interesting lives but not her.

Yet Jesus wanted *her*. Out of all the ballerinas, he picked her to dance for him, picked *her* to come to his house. It didn't make any difference that she didn't have any training or that she didn't have the

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lovely outfits the other ballerinas had. She had the heart of a ballerina. And she loved to dance. Those were the things that mattered.

Judy called me at work to tell me about the dream, not knowing how I would react but needing to tell me because it was such a beautiful dream and had touched her so deeply.

"So," I said, after she finished, "are you saying you want ballet lessons?" "It's not about ballet," she said. "It's His way of telling me that He was there. Back then, when I was younger. He saw me. Nobody else saw me, but He saw me. I think, I don't know, but I think the dream was about Him being pleased with me and about His delight in my worship of Him, and I think He's inviting me into a more intimate relationship with Him."

I tried not to sound skeptical, for even over the phone I could tell how much the dream had meant to her, the emotion in her voice kept breaking the surface. After I hung up, I thought about it a few minutes. It was all so foreign to me. And yet there was no one in the world I respected more than Judy, no one whose heart I trusted more. She was not one to exaggerate or one who was prone to extremes. And she was not emotional. Yet she couldn't talk about the dream without tears.

I remember praying before I left work for God to help me understand. If indeed this was His voice, I didn't want to squelch it. If it wasn't, I didn't want to encourage it. I was driving home with these thoughts when I stopped at a Salvation Army Thrift Store, where I usually stopped once or twice a week, looking for used books. As I looked, my eye caught the spine of a slender book, titled, "*A Dream So Real*." I remember thinking, *Odd coincidence*. I pulled the book off the shelf, and it fell open to a picture of a little girl on one page and a poem on the other. The little girl had her leg raised, as if trying to dance. And the poem? "Dream Dancer."

Was this the answer? So soon? Was God meeting me in a thrift store and telling me, "yes, it's true, yes, it was me, it was my voice?" I bought the book and brought it home, told Judy what I had prayed when I got off the phone, and I read her the poem. Again, she wept. Especially at the stanza which read:

Step then
from the staid and somber line.
Move out in dancing
into dreams so daring;
without them you will settle for the road
that wanders by and winds to nowhere.

For three days Judy cried, the emotions at times seeping to the surface, at other times surging with irrepressible force. After those three days, the tears were gone. And miraculously, so were the hurts from her past. Just like that. And they haven't come back.

Do you see what God was doing? He paged through my wife's dog-eared dictionary of childhood memories, picked out an image that was dear to her, and one night bent down and whispered it in her ear. That image touched her in places where words alone couldn't reach. And with that touch, brought healing. Look deeper into that picture. Do you see the window?

Do you see the ways of God revealed in the way He speaks? He didn't require Judy to go to seminary and learn Hebrew, the language through which He first spoke to His people. Instead, He learned hers. He learned the language of her heart, which He had been studying since she was a girl. And it's a different language than He uses when speaking to you and to me. Can you see how incredible that is?"

Ken Gire, "Windows of the Soul" Grand Rapids: Zondervan 1996 Pages 151-155

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Walk In His Footsteps

"Walk before me and be blameless"

(Gen 17:1)

This is what the Lord says: "Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.

Jer 6:16



"There is not enough darkness in all the world to put out the light of one small candle."

"Set up road signs, put up guideposts, Take note of the highway, the road that you take"

Jer 31:21



"Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying "This is the way; walk in it"

Isa 30:21

"Jesus himself came up and walked with them "

(Luk 24:15)

"When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Jhn 8:12



"And this is love: that we walk in his commands."

2 Jhn 6

Look Up At The Light

She got in the elevator at the fifteenth floor of the big hotel and the eight of us who were already in shuffled back to make more room.

She was pretty and dressed in black that seemed to add to a touch of grief that lay in her eyes. Along with her, in a little blue coat and a cute little face, came a bit of a girl of about four years. We made more room, for little girls who are not very tall must have more room than grown-ups.

And so we stood as the door clanged shut and we started down. Just as we did there came an 'Oh' in a frightened tone from the little girl, and she hid her face in her mother's skirt.

Her mother looked down and said to her-'You mustn't be frightened. Just open your eyes and look up at the light.'

And so she did. And all the way down she kept her eyes on the blow-like globe with a clear white light. And reaching the lobby we all of us stood with hat in hand while mother and child went on their way.

I don't know, but I imagine that most of us remember the words- **YOU MUSTN'T BE FRIGHTENED. JUST OPEN YOUR EYES AND LOOK UP AT THE LIGHT.**

John S. Matthew
"The Quiet Corner"
C. St. Andrew's Press

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The Guild News: Winter 2006

Our meetings so far has been very interesting, beginning with Beryl Anderson speaking of he different avenues of service her and Doug had been used in over the years. We realised that she had been a very busy person who loved the Lord and did so by helping people.

Keeping within Guild theme, the subjects of the next two meetings were "Line Dancing," and "Healthy Eating" , both were enlightening.

Following on we had a visit from The Baptist ladies from Wick, a very spiritual time of music, testimony and drama, led by Mrs Isobel Cameron. We were saddened to hear that their Guild was not active at present due to low numbers and age and ill health, but we were so pleased that they honoured our invitation and managed to get a group of ladies together.

By the time you receive this Ruby Brock will have shared with us something from her trip to Albania.

We will have a "Scots Night" when we will have invited guilds with us and the Occasionals will be with us for Christmas Praise.

The United Guild Dinner is on Monday 4 December.

Malawi: Jumpers are still needed for this. We sent about one hundred garments to Aberdeen in the last twelve months. Please help us again with your knitting through the winter months.

If you cannot knit but would like to make a donation towards the hospital where AIDS children are treated, please put this in the collection plate, in an envelope marked "AIDS Malawi", and this can be forwarded on. Guild Week.

Coffee mornings: Our guilds raised £200 for this and we thank all who helped in any way.

There will be a United Coffee Morning in British Legion 17 November. Three people are needed from our Guild. Donations for the sales table will be appreciated.

The Festive season is almost upon us and we in the Guild would like to wish the congregation and their families much joy and peace at this special time.

Many Thanks

Mary Chalmers
Contact person
Tel 01847 892883



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Remembering

The Moderator of the General Assembly, the Right Rev Alan McDonald, has made the followings remarks on the occasion of Remembrance Sunday (12 November 2006).

"Those who served this country in the First World War did so believing they were fighting in the war to end all wars. When the guns eventually fell silent, at the eleventh hour, of the eleventh day, in the eleventh month, surely no one could have imagined the carnage that would follow through the remainder of the twentieth century, and into the beginning of a new century, and new millennium.

"This Remembrance Day, there is once again an acute awareness of the cost of war because of the present international uncertainty, and in particular, because of the current conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan.

"As we seek to honour the memory of all those who have died since that first quiet in 1918, we are offered precious gifts of silence, poppies, and the time for reflection. As we remember them, and as we think of those who face danger or death on our behalf today, we may recall the gifts that last forever - faith, hope and love, and the greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13: 13)



Definitions

church (**church**) n. building for Christian worship; collective body of Christians; a denomination or sect of the Christian religion; the clergy; the church service [O.E. circe, fr. Gr kurakion, belonging to the Lord].

Collins Dictionary Copyright 1968.

news letter , a small printed sheet issued at irregular intervals during the 17th cent. giving news and gossip of the coffee-houses; a modern revival claiming to give exclusive news.

Collins Dictionary Copyright 1968.

edit , to compile, garble or cook up materials into literary shape

Chambers Twentieth Century Dictionary 1902, (Edited by Rev. Thomas Davidson)

Edited by Iain MacKillop for the members and friends of Saint Peter's and Saint Andrew's Church Thurso. Many thanks to all who contributed. Contributions not used may be used in later issues. Printed by St. Peter's and St. Andrew's Church.