

FROM THE MINISTER

February 2010

Dear Friends,

Christian Faith - a Celebration!

Christmas is well behind us now, yet the glow of its celebration in Maxwelltown West remains. The piles of gifts for the Homeless brought to the service on 13th December have made a real difference to the lives of many in our community for whom Christmas was without the warmth and the joy that we take for granted. Thanks to Rachel and her team of helpers (and despite atrocious weather conditions), we had a super Family Nativity Service on 20th December. The Christmas Eve service saw, literally, hundreds of visitors join us to sing our favourite carols; while a much bigger than usual attendance on Christmas Day, including many of our young folk home for the holidays or visiting with their little ones, was a special joy.

Outside, for the first time, we had a Christmas tree whose twinkling lights sent a greeting to all who passed by; while one of our church families decorated the tree in the west transept. On Sunday 27th, we rounded off the Christmas celebration by sharing the Sacrament of Holy Communion together. To all who helped in so many ways with these events, many thanks.

Everyone celebrates Christmas ... but within the Church, we are not simply celebrating a season; we are celebrating our faith in Jesus Christ, God's precious gift to us. The celebration goes on throughout the year, in our weekly worship and, hopefully, in our daily lives also.

As a congregation, we are at our best when thinking of others, or helping others. The response to Souper Sunday, the Haiti Disaster Appeal, the Christmas Offering of £990 divided between the Bondo Project and CLIC Sargent, and the contribution of many to the Christian Aid Lent Lunches, are all examples of the generosity of Max West members. The Planning Group for the Stewardship Project have chosen the title "A Celebration of Giving" - because committed giving is part of our celebration of the faith.

As a long, cold winter moves toward spring, the Celebration continues. During Lent we celebrate more quietly, as we remember our Lord's suffering, leading to his death on the cross; and in April we celebrate joyfully as Easter dawns.

Our church and congregation exist in order to celebrate the Lord Jesus Christ. It is my joy and privilege to lead our celebration Sunday by Sunday; it is, I trust, a joy for all of us to celebrate our faith all the year round.

Yours sincerely,

GORDON M.A. SAVAGE

Congregational Office Bearers

SESSION CLERK: Mr Tom Bryden
CLERK TO DEACONS' COURT: Mrs Eileen Riddick
ORGANIST: Mr Stephen Crosbie
TREASURER: Mr David McNay
CHURCH OFFICER: Mr Robert Wilson
FABRIC CONVENER: Mr Bill Riddick
EDITOR OF 'CONTACT': Dr Sandy Christie

Special Notice

Communion Arrangements for next Quarter

Because of the Stewardship Programme which will be culminating in Congregational Gatherings in June, and the involvement of a number of elders in the programme, the Kirk Session have decided to change the Communion arrangements as follows:

There will be no Communion Services in June 2010

The Family Communion will take place, as usual, on the second Sunday of May (9th May) at 11.00 a.m. and there will be an Afternoon Communion Service (3.00 pm) in the hall, also on 9th May.

Communion Services on 9th May : 11.00 and 3.00

Cards will not be issued for this Communion.

Arrangements will be made for the distribution of 'Contact' at the usual time, i.e. late May / early June.

NEW DEACONS

At the Annual Meeting for election of Deacons, held in the church on 22nd November, Elizabeth Crossan, Mary Darroch, Sheena Forsyth, Isobel Scott and Joan Wood were elected to serve on the Deacons' Court for three years commencing on 1st January 2010.

COURSE FOR NEW MEMBERS

A Course for those interested in finding out more about Church Membership will be held over the spring and summer period. An initial meeting will take place on Sunday 18th April at 7.00 pm in the Committee Room (enter by Rosemount Street). Anyone aged 15 or over will be welcome.

KIRK SESSION and DEACONS' COURT MEETINGS

(Provisional dates)

Kirk Session

Tuesday 16th March
Thursday 22nd April
Tuesday 22nd June
Wednesday 15th September
Tuesday 9th November

Deacons' Court

Thursday 22nd April
Tuesday 22nd June
Thursday 23rd September
Tuesday 23rd November

Editorial

Choosing a topic for an editorial can sometimes be difficult. This time, however, Muriel Donkersley's article presents the obvious answer - young people. How often do we adopt double standards concerning the young? It is easy and convenient to forget our own attitudes of half a century or more ago. Were we any more thoughtful or considerate? You may prefer to pass over that question and move on.

Times have certainly changed. Many of us remember the War years, if only as a child. The discipline and threats of that period are in stark contrast with what today's youngsters face. That was our gold standard - do we appreciate theirs? Perhaps they are still struggling to find one. The Church and all it represents may be a complete unknown to many of them.

We should be proud of our own youngsters. Most of us can recall some aspects of the training and subsequent careers of those who have passed through Y-Max. It was quite inspiring recently when three more went off to University - an event which encourages us to recall their predecessors. Few will return to develop careers in Dumfries but perhaps they will take a little bit of Max. West with them wherever they go.

Some may have noted Scott Carroll's absence from our midst in recent months. His article in this issue will fill in a few blanks. Who said older members lack a sense of adventure? I should also like to draw attention to the letter about Scout leadership. The situation is clearly urgent. Can anyone help?

Sandy Christie

Kirk Session

The Session met on 10th November. Among topics discussed were the success of the Maxwelltown West Christmas Card, of which more than 1600 had been purchased, and plans to sing carols at Lochduhar Nursing Home instead of at Tesco as in previous years. Reports were received from the World Church Team, including progress on the proposed twinning with Mathia, and Dumfries Christian Council, whose plans for a Dumfries Churches Website were progressing well.

Possibly of greatest import was the report by Patricia Jardine on behalf of the Stewardship Planning Group. The Group was meeting regularly, sometimes accompanied by Edith Scott, Church of Scotland Stewardship Consultant, to plan the Congregational Gatherings in June. It was acknowledged that the timing of the Gatherings would have an impact on both the distribution of Communion cards and Communion Services that month - *see p.2*.

The Session met again on the 14th January, just after "Souper Sunday" (January 10th) when the service had been conducted by elders. Many in the congregation had commented positively on the service and on the bread & soup lunch which followed. Thanks were expressed to all concerned. The retiring offering for the Church of Scotland HIV / AIDS Project amounted to £448.

While it was noted that 5 new Deacons had been appointed in November, the need to increase the number of Elders was also noted. Steps will be taken to carry this process forward.

A letter had been received from Mathia expressing grateful thanks for this year's Bursary amounting to £1,000, which had been shared among 9 students.

The traditional attestation of the Church records took place at this meeting. In addition a number of statistics were reported. In the course of 2009 eight members were added to the roll while nineteen were removed by death and one by disjunction. At 31st December 2009 we had 655 members.

Tom Bryden and Sandy Christie

Deacons' Court

The Deacons' Court met on 24th November when 32 members were present. The Treasurer reported that income was falling well short of expenditure and this would be highlighted in the annual Statement of Accounts. Gift Aid Tax refunds continued to offset some of our costs but with increased charges for Heating and Lighting and a rise in our Ministries & Mission allocation we would be looking at ways of minimizing outgoings and maximizing income in the future.

Dependent on Kirk Session approval the Deacons' Court gave the go-ahead for details of the activities of Maxwelltown West to be included in the Dumfries Christian

Council website. The Presbytery of Dumfries and Kirkcudbright had written to each congregation on the subject of Climate Change. All congregations had been asked to measure their carbon footprint and actively consider how energy bills might be reduced by 5% per annum and to take action on this. David McNay, Treasurer, presented the figures for fuel costs and agreed to monitor this. A new Church Handbook would be printed soon as the information contained in the present one was now out of date. The Fabric Box Count had raised £980.99.

Eileen Riddick

A Tribute to our Young People

This article was too late for the December issue of 'Contact' but it is never too late to say "thank you". So a big thank you to the leaders of the uniformed organisations and their charges for the time and effort put into the training for the Remembrance Day service. It was a truly disciplined performance in every respect.

I should also like to congratulate the young people on their bearing throughout the proceedings. It displayed a true reverence for the occasion. As adults we frequently criticise young people's behaviour - with or without just cause - but I do believe praise should be given where it is due. So, well done and thank you, boys and girls. Keep up the good work!

Muriel Donkersley

Jungle Jamboree

This year's Easter Holiday Club, "Jungle Jamboree", will run from 5th-9th April. All children of primary school age will be welcome, as of course will be our team of adult helpers. Even if you can only do a couple of days, we'd like to have your help! Please sign up on the notice in the Simmons Hall.

'The Celebration of Giving'

In the last newsletter our Minister outlined the Stewardship programme being undertaken by the Kirk Session. As joint Convener with Patricia Jardine, we have the task of taking this programme forward and I am happy to report that the planning group is well on its way to achieving this.

We have named the event 'The Celebration of Giving' and there will be three dates for your diary: 9th & 10th June in the evening and 13th June in the afternoon. You will receive a personal invitation to attend on one of these dates and I can promise you it will be a worthwhile event. Although essentially the 'Celebration of Giving' is to raise awareness of Stewardship, it is also an opportunity for us to showcase the whole of our wonderful church here at Maxwelltown West. Our theme is Giving, and yes, 'Your Contribution Matters' and through this we will 'Build our Future Together'.

Val Coltart

"What's Going On?"

Sandy Geddes envisages a question asked by one man in the Gospels ...

Life can be puzzling. As it must have been to Simon of Cyrene, forced at Roman sword-point to carry Jesus' cross on the road to Calvary. Although brief (one verse, Mark 15.21), it's one of my favourite Gospel passages, because it suggests, just as we need Jesus to help through puzzling times in our lives, so he may need us ~ as he needed Simon ~ to share the burden of his cross with the world he came to save. In a world of hugely puzzling problems, Jesus needs us to be at his side on life's road, to help to carry into our own little world the sign of His crucified love, just as Simon did.

Years ago, chairing a Ministers' In-service Course, I joined in a literary exercise by writing this wee poem on what the thoughts of Simon of Cyrene might have been.

"WHAT'S GOING ON?"

The crowd press in, people pushing, straining, on tip-toe to see ...

"WHY NOT ME?"

"WHAT'S GOING ON?"

The authoritative voice, the clank of sword, the finger prodding, "You" ...

"ME? WHY ME?"

"WHAT'S GOING ON?"

The weight of wood, the aching back; folk laughing, at me! But this other man ...

"WHY HIM?"

"WHAT'S GOING ON?"

A look, a glance, the meeting of our eyes, a smile, a word, the beginning of understanding ...

"NOT ME, NOT HIM, US"

MUSINGS FROM AN ISLAY MANSE

In October I embarked on a journey with my dog and a car full of luggage. We were going to provide cover in the linked parishes of Kilchoman, Kilmeny and Portnahaven on Islay which cover the north half of the island.

It was the second time that I had been made aware of the Parish. Three years before I had seen a post as Reader Assistant advertised but I was caring for my wife at that time and her care needs could not have been properly dealt with on the island and I had to forego the chance. This time I no longer had these responsibilities, and on hearing that the minister was leaving at the end of September I was persuaded to take the post until the end of the year at which point both parties could consider their options. I would take two services a week and deal with such parish duties as came up. It was an immediate immersion into a very different community.

The first difference I noticed was having to stop the car to let cattle cross the road from the beach to the field where they usually grazed: welcome to Islay! I also noticed that the drivers of most of the cars that I passed waved to me, and there was nothing wrong with the car. Confusing ... but the Session Clerk explained that people just did this - if they don't wave they are tourists!

Another difference was with funerals. I was phoned by the local undertakers and advised of a funeral later in the week at Kilmeny. After a short discussion I was told that they would have to educate me into "Island ways" as they did with every new minister. The remains are received into the Church on the evening before a funeral to allow viewing by relatives and friends. The funeral took place and the hearse took the coffin to the graveyard followed by the minister and mourners on foot. Invariably the cemetery is at least a mile from the Kirk and in Kilmeny's case it was through a woodland track, so to maintain dignity I changed from shoes into hiking boots. In Portnahaven I was told that local families hold to a tradition of serving oatcakes and cheese with a dram of whisky as the mourners in earlier times had to carry the coffin two miles. I am sure such a practice could increase numbers attending funerals in Dumfries! The "trial period" went well with some excellent services over the Christmas period, the outcome being that I was offered and accepted an official "Locum" appointment from the 11th January for the length of the vacancy.

I was back in Dumfries over New Year and it was good to meet up with friends in Maxwelltown West, where I hasten to add I am still a member and an elder.

I am sure that you can gather that I am enjoying my time here. My "acceptance" was complete when, at a Watchnight service, I asked a Guild member to pass me the milk for my tea. Her reply was wonderful: "Get it yourself, you are family" - acceptance indeed! I honestly believe somehow I have been led into this situation and all I can do is follow as well as I can. I will be back in Dumfries during the summer. Meantime I send my best wishes and those of my parishioners and ask you to pray that this vacancy may be resolved soon.

Scott Carroll

----- Reports from Organisations -----

The Guild

The Guild has managed to hold every meeting this year although snow and ice has been a challenge for some.

'NHS 24' was the subject of a very interesting talk of by Avril Brown who surprised us with the amount of calls and varying advice they are called upon to give to callers. "Birds of Prey from Arctic Norway", although a subject appropriate to the weather, sadly had to be cancelled due to the speaker having burst pipes in his home. However, every cloud has a silver lining as our secretary Eileen Riddick arrived beautifully dressed with a fabulous hat and armed with photographs and fascinating stories of her visit to "The Palace" to receive her MBE from the Queen.

Our Mini Burns Supper in February was led by three past presidents from various Burns Clubs as well as other well known people who entertained us with recitations and songs. A great evening was enjoyed by our members. March will bring a speaker for our project (2nd); The Presbyterial Council Spring Rally (10th); and "Life Through the Manse Window" (no; the lady is from Kirkcudbright!) along with our AGM. on the 23rd.

This summer we look forward to another outing, venue still to be decided, as well as the "Songs of Praise" on 3rd June at Thornhill Church. All are welcome so I look forward to seeing you then.

Anne Dunbar.

After Eights

The sugar craft workshop in November was great fun. With the expert guidance of Margaret Thomson we all made a miniature seated snowman, complete with arms, legs, eyes, nose, scarf, hat, mitts and a pile of snowballs at his side. Everyone enjoyed the attempt at this new skill and each snowman showed the unique style of its maker when they were all complete.

We had an excellent Christmas dinner at the Aberdour Hotel at the beginning of December which put everyone in a festive mood.

In January David Lockwood, curator of Dumfries Museum, gave a fascinating and informative talk and power point presentation on the life of John Paul Jones, the famous 18th century sailor who was born at Kirkbean and ended up commanding ships for the American Navy. We are looking forward to being entertained by the Dumfries Historical Dancers in February.

Jane Marchbank

Brownies

In November we held a Homecoming themes sleepover with lots of Scottish themed activities. We enjoyed our visit to see Sleeping Beauty at the Theatre Royal and held an Abba themed dressing up evening before the Christmas holidays.

Since the new year the Brownies have been working on our Adventure 100 challenges for our centenary year. We have completed our "flashback" and "what a

performance" challenges so far. We are now preparing for Thinking Day when we shall be involved in special celebrations for the centenary of Guiding.

Please get in touch if you would like any information about our Brownie Pack or Girl Guiding.

Jill McEwan, Brownie Leader

Cub Report

We are currently working with 14 Cubs and have recently welcomed a Beaver, who will be invested in the next few weeks.

13 Cubs passed the Scientist badge before Christmas, and between now and the summer the Cubs will be working towards the Chef's badge and a new Scottish Cub Challenge Badge, which Scottish headquarters launched towards the end of last year. The Cubs have to complete 10 activities based around Scotland or on a Scottish theme. So far we have found out about St Andrew, the patron Saint of Scotland, and the Cubs have designed their own Coat of Arms. They have made Scotch broth and tasted different food and drink from around Scotland (we used Irn Bru instead of whisky). Some of the other activities we are hoping to do include: - walk the equivalent of Mount Everest, learn a simple Gaelic phrase, and take part in some Scottish sports.

For the Chef's badge we will be learning about healthy diets, different food methods and making other food dishes.

Gillian Little, Akela

28th Maxwelltown West Scout Group

This letter to parents from Kenny Eggo, Chairman, 28th Maxwelltown West Scout Group, is reproduced for the benefit of 'Contact' readers

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Our Cubs and Scouts Need You

The Cubs and Scouts at Maxwelltown West in Dumfries are in urgent need of new leaders. After many years of service Cub leader Gillian Little and Scout Leader Hamish McDonald are stepping down to pursue new interests.

Cubs and Scouts take part in lots of activities like to pursue adventure try new things, play games and have lots of fun. Currently, there are 14 Cubs and 14 Scouts at Max West. And sadly} unless new leaders can be found soon} the Cub pack and Scout troop are in serious danger of having to shut down.

Cub leaders and Scout leaders can be female or male. They need to be outgoing, creative, fun, energetic, and be able to relate to enthusiastic boys aged from eight to teenage. If you are interested in training as a Cub leader or Scout leader or think that you can help, either drop into the Max West hall on Rosemount Street in Dumfries one Monday evening, between 6.30 pm and 9.15 pm, or phone on 07974 757 713.

Thank you for your interest and help.

Yours faithfully,
Kenny Eggo

WM 33

Anne Dunbar has kindly made available to us the World Mission newsletter of the above name. It makes interesting reading with skilful interplay between two important issues - Fair Trade and Global Warming.

Along with the above is a booklet entitled "Church Action Guide" which talks of successes arising from Fair Trade. Reference is made to "Fair Trade Fortnight" which this year runs from 22nd February to 7th March. It appears that we are among 6,000 Churches in the UK which are recognised as Fair Trade Churches.

If you would like further information on these encouraging subjects please contact Anne Dunbar.

Book Review

"The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith" by Timothy Keller

The twenty-one verses in Luke 15 that make up what we call the parable of the "lost son" begins in verse 3 with, "There was a man who had two sons", and it is the second or elder son who is emphasised as the subject of this study. Verse 1 describes the audience as being representative of both the sinners and the righteous of the day and Jesus ministers to both in so very few words.

The parable is very familiar to us as the story of a younger son who takes his inheritance early, squanders it on loose living and, realising his wrongdoing, returns with a repentant heart to his father who is joyous in his forgiveness. It is easy for us to make parallels between the father in the parable and our understanding of the heavenly Father's gracious forgiveness of those who ostentatiously wander from Him and of His joy in their repentance and restoration.

The elder son watches the return of the younger with a growing grievance. He protests at his father's generosity, he fails to understand his father's celebration, and will not go in to participate in the feast. The generous and loving father goes out to his elder son in the same way as he had run to the younger and pleads with him to come in. Verse 32 does not answer whether the self-righteous son acted on his father's pleadings and thereby we are left with a cliff-hanging ending.

Keller challenges us to evaluate our status as a younger son manifestly intent on defying God, or as an elder son who has been brought up in the Christian faith but does not yet understand the mind of the Father. Both, Keller argues, are rejecting of God in different ways. In the current time in our history of declining mainstream belief, those of us in the church need to seek the mind of the Father, to go out as the father in the parable did to welcome those who have not come to faith, and to be prepared to minister to both the elder and younger brother attitudes in our midst.

Recommended reading! [Available from Kings Bookshop]

John Sturgeon

Presbytery Notes

There are currently seven vacant charges in the Presbytery of Dumfries & Kirkcudbright: Auchencairn & Rerrick with Buittle & Kelton; Caerlaverock with Dumfries St. Mary's-Greyfriars; Durisdeer with Penpont with Thornhill; Irongray, Lochrutton & Terregles; Kirkmichael, Tinwald & Torthorwald; Lochend & New Abbey; Ruthwell, Cummertrees and Mouswald. Three of these are currently searching for a minister, while the others are 'on hold' pending discussion about their future.

The Presbytery Commission, set up in 2007 to consider long-term future planning, reported in February this year. Their report, entitled 'Mapping the Future', envisaged rural congregations being grouped around a 'focus church' for each area. The focus church would be well resourced and the congregations within each grouping would get to know each other, so that in the event of a church having to close, they would have an alternative ready-made 'home'. In addition, the Commission recommended that "all congregations develop an imaginative vision for the use of their current buildings." The Presbytery approved the Report and instructed all Kirk Sessions and Financial Boards to prepare a statement of their vision for the use of church buildings, and agreed to set up an Implementation Team to visit congregations, and to work on the development of the various groupings and focus churches.

Mr Craig McEwen, a member of Dumfries: North West, has been appointed Parish Assistant in that charge ... a full-time post working with the Rev. Neil Campbell.

Plans were approved for a Pentecost Event to take place in Dumfries on Sunday 23rd May, and for a General Election 'Hustings' event at which all the local candidates would be brought together in a local church for a time of questions.

G.M.A.S.

	Church Flowers	Memorial Flowers
4th April	Mrs H Campbell	Mrs O Geddes
11th	Mrs J Grant	Mrs M Allison
18th	Mrs M Boyd	Mrs M Savage
25th	Mrs S Muir	Mrs P Williams
2nd May	Miss D Hill	Mrs A Milligan
9th	Mrs J Sloan	Mrs Forsyth & Mrs Scott
16th	Mrs Pearson	Mrs J McEwan
23rd	Mrs K Brown	Mrs Edgar
30th	Wedding Flowers	Wedding Flowers
6th June	Mrs Donkersley	Mrs Sommerville
13th	Wedding Flowers	Wedding Flowers
20th	Miss Biggar	Mrs D McWhirter
27th	Mrs M Wallace	Mrs Adamson

The Church is open for flower arranging each Saturday from 10am to 11am. If you would like to take a date please contact Anne Dunbar.

