



November 2008

HISTORIC DECISION BY THE KIRK SESSION

On Sunday 26th October 2008, the Kirk Session agreed to the signing of a contract which will result in very significant refurbishment and extension of our premises.

By the time you read this we will be agreeing a contract with a builder and, soon thereafter, we will begin the process of moving out of our premises to worship in Arbroath Academy.

Planning permission was granted some time ago, but the final pieces of the jigsaw fell into place only very recently with the receipt of the Building Warrant and the ap-

proval of a loan from the Church of Scotland Trustees.

We believe that the changes to be seen on our return will be quite superb, and will go well beyond whatever we

have been able to appreciate from the descriptions and plans.

It will be exciting times, indeed, when we return to premises which will not only be enjoyed by ourselves, but will give us the impetus to reach out even more into our local and world-wide communities, to spread the love which comes from knowing the Lord who has so richly blessed us in our endeavours.



For some eight or nine years now, we have been offering a midweek service – 10.30am on Wednesdays. From small beginnings (nine attended the first one) this service has grown and grown to the point that forty to fifty in attendance is the norm. The service lasts for about forty minutes and includes songs and prayers with a short message.

This year, these messages are featuring lesser known characters from the Bible...and we are doing it by the alphabet. So, for instance, we started with Achan, from the book of Joshua, moved through B, C, D etc. till, most recently, dealing with Lydia (Acts 16) under the letter L.

We have discovered that

there is something to learn from all of these characters and that though their lives were worlds apart from ours, still we can see the connections. The

Wednesday Midweek Meeting Point



Wednesday congregation has had great fun trying to guess which character – from which letter of the alphabet – it is going to be each week!

The Wednesday congregation enjoys tea and coffee right after the worship and that nearly all of them stay for the refreshments is testimony to the fact they really enjoy being together. With the service lasting just forty minutes, the Midweek Meeting is ideal for those who struggle to sit through the length of the Sunday service.

So, perhaps you are finding it difficult to get along on Sunday mornings, for any kind of reason. Perhaps the Wednesday service is the one for you. Why not give it a try!

CONTACTS**MINISTER**

Rev Dr W Martin Fair, BA, BD
873238

ASSISTANT MINISTER

Ruth Bell : 07939 543467

MINISTER EMERITUS

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Jane Miller : 875235

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SUNDAY CLUB

Elaine Fair : 873238

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Ruth Spink : 874690

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Judy Spink : 872395

Lesley Bailey : 436751

SUPPLIES CO-ORDINATOR

Norma Beattie : 873442

CHURCH OFFICE : 431135

Monday to Friday : 9 am to noon and for 15 minutes after Sunday service

ADMINISTRATOR and BOOKINGS / ROLLKEEPER

Alison Davie : 431135

MAGAZINE EDITOR/CDs

Ken Miller : 875235

ST ANDREW'S ARBROATH**REGISTER OF MEMBERS**

October 2008

Baptisms - None

Weddings - None

Funerals - Joan Cargill

DEADLINE DATES FOR DIARIES**NOVEMBER EDITION**

Please note that DEADLINE dates must mean exactly that, with all articles and pictures submitted beforehand, or on those dates.

Friday 21st November (Written/preferably typed)

Tuesday 25th November (Word-Processed file)

As Decanting Approaches!

The venues for organisations listed below will be/are as follows:

Youth Group – Guide Hall, Ogilvy Place (at the moment still in Church)
Havilah – Café Project
Dorothy Dobson – West Kirk
Guild – OBs
Flower Club – OBs (in Church at the moment)
Midweek Meeting – Old & Abbey Church
Wednesday monthly gathering – Windmill Chris-

tian Centre
Parent & Toddlers – Old & Abbey Church
Friends Club – Green Street Hall
BB – Sea Cadet Hall
Coffee Morning – Old & Abbey Church
Guides - New Life Centre
Brownies - United Free Church
Rainbows - Guide Hall

SOMETHING FOR EVERYONE**SUNDAY**

10.15 am – Gathering for prayer in the McLeod room.

10.30 am – Choir practice in new hall.

11.00 am – Morning service (with short communion on the third Sunday of each month. Tea/coffee after.

Creche – up to age 3

Infants – ages 3 to 5

Juniors – ages 8 and 9

Seniors – ages 10 and 11

Sunday Club – Elaine Fair (873238)

Teen Scene – S1 to S2

6.30 to 8.00 pm – Sunday evening ICE-BREAKERS – up to age 16

8.00 pm – Sunday evening Youth Group – age 16 plus

MONDAY

11.00 am – Havilah – Drop-in Centre – Church Office (431135)

2.00 pm – Dorothy Dobson Over 50s Exercise Class

6.00 pm – Rainbow Guides – L Hadden (875379)

7.30 pm – St Andrew's Guild : Fortnightly – Joyce Lownie (430053)

7.30 pm – Flower Club : Fortnightly – R Spink (874690)

WEDNESDAY

10.30 am – Midweek Meeting Point – M Fair (873238)

11.00 am – Havilah – Drop-in Centre – Church Office (431135)

5.45 pm – Brownies – Morag Scorgie (01674 820721)

7.15 pm – Guides

7.30 pm – Women's Group – first Wednesdays – Elaine Fair (873238)

THURSDAY

10.00 am – Parent and Toddler Group – Joan Archer (876522)

2.00 pm – Friend's Club : first Thursdays – L Smith – B Gerrard, secretary (434821)

6.00 pm – Anchor Boys – S Jamieson (431942)

6.00 pm – BB Junior Section – W Ewart (876114)

7.30 pm – BB Company Section – M Clark (437758)

FRIDAY

9.30 am – Coffee morning, main hall

11.00 am – Havilah – Drop-in Centre – Church Office (431135)

During the refurbishment please contact the church office for information on alternative venues. Intimations, changes of address, hall bookings etc., please contact Alison Davie at the Church office, Monday to Friday, 9 am to noon and for 15 minutes after Sunday Service, telephone 431135.

Printing, tickets, syllabi, etc – W Marshall (873376).

Please call 875235 in the event of corrections or omissions, and an updated sheet will be produced.

Martin Fair



November 2008

Dear Friends,

Well, after what has been something of a marathon, we're almost there – at the point of *going for it!* Yes, the final pieces of the jigsaw are now being put in place which will allow us to make a start on the long-awaited Refurbishment of our buildings. As we look back, we see that we're quite a few months later in reaching this point than we had first envisaged. Why? Quite simply, none of us had ever taken on anything as complex as this before and, almost inevitably, there were various unforeseens which caused delays along the way.

Even so, I for one am not in the slightest bit bothered about this later-than-planned start. The important thing is that it's going to happen. We are quite sure that this project is a crucial part of our positioning ourselves as a congregation for the challenges that will face us in ministry and mission through this new era – and, most important, we remain sure that we are acting out of obedience to God's prompting and that in the end what we are doing will be to His greater glory. That's what matters!

That we have got this far at all is in no small part due to the huge efforts of several people, who have given tirelessly of themselves – their time and their talent – to bring our vision to reality. It's difficult to name everyone but Ken Miller, for his work with the Design Team, and Bobby Craig and the Fabric Group for their work in preparing for the *flittin'*, have been inspirational. We record our grateful thanks to them for getting us to this point and look forward as they, and the others who are directly involved, steer things forward from here.

For myself, to be honest, I have found the whole business to have been somewhat draining. I have no regrets that we're going in this direction – as I've said above, through much prayer and planning, we have a real sense that we're doing the right thing. That it's been draining is simply because of the great sense of responsibility that I've felt. There's been tremendous support from all quarters and, again, as mentioned above, great efforts from those involved. Even so, as minister, there is always the sense that it eventually works its way back to you!

So, yes, it has been a *big ask* for many of us. Therefore, for my part, I would like to thank all those of you who have personally supported me through this endeavour, who have regularly enquired as to my well-being etc., and who have stood shoulder to shoulder with me, making it clear in the process that all of this is very much a team game and not something that we have to do on our own.

From time to time, I have speaking engagements around the country. In my introductions, I always say something to the effect that *my people* – my congregation – is the best one in Scotland!! Of course, we all know that we've a long way still to go, that there are many aspects of the life of our congregation that we'll continue to work on. And, of course we know that there are lots of great congregations around the country. So, when I tell people that you lot, *my people*, are the best congregation in the country, I'm being light-hearted. Even so, a little bit of me tells me that it's true!! You're a great bunch to be around and I wouldn't have myself anywhere else. Thank you.

God bless,
Martin, Elaine, Callum, Andrew, Fraser and Flossie!

MartinFair@aol.com

Thank You

More and more of you (the lucky ones!) will, by now, have had opportunity to meet our new Assistant Minister, Ruth Bell.

Ruth has only been with us for some six weeks but already she has made her mark, having led Sunday and Wednesday services, conducted funerals and been visiting in home and hospital. Ruth has shown her abilities but, just as important, she's shown herself to be a loving, caring, committed person. With all of that going on, she will fit in perfectly at St. Andrew's!

From the other point of view, a big 'thank you' to all those of you who have had Ruth for lunch or dinner. When moving to a new town and taking up a new job etc., it is important to settle in quickly. That becomes all the easier when you are made welcome. Again, thanks to those of you who have gone out of your way to help Ruth feel at home.

We all look forward to her working with us, and living among us, in the coming months till, when she is ready to leave us, we will see her move on to take up her own ministry, or whatever God has in store for her next. What a privilege for St. Andrew's Church to be able to play a part in Ruth's formation.

Home and Away - OUTREACH - Home and Away

Malawi Gifts for Christmas

Lots of you last year used our Alternative Christmas Gift Catalogue. This year again we are offering you a chance to choose from a list of different gifts that will benefit one of the children in Namisu village or one of the day-care centres that Aquaid run. We have arranged this with Aquaid, Malawi to ensure that your gift will go to where it is most needed. Instead of struggling to find a gift for someone who has everything they could possibly need why not give them a gift of sending it to a child in Malawi who has so little. We can assure you that the money that you gave last year was used for the gift that you specified.

Choose from:

- £2 - Medicine for 1 child for a month.
- £4 - A school uniform for a child.
- £5 - Mosquito Net.
- £6 - School Textbooks.
- £9 - Veggie Seeds for a Day-care Centre.
- £10 - Football.
- £14 - Meal for 70 children.
- £15 - Sewing kit.
- £20 - School Desk.

- £24 - Seeds, Tools & Training.
- £30 - Scholarship for a child to go secondary school as a day scholar.
- £40 - Classroom Equipment.
- £50 - Scholarship for a child to go to secondary school as a boarder.
- £50 - Bike.
- £75 - School Trip for a class.
- £250 - Sponsor a student for 6 months vocational training.
- £300 - Sponsor a Day-care centre with less than 100 children for a month.
- £450 - Train a teacher for 1 year of a 2-year course.
- £400 - Sponsor a day-care centre with more than 100 children for a month.
- £1,600 - Drill a borehole and fit a hand pump to ensure clean water for a whole village.

You choose the gift you would like to purchase. Contact either Sheila or Charis who will let you choose one of the Christmas Cards that we have which will tell about the gift that you have chosen. You can then send it to a family member or friend and give them a gift that will give twice!

Christmas is time when most of us end up with so much that we don't need or want so let's do something different this Christmas and remember those who have nothing!

First Aid For Our Community

A few weeks ago, the financial crisis was not fully realised. Yes, some "experts" on the news had gloomy predictions, but few anticipated the stock market roller coaster and the historic government bailouts that followed around the world.

Conventional wisdom would tell us that this is the time to be prudent. We need to be "fiscally conservative" and perhaps even think about "battening down the hatches". This is not God's wisdom. In times of economic crisis, people are hurting even more. They need God's love. They have ears to hear good news, and we have the best news in town--the gospel. Now is the time for the church to respond like an Army medic. God is calling us on all frequencies with the urgent dispatch to provide aid to those in need.

It's been said that a man's chequebook would tell him everything he needed to know about his soul. If that is true, then we are in a time when spiritual awareness is heightened for both the believer and the seeker.

In these difficult, uncertain times the question is whether or not we will answer the dispatch sent from headquarters and go to help those that are ducking for cover. The next time you turn on the news don't just think of how this might affect your pension; consider bad financial news as marching orders from God to look for a person in need that you can serve. Trust me, it will be a short "recon" mission!

Chris Barton - Adapted from "Serve!" - the magazine from www.servantevangelism.com

A big THANK YOU to all who handed in things to be put in the container to go to Malawi. Sandy and Charis Bowie delivered 16 boxes and a bike to Aberdeen and they should hopefully arrive in Namisu by around February time. The next container should be leaving Scotland in early spring and we will let you know nearer the time what we need to put in it. At this time I would say, if anyone has contacts within any of the Primary Schools, we still desperately need jotters, textbooks, reference books etc as well as any sports equipment. Becky is presently teaching football skills to classes of about 40 with 2 footballs and one day she had to teach a science lesson on 'Light' with no textbook.

As mentioned last month some of the young people are doing a sponsored bike run on Saturday 8th November. A group are cycling to Muirdrum and back and the more adventurous are cycling to Dobbies and back. That evening

Malawi Fundraising

sees our Family Firework Party. This will take place at the Martins' house. There will be fireworks, food and hopefully some singing and games. Tickets are £4 for adults, £2 for children and a family ticket is £10. Donation tickets can be obtained after the church service or by contacting Sheila on 873218. - Transport can be arranged.

Watch out for our Christmas competition being launched at the beginning of December - Guess the Santa!

As some of you may know, Sheila Stewart's youngest daughter is getting married on 27th December. We are looking for church people who would be willing to put some of the guests up for the night of the 27th. For this service they would charge an average B&B rate and then donate the money to the Malawi fund. Anyone who would like more information on this should contact Sheila on 873218.

Sunday morning, and there was great excitement, because we were going to open a new Church. We all piled into the truck, Maggie and her choir of boys in the back. Maggie cooked for us while we were there; she has a lovely singing voice and was very good at conducting the boy's choir. Whenever a new church is

My Visit To Malawi

Mary Scott continues her account

that church and she would stay, even if she died there! Now here we were, opening a lovely new building and they were being supported by

Aquaid. At the end of the service, 30 people stood up to commit their lives to Jesus Christ, including the invited guest, the village chief, and 10 Muslims!

Every day was a thrilling experience and I was truly very privileged to be there. How I enjoyed singing and dancing with the women (even though I didn't understand the words they were singing) but they helped me with the actions and were so delighted that I had joined in.

On my second Sunday we went to open a new church in Kambilongo. I couldn't wait to get there having heard so much about it from our own young people. Before opening a new church everyone marches round it 3 times singing hymns. The ground was just a building site with stones and rocks to scramble over but I joined in with enthusiasm and then the ribbon across the door was cut (after a very long wait to find a pair of scissors!) There was not enough room for everyone to get inside - about 2000 people had turned up, but as many as could squashed in and we sang a great hymn of praise, then outside again, where they sat on the ground for a 3 hour service!



Maggie and her choir

opened, choirs from all the churches around come to sing and help to celebrate the occasion. Maggie's choir was easily the best, the children from Namisu orphan village sing with such tremendous enthusiasm! I was only there for 2 Sundays but both days a new church was opened. What a contrast to the UK where churches are being closed.

John was the guest speaker and spoke very movingly about the Pastor of the church. He told us that one Sunday, he didn't turn up for the Sunday service and some of the folks went out to look for him. They found him collapsed at the road-side, so weak with hunger that he couldn't reach the church. They carried him the rest of the way, gave him a meal and then he took the service. He said to his wife, "Take the children and go back to your own village. Perhaps you will be able to get food and survive." But she told him that she had married him and God had called them to



The New Church

Each day was different, visiting churches in the process of being built, John encouraging the pastors and giving financial help whenever it was genuinely needed, sharing a meal with the pastor's wife and children and each time feeling more and more humbled by their high regard for us when they were such wonderfully devoted Christians, so full of the love of Jesus. I knew that I could learn such a lot from them.

It is my prayer that I will go back soon, their medical needs are so great and they have so few resources. In spite of that I have never met lovelier people anywhere, so full of fun (I had a ball) and so appreciative of the little I could do. I was tremendously blessed.

Mary Scott



The Old Church

Friends Club

Liz Smith, President, welcomed everyone to our first meeting in our temporary accommodation in the Green Street Hall.

After our opening business she gave a warm welcome to Ruth Bell and five new members. She then introduced Chris and Rosalie Barton who played and sang a variety of songs including a Scots selection. We went on to have a quiz on Canada followed by a selection of Canadian songs including the national anthem of which Canadians are very proud. The afternoon was completed by singing some favourite hymns. Jean Low

gave a vote of thanks before refreshments were served.

Liz Smith, President, welcomed everyone to our October meeting in the Green Street Hall. After the opening business she introduced Willie Robertson of the Nashville Skyliner who gave a varied programme of songs including some we could sing along to. He began with Canadian Pacific before including some Scots songs, an American trilogy and completed his programme with the Battle Hymn of the Republic. Isobel Mitchell gave the vote of thanks and our meeting was closed with a hymn and the Lord's Prayer before we enjoyed some refreshments.

KIDS IN CHURCH

A Sunday school teacher asked her children as they were on the way to church service,

"And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?"

One bright little girl replied,
"Because people are sleeping!"

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3.

The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake.

Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson. "If Jesus was sitting here, He would say, 'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'"

Kevin turned to his younger brother and said, "Ryan, you be Jesus!"

Clerk's Corner

In St Andrew's we are quite used to being presented with opportunities for service. These usually are within the congregation or in our local community. Here now is an opportunity to use your talents in the wider work of the Church of Scotland. The Nomination Committee is seeking to identify ministers, deacons, elders and members whose skills and experience might be of particular use to a given area of work within the Councils and Standing Committees. There are 21 of these ranging over such subjects as Church and Society, Social Care, Ecumenical Relations, World Mission, Stewardship and Finance and The Iona Community. If you would be interested in this kind of work and would like to see the complete list of committees, we would like to hear from you. The list is available in the office. Nominations have to be submitted by the end of November so if you are interested we need a response very soon. Thank you.

Jane Miller

7TH ARBROATH B.B. NEWS

Yes we are still here. We have moved to the Sea Cadet Halls in East Abbey Street during the refit of the Church. The Anchor Section under the leadership of Lt Sharon Jamieson and Lt Mandy Tasker have 8 boys. The Junior Section under the leadership of Lt Wilma Ewart and Lt Karen Gammie have 10 boys. We are meeting together and sharing in worship, games and achievement badges.

We are holding a Fancy Dress night on 30th of October when our judge will be Ruth Bell our new assistant minister.

It's also that time of year when we have to start thinking of booking our Panto seats. We had a great time last year at the Abbey Theatre and we will be booking it again for the Thursday Night 11th of December. If you are on your own or would like to bring a friend please contact Wilma Ewart for tickets. £5 each.

The Company Section meets in the Sea Cadet Halls also under the leadership of Lt Michael Clark. There are 12 boys in the Company and with lots of helpers they have a great programme each week.

Captain E.J. Matthew M.B.E.

LOOKING AHEAD

The following are, of course, the correct dates for our upcoming worships services. Full notice will be given (local press etc.) as and when the venue changes.

N.B. As well as our main Sunday morning services outlined above, remember that in addition there are the following:

- ♦ A 40mins. service every Wednesday morning at 10.30am.
- ♦ Messy Church, from 4-6pm, on the last Sunday of every month – 2 hours for all the family, with games, craft and worship and an all-together meal
- ♦ A full-on contemporary worship service, OFF the W.O.L., on the first Sunday of every month at 8pm

NOVEMBER

Sunday 2

11 am - Worship Service, with Harvest Thanksgiving, and Boys Brigade Dedication.
8 pm OFF the W.O.L.

Sunday 9

10.50 am - Worship Service including Act of Remembrance

Sunday 16

11 am - Worship Service including short celebration of Holy Communion

Sunday 23

11 am - Worship Service

Sunday 30

11 am - Worship Service
4 - 6pm - *Messy Church!*

DECEMBER

To be announced with locations for special services

The Girl With An Apple

Part 1

**This is a true story.
You can find out more by Googling
Herman Rosenblat.
He was Bar Mitzvahed at age 75.**

August 1942, Piotrkow, Poland.

The sky was gloomy that morning as we waited anxiously. All the men, women and children of Piotrkow's Jewish ghetto had been herded into a square. Word had gotten around that we were being moved. My father had only recently died from typhus, which had run rampant through the crowded ghetto. My greatest fear was that our family would be separated.

'Whatever you do,' Isidore, my eldest brother, whispered to me, 'don't tell them your age. Say you're sixteen.' I was tall for a boy of 11, so I could pull it off. That way I might be deemed valuable as a worker. An SS man approached me, boots clicking against the cobblestones. He looked me up and down, and then asked my age. 'Sixteen,' I said. He directed me to the left, where my three brothers and other healthy young men already stood.

My mother was motioned to the right with the other women, children, sick and elderly people. I whispered to Isidore, 'Why?' He didn't answer. I ran to Mama's side and said I wanted to stay with her. 'No,' she said sternly, 'get away. Don't be a nuisance. Go with your brothers.' She had never

spoken so harshly before. But I understood: she was protecting me. She loved me so much that, just this once, she pretended not to. It was the last I ever saw of her.

My brothers and I were transported in a cattle car to Germany. We arrived at the Buchenwald concentration camp one night weeks later and were led into a crowded barrack. The next day, we were issued uniforms and identification numbers. 'Don't call me Herman anymore.' I said to my brothers. 'Call me 94983.'

I was put to work in the camp's crematorium, loading the dead into a hand-cranked elevator. I, too, felt dead. Hardened, I had become a number. Soon, my brothers and I were sent to Schlieben, one of Buchenwald's sub-camps near Berlin. One morning I thought I heard my mother's voice. 'Son,' she said softly but clearly, 'I am going to send you an angel.' Then I woke up. Just a dream. A beautiful dream. But in this place there could be no angels. There was only work. And hunger. And fear.

A couple of days later, I was walking around the camp, around the barracks, near the barbed-wire fence where the guards could not easily see. I was alone. On the other side of the fence, I spotted someone: a little girl with light, almost luminous curls. She was half-hidden behind a birch tree. I glanced around to make sure no one saw me. I called to her softly in Ger-

man. 'Do you have something to eat?' She didn't understand. I inched closer to the fence and repeated the question in Polish. She stepped forward. I was thin and gaunt, with rags wrapped around my feet, but the girl looked unafraid. In her eyes, I saw life. She pulled an apple from her woollen jacket and threw it over the fence. I grabbed the fruit and, as I started to run away, I heard her say faintly, 'I'll see you tomorrow.'

I returned to the same spot by the fence at the same time every day. She was always there with something for me to eat - a hunk of bread or, better yet, an apple. We didn't dare speak or linger. To be caught would mean death for us both. I didn't know anything about her, just a kind farm girl, except that she understood Polish. What was her name? Why was she risking her life for me? Hope was in such short supply, and this girl on the other side of the fence gave me some, as nourishing, in its way, as the bread and apples.

Nearly seven months later, my brothers and I were to be crammed into a coal car and shipped to Theresienstadt camp in Czechoslovakia. 'Don't return,' I told the girl that day, 'we're leaving.' I turned toward the barracks and didn't look back, didn't even say good-bye to the little girl whose name I'd never learned, the girl with an apple.

(To be continued)

Habits

All of us would have to admit that, alongside our good habits, we have got some bad ones! The bad ones, we could well do without - the good ones are worth cultivating.

I wonder if some of us have just got out of the habit of coming to worship on Sunday (or Wednesday) mornings. From time to time, as I am looking out over the congregation, it strikes me that such and such a person, or family, has not been around for a while. Experience suggests that few people make a delib-

erate decision to stop coming to Church (although that does happen.) More often, it is just a case of getting out of the habit and finding it difficult to start again.

Well, there is no time like the present to try to get back in to the way of things. Perhaps the move to what will be our temporary home at the Academy might give some of us the opportunity for a fresh start - new surroundings, new beginnings - a fresh start in terms of our involvement in the church family and a fresh start in terms of our walk with God.

Of course, with the best will in the

world, sometimes it is difficult. Some of you have children who are involved in sport or some other activity. As a family, we are in that same place, with football etc! But there is no need to see such challenges as being insurmountable and as a church we offer plenty of alternatives - After-School Zone, Messy Church etc. - to make it possible for individuals and families to stay connected.

We would love to see some of you getting back into the habit! There's a welcome waiting for you - come and see for yourself.

Christmas 2008 No It Has Not Come Early!

This year, given that we will be in temporary accommodation (which will not be available to us during the school holidays), our celebrations of Christmas will be of a different flavour. Various individuals and groups are already giving thought to what we will be doing and to where such activities and celebrations will take place.

Whatever we end up doing, perhaps we will all benefit from having a year in which we do things differently –

even at Christmas. Perhaps we will all benefit from taking a break – even from those things which we have come to enjoy so much. That way, in a year's time, when we are back in our building, we will be approaching our Christmas celebrations with a freshness which, even with the best will in the world, can be lost to us when similar patterns are followed year in year out.

So, as with much of what we are doing this year, let us look forward to different way of doing things – and let us be open to what God will do among us, perhaps to surprise and excite us in ways which we never anticipated!

"The Soul of Britain is Dying"

The following appeared in a respected national newspaper: *The decline in UK church attendance coincides with a surge of interest in religion, reflected in the growing numbers of children opting for religious studies and the increasing numbers of students at theological colleges. Somehow, however, despite reports, studies and endless committees having been set up to tackle the issue, churches are failing to attract these people into Church.*

Today, therefore, with thousands of churches facing closure, there is something unbearably sad about the plight of Christianity in this country. It feels as if the soul of Britain is dying.

It doesn't take much travelling around to see closed, boarded-up, and half-empty, dying churches. But one wonders if this is the same thing as saying that the soul of a nation is dying. Sadly, many churches will die and many of them will have to take a share of the blame for that. In as much as they've refused to look at themselves and their way of doing things, they have effectively ensured their early demise. The world moved on when many of these churches were not watching.

But there is still hope. Jesus himself promised that not even the gates of hell would overcome the Church. That does not mean that individual churches – perhaps even whole denominations – will not vanish. It does mean that our Lord will not leave himself without a witness in this land. Where some churches die, new ones will emerge.

As for St. Andrew's, let us continue to do everything in our power to make sure that we are part of what God has in mind for the days still to come!

Let us keep that soul alive.

More midweek enjoyment



Seeing Ourselves As Others See Us

During our recent holiday, I had opportunity to visit another church – this one being on the south side of Glasgow. For me, as a minister, it is always fascinating going to different places of worship, being among other Christian people, to see how they do things (apart from the enjoyment of sitting in the pew and not having to say a word!!)

At this particular church, we were welcomed warmly and there did seem to be a genuine sense of fellowship among the people. We watched as they greeted one another and exchanged smiles and handshakes etc. As for their publications, their bulletin and magazine were not a patch on ours – but then they do not have Alison and Ken!! The service itself was along very traditional lines – exclusively old-style hymns, a children's address and a sermon. I found myself thoroughly enjoying the service and confirming within myself that worship is not so much about the style etc. as it is about the attitude of the worshipper – whether or not that person has come with a spirit of devotion and a genuine desire to seek a meeting with God.

The sadness of the day was that there were less than fifty people in the church – only three children and no young people. Of the adults, possibly two were less than sixty years of age. The sadness is that, as is reflected in the article above, many, many churches are in this position. It is hard to see where their future lies given the almost complete absence of younger generations.

For us, the important thing is that we never become complacent. It is easy to look around and see that we're blessed with the presence of both children and young people – and plenty of younger adults. But nothing is guaranteed as far as the fortunes of churches is concerned. There are plenty of examples of once super churches now sadly demised.

So, ALL OF US need to continue to work together, to keep our focus on those things that really matter and, above all, to be reminded daily that only a continued reliance on our Saviour, who is Lord of the Church, will do.

More midweek enjoyment

