



Show God's Love

Dear friends

This time last year the comedian Jason Manford had an album out in aid of the Trussell Trust entitled "Assembly Bangers" – those Christian songs that he remembered fondly from school assemblies like "This little light of mine" and "Give me oil in my lamp keep me burning". You can still see a clip from the promotional video on YouTube where he gets the thousands of people at one of his gigs singing and waving their hands, candles, and phones.

At one point people are raising their hands and singing Hosanna - for all intents and purposes they were worshipping! Two things struck me – firstly, we are all wired for worship. We are created with a God-shaped hole in us that only worship can fill. If we don't worship God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, then other things will grab our attention and our worship. Jesus taught this when He said you can't serve both God and money (Matthew 6: 24).

The second thing that struck me was that God, through the work of the Holy Spirit is always seeking worshippers (John 4: 23), and I believe he has so many ways at His disposal to draw those that don't know him yet to Himself. Many adults at the Jason Manford gig clearly had memories of singing at school assemblies, and you could see how their child-like joy

was being recaptured as they sang the familiar songs again, belting out praise to the "King of Kings."

Christmas is the time of year when many folk think about coming to a church service perhaps for the first time in the year, or the first time ever. I would encourage us to pray that there will be points of connection that bring to mind past experiences, past joys, times perhaps when they felt close to God. Singing carols and reading familiar passages of scripture can provide a bridge to the past. Also, my experience over the years, is that when we are open to the leading of the Spirit in our services, certain words, phrases, or emotions can create God-moments. I have even found that the sound of praise can draw people in from the streets around.

But the most important thing of all is for us to be ready to welcome anybody from anywhere, without judgement, and show the unconditional love of Jesus that accepts everyone no matter who they are, what they've done, or where they've been. As we seek to bless others, I pray that God's love and blessing will be palpable within our Advent and Christmas services this year. For His glory!

I wish you all a Happy Christmas and Wonderful New Year.

Love to you all, Jonathan

The Absent Samaritan

It's hard to relate, Lord.
People in need. Millions of people.
Whether they're refugees, or leprosy sufferers, or people without food.
Living in countries I don't know.
Names I can't pronounce in languages I don't understand.
They're a long way away, just pictures.
Cardboard cutouts, with no more reality than the picture on the back of a cereal packet.
Even those nearer home are distant from my experience.
Statistics.
There's safety in numbers:
I can forget the humanity behind them.

Men, women, children, who feel, and laugh, and cry.
Not much laughter though, more crying.
Tears watering the parched ground, irrigating seeds of pain.
The only crop that grows in the desert.

I could hide behind the questions.
Why does it happen? Why so much suffering?
I could blame others. Politicians. Exploiters. Arms salesmen.

Multination corporations. Current manipulators.
That's fashionable – and true.

Why, Lord?
I hide behind the questions, and do nothing,
waiting for an answer, because I'm scared.
Overwhelmed. Frightened to get involved,
like turning away from a drunk in the gutter.

And who is my neighbour? I can't argue, Lord, I know.
And the Absent Samaritan? Yes, Lord, I know that too.
I know the answer has to begin with me.
Maybe I can't do a lot (more than I know, did you say?)
but I can do something.
Together with others, together with You I can spread Your love around.
Show me how. So that through me, today,
Someone may catch a glimpse of Your love.
May find new life and hope.
May find the open door into Your Kingdom.
And, Lord, as I pray for people in need, as I hear the crying far away,
let me not be deaf to the cry next door.

Writer unknown
Thanks to Lynne and Ron Morrison for the submission.

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ST. ANDREW'S ARBROATH**Member Records - November 2023****Baptisms** - None**Weddings** - None**Funerals** - Flora Morrison, Judy Spink

Jonathan and Ian, our pastoral assistant, conducted other funerals though none were of members of our congregation. Nonetheless, we remember the bereaved families in our prayers.

Christmas: Fact or Fiction?

When we were children, either my mother or my father would always read a story to us before we were tucked up in bed and the light turned out. Very often the story would begin, 'Once upon a time...' and we would nestle down and listen to some tale which we instinctively knew never really happened. Nonetheless, we loved those opening words, 'Once upon a time...'

However, we should always remember that the story of Jesus' birth is not that kind of imaginative invention which appeals to us. It begins quite differently: 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ took place in this way...' (Matt. 1:18), because it is an account of fact, not an imagined story such as Peter Pan and Captain Hook. When we read it carefully, the two accounts (in both Matthew & Luke) boldly are set down as historical facts. 'After Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea...

wise men from the east came saying, "Where is he who has been born king of the Jews?"' Again, 'In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered...' Or again, 'In that region there were shepherds in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks by night.'

Not a single 'Once upon a time...!' I am not suggesting that all genuine historical accounts are boring and dry. History can be exciting and stimulating. It certainly is when it comes to the simple, unadorned facts of the Saviour's birth. God's plan of redemption, promised for so many centuries, was now being inaugurated. And the wonderful thing is, it's a living story and is being re-enacted whenever our eyes are opened, our ears unstopped, and our hearts made willing to receive the gift of God's Son as our Lord and Saviour! The accounts of Jesus' birth are arguably recounting the greatest event in human history. For Christmas is truly for you and for me!

David Searle

Dalitso Project

Hi all,

The team arrived back safely on Sunday 29th October after a busy two weeks. They came back with reports, photos, and news of the projects from both Thyolo and Kambilonjo. We have been busy getting as much of this information out to sponsors and so, during the Christmas count down, lots of other news will be on Facebook etc. What is certain is the children had fun with the Scottish team, lots of snacks, sweets, games, etc enjoyed. We are indebted to Kiri & Charles for the way they look after our centres doing way more than their actual jobs.

Christmas money gifts for sponsor kids has continued to come in and final total will be announced in the next Quest. The response has been amazing, so thank you to all.

The busy weekend in November, when we had the Fayre on the Saturday and Church soup lunch on the Sunday, was incredible. First time we have ever run out of soup!!! Over that weekend, with other donations, over £1700 was banked. How AMAZING.

We have decided, especially as those who come to Fayre are maybe not aware of the work of the Dalitso Project, to give supporters an insight to what their money buys. So, we are to purchase blankets for when the

cold season approaches with these monies.

Also, our Christmas emphasis is on mosquito nets. We are aiming to provide each of the children in our care with a net. So, if you need a gift for someone who is difficult to buy for, why not donate one or more nets – a card will be provided for your friend or family member. Please get your orders in as soon as possible.

We have our final soup kitchen/coffee and cakes in the SMALL hall at the Fayre which will be held in the church on Saturday 9th December. Please come along and support the crafters too - some amazing stalls.

Finally, for those who want a stress-free starter or dessert, our Christmas deal is back. Soup for 8-10 people £12 and dessert to serve the same number £15. We have choices of:

Soups

Leek & Potato
Carrot & Coriander
Curried Parsnip
Sweet Potato &
Red Pepper

Desserts

Sticky Toffee pudding
Clootie Dumpling
Mars Bar Cheesecake
Tiramisu
Apple Pie

Iced White Chocolate Mousse
Apple Crisp (GF)

Further information on our website or get in touch with me or Charis on 07877 256236 or any committee member.

Doris

Guild News

Greetings Ladies,

As we approach the end of the year with all the busyness it entails, let us not lose sight of the reason for the season and the wonderful gift given to us all of Our Saviour Jesus Christ. We also take a moment to reflect and give thanks for the wonderful gatherings we've had, and those who are no longer with us giving thanks for their service and friendship.

Last meeting was a hard hitting, and very moving, information packed video describing the inception and reason why "STARCHILD" came into being. (Starchild is one of the projects supported by the Church of Scotland guild.)

At this point I need to add thanks to our wonderful innovative "tech team" of Linda, seen on my arrival at the meeting juggling two lap tops, Jenni and Elise crawling around sorting cables and plugs, not forgetting Doris who at one point was standing in the middle of the hall with her phone held at full arm high stretch so we could hear the commentary. I hasten to add these ladies did get it all sorted allowing us to both hear and watch the video in comfort. "YOU ARE AWESOME GIRLS" This Monday 27th we will have an evening of crafts and chat, with all the mess and fun this always entails.

The Christmas craft sale raised a wonderful £280 for Guild

Projects proving we have some crafty ladies in our midst a very supportive congregation.

On the 11th of December the guild will hold their annual Christmas party, the venue is The Meadowbank where we have been assured of a private room (very wise considering the hilarity last year caused by an interesting take on pass the parcel which had us all doubting what was left and what was right).

THE FIRST MEETING FOR 2024 WILL BE ON MONDAY 15TH JANUARY WHEN Brenda Carcary waste strategy officer, Angus council will give a talk entitled "What to do with waste". I have one addendum to this article which the author was keen to have brought to the attention of our lovely guild ladies.

"St Andrews Guild Soup and Pudding Lunch - I enjoyed a lovely lunch served by very welcoming and friendly ladies, choice of soups and lots of delicious puddings - had to have a second helping! Do you have a date for the next lunch? From Helen."

This note was written by a friend of one of our guild members who doesn't attend church. I think this is what is meant by showing our faith by how we live and treat others.

Till next time always remember -

"Whose we are and Whom we serve."

Church calls on members to pray for peace in Israel and Palestine

Rev David Cameron, Convener of the Assembly Trustees of the Church of Scotland, has issued a statement in response to the outbreak of violence in the Holy Land.

The Church of Scotland employs around 160 local staff and two Mission Partners in the region.

Mr Cameron said:

"We are horrified by the situation currently occurring in Israel and Gaza, and the wider areas. The sudden attack by Hamas on Israel, 50 years and a day after the Yom Kippur War, came at a time when many Israelis were celebrating the end of the festival of Succot.

"At this time, our prayers are for all of those affected by these horrendous events. They are with the families of those killed, both in Israel and in Gaza. They are with those who have been taken hostage. They are with those dealing with the decisions to be made in the days ahead. With two Mission Partners and 160 locally employed staff, our prayers are also with them and their families, and they are with all

whom we know in both Israel and Gaza.

"There can be no peace without justice, and we all must do what we can to bring justice to Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Gaza.

"The coming days are crucial as decisions are made which can either start the route to peace and justice, or lead to revenge and devastation, and much weeping and mourning. This war feels like a breaking point. There is a context to all the attacks which is important, but there is no justification for them.

"We urge all in our Church to unite in prayer for the people of Israel and Palestine. We condemn the attacks by Hamas, and the ongoing violence and killing. Our Church has long spoken out about the need for justice for all people in that land so that everyone can enjoy a future which is peaceable and just. No-one should live in fear of attack or kidnap; war and violence will only lead to more death and destruction.

"Alongside the voices of our partners in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and the Anglican Diocese of Jerusalem, and with the Archbishops of Canterbury and York, we agree that a just peace will bring, 'a secure future through which Israel and its people can live in security within its internationally recognised borders, and Palestinians have their own state and live in their lands in security, and with peace and justice.'

"Let us pray for that peace which will offer new opportunities for justice to prevail so that all the people in the region may live in peace."

(From the Church of Scotland Website.)

Rt Rev Sally Foster-Fulton, Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, has issued a statement in response to the outbreak of violence in the Holy Land.

"Peace in our world can never come through violence."

Mrs Foster-Fulton said:

"Friends,

"I reach out to you all, as we continue to grapple with the shattering violence unfolding in Israel and Gaza, and to ask for your prayers and your action.

"Across Scotland, our Jewish friends, neighbours and colleagues grieve the loss of loved ones following the devastating terrorist attacks we witnessed unfolding over the weekend, worry for friends and family who have been kidnapped and fear the possibility of increased antisemitism in their own neighbourhoods as tensions rise across the world.

"In Scotland, our friends with family in Gaza mourn the loss of loved ones, worry for those unable to find safety or a place of refuge and fear an even more uncertain future.

"Together we agonise, yet again, over peace gone to pieces. We desperately try to fathom how we can be any comfort to the members of our global family trapped in the middle of such a barrage of violence and fear. We are appalled by the horrifying levels of brutality and the inhumanity of mass murder scenes which were broadcast across our screens in horrifying, gut-wrenching detail.

"We call for calm and active consideration for the innocent civilians who are suffering in Israel and Gaza. Peace in our world can never come through violence. Peace in our spirits can never come through revenge.

"So, what can we do in the face of war?

"If you pray, pray from your guts, not your lips – offer a prayer that moves in you and through you – one that calls you to reach out to a fearful neighbour, to speak up for peace and calm and the unity of humanity.

"Pray for all those many people injured and those mourning the loss of loved ones and those living in abject fear who await news of family members missing.

"Wherever you are, check in on your Jewish neighbours, friends and colleagues.

"Wherever you are, check in on your neighbours, friends and colleagues who have family in Gaza.

"Wherever you are, be mindful of your words. Tarring with a broad brush adds more fuel to the fire, so be kind to one another wherever you find each other.

"The Zulu phrase, Ubuntu, is the theme for my year as Moderator and its challenging truth resonates powerfully today. 'I am because you are.' We are one global family. When we look into the face of another human being, God looks out from the windows of their souls. Today, love God by loving each other."

A prayer for peace

'In days to come ... they shall beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation; neither shall they learn war any more.'

God, it is said that you are the peace that passes all understanding. We sit now, staggered at how quickly the fragile half-peace we had pieced together has unravelled.

The lessons we have so desperately needed to learn have been laid aside as the instruments of war begin their horrible, haunting reprise. Call us back to our senses.

For the angry, abused and frightened among us, who strike out in a distorted quest for victory, help us find ways to convince that there is no victory to be found in violence.

Peace-making is a daunting path to tread, especially when fear follows so closely behind, so breathe your loving spirit into our hearts and help us walk your way.

We pray ceaselessly for our family in Israel and Palestine, for we are all family and when one part suffers, we are all depleted. Peace in pieces is a collective, shared shame.

God, you are the peace that passes all understanding, so help us understand how to find you.

(From the Church of Scotland Website)