

Minister's Letter - November 2008

Dear Friends,

I leave later this week with three members of the Kirk Session for a brief visit to Israel and Palestine for what was to have been the inauguration of the new Al-Sharooq School for Blind Children in Bethlehem. Having rented accommodation for the 25 pupil residential school since its beginnings they are presently moving into their own custom built premises. As we had donated almost £32,000 earlier this year to assist them with their move they were very keen that we should be present at the inauguration. However having booked the flights, due to circumstances beyond the school's control, the official opening has had to be postponed until the Spring. However we will still have an opportunity to visit the school and discuss with them ways in which the congregation can continue to be involved. While in Jerusalem we will stay at the recently refurbished St. Andrew's Guest House and worship in St. Andrew's on Sunday (appropriately St. Andrew's Day). We will also spend two nights at the Scots Hotel, the Church's centre in Tiberias on the Sea of Galilee, before visiting Tabeetha School in Jaffa on our way to Ben Gurion airport. The school, also run by the Church of Scotland, has had few visitors recently, and so were especially keen that we should visit. They also are very appreciative of the funding we give to enable a residential class visit to the village of Neve Shalom, where deliberately but unusually in Israel, Jews and Arabs live together.

Our visit will also include a visit to the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem and in Jerusalem to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Many of you may have seen this church feature recently on news programmes when an unseemly and violent brawl broke out between Greek Orthodox and Armenian Orthodox monks, eventually brought to an end by the Israeli Police. Sad to say such an event is not unique and later in the magazine is a brief description of some past disputes. In a city and land of great tension and indeed violence it is hardly a positive advertisement for the Christian Church.

In his recent Gifford Lecture in Edinburgh, Chief Rabbi Sir Jonathan Sachs spoke of the positive contribution religion could still make in the 21st century in an increasingly secular and materialistic western world. The two great institutions of that world, the state and the market, are not capable of creating that sense of community or society in which the best of human values can be found. However religion can only do this if it avoids the great conflicts of the past.

In a small way, but a great distance from the unedifying fighting in the Holy Sepulchre, we attempt to do that through our support for these two schools. It is support which crosses religious, cultural and ethnic divisions for the benefit of the children involved. May I suggest that this Christmas, amidst all our celebrations, we kick start a project fund to assist these schools by considering as individuals or families what our spend on these same Christmas celebrations is likely to be and decide on an appropriate contribution. This could be donated at any of the Christmas Eve services of worship, when recently the offering has been for the support of Tabeetha School, or at any other time if clearly marked for these purposes.

Wishing you all a very happy and peaceful Christmas season.

Yours sincerely

Alistair Bennett

MID-WEEK LUNCH

Future dates:

Wednesday, 17 th December (Xmas Lunch)	Pat's team
Wednesday, 28 th January	Margaret's team
Wednesday 25 th February	Kath's team
Wednesday 25 th March	Margaret's team

12.15 – 1.30pm – Price £2.50

There will be a short ecumenical service in the Chapel prior to the lunch at 11.45am. We would like to see more people coming to the Service. Why not start with the next one, before the Christmas Lunch, to make it extra special.

Tickets for the Christmas Lunch are still available through Joyce at the office or any team leader.

Pat Mackenzie

GUILD NEWS

We are looking forward to Christmas, but wish to give thanks to all Members who gave so generously of their time and talents, and also to those who came to happily support our Coffee Morning and Christmas Fair recently. We made a marvellous sum, which enables us to give to all our Guild Projects, especially Crossreach.

We also thank all who gave generously to the Shoe Box Appeal, when 75+ boxes were delivered to the Blythswood Truck, for delivery, at Christmas, to various Eastern European Countries.

We look forward to our Council Carol Service at Innerleithen Church on 1st December, at 7.15pm. Cars will be going, so anyone wanting to share, 'phone either Grace, Cathy or Greta beforehand.

A date to be looked forward to will be our Christmas Party Lunch, at the Town House, 12.15pm for 12.30pm. Paper hats will be worn!

We restart our meeting on January 8th, '09 when Jill and Haisley Moore will be with us - who could think of a better start to a year?

We ask you to continue to support our caring and giving in this place, and it would be pleasant, we think, to have our men-folk join us occasionally, so could you please look at the 'Calendar of Events' for a meeting to attract, and come along – all are welcome.

A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to us all.

Greta, Cathy and Grace

STAMPS, STAMPS, STAMPS.....

John Dorricott reminds us that after Christmas he would love to have all the used stamps from your Christmas card envelopes in little bundles in his tray at the Gattonside porch.

CHOIR AT CHRISTMAS - MELROSE

For many years the choir has sung at special services like communion, Christmas etc. and if you would like to join us for this special occasion our first practice is on Sunday 30th November at 10.00am in the upper room. Further dates arranged Tuesday 16th December at 7.30pm in the upper room and Monday 22nd December and (this will be followed by our Christmas Party!) Please come along and help us make

this year's Watchnight Service as memorable as ever, you will be made very welcome.

CHRISTMAS PARADE AND CAROL SERVICE

Once again it is time for the annual parade and carol service in Melrose Abbey and we would like to invite all to join us on Saturday 13th December. The parade, led by the Pipe Band, the Masons and Monks leaves the Greenyards at 5.30p.m. and the service starts in the Abbey at 6.00p.m. Access this year will be easier as it is through the double gates. This year we are linking the carols by telling the Christmas story so we would ask children up to Primary 4 age to dress as animals or angels and older children to dress as shepherds, wise men, Mary or Joseph. Children should make their way to the front to stand where indicated by stewards. Throughout the entire parade and service it should be noted that children should be accompanied by a responsible adult. Afterwards Peter Pepper will entertain the children in the Corn Exchange and mince pies and mulled wine will be on sale in the Market Square.

Please join us for a traditional start to Christmas.
Elizabeth Wilson and Angela Dewar - Melrose Traders Association

RECENT EVENTS

Harvest Thanksgiving was celebrated at Bowden on Sunday 12th October and unusually late at Melrose on the 2nd November when the service was followed by a very enjoyable lunch. Thanks to all who assisted or contributed in the organisation of the lunch. The Retiring Offering after both services amounted to £522.80 and was sent to Christian Aid

Traidcraft had a very successful Christmas Fayre on Friday 7th November and Saturday 8th November and over £2,000 worth of products were sold. The organisers were delighted with the result and wish to thank all who support the work of Traidcraft.

The Offering at the well attended Ecumenical Service of Remembrance amounted to £856.89 and was for the work of the Earl Haig Fund Scotland. We were pleased to welcome the Reverend David Dalglish the new Curate at Holy Trinity Episcopal Church who assisted in leading the worship. Acts of Remembrance also took place at Gattonside and Darnick as well as at the Melrose War Memorial.

A very enjoyable Quiz Night was held in Bowden Village Hall and £204 was raised for Church Funds and £50 donated to Children in Need.

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre, Jerusalem

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre would be regarded by many as Christendom's holiest site. Found within the Old City of Jerusalem but at the time of Jesus outwith the city walls it is built on the supposed site of Jesus crucifixion, burial and resurrection. However for many a visit to the church is as likely to provoke questions about the fractious relationships that exist among the various denominations responsible for the management of the building, as it is to create a sense of mystery or peace.

The Church has been managed by six competing denominations – Roman Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Armenian Orthodox, Coptic, Syrian Orthodox and Ethiopian – since an agreement reached under Ottoman law in 1757. Rival denominations often battle for

access or space to hold their services. Such is the level of distrust that the keys to the main entrance to the church have been held by a Muslim family since the 12th century.

In the 19th century a ladder was placed on a ledge above the main entrance to the church. A priest from another denomination accused the man of trespassing and a row began that has yet to be resolved. The ladder remains unmoved.

The Ethiopians are to found in the Deir al-Sultan monastery on the church's roof – two chapels and twenty-six tiny rooms which presently are threatening the whole structure of the building. In Easter 1970 when the Coptic monks, who had controlled the area, were praying in the main church and left the roof unattended, Ethiopian monks changed the locks at the entrances before the Copts returned. The Coptic Church refused to relinquish its claim to the monastery, posting a single monk there at all times. In the midst of a heat-wave on 2002 the monk on duty moved his chair from the agreed spot into the shade. This was interpreted as a hostile move by the Ethiopians and eleven monks needed hospital treatment at the end of the ensuing fracas.

On Palm Sunday this year a Greek Orthodox monk was ejected by a rival faction. Police were attacked by the fighting monks and several people were taken to hospital, and so the recent events were not unique.

Harvest Thanksgiving Lunch: The Consumers



Today I sent an email – A poem from Priorwood Court

Today I sent an email
to a special friend of mine,

and I know He will receive it
'cos He is very much "on line".

My "Subject" was Thanksgiving,
my message most sincere,
as my mind was overwhelmed
by the things I hold most dear.

I thanked Him for the gift of life,
I thanked Him for my friends.
I thanked Him, for his faithfulness
And His love that knows no end.

And while I wait for His reply
I know there will be "attachments" too,
These are the Blessings that He sends
each day to see me through. *Jean Smith*

Harvest Thanksgiving Lunch: The Servers



10TH ANNIVERSARY AWARDS

The Scottish Borders Adult Learners Awards are 10 in 2009 and will be celebrating in style. Do you know anyone who has made a significant contribution to their lives and the lives of others whom you would like to nominate for an Adult Learners Award? The whole of life is a learning curve and there is no need for the learning to be through conventional means – so why not recognise the path along which someone has travelled? This may be through volunteering, overcoming adversity, returning to study to support the family or via a large variety of routes. The only requirement is that the nominees are over 16 (no upper age limit!) and that they live in the Borders (the learning can have taken place anywhere in the world!).

Nominations close on 16th February and the presentations will take place at a glittering ceremony at the Victoria Hall in Selkirk on 31st March 2009. Nomination forms are available from The Bridge office at 6a Roxburgh Street, Galashiels or can be downloaded from: <http://www.onlineborders.org.uk/site/learn guidance/learning/AL Awards/page>. For more information contact VBLAC@borderscollege.ac.uk or isobel.king@the-bridge.uk.net.

AN EXCHANGE OF LETTERS

a Latinist's bugbear (15.09.08)

Dear [Scotsman Columnist]

Some people are annoyed about the misuse of the apostrophe; others about the glo"al stop. I am bugged when radio and TV announcers talk about a hospital bug as 'c. dee-fee-seel'. My bugbear has burst out as follows:-

Clo-stri-di-um is Latin:and dee-fee-seel is French.
To join them both together is really quite a wrench
Of language. For BOTH are Latin; and it's silly
If they don't SOUND right (willy-nilly!).
The bug's a KILLER: SOUND it so.
Think KILLIE-crankie – make them go
Together. Let's not gild the lily!
Shout out 'clo-strl-di-um dif-fi-KILLY!

I tried to work in the football team but haven't quite made it yet. I wonder how the French pronounce it. If this won't fit *your* column perhaps Alba [the diarist] could use it.

Yours,
Latinist

The reply (01.10.08)

Dear Latinist,

Many thanks for your recent letter, which has been forwarded to me here at Semi-Detached Towers. Lovely to hear from you, mate.
Clearly you are awfy Araldite. Not Araldite. What's that other one? Erudite.

Mind you, I am always impressed with any verse that can work in the expression 'willy-nilly'. Had you added 'hither and yon', my joy would have been unbounded. Well, not unbounded. Let us not get carried away here. Let us say, my joy would have been a little less bounded than usual.

I'll pass this to Alba, but I'm not confident he knows his clunes from his cubitum. All the very best to all at yon Trimontium.

Yours,

[Scotsman Columnist]

Let's have a less wasteful Christmas this year

Amid all the rejoicing at Christmas, it is easy forget our good intentions about recycling. Overwhelmed by a mountain of discarded packaging, tinsel, food scraps and other rubbish, we have so much to distract us. But it's worth giving some thought to ways in which we can minimise the waste that is created during the festivities.

An estimated one billion Christmas cards and 85 square kilometres of wrapping paper will have to go somewhere. Turkey foil wrap alone will create 3,000 tons of waste.

Also looking for a home will be loads of old electronic gadgets (displaced by new ones). Thousands of mobile phones will be exchanged as gifts (15 million are replaced in the UK each year). According to a survey, each child will expect to receive ten presents, on top of those from parents - and 40 per cent of the toys will be broken within three months. Hardly any batteries are recycled despite the toxic substances they contain. Although green and blue recycling bins are becoming a familiar sight, the UK still lacks an extensive recycling infrastructure. The nation still creates 150 million tons of rubbish each year, of which 80 per cent is buried. Landfill space is rapidly running out.

The good news is that this year over a million Christmas trees will be recycled and turned into ash or mulch by local authorities, many of which will arrange collection. But that still leaves six million that will be thrown out with the rubbish or left to rot in back yards or gardens.

So what can we do on an individual level? If you have an old mobile phone lying around, hand it in to the church. Christmas cards could be taken to the special bins provided in (or outside) supermarkets. "Think before you throw" is a good motto for all of us.

Courtesy of Parish Pump

An invitation to Holy Communion on the last Sunday of December, January and February at Bowden Kirk 9.30a.m and Sunday 22nd February at Melrose Parish Church, 11.00a.m.

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