

August 2009

Dear Friends,

On return from holiday, visiting our daughter in Canada, I was presented with the news that Ewan Rintoul, our Session Clerk, in consultation with the Kirk Session was proposing a special service on 15th November to mark the 25th anniversary on that date of my induction as minister to the charge of Melrose. I'm often asked by visitors how long I've been minister here and when answering, "Almost 25 years," they invariably respond, "That's a long time." My reply tends to be, "Yes, that's what the congregation are saying!" Therefore it's very thoughtful and kind of the Kirk Session to mark the anniversary in this way. It is appreciated of course that I have been minister of the charge of Bowden and Melrose only since January 2007 and so the date will not have the same significance for members of the former Bowden congregation.

I would however like to use the rest of this letter to look forward rather than back but before doing so a word of thanks. Each Wednesday morning during July and August, with the exception of the days on which we have a lunch, tea, coffee and home baking has been served to visitors and locals by whom it has been much appreciated. I would like to thank all those who assisted with this in any way. In August the annual Bowden Fete was held and perhaps the terrible weather in the morning was in part responsible for a lower than average turnout. However over £1,030 was raised for church funds and again thanks to all those involved in organising and helping with this event.

Looking forward I would like to highlight and draw attention to the following:

Bowden Centenary

As indicated below a Songs of Praise will be held in Bowden Kirk at 6.00p.m. on Sunday 18th October to mark the centenary of the restoration of the Kirk completed in 1909. The service will also give the opportunity to reflect on the history of the Kirk and will be followed by a buffet supper in Bowden Village Hall. It would be lovely to think that the church might be full for this special occasion. We may need to be gently reminded that as a part of the Church of Scotland we are one congregation in the very privileged position of having two quite different and distinct, but very beautiful sanctuaries in which to worship – something we should celebrate. For anyone needing transport from Melrose that evening arrangements will be made for this very special occasion.

Melrose Anniversary

Again as indicated below, it will be 200 years ago next year that a church was built on the Weirhill in Melrose – the decision having been taken to move from the Abbey. All that remains of that building is the tower and spire, the remainder having been burned to the ground in 1908. It is hoped to arrange a suitable celebration but in addition to which a second visit to the Holy Land is being considered.

Holy Land Visit

It is over three years since a group, mainly from Melrose, had a very successful and interesting visit to the Holy Land. Some of those who participated in that trip have indicated they would welcome another opportunity to visit, while others have also expressed an interest. It is hoped that a visit to the Holy Land might be combined with a visit to Petra in Jordan and that this might take place in October 2010. At this stage it is necessary to gauge the level of interest and so a preliminary meeting will take place in the

church hall on Thursday 1st October at 7.30p.m. If you are interested but unable to attend on that evening please let our secretary Joyce or myself know.

New Members

A number of people have indicated recently that they would like to become members of the congregation. Throughout the Church it is now very much the case that people are less inclined to consider formal membership and are happy simply to attend services of worship and other events. However there is something very important and moving in the formal commitment to membership of a congregation, its work and worship. Anyone interested in becoming a member or simply considering membership is invited to a meeting in the church hall on Thursday 22nd October at 7.30p.m. There will be further intimation of this in the weekly church notices with a service of admission of new members in Advent.

Visiting of Elderly Members

At present the Kirk Session is seeking to recruit to the eldership but in addition to district visiting by elders is also looking for volunteers to visit more elderly members of the congregation and parishioners who might appreciate such a visit. The first meeting for volunteers will be over tea/coffee on Wednesday 2nd September at 10.30a.m. and the second meeting on Wednesday 30th September at the same time. If you would like to help please come along.

Family Services

Many of the children who come to these services are pre-school and I hope they will continue to attend with their parents. The services, I hope, are suitable for school age children and I would love to see more families involved and if possible greater participation by the children themselves. We also desperately need to learn more songs! Please make a note of the dates – the first Sundays in September to December – and take part as a family in what I hope are enjoyable services of worship which at the same time give the children an introduction to the Christian faith.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Bennet

An Invitation to Holy Communion

Last Sunday September, October and November

9.30a.m.

Bowden Kirk

Sunday 22nd November

11.00a.m.

Melrose Parish Church

(Individual Glasses)

Mid-Week Lunch

Future dates:

Wednesday, 23 rd September	Margaret's team
Wednesday, 28 th October	Pat's team
Wednesday 25 th November	Margaret's Team
Wednesday 16 th December (Xmas Lunch)	Kath's Team

12.15 – 1.30pm – Price £2.50

There is a short Ecumenical Service in the Chapel, prior to the lunch at 11.45am..

Pat Mackenzie

GUILD NEWS

I hope you have all had a lovely summer. We in the Guild have been busy preparing for the next session which starts on the 8th October at 2.30pm in the chapel. We have arranged a varied programme with something for everyone. Please come along. We really do need new members. Don't let the hill deter you ~ lifts can be arranged. All are made very welcome. Our teas are famous!! I don't wish to alarm you but Christmas is coming! The leaflets for the 2009 Shoe Box Appeal are to be found in the Gattonside porch. Will see you all on the 8th October ~ please put the date in your diary.

Greta Leitch
Joint – President

A BOWDEN CENTENARY

During 1907 and the early part of 1908 plans were laid for a major restoration of Bowden Kirk. After worship on Sunday 31st May 1908 the church doors were closed to allow work to commence and services thereafter were held in Bowden Village Hall. On Wednesday 31st March 1909 the church was reopened. The restoration was complete and provided us with the beautiful church we enjoy at worship today.

To mark this centenary there will be a Songs of Praise in Bowden Kirk on Sunday 18th October at 6.00pm. This will be followed by a Buffet Supper in Bowden Village Hall at which there will be a small exhibition of old material relating to the Kirk.

These events are open to all and it is hoped that a good number will turn out to celebrate another milestone in the long history of Bowden Kirk.

Making a Fresh Start

Selkirk Council of Churches have embarked on an much needed project providing home starter packs for people coming out of homelessness. The group have already provided some packs for a handful of people via local contacts and also through Home Basics. They hope to create many more. The packs contain everything that an individual or a family might need for their kitchen or bedroom. Many of the items are brand new but the emphasis is also on re-using hardly used materials. The group has been extensively

supported by the Scottish Churches Housing Action who have shown them how Starter Pack groups have been developed across Scotland by other churches. They have evidence that shows new tenancies often fail in the initial stages because of the lack of finance to buy the basic resources to settle in. Edinburgh has a well established Freshstart project and it was decided that the people of the Scottish Borders could benefit from having access to this wonderful support. There are copies of the flyer describing the contents of a typical pack available in the Gattonside porch. The volunteers, drawn from congregations in the town and surrounding area, meet at a venue in Selkirk where the items are stored, to work on making up the packs. If anyone has any items to donate or wishes any further information please contact one of the names on the flyer or speak to me, Ruth MacDonnell

Book Stall direct to the Church

Starting on Sunday 13th September for four weeks the St Andrew Press entire catalogue of over 150 book titles and some CDs will be on display and for sale within the congregation. An added benefit to having this purchasing facility on our doorstep is the fact that by using the book stall the Church of Scotland stands to gain 50% of the value of sales, split evenly between the local congregation and its national mission.

Some people will be asking what the St Andrew Press is and what books they are displaying for sale. Most Church members know of *Life and Work*, the monthly magazine of the Church of Scotland. A smaller number may know that St Andrew Press is a publishing business which has existed for fifty years within the Church of Scotland. In that time it has sold over 20 million books. It currently has a list of 170 items, covering mainly religious, moral and ethical topics. Its range of books is aimed at all ages from children to all stages of adulthood. They are aimed at church members and non-members alike.

St Andrew Press was initially established in the 1950s to support the enormous publishing activity when Rev. Willie Barclay of Glasgow University was writing his popular commentaries on the books of the New Testament and, in his unmistakable gravelly voice, giving equally popular 'lectures' on TV. These books are still being sold worldwide through the St Andrew Press, but it has diversified since then and become part of the Church's Mission and Discipleship Council. This recognises the importance of the written word in reaching out to thousands of individuals who would infrequently, if ever, enter a church. At the same time it offers the committed member material that is stimulating and helpful in understanding Christian, moral and ethical issues.

St Andrew Press and *Life and Work* are unique in that they are elements of the Church that are managed and run as businesses. Their existence recently has depended on their being collectively run at no cost to the overall finances of the Church. Any retained profit is ploughed back into the wider work of the Church.

Why then is this display and book sale coming to Bowden and Melrose? One answer is that in the present economic climate, and particularly in relation to books, trading times are very difficult. Booksellers are demanding, in most cases, a minimum of 50% discounts on the books they sell to the public.

Furthermore, now that the circulation of *Life and Work* is reducing (because of an ageing readership, folks) the combined profit of the two publishing bodies is being put under threat. Their ability to plan and develop their Mission is being challenged. The direct

approach is therefore being taken. By bringing books and CDs *directly* to congregations 50% of the book sales value will be realised. 25% will go to the Church's Mission and Discipleship Council; 25% to Bowden and Melrose congregation, to support our local work. Members of the congregation have the opportunity to peruse and (it is hoped) purchase some of the material, without traipsing to the Edinburgh bookshops which carry these titles.

As an alternative, if you cannot manage to see the bookstall at either church, you can go on-line at www.standrewpress.com and order books that way. This method of purchase will help the national cause, but gives no financial benefit to Bowden & Melrose.

As a member of the Church of Scotland's Publishing Committee I would be happy to answer questions, after a Sunday service, about the Church's publishing work, St Andrew Press and *Life and Work*.

John Henderson

Volunteering in the Holy Land

Having spent three and a half months in Israel and Palestine at the beginning of this year I would say I have returned from the trip with a deeper understanding of religion, a great frustration with the political situation there, and an amplified admiration for the strength, humility and hospitality of people. I initially spent a week travelling in Israel with friends; 3 weeks volunteering at Al-Shurooq school in Bethlehem; then 2½ months volunteering with Project Hope (a Canadian-Palestinian NGO); and finally a week with Al-Shurooq at their annual camp in Tiberias.

Al-Shurooq, as many of you will know, is a Christian school for blind and visually impaired children as well as children with various special needs. The majority of the kids (as well as the staff) are Muslim but both religions are discussed, and the children enjoy singing hymns as well as songs about Mohammed and Allah. It is actually situated in Beit Jala, just beside Bethlehem. The kids that attend Al Shurooq come from all over the West Bank and two come from Gaza. This means that, although many of their families do not live far away in terms of distance, they cannot visit or take their children home regularly due to checkpoints and other travel restrictions. Thus all but a couple of the kids board at the school, only going home anything from every other weekend to every 4-6 months (in the case of Lara and Joujou from Gaza). Given that some of the kids are as young as 4, and there are only two house mothers, this can be quite difficult for them, and each child needs lots of love and attention.

My role at Al Shurooq was to play with and entertain the kids in their afternoon break – between classes finishing and dinner being served (about 3 hours) – and on Fridays. This was, in my opinion, more difficult, than it first seemed: the 8 – 20 children (depending on the day) spoke little English, had varying amounts of visual awareness and, as mentioned previously, had various other special needs – including mobility impairments and undiagnosed learning difficulties. I, at the time, spoke no Arabic (and don't speak much more than that now), had little experience with children with these kinds of needs, had little space to use, no translator or colleague for the most part (the house mothers were usually involved in washing clothes or helping with homework) and very few tools, given that the kids had few toys and those they had repeatedly got broken or lost. So I would neither say this was an easy task, or that I made a very good job of it. What I did have, however, was a group of amazing and wonderful children who not only have all these special needs, but also live in a war zone and rarely get to see their parents or families. But, as children have

the miraculous ability to do, they stayed positive and happy, they regularly helped each other out (the older children became sort of mini house parents, helping to clean up and helping the other kids to get dressed etc), they shared everything they had, and tried hard to include everyone in their games and activities.

From the relatively peaceful Beit Jala it was on to Nablus – the “terrorist capital of the West Bank”. On my nerve-racking journey between the two, in a “servive” (shared mini bus taxi) in which we could have had to pass through up to four check points (or more) and with my speech prepared for any curious Israeli soldiers, we were lucky enough not to have to pass through a single check point! So I made it to Nablus having paid only 28 NIS (£3.50) for a 2 hour, interrogation-free, journey. I have since, however, had ample experience of West bank check points, but continue to be grateful for the lack of them on this particular day. In Nablus I worked with a grassroots apolitical, non-religious organisation called Project H.O.P.E. (Humanitarian Opportunities for Peace and Education) with whom I was to teach English and dance. In the end I mostly taught English to a mixture of housewives, University students, people that wanted to improve their CV (whether to leave Palestine or just to be able to get a job within the West Bank) and some children including girls at a U.N. school in a refugee camp. My students were great, all very good-humoured and interested and always ridiculously grateful for my efforts. Living in Nablus was fun too. It was difficult sometimes following some of the strict rules about how women should behave – covering to my ankles and wrists and not being allowed to shout, sing, dance, run, have any physical contact with a male or even laugh loudly in public. But in general it is a beautiful city with a lovely small town feeling where everyone is familiar and welcoming. And the food was great!

Finally my week in Tiberias with Al Shurooq was brilliant. A whole week of playing in the swimming pool with the kids, going for walks – touching the mangoes and lemons on the trees, smelling the flowers and collecting shells on the shores of the Sea of Galilee – and just relaxing. Perhaps the most challenging thing about the camp - which takes place at a German monastery specifically designed for people with special needs and with the aim of bringing Israelis and Palestinians together - is that we were sharing it with a group of Zionist Christian Germans who had come to Israel to apologise for the Holocaust. They enjoyed playing with the kids but were reluctant to call them Palestinians and kept asking where in Israel they were from.

Throughout my time in the Holy Land I was in touch with and often visited some Israeli friends I had made in Canada. Two of them are in the army doing their military service, and one is doing volunteer service as she avoided her military service by being declared psychologically unfit. This was interesting and useful but often challenging. I can appreciate why my friends joined the army but it is difficult to listen to them justifying the awful things the Israeli military do to Palestinians.

Ultimately, I feel that what is most important to appreciate is the beauty of the Holy Land, the people and the various meaningful places there, and I think that both Israel and Palestine should be on everyone’s list of places to visit. I do have hope for the future of Palestine and I intend to go back before too long. I am grateful to all the people – Israeli and Palestinian – who helped me, and hosted me while I was there, as well as the people here who helped me to prepare for my trip. I am also very grateful to Melrose Parish Church, on behalf of Al Shurooq, for their generous support in general but most specifically for the beautiful kitchen that has been provided in the new school. It is a vast improvement on their previous facilities and everyone there is very excited about it.

Meghan Thom

George Thomson - the Dominie

(Continuing Mrs Young's account)

In 1812 Sir Walter was looking for a tutor for his two sons, Walter and Charles. A note to Daniel Terry, the actor, tells what happened. 'I am relieved of the labour of hearing Walter's lesson by a gallant son of the church who, with one leg of wood and another of oak (walking stick) walks from and to Melrose for that purpose'. From now to the end of his life George would be Dominie Thomson.

The walking came to an end when the Dominie was 'domesticated' and went to live with the family. Sir Walter, who himself suffered a painful leg, damaged in infancy by polio, was very taken with him. 'In the Dominie, like myself,' he once said, 'accident has spoiled a capital lifeguardsman'.

Being 'domesticated' meant eating at the family table and performing chaplain's duties. This service was called for when thirty or forty hungry people sat down to dine after the Abbotsford Hunt, held in late October. 'Neither wooden leg nor religion prevented George Thomson from sharing in the hunt,' comments Stalker in his *Life of Scott*. The only trouble was the longwindedness of his grace. Even Sir Walter was seen to be fiddling impatiently with his spoon.

At the Abbotsford hanselling (housewarming) however, things were more relaxed. The Dominie performed his party piece – a sad little song, entitled *Lucy's Flittin'* – and when everybody assembled in the new dining-room for the dancing 'Scott and the Dominie looked on with gladsome faces, and beat time now and then, the one with staff, the other with his wooden leg.'

But the Scott children were growing up. By 1819, at the age of eighteen, Scott's elder son had gone off to join a regiment of Hussars. Some time the following year, a letter from his father let him know that the Dominie had left Abbotsford and had taken a tutoring post with another family. The letter reveals Sir Walter's anxiety about George Thomson's future, for he writes 'I am afraid he will find it a change; but I hope to have a nook for him by and by.'

Finding that nook was to prove impossible. Overtures were made to many influential friends, attempting to settle the Dominie in some suitable position. 'I wish to God I saw him provided in a country kirk,' Scott has in his diary. He wrote to the Duke of Buccleuch concerning a church vacancy 'on behalf of George Thomson, being the grinder (*sic*) of my boys, and therefore deeply entitled to my gratitude and good offices. If you knew this poor fellow, your Grace would take uncommon interest in him, were it but for the odd mixture of sense and simplicity, and spirit and good morals.' This letter, like the others, came to nothing.

After his father's death in 1835, the Dominie took a teaching position in Edinburgh. One morning, three years later, he was found dead in his bed, eccentricity having persisted to the last. Rumour had it that the socket of his wooden leg contained a hundred gold sovereigns.

Mastering the Festival Ceremonies

The duties of the Ceremonial Convenor of the Melrose Festival begin at the election to office at the Festival AGM, with the reading of the minutes of the "Greetin' Meetin'" held after the previous year's Festival.

Whilst not being involved in the selection of the Melrosian-elect, the Convenor's first official task is supervising proceedings 'back stage' on Appointments Night. Thereafter, in the run-up to the Festival the job involves attendance at Festival Executive meetings and communications. Letters must be written to the Minister, the Piper, the Masons and townfolk of Newstead, the dresser of the Trimontium centurion, Gattonside Tea Ladies, the Curator at Abbotsford and the Keeper of Darnick Tower, to ensure that they are willing to participate once again, and likewise all the 'players' in the various aspects of the 'Tour of Ceremonies'.

Festival Week proper starts with the Kirkin' of the Melrosian, preceded by a short act of remembrance at the War Memorial. Before that certain pews within the Church have to be marked off to ensure that the correct people are sitting in the correct places and that pews have been left vacant for the procession, when it enters the Church.

The day of the Crowning of the Queen, on Festival Thursday in the Abbey, is spent in making sure that the seats are in place, the guest lists are correct and that there is a seat designated for each and every guest. The holding of the event in the open air is dependent on fine weather. In the case of rain, Plan B comes into play, with the seating arrangements altered to accommodate proceedings in the church. Prudence dictates that *both* seating plans are drawn up and ready for action, whatever the weather. Invited guests, whether entering the Abbey or the church have to take their seats in good time before the ceremony begins. The 'platform party' are drawn up in the nave of the Abbey, out of sight until each group's turn comes to be sent 'on stage' at the right time. With luck, it all goes like clockwork.

The 'Tour of Ceremonies' on Festival Saturday morning starts by ensuring that the Melrosian has arrived at the Market Square on time and is not suffering from the effects of the previous night's Ball. The arrangements for the accompanying buses having been checked the Convenor takes off, as a one-man advance party ahead of the tour at the various attractions. At the Masonic Lodge remains at Newstead, the Masons are to be thanked for welcoming the Melrosian and the Queen and her Court to the enactment, and the neighbours for providing refreshments. Is the Centurion at the Trimontium Stone still on duty? Are the monks ready in Gattonside, with the cherries 'from their orchard', to welcome the official party? Here it's the turn of the Ladies of Gattonside to provide refreshments. The Convenor has the job of flushing the public out of the Hall and back on to the buses for the trip to Abbotsford, where he manages to thank the Curator before the entourage arrives to acknowledge Sir Walter and be photographed in a splendid setting. At the Darnick Tower ceremony, Smiths Road and Tower Road residents having already been asked to help with the passage and parking of the buses, Mrs Wilson is thanked for her hospitality.

The final series of events at the Abbey at noon needs preparation beforehand involving the delivery of monks' white habits, the marshalling of the monks themselves, the bell summoning their procession, the tapes of the Gregorian Chant, the granting of the Charter, the honouring of Robert the Bruce, the prayer and the singing of the 23rd Psalm. On the day the Convenor's last duty is to arrange the collection and laundry of the monks' habits

(yes, the 'dirty habits' joke). A week or so later, at the 'Greetin' Meetin' – the debrief (where we started) – all being well there is re-election for the next year, and the cycle begins again.

Ian Houston

John Bower's History of Melrose

John Bower was the Custodian of Melrose Abbey for many years and wrote 'A Description of the Abbeys of Melrose' which was published by its author and printed by an Edinburgh firm, in three editions.

The Third Edition, of 1827, is now being prepared for a limited reprint of the original text, with some additional notes, to mark the 200th Anniversary of the completion of Melrose Parish Church on the Weirhill in 1810. Subscriptions are invited, for one or more copies, by phoning 01896 822903.

John Hawkins

Iona Associates Group: Borders

Our small group contrives to meet once a month, usually on a Thursday evening, to hold a short service of worship and to maintain contact between members, associates, friends and supporters of the Iona Community in the Borders and North Northumberland. We also arrange meetings on a Saturday, when we have a service and a discussion of a common Christian theme, followed by a shared lunch together.

The September meeting is planned for Thursday 24th at 7.30pm at the home of Dr Monica Bolton in Denholm Village. October's meeting will be on Saturday 31st at 10.30am, venue still to be confirmed. All are welcome at any of our meetings. For more information please phone 01896 822903 or 01450 870002.

Melrose Reel Club

The new session starts on Wednesday 23 September, for 12 weeks, in the Church Hall at 7.30pm. All abilities welcome. Eleanor Connochie, Secretary (01896 823192 for more information).

ROTAS- ROTAS-AND MORE ROTAS

To enable all church facilities to run smoothly we need a band of volunteers to give their energy and time to carry out various duties. For a number of reasons these numbers are in decline and in particular the crèche. The following is a list of areas where willing hands will be made most welcome. The more people on a rota the less often a duty is required.

If you would like to join a rota then please contact Joyce at the office on 823339 who will be pleased to answer any questions you may have.

Creche Rota on Sundays

Coffee Rota on Sunday

Cleaning Rota, part of a team of 2/3 ideally 3

Door Duty on Sundays welcoming people to church and taking up the offering

Delivering the quarterly church magazine

Counting the Offering with Joyce at the office on Monday mornings

Flower Rota helping with flowers in church

Mid-Week Lunch helping every three months

Galashiels Clef Club

Galashiels Clef Club is a friendly and informal society for lovers of classical music (Vocal or instrumental) who enjoy making music together. The only qualification for membership is a readiness to perform music of the member's own choice from time to time at Club meetings, whether solo or ensemble.

Membership has been steady for many years at about 40 to 50, and comes from the central Borders area and beyond. It includes vocalists, an ad hoc choir, pianist, string players and some woodwind and brass players.

We normally hold eight meetings per year on Saturday evenings in the Lucy Sanderson Hall, each consisting of about 6 items or groups of items, performed by the members for the members.

Anyone interested in singing or playing in friendly company is warmly invited to contact Elizabeth Fraser on 01896 752375

The Rosie Ode 2009

Orange and yellow, purple and blue
Blooms aplenty, a radiant hue

Undismayed by blowing in the wind
Not dashed by storm or rain,
When Rosie passes on her route
Her labour's not in vain

Flowers selected by Rosie's masters
Contrast with the sombre planters
Hollyhocks and even asters (?)
A Homecoming welcome to all.

Butchers and Bakers support the display
Burts, Sarah and Grant are there
The baskets and boxes in splendid array
Are there better blooms anywhere?

The committee Chairman smiles and smiles
Along the boxes in their military rows
Spraying and schooshing, the new lance
Refreshes the plants that Nature grows.

It's Rosie's efforts in the Square
And we are proud to remember
That draws the folks to sit and admire
From early June to late September

The Pubs and the Grocers
The Boots and the Banks
To the Whole Lot of them
Our grateful thanks.

And amid this colourful profusion
That happy band of volunteers
Unlimited their contribution
To them, three long and hearty cheers!

As Rosie bears the last year's Cup
We stand in joyful celebration
She's really on the up and up
For us the word is – yes – elation!

From endless competition
It's time to take a break.
To plan the next new blooming move
Reflection time to take.

Rosie now has won her spurs
Soon, retiring to her bed,
Resting free from wear and tear
Will slumber in her Council shed

The end is nigh.
Enough of ode.
Next year we'll try
Another mode.

The Ormiston Bard