

Church Matters

West Kilbride Parish Church Magazine
Issue No. 12 December 2011/Jan 2012



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I would appreciate articles for the next issue of Church Matters to be emailed to me at brian.murray100@btinternet.com (PLEASE NOTE CHANGE) by 15th January or, if you do not have access to email, to be handed in to Ruth in the church office by 13th January. *Deirdre Murray, Editor.*

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EDITORIAL

What a bumper edition we have this month! Thank you so much to everyone who submitted articles. There were so many that I've had to hold some back for the next edition.

We have a letter from Heidi who is in Ethiopia helping to organise aid to the starving people in the Horn of Africa that has been devastated by drought and famine. She has been away so much this year but she will be home for Christmas and it will be good to have her back with us.

This has been a year of controversy within the church with the issue of homosexual ministers at the forefront and now there is the issue of same sex marriage. Please read and respond to the letter on page 24, always keeping in mind what the Bible says about these issues.

On the issue of marriage, we are planning to have an Alpha Marriage Course starting in February next year. Please speak to Brian or myself if you, or anyone you know, would be interested in participating in this course. This will be a wonderful way to reach out to couples in the community and it is for couples who are co-habiting as well as those who are married, so please pass the word along.

This is the last Church Matters for 2011 and time to reflect on the year gone by. Most of it has been joyful but, for some, there have been times of sadness. For some in our church family Christmas is a time when they remember loved ones who are no longer there to share it with them and for others it is a time of loneliness. There are families, like ourselves, who have a loved one serving in Afghanistan and others who have loved ones ill in hospital or at home. Please remember them all in your prayers at this time.

2012 already looks as if we have much to look forward to. I hope you are inspired by the vision of the Church and the plans for the refurbishment of the building. We must thank Billy McFarland and the Property Team for their hard work on our behalf in getting us to this stage. It is very exciting. May you and yours be blessed as we remember the true meaning of the season.

Deirdre Murray.

MINISTER'S LETTER

Christmas - A time for family

I wonder how you will be spending Christmas this year. For most people, it will be a time to spend with family and close friends - to eat together, to laugh together and to open presents together.

Of course, Christmas has always been about family. On that first Christmas, there was Mary and Joseph and baby Jesus in the manger - a small family together, who received visitors in the form of the shepherds and the wise men who brought gifts. They celebrated together not just the birth of a child, but a special child.

Jesus was so special, because he was willing to lay his glory by - and to come to earth as a man. He lived a perfect life and died the death of a criminal, before being raised to life again.

Now, the question should be - Why would he do such a thing?

Why would Jesus come into the world instead of remaining in heaven with the Father?

The answer of course, is that Jesus came to save us. To save us from sin. To save us from the righteous wrath of God - to save us from death and an eternity away from him. In other words, Jesus came that by believing in him and following him we might become part of God's family - adopted sons and daughters.

Did you know that you were in God's family - that He is our heavenly Father? What a privilege!

Of course, as well as spending time with our biological family at Christmas, it is also time to spend with the church family - our brothers and sisters in Christ - to celebrate the coming of Jesus into the world, and to look forward with anticipation to him coming again.

That is why over the Christmas period we have services which mean that we can get together and celebrate.

So however you are spending time this Christmas - and whoever you are spending it with - remember that you are part of God's family - you are his adopted child.

And may you know the joy and assurance that comes from that.

But equally, may you also know that God's family - the church - is a big one! As you come to church this Christmas to celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour, why not bring a family member or a friend or neighbour that they too might find a Saviour in Jesus!

Anna, John and I wish you all a very happy Christmas and a blessed New Year!

James

Vision for West Kilbride Parish Church

Early on in our life as a congregation following the union of churches in January 2010, the Session agreed a vision statement, which is worth reflecting on now and again.

It is:

That we **Come to Christ.**

That we **Follow Christ.**

That we **Serve Christ.**

That we **Share Christ.**

Come, Follow, Serve and Share - that is our mission as a church.

As a church body, we long to be vibrant with all ages represented - a church family together worshipping God. At this present moment, we have some way to go. In common with most Churches at this time, we are an ageing congregation and we are particularly missing those in their teens, twenties, thirties and forties.

Elsewhere, Billy McFarland, our property convenor has outlined what the Kirk Session has been considering in terms of renovation of the existing buildings.

This renovation is not something that has been considered to be more comfortable on a Sunday morning within the church. Rather, it is something that the Session feel should be done in an attempt to reach out to those in the community. We are seeking, with God's help, to reach out to the lost.

For example, a change in the layout of the Sanctuary will allow us a degree of flexibility. Different styles of worship can be done. Outreach events such as our recent Alpha Course could also be held within the Sanctuary. And, at the same time, we will be more welcoming with a new heating system in place - after all, who likes sitting in a cold church?

As always, the church is the people. It is not the building. But the building can be used as a tool to reach out - to share the love of Christ with others in a way which is appropriate for the 21st Century.

Can I commend to you the work that the Property Committee have done in drawing the plans together and as things progress, we will try to keep the congregation as up to date as possible.

James

PROPERTY REPORT

PROPERTY, THE FUTURE ?

Following on from the presentation of proposals to the Congregation on 30th October, the Property team thought that it would be helpful to record and highlight a few important issues contained in the presentation. Also to explain what lead us to the stage we now find ourselves as a Session, Property team and now as a Congregation, all the while being mindful that we are all stewards of the property.

James has made reference to the “vision” for the church and the role of the buildings within that. We will, therefore, only address the suitability and general condition of the buildings in assisting with that future role and vision.

The Quinquennial Report of 2010 identified and highlighted numerous areas where work was demanded and others where professional surveys were to be arranged. These surveys ultimately resulted in identifying further repairs, upgrading and improvement requirements. In some cases, basic legislation was not being achieved.

Having been surveyed, examples of these required works include, Tower - Structural strengthening is required. This has been helped recently by the removal of the bell and the renewal of the internal roof, drainage, floor and ceiling. Further work is, however, required.

Windows – These are currently in a condition where only substantial and expensive remedial works will be required in order to save them in the long term.

However, by relocating the stained glass windows from Overton, (not including the two rose windows), we would not only be in receipt of higher quality windows, visually and structurally but we would also be “saving” the Overton windows from potential future damage/removal/loss. We would also be ensuring that Overton was returned to its original design.

Wiring – Inspection suggests that major replacement is advisable throughout.

Disabled Access – Legislation dictates improvement on the current situation.

Fire Risk Audit – Although recent minor installation and upgrades have been made, further works are to be arranged in order to comply fully.

Roof repairs – There are various areas where repairs are outstanding. Long-term water ingress has resulted in damage to numerous locations throughout the buildings, with substantial repairs and preservation works being the required solution. The Bill Penny Hall roof is also in need of substantial repairs.

Asbestos management/removal – Although minor in quantity, this matter requires addressing, having been identified by professional survey.

Heating/Insulation to Sanctuary and lower halls – Currently the insulation is non-existent and the heating, as we are aware, is far from satisfactory.

The above are only a few examples of items requiring attention and which will have to be addressed in the near future, whether we deal with them individually or include them in the proposed work associated with the remodelling of the property, (generally Phase 1), as presented to the Congregation on 30th.October.

If we only tend to spend one hour or so, per week, in church, there may be a tendency to form the opinion that we can “get by” through simply carrying out repairs on a “care and maintenance” basis, there-by incurring (initially, at least) lower costs. However, if we genuinely have a desire to see the church thrive and to have the buildings used on a more regular basis (not to mention comfort and safety) then, Session believes, that to be seen as portraying the attitude of “getting by” or “it’s good enough”, is not an option.

Only by improving the buildings and not simply and continually to be spending funds on repetitive repairs to individual areas, can we take the necessary steps to “fuel” the vision which we all, hopefully, share. The “cheap” option usually, in the long-term, never is actually the “cheapest”, or best!

Session is of the belief that we have a huge opportunity to display boldness for the church at a time when that is greatly needed, not only locally but also overall.

To take this opportunity does require financial commitment as well as trust that we are taking the correct path. Session is of the opinion that we should continue along the path we currently find ourselves, taking, as always “one stage at a time”. This has been the case up to now and will continue, carefully and prayerfully.

A fund sourcing team has been formed with a view to investigating potential areas of assistance. This is at an early stage. In addition, the proceeds from the sale of the ex- St. Andrew’s manse are available to us and are, under Church of Scotland regulations, to be used only for Property/Fabric.

The next stage, subject to receipt of approval from the General Trustees, will be to have detailed drawings and proposals produced by the architect for Sessions comments and approval, before submission to the Planners. This process will take a few months, during which time further debate and decisions will be required by Session and subsequent issue of information to the Congregation will follow.

With regards to the future marketing and sale of Overton, this will largely depend on the churches general needs and also the time-scale and scope of proposed future works in W.K.P.C.

W. McFarland.
Property Convener.

Diary Dates for December 2011 and January 2012

4th Dec 10.30am Advent 2 - Morning Worship

2.00pm - Afternoon Service at Headrigg Gardens

5th Dec 7.15pm - Men's Fellowship in the Bill Penny Hall

6th Dec 10.00am - Rendezvous in the Lower Hall

6th Dec 2.30pm - Guild meeting in the Lower Hall

LIGHT & LIFE - with Gail Montgomery

7th Dec 10.00am -11.00am Vestry Hour

7th Dec 7.15pm - Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room

8.00pm Bible Study

11th Dec 10.30am Advent 3 - Morning Worship

12th Dec 7.15pm - Men's Fellowship: Christmas Lunch in
WK Golf Club

13th Dec No Rendezvous today due to the Age Concern Christmas
Lunch in Seamill Hydro

13th Dec Guild - will meet for Christmas Lunch in Seamill Hydro

13th Dec 7.30pm - Kirk Session Meeting in the Lower Hall

14th Dec 10.00am - 11.00am Vestry Hour

14th Dec 7.00pm - Uniformed Organisations Carol Service

14th Dec 7.15pm - Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room

8.00pm - Bible Study

18th Dec 10.30am Advent 4 - Family Service

18th Dec 7.00pm - Nine Lessons and carols

20th Dec 9.30am - West Kilbride Primary Christmas Service (P4-7)

20th Dec 10.00am Rendezvous in the Lower Hall

20th Dec 2.30pm Guild meeting in the Lower Hall

Allocation of Funds, Carols and Readings

21st Dec 10.00am-11.00am Vestry Hour

21st Dec 7.15pm Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room

8.00pm Bible Study

24th Dec 7.30pm Christmas Eve Service - Family Service

11.15pm Watchnight Service

25th Dec 10.30am Christmas Day Service - Family Service

27th Dec No Rendezvous - Christmas break

2012

- 1st Jan** **10.30am Communion Service**
2.00pm Communion Service at Headrigg Gardens
- 3rd Jan No Rendezvous - Christmas break
- 8th Jan** **10.30am Morning Worship**
- 9th Jan 7.15pm - Men's Fellowship in the Bill Penny Hall
- 10th Jan 10.00am - Rendezvous in the Lower Hall
- 10th Jan 2.30pm - Guild meets in the Lower Hall
MEMORIES OF TEACHING - J Copeland
- 11th Jan 10.00am-11.00am Vestry Hour
- 11th Jan 7.15pm - Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room
8.00pm - Bible Study
- 15th Jan** **10.30am Morning Worship**
- 16th Jan 7.15pm - Men's Fellowship in the Bill Penny Hall
- 17th Jan 10.00am - Rendezvous in the Lower Hall
- 17th Jan 2.30pm - Guild meeting in the Lower Hall
SLIDE SHOW - Mr N McGillvary
- 18th Jan 10.00am-11.00am Vestry Hour
- 18th Jan 7.15pm - Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room
8.00pm - Bible Study
- 22nd Jan** **10.30am Morning Worship**
- 23rd Jan 7.15pm - Men's Fellowship in the Bill Penny Hall
- 24th Jan 10.00am - Rendezvous in the Lower Hall
- 24th Jan 2.30pm - Guild meeting in the Lower Hall
Burns Afternoon
- 25th Jan 10.00am-11.00am Vestry Hour
- 25th Jan 7.15pm- Prayer Meeting in the Prayer Room
8.00pm- Bible Study
- 29th Jan** **10.30am Morning Worship - Rev Scott Cameron**
18.30pm Evening Praise and Worship Service
- 30th Jan 7.15pm- Men's Fellowship in the Bill Penny Hall.
- 31st Jan 10.00am - Rendezvous in the Lower Hall
- 31st Jan 2.30pm - Guild meeting in the Lower Hall
GUEST SPEAKER – Mrs J Cruickshank
- 31st Jan Team Leaders' Meeting in the Prayer Room

The Guild

Mindful of our theme this year '**Called to Walk Humbly**' the Guild programme is well under way. One feature that has stood out for me this year is the way our members are willing to contribute to the programme. A 'Do-it-yourself' afternoon is not difficult to arrange.

After the **At Home** on Sept. 20th when we had the encouragement of welcoming new members we have had a varied programme. Mr J Steele gave a fascinating talk on '**Horse Island**' off Ardrossan, dispelling some of the myths people had grown up with, and describing the wild life sanctuary that it is. A speaker from **Geilsland School**, Beith, a special school run by the Church of Scotland, spoke very movingly about the work done with boys from difficult backgrounds and with many problems.

We thoroughly enjoyed being entertained by our own **Church Choir**, with Gilmour Smith our organist. They sang a varied selection of songs and hymns, old and new.

The Guild project which we are supporting financially this year is '**A new Hungers**', the Church of Scotland World Mission Department's H.I.V/AIDS initiative to help those on anti-retroviral drugs to have a good diet and living conditions so that the drugs can work. We were fortunate to have an excellent speaker, Miss Marjorie Clarke, from Edinburgh who opened our eyes to the value of the project.

Another interesting afternoon was when Miss Pricilla Thorburn, under the title '**Travel with my Aunt**', told us an amazing story of a journey to India in 1963 by sea, to visit her aunt who then took her on an overland journey by car through India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, and eventually to Turkey and Greece. They had many adventures, including being arrested!

Other meetings included a '**Favourite Hymns and Readings**' afternoon, and a visit from our Minister, James, who spoke to us about the current Guild theme. As Anna & young John were with us too, it was a happy afternoon, but with a meaningful challenge.

Eileen Hinde

Bishop Elias Taban.

We were very fortunate to have Bishop Elias Taban, Moderator of the Evangelical Presbyterian Church (EPC) of South Sudan and John Earwicker of Medic Assist International (MAI) visit our church earlier this month. We hosted a lunch after which Elias gave a presentation and spoke very movingly about his life and the situation in South Sudan.

This year, after decades of war, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan. As most of you are aware, last year I visited Elias and the EPC with nine other supporters of MAI and saw first-hand the wonderful work being carried out by the church in partnership with MAI. The church runs schools, orphanages, clinics, a Bible School and various fund raising projects that employ local people. I was there for the opening of the two in patient blocks, with 25 beds, at the hospital in Goli and what great joy there was in that community of the Mundu tribe who traditionally go to witch doctors when they are ill. Now, people are coming for many miles to the hospital and lives are being saved. Thank you, too, to all who gave me money for mosquito nets, more lives saved!

South Sudan is larger than Spain and Portugal combined and there is virtually no infrastructure because of the decades of war with the Khartoum government. For example, there is only 50 kilometres of tarmac road in the whole country and very few government schools or medical facilities. Women and children have to walk many miles in oppressive heat to collect water. This is one of the poorest countries on earth and there is only one doctor for every 100,000 people. In contrast, West Kilbride has less than 5000 people and we have five doctors as well as various hospitals within a few (tarmac) miles!

How humbling it was to hear from Elias that the new church for 1000 people they had started to build when I was there is too small! They have the roof on it but can't put the walls on because there are too many people to fit in. This is surely 'church without walls'! People are turning to Christ because of the love Christian people have shown in providing medical and other aid to them and the women of the church meeting for prayer on a Tuesday and going out to spread the Good News every Friday. Elias baptised 83 people just before coming to Britain. They are so poor in material wealth but are spiritually rich. We, the developed countries, are materially rich, but spiritually poor. Oh, that people here would be as hungry for Jesus as the South Sudanese...

Deirdre Murray.

This newsletter was received after Bishop Taban returned home.

GREAT NEWS FROM GOLI!

Good News #1: All the costs of the Out Patient Department at Goli Hospital have been met in 2011 by our Partners from their business activities' surpluses.....just as they promised!

Good News #2: The first two student nurses that have been sponsored by MAI and EPC (70%/30%) are graduating this term and will start their three year commitment at Goli from January 2012! The plan to raise up our own staff by investing in training has come to fruition!

Good News #3: When Elias Taban arrived in the UK, he stunned us by announcing that a Congolese surgical doctor is willing to begin work at Goli in January 2012! This is amazing news and will bring radical transformation to the community and the future of the Hospital. However, it means that we have to resolve the matter of power supply at the site urgently, especially for the Operating Theatre. Solar is the answer with plenty of sun that comes free of charge!

Good News #4: On the tour, we raised this with the people we met. At the time, we thought we could achieve the basic installation for £9,000 although now we know it will cost £11,565. Amazingly, there has been a fantastic response and £11,290 has been given (including Gift Aid yet to be claimed). Further funds that are being sent or sought will enable an additional installation to power the staff accommodation as well!

Good News #5: Some essential equipment will need to be purchased as well so that surgery can commence but a gift of £5,000 has made a great start to that search.

Thank you to Bishop Taban and all the churches and groups that met with us.
John Earwicker.

THE FUTURE STORY

The people of Goli need your help:

Volunteer your skills (Doctors, Nurses and Midwives are needed for short-term assignments and a Doctor for two or three years)

Pray for the work of MAI and the church in South Sudan.

Support local staff with your gifts of money towards the cost of employing staff and funding the hospital. **(Please go to page 27)**

Monthly Prayer Diary – December 2011

- Thu 1st World AIDS Day. We pray for all who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS and we remember the final year of the Guild project, A New Hunger
- Fri 2nd Yuletide Night. We pray blessing on our local businesses for the good of the community
- Sat 3rd We pray for the residents of Meadowfoot Road and all who have been affected by the recent tragic events there
- Sun 4th Help us Lord as we prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus, to share with those around us the good news of Your power and love**
- Mon 5th Our Minister James, Anna his wife and their little son John. We pray especially for James during this busy time preparing for Christmas Services
- Tue 6th Human Trafficking. People bought and sold into slavery
- Wed 7th Libya, Syria and the Middle East. We remember also the work of MECO (Middle East Christian Outreach) and Christians living in those regions
- Thu 8th World Leaders & all in authority over us. May they seek Godly wisdom
- Fri 9th The Persecuted Church. We pray for the work of Open Doors and Release International,
- Sat 10th Servicemen and women working in difficult parts of the world. We pray for their protection and for their families at home
- Sun 11th Lord Jesus, Light of the World, as Christmas grows closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome You in the midst of all our preparations**
- Mon 12th Helen Scott as she prepares to return to Malawi at the end of the month. We pray for the situation in Malawi with fuel, medication and fertilizer shortages.
- Tue 13th Our local schools. We pray for our Minister James as he goes into Ardrossan Academy on Tuesdays. We pray for good times of sharing.
- Wed 14th The children in the Crèche, Treasure Seekers, Junior Church and the YF. We pray for their leaders. We remember also Rainbows, Brownies, Guides, Anchor Boys and BBs.
- Thu 15th We pray for our GP Surgery and local hospitals and Care Homes.
- Fri 16th All who are unwell, and those who care for them. Also all who are undergoing treatment or waiting for test results.
- Sat 17th All who are struggling with drug and alcohol addiction and the effect this has on family life.

- Sun 18th Lord Jesus, Light of the world, bless Your Church preparing for Christmas and bless us Your children who long for Your coming.**
- Mon 19th All who are feeling the sadness of bereavement deeper at this time of year, may they know that You are with them and You will never leave them.
- Tue 20th All who are sad or lonely, may they know Your comfort and find hope for the future.
- Wed 21st All who are called to serve You in distant lands. Lord protect and provide for them.
- Thu 22nd Glasgow City Mission and also the work of The Samaritans at this time of year.
- Fri 23rd We pray for families in broken relationships that You will make a way when times look bleakest.
- Sat 24th Christmas Services being held in the village. May we sense Your Presence with us.
- Sun 25th Lord Jesus, Light of Light, You have come among us. Help us who live by Your light to shine as lights in Your world. Glory to God in the Highest.**
- Mon 26th We pray for family and friends who don't yet know You as their Lord and Saviour.
- Tue 27th Home Helps & Care Workers bringing cheer and valuable help to those in need in WK.
- Wed 28th Our neighbours, especially those who feel vulnerable during the winter months.
- Thu 29th All whose lives have been torn apart by wars, terrorism or natural disasters.
- Fri 30th Protection over our village against violence and crime.
- Sat 31st Let us set this day aside to count our many blessings throughout 2011 and give thanks.

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you.” John 14 v 27

Please remember the **Prayer Chain** is available for urgent prayer requests. **Contact 07826652331**

When we pray remember:

1. The love of God that wants the best for us.
2. The wisdom of God that knows what is best for us.
3. The power of God that can accomplish it.

William Barclay

Monthly Prayer Diary – January 2012

- Sun 1st** **God of new beginnings, help the light of Your love to shine in our hearts, that we may become the people You created us to be**
- Mon 2nd The residents of Aiknut Road + Ailsa View
- Tue 3rd The Church of Scotland and the Church in Scotland
- Wed 4th God's leading and guidance for the future plans for the Church in West Kilbride
- Thu 5th The Ardrossan Presbytery and for local congregations facing change
- Fri 6th We give thanks for our Minister James, Anna his wife and their son John
- Sat 7th Our Session Clerks Carol and Graeme and all our Elders
- Sun 8th** **Thou who are ever the same, grant us so to pass through the coming year with faithful hearts, that we may be able in all things to please Thee**
- Mon 9th The residents of Alton St + Alton Way
- Tue 10th We pray for all who attend our Services on Sundays and the organisations throughout each week. May we feel welcomed, loved and know the sense of Your Presence with us
- Wed 11th All who are called to serve God in other lands, we remember especially Helen Scott as she settles back into life at the school in Ekwendeni
- Thu 12th Troubled parts of the world. All whose lives have been torn apart by war, terrorism or natural disasters
- Fri 13th Aid Agencies and Rescue services. Peacemakers and Peacekeepers
- Sat 14th World leaders and all who are in authority over us. We pray for Godly wisdom and integrity.
- Sun 15th** **Almighty God, You are our Light in darkness, our Strength in weakness, our Hope in sinfulness and our Eternal Home**
- Mon 16th The residents of Ardneil Ave + Ardrossan High Road
- Tue 17th Our local schools, may all staff and pupils feel valued and supported
- Wed 18th Our GP Surgery. We give thanks for our doctors and nurses and all who work there. We pray for strength for them as they care for us
- Thu 19th All we know who are unwell, or receiving treatment. All who are awaiting test results

- Fri 20th The Persecuted Church. We pray for wives separated from their husbands, children who are orphaned and all who reach out to support them in Jesus name
- Sat 21st Our brothers and sisters who attend St Brides Church
- Sun 22nd Lord grant that we may arise to serve You and lie down to sleep in entire confidence in You**
- Mon 23rd The residents of Ardrossan Road + Arranview Gardens
- Tue 24th We ask for more of the Holy Spirit's boldness in our witness at our workplaces, amongst our friends and family and within the village
- Wed 25th All who are caught up in addiction and the impact it has on family life
- Thu 26th Human Trafficking. We pray for an end to slavery and for the organisations campaigning to raise awareness
- Fri 27th Our neighbours and all who may be feeling vulnerable during these winter months
- Sat 28th We give thanks for our Church Family. We pray that those looking in on us will see how we love one another
- Sun 29th Give me what You have chosen for me and bring about what You desire for me**
- Mon 30th The residents of Arthur Court + Arthur Street
- Tue 31st All who are bereaved. Lord You have promised to bind up the broken-hearted

**“I have set the Lord always before me.
Because He is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.”
Psalm 16 v 8**

Prayer Diary

It is a privilege month by month to prepare the prayer diary. I start with a blank page and a prayer and I am always thrilled to see it come together through God's leading and guidance. You will see that for January some roads and streets have been included. God willing, in this way we will be able to cover all of West Kilbride with our prayers throughout 2012. May we pray a blessing on every home.

Lynne Seal

WHERE IS GOD IN THE WORLD?

Apparently the White House referred to Christmas Trees as Holiday Trees for the first time this year which prompted CBS presenter, Ben Stein, to present this piece which I would like to share with you. I think it applies just as much to many countries as it does to America.

The following was written by Ben Stein and recited by him on CBS Sunday Morning Commentary.

My confession:

I am a Jew, and every single one of my ancestors was Jewish. And it does not bother me even a little bit when people call those beautiful lit up, bejewelled trees, Christmas trees. I don't feel threatened. I don't feel discriminated against. That's what they are, Christmas trees.

It doesn't bother me a bit when people say, 'Merry Christmas' to me. I don't think they are slighting me or getting ready to put me in a ghetto. In fact, I kind of like it. It shows that we are all brothers and sisters celebrating this happy time of year. It doesn't bother me at all that there is a manger scene on display at a key intersection near my beach house in Malibu. If people want a crèche, it's just as fine with me as is the Menorah a few hundred yards away.

I don't like getting pushed around for being a Jew, and I don't think Christians like getting pushed around for being Christians. I think people who believe in God are sick and tired of getting pushed around, period. I have no idea where the concept came from, that America is an explicitly atheist country. I can't find it in the Constitution and I don't like it being shoved down my throat.

Or maybe I can put it another way: where did the idea come from that we should worship celebrities and we aren't allowed to worship God? I guess that's a sign that I'm getting old, too. But there are a lot of us who are wondering where these celebrities came from and where the America we knew went to.

This is not intended to be a joke; it's not funny, it's intended to get you thinking.

Billy Graham's daughter was interviewed on the Early Show and Jane Clayson asked her 'How could God let something like this happen?' (regarding Hurricane Katrina). Anne Graham gave an extremely profound and insightful response. She said, 'I believe God is deeply saddened by this, just as we are, but for years we've been telling God to get out of our schools, to get out of our government and to get out of our lives. And being the gentleman He is, I believe He has calmly backed out. How can we expect God to give us His blessing and His protection if we demand He leave us alone?'

In light of recent events... terrorists attack, school shootings, etc. I think it started when Madeleine Murray O'Hare (she was murdered a few years ago) complained she didn't want prayer in our schools, and we said OK. Then someone said you better not read the Bible in school. The Bible says you shall not kill; you shall not steal, and love your neighbour as yourself. And we said OK.

Then Dr. Benjamin Spock said we shouldn't spank our children when they misbehave, because their little personalities would be warped and we might damage their self-esteem (Dr. Spock's son committed suicide). We said an expert should know what he's talking about. And we said OK.

Now we're asking ourselves why our children have no conscience, why they don't know right from wrong, and why it doesn't bother them to kill strangers, their classmates, and themselves. Probably, if we think about it long and hard enough, we can figure it out. I think it has a great deal to do with 'WE REAP WHAT WE SOW.'

Funny how simple it is for people to trash God and then wonder why the world's going to hell. Funny how we believe what the newspapers say, but question what the Bible says. Funny how you can send 'jokes' through e-mail and they spread like wildfire, but when you start sending messages regarding the Lord, people think twice about sharing. Funny how lewd, crude, vulgar and obscene

articles pass freely through cyberspace, but public discussion of God is suppressed in the school and workplace.

Are you laughing yet?

Funny how we can be more worried about what other people think of us than what God thinks of us.

If you discard this thought process, don't sit back and complain about what bad shape the world is in.

My Best Regards,
Honestly and respectfully,
Ben Stein

*I thought this was a very meaningful article for this Christmas issue.
Ed.*

TEARFUND

Although I shall still continue to put the Tearfund 'Thank You' letters in the notice board slot in the Lower Hall, as I think that they may not be read by many of you, I propose to give a short synopsis in Church Matters when I'm communicating regarding the total you have collected in the little boxes so that you know how your money is helping.

This time the wonderful total is £90.73. Thank you all for collecting your small change which mounts up amazingly quickly. Lynne Paterson writes that, as there is widespread poverty in Tajikistan, with children suffering, Tearfund's partners are mobilising church members to become foster parents working in conjunction with the local authority social workers.

They also run a crisis centre providing shelter, clothing, education and medical care to children in trauma.

Audrey Brown.

Boys Brigade Christmas Post

The 1st West Kilbride B.B. Charity Christmas Post Collection will start from Monday 12th December. Cards can be handed into the following shops - **D&B Gallery** and **Woolpatch**, for delivery in the West Kilbride postcode area. The minimum donation of 10p per card will be shared between the BB and nominated charities.

The shops will collect the cards up until 5pm on Friday 16th December. Thereafter cards can be handed in to Overton Church Hall until 3pm on Saturday 17th December.

Due to increased usage of the Parish Church facilities at this busy time, the main sorting office will again be at Overton Church Hall this year.

Last year the collection raised £2,000 of which £1,050 was shared between 3 good causes (North Ayrshire Cancer Care - Local Drivers, Haematology & Oncology Ward at Ayrshire Central Hospital, BB World Mission) with the balance going towards the work of the local BB.

The support of the village in this worthwhile venture is greatly appreciated, so please pass on the word to your friends and neighbours.

The Junior Section Bible Knowledge team, which includes three members of West Kilbride Parish Junior Church, under the direction of Miss Elizabeth McGillivray, were victorious in the North Ayrshire Battalion Bible Knowledge competition on the 6th of November.

As you may be aware the Battalion includes 14 other companies which our team had to compete against.

Team - P4-Liam McLeod, P5-Paul Lidbury, P6-Robert Jack
P7- Gavin Lidbury. *Alex Jack*

Church Flowers

I would like to thank the flower team for all their hard work decorating the church for the Harvest Thanksgiving. The church looked lovely and it was heartening to see so many tins ready to be sent to the Glasgow City Mission.

I found this poem in another church magazine and thought it apt following our celebration.

HARVEST FESTIVAL

Thank you Father for Nature for supplying the food we eat.
For the many wonderful fruits that are tasty and so sweet.

Thank you for the vegetables that help the body to survive,
That nourish our very being to keep us all alive.

Thank you for the conditions, the wind, the rain and storm,
Thank you for the sunshine that ripens fields of corn.

Bless all the harvest that grace our table fare,
Abundance of glorious food, a feast for all to share.

So as we celebrate Harvest Festival let us think of those in need,
Send your thoughts out to the starving that all of them may feed.

Help us share your treasure with those who are starving today.
Give them strength and nourishment to soothe their pains away.

If through your love and understanding we conquer famine, decay
and despair,
Then, Father, we have learnt our lesson, for through You we've
learnt to share

M.G.Bradshaw

One of the satisfying aspects of doing the flowers is knowing how much they mean to those who receive them after the service. Indeed, we receive many 'thank you' letters expressing such

thoughts as "I do appreciate your kind thoughts" or "we were touched and comforted to receive the flowers and to know we are in your thoughts and prayers."

Unfortunately the number of donations we are receiving towards the provision of the flowers that enhance the sanctuary Sunday by Sunday has dropped drastically and very few Sundays are now covered. May I encourage you to donate the flowers some Sunday, perhaps to mark a special occasion, e.g. an anniversary or birthday?

It is very simple: put your name on the flower calendar (on the notice board in the lower hall) against the Sunday you would like to provide the flowers and then either hand your donation to the office or put it in an envelope marked 'Flower Fund' and drop it into the collection bag.

Thank you in anticipation

Moira Mackinnon

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

During the ongoing alterations to the church building, the Men's Fellowship have continued to hold their meetings in the Lower Hall. While the carpet there is not ideally suited to our recreational carpet bowls, and runs anything but true, we have gradually begun to master the problem and, whatever else, have had some really good "fun nights" One in particular where (no names mentioned) one team of four beat the other by 19 – 0!

It is expected we will be able to return to the Bill Penny Hall, certainly by January if not sooner, and get down to our normal routine. This will allow us to resume with some speaker nights that had to be cancelled and we hope to have John Steele at some point in January to update us on his research into the HMS Dasher incident, and John Rhodes on his latest travels in February. Also in January we are to resume our connection with the Beith Men's Fellowship when we host them on the 16th.

We are continually looking to add to our membership and are pleased to welcome Bill Roper to the scene. Any men in need of a

little exercise and enjoyment will be welcomed to come and join us.
Nothing is taken too seriously. *Fred Baxter.*

This is a letter which was received from Colin Hart, Director of the Christian Institute. Please respond to this important issue. Introducing homosexual marriage will have a huge effect on Scottish society and values if it is implemented and all Christians must make their voices heard before it is too late.

Marriage

Please write to your MSPs: Ask them not to redefine marriage.

Now is the time to write to your MSPs about the marriage issue. The Scottish Government says it is "leaning toward" redefining marriage to introduce homosexual marriage. However, the Scottish Government also says it is listening to all sides. We believe the current definition of marriage could be retained if enough people express their support now.

It is important that MSPs know how voters feel about this issue. Please write now (information and tips on the next page).

If marriage is redefined in law, the new definition will be the one that is promoted by the Government in schools and through other public bodies. Children need a mother and a father, which homosexual parenting denies them. Throughout Scottish history and across the world marriage has been the bedrock of society and enabled communities to prosper.

The legal rights of marriage are already available to homosexuals through civil partnerships. This issue is not about rights, this is about a small minority trying to redefine marriage across the whole of Scotland. If marriage is redefined, what is to stop it being rewritten in other ways? Will the legalisation of polygamy be next? The implications are far-reaching.

So please write to your MSPs today. Your MSPs are listed below with their contact details. We have also suggested some arguments that you may wish to use in your letter.

Yours in Christ,



Your constituency MSP is: Mr Kenneth Gibson MSP, Member for Cunninghame North.

Please also write to one of your regional MSP's from this list:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------|
| 1. Mr Neil Bibby MSP | (Lab) |
| 2. Mr Jackson Cariaw MSP | (Con) |
| 3. Mrs Mary Fee MSP | (Lab) |
| 4. Miss Annabel Goldie MSP | (Con) |
| 5. Mr Stewart Maxwell MSP | (SNP) |
| 6. Mrs Margaret McDougall MSP | (Lab) |
| 7. Mr Stuart McMillan MSP | (SNP) |

If you have the time. please do write to your other regional MSPs on the list above.

Writing tips:

- Be brief (one side of paper is good), be polite, and be clear.
- **Say you oppose redefining marriage.**
- If you voted for your MSP or their Party, say so.
- If this issue would affect your vote at the next election, say so.,
- If you support the idea of a referendum on same-sex marriage, say so.

Use one or two of the following arguments (use your own words):

- Homosexual marriage will redefine marriage for the whole of society.
- It's not about rights. All the rights of marriage are already available through homosexual civil partnerships.
- If marriage is redefined for homosexuals, the new legal definition will be the one promoted in schools and by other public bodies.
- Children need a mother and father; homosexual marriage denies this.

- Marriage was not created by politicians, and it is wrong for politicians to redefine it.
- Marriage has served Scotland well for centuries; it is a bedrock institution of society.
- If marriage can be redefined for homosexuals, what about polygamists? There is already a court case about this in Canada.
- How much would this cost the taxpayer? Is this really what the Government should be spending our money on?
- Fewer than 0.2% of Scottish households are headed by a same-sex couple. Last year fewer than 500 civil partnerships were registered in Scotland. Should such a small group be able to redefine marriage for the whole nation?
- Whatever the politicians say, if marriage is redefined there will surely be an erosion of religious liberty and freedom of conscience.
- People should be allowed to debate this issue in a climate of courtesy and respect; some people have already been treated in a shocking way and punished for standing up for traditional marriage.
- People should not suffer discrimination at work just because they support traditional marriage.
- Parents should not be treated as intolerant just because they do not want their children to be taught that same-sex marriage is the same as traditional marriage.
- *Disagreement isn't hatred. Opposition to same-sex marriage is not based on hostility to anyone.*

“If you read history you find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next.”

CS Lewis

THE FINAL INSPECTION

The soldier stood and faced God, which must always come to pass.
He hoped his shoes were shining just as brightly as his brass.

“Step forward now, you soldier, how shall I deal with you?
Have you always turned the other cheek? To My Church have you
been true?”

The soldier squared his shoulders and said, “No, Lord, I guess I ain't.
Because those of us who carry guns can't always be a saint.

I've had to work most Sundays and at times my talk was tough.
And sometimes I've been violent because the world is awfully rough.

But, I never took a penny that wasn't mine to keep.
Though I worked a lot of overtime when the bills got just too steep.

And I never passed a cry for help though at times I shook with fear.
And sometimes, God, forgive me, I've wept unmanly tears.

I know I don't deserve a place among the people here.
They never wanted me around except to calm their fears.

If you've a place for me here, Lord, it needn't be so grand.
I never expected or had too much but if you don't, I'll understand.”

There was a silence all around the throne where saints had often trod.
As the soldier waited quietly for the judgement of his God.

“Step forward now, you soldier you've borne your burdens well.
Walk peacefully on Heaven's streets; you've done your time in Hell.”

Author Unknown~

IN GOD WE TRUST

GOOD SAMARITAN

A Sunday school teacher was telling her class the story of the Good Samaritan. She asked the class, "If you saw a person lying on the roadside, all wounded and bleeding, what would you do?" A thoughtful little girl broke the hushed silence, "I think I'd throw up."

DID NOAH FISH?

A Sunday school teacher asked, "Johnny, do you think Noah did a lot of fishing when he was on the Ark?" "No," replied Johnny, "How could he, with just two worms."

THE LORD IS MY SHEPHERD

A Sunday School teacher decided to have her young class memorize one of the most quoted passages in the Bible - Psalm 23. She gave the youngsters a month to learn the chapter. Little Rick was excited about the task - but he just couldn't remember the Psalm. After much practice, he could barely get past the first line. On the day that the kids were scheduled to recite Psalm 23 in front of the congregation, Ricky was so nervous. When it was his turn, he stepped up to the microphone and said proudly, "The Lord is my Shepherd, and that's all I need to know."

UNANSWERED PRAYER

The preacher's 5 year-old daughter noticed that her father always paused and bowed his head for a moment before starting his sermon. One day, she asked him why. "Well, honey," he began, proud that his daughter was so observant of his messages, "I'm asking the Lord to help me preach a good sermon." "How come He doesn't answer it?" she asked.

BEING THANKFUL

A Rabbi said to a precocious six-year-old boy, "So your mother says your prayers for you each night? That's very commendable. What does she say?"

The little boy replied, "Thank God he's in bed!"

CHURCH ADMINISTRATOR

In November Jo Russell, our Church Administrator, left us (and West Kilbride) to live in Glasgow. She had been working part-time for St. Mary's Cathedral, which is where she worships and is a member of the choir, as well as working for us and she felt it was time to move nearer to there. Jo was with us for three years and did a sterling job running the church office and we pray for many blessings in her new home and this new phase of her life. Thank you, Jo, for your patience in dealing with everyone who needed your help.

We are fortunate to have Ruth Donaldson taking over from Jo. Most people will know Ruth, who is a member of our Church family, and pray that she will enjoy working in the office. This is a very busy time for the church administrator, already she has had to print off the Christmas leaflets and now she has to cope with Church Matters! Bless you, Ruth.

I'm helping Medic Assist International to raise money whenever I shop online - could you do the same? It's very simple - just visit <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/medicassistint/> to register and shop with over 2000 well known retailers like Amazon, Argos, M&S, eBay and many more. Whenever I buy something, the retailer makes a donation to Medic Assist International. They've helped other causes raise over £2,000,000 so it really does work.

I'd be really grateful if you could use *easyfundraising* too. It won't cost you a penny extra to shop through *easyfundraising* and you can even save money with special offers and voucher codes.

And this Christmas *easyfundraising* are giving away prizes worth over £5,000 including £1000 cash, so if you start fundraising now, you could be a winner!

So please make a difference to Medic Assist International and take a look at *easyfundraising* today -

<http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/medicassistint/>

BOOK REVIEW

Emerging Churches by Gibbs & Bolger

What do liturgy and DJ's, dance and incense, creativity and silence, candles and pubs, art and clubs all have in common? You'll find them in emerging churches. Some wouldn't be my first choice either! But lots of people have got indigestion from the hymn, prayer, hymn sandwich, even with a little guitar on the side.

The book is the result of research into emerging churches. It's really not academic mainly because the subject matter is often quite exciting, different, challenging, weird or a mix of them all. They studied various 'churches' in the UK and N America (roughly 50/50) and interviewed around 50 of the leaders or spokespersons (as some do not have 'leaders'). Some of these groups have continued and others not - or at least they've had to stop, rethink and rebuild within a few years. That is perhaps not so surprising bearing in mind the rate of change in our society? Also, as one contributor said, "emerging churches are truly pioneering so a little messiness is to be expected". You might like the good old solid dependable form of church life and worship but just think how many people in West Kilbride DON'T come to church - do you ever wonder why?

A very common theme with emerging churches is a stress on living and spreading the kingdom of God here on earth as a way of life as opposed to a set of meetings. Serving coffee can be more important than sermons. Most see themselves as not so much a congregation but more of a community. Worship is usually coming to give, rather than coming to get.

Here's what some contributors said -
"Nothing I was doing on Sunday was what I thought Jesus would be doing if he were here"(Joe Boyd of Apex)

"I started to wonder if the religion we practiced was more the way of the Pharisees than the way of Jesus" (Brian McLaren of Cedar Ridge)

"I found that neighbours and friends were hostile in their perception of Christians but ambivalent or even positive about Jesus and his teachings ... clearly some deconstruction was necessary"

Are you open to the idea that tea and biscuits or lager and crisps might take the place of the Bread and Wine? You will find some of the ideas quite challenging but I do recommend the book to you particularly if any of the above thoughts ring a bell with you.

Remember, it was Jesus who said "You don't put new wine into old wine skins"

DJM

Dear Family and Friends,

Addis Ababa is again totally different to anywhere I have been before. It is an easy city to be in, even with population 7 million people. The city is only 120 years old – no historic centre – actually nothing to see of any meaning at all. Everything looks the same (quite ugly), only the building of the African Union breaks the skyline. In the background the mountains surrounding the city are visible – the best view is from the rooftop of our office.

Addis is very close to the equator, but it lies at 2500m (lots of feet). This produces a great daily temperature rhythm – day time about 25c and sun, nighttime down to 10c. Never sweat but can get chilly at night.

The people are friendly and polite. You can easily get by with English. I can walk between the Humedica guesthouse and office – I get a minimum of exercise. Because everything in this huge city looks the same to me, I have a car and driver. The guesthouse is pleasant (still need to buy some

furniture). I have a nice room with a comfortable bed! Sometimes I am alone and sometimes I have company.

30

We moved into the office on my first day at work – I have never had such a nice office with Humedica.

My Ethiopian work colleagues are very welcoming. We always have lunch together. Which brings me to the food – it is great and cheap.

Staple diet is “enjera”, made of Tef (a corn that only grows in Ethiopia) prepared as a sour dour into big soft pancakes. It is light & tasty. You eat with your fingers (I am getting better and better at finger-eating) dipping it into different foods. And the coffee is brilliant – strong flavour without bitterness. You can sit in a little roadside café sipping your Macchiato on your own and it is totally normal.

I have been super busy at work. Thrown into a project that has been running for 3 months is a challenge. I think things are beginning to normalize. The actual project is in the south on the border to Somalia. We are giving medical aid to the famine refugees in the camps. There has been a drought for three years and for the last three weeks it has been raining. Our medical team can't get in or out of the camp because one of the bridges has collapsed and the dirt road turned into a river. Neither can the UN planes land on the landing strip. Logistic chaos!



I visited some of the beneficiaries in Humedica's Family Sponsorship Programme.

Sorry for the late update – just been a bit crazy here.

Lots of love, hugs and blessings

Heidi