

*Scottish Episcopal Church
Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway
St Ninian's, Castle Douglas
(Scottish Charity No: SC011079)*



Service of Hymns and Readings for Advent

St Ninian's Review

Issue No 53

Advent 2015

SERVICES FOR CHRISTMAS-TIDE 2015

Sun 13 Dec - Advent 3

- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 11.00am Family Eucharist and Nativity Play**
- 6.00pm Evensong

Sun 20 Dec - Advent 4

- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 11.00am Family Eucharist
- 7.00pm Christmas Carol Service**

Thu 24 Dec - Christmas Eve

- 10.15 am Holy Communion
- 4.00pm Christingle and Crib Service**
- 11.30pm Midnight Eucharist**

Fri 25 Dec - Christmas Day

- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 11.00am Family Service followed by**
- 12 noon Holy Communion (Said Service)**

Sat 26 Dec - St Stephen

- 10.15 am Holy Communion

Sun 27 Dec - St John the Evangelist

- 8.30am Holy Communion
- 11.00am Family Eucharist

No Sunday Evening Alternative Service

Thu 31 Dec

- 10.15 am Holy Communion

Dear Friends,

As one ecclesiastical year gives way to another on Advent Sunday, it would be all-too-easy to give way to despair over the terrible events of the weeks and months just past and over the prospects for humanity in the year to come. The waves of refugees rolling over Europe and South-East Asia; the growing interference of the great powers in the desperate, multi-faceted conflict in Syria/Iraq; the increasingly sadistic and nihilistic terrorist attacks around the world; the sense of frustrated futility in democratic politics; the evidence of strains of antibiotic-resistant bacteria; the exploding human population—these and many other negative factors combine to make the outlook as bleak as any I can remember. It is easy to see why millenarian Christians are expecting the Apocalypse or the Rapture on a daily basis. And it isn't even safe (apparently) for the rest of us to console ourselves with a bacon sarnie or a sausage roll!

Yet, into the darkening year and the darkening mood, in 2015 as in every year, steals the Advent hope—the coming Christ. A hope heralded by the lighting of a single candle on Advent Sunday and whose fulfilment begins each Christmas Midnight with the spine-tingling declaration in the prologue to John's Gospel that Jesus is the true light coming into the world, "and the darkness has never overcome it." This is not just a memory or a metaphor but, for us, it is living truth: that God became a human being in Jesus to lead us out of the darkness of the human condition by that unconquerable light. The light of Christ, but the dim, warm glow from a stable for now, grows into the Light of the World in his teaching and example, dazzles the senses at the Resurrection, and ultimately bursts into flames of fire at Pentecost, when we, his followers, are commissioned to take his light into all the world.

It is that hope, of a humanity enlightened by Christ, that is our faith's greatest gift to the world—a hope constantly seeking progress in the accumulation of acts of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, that St. Paul called the fruits of the Spirit. Like the forests of candles we have witnessed in Paris in recent days: individually, mere points of light, but together, banishing the darkness. I am reminded of the last stanza of A.H.Clough's "Say not the struggle naught availeth":

And not by eastern windows only,
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright!

May this Advent bring you hope, and Christmas bring you joy, in the light of Jesus Christ our Lord.



RECTOR'S REPORT

(David's report given to our Annual Meeting on 25th October - mainly for the benefit of any who were unable to attend the meeting or see the written reports)

The Rector's year has been dominated by the need to provide ministry to the three vacant Charges in the Stewartry. A link with Christ Church, Dalbeattie had already been agreed, and the intention was that I should be inducted as Rector there, in addition to St Ninian's, in the course of 2015. That plan was scuppered by the extended vacancy at Greyfriars', Kirkcudbright and St Mary's, Gatehouse-of-Fleet. During the summer, Bishop Gregor and I agreed that I should instead be licensed as Priest-in-Charge at Christ Church, in order to provide maximum flexibility should the need for a different grouping of Charges become necessary. A date for the licensing will be announced soon.

I am grateful to all the Clergy, Lay Readers and Worship Leaders who make it possible for me to cover all four Charges. I am also pleased formally to welcome the Revd Mark Smith, who will be Honorary Assistant Priest at both Christ Church and St Ninian's. Mark and Debbie bring with them a wealth of parish experience that I am sure will enrich our corporate life. Mr Alan Rumble, who is a Diocesan Lay Reader Emeritus, has also joined us in recent months, and we welcome him to the team.

My thanks are also due to this Congregation, for your patience in allowing me to be absent when tending to the other Charges - although, on reflection, it may come as a relief to you, after so many years, to hear

voices other than mine! Let us all pray that a new Rector is found for Gatehouse and Kirkcudbright in the course of 2016.

A second theme has been major repairs: to the roof of the Church and to the stonework of the Rectory. Details are in the Property Convener's report and the costs are to be seen in the Annual Accounts. I simply want to note my relief here that a delay in beginning the work on the Rectory means that the cost of the project will be transferred to the current year, spreading the load somewhat.

Bishop Gregor was with us from Palm Sunday to Easter Day. For me, sharing Holy Week with the Bishop was a powerful and moving experience in which I hope you were able to share. The climax was the Easter Eucharist, at which Michael Little, Euan MacQuarrie and Sam Stevens were confirmed. The Service was splendid, but I'm still mystified as to how Bishop Gregor managed to produce three Easter eggs from under his chasuble. Episcopal legerdemain, indeed! During Holy Week, we also reported to the Bishop on Year 1 of our Mission Action Plan. Given the events above, Year 2 has been forced into the background but we shall have to pick up on it very soon.

In the course of the year, Alf Close, May Fraser, Alison Chandler, and Sue Beddows' husband, Jim, all passed from us, and we recently waved Katie MacQuarrie off to college. The exodus of couples to other parts of the United Kingdom does, though, seem to have stopped for the moment, and we were delighted to welcome a number of new members in the course of the year. Attendances, therefore, are slowly climbing again – although I wish you wouldn't all sit at the back.....

Once again, I have been able to experience the life of the Church elsewhere – in other Episcopalian congregations, in other denominations, and in other countries – and those experiences always bring me back to St Ninian's with a sense of wonder and thanksgiving that we are so richly blessed, most especially in our people.

David Bayne



LITTLE FISHES
**(from Roz's report given to our Annual Meeting
on 25th October)**

Little Fishes continues to provide the safe, happy nurturing place for youngsters that is the intention. It is furthermore providing a support network for parents, grandparents and

carers. I have set up a Facebook page that is reaching huge numbers, including many people beyond Dumfries and Galloway.

Through the information, locally of things to do and places to go with little ones and the sharing of the rhymes and activities enjoyed at Little Fishes, people who have returned to work or indeed left the area are able to be in touch and feel part of something. Numbers are at the highest they have ever been with lots of youngsters attending regularly as well as some families dipping in and out as they are able, due to work patterns etc. The most recent session had 38 babies, toddlers and pre-schoolers present. People come, they feel welcome and at ease and they remember that it is through the Church. Hopefully they leave feeling better than when they came.

In August 2006, when we were not long back living here in Castle Douglas I didn't imagine that setting up, running and organising Little Fishes would become such an important part of my life. I thoroughly enjoy all aspects of organising Little Fishes; one parent who attends regularly says that is apparent and why she told all her mummy friends to come too. It is something that is integral to the Stevens family: "Mum you could use this at Little Fishes." I have reduced my teaching commitment back to four days from four and a half. It would be fair to say that it was tricky at times to do all that I feel I need to as a mum, teacher and member of the wider community.

Little Fishes continues to cover its costs in terms of refreshments and resources , and holds two fundraising activities a year. The suggested donation is deliberately kept low to ensure no one is prohibited from attending through cost - it remains at £2. Our last fundraiser, a Teddy Bear's Picnic for Mary's Meals, raised £78.

I do have some mums offering to help but I believe that as long as we have the numbers able to commit to refreshments via the Mothers' Union that is the way to continue. It helps to reinforce Little Fishes as truly part of the Church and it bridges generations, as some of the young attendees have no grandparents locally.

A huge thank you for all the support that is offered through the Church and individuals to help provide an important outreach into the community.

Roz Stevens

“LESSON FROM AUSCHWITZ”

Ellie Stevens and Chloe from Castle Douglas High School have been involved with a project called the Holocaust Education Trust who select and send ambassadors from participating schools to Poland. The ambassadors have to say what they will do to pass on the lessons they have learned on their return. Ellie has a Facebook page called 'Passing on the Lessons' and she will be going into cluster primary schools to work with the P7 pupils. She is also arranging a talk in February.

The Holocaust Education Trust has a website: www.het.org.uk

This is Ellie’s description of her visit to Auschwitz

After being selected to take part in the “Lesson From Auschwitz” project I had no idea what to expect.

On the Sunday before we departed Chloe and I went up to Glasgow to meet all of the other ambassadors. We not only talked about what we were to expect when we arrived, but we had the once in a lifetime opportunity to meet a holocaust survivor. Her name was Eva Clarke and she was born in Mauthausen concentration camp in 1945 where she narrowly escaped the gas chamber, as the camp had run out of gas just 24 hours previously. She spoke of the story of her family who were all murdered in Auschwitz apart from her mother Anka, and told us of her mother’s shocking experiences with concentration camps. Eva taught us how important it is to stamp out prejudice and extremism and remember all those who lost their lives by carrying on stories told by survivors and their families.



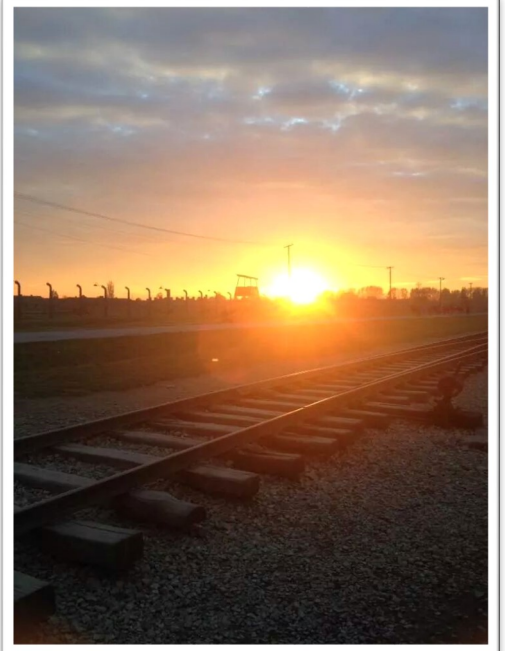
Chloe, Eva Clarke and Ellie

We have just visited a Jewish grave yard in the town of Oświęcim (also known by the German name: Auschwitz). Before the war this town had a 48% Jewish population. After the war and even today the Jewish population is 0%. The holocaust did not only mean the loss of human life but the loss of culture and community. Due to the lack of Jewish population the graveyard had fallen into a state of disrepair. The graveyard normally remains constantly locked due



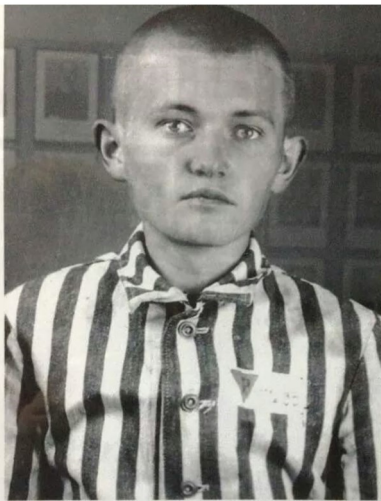
Suitcases accumulated during the Holocaust

to the lack of respect the Jews still have in the town. In 2001 and 2003 people broke in, smashed gravestones and painted Swastikas on the walls. Six million Jews were exterminated during the holocaust and looking at all of these possessions it is easy



to forget that all of these people are more than just numbers. Six million individuals were murdered and that is what we need to remember.

This should not have happened to one person. Let alone six million.



**STANISŁAW ZGRYCZ
67266**

Polak/Pole, ur./born 24.04.1922
deportowany/deported 09.10.1942, zginął/died 26.11.1942



The display of human hair at the Auschwitz Museum

The point is not the extent of the killing - although that is shocking - the point is that innocent people lost their lives simply because they were born into the wrong religion at the wrong time. These people had families, pets, homes, jobs and lives - they were more than just a number.

It is hard to imagine the atrocities that took place here. It's hard to imagine that fellow human beings would be willing to starve, hurt, and murder another human simply because they are 'different'. It is hard to imagine how



***Memorial candle for Yahrzeit
and Yom Kippur***

these victims were feeling while they watched their families and friends die in front of their eyes. It is hard to imagine being forced to drag dead bodies out of a gas chamber to be cremated and coming across your mother, or husband, or child.

It is hard to imagine, and yet it must be imagined. It must be remembered. It must not be forgotten. This cannot happen again. Ever. This is proof of how far discrimination can go and, until we live in a world without hate towards other cultures or religions, we must remember.

Ellie Stevens

ARMISTICE DAY 1415

"Henry Five - a great play,
'God for Harry!' and all that."

"Yet there are other lines , my friend:
'Tennis balls, my liege!'
'A little touch of Harry in the night,'
'There's witchcraft in your lips.'
And always three words catch my throat -
'Davy Gam Esquire.'

"Just a name on the short role of the English dead,
We don't know his history, he's just a name.
Was he a hero or a fool,
The one that stopped the bullet, set off the mine?
Just a name on a village memorial
With no one left to mourn him now;
Just a name, but he stands for the countless dead
Lying on battlefields across the world."



Sheila MacKenzie

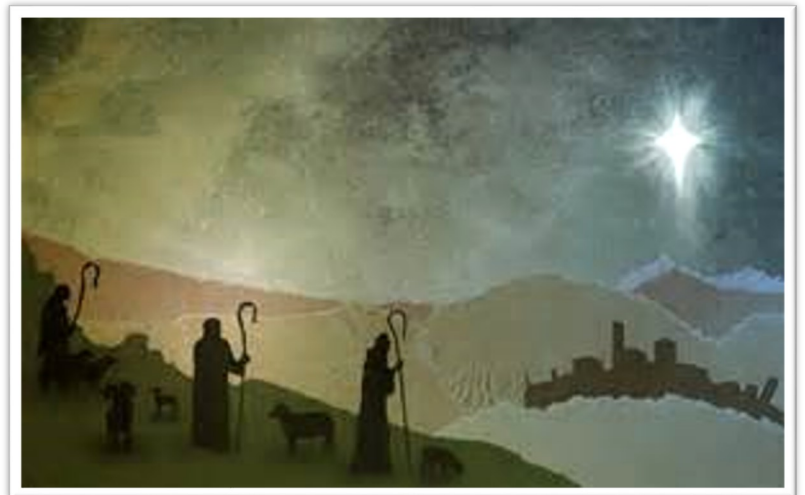


WHILE SHEPHERDS WATCHED

by *Patrick Little*

Apart from the shadowy figure of the innkeeper (not actually mentioned in the Bible, of course), the shepherds seem to have been the only people at work in Bethlehem on Christmas night 2,000 years ago.

Shepherds in first century Palestine were in an odd position. They were venerated in Scripture – Abel, Jacob, King David, the list is extensive – and the Jewish prayers acknowledged that they had begun as a wandering, pastoral people, forced to abandon their nomadic lifestyle when they went to live in Egypt, and then cast out into the wilderness again before finding the Promised Land. This foot-loose existence had a profound effect on their religious identity. In the early days the Jews did not worship statues of gods at altars set up in temples: their God went with them, a personal Deity looking after a chosen people. God's presence was symbolised by the Ark – a moveable shrine. Later, the Jews settled down to arable farming, and built towns for themselves, and eventually the city of Jerusalem, with its Temple, and the Ark placed in the Holy of Holies. The Jews became sedentary, and richer; they established a thriving middle class made up of traders and teachers, tax collectors and, of course, priests. But they still needed the shepherds, not least to provide the lambs for sacrifice. And they were still familiar with the life of the shepherd. That is one reason Jesus told the parable of the lost sheep, why he portrayed himself as the Good Shepherd, and urged Peter to 'feed my sheep'. And of course, in Luke the shepherds were celebrated as the first to visit the Baby Jesus at Bethlehem.



Shepherding today is very different. Commercial flocks are usually large – 1,000 ewes is a fairly modest number – and the sheep are farmed for their meat, as the wool is almost worthless, the price barely covering the cost of shearing. (This is something that would have caused those Jewish shepherds to gasp with amazement.) The sheepskins, formerly a prized commodity, are now another waste product. In the main they are shipped to China to be made into what is then sold back to us in shops and boutiques as natural, low-carbon products. Sheep are managed in very different ways now. Dogs and (carbon fibre) crooks are still used,

but the shepherd's main herding tool is now the quad bike. The shepherd does not need to know his sheep – they are all electronically tagged. Sheep are moved in lorries, or (less frequently) herded down the lanes: they do not *follow* the shepherd, as in biblical times.

Yet, on a more basic level, shepherding is the same as it always has been. The shepherd's calendar makes its familiar round: lambing in the springtime, shearing in the early summer, separating out the lambs for sale, 'flushing' the ewes ready for the tup in the autumn, putting in the tup and monitoring his progress, bringing hay and other feed during the hard winter months. The shepherd will visit the sheep regularly, and will know at a glance if something is wrong with an individual or with the flock. All this would be immediately recognisable to a Bethlehem shepherd.

So whether the weather be cold and bleak or merely wet, spare a thought for the shepherds abiding in the fields, keeping watch over their flocks this Christmas night.

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Update via email on 3rd August 2015, from David Steward, who says, "and if you want to publish any of this in The Review, be my guest." It was sent to us after he had read the Summer edition on St Ninian's website.

(John & Stephanie)



Dear both,

Thank you so much for keeping me in the loop. I will digest The Review at my leisure. Sorry to hear of those who have passed on but I do so hope the newcomers' numbers are making up and even exceeding the difference.

I suspect David (*i.e. the Rector*) wonders which day of the week it is. I do not envy him his workload. Please pass on my good wishes to him and Alison.

As for your representatives in the "warm" South we take each day as it comes. Theo is essentially OK and I am managing to keep her as well as she can be. Physically she is pretty well but her dementia is more in evidence. We have some interesting discussions as to what her mother is doing, and when I say that she actually died 30 years ago her response is, "I know that!" Vascular dementia moves along in stages, whereas Alzheimer's tends to be a steady decline.

Theo's mobility is getting worse and she can no longer walk by herself, and thus she is following the predicted decline laid out so very clearly in the excellent publications produced by the Alzheimer's Society. Anyway we are a long way off talking of a care home and I hope it will be the case for some time, albeit my life is devoted to her care; but after 61 years of marriage I am not about to step off the roundabout.

Just to prove that, we are off to Brussels next week for six days to visit an old school friend of mine, who I am sure is doing this to help us (he and his wife are both doctors). We have done it before, last year, and it is so easy - drive to Ebbsfleet which is just under an hour, park up and get Theo into her wheelchair, up to the ticket office and Eurostar takes over. Andre and Elisabeth are there to meet us at Brussels Midi, QED. Remember us to whoever, Regards David S.

* * * * *

POST TENEBRAS LUX - LIGHT AFTER DARKNESS

A Christmas Carol by Alan Temperley



Winter wild
In Bethlehem.
Empty streets,
No diadem.
Mary cries
In dirty stall:
Christ is born,
Emmanuel.
Post tenebras lux:
Emmanuel.

Ragged star
In jewelled sky,
Desert wind
For psaltery,
Wise men run
From Herod's hall.
Shepherds cry
Emmanuel.
Post tenebras lux:
Emmanuel.

Cradled love
In cruel land,
God become
The son of man.
In the night
Where great men fall,
Be our guide
Emmanuel.
Post tenebras lux:
Emmanuel.

Holy child
With arms spread wide,
Sacrifice
And crucified.
Perfect love,
One life for all,
Jesus Christ,
Emmanuel.
Post tenebras lux:
Emmanuel.

Alan writes that 'Post Tenebras Lux' was the motto of the Bede Grammar School in Sunderland, which he attended.

ST NINIAN'S REVIEW - SPRING 2016

If you have anything you would like to contribute to the next edition of "The Review" (such as a piece about your favourite hymn) it would be most welcome. Please give or send it to me by sometime in early March.

The deadline will be published in the weekly notices nearer the time.

Email: johnsteph@mkcott.wanadoo.co.uk or phone: 01556 502736.

Current and recent editions of the Review can also be read on the St Ninian's website: stninianscastledouglas.org.uk/st-ninians-review/

If for any reason you are unable to get to a Service at St Ninian's, the current notices are also published on the News page of the website.

ST NINIAN'S WEBSITE can be found at: stninianscastledouglas.org.uk/

WHEN CHRISTMAS WAS BANNED!

In England in the early seventeenth century, Christmas was celebrated lavishly. Festivities began on Christmas Eve and lasted for the full Twelve Days, ending with a big blow-out on Twelfth Night. This was a major public holiday – shops were shut and businesses closed down for the duration. Houses were decorated with holly and ivy and evergreens. Friends and relatives were visited, gifts were given to servants and the poor (though not generally to every member of the family). And the food was, well, Dickensian: beef and the newly-introduced turkey, mince pies, plum puddings, Christmas ale. At the heart of the celebrations were the Christmas services. They were not as grand or complicated as the Catholic ceremonies before the Reformation, but a glance at the Prayer Book reveals special readings and collects were provided for days dedicated to St Stephen, St John, the Holy Innocents, and of course the Epiphany. Christmas Day itself was celebrated with great solemnity, and it was a day of obligation, when all were expected to receive communion. All of this might read like a caricature of ‘Merrie England’, but it does seem to have been the way that people celebrated the Twelve Days, if they had the money.

Excess brings criticism, of course. There were some in England – portrayed by their enemies as ‘Puritans’ – who thought the church was not nearly Protestant enough and who were uncomfortable with the immorality of popular culture. For the ‘Godly’ (as they referred to themselves) Christmas was particularly troubling, as it was seen as nothing more than the survival of a ‘Popish’ feast-day, for which there was no injunction in the Bible. It was also a period of over-eating and over-drinking, or disorder and misrule, with the attendant sins of gluttony and drunkenness and sexual license. In short, Christmas encouraged sin. With the English Civil War of the 1640s the Godly were at last able to impose their views on others, to stamp out Catholic influences in the church and introduce a ‘reformation of manners’. The Prayer Book was replaced with a Presbyterian Directory of Worship. The legislation that brought in the Directory, passed in 1645, effectively banned all services other than those held on Sundays or other officially approved holy days. The ban on Christmas was confirmed by a parliamentary ordinance in 1647.

Unlike a modern police-state, the parliamentary regimes of the later 1640s and 1650s – the commonwealth and protectorate of Oliver Cromwell – did not have the ability to enforce its will over everyone across the whole

of the country. Christmas was still celebrated, but surreptitiously. Occasionally there was open defiance, leading to riots in southern England in 1647-8, and from 1656 the government became increasingly concerned at the blatant disregard for the ban. Moves were made to stop services at Christmas. In a diary entry for 25th December 1657, Sir John Evelyn describes his shock when a chapel he was attending 'was surrounded with soldiers: all the communicants and assembly surprised and kept prisoners by them... these wretched miscreants held their muskets against us as we came to receive the sacred elements, as if they would have shot us at the altar'. To the relief of Evelyn and his friends, the ban on Christmas did not outlive the interregnum regimes. With the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the Twelve Days, with their church services and feasts, piety and sinfulness, returned.

So much for Merrie England. What of Scotland? As ever, the Scottish Parliament was ahead of the game. The General Assembly had ejected their bishops and abolished the Prayer Book in 1638; and in June 1640 the Parliament passed an 'Act dischairing the Yule vacance'. This was repealed after the Restoration, but with the 'rabbling of the ministers' and the abolition of bishops for a second time in 1690, a similar act was passed. Yule disappeared from the Scottish calendar, to be replaced by Hogmanay as the main winter festival. And it was not until 1958 that Christmas Day once again became a public holiday in Scotland.

Patrick Little

FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptisms

4.10.15	Gracie Fiona Gowans
18.10.15	Jaimee Wilson
1.11.15	Rory James Alistair M ^c Cormick

Funerals

14.08.15	Sheilah Stevens
21.08.15	Alison Chandler
9.09.15	Doris Rogers
11.09.15	William Fullerton
13.11.15	Peter Rogers

MY FAVOURITE HYMN *by Jenny Armstrong*

One of my favourite hymns is “How Great Thou Art.” The original words were written by Carl Gustav Boberg (1859-1940), who was Swedish. He was returning home with friends from an afternoon service when he was caught in a thunderstorm and had to rush to shelter. It was soon over and, on arriving home, he was looking out of his window. It was warm and the sun was out. The birds were singing and the church bells were ringing. His experiences of that day gave him the inspiration.



It was translated into German and Russian and eventually English. The first literal translation into English was in 1929. In 1931, Stuart K Hine, a British Methodist missionary heard the Russian translation whilst in Ukraine. He added his own verses and eventually finalised his English translation in 1949. Billy Graham heard the hymn and subsequently used it in his crusades.

When Billy Graham came to London in 1989, the church where I worshipped was involved in inviting people to attend the crusades and buses were supplied to take them to the various meetings. I went to the final crusade in the old Wembley stadium. The stadium was packed and suddenly, during Billy Graham’s address, there was a flash of lightening and a clap of thunder over the stadium. It came out of nowhere. Just afterwards George Beverly Shea started singing “How Great Thou Art”. When it came to the words “*I see the stars, I hear the rolling thunder, Thy power throughout the universe displayed,*” the whole stadium erupted with cheers and clapping. It is an experience I will never forget.

CHRIST CHURCH, DALBEATTIE WINTER BAZAAR SATURDAY 7 NOVEMBER 2015

The organisers of the Bazaar must be congratulated on the success of their event, which raised £1500 from admission charges and the variety of stalls, games and raffles.



Above:
Revd Mark Smith
and his wife,
Debbie



Maurice!

It was a great atmosphere. Debbie and Mark Smith - among others - were kept busy throughout the entire morning, while many came in to enjoy the stalls, coffee, home baking and chat - and to dodge the rain showers outside!

And now for the African adventures of some of our congregation ...

CASTLE DOUGLAS SCOUTS TRIP TO KENYA

It feels a long time since Sam and I with a group of scouts from Castle Douglas were in Kenya. Was it only this summer? It may have been a few months since the trip but the fundraising started long before. Scouts were busy car washing and doing various different jobs to raise money for the trip. You may remember the contraption the scouts built from four old bicycles, a wheel at each corner with a full scale model of a latrine at the centre. They boys rode it around the Stewartry raising money to fund the building of pit latrines at two primary schools and a secondary school in Kenya. Kirkcudbright and Crossmichael Primary Schools held various events to raise money for much-needed books for Wamboo Primary School.

The trip started on 5th July flying to Nairobi. After a long flight and a discussion with Customs as to why we were bringing suspicious looking eight foot lengths of two-inch pipe into the country we emerged from the airport. I said a long flight but it is incredible to me how, within a matter of hours, you can be in an environment so different to what you are used to in every way. After meeting our drivers the group split. Most went to our first destination Ekalakala while I went with a small group to pick up the books we had ordered for the Primary School. After an hour, in what felt like the Nairobi Grand Prix, with traffic jams for added interest, we were out of the city and into the beautiful countryside. Ekalakala is not a big commercial place, they do not have any real industry they have no tarmac roads or large shops; most of the people there are subsistence farmers. When it rains and the harvest is good they eat that year; if the crops fail they face difficult times. There is no safety net.



The boys worked on the pit latrines with students from the technical college. Although the students have very little English and the scouts even less Swahili they managed to communicate and worked well together. Talking to the boys at the end of the trip, the relationships they formed with the Kenyan students was one of the highlights of the trip for them.

While they did the hard work I thought I would have a bash at teaching in the school; what a joy! The pupils were bright, friendly and keen to learn. I had a fantastic time teaching maths and English to not only the pupils but the teachers too. The children value their education - they see it as an opportunity to help themselves improve their situation and that of their families. I have seen on television but have now experienced first-hand pupils walking miles barefoot to get to school. At home Sam now readily admits he has a different attitude to school: no more moaning about having to go, but appreciating the chances and opportunities he has.

With the latrines finished and books delivered, we moved onto our next task which was to install a water pump in a sand dam that had been built several years previously (hence the eight-foot pipes). As we walked into the dry sand covered riverbed we saw two small boys in a hole that had been dug to collect water. As we watched them fill their plastic bottles with the coffee coloured water we knew why we were there.



Paul Hodson, scout leader and trip organiser, had lived and worked in the area years before and knew what was needed. The sand dam had been built to collect water in the river bed but it was still inaccessible. We all worked hard along with many locals, digging and laying pipework from the centre of the riverbed to the bank. At the end of the second day, when the first clean water was drawn from the hand pump there was much to celebrate – smiles, laughing, singing and much shaking of hands left us in no doubt what a difference the pump would make to the community. We have since heard that there is a group responsible for the pump who are to maintain and guard the simple technology that means so much to them.

One thing we all agreed we would take from the trip was memories of the wonderful people we had met. Everywhere we went we were shown such tremendous hospitality and generosity; fourteen people arriving at a tiny house made out of mud and corrugated iron were treated to a simple but delicious meal in the shade of the trees outside. It was often difficult to refuse people who have very little who wanted to share what they had with us.

After the hard work, heat and dust of Ekalakala, we enjoyed a game drive and stay at Samburu Lodge; we were all excited to see elephant, giraffe, and lion. We camped a night at Shabashe and spent the day climbing Ololokwe and were rewarded with a spectacular view over the plains.



After visiting the grave of the founder of the scouting movement, Baden Powell, in Nyeri it was time to return home. We will all take something different from the trip but, as a unit, we would like to thank everyone who supported us. The common thought we have was that the people we met did not want our sympathy; they were intelligent, resourceful people who wanted a chance to support their families as we all do.

David and Sam Stevens

LAKE VICTORIA, TANZANIA



Jim and I are safely back from a *very* adventurous trip to Africa. I want to thank all of you for your loving prayers, and your generosity in supporting The Vine Trust. We joined their new project ship, Jubilee Hope, for an amazing time, taking medical care and dentistry to remote islands.



We saw that the funds are most definitely needed, and that they are being used to change lives among desperately poor people.

Most exciting for me was being able to hand out the reading glasses that you contributed - the thrill on the faces of the older people who could read, but hadn't been able to, was indescribable. So if you give me more, I will send them!

We'd love to tell more, and show our photos, preferably on an informal basis - so do give us a call!

Judi Duck
(Tel 01556 502797)

SENT FROM GOD ?

Some considerable time ago, I was in a very dark place in my life, facing losing my home, marriage falling apart and I was in despair. I could see no way forward and felt as if I was in a deep, dark pit with no light.

I was sitting in my kitchen and there was no-one in the house except for me. I was in tears. I sent a desperate plea and prayer to God asking for help to see my way forward ... although I didn't expect an answer. I was a Christian really through habit I suppose Sunday School, and then going from time to time, and taking the children as they came along ... rather than a really deep conviction.

But then came something so unexpected ... my hand was taken. I can only tell you that the hand that took mine was large, strong, gentle, warm, very real and so comforting. The words came into my mind and heart, "You are not alone." The experience lasted for some minutes ... I've no idea how long ... and then the hand faded away. But something had changed for me.

God didn't give me an answer to my problems but He gave me the strength to keep going and fight my way through. That strength has been with me ever since; I've never been in such despair ever again and I have always been aware that I am never alone. I've never felt that hand since but I know it is there.

I've never talked about this with anyone because I found it hard to share the experience. But I felt it might help other people.

From a member of the congregation
(who wishes to remain anonymous)

MY FIRST YEAR AS ORGAN SCHOLAR

by Michael Little

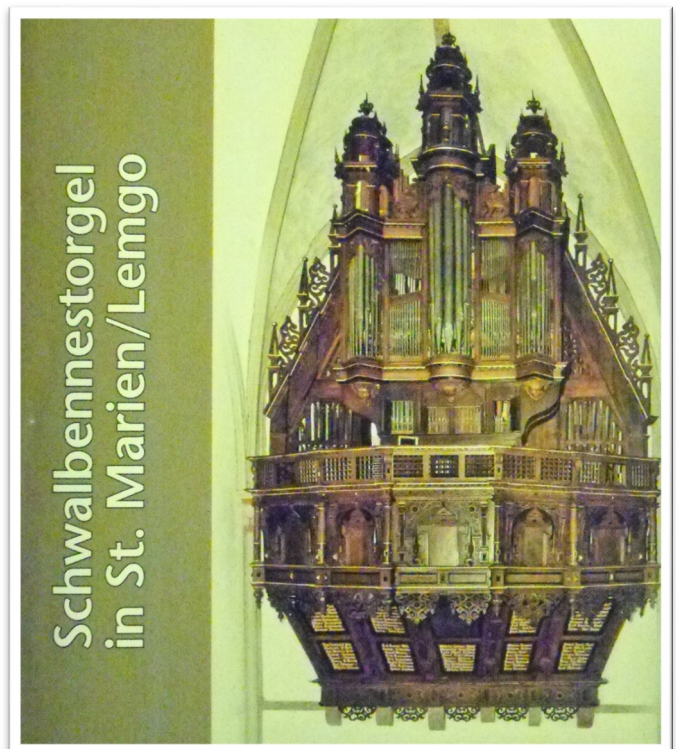


I have been the organ scholar at St Ninian's for nearly a year. Mr Maurice Till is my organ teacher. He gives me a lesson every Monday, and I practise for an hour a week, usually on Thursdays. I have played twice in services (during the Communion) and I am going to play a piece at the carol service before Christmas. As well as other music, Maurice has taught me to play the canticles for Matins and Evensong and hymns, and I have started to play the pedal part, which is tricky as I have to concentrate on feet and hands at the same time.

One of the good things about being an organ scholar is that you get to try out other organs. Most organists are happy to show you their instruments and some even let you have a go! This year I went to Dorset to visit my grandparents and they arranged for me to play the Hayward/Walker organ at Wimborne Minster. The sub-organist there is Sean Tucker, and he was very friendly. He let me play lots of pieces and try out the orchestral trumpet stops. They are very loud!

When I went to Germany in the summer I played the very special 'Swallow's Nest' organ at a town called Lemgo. It is very old. The earliest part was built in 1586 and the instrument was completed by Scherer of Hamburg in 1613. It is the only organ in Germany that pre-dates the Thirty Years War (1618-48). It is tuned for early music, so modern pieces sound frightful!

I hope to play another German organ next year, and to go back to Wimborne too. I would like to play more music for the services at St Ninian's.





Christian Aid Christmas Appeal 2015

**At Christmas, we remember God's gift to us
– his Son, Jesus Christ.**

This year Christian Aid is also celebrating the precious gift of life for families in Nigeria threatened by malaria.

Malaria kills a child every 60 seconds. It leaves parents bereaved and orphans children. It is so common that people can catch it several times a year. Mothers, pregnant women and children are most vulnerable, and are dying needlessly from a disease that is so easily prevented.

Christian Aid is working with communities in Nigeria, training volunteers to help prevent this life-threatening disease, to bring hope to people's lives.

**For every pound you give to this Christmas Appeal
between 6th Nov 2015 and 5th February 2016,
the UK Government will match it with another pound,
up to £5 million – meaning twice the impact for people
in poverty.**

If you are interested in supporting Christian Aid locally
please contact Lorna McDonald (01556 504711)

lorna.e.mcdonald@gmail.com

A faint, artistic background image of a saint with a beard and a large golden halo, wearing a green robe over a red garment. The image is framed by a yellow border.

This Year's Advent Studies

Six Saints of Advent

**The Rector's illustrated exploration of some Saints
whose Feast Days fall during Advent**

Wed 2nd December, at 2pm in the Hall

The Apostles :

St Andrew and St Thomas

Wed 9th December, at 2pm in the Hall

The Teachers :

St Clement of Alexandria and St Ambrose of Milan

Wed 16th December, at 2pm in the Church

The Pastors :

St Nicholas of Myra and St Francis Xavier

WHO'S WHO

Rector	: The Revd Canon David Bayne	01556-503818
Hon Assistant	: The Revd Canon David Main	504669
Lay Reader	: Mr Douglas Allison	504279
Lay Worship Leader / Pastoral Assistant / Lay Representative	: Mrs Jenny Wright	502184
Hon Secretary	: Mr Patrick Little	690507
Hon Treasurer	: Mr Fred Coulthard	502965
Property Convenor	: Mr Clem Gault	502583
Freewill Offerings Convenor / Alternate Lay Rep	: Mr Ian Mather	505910
Third Lay Rep	: Mrs Ann Gault	502583
Vestry Members	: The Rector (Chair) Hon Secretary Hon Treasurer Property Convenor Lay Representative	
Elected Vestry Members	: Mrs Sue Beddows	670286
	: Mrs Stephanie Dewhurst	502736
	: Miss Sheila MacKenzie	01644-420623
	: Mr Ian MacQuarrie	01557-820530
	: Mr Ian Mather	505910
Organist	: Mr Maurice Till FRCO LTCL ARCM	620619
Sanctuary Guild	: Mrs Alison Bayne	503818
Co-ordinator for the Protection of Vulnerable Groups	: Miss Sheila MacKenzie	01644-420623
MU Branch Leaders	: {Mrs Alison Bayne	503818
	: {Mrs Ann Gault	502583
Thursday Club	: Mrs Ann Gault	502583
Men's Group Chairman	: Mr Ian Mather	505910
Administrator / Hall Bookings / Magazine & Website Editor	: Mrs Stephanie Dewhurst	502736
Magazine Distribution / Traidcraft	: Mr John Dewhurst	502736
	: {Mrs Rosie MacQuarrie	01557-820530
Sunday School Leaders	: {Mrs Ann Gault	502583
	: {Mrs Roz Stevens	503589
Little Fishes	: Mrs Roz Stevens	503589