

*Scottish Episcopal Church
Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway
St Ninian's, Castle Douglas*



St Ninian's Review

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Advent 2009

Dear Friends,

It was almost inevitable that a media commentator would describe the rain and floods that recently swept across this region and our neighbours in Cumbria to such terrible and tragic effect as “biblical”. A word that generally refers to anything pertaining to the Christian Scriptures has become journalistic shorthand for natural disaster – and it’s worth taking a moment to see how that came about.

The process probably began with Hollywood’s “biblical epics” – those wonderful, sprawling films of human tragedy and triumph based, sometimes rather loosely, on Bible themes: The Ten Commandments, Samson and Delilah, The Robe, Ben Hur. Over time, the sense of the noun has become absorbed into the adjective until (at least in the mind of the media) “biblical” automatically means “epic”. I first heard it used in this sense by Michael Buerk, covering the Ethiopian famine of the 1980s for the BBC: in Buerk’s elegant and impassioned reportage it was both apt and powerful, giving a sense of the scale of the horror by calling up echoes of the plagues of Egypt; since then it has descended, through lazy over-use, to the level of convenient cliché for any large-scale disaster.

This debasement of the word is a great shame, for it tends to reduce the Bible by association, thereby losing sense of Scripture’s genuinely-epic theme – that God’s enduring love for his people has brought untold generations through all life’s disasters and triumphs. In Advent, we begin our annual retelling of “The Greatest Story Ever Told”, when God’s eternal love overflowed into time and space in the person of Jesus, as testimony that humanity’s true destiny is not sin and death but life eternal. Now that *is* Biblical!

May the Advent hope of Christ’s coming bring you to the joy of his Christmas birth.

Yours in Christ’s service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "David Bayne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

FROM THE REGISTERS:

Baptism:

15.11.09 Riley Mark Robert Pflanz

Wedding:

31.10.09 Kirsty Erica Hydes and Douglas Walter McLachlan

Funerals:

7.09.09 George Wilson
7.10.09 Alice Till
27.10.09 Edward Neil Shapeero

OBITUARY: Revd Canon John Paul

The Revd Canon John Paul came as Rector to St Ninian's Episcopal Church in 1970; he had previously served as a Missionary and Arch-deacon in Mozambique.

He left St Ninian's in 1975. His subsequent service was at St Mark's, Edinburgh and Holy Trinity, Elgin. Latterly he was a Canon and Dean of the Diocese of Moray, Ross and Caithness. He retired in 1992 to live in Gifford, East Lothian, where he died at the end of September. His funeral was held in Edinburgh on 5th October and at it the clergy, the vestry and the congregation of St Ninian's were represented.

Canon David Main

ST NINIAN'S MEN'S GROUP

We held our latest dinner in the Gordon Memorial Hall on Monday 28 September. It was attended by 19, drawn from other congregations within the town as well as our own, making it a truly ecumenical occasion. Brian Haining of The Scottish Pantry provided an excellent meal, which was followed by a most informative talk given by Bill Millar on his experiences as an electrical engineer working, in those far off days, for the GPO. His work took him all over Scotland including the Highlands and Islands, and he kept our interest with events in Barra and South Uist, amongst many other locations, not to mention the CalMac ferries.

David Steward

CHRISTIAN AID

Christian Aid is not just in Christian Aid Week but all the year.

There was an ecumenical collecting effort at Tesco on 22/23 September 2009 which produced £768.70 - an excellent result.

David Steward

MOTHERS' UNION REVIEW

Our new session began with a service of dedication, followed by an open meeting. Members enjoyed a slide show covering every event over the last session. David Steward was first on the agenda of speakers. He delighted us with a witty and interesting talk about bee keeping and left us with the realisation that there is a lot more to that hobby than we had ever thought! We did enjoy the tasting session too!

It was our turn to host a Regional Rally in November with our friends from St John's, Dumfries, and other local MU groups: a service followed by a luncheon prepared by our own members. After lunch some of the members entertained the company with a sketch, readings and poems. Alison led off with two well known traditional songs and David played "Love is a Many Splendoured Thing". It was all most enjoyable. We were delighted to have Marion George, one of our members, playing the organ for the service. This format has become well established in recent years and is a great way of mixing with and getting to know each other. Our numbers have increased to such an extent that we have found it beneficial to wear name tabs for easier communication.

We continue to support various outreach projects, both abroad and in our own community. The Women's Aid refuges in Stranraer and Newton Stewart receive bags of toiletries provided by our members and, in association with Dumfries Branch, we supply 'angel pockets' (tiny 'sleeping bags' for miscarried babies), for Dumfries Royal Infirmary. Abroad, we support the "Abba's Rest" orphanages in Malawi by collecting items like postcards and DVDs for the children involved. Feedback from the recipients of our "Healing Blankets" has been most positive and encouraging. We are grateful for the donations of wool and ribbon for these and also for the wonderful support from the congregation for all our projects.

We look forward to Christmas and to a varied programme of talks in the New Year.

Jessie Lockhart

MY GARDEN

As I sit in my garden, pondering what I see,
I wonder how this lovely world ever came to be;
I watch the little creatures all busying away,
doing their own little things that help to make their day.
I watch the ants go scurrying by, doing I know not what:
No matter where I seem to be there's always quite a lot.
The flowers are in full bloom, their colours do amaze:
they come in great varieties and brighten up our days.
There's grasslands and there's mountains that also play their part
in keeping this old planet so dear to our hearts.
There's rivers and there's oceans all teeming with life ...
What a wonderful world this could be
if there wasn't any strife.
Perhaps one day all wars will end
and mankind live in peace,
and we can all sit in our gardens
completely at our ease.

David Wight

We may be approaching Christmas, but Remembrance Day has only just passed, which prompted the submission of the following two pieces:

NINETY YEARS ON

In 1914, the Revd C W Baines was appointed Rector of St Ninian's but, before he could take up his position, he was recalled to the Army Chaplaincy Service on the outbreak of the War. He served throughout the War, becoming Colonel in rank, Assistant Chaplain General to 4th Army, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and a Mention in Despatches. He also lost his only son, Captain Arthur Baines, who died in 1916, one of 40,000 who died in the campaign.

On his arrival at St Ninian's, the Revd Baines wished to install the wooden screening in the Chancel and Sanctuary as a war memorial and this was carried out at a cost of £190, of which he subscribed £100 in memory of his son.

When changes were made to accommodate the new organ, it became necessary to remove the large safe from the Sanctuary and I was asked by Clem Gault to sort out the old books and papers it contained. Among those papers, mainly dating from the time when the design and installation of the War Memorial was taking place, I found letters written by mothers of two of the church members who had lost their lives, and I thought they might be of interest.

Firstly an undated letter from Mrs Helen Wedderburn-Maxwell, mother of James, who died on 1st October 1918:

London W.8

Dear Mr Baines

I herewith enclose my authorization for your applying to the Graves Commission to have my son's wooden cross sent direct to you. I am extremely obliged to you for allowing this to be done as at this distance I should have found it difficult to arrange for the best about it. I have told the Graves Commission they will hear direct from you.

My son's grave was at first "on the north western outskirts of Ledeghem" but as there were only five or six graves there altogether, it seems to be thought they may have to be moved.

I wrote and asked about this and on the 25th inst. they replied that they had not received any report as to my son's grave being removed, but that it will be removed "unless it happens that a new cemetery is formed where he lies".

I have written again begging them to find out if there has been or is to be any removal, and if so where to. Is the place of burial to be named in the inscriptions on the Memorial? I feel it would be very desirable us placing it on record and would let you know immediately on hearing anything definite from the Graves Commission.

Yours etc.

She was clearly deeply distressed that it was necessary for her son's body to be moved to a new communal cemetery and concerned that due attention would be given. As we now know, these cemeteries continue to be maintained to a very high standard and are

worthy resting places of those lost. Her two older sons both survived the war.
The second letter is from Mrs Christabel Cubitt, mother of Victor Cubitt:
Honing, Norwich:

13th April 1920

Dear Mr Baines

Thanks for your kind letter of the 3rd inst. I am very glad to hear you have been able to put up the panelling. My son's full name was Victor Murray Cubitt, 2nd Lieut. 1/5th Battn. The Norfolk Regt. He fell in the attack at Suvla Bay (Gallipoli) which took place on the 12th August 1915. As far as we know, he and his eldest brother, Capt E R Cubitt, fell within a few minutes of each other, but where and how is still a subject for conjecture. It has been reported that the Turks buried the bodies somewhere in the Bush. It is a sad sad story; the Regiment was practically wiped out. You do not say how the money has been raised or if I am to send you a subscription.

Yours etc.

This lady was to lose three sons in the War, having also lost a young son just before the War. One other son survived the War and, in the 1930s, became Colonel of the Battalion of the Norfolk Regiment in which his three brothers served.

Leslie Scarborough

Handwritten in pencil, and on two sheets of foolscap, Don Crawford gave this poem to the 'Perth Courier' in Australia one morning in the early 1960s, where it first saw print a few days later and was later published in several countries in connection with Remembrance Day. He died in 2000.

“Please wear a poppy,” the lady said,
And held one forth, but I shook my head,
Then I stopped and watched as she offered them there,
Her face was old and lined with care;
Yet beneath the scars the years had made
There remained a smile that refused to fade.

A boy came whistling down the street,
Bouncing along on his care-free feet.
His smile was full of joy and fun,
“Lady,” said he, “may I have one?”
When she'd pinned it on, he turned to say;
“Why do we wear a poppy today?”

The lady smiled in her wistful way
And answered; “This is Remembrance Day.
And the poppy there is a symbol for
The gallant men who died in war.
And because they did, you and I are free –
That's why we wear a poppy, you see.

"I had a boy about your size,
With golden hair and big blue eyes.
He loved to play and jump and shout,
Free as a bird, he would race about.
As the years went by, he learned and grew,
And became a man - as you will, too.

"He was fine and strong, with a boyish smile,
But he seemed to be with us such a short while.
When war broke out and he went away.
I can still remember his face that day
When he smiled at me and said, 'Goodbye,
I'll be back soon, Mum, please don't cry.'

"But the war went on and he had to stay,
And all I could do was wait and pray.
His letters told of the awful fight
(I can see it still in my dreams at night),
With the tanks and guns and cruel barbed wire,
And the mines and bullets, the bombs and fire.

"Till at last, at last, the war was won -
And that's why we wear a poppy, son."
The small boy turned as if to go,
Then said: "Thanks, lady, I'm glad to know.
That sounded like an awful fight.
But your son, did he come home all right?"

A tear rolled down each faded cheek;
She shook her head but didn't speak.
I slunk away, head bowed in shame,
And if you were me, you'd have done the same:
For our thanks, in giving, is oft delayed,
Though our freedom was bought by the legions who paid!

And so, when we see a poppy worn,
Let us reflect on the burden borne
By those who gave their very all
When asked to answer their country's call
That we at home in peace might live.
Then wear a poppy! Remember - and give!

Submitted by Ian Mather

***A Sunday school teacher asked her children as they were
on the way to church service,***

'And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?'
One bright little girl replied,
'Because people are sleeping.'

BIBLICAL RIDDLES, as told by my grandmother ...

Q: How many scarves had Job?

A: *Only three miserable comforters.*

Q: How did the Children of Israel live in the wilderness?

A: *Because of the sand which is there. (...sandwiches!)*

Q: Of what were the sandwiches made?

A: *Ham's descendants mustered (mustard) and bred (bread) there;
and Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt, and they all left but 'er (butter).*

Q: When was cricket played in the Bible?

A: *Peter stood up before the eleven and was bold (bowled), and Rhoda kept the wicket.**

Penelope Bain

*(*See Acts 12.12-14 if, like me, this reference baffles you! Ed.)*

A MEMORY FROM MILLPORT

The Diocesan Clergy Retreat was held in the College at Millport in September and the Conductor was an American, the Rt Revd Porter Taylor, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Western North Carolina. Before ordination he had been a Professor in English Literature and his addresses were well filled with poems: one of these I found particularly 'on the ball', amusing, and entertaining, and I should like to share it with you. It was written by Gerald Locklin and entitled, 'No Longer a Teenager' and this is how it goes:

my daughter, who turns twenty tomorrow,
has become truly independent.
she doesn't need her father to help her
deal with the bureaucracies of schools,
hmo's, insurance, the dmv.
she is quite capable of handling
landlords, bosses and auto repair shops.
also boyfriends and roommates.
and her mother.

frankly it's been a big relief.
the teenage years were often stressful.
sometimes, though, i feel a little useless.

but when she drove down from northern California
to visit us for a couple of days,
she came through the door with the
biggest, warmest hug in the world for me,
and when we all went out for lunch
she said, affecting a little girl's voice,
'i'm going to sit next to my daddy,'
and she did, and slid over close to me
so i could put my arm around her shoulder
until the food arrived.

i've been keeping busy since she's been gone,
mainly with my teaching and writing,
a little travel connected with both,
but i realized now how long it had been
since i had felt deep emotion.
when she left i said, simply,
"i love you,"
and she replied, quietly,
"i love you too."
you know it isn't always easy for
a twenty-year-old to say that;
it isn't always easy for a father.
literature and opera are full of
characters who die for love:
i stay alive for her.

Even a crusty old bachelor like me can be moved by that poem; maybe you have been – I hope so.

(The lack of capitals is intentional – e e cummings was the first to do it, I think.)

David Main

SUNDAY 20 SEPTEMBER was the day on which we celebrated our Patronal Festival of St Ninian and Revd Dr Anne Tomlinson, Ministry Development Officer, preached the sermon. Afterwards a delicious buffet lunch was served in the Hall and then Anne led us in a Congregational Consultation, 'Journeying in the Footsteps of St Ninian' which proved to be both interesting and productive.

GOING TO CHURCH AT THIAT (in the Limousin region of France)

It is now three years since I left Laurieston for a sunnier climate in France. I enjoy life here but really miss St Ninian's. After attending our church in Castle Douglas for nearly 17 years I had seen some changes but it was still like a comfortable old jumper and I am not sure I was prepared for my new church in Thiat (a small village 10km from where I live in France) but I have survived and I would like to share with you some of my experiences.

Well, first find your church. This is on the list of vet, doctor, hairdresser, dentist etc when one moves house. The first protestant church I found looked encouraging as it had simultaneous translation into English but the style was not really for me. I persisted for three months but, to be honest, I was eventually defeated by the two-hour service on a very hard seat. However I received a letter from an English pastor, who had written to people in my village who had a British sounding name, inviting me to Thiat. So off I went and am now a regular member of the congregation.

Well, forget the stained glass windows. The church is a small converted barn, somewhat bare and simple, and the congregation numbers from six to twenty five, except for baptisms or when the Brits are *en vacances* when it can be full to the brim. Also – no loo – so remember not to drink too much tea in the morning.

The first thing I had to learn was the greeting and parting customs. You have to greet, and after the service say goodbye, to everyone in the church individually. For some people it is a polite handshake and a “Ça va”, for others it has to be a kiss - at least two kisses, but sometimes three or even four. One just has to remember who you are greeting. So no sneaking in the back just before 11am with a polite nod to one's neighbours and one never rushes off! On leaving the custom is repeated wishing everyone a “Bon dimanche” and catching up with the news.

We do not have a resident pastor but rotate two French ministers, together with a Vietnamese minister, a retired English pastor and a visiting Church of Scotland minister from Perth. His Scottish church recently kindly donated a cloth embroidered by his congregation for the pulpit. All services are in French, but I find his French with a Scottish accent the easiest to understand! With each minister the order of service changes a bit so one has to keep one's wits about one. However the English minister does give a pew sheet with the hymn numbers and bible readings and a print out of his sermon. I can read French reasonably well, but when I say I do not understand most of the sermons this is literally true. When I have returned to Scotland and attended St Ninian's, listening to David and understanding every word he says is a great pleasure!

The hymns are often a challenge. For a start I do not sing in tune. Never mastered that one. Then my French accent is appalling but the worst experience was the day that I got the hymn number wrong and was singing the wrong hymn to boot. However we now have a hymn board so no excuse. However we do not have an organist all of the time and sometimes no one knows the tune so further hymns are suggested by the congregation until one is found that most people know. Then we sing heartily – wrong notes and all.

The congregation may be small but everyone is so welcoming and kind and I feel a great sense of Christian fellowship. Our summer picnics where we share our food (and the congregation doubles) are a great success.

Liz Barrett came over recently and enjoyed our harvest festival service with us. We had great fun, and she was very impressed by the wonderful Frenchman who cleans my house and does odd jobs, and also my bilingual dog! We loved our trip to Paris, which included visits to Notre Dame and Sacré Couer. We also went to Poitiers Cathedral and found ourselves in the middle of a very large wedding. The choir was magnificent. But, big or small, “For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them”.

I cannot finish without thanking St Ninians for the wonderful website. As a member of your wider congregation I can now keep up with all your news and still feel part of the old place – it is very much appreciated.

“À bientôt ...”

Fay Simpson

A mother was preparing pancakes for her sons, Kevin 5, and Ryan 3. The boys began to argue over who would get the first pancake. Their mother saw the opportunity for a moral lesson.

If Jesus were sitting here, He would say,
'Let my brother have the first pancake, I can wait.'
Kevin turned to his younger brother and said,
'Ryan, you be Jesus!'

POEMS FOR CHRISTMAS

This was the moment when Before
Turned into After, and the future's
Uninvented timekeepers presented arms.

These are the opening lines of "BC – AD", perhaps the best known of U A Fanthorpe's Christmas Card poems. For thirty years she and her companion, R V Bailey, have sent their friends a hand-printed card celebrating some aspect of Christmas. They started with a simple banda machine – never simple in my experience – and then moved on to a hand-operated printing press. But there were still difficulties. To begin with they had only a limited number of letters and punctuation marks and sometimes more were needed to print the poem. What was the solution? The poet rewrote the poem to accommodate the problem! Still, such limitations can be a valuable discipline for a writer and every year a Christmas card would plop through the letter boxes of their friends bringing them a unique Christmas message.

To add variety to the basic Christmas story new characters not normally given a role in were introduced: the cat in the manger who blamed the gospel writers for its exclusion:

Anti-cat evangelists
How on earth could you have missed
Such an obvious and able
Occupant of any stable?

The sheepdog who was left to guard the sheep while the shepherds went to the stable; he says wistfully:

Pity they didn't tek me along too.
I'm good wi' sheep,
And the baby might have liked a dog
After all that myrrh and such.

The grumpy innkeeper who has no room for Joseph and Mary:

No, I said to the wife,
Not this night of all nights

U A Fanthorpe also brought variety to the form of the poems. The lines of "Bird Psalm" take the shape of a bird's wing. "Open House" recalls earlier carols with its strange refrain:

Come into the house
Whoever you are.

"Now" set out as an antiphony reminds us of early church music with the alternate lines contrasting our modern celebration with the first Christmas:

Before the Queen's Speech
A baby's cry
Across the morning suburbs
The Light of the World.

The lullaby “Sanctus Deus” is even set to music!

For all the humour and quirkiness of her vision U A Fanthorpe also shows that the Christmas story is only the first stage of a longer journey. “The Gardener at Christmas” dreams:

Of three white lilies in flower,
Of a tree that could bear a man.

In “The Invitation” the Gloucester foxes invite the Christ Child to share their snuggest den because “us dreams uneasy of thee”:

Us knows the pack be after thee
Us knows how that du end,
The chase, the kill, the cheering,
Dying wi’out a friend.

U A Fanthorpe nudges us to remember Christ’s words to the scribe in Matthew, Ch.8:

“Foxes have holes ... but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.”

U A Fanthorpe looks at what has happened to the celebration of Christmas today saying that Mary “muddling along in the manger with (her) confused old man” cannot be held responsible for “our unholy family Xmas,”

Our lonely overdoses, deep frozen bonhomie.

If it wasn’t to burden these brief poems with too heavy a weight of literary criticism I should be tempted to describe them as many layered. The Christmas Tree promises:

.....every year I rise again indoors
Hazardous fire of love.

All at least repay a second reading. Only as you re-read “The Biographers” do you realise that each stanza epitomises one of the four gospel writers. Number four, in contrast to the earlier three shows that:

Babies, bit players, aren’t part
Of the mystic’s agenda. He starts with aplomb
And a metaphor.

The poem that must have had a particular resonance for U A Fanthorpe’s Cotswold neighbours – as indeed it has for us in the Stewartry – is “Agnus Dei – 2001”. Every year, she writes, the new lambs arrive, the “life and soul of the flock”. In a good year they grow stockier. In a bad year they leave the world in summer “behind screens”. And then:

This one comes with the very early lambs
Always. Doing the things lambs do,
Lord of the dance in the meadow.

He knows where he is going.

Note the placing of “Always”. Remember the words of Steven Carter’s song. Recognise the certainty of the final line from another folk song.

Sadly, there will be no new Christmas cards this year. U A Fanthorpe died last April aged 79. She however would be the first to say,

“Read the poems, don’t read *about* them!”

For those of you who would like to do just that, “Christmas Poems” by U A Fanthorpe is published by Enitharmon Press and Peterloo Poets, price £7.95 and can be ordered from any bookshop.

Sheila MacKenzie

A FEW INTERESTING FACTS ...

The next time you are washing your hands and complaining that the water temperature is not just how you would like it, think about how things used to be. Here are some facts about the 1500s ...

In the 1500s ...

Most people got married in June because they took their annual bath in May and still smelled pretty good by June. However, they were starting to smell a bit so brides carried a bouquet to hide the body odour. Hence today’s custom of carrying a bouquet at a wedding.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women, then finally the children. The babies were the last of all and by then the water was so dirty that you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, “Don’t throw the baby out with the bath water”.

Houses had thatched roofs with thick straw piled high, with no wood underneath. It was the only place for animals to get warm, so all the cats and small animals (mice, bugs) lived in the roof. When it rained, it became slippery and sometimes the animals would slip and fall off the roof. Hence the saying, “It’s raining cats and dogs”.

There was nothing to stop things from falling into the house. This posed a real problem in the bedroom where bugs and other droppings could mess up your nice clean bed. Hence a bed with big posts and a sheet hung over the top afforded some protection. That’s how canopy beds came into existence.

The floor was dirt. Only the wealthy has something other than dirt floors. Hence the saying, “Dirt poor”. The wealthy had slate floors that would get slippery when wet, so they spread thresh (straw) on the floor to help their footing. As the winter wore on, they added more and more thresh until, when you opened the door, it would all start slipping outside. A piece of wood was placed at the entrance. Hence the name thresh-hold.

In those days a big kettle hung over the fire. Every day they lit the fire then added things to the pot. They ate mostly vegetables and did not get much meat. They would eat the stew for dinner and leave leftovers in the pot to get cold overnight. Sometimes stew had food in it that had been there for some time, hence the rhyme, “Pease porridge hot, pease porridge cold, pease porridge in the pot, nine days old”.

Those with money had plates of pewter. Food with a high acid content caused some of the lead to leach onto food causing death from lead poisoning. This often happened with tomatoes so for the next 400 years or so tomatoes were considered poisonous.

Bread was divided according to status: workers got the burnt bottom of the loaf, the family got the middle and guests got the top or the upper crust.

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of holding a wake.

England is old and small and local folks started running out of places to bury people, so they would dig up coffins and would take the bones to a charnel house. When re-opening these coffins, one out of 25 coffins were found to have scratch marks on the inside and they realised that they had been burying people alive. So they would tie a string on the wrist of the corpse, lead it through the coffin and up through the ground and tie it to a bell. Someone would have to sit out in the graveyard all night (the graveyard shift) to listen for the bell, thus someone could be saved by the bell or could be considered a dead ringer.

And there's the truth ... Now who could say that history was boring!!

Jessie Lockhart

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY submitted by David Steward (from one of Theo's cousins in Seattle):

A mouse looked through the crack in the wall to see the farmer and his wife open a package. "What food might this contain?" the mouse wondered. He was devastated to discover it was a mousetrap. Retreating to the farmyard, the mouse proclaimed this warning:

"There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The chicken clucked and scratched, raised her head and said, "Mr Mouse, I can tell this is a grave concern to you, but it is of no consequence to me. I cannot be bothered by it." The mouse turned to the pig and told him, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!"

The pig sympathized, but said, "I am so very sorry, Mr. Mouse, but there is nothing I can do about it but pray. Be assured you are in my prayers."

The mouse turned to the cow and said, "There is a mousetrap in the house! There is a mousetrap in the house!" The cow said, "Wow, Mr. Mouse. I'm sorry for you, but it's no skin off my nose."

So, the mouse returned to the house, head down and dejected, to face the farmer's mousetrap ... Alone ...

That very night a sound was heard throughout the house ... the sound of a mousetrap

catching its prey.

The farmer's wife rushed to see what was caught. In the darkness, she did not see it. It was a venomous snake whose tail was caught in the trap.

The snake bit the farmer's wife. The farmer rushed her to the hospital.

When she returned home she still had a fever. Everyone knows you treat a fever with fresh chicken soup. So the farmer took his hatchet to the farmyard for the soup's main ingredient:

But his wife's sickness continued. Friends and neighbours came to sit with her around the clock. To feed them the farmer butchered the pig. But, alas, the farmer's wife did not get well... She died.

So many people came for her funeral that the farmer had the cow slaughtered to provide enough meat for all of them for the funeral luncheon. And the mouse looked upon it all from his crack in the wall with great sadness.



So, the next time you hear someone is facing a problem and you think it doesn't concern you, remember ... When one of us is threatened, we are all at risk. We are all involved in this journey called life. We must keep an eye out for one another and make an extra effort to encourage one another.

REMEMBER - EACH OF US IS A VITAL THREAD IN ANOTHER PERSON'S TAPESTRY. OUR LIVES ARE WOVEN TOGETHER FOR A REASON.

One of the best things to hold onto in this world is a FRIEND.

* * * * *

RETREAT IN DAILY LIFE (RDL): 31 January - 6 February 2010

This is offered by Kirkcudbright-based 'Aig Fois' as a preparation for Lent. RDL offers the experience of a retreat without going away to a retreat house and is an opportunity to pause and reflect on your life, to try new ways of praying and to draw closer to God.

If you are interested, there are further details/application forms at the back of the church, or contact Rachel Inglis on 01557 331548. Closing date for applications is 24 January 2010.

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