

COMFORT in North Carrick

**Caring Observant Mindful Friendly Obliging Responsible Tactful
Providing comfort to the people of North Carrick at a time of crisis
Sunday 12th July 2020**

CHRIST IN THE STORM

In the Christian Year, this Sunday is Trinity 5. It has also been designated Sea Sunday, when we commemorate those who go out to the sea in ships, for whose sacrifice and devotion to duty we rightly give thanks. Our message thus has a nautical theme.

A fact of life today is that we often put faith in self, rather than faith in Jesus Christ. When 'adverse winds' arise, or we face 'stormy waters', we are only too ready to trust our own judgment to navigate our way through them. As Edward Norman, the historian/theologian has said, 'Humanity is now sovereign', and human beings believe that they are masters of their own destiny. When we face life's howling gales, no call for divine action is necessary, as we are quite capable of handling the situation ourselves.

That was the mistake the disciples' made. They put too much faith in self, and far too little in Jesus Christ. When the storm arose on the Sea of Galilee, they started to panic, fearing they would lose their lives in one of the fierce and sudden squalls for which this stretch of water was notorious. The situation was worsened by Jesus sleeping in the boat, when, in their minds, he ought to have been doing something about it.

Jesus rebuked their lack of faith. "Why are you such cowards?", he asked. "What little faith you have!" The point of the story is perfectly clear. In their hour of greatest need, when the disciples feared their very lives were in peril, Jesus came to them. When the wind was contrary, and all seemed lost, Jesus was there to help, even if those around him had shown such lack of trust.

In recent months, we have faced a storm: 'adverse winds' of enormous and unsurpassed proportions. In a short time, the course of our life has changed, and changed for ever. For many, there have been times when, like those disciples, they have felt overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control. Never in our lifetime have we experienced such upheaval, which will leave a long-lasting medical, psychological, social and economic legacy.

Throughout it all, in spite of our frequent lack of faith, we have not struggled alone. Across the tempest, the same Jesus Christ has come, with his hand outstretched to save. Not only that, this same Jesus comes again and again, with his strong, clear voice - bidding us to take heart, to have no fear, and to put our trust in him, and not in self.. A virus victim recently spoke on Songs of Praise about feeling the waves of Christ's peace ripple over them gently in their time of greatest need, giving them that peace and calm the world cannot give.

In an age that puts so much trust in self, let us remember that in those 'storms' and 'adverse winds' beyond our control, "we have an anchor that keeps the soul, steadfast and sure while the billows roll." That anchor is Jesus Christ!

Let this be a lesson for us today on Sea Sunday!

*"Those who go down to the sea in ships,
who do business on great waters,
they see the works of the Lord,
and his wonders in the deep."*

The Rev. W. Gerald Jones



From Rev Dr John Lochrie, Locum minister at Crosshill and Maybole Parish Church

Later this month the Olympic Games should have taken place in Tokyo, but as we know, had to be postponed because of the pandemic.

This being supposedly an Olympic year reminded me of a visit to the original stadium at Olympia. It was a memorable visit because one of the group we were with was Sally Gunnell who had won the ladies 400 metres hurdles at the 1992 Games in Barcelona.

It turned out Sally did not have a camera with her that day and asked if she could have a photo taken. So we now have a photo of her standing at the finishing line of the old stadium. Later we had the privilege of holding her medal after a most interesting talk about her experiences.



The ancient games fell out of favour and had all but been forgotten until in 1894 Baron Pierre de Coubertin decided that the first of the modern games should be held in Athens in 1896. Since then there have been Olympic Games every 4 years except during war time.

To begin with the games were for amateur athletes, though this began to change towards the end of the 20th century. It is perhaps unfortunate that that meant it is no longer just competing but winning that is all important.

The stance taken in 1924 by Eric Liddell would be laughed out of court nowadays. He, of course, refused to run in his best event, the 100 yards, because the heats would be on a Sunday. He was persuaded to run in the 220 yards and against the odds did win his gold! Before the final one of the American team sent him a message—"He who honours me, says the Lord, I will honour". So by taking the stance he did Eric Liddell did honour the Lord, for that mattered more to him than any dream of success as the world might measure it.

For any athlete competing, the Games are the culmination of months, if not years of hard work. The actual race is little more than the icing on the cake, a cake that has been made from the hours of training needed to build up the necessary fitness and skill. It is the end that gives justification to it all.



That certainly was how Sally Gunnell put it.

For her the medal is not the reward for the few seconds her race lasted, but for all the hard work put in beforehand.

That surely is a thought that should be in everyone's mind just now. After three months we are beginning to see the results of the effort and sacrifice we have made during lockdown. It appears that we could be on the verge of winning the prize.

The suppression of the virus could now be in sight, but as recent events show only too clearly we dare not relax our vigilance.

This week we have seen the emergence of a hot spot around Annan showing that we are not out of the woods yet. Thankfully, quick action appears to have brought things under control. But from the behaviour of some, as the hospitality industry took the first steps to reopening, it is clear that not everyone feels the rules apply to them. That is what is being blamed for the re-imposition of lockdown in Melbourne and could also be the reason for the higher infection rate in Leicester.

Just as it is dangerous for an athlete to relax too soon in a race, we have to maintain our guard. Both Paul and the unknown author of the letter to the Hebrews urge us to run the race that is set before us always pressing towards the goal. Our goal in this world at this time is to come through the pandemic and recreate a 'normal' life.

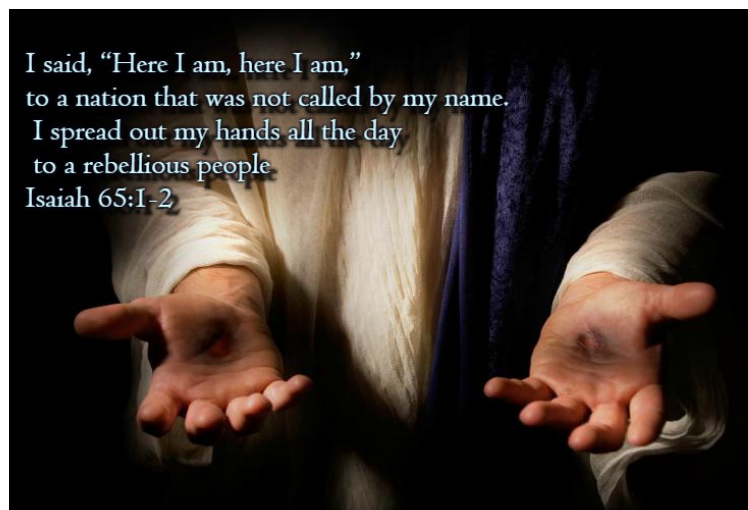
Now is not the time to relax our efforts.

Too much is at stake.

Sometimes people listening to Jesus, even his closest followers, had difficulty understanding some of his teaching. He often had to explain the meaning of his parables. We too have to really study the words Jesus speaks to realise their significance for 21st century living.

Jesus used parables to illustrate his point. People remembered the stories and understood better the concepts that he was trying to convey. Seeing and hearing clearly how God loved them transformed their lives.

Words can be very powerful but are often misunderstood and even misused. We can fail to catch their significance and at times their meaning can elude us completely. In today's world of mass media, advanced technology, and global networking, the power of the word is enhanced by seeing as well as hearing. In the current pandemic media conferences and news bulletins conveying information, advice and statistics have shown the potential for good of modern communication skills. But conversely they can also be vehicles for propaganda, twisting the truth, and popularising bad advice and fake information. We can be at a loss to know the truth.



I said, "Here I am, here I am,"
to a nation that was not called by my name.
I spread out my hands all the day
to a rebellious people
Isaiah 65:1-2

As Christians, we believe we are privileged to know the one truth that is above all others. For us Jesus is the Way, who will bring peace and justice to our earth. But today so many fail to hear his voice. As Jesus used parables, perhaps we can find a way via modern communication methods to let our truth reach the hearts and minds of those listening. Many are anxious about the future, many are searching for the meaning of what's happening to our world.

God still awaits his people's prayer (Isaiah 65:1-2), ready to answer our needy, confused and broken world. If our Christian hearts are hearing, understanding and living the truth of God's word in a way that speaks relevantly, we have at our disposal so many more ways of spreading that truth.

Ellen Hawkes

From Matthew Wyllie

St Oswald's Church open for private prayer

In line with the Scottish Government's guidelines for Phase 2 of the route out of lockdown, St Oswald's Church has re-opened to visitors or anyone that would like to come in to pray or enjoy the peace and quiet. There is hand sanitiser available to use on entering and exiting the building and a member of the church will be present at all times. The church is open on Sundays, 12—2pm and Mondays—Fridays, 10am—1pm.

Visitors might like to see the new icon of Saint Oswald that is displayed in the church, painted by the Rev Mary Jepp. St Oswald was a 7th Century King who, with St Aidan, introduced Christianity to Northumbria. The village of Kirkoswald takes its name from the church that was built following St Oswald's victory in battle there. St Oswald died in battle on 5th August in the year 642.

New Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway

The United Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway in the Scottish Episcopal Church has a new bishop. The Right Rev Kevin Pearson became bishop of the diocese on Wednesday 1st July after translating from the Diocese of Argyll and The Isles where he was bishop from 2011. The current pandemic means that Bishop Kevin and his wife, Elspeth, have not been able to move to Glasgow as was planned, and his enthronement service at St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow has had to be postponed. Bishop Kevin is married to Dr Elspeth Atkinson who is Chief Operating Officer for the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh.



Bishop Kevin preached as Bishop of Glasgow and Galloway for the first time on Sunday 5th July for the online worship at St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow and you can hear his sermon here, 7 minutes and 30 seconds in: <https://www.facebook.com/openinclusivewelcoming/posts/10157575814402339>

From Marguerite Hunter Blair, Our Lady and St Cuthbert's

I am delighted to confirm that Our Lady and St Cuthbert's Catholic Church Maybole will be reopening for mass on Saturday 18th July and Sunday 19th July. Attendance will need to be managed owing to physical distancing requirements. Please register your interest with Dennis McCaffery if you would like to attend.

"Come to me, all you who labour and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light." Matthew 28-30

In Matthew's Gospel, Jesus invites us learn from Him and carry out our own personal SWOT analysis to help us deepen our faith and commitment to God. Guided by His teachings He wants us to make time for our personal development and faith. In this way we will find peace and contentment and be more able to follow lightly in His footsteps.

This week, let us all take time and reflect on the **Strengths** in our lives, then think about our **Weaknesses**- little things we would like to improve. Can we identify **Opportunities** to use our strengths to improve our personal relationships within our family, at work and in our communities? What are the **Threats**, the barriers that prevent us becoming kinder to our family, friends, neighbours and becoming closer to God?

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by life's many pressures. Many of us feel exhausted and over-burdened by the challenges of the past few weeks. There hardly seems time to fit God into our busy, anxious lives, never mind trying to find time to nurture our faith.

Start with thinking about the people who make life's challenges easier for us to bear. Then for a moment stop and 'take time and smell the roses'- admire the beauty of nature, celebrate the greatness of others, be proud of the achievements of our community.

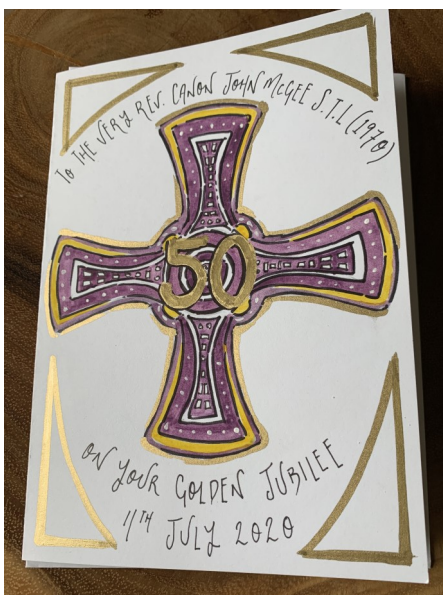
Giving ourselves the freedom to stop, wonder, and admire our world is the way to reconnect with our faith and the wonder of God. It is too easy to focus on world events and feel despair and helpless. Faith tells us that we are more than the things that make us feel helpless, isolated and unappreciated. If you truly believe in your own redemption, it is easier to embrace every new day with hope.

'I see skies of blue and clouds of white

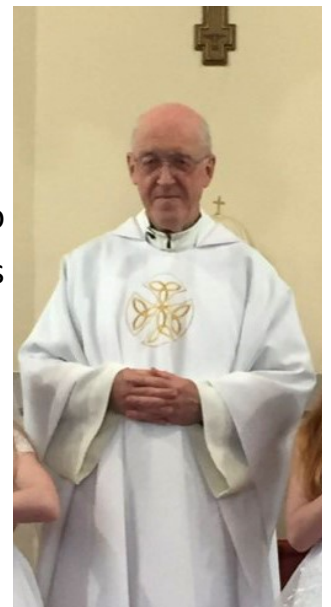
The bright blessed day, the dark sacred night

And I think to myself what a wonderful world'

from What a Wonderful World by Bob Thiele and George Weiss



Congratulations to Canon McGee who celebrates his Golden Jubilee this weekend



Lynne Rankin MPC with thanks to Rev. Nigel Robb, for thoughts and prayers

Sixth Sunday after Pentecost—12 July 2020

Isaiah 55:10-12—For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there until they have watered the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and succeed in the thing for which I sent it. For you shall go out in joy and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23 The Parable of the Sower—This reading is the familiar story of a man who went out to plant seed in a field.

The message of the reading is one of hope to the faithful disciples—that even when the results are not seen or evident anywhere, there is no cause for despair. God is in charge even when the present superficial evidence is not obvious.

The concepts and images of seed, growth, and sowing, planting, and germination are powerful. The notion of wind, rain, weeds, and the cold and heat of the sun are all useful. There is at the centre of the Gospel message and the reading from Isaiah the extravagant mercy of God, spreading the message in dry and dusty territory, where there are few opportunities for growth and harvest. (A bit like lockdown)



It's puzzling that the reading is not set at the time of harvest or early in the spring when we, in the northern hemisphere, sow seeds in ground to reap a harvest in the autumn. By remaining faithful to the chronology of the Gospel of Matthew and reading the parable in the lectionary in summer, (or in the southern hemisphere in the midst of winter) we are asked to think a little differently—to acknowledge that it is not up to us to determine the growth, but to rely on God who provides for our needs and creates the natural rhythm of life.

PRAYERS

Approach—God of grace and love, we rely on Your love extended to us in all ways and at all times, extravagantly and with generosity. We live day by day knowing that Your care and concern is poured out for us in Your provision for our needs and beyond our imagining. You entrust us with the gift of the good news of the Gospel and invite us to be partners in the sharing of the message of grace. Day by day we realise the many gifts lavished upon us. We come to You to acknowledge and praise You for all Your goodness to us.

Confession—Merciful God, we often appear to be choked by greed and selfishness. We indulge ourselves and ignore the needs of others. We are quick to protect what we believe is our own and forget to share the bounty You have so generously provided for us. We have ignored the opportunities for bringing the love You have shown to our neighbours and those in need. We are restricted in our spiritual growth by the power of selfishness and indulgence which take root in our lives. We know we are in need of mercy, care and compassion and seek Your message of forgiveness and restoration.

Petition—Source of life and hope, make us aware of our opportunities for witness and service, even in unlikely places. Focus our attention on our responsibilities, and not on the impact of what we are doing as Your disciples. Take from us the desire for superficial success and strengthen our resolve to be faithful and responsive to the message of Your inclusive love so demonstrated in the life and death and resurrection of Jesus,

In whose name we pray.

Amen.