

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 23rd August 2020

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

The VJ Day commemorations last Saturday firmly and fairly put the Forgotten Army at the centre. Partly because the war in the Far East was so remote from life at home, partly because when it was over the returning forces were told to say very little about what they had endured and many really only wanted to try to forget, the returning forces came to be known as the Forgotten Army. Last Saturday the record was put straight as the contribution of so many to the fighting that brought the Second World War to its end was recognised at last.

Much was made of the fighting in Burma that prevented the Japanese from taking India, which was their goal throughout. It was very nearly the case that they did not have to try to go through Burma at all for the first Japanese move against India in 1942 came to nothing thanks to the Royal Air Force squadrons based in what was then Ceylon.



A Japanese invasion fleet was sent to capture the island and so open the way into India. On 2nd April 1942 it was sighted and reported by a patrolling Catalina flying out of Colombo. Despite being ordered to return to base the pilot decided to circle the fleet to determine its course and speed and eventually was shot down. Later Churchill is reputed to have said that his actions determined the course of the war in the Far East for when the fleet came in range of the RAF fighters and bombers based in Ceylon it was attacked and so severely damaged that it had to return to Singapore. The intended invasion of Ceylon never took place and indeed some of the aircraft carriers that had been attacked never took part in the war again.

These events of April 1942 are still remembered with gratitude in Colombo today as we found out. We were on our way to visit a tea plantation south of Colombo. As we passed what had been the RAF base during the war our guide told the story of the RAF pilot who saved Ceylon from invasion. What he did not know was that the pilot of that Catalina was my uncle. At the comfort stop I explained and was asked to write down for him all that I knew. I am sure that the guide's story is no longer about an unknown pilot whose name had been forgotten.

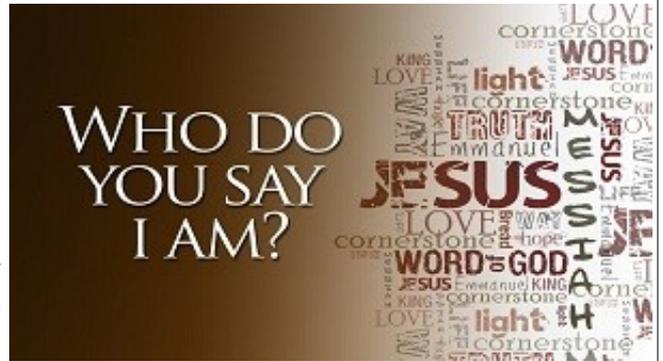
As we continue to move out of lockdown I sometimes wonder if we are in danger of creating a new forgotten army. Much has rightly been made of the efforts of the NHS and the military to combat the virus, but what about the unofficial volunteers? There were countless family members and friends who took it upon themselves to help so many who are older and more vulnerable to be able to come through the early weeks of lockdown. By getting shopping and prescriptions they enabled so many of us to remain safe at home. They kept in touch in so many ways to ensure that all was as well as could be. Here we had the food bank and the free meals service, both appreciated by those who benefitted. Then there were the delivery drivers and shop workers who did their bit to keep the shelves filled. This was particularly difficult in the early days when there was so much panic buying. We all owe all of them a debt of gratitude that must not be forgotten.

There is a strange footnote to the Catalina story. On holiday one year we met a gentleman who had served in the Far East in the navy during the war. In conversation it emerged that he had served on a cruiser which in April 1942 had been in Colombo harbour. Amazingly he was on duty on the bridge when the radio messages from the Catalina came through and actually heard the last one suddenly break off. That must have been the moment the plane was shot down.

It is not only a small world, but an amazing one!

Jesus asked his apostles 'Who do you say I am?' The question was on the lips of many of his contemporaries, and is still with us today. In his time, the question was a cause of much division as well as debate, and he himself insisted that only by the grace of God could anyone come to the right answer.

In our own age, the answer is one in which every Christian echoes Peter in faith. It is an admission which must be endorsed by our lives because the question still hangs over the world at large. That people now speak of a 'post Christian era' is a sign that as Church we are more responsible than ever for witnessing who Christ really is.



Many churches today are losing members, especially the young. Perhaps it is time to review how we conduct services, the language we use and the way we present the Good News. All of these are important but perhaps the most essential of all is how the person of Jesus comes over. Have we unconsciously hidden him in too many words, rituals or doctrines? In the end these are simply launch pads for faith in Christ, which St Paul keeps insisting is the primary requirement

It is the figure of Jesus which undoubtedly attracts people to the gospel. Meeting him today may be somewhat more difficult than when he walked the earth. He has left it up to us to reflect him to others.

Sometimes when we read a really awesome story, or admire someone's courage or are inspired by someone's insights, we take another look at our own lives. Often we get caught up by someone's enthusiasm, or challenged by our circumstances to look for answers as to why we are here at all.

Read without prejudice the gospels certainly show a man of remarkable insight, courage and conviction. And the times in which we live present us all with challenges and anxieties. Unfortunately familiarity and sadly Christian behaviour at times has rather detracted from the strong image of Jesus presented in the New Testament. At times it appears as if we have somewhat domesticated Jesus to fit into our lifestyle, rather than us fitting into his.

I often feel the challenge of the gospel to love everyone can be so hard, not to mention not being afraid no matter if the mountains fall around us. At such times it is always the person of Jesus himself that carries me through from anxiety and frustration to peace and hope. He promised to walk through life with us and that relationship with himself and with his Father whom he tells us to address as Abba has been a real rock. Somehow it is our real experience of the real Jesus that I believe we have to try and convey to others. 'Who do I say Jesus is' might be the key to unlock fearful hearts at this time.

As Church together we can 'lift Jesus higher' as the chorus goes, not ourselves or even our community but Jesus. The die is cast and it's up to us in these uncertain times to seek ways together to pray and reflect our faith in this Jesus who can play a major role in lives today as he did in Galilee.

Ellen Hawkes

LOVING NORTH CARRICK
Amateur Photography Competition

NCCBC are building a bank of copyright-free images to showcase the area

Turn your photos into prizes

1ST PRIZE
choice of digital equipment up to a value of **£500**

2ND PRIZE
choice of digital equipment up to a value of **£350**

9 RUNNERS UP
vouchers for iTunes or Amazon worth **£30**

For full details or to submit entries email: Stuart.northcarrick@gmail.com
Closing date for entries: 12 noon on Friday 12th October

North Carrick Community Benefit Company (NCCBC) is running a photography competition with some very handsome prizes available.

Ultimately the aim is to develop a bank of copyright free images that anyone and particularly businesses can tap into when they are building websites or advertising themselves and the area.

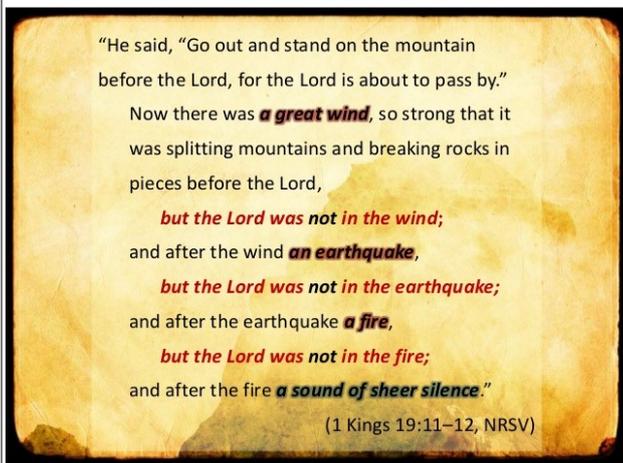
NCCBC will use the images also to populate a new e-commerce web site for the area.

Happy snapping!

CREATIVE SILENCE

The cautious reopening of churches will not include congregational singing. For some, this will be a disappointment; for others, a blessing! Whether or not we have singing voices, the absence of congregational praise will be an unusual, if not an austere experience. The singing, however, may be replaced with a short musical interlude, or a time for silent reflection.

Silence has always been highly valued. Thomas Carlyle, that well-known man of letters from Ecclefechan in Dumfriesshire, said that "Silence is as deep as Eternity, speech is as shallow as Time." Christina Rossetti, herself a gifted hymnwriter, remarked that silence is "more musical than any song", while Thomas Hardy, the English novelist and poet, is on record as saying that "That man's silence is wonderful to listen to." Silence has always been highly valued, and God has often communicated with his people in this way.



In 1 Kings 19 we find the prophet Elijah in a depressed state.

Hounded by the prophets of Baal, and facing the faithlessness and the hostility of the Israelites, he informs God that he is a complete failure and asks God to take away his life.

His morale is temporarily boosted by an angel and he sets off again, travelling for forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb, where he enters a cave for the night. His depressed state returns, but God chooses to speak to him, and in a most unusual way. The voice of the Lord comes to Elijah, not in a strong wind, or in an earthquake, or in a fire, but in "a faint murmuring sound" - in the stillness and the calm of evening. In the quietness, the prophet receives renewed hope for the future.

We live in a world of words. Each day we are bombarded with words, spoken or written, and often transmitted to us in a noisy way. It is little wonder that Rudyard Kipling said that "Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind."

This applies to the Church and to worship, as much as it does to anything else, especially in light of a comment once made that of all world religions, Christianity is by far the noisiest!

This pandemic is possibly a ripe opportunity to rediscover the value of "creative silence" in Christian devotion. Though much of our worship consists of word and action, and with what St. Paul calls "psalms and hymns and spiritual songs," there is surely a place for "creative silence," where the voice of God may come to us, as it came to Elijah, in "a faint murmuring sound" - in stillness, and in quietness. In 2017 Julia Monnin, a spiritual writer, penned a book with the title *The World is Noisy - God Whispers*, a series of short reflections from her own spiritual journal.

Her title is an apt one for our day. The world is noisy, and we forget that God can speak to us in a whisper, as well as in a more dramatic way.

There is an urgent need today to cultivate a much more restful spirit in our lives, and a healthy measure of "creative silence" in worship could well be an adequate substitute for congregational praise.

Finding God in the silence was the blessing that came to Elijah. So can it be for all of us!

"Be still, and know that I am God."

Rev. W. Gerald Jones

