

MAGAZINE

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Pastoral letter

Whence the origin of evil? For millennia we have tried to answer this question. Is it the perverse use of human imagination? Is it an external force acting on humankind? Evil's creative imagination brings sickening suffering, Stalin's Gulags, Hitler's death camps, Mao's arbitrary genocides. Internet horror entertainment reflects and is reflected by actual human conduct. In Nottingham 15 year old Daniel Bartlam was convicted of murdering his mother with a hammer and setting fire to her body. In Overtown four masked intruders slashed the face and broke the skull and arms of an aged woman in a case of mistaken identity. Aaron Campbell, a 16 year old boy, raped and murdered 6 year old Alesha MacPhail on the island of Bute. Nurse Lucy Letby stands accused of murdering many babies who were in her care.

The Old Testament indicates the existence of a fallen heavenly personage given the name Satan who is permitted by God to create havoc on earth among human beings. Judaism laconically suggests that as we receive good from God, shall we not also receive evil? Human conscious existence depends upon choice. Evil is only identified in relation to good, thus love and heroism on one side and violence and bestiality on the other.

Jesus knew the reality of personally targeted evil upon Himself. For Paul there was an actively involved strategic spiritual enemy of the first Christian communities. The Church was not easily or cheaply brought into existence. Today evil is identified in the media with criminality but it is not associated with ordinary human life. Nor is there any narrative of necessary redemption in our popular culture and liberal society.

New Ager David Icke, the former Coventry goalkeeper and TV commentator used to claim to be a son of God while living in what he called 'a turquoise triangle' with two women but his prophecy that parts of Perthshire and Arran would disappear in 1997 proved false.

Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and that could not be tolerated by his contemporaries. He suffered a cruel and horrific death which bore no relation to His exemplary life and conduct. Calvary was conspiratorial evil in action. Jesus rose from physical death in a transformed body and existence. His personal triumph makes evil a servant and not a master. Christianity has restrained much evil and continues to do so. Christianity is strong stuff. It can save from the worst of human capacities for evil.

Jesus has redeemed serial killers on death row in America. Our Church version is so much weaker, politely avoiding the corollaries of our Faith. Keeping quiet about evil. Diminishing returns.

Rev Dr Robert Anderson

Old Cumnock Trinity/Muirkirk Parish Churches Interim Moderator's Letter: September 2019

Dear Friends,

Cabbage, liver, olives, mushrooms – sounds like an ingredients list for 'Read, Steady, Cook'! In fact, these are just a few of the foods that I had absolutely no appetite for when I was younger, but now could eat, as my granny used to say 'tae a baun playin'! I remember, too, 'going off' tablet for years because I spent too many hours scraping the pot and, in the process, sickened myself of that otherwise tasty Scottish delicacy.

I'm sure we are all aware of our appetites changing over the years. I'm sure we know too either from personal experience or looking after people young or old that if people don't have an appetite for something, chances are it won't get eaten.

It's the same, I believe, with spiritual food. We need to have an appetite for it. And what is 'spiritual food'? Jesus said: 'It is written, "People do not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God."' (Matthew 4.4, where Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 8.3 - New Living Translation)

We need spiritual food to live spiritually, to live the more than merely physical and material life and that food is 'every word that comes from the mouth of God.' Every word. From the mouth of God. Every part of scripture – Old Testament and New with the Bible being a huge store cupboard of the choicest food for our souls bringing us what edible food brings our bodies – health, strength, enjoyment, comfort, life itself.

And we feed, too, on the Living Word who is Jesus himself, 'taking in' his life through faith and fellowship with him.

So, how's your appetite for the Word of God? Do you 'gorge on the good bits' with lots of 'comfort eating' on those favourite parts of scripture that you 'eat' again and again? Are you a 'picky' eater, pushing to the side of your plate some of the truths that are hard to swallow?

Or maybe you've simply well and truly lost your appetite for God's word altogether. That happens – just as it happens with food for our bodies.

Hunger, they say, is the best sauce. We all, I believe, need to pray for ourselves, for each other, for our world for a hunger, a deep aching hunger for the Word of God so that we open it, turn to it, read it, savour it in all its breadth and depth.

These days, honey, especially Manuka honey from New Zealand, is being hailed as a 'superfood' with extraordinary health benefits.

Of course, centuries ago, the Bible beat us to it: 'How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!' A verse, perhaps - to whet our appetite.

God bless you and yours,
Helen

Thank you

I would like to thank the elders, congregation and friends of Old Cumnock Trinity and Muirkirk for their sympathy, kindness, support, prayers, cards and flowers following the death of my mum at the end of May. Each expression of love and concern was greatly appreciated.
Helen

In Love, In Memory

During the months of my mum's illness I gained a great deal of comfort from writing poems at various times and stages. Together with some of mum's 'witty sayings' these and a few other poems make up a small book entitled 'In Love, In Memory.' Which should be available soon with a suggested donation of £2, the proceeds from which will go to St 16, Ayr Hospital and the Elderly Mental Health Liaison Team.
HC

The Hiding Place by Corrie ten Boom

This is the account of the family ten Boom in Holland, the devastation and separation that befell them during world war two and the fire and faith of Corrie afterwards to continue telling others the gospel truths.

The ten Booms were a Christian family and in all they did, always put the Lord first. The beje (house) where they lived was of a strange design but proved ideal when they decided to secretly house Dutch Jews from the Nazis who had occupied Holland. This remarkable plan worked well until they themselves were betrayed. All were imprisoned and both Corrie and her sister were eventually taken to the concentration camp at Ravensbruck in Germany.

This internment did not phase the sisters in relation to their faith. Hard as it was just to exist, they continued to praise God and would lead a worship time each evening in their quarters with many other women. This was possible because the hut these women occupied was overrun by

lice! In Colossians Ch. 3 Paul tells us to be thankful. To teach and help each other, sings songs and psalms with thanksgiving. It is not easy to be thankful in all circumstances, but because the hut was infested with lice, it kept the guards away thus giving the women freedom to worship. God can use anything for our good - even lice!

Despite all Corrie ten Boom suffered during her time of interment she spent the remainder of her life travelling and speaking for Jesus. She carried no malice or hate.

This is a story of one family's personal sorrow and hardship was borne with humility, love and faith in their Lord. It is available in the pew library.

Review by J. Trotter

Hospitals are Holy Places

Hospitals are Holy Places,
Not surprising, really:
Death happens there and birth
And most else in-between.
Life's dramas and mysteries crisscross the corridors
And are ushered into beds and rooms.

Hospitals are Holy Places,
I would imagine that in them, people of all faiths
(And of the faith that doesn't feel it needs to
Bother with a Name) pray.
Short prayers mainly – help, why, thank you.

Hospitals are Holy Places,
For healing happens and if it doesn't,
It is certainly not for want of people trying,
Of Hospital in all its fulness, all its many parts
Straining to make it so.
And when it doesn't, when it can't,
Brave acceptance hallows those small rooms,
Those too-cramped bedsides
Where the worst of truths have to be told.

Hospitals are Holy Places,
For, despite their business-like busyness,
Underneath and all around the crises and the pain,
The science and the skill, the weight of far too much to do,
The clash of cultures – medical and non,

The understandable human misunderstandings,
There is love - saving, even when the medicine fails, so many lives.

Hospitals are Holy Places,
Because, for me in my faith, anyway,
The Holy One was the first great paramedic,
Everyone's doctor on call,
Nursing back to health the people that he touched.
I would think, for the most part, He would just love hospitals
And agree that they are Holy Places.

Helen Cuthbert © 2019

Busy lives

Many of us have busy lives and often things can overwhelm us. I remember when I was working full time, I didn't know what to do next because there was so much on the to-do list.

We know the story of sisters Mary and Martha. Martha rushed around working in the kitchen while Mary sat at Jesus's feet listening to him. When Martha remonstrated, Jesus told her that she was anxious about many things but only one thing was important.

We all have commitments but Mary chose to forget about some of them. She wasn't going to pass up the chance to sit and listen to Jesus.

Martha was frazzled, as we sometimes are, so she told Jesus, 'Tell my sister to help me.'

Don't be overwhelmed by the many things that need to be done. For our peace and wellbeing take a moment in the day when you sit at the feet of Jesus and listen to him.

'Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy-laden and I will give you rest.'

A. C. Clark

Retiring from the copy room

After 16 years of producing the church magazine, Susann has decided to give up the editor's chair.

The church wants to say a huge thank you for all the hard work that went into those 16 years - for faithfully collecting and typing up the articles and getting the magazine out on time each quarter.



V. Trotter has agreed to fill the chair - it will be a hard act to follow.

Lord, hear our prayers

Father hear the prayer we offer for all in our small village,
for all who are sick, in hospital or at home.
All who are by themselves or have a loved one who has passed on.
Lord, hear our prayers.

Let us pray that some day we shall have our own minister,
a light to follow, someone who can lift us all up.
Going home with a smile on our faces and good thoughts.
Lord, hear our prayers.

Let us pray for all who are trying to run our country
and those who do lots of work within our village.
Remembering those who look after those who cannot get out and about.
Lord, hear our prayers.

God bless one and all.
M. Rae

The Church's Birthday

The word Pentecost means 50 days. We are familiar with Christmas and Easter. Pentecost comes 7 weeks after Easter. It is also called Whitsun Day in England. That is from white Sunday because the priests wore white robes. It is the Church's birthday. We should all sing 'Happy Birthday' dear Church. The Church may actually be 1990 years old today because historians tell us that Jesus was crucified in 29AD.

We are told about the birthday of the Church in Acts 2. The disciples and others were meeting every day waiting for what Jesus had promised them - the gift of the Holy Spirit. They did not know what was going to happen although they had been told they would receive the same supernatural divine and spiritual powers that Jesus had in his own life and ministry. They would heal the sick and they would convert many to Jesus Christ through their preaching and teaching. For themselves, their inward being would be filled with God's life and power and they would be activated and motivated to witness for Jesus Christ. And this indeed happened and from that day the Church was set in motion as an empowered and led divine human operation.

What actually happened? Well - if I were to stop speaking right now and we all sat in complete silence, you might sense a special atmosphere. Sometimes, for example, when we are praying, and we have a silence for

private thoughts and prayers, there is a special atmosphere. You can sense it and you might think you can touch it. It is very sacred and powerful and it is like nothing else you experience anywhere else in your normal life pattern. We are in direct touch with God and we open ourselves out to the presence of the Holy Spirit. We feel blessed and at peace and we feel strengthened and comforted. And we know for sure that God is real and that God loves us and that we are his children.

That actually happens very often. You could say that it happens every week. Multiply that by 1000 times and that is what happened at Pentecost. The disciples and the others had known Jesus personally. They had listened to his teaching and had committed themselves to him. He had taught them and prepared them. They were attuned to him especially after meeting him after his resurrection. They were praying and waiting in peace and in silence. On this special day, however, the atmosphere suddenly changed. A spiritual wind began to blow in and around everyone gathered together. It was not harmful however and it did not make them feel cold or frightened. It was warm and gentle and it did not make them shake or move or fall down. It was a spiritual wind not an elemental or physical wind. It made everyone full of joy and excitement. Everyone was filled with the Holy Spirit and felt warm and complete inside.

Something else happened. It is called 'speaking in tongues'. Everyone was so happy that they started babbling and talking away but not in their own language. This was a sign of spiritual ecstasy and some churches today say that the sign of being filled with the Holy Spirit is this 'speaking in tongues'. St Paul also had this gift but he did not think it was the most important spiritual gift to have. Throughout the history of the Church, many great Christians have not had this particular gift while they have had other gifts of the Holy Spirit. Even Jesus did not speak in tongues. But this gift is still given in some Churches and they are usually called Pentecostal Churches. Speaking in tongues is not part of the life of the Church of Scotland. But there are other evidences of the Holy Spirit in our Church. One is the honest dealing with money at congregational level over the years and centuries. We may not be hanging from the chandeliers in the Spirit but honesty in financial matters is equally if not more so a sign of the Holy Spirit in my view.

There is nothing we can compare this outpouring of the Holy Spirit with. You might have a large family celebration and people will be happy. You might be at a football match where Auchinleck Talbot has won - or less importantly – Liverpool - and everyone spills out of the ground singing and cheering. But this was something special from God, from heaven, from the Risen Jesus Christ. This powerful blessing gave birth to the confessing Christian Church as we know it today.

Here is further evidence. Peter as you know was one of Jesus' closest disciples. Yet he had let Jesus down and denied him. Even after Jesus' resurrection Peter just wanted to go back to Galilee and resume his fishing business. Jesus had had to ask Peter three times if he really loved Jesus. Now - after the coming of the Holy Spirit - Peter amazingly stood up and started teaching and preaching and explaining to everyone what was happening and what it all meant. This big 'fearty' actually stood up to be identified with Jesus Christ and accepted the leadership of the first Christian Church. He spoke with power and authority though he had never been trained as a rabbi. And everyone listened to him.

The first thing he said was that this Day of Pentecost had been written about and prophesied in the Old Testament. A major aspect in legitimising Jesus was to show how the Old Testament (the Jewish Bible) pointed to Jesus and explained what he would do and what would happen to him. Because the Jews of the time did not want a suffering Messiah, they did not recognise Jesus. So, Peter quoted the prophet Joel who lived possibly around the same time as Hosea and Amos in the 9th century BC. He had written, "God says 'I will pour out my spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy ... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my spirit in those days and they will prophesy'". This actually happened on the Church's birthday. Peter then was able to claim that what was happening was within the calling and ordering of God - was in the Bible - and was good and right.

The second thing Peter did was to identify Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel. In doing so he was at last fulfilling his calling to witness for Jesus but he was also taking his life in his hands. Scholars say that this change of character and behaviour is one of the strongest proofs that Jesus did actually rise from the dead. Psychologically and emotionally, there was no reason for Peter to become a courageous preacher if what he said was made up or untrue. There would be neither motivation or

purpose in Peter risking his life for a lie. Peter was preaching in public knowing that what he said would be reported to the Jewish authorities. He, of all people, would not have done so unless what he said was true. The key to his speech is in Acts 2:36, "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ".

The third thing Peter did was to invite everyone listening to him to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as the Messiah and receive forgiveness and be blessed with the Holy Spirit. Repent sins. Confess Jesus. Receive forgiveness. Be blessed with the Holy Spirit. That is Christianity's true purpose to this day. This is what our worship means. This is why we are here. Christianity's niche market is to offer these heavenly and divine and spiritual things to anyone who wishes to respond. Today. Here. This morning. You. These ideas of sin and repentance are out of fashion and yet all around us the need for them is more and more evident. The key is that we know of sin only in relation to God because we are made to know and love God. Forgiveness is something we all need and something we all need to give to others. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit is something special which follows from a dedicated Christian life.

It does not just happen. It takes you over the line from not being a Christian to knowing in your heart and mind that you most certainly are a Christian.

And that is what happened on the birthday of the Church. Throughout the day about 3000 people became Christians. The Church began with an explosion of faith, a spiritual 'Big Bang' of love and warmth and saving grace from the risen Jesus Christ. That intensity of power has not been lost and is evident in different places in the world. In America there are churches like football stadiums with 10,000 seats. In Africa, churches cannot be built fast enough. In Asia there are large congregations and in China the underground church is multiplying. In Scotland, we are on a smaller scale and canner in our Christian expression. But there are many quieter expressions of the Holy Spirit just the same. In our country's history, men and women died for Jesus Christ. There are still over 1000 congregations worshipping every Sunday in different denominations throughout the land. Men and women are still being called to ministries.

There is another lovely aspect to this birth of the Christian Church. It was a family affair. It was for men, women and children, for fathers and

mothers and grandpas and grannies. There has been terrible violence throughout the Christian centuries for example at the time of the Crusades, at the Reformation, at the Roman Catholic Inquisitions, during the European wars of the middle ages, the Covenanting years, the empire building of the European nations, but the Christian Church was born in peace and in joy and wholesomeness and the spiritual beauty of Jesus Christ.

What we all need is another great birthday party for the Church. We need a birthday party like the first one when the Holy Spirit came and filled Peter and the others up with blessing and power. We need that to dispel our doubts and spiritual slumber, to wake us up and set us in motion, to inspire us and lead us where we cannot go by our own inclination and strength and will. We are not meant to carry the burden of our life alone without God's help. We are not meant to force ourselves to be Christians. We are to receive the Holy Spirit to make it easier to be Christians. The power of Pentecost is different from our own energy and enthusiasm. Baptism in the Holy Spirit becomes possible for the earnestly seeking. The mere presence of the Holy Spirit is not the fullest expression of the Holy Spirit. This can happen for us. We do not express the full dispensation of Grace in the Holy Spirit. This elemental power is needed to revive the churches, to revive us. If we believe, if we pray enough, we can help the process forward. It is within the Sovereignty of God, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Not human made, not manufactured or contrived. If we take Jesus at his word, then he will respond. It is for you and I, each in our relationship with the Risen Jesus Christ, to do this.

Rev Dr Robert Anderson

Door welcoming

Sept	1	Nan Kay & Sam Hillditch
	8	David Crawford & Jim McAleer
	15	Drew Samson & John Blackwood
	22	Jenny Blackwood & Margaret Rae
	29	David Crawford & Nan Kay
Oct	6	Agnes Johnstone & Sam Hillditch
	13	Jim McAleer & John Blackwood
	20	Drew Samson & Susann Hillditch
	27	Margaret Rae & David Crawford

Nov	3	Sam Hilditch & Jim McAleer
	10	Nan Kay & Jenny Blackwood
	17	Drew Samson & David Crawford
	24	Jim McAleer & John Blackwood

Flowers

Sept	1	Mr & Mrs J Weir
	8	Mr & Mrs E Dempster
	15	Mrs A & Miss A Murphy
	22	Mr & Mrs S Hilditch
	29	Mrs M Rae
Oct	6	Mrs M Dempster/Mrs M Mitchell
	13	Mr & Mrs I Spence
	20	Mrs C Walker
	27	27th Mrs C Barrie
Nov	3	Mrs S McBirnie
	10	Mr & Mrs S Johnstone
	17	Mrs J Blackwood
	24	Mr G Gibson

If you would like to donate flowers to beautify the church, please speak to Mrs Agnes Johnstone.

Church Lunch: Sunday 6th October

Christmas Lunch: Sunday 1st December

DEATHS

20-06-2019	Anne Lochrie, Park Avenue
29-07-2019	Margaret Archibald, formerly of Muirkirk

The next edition of the Muirkirk Parish Church Magazine will be out at the start of December.