



St Augustine's Dumbarton

Issue 58 Easter 2012

£1.00



the new look

Champions!



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Well, the Rector made a heartfelt plea, almost begged, and it was delivered!

For all of the Rector's ministry here in Dumbarton, over 10 years now, he has coveted the town's Christian Aid Quiz Trophy.

We have had some serious attempts, and finished up runners-up on a couple of occasions, but being second is little use, even although the winners have been suspected of foul play. We have suspected the smuggling in of android phones, and then there was the year when most of the questions

were biblically based on chapter and verse, and we Pisceki's got a bit lost!

However, 2012 has seen us triumph at last, with a super win from our team full of intelligentsia, including Tim, Margot and Toby Rhead, and the unstoppable Barbara Barnes.

The Rector's wee heart is bursting with pride, and we may all get a drink of champagne from the trophy on Easter Day! Now the worry is retaining the trophy, and of course cleaning it! Meanwhile we celebrate!

"No pain, no gain" - The Primus's Easter Reflection

An Easter reflection from the Most Rev David Chillingworth, Bishop of St Andrews, Dunkeld & Dunblane and Primus of the Scottish Episcopal Church

People sometimes say 'No pain, no gain.' It's a way of saying that anything which is worth having will come at a cost – and the cost is part of the value.

This is the season when Christians tell again the story of the crucifixion of Jesus and the power of the resurrection. Jesus approached suffering and death with quiet dignity. He believed that this was what God asked of him. It is from the seed-bed of this suffering that hope and new life come into the world.

My friend Archbishop Nathaniel of the Anglican Church of Japan writes about what it is like to care for people in the suffering which followed the tsunami, just over a year ago. He describes the helplessness and the sadness of lives destroyed. Then he shares the story of how faith in the risen Christ changed the lives of Jesus' followers then and changes it now, saying: "The resurrection of Jesus revealed to them that the Lord would never desert them, and from that they stood up together to make a world where every human being is brought together with the bond of love."

From Kenny....

I need to apologise to you all for the gap in magazines. The last one was the February Edition, and much has happened since then which will go unrecorded.

There are plenty of reasons why this is so, and I won't bore you all with excuses, but it is no secret that I had been suffering from depression since the turn of the year.

This is not a "fed-up" kind of depression, but the kind that is deeply dark, and in which it is difficult to function properly or organise your life in any great way.

When I was at Theological College, a priest whose parish I was attached to went through a similar experience. It was the first time I had encountered such severe depression, and it scared me witless.

Eventually, it cleared by the end of Lent, and he wrote a most moving article entitled, "It is Easter, and I can See You". It brought tears to my eyes, as he described the darkness of his experience, and

the gradual movement from his own Gethsemane into an Easter morning when he was once again free, and the world looked and felt a much more hopeful place to live in.

Many of us are friends of Gethsemane. It is in the garden that Jesus sweats at the prospect of crucifixion, and feels the total abandonment of friends, and the futility of the suffering which is coming his way. It is the passive Jesus that we meet there, the one who knows that things are happening beyond his control which have to be accepted. He prays for the strength to handle what has to be done, until he finally reaches his own Easter morning. The waiting time, in the darkness, can be the most crushing, for we are unsure of the outcome and trust in God can be hard to come by.

I know that some of you will know exactly what I mean, having been through your own periods of darkness in recent months. We celebrated two minor miracles when we were on retreat in Millport, and there was much joy that the darkness had been overcome. For it is not just depression that can hurl us into darkness. Illness, bereavement, the break up of relationships and many other things can find us in a place we would rather not be.

Easter seems far away at these times, but we need to hold on to the fact, as Jesus did, that God is faithful, and has the ability and the will to raise us from the most hopeless and helpless situations and feelings.

That's something for us all to reflect on as we hear the Easter story again this year. It was Juliana of Norwich who said, "All will be well, and all will be well, and all manner of things shall be well." These are wise words and speak of our own promised Easter mornings.

There is nothing that will not be overcome. There is no evil too big for God to tackle and overcome with us at his side. We may know the pain of Good Friday, but we shall also know the joy of Easter morning. That is the Gospel promise, and even death cannot defeat us.

For me the darkness of January through to mid-March has gone, although at times I doubted that it ever would. How little faith I have at times!

However, today, this Easter, I can stand among you, and say with my priest-friend Brian, "It is Easter, and I see you!"

Kenny

THE NIGHT WE HAUNTED THE HIGH STREET

Today we despair at the state of our beloved High Street, urging action with campaigns - but on Friday 30th March it was haunted. Yes, our recent Friends' event brought out the ghosts of Dumbarton's rich historic past specially for the participants in the long awaited Ghost Walk. Linda's superb organisation ensured that the 'spirits' were always on cue and transported surreptitiously to their arranged locations in her freshly cleaned dog-mobile.

For years at Friends' AGMs Tim has requested such an event but unfortunately on this haunted evening he was otherwise engaged! Now he's suggesting that we repeat the whole experience of 'Going for Ghosts' - he hasn't had a fright for quite some time! The fun started in the Community Hall at around 7pm with Linda and Sharon conducting business as usual to allow the ghosts to materialise and the darkness to fall. Drinks and snacks were served.

A loud knock at the door indicated the arrival of the 15th century Countess of Lennox, her servant, Murrin, and Ghislaine with her bodhran. There was an air of excitement and anticipation. These apparitions, played by Maggie and Janette, had been invited along to lead the walk. Maggie, as the Countess Isabella, was splendidly attired in medieval majesty with a startling white face and looked as though she was awaiting admission to the RAH! This character was appropriate to the venture having founded St. Mary's Collegiate Church giving our town St. Mary's Way and the College Bow in the Municipal Buildings. This was also the origin of College and College Park Streets which our Council sadly disposed of! The walk would start in St. Mary's Way and then at the insistence of the servant move through the town - not just looking for 'posh ghosts'!

Locations would include the old Dumbarton Prison, the Municipal Buildings, the edge of the 'flooded lands', the site of the Glassworks, the Leven path, the Tolbooth, the opening of the Vennel and the Parish Kirk graveyard.

So Margaret Hardie, clutching a formidable hangman's noose stalked the old prison ruins and alarmed home-bound shoppers from ASDA and Morrison's. She then returned on foot to the hall to see to the sausage rolls and pies for supper! Even more alarming was the appearance of the headless Duke of Albany under the College Bow - Fran had gone to town on her gruesome costume!

Meanwhile, Chrissie had been hanging around Meadowbank Street with a 'bloody sark' or bloodstained shirt in her hands hoping that the nearby residents, who were

finding her more interesting than the telly, were not dialling '999'.

The police, of course, had been warned in advance of our proposed on goings. A demented Sandra with a hideous face (not her own!) came out of the shadows near the Health Centre searching frantically. No, it wasn't for a cup of tea but this ghost was clearly not resting in peace. So we left her and progressed to the Leven path where the ghost of a beautiful heilan' lass was strolling in the moonlight - her dead body having been pulled from the river. This was Sharon, with a candle that wouldn't stay lit in the chilly wind, attracting the attention of several local revellers.

On the cobbled alleyway to the Tollbooth a poor, tortured, suspected witch was being harassed and across the road at the opening of the Vennel appeared two desperate Cholera victims - Roberta and Margaret Swan - who nearly missed their cues looking in Poundland's windows!

They had been approached by the law who left them in peace to return to the station to seek guidance on handling cholera outbreaks! Our last ghost was at the Parish Kirk graveyard where a guilt ridden tavern wench sought the grave of the murdered John Arrol. Ghislaine had used her bodhran to great effect on this walk summoning the ghosts from their graves.

Kenny stayed with the little party throughout the walk - perhaps he felt an exorcism might prove necessary! The actual walk had lasted around forty five minutes but it was getting chilly - even for ghosts - so the warmth of the hall and a hot supper brought a very successful evening to a close. It had been great fun haunting the High Street!

Janette



ROTAS APRIL 2012

Sunday April 15th.

11am Eucharist

Readers: Morag O'Neill & Tim Rhead.

Intercessions: Fran Walker.

Chalice: Sharon Rowatt & Margaret Hardie.

Sidespersons: Vernon Perrin & David Ansell.

Sunday April 22nd.

11am Eucharist .

Readers: Maggie Wallace & Sharon Rowatt.

Intercessions: Margaret Hardie.

Chalice: Tim Rhead & Janette Barnes.

Sidespersons: Ronnie Blaney & Roberta Mailley.

Sunday April 29th.

11am Eucharist

Readers: Ghislaine Kennedy & Janette Barnes.

Intercessions: Evelyn O'Neill.

Chalice: Fran Walker & David Rowatt.

Sidespersons: Ross & Gavin Elder.

FLOWERS

April 15th. Moira McGown & Margaret Hardie.

" 22nd. Linda Macaulay

" 29th. Barbara Barnes & Maggie Wallace.

SUNDAY ROTAS -

READERS, INTERCESSORS SIDESPERSONS.

There is always room for more volunteers for Rotas. If you would like to read lessons, lead intercessions or be a sidesperson on a Sunday, please speak to Kenny, Tim or Maggie. There isn't a test or an audition. Just be able to speak clearly, be yourself and smile!

Cursillo

The period from the end of April to the end of May will be busy, so here is a check-list of dates:-

April 24th [Tuesday] Diocesan Ultreya, St. Ninian's, Troon 7.30p.m.

May, Wednesday 2nd St. Augustine's hall palanca writing 7.30p.m.

May 17-20 weekend #61 at Kinnoull

May 17 Thurs. 'Stations' service in the church 7.30p.m.

May 20th Sunday Clausura at Kinnoull probably at 3p.m.

May 30th Wednesday Welcome back .St Augustine's hall 7.30p.m.

Everyone is welcome to Cursillo meetings.

Passing the Baton

Some St Augustine's folk came to hear Gavin Lawson from Bethany talk about the possibility of starting up a pilot project, supporting a homelessness person as they seek to secure and hold on to a tenancy in the town.

Passing the Baton is a service delivered by volunteers to help formerly homeless people settle into new tenancies, build relationships and get plugged into their local area.

Volunteers act as "buddies" for members, helping them with DIY to make their homes look and feel comfortable and personal. Volunteers offer friendly one-to-one support to help members pursue hobbies and social activities that will get them out and about and involved in their community.

Passing the Baton has a 98% success rate for maintaining tenancies 6 months on from initial re-settlement.

Some volunteers were signed up, but we could do with one or two more.

There is now a follow-up meeting in St Augustine's on April 24th at 7.30pm when we will be taking things a step further. Please feel free to come along, even if you missed the first meeting.

Vestry

The Vestry meets on Wednesday 11th April at 7.30pm.

Quote from Richard Holloway's new book:

Mission statements were part of the rhetoric of the time, and the one I dreamt up for the Scottish Church seemed to sum us up, though it probably only summed up my own wishful thinking: 'We are the Church for people other Churches won't take in.'

Parish Retreat

Eucharistic People

(This was written in Anne Tomlinson's Blog the day after our retreat at Millport)

Just back from an exceptionally enjoyable weekend on Cumbrae. 19 members of St Augustine's Dumbarton were there for a Congregational Retreat; the theme was God's hospitality to us, and our response. Some of the time was spent in silence, much in prayer, some in reflective walks round the island in twos and threes (in blazing sunshine) – and the rest in 'sharing meals' in Cathedral and Refectory.

There was much thankfulness for recent healings; deep thoughtfulness about mission and the church's task to proclaim the good news; discussion about how to respond to the Eucharist's challenge to construct 'a just, participatory and sustainable world order'; and above all joy. St Augustine's has to be one of the most joyous charges in the diocese.

That joy is not fluffy. It is born out of much pain; it is forged in courage (which Kenny dubbed in his sermon as 'fear which has said its prayers'); it is palpable and powerful. Passionate.

And it produces fun; I don't think I have had such a good laugh for ages. I could tell you about the 'mood cigarettes' or PC 505 .. but I reckon they will appear in next year's Pantomime, so I won't spoil the show.

Thank you, St Auggie's, for such a memorable weekend; an ikon of your life together in Christ.

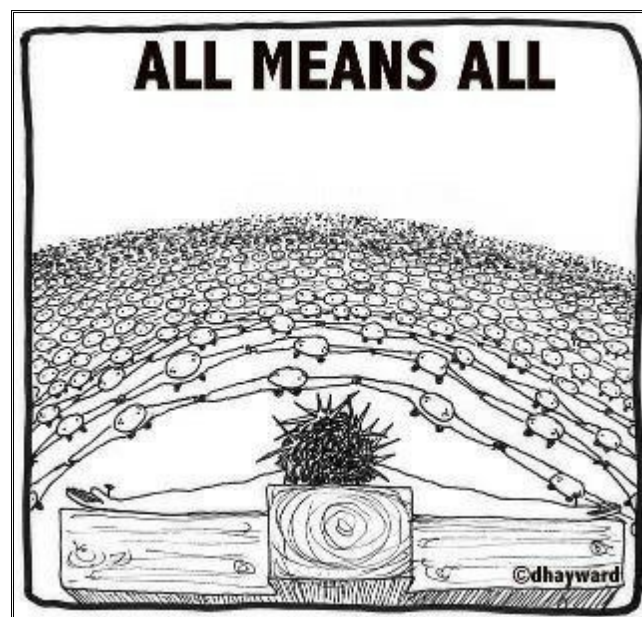
One of the readings from the retreat affected the Ed greatly. It is from Jesus Freak: Feeding, Healing, Raising the Dead (2012)

I came late to Christianity, knocked upside down by a midlife conversion centered around a literal chunk of bread. The immediacy of my conversion experience left me perhaps freakily convinced of the presence of Jesus around me. I hadn't figured out a neat set of "beliefs," but discovered a force blowing uncontrollably through the world.

Eating Jesus cracked my world open and made me hunger to keep sharing food with other people. That desire took me to an altar, at St. Gregory of Nyssa Episcopal Church in San Francisco, where I helped break the bread for Holy Communion, then to a food pantry that I set up around the same altar, where we gave away free groceries to anyone who showed up. From all over the city, poor people started to

come every Friday to the church—100, 200, 450, 800—and like me, some of them stayed. Soon they began to feed and take care of each other, then run things, then start other pantries. It was my first experience of discovering that regular people could do Jesus' work. In the thrilling and difficult years after my first communion, I kept learning that my new Christian identity required me to act. .. Time and again, I was going to have to forgive people I was mad at, say I was sorry, be honest when I felt petty, and sit down to eat, as Jesus did, with my betrayers and enemies: the mad, the boring, and the merely unlikeable.

As I got pushed deeper into all these relationships, I started to suspect that the body of Christ was not a metaphor at all. "Because there's one bread," as St. Paul, another poleaxed convert, wrote in astonishment, "we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one I began to taste something, see something, touch something which suggested that Jesus' vision of what we could do was true. "I know this sounds nuts," I said to an old friend, who'd been shocked at my conversion to a faith I'd mocked, and baffled by my sudden urge to give away pallets of lettuce and cereal. "But, uh, when we're all together at the Eucharist and at the food pantry, it's the same thing. Because Jesus is real."



Outreach Group:

This meets on Wednesday 18th April at 7.30pm in the Community Hall. If you would like to be a part of this small group which has formed to carry out our Mission Action Plan, then please speak to Kenny as soon as possible.

St James the Least of All...

Here the elderly Anglo-Catholic Rector, Eustace, continues his correspondence to Darren, his nephew, a low-church curate recently ordained...

The Rectory

My dear Nephew Darren,

It seemed such an innocent suggestion. A local farmer announced he wanted to arrange a Spring music festival. I could already hear Mozart string quartets being played in our Lady Chapel, and arias from Donizetti operas being sung al fresco in the Glebe field, while we sipped champagne in the warm Spring sunshine and admired the flowers.

Unfortunately, our farmer was thinking of a heavy metal weekend in one of his fields. The teacups began to rattle when village talk turned to portable lavatories, mobile catering vans and using the churchyard for overflow camping space. Then the police arrived to discuss crowd control and drug policy. At James the Least of All we tend more towards congenial dinner parties with drinks labelled Bollinger or Glenfiddich.

That was the point when Colonel Trubshaw began to search out his old shotgun. His wife even stopped serving coffee after Mattins, in order to patrol the perimeter of their estate with their arthritic spaniel. On the other hand, Miss Little went a little mad. She exchanged her usual tweeds and brogues and pearls for a red bandana, long patchwork dress and peace beads. She must have enjoyed the 1960s.

It was time to take action, so I told our farmer that St. James the Least of All would support him to the hilt. Our ladies would of course do flower arrangements for the stage, and our sidesmen would greet the campers as they arrived. We would provide a full choral Evensong on Friday night, to help set the tone for the weekend. When the farmer gasped something about heavy metal, I was able to reassure him. "Heavy metal? We're doing that Saturday morning from about 6am, when our bellringers will give a three hour exhibition of change ringing." The farmer pleaded something about singing, and I was able to reassure him on that point as well: "On Sunday we'll do a Songs of Praise, and not to worry, your campers can choose their favourite hymns from 'Ancient and Modern'."

I was thanked profusely, but the following week, our dear farmer wrote to tell me he had decided to

graze sheep on his field after all. Shame about that.

A Spring parish picnic is always a good idea – although you must bear some details in mind. First, whatever date you choose will turn out be the wettest of the year. Scottish picnics are invariably eaten under umbrellas while wearing Wellingtons and the sort of determinedly cheerful look that defies anyone to admit they would rather be home in front of the fire.

Second, no matter how early in the year, wasps will emerge from hibernation in huge numbers, and terrorise Mrs Hornby with the picnic baskets. And thirdly, someone will bring along their (hungry) dog. Last time Colonel Smith's spaniel outdid herself: she leapt up, head butted a piece of Madeira cake out of Mrs Horngirdle's hand - and ate the lot – before even a crumb could touch the ground. A good piece of field work, that.

Half way through the afternoon, some over-excited member of the party will decide to arrange a game of rounders. (Mr Poppinjay tried this once one year, as in his youth he had been athletic. Fortunately, the ambulance got there quickly, and the ankle healed well.)

Then the mothers who join in will completely ignore the ball sailing past them, while they discuss some burning topic of Mother's Union gossip. In the meantime, the young choir members, who were the reason for arranging the game in the first place, will have drifted off to the lake to throw stones at the ducks while no one is looking.

For our annual picnic, I use my own car, making sure it is so full of clerical robes and church magazines that no-one else can fit in. Throughout the day, I keep returning to it to make sure no one has broken in to steal the Communion wine – and taking the opportunity to catch up on the cricket scores. By the middle of the afternoon, I usually remember that some urgent duty, such as blessing a traction engine, demands my departure.

The rest of the party, by now soaked, cold and knowing the coach to take them home is still several hours off, only wish they had such demanding work to tear them away.

Your loving uncle,

Eustace

Walk of Witness or Walk of Shame?

Posted by Revd Ruth Innes in her Blog

I have a problem with the Walk of Witness. I always have and suspect I always will. And I'm not exactly sure why, but I do know that it makes me very uneasy and I never take part in them.

You know the kind of thing... sometimes/often ecumenical, a group of rather elderly people gather at a church and lug a huge cross along the street to the next church where they might meet another bunch of rather elderly people and so it goes on. Sometimes it ends in a church where there are prayers and a sing-song. Sometimes it ends at the town hall or other public space where prayers are said and hymns are sung (usually quite badly because there is no musical instrument to keep them in line). I believe that this Walk of Witness is to show passers-by that you can tell we are Christians by our grey hair and our large wooden cross and because it is Good Friday and look how we love one another.

And I feel dreadful being so mean minded about it because I know for some people these Walks are terribly important. They believe that they are indeed witnessing to their faith and that people will come to know Jesus by their actions. (I don't know of anyone who joined a church because they saw a Walk of Witness.) It is Mission, they say, or evangelism. And the people keep on walking by on the other side, embarrassingly looking in any direction but at that huge cross. Or worse, shouting out insults and jokes which we bear because Our Lord did too.

Today a little book arrived in the post called 10 Second Sermons by Milton Jones, the comedian. I like Milton Jones. He makes me laugh and I didn't know that he had a faith until I saw this wee book. There is something he wrote which made me realise why I struggle so much with Walks of Witness. Here it is:

Sometimes people think church is like a baseball bat. For most of the time they play nice little games with their friends. Then once a year they go out into the High Street and hit someone over the head with it.

I think that's kind of how it feels to me. Because I'm not ashamed of being a Christian. Heaven knows you can hardly avoid guessing what I do for a living when I walk about town with a black shirt and dog collar on most of the time. On occasion I even wear crosses in my ears. I drive a car with rosary beads swinging from the mirror and a bouncy nun and dashboard Jesus tootle along on my dashboard, and there is a sign in my back window which pro-

claims 'Welcome to the Scottish Episcopal Church'. So you see, I do witness to my faith each and every day.

I'll even walk round the outside of my church on Palm Sunday waving a palm cross and singing a song that nobody outside the church has ever heard and can't make out because the front of the procession are two verses ahead of the end. And I'll do it proudly with scarlet vestments and an orange hymn book which clashes.

But please just don't ask me to walk along the road on a Walk of Witness. I'm sorry, and you probably think I'm shameful for it, but it does just feel like going out and hitting folk on the head with a baseball bat when they're not quite ready for it.



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Smile-Lines for April

Teachers and Pupils

Teacher: Glenn, how do you spell 'crocodile'?

Glenn: K-R-O-K-O-D-I-A-L

Teacher: No, that's wrong.

Glenn: Maybe it is wrong, but you asked me how I spell it.

The taxi

The passenger tapped the cab driver on the shoulder to ask him something. The driver screamed, lost control of the car, nearly hit a bus, went up on the pavement, and stopped inches from a department store window. For a second everything went quiet in the cab, then the driver said, "Look mate, don't ever do that again. You scared me half to death!"

The passenger apologized and said he didn't realize that a little tap could scare him so much. The driver replied, "You're right. I'm sorry. Really, it's not your fault. Today is my first day as a cab driver. I've been driving a hearse for 25 years."

What can I eat for Easter?

Can't eat beef.....mad cow.

Can't eat chicken..... bird flu.

Can't eat eggs..... Salmonella.

Can't eat pork.....fears that bird flu will infect piggies. Also trichinosis.

Can't eat fish..... heavy metals in the waters.

Can't eat fruits and veggies..... insecticides and herbicides.

Can't eat potatoes, pasta, bread, rice.....nasty carbs .
HMMMMMMMM! I believe that leaves.....*chocolate*.

Wrong number?

I still have a lot of trouble with wrong numbers. Yesterday I dialed the Red Cross and got the HMRC in error. So the HMRC operator asked me what number I had dialed. I said, "The Red Cross, you know, where they take people's blood." She said, "Well, you aren't too far off, are you?"

Gone fishing

A wife returning from a fishing trip with her husband was telling her troubles to a neighbour. "I did everything all wrong again today," she said. "I talked too loud, I used the wrong bait, I reeled in too soon, and - I caught more fish than he did."

Good Friday

I was standing in line at the bank when there was a commotion at the counter. A woman was very distressed, exclaiming, "Where will I put my money?! I have all my money and my mortgage here!! What will happen to my mortgage?! You can't do this to us!"

It turned out that she had misunderstood a small sign on the counter. The sign read: WE WILL BE CLOSED FOR GOOD FRIDAY.

Twitter

A man walked into a church and approached the minister. "I need help. I think I'm addicted to Twitter." The minister looked at him and said gently, "I'm so sorry, I don't follow you."

Preach

When a minister rehearses his sermon, is he practising what he preaches?

Mr Bones

The orthopedic surgeon I work for was moving to a new office, and we, his staff, were helping transport many of the items. I sat the display skeleton in the front of my car, his bony arm across the back of my seat. I hadn't considered the drive across town. At one traffic light, the stares of the people in the car beside me became obvious, and I looked across and called, "I'm delivering him to my doctor's office." The other driver leaned out of his window. "I hate to tell you, lady," he said, "but I think it's too late!"

Christian dog

A strong Baptist family decided to buy a dog. But they wanted it to be a Christian dog. Down at the local animal home they asked if they had such a thing. The manager thought and then said: "Yes... yes, I think we have a dog that will fit your description." He brought out a dog to the family and the family decided to test the dog.

The father said: "Go to my car and get the Bible." Obediently, the dog trotted to the car, grabbed the Bible off the front seat, and laid it at the feet of the man. "Ah," said the father, "he may know what the Bible is, but does he read it?" He instructed the dog to turn to Psalm 23. The dog opened the Bible with his nose, and pawed through the pages to Psalm 23. "Ah," said the father, "he may read the Bible, but is he baptized?" Immediately, the dog turned and trotted over to the nearby stream, where it jumped in, went under, and jumped out again.

"Ah," said the father, "It may be baptized, but does it pray?" The dog immediately sat down, closed its eyes and waved its front paws in the air. "Wait a minute!" exclaimed the mother, outraged, "this dog is no good for us - he is Pentecostal!"

Walking

If walking/cycling is good for your health, the postman would be immortal.

‘Wait Till I Tell You.....’

Due to unforeseen circumstances, the March Edition of New Look was not published, but WTITY has long been in the Rector's In-tray. We publish it now with apologies.

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO WINTER?

With supplies of salt now taking over the planet and snow shovels and ice grippers being consigned to the charity shops, we are almost confidently saying that we are looking forward to an early Spring. Aye, February nearly made it into the record books for warm temperatures and now it's uphill all the way towards Lent and Easter. How time passes!

Highlight of February at St. Aug's, apart from the Bishop ushering in Ash Wednesday, was 'mission accomplished' for the quiz team who were urged by Kenny to bring back the Christian Aid inter-Church trophy at all costs - and they did! Congratulations to Tim, Margot, Toby and Barbara for a supreme effort. We're still waiting to drink the 'bubbly' from it!

PANDA-MONIUM.

On Sunday, 26th February, Friends finally took off on their expedition to Edinburgh to meet the Giant Pandas. We started arriving at Church around 8.30am, the more devout amongst us to join 'us men' to 'thee' and 'thou' for 'our salvation', while others 'thtayed' in the kitchen to 'therve' a thpecial breakfast for the Panda viewers. We had heard on the bamboo vine that the Pandas were looking forward to our visit.

The luxury coach arrived on time and everyone piled aboard to be counted and waved off by Kenny, Tim and Gillian, the latter hanging on to wee John who was weeping and wailing at not being included in the outing. Too many weans only upset the animals at a Zoo! It was a traumatic departure as our little party ventured forth as though heading for the nether regions of Beijing. On board we had 7 full price adults, 32 concessions (10 with sticks), 4 weans and a lovely wee monkey called Katy. As soon as the journey got underway the raffle was started - everyone wanted to win the top prize of a soft, furry Panda.

This excitement meant a request for a toilet stop on one of the remotest spots on the motorway. Oh, there was an in-house toilet on our luxury coach but our driver had lost the key! However, the obliging fellow stopped just off the M8 in a suitable area that offered a selection of bushes and trees. The icy cold wind ensured that there were 'no takers' so it was off again on our quest for the Giant Pandas. As we approached the capital, instructions were issued regarding being punctual for our 1.30pm appointment with our Chinese visitors, the latest time for returning to the coach and, of course, the availability of toilets at the Zoo.

Miraculously the St. Auggie's Group were all on time for the Pandas but the Pandas were running ten minutes late. Such is their popularity! Our Guide was Ste-

phie from Balloch who had done a lot of her job training in the Park - Balloch Park! So did we see them? Well, Yang Guang, the male, had taken to his bed with half a bamboo forest leaving the female of the species to get on with the work. Typical male! 'No weel' again! Left it all to the 'wumman'!

On our arrival, Tien Tien experienced a close encounter with Betty Gordon in the indoor enclosure and ran off in terror - even a Panda had heard about her tea rotas! We hung around expectantly but the creature could not be coaxed back in. And Pandas will not be pushed around so our party moved to the outdoor enclosure hoping that she would join us there at her pleasure. We had to get a photo for the magazine! Then out she came, at first shyly, climbing onto her tree platform and stretching out provocatively on her back while scratching furiously. At last she descended, acknowledged our presence, walked around a bit and posed for our cameras. We were all enchanted by this amazing creature which is resembled by no other on the planet.

All too soon, Stephie moved us on to allow another party to enter. We saw crowds starting to gather as if a Royal visit was expected. But no, not even Mr Salmon was in the Zoo that day - it was time for the Penguins' Parade. We joined the crowds but when the gates opened only four penguins appeared. Oh, there were hundreds in the enclosure but only four wanted to perform for the punters! And like Pandas, Penguins won't be pushed around either - so are we pandering and pampering these creatures?

Soon we all split up with our maps to search for varieties of wild life we had never heard of. Our little monkey joined her friends in the Monkey House and caused much hilarity when the monkeys thought she was one of them!

We were all aware of the time and the need for toilet stops so the more prudent started back to the main entrance and to the shop. The walking stick club were beginning to get exhausted and the wind was increasing. Yes, our obedient and well trained party all arrived back safely at the coach to return to the West. The raffle was drawn and Cathy Devine was delighted to become the owner of the prize Panda. This was a lovely, exciting day out for Friends proving again that St. Aug's are indeed trailblazers - taking people places before everyone else thinks about it! After all, the Princess Royal couldn't get a booking until two days later!

PARKING - THE ULTIMATE CHALLENGE.

A recent survey revealed that female drivers were more skilful at parking than their male counterparts - even when they did so while putting on their lipstick!

TBag O'Neill unfortunately blew this theory on Panda Sunday (1st Sunday in Lent) in an attempt to get home in time for 'Dancing on Ice'. What a slip up!

As we all were alighting from the coach we noticed TBag's red Corsa stuck between the Community Hall window and a lamp post that had appeared unexpectedly in St. Mary's Way. Getting out of this position was clearly going to be a problem even without a cup of tea in her hand! But she did have the benefit of Betty Gordon advising her which way to turn the steering wheel! Would the result be a damaged hall window, a dilapidated lamp post, a crushed Corsa or even a compensatory whiplash claim?

Fortunately, Margaret Hardie appeared, summed up the situation and got TBag and the wounded Corsa back on to St. Mary's Way. Margaret is part of the Vestry Fabric Team and couldn't bear the thought of a hole in the Community Hall. Aye, all's well that ends well! TBag will now be known as TCut. Oh, and there were no male drivers around to advise on her little predicament!

ON THE RED CARPET

One of the great excitements of February is the OSCAR ceremonies when the stars come out in their good frocks to receive their awards and dazzle the world. Such a poser is that Angelina Jolie! Not content with just having the lovely Brad Pitt on her arm, she 'stoated' along the carpet exposing her two splendidly formed legs. Meanwhile, Uggie, the Jack Russell star of the award winning movie 'The Artist' was also on the red carpet wearing a natty line in canine couture and sporting four splendid legs! Let's hope he didn't lift one!

WHAT'S YOUR PHOBIA?

So you think you haven't got one! Well, the latest phobia might be just the one for you. Ask the winning St. Aug's Quiz Team what a nomophobic is - they're sure to know. What do you mean they don't? For future quizzes- it's feeling upset, alone and insecure when separated from your mobile phone. Recognize the condition?

Maggie and Sandra are definitely not nomophobics - they carry their mobiles around as handbag furniture and never ever switch them on! Anyway, the affliction is on the increase so it won't be too long before a Nomophobics Anonymous Group applies for a room in the Community Hall!

PINGIT IN THE PLATE.

And still on the subject of mobile phones, a new app has been unleashed on the world to allow smart phone users to transfer money to other users without either of them going near a bank. That'll show those greedy bankers they're not needed! Soon the service will be improved to let businesses and charities in on the action. Imagine the scene at future 11am Eucharists (the 9am crowd will simply ignore it). 'Let us present our offerings' could result in redundant sides

persons as worshippers fumble in their handbags for their mobile phones, press a few buttons and 'pingit in the plate'. Of course, it will be a virtual plate! This would transfer their pound through cyberspace to the Church current account. No hymns necessary! The treasurer can get away early knowing, at the touch of a few buttons, whether or not St. Aug's will be in the red for the coming week. What did I say about St. Aug's being trailblazers?

THE TAXMAN COMETH

Maggie is 'no' a happy wumman' these days. She is in the same boat as Rangers having received a demand for unpaid tax. However Maggie, as you would have expected, has given them all an earful at the Inland Revenue and is following up her consternation with a letter. She is hopeful of a result and they are fearful of another phone call. Oh, and Mr McCoist has been in touch asking for her assistance.

CONFUSION MAX OR CONFUSION LITE?

We are being urged to get on with our Referendum and get it over with. Who are they kidding? There are so many options - Devo max, Devo lite, Independence max or Independence lite. '*Oor heids wull be ferr nip-pin*' and it'll take us till 2014 to work out how on earth to vote. And now that the Sun has told us that we shall be voting on a Saturday - there's another small problem known as the Western Isles factor. Imagine the Sunday after Referendum Day as the whole world waits with bated breath for the news of Scotland's fate? Donald and Kirsty will be too busy singing psalms to open their ballot boxes. Och well, we've waited over three hundred years for a result so what's the rush?

MARCH - A LION, A LAMB OR A MAD MARCH HARE?

Yes, there's a lot happening at St. Aug's in March. For the spiritual there's a Retreat to the Cathedral of the Isles in Millport, there's a Bishop's Pilgrimage in St. Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow and a Ghost Walk in Dumbarton after dark for Friends. We shall seek out the ghosts of old Dumbarton. This should not be too difficult since they are the only thing left in our desolate town centre. The walk will be followed by some suitable food and a spirited refreshment! See the notice Board for details but numbers will be limited since ghosts don't like crowds!

AND LOOKING FORWARD TO APRIL...

Friends will be arranging a Night at the Theatre to see DPT's production of 'It Runs in the Family' by Ray Cooney. This hilarious farce which is set in a hospital will have everyone rolling in the aisles. Just the tonic we need to put a spring in our steps. The performance will be preceded by a Buffet Tea with Refreshments in the Community Hall so watch out for a notice showing details of this event.

Back next month.....

Janette

Secretary to Saint Peter

MARK'S GOSPEL IS THE MOST IMPORTANT BOOK IN THE WORLD! So says Prof. William Barclay. Why? Because, says he, It is agreed by nearly everyone that Mark is the earliest of all the gospels, and is therefore the first life of Jesus that has come down to us. In other words, if there had been no Gospel of St. Mark there would have been no Gospels. Period. It is an intriguing thought.

I. HOW DO SCHOLARS KNOW WHICH GOSPEL WAS THE FIRST? They don't. Their theory is based on a highly-educated guess. Suffice to say that when we read the Gospels we see that there are many remarkable similarities between them...especially the first three. The first three are called the synoptic Gospels (from a couple of Greek words meaning: with the same eye). The Gospels often contain the same incident told in exactly the same words. For instance, the story of the Feeding of the Five Thousand (the only miracle which appears in all four Gospels) is told in almost exactly the same words and the same way.

The correspondence between the first three Gospels is so close that we are forced to one of two conclusions: either all three are taking their material from one common source, or two of the three are based on the third. Scholars lean toward the latter view because a careful comparison indicates that Matthew and Luke borrowed from Mark, and made their own additions. There are many similarities; but there are also differences. And those differences often reflect the personality of their respective authors.

WHO, THEN, WAS THE AUTHOR? Indications are that he was the son of a well-to-do woman of Jerusalem whose name was Mary, and whose house was a meeting place for the Early Church. Mark was also the nephew of Barnabas, one of Paul's travelling companions in the preaching of the Gospel. And thereby hangs a tale. When Paul and Barnabas set out on their first missionary journey they took Mark along with them as their secretary. (Acts 12:25) This journey was most unfortunate for young Mark, for when they reached Perga Paul proposed that they travel inland,

but for some reason Mark left the expedition and went home. (Acts 13:13) He may have been afraid of the dangers which were to face them on what was one of the most difficult and dangerous roads of the ancient world. He may have gone home because he resented the fact that Paul was gaining more and more ascendancy in leadership, while his uncle Barnabas receded into the background. Whatever the reason, Paul and Barnabas had to complete their journey without the young man. When Paul got ready for his second trip, Barnabas suggested that again they take along Mark; but Paul would have none of it. (Acts 15:37-40) Once bitten, twice shy, as they say. So serious was their disagreement that they parted company. and, as far as we know, never worked together again. Paul took another man named Silas, and Barnabas took Mark and off they went in different directions. But it all worked out to the glory of God - for now the Gospel had two teams out preaching!

Mark drops from sight for some years, and when he appears again it is in a most amazing way. When Paul wrote to the Colossians from Rome, he says that Mark is there in prison with him (Col. 4:10) In another prison letter, Philemon, Paul numbers Mark among his fellow-labourers. (vs. 24) And when Paul was awaiting death and very near the end, he wrote to another young preacher named Timothy, and said: Take Mark and bring him with you; for he is very useful in serving me. A remarkable turn-around of opinion, that! Whatever happened along the way, Mark had redeemed himself. And, notice the vagaries of chance: if Barnabas had not had faith in young John Mark, we might never have this Gospel.

Now, The value of any person's story depends upon his or her sources of information. So, we must ask: where did Mark get his information about the life of Jesus Christ? From his close associations with the Christian community, no doubt. From his listening to the preaching of Paul and his uncle Barnabas, no doubt. But there is a very early tradition which says that Mark had a source of information better than even those, excellent though they be. Toward the end of the second century there was a man called Papias who said that Mark's Gospel was nothing less than a record of the preaching of the apostle Peter, the lead-

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er of the apostolic band. Indeed, he stood so close to Peter that the Big Fisherman could refer to him as Mark, my son. (I Peter 5:13) If this tradition be true (and I am suggesting that it is) then you can understand some things about the Gospel of St. Mark. Why, for instance, this Gospel does not have any account of the birth of Jesus. Of course not; Peter had not yet come on board and had no knowledge of the events recorded by Matthew and Luke which we read with such delight at Christmas time. It may be that Mark (and, indeed, Peter) spent all of their lives without ever hearing about the miraculous event called the Virgin Birth, which seems so important to some Christians. It gives us something to think about.

There is one further interesting thing about Mark's Gospel. In its original form the gospel stops at 16:8.. We know that for two reasons. One, the verses which follow are not in any of the great early manuscripts. Two, the style of Greek is so different that they cannot have been written by the same person. In some editions of the Revised Standard Version they are in small italics at the end. But the Gospel cannot have been meant to stop there-for they were afraid. That is no place to stop. What happened? It may be that Mark died, perhaps as a martyr, before he could complete the Gospel. More likely, at one time only one copy of the Gospel remained and the ending got cut off mid-sentence. There was a time when the church did not use Mark very much. It may be that they preferred the other Gospels which are fuller and more complete, and they looked with disdain on this incomplete scroll with the torn-off ending. And so it ended up in second place in our New Testaments.

II. EACH OF THE FOUR GOSPELS TELLS THE STORY OF JESUS IN A DIFFERENT WAY. Each has its own characteristic view-point. It is natural that this would be so - and adds to their credibility. If you have four reports of a traffic accident and they agree on every detail, then something is fishy. There are going to be differences of detail and emphasis in a true, as opposed to a made-up, story. Let's just list a few difference we find in this Gospel.

1.) It is the closest thing we will ever have to a report on Jesus' life. Now, none of the Gospel writers, set out to write biography. Not at all. They were out to write Gospel - Good News. (Mark's Gospel is the only one that actually calls itself such.) Its purpose, like the purpose of a good sermon is not the elucidation of a subject, but the transformation of a person. Nevertheless, Mark's Gospel bursts with realism. You get the feeling of an eyewitness, that the writer was really there-and that you, reading his words, are also there.

2.) There is no Gospel which gives us such a human picture of Jesus. One of Mark's favourite titles for Jesus was Son of Man, (which, by the way, in the first century meant more than a mere representative of humanity. It had divine connotations to it.) But Mark's picture of Jesus is so human that the other Gospel writers sometimes alter it a bit because they are afraid

of what Mark said. Mark was so impressed with the humanity of Jesus that it became an embarrassment to the other Gospel writers. To Mark, Jesus is simply the carpenter. Later on Matthew changes that to the carpenter's son. No one tells us so much about the emotions of Jesus as does Mark. Jesus sighs, gets angry, gets weary, is moved with compassion, feels the pangs of hunger. In Mark's Gospel we get the picture of a Jesus very much like us. For Mark, the real Jesus, the real Christ, the real Lord of our lives, was very much of flesh and blood - very much of emotion and feeling. In the Christ of Mark, the adrenalin can flow, the face can flush, and the voice can be raised in angry tones. For Mark, you did not know Christ - the Christ of God - until you knew that God had expressed Himself through very human features, indeed, like yours and mine.

How comforting that ought to be for all of us! How much we - each of us - need to know that God can be expressed where tears flow, and blood boils, and muscles tense, and bodies tremble.. We need to know God can speak in and to and through our common humanity. For this is who we are, after all. And if God is to be real in our own lives, God must use such human material as we all are! In Mark, the humanity of Jesus shines through!

3.) But so does the divinity! Mark begins his Gospel by clearly stating: The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He leaves us no doubt who and what he believed Jesus to be. He reports not only the divine voice at Jesus' Baptism proclaiming Jesus to be Someone Special, but also the Transfiguration of Jesus. Through the whole story there runs a mysterious undercurrent. There is mystery about this Man. He possesses powers which strike people with awe and astonishment. To Mark, Jesus was not merely a man among men, but God among humankind, ever moving the minds of humanity to wonder and amazement at His words and deeds.

4.) Mark gives us little details that the other Gospels miss. Both Matthew and Mark tell of Jesus taking a little child and setting him in the midst. But Mark tells us that Jesus took the child up into his arms. All the tenderness of Jesus comes through in these little touches. When Mark is telling about the feeding of the Five Thousand, he alone tells us that they sat down in rows of hundreds and fifties, and how they looked like vegetable beds in a garden. When the disciples were on that last journey to Jerusalem, only Mark tells us that Jesus went before them and in that one phrase, Jesus stands out. When Mark tells the story of the stilling of the storm on the Sea of Galilee (whose waves can go from one foot to twelve feet in less than an hour, due to winds from the Golan heights), only Mark tells us that Jesus was in the hold of the ship asleep on a pillow.

Another very minor detail: there is in Mark's Gospel a strange story of a young man in the garden of Gethsemane who in his haste to get away from the guards,

left behind his loincloth...thus becoming the first streaker in history. Well, consider the possibility that the man who left behind his loincloth, was St. Mark himself, and in this odd passage he has left behind his signature. It is a possibility.

III. MARK'S FAVOURITE WORD IS IMMEDIATELY. It occurs in the Gospel some 36 times. Mark was always in a hurry. Mark's Jesus was always in a hurry (save when he took time to stop to heal and to bless little children.) In this Gospel Jesus himself races by, scattering miracles like rice at a wedding. Jesus is in a hurry. Mark's disciples are in a hurry to respond to Jesus. Immediately they leave their nets and follow Him. Mark rushes on with a breathless attempt to make the story as real and alive to others as it is to him. It is an exciting Gospel! In reading Mark, we are impressed with the relentless activity of Christ. Here you do not meet a Jesus of contemplation and calmness and reflection, but rather a Christ of action who calls others to action. And decision.

The Gospel is filled with the verbs of faith. Down through the centuries most Christians have got themselves hung up on the adjectives of faith. But for the Bible, it is the verbs that count.

Our religion is excellent - all except the verbs. We have all sorts of wonderful adjectives: holy sacred, divine, etc., We even have some pretty good nouns to go with them. But we are short on verbs. Mark is filled with the great verbs of our faith: Come! Repent! Go! In Mark, we are faced with a choice. We are called to leave our nets (whatever they may be) those nets that hold us back and keep us from becoming what God had in mind when he created us; called to cast them off, and to rise up and follow Christ. The Christian life is not so much contemplation as it is commitment.

Someone tells the story of a wife who came to the living room one day after having answered the front door. There's a man at the door who wants to see you about a bill you owe, she told her husband. What does he look like? the husband inquired. He looks like you'd better pay him, the wife declared. Well, this is part of the decisiveness involved in Mark's portrayal of the Christ. If you ever confront Him, you have to make some decision concerning Him, take some action, DO something. The time for adjectives is over. The time for verbs has come. Go, Come, Follow, says the Jesus of St. Mark. And He looks like you'd better follow Him!

Mark ends his book, as he begins it, almost in the middle of a sentence. There was no time to gather up all the loose ends. The world itself was the loose ends, and all history would hardly be enough to gather them up in.

The women went to the tomb and found it empty. A young man in white was sitting there - on the right, Mark says, not on the left. He has risen, the young man said. Go tell his disciples. And Peter, Mark adds, unlike Matthew and Luke again. Was it because he'd known Peter and the old man wanted his name there?

So the women ran out as if the place was on fire, which in a way of course it was, for trembling and astonishment had come upon them, and they said nothing to anyone for they were afraid. Later editors added a few extra verses to round things off, but that's where Mark ended it. In mid-air. THE REST, I GUESS, IS UP TO US.



"I agree, Vicar, the church's bats problem is getting worse – all that high-frequency squeaking is interfering with my iPod."

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Another Grandparent!

Peter Cairns became the latest Grandparent in the congregation, following the birth of little Madeleine Rose, a prem baby who is doing well! We remember the "wee one" in our prayers.

All our young people are becoming grandparents! Help!



...rumours that we would be giving out easter eggs are unfounded - er, there aren't any left!