
From the Manse...

Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you.

Psalm 63:3

Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever.

The Shorter Catechism

God is most magnified in us when we are most satisfied in him.

John Piper

As I write this we have been in Hawick four weeks and I have been your Minister for three and a half weeks. It feels we have been here much longer! We have, I think, settled very well in this short time into the manse and into the work.

I have been struck by the friendliness of folk here and especially by the warmth of your welcome, which was so much in evidence at the induction and social on Friday 3rd February. Thank you all very much for the gifts presented to Sheila and me — the inscribed hand-made vase from Scottish Borders Art Glass is beautiful and has been given a prominent place in our display cabinet. Thank you for the many other expressions of welcome in the form of cards, flowers, practical help, hospitality, etc which are all very much appreciated. Thank you too for the provision of the manse, which is an excellent house where we (including Zak!) feel very much at home.

In this my first letter since coming here, let me share with you something of my "spiritual autobiography" until now.

I grew up in a Christian home. Mum became a Christian at the Billy Graham Crusade in Glasgow in 1955. Around 1978 Dad, although he had been an elder for many years, discovered the reality of Christian faith for the first time. This had an effect on our family. All of us, including my two sisters, my brother and myself, started reading our Bibles. God was at work in the whole family. He had been working in me around this time independently, with the church Youth Fellowship being an important influence, as was the preaching of David Easton who came to be minister of Burnside Church in 1977. I was going along to the CU at Glasgow University and was part of a group of around four who met to read the Bible and pray. The friendship of this group and meeting together like that were hugely significant in my life and I thank God for it.

Various other things were going on in my life, all of which resulted in an increased openness to spiritual things. I remember reading CS Lewis's *Mere Christianity* at that time. When I came to join the church in 1979, I meant what I said as I professed my faith.

The Argentinian evangelist Luis Palau came to Glasgow in Spring 1981. I remember the huge Boyd Orr lecture theatre in the University overflowing with students — the Christians were told to stay away! Local churches held pre-crusade rallies in preparation for the main Kelvin Hall events and I went along to the one held in Stonelaw Church. I felt before I went that God wanted to do something for me — it was a bit like the mixture of fear and anticipation you feel before something really important. At the end there was a call for those who wished to come forward for prayer. I knew I should do so — God spoke challengingly to me through the preacher that evening. But my fear and pride held me back. Instead I slipped round the back afterwards to where the people were being counselled — a friend spotted me and ended up praying for me. I had the profound experience of becoming aware of my

own sinfulness before the awesome holiness of God and feeling under God's condemnation, and I cried strongly out to God for mercy and help. I then saw that Jesus had died for me, taking my place, to take my sins away, instead of me having to bear them. I immediately felt myself lifted up — as he had been raised up from the dead. I knew I was forgiven and accepted. I was overwhelmed by the goodness and the love of God.

I understood things in a way I had not known before. I was different. I had experienced the power of the Holy Spirit working in me and knew the goodness and reality of God and what he had done for me in Christ in a new way. I loved the Lord and wanted to tell others, and still do, how good he is. And that is really where my call to ministry and to proclaim the good news came from.

I obtained my BSc in maths and physics and then proceeded to train, and qualify as a Chartered Accountant. I was in the profession for almost 20 years, the last 12 in Cook & Co, the firm I set up in 1992. I was much involved in the church as treasurer, involved with the music, and occasionally leading worship, and preaching.

Sheila also grew up in a Christian family as part of Burnside Church. We were married on 27th December 1990. Sheila was a geography/maths teacher for 11 years but gave that up in 1992 to help in the accountancy practice and to do other things, especially in the children's work of the church. We also hoped that family would come along but that didn't happen.

Sheila married an accountant but that would change!

The sense that God was calling me into some kind of full-time church-based service never left me. A drawing to ministry came back at intervals — I thought about it and dismissed it towards the end of my first degree as I considered I didn't have the necessary maturity. In the early 1990's various things people said caused me to consider ministry again but it wasn't the right time.

When the sense of call returned in the early 2000's I responded. Following the lengthy Church of Scotland enquiry process, I left the firm in the hands of my partners in 2004 and returned to Glasgow University to train for the ministry.

After my 15 month assistantship at Maxwell Mearns Castle Church in Newton Mearns I was ordained and inducted in November 2008 as minister of Lylesland Parish Church in Paisley. We spent just over eight years there seeking to see the church grow spiritually and we trust God our time there will have been eternally fruitful.

Now we have been called to Hawick!

As I initially considered St Mary's & Old linked with Teviot & Robertson, something significant drew me. It was the kind of minister you were looking for. According to the parish profile, that was one, "with an emphasis on prayer and biblical teaching." Later on I saw on the website that you were looking for a "Spirit-filled" leader!

These all reflect the crying need of the church today: that the Word of God is faithfully taught, that prayer has a central place in our individual lives and in our life together, and that we rely on the Holy Spirit, who makes Jesus real to us and enables us to live for him.

In a sermon a few weeks back I told the story of St Cuthbert's Church in York which was under imminent threat of closure when the young minister David Watson went there. Numbers were down to a dozen or so. David was asked by the Church Redundancy Commission, "What are we going to do with you when we close you down?" He answered, "If anyone comes to this church and preaches the simple Gospel of Christ, believes in the power of prayer and trusts in the Holy Spirit, this building will be full in no time." That church, which was given a year's grace before being closed, did not close! Numbers grew to exceed the capacity of the building and eventually the congregation moved to a bigger church right in the heart of the city.

In relation to Bible teaching, you will see elsewhere in this newsletter that in addition to our morning worship services, we are recommencing evening services, initially once a month on the first Sunday at 6pm. These will be in Teviot large hall, except on a communion Sunday when the morning service is in Teviot in which case the evening service will be in St Mary's & Old. These services will give an opportunity to come together in a more informal way for worship and teaching.

As regards prayer, the weekly prayer meeting is an important time in the life of the congregation. It is currently from 5.30-6.30pm in the lounge. I commend it to you all.

What about the Holy Spirit? We are all as Christians urged to "be filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18). This is to be an ongoing, rather than a one-off, experience. We are to "be being filled", or to "go on and on being filled" with the Spirit. May that indeed be the experience of us all.

The preaching and teaching of the Bible, prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit are essential if we are to live the life of faith.

That brings me to the quotations at the top of this letter, from the Psalmist, the Shorter Catechism, and US preacher and writer John Piper. I believe they direct us to what life with God is really all about. God in his love and grace brings us into a relationship with himself as we trust in Christ. Flowing out of that relationship with him, we glorify him — we worship him, we live for him and we serve him. We also long for others to discover for themselves the joy and satisfaction of knowing him too.

May God lead us on and bless us in our Christian life together, as Minister and people.

Your friend and Minister



Alistair Cook

Guild

At our meeting on 22nd February our worship focused on God's redeeming love, his provision for each of us, and his desire for us to respond to his love by spreading it and sharing it with others.

We welcomed Margaret Borthwick, now living in the West Midlands, but whose husband was from Hawick. Margaret is involved with a children's home in Kenya named Footprints, set up a few years ago by a friend of hers.

She shared with us the story of how the home was set up and has flourished, to the point that so many people wanted to send their children to its academy that they were forced to choose between running the home and running the school; the home won!



Margaret shared with us many photographs and some letters from her Kenyan godson; these, and the enthusiasm with which Margaret talked, told us that she had indeed gone in joy.

Our next meeting will be on Wednesday 15th March, at 2.30pm in the Lounge, when we will be walking with the disciples on the road to Emmaus — going in sorrow but returning in joy. Do come and join us on that road! We'd love to have your company. Contact Lesley on 01835 864488 or Mairhi on 01450 218519 to arrange a lift.



World Day of Prayer

Members of Teviot Guild and congregation attended and took part in the World Day of Prayer evening service on Friday 3rd March, held in Hawick Baptist Church.

This year's service had been prepared by Christian women of the Philippines, and was entitled *Am I Being Unfair to You?* Helped by colour, music and symbols, we considered the injustice which so many in the world have to bear.

The hymns sung during the evening reminded us that as we are gathered, Jesus is here; that there is a place at the table for everyone born, and God will delight when we are creators of justice and joy; and that we can give a voice to those who have not spoken, including all in circles of our love.

Thoughts to consider and pray about **every** day.

Lesley Donaldson

Breathing space

Psalm 19 :Rhythm

The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.

Your world proclaims you, O lord;

in the unique fragile lace of a snowflake,
in the solidity of an oak tree,
in the vastness of the star fields,
in the rhythmic dance of the universe:

in pattern,
in order,
in symmetry,

your song is chanted,
your praise is sung,
your glory is proclaimed.

In the lives of all who heed your Word,
in the labours of all who are shaped by your call,
in the actions of all who seek your Way:

there is a like pattern,
a recognisable order,
a familiar symmetry.

In small deeds,
in words of hope
in quiet ways:

your song is chanted,
your praise is sung,
your glory is proclaimed.

May this be true of my life today. Amen.

Exert from Pray Now (2002)

Jim Cotter, Prayer at Day's Dawning, Cairns Publications, 1998

Induction of Rev Alistair W Cook

On Friday 3rd February a large congregation filled Teviot Church for the induction of Rev Alistair W Cook to the charge of St Mary's & Old linked with Teviot & Robertson churches. Alistair and his wife Sheila had come from the charge of Lylesland Parish Church in Paisley.

The service was conducted by the Moderator of the Presbytery of Jedburgh, Mr James Smith and we had the pleasure of having Mr John Bryden playing the organ for us.

Present were members of both congregations, members of Presbytery, representatives from all the other churches in town, members from Lylesland in Paisley, and members of Alistair and Sheila's families.

The sermon was given by Rev Frank Campbell from Ale & Teviot churches.

It was a very uplifting service and we were all delighted to witness Alistair being inducted to our charge, having been without a minister for almost two years.

We then crossed over to St Mary's & Old Hall for the informal part of the evening.

Pat Sutherland welcomed Alistair and Sheila on behalf of Teviot & Robertson and Mrs Jean Strathie presented them with a gift. Gael Nuttal welcomed Alistair and Sheila on behalf of St Mary's & Old and Mrs Ena Morrison presented them with a gift.

Carol Peat presented Rev Charles Finnie with a gift on behalf of both congregations to thank him for his diligence, patience and good humour while he was our Interim Moderator.

Rev Michael Scouler welcomed Alistair and Sheila on behalf of the other Hawick ministers.

We had a very amusing talk from Rev Jonathan Keefe, minister of Robroyston Church in Glasgow, and a friend of Alistair's from his study days, giving away some of Alistair's secrets.

We then enjoyed a well catered for supper, before finishing the evening by singing the hymn, *To God be the Glory* together.

Both congregations give a very warm welcome to Alistair and Sheila (and Zak the dog) and look forward to their ministry with us.

PS

Holiday Club 2017

The Guardians of Ancora

Monday 7th to Friday 11th August 2017

This year's holiday club is called **Guardians of Ancora**. This club is related to a Bible story based app that Scripture Union have developed in the last few years, that aims to engage the current generation of tech-literate youngsters. Apparently the churches in Selkirk ran this Holiday Club last year, and a family member was recently telling one of our Team how much their child still enjoyed playing the app!

You may remember our club last year was **Polar Explorers**, exploring the adventures of the Early Church in Acts. Well, this year we are back in the Gospels for our Bible stories. Following our craft planning meeting on 19th February we already have some resources to request, please:

- Pringles tubes — the big ones this year, with lids included!
- Dole individual fruit in jelly pots, washed.

Monetary donations can also be made at any time to our treasurer, Donna, for the Holiday Club account. But most important, please start praying for the Holiday Club now!

Here are some initial prayer ideas:

- Pray for a good reception to the Easter cards we will be delivering to the children who attended **Polar Explorers** last year. This year the cards will be accompanied by an invitation to a screening of **The Jesus Quest**, a children's version of the Jesus film, on Easter Saturday. Please pray that families would take up the invitation to join us for this.
- Pray that all the kids that God would have be at the club would be able to make it.
- Pray for the right people in the right roles on the Team.
- Pray for organisation, planning and resources.
- Pray for protection of the Team and the kids' health and safety in the run up to Holiday Club and during the week itself.
- Pray for God to be with us by His Spirit.
- Pray that it would be a wonderful Holiday Club week in every way!!

Our next planning meeting is scheduled for Sunday 19th March, to be held in Teviot lounge following the 9:30am service. This meeting will be focused on finalising the ideas for craft activities.



Thank you so much for all that you do — seen or unseen — to make Holiday Club happen.

Gwen

Gwen: 01450 370487, email: gwen@thebuzzness.co.uk

Eco congregations

What is this?

An opportunity to meet with other Christians in the area to find out what we can do together towards mitigating the contribution our church buildings might be making towards climate change (and how to save money on bills!). Eco-Congregation Scotland is a network of churches doing this and they are organising a meeting in Langholm to enable us to find out more about what other churches are doing, about Eco Awards, and how to become an Eco-Congregation. At the moment only Hawick Baptist is part of this venture in our town.

Members of St Mary's and Old will be heading over to Langholm. If anyone is interested in joining them, then please contact Carol Peat. David Bethune will be speaking at the meeting.

The meeting is at Langholm Parish Church on Wednesday 22nd March at 7.30pm.

Find out more at: <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org>

Visit us on Facebook :<http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/facebook>

Follow us on Twitter: <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/twitter>

Special services activities and events

Teens: Meeting upstairs on 12th March, and possibly 26th.

Rock Solid dates: There is no meeting in April due to school holidays.

Prayer meetings: Thursdays at 5.30pm in Teviot Church lounge. Contact Evelyn or Kerry for details.

Bible studies: Tuesdays at 7.00pm or Thursdays afternoons. If you are interested, please contact Pat Sutherland.

Evening Services: It is intended to reintroduce evening services to Teviot. As previously, these will be in the more informal setting of the Hall. The first service will be on Sunday 5th March at 6.00pm followed by Sunday 7th May at 6.00pm. The April service is a united Communion at 6.00pm in SMOP.

Annual Stated Business Meeting of the Congregation: Tuesday 28th March 2017 at 7.30pm in Teviot Hall. Session will meet at 7.00 pm to approve the accounts.

Life & Work Magazine: There are always two or three spare copies of *Life and Work*, the Church of Scotland's Magazine, on the table in the vestibule. Please feel free to take one away and read it. If you wish, you can always return it for someone else to read after you. We are investigating accessing *Life and work* online, so watch the church magazine for further details.

Church contacts

Minister: Rev Alistair Cook, The Manse, 4 Heronhill Close, Hawick TD9 9RA (07802 616352). Day off Mondays, except for emergencies.

Session Clerk: Pat Sutherland (375150) rasutherland@tiscali.co.uk

Safeguarding Officer: Mary Walker (372549)

Treasurer: Ron Smith (374216) rhs@ellistrin.com

Doorkeeper: Eileen Glendinning (374775)

Magazine Editor: Jo Maybury (375750) joannemaybury@googlemail.com

Forthcoming services

Date	Service	Teviot	SMOP	Theme
5 March	United Service		11.00am	"The burning, but unburnt, bush" Exodus 3:1-22
5 March	Evening Service	6.00pm		"Amazing grace" Ephesians 1:1-14
12 March		9.30am	11.00am	"Please send someone else!" Exodus 4:1-31
19 March		9.30am	11.00am	Rev Warner Hardie
26 March		9.30am	11.00am	Rev Warner Hardie
2 April	Communion	11.00am		"Bricks without straw" Exodus 5:1-23
2 April	Evening Communion		6.00pm	"Our God is too small" Ephesians 1:15-23
9 April		9.30am	11.00am	Palm Sunday
13 April	Maundy Thursday Communion	7.00pm		
14 April	Good Friday		7.00pm	
16 April	Easter Day South Grouping	11 am Teviot 2pm Robertson		Easter Celebration
23 April		9.30am	11.00am	"Go tell Pharaoh...." Exodus 6:1-12
30 April		9.30am	11.00am	"Signs and wonders" Exodus 6:28-7:24