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# ST. MARGARET'S PARISH NEWS

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No. 466

## VIEW FROM THE MANSE



In a recent “tour” through the Old Testament, I have repeatedly seen that the featured people of the Bible have prominent dysfunction in their lives. This is not the exception – it’s the norm! We talk about “great lives” in the Bible – and there are many of them – but the thing that amazes me is how many of those “great lives” were actually lived by damaged people with serious family issues.

Personally, I find this trend somewhat comforting, not a justification for wrong-doing or unhealthiness, but at least a consoling depiction of the challenges we humans face. I don’t find myself alone as the only one dealing with issues.

Consider the prevailing trend of “unhealthy” among some of the Bible’s greats:

- Adam, the first man, was a blame shifter who couldn’t resist peer pressure. (Genesis 3:12)
- Eve, the first woman, couldn’t control her appetite, and should we say, had the first eating disorder? (Genesis 3:6)
- Cain, the first born human being, murdered his brother. (Genesis 4:8)
- Abraham, the forefather of faith, lied on two different occasions. (Genesis 12 & 20)
- Sarah, the most gorgeous woman by popular opinion, let her husband sleep with another woman and then hated her for it (Genesis 16)
- Lot, who lost his father early in life, had a serious problem with choosing the wrong company. (Genesis 18-20)
- Rebekah, the first “mail order bride,” turned out to be a rather manipulative wife. (Genesis 27)
- Jacob, who out-wrestled God, was pretty much a pathological deceiver. (Genesis 25, 27, 30)
- Rachel, who wrote the book on love at first sight, was a nomadic kleptomaniac. (Genesis 31:19)
- Reuben, the pride and firstborn of Jacob, was a pervert who slept with his father’s concubine. (Genesis 35:21)
- Moses, the humblest man on the face of the earth (Numbers 12:13), had a very serious problem with his temper. (Exodus 2, 32:19; Numbers 20:11)
- Aaron, who watched Jehovah triumph over Pharaoh, formed an abominable idol during an apparent episode of attention deficit disorder or perhaps colossal amnesia. (Exodus 32)
- Miriam, the songwriter, had sibling jealousy and a greed for power. (Numbers 12)
- Samson, who put Arnold Schwarzenegger and Jesse Ventura to shame, was hopelessly enmeshed with a disloyal wife – and ended up taking his own life, (Judges 16)
- Eli, who ruled over Israel, was a hopelessly incapable father who lost his sons to immorality – and to an untimely death. (1 Samuel 2, 4)

- Saul, the first and powerful king of Israel, was apparently a psychotic with manic bursts of anger, episodes of deep depression and traces of paranoia, too. He committed suicide. (1 Samuel 16, 18, 19, 31)
- David, the friend of God, concealed his adultery with a murder. (2 Samuel 11)
- Solomon, the wisest man in the world, was arguably the world's greatest sex addict with 1,000 sexual partners. (1 Kings 11)
- With rare exception, all the kings that followed Solomon had mammoth issues in their lives.
- The prophets, even as they spoke for God, struggled with impurity, depression, unfaithful spouses, and broken families.

So what? Where's the edification in the list of warped examples? Should we all just throw up our hands conceding that people are typically a mess? Of course not. But there are some practical and productive takeaways from these patterns of dysfunction in the Bible.

Here are some takeaways:

- 1. God is unabashedly honest in his depiction of the human condition.** We can likewise grapple with authenticity and frankness. The temptation to misrepresent ourselves and the pressure to put on a mask causes further damage. The Gospel invites us to come into and live in the light.
- 2. Dysfunction cannot be equated with our standing before God.** Most of those listed above can be characterized as righteous – or at least people of faith as we see in Hebrews 11. It's not so much what our issues are – it's how we handle our issues. And even if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart. (1 John 3:20) Paul spent his energy struggling against sin and left the task of judging himself with God. (1 Corinthians 4:3)
- 3. Sin does indeed have consequences.** Pain, brokenness, loss, even death, follow our bad choices. Hopefully our distaste for sin is driven by our gratitude and love for God. But if for no other reason, we should at least avoid it to escape the incredible pain that accompanies it. (Galatians 6:7)
- 4. We do not have to feel alone in our sufferings.** We've been given a cloud of witnesses that can identify with how messy life can be. We can take heart because we can get through our challenges and one day be relieved of our striving against sin. (Hebrews 12:4)
- 5. There is most certainly grace to be had.** It's what the Gospel is all about. No one can unscramble scrambled eggs – except God. So let us take our scrambled lives to God who understands and has mercy. (Hebrews 4:16) This is what redemption is all about.

Your Brother in Christ,  
Iain.

## **Summary of the Minutes of the Congregational Board Meeting held on Monday 1st June 09.**

The meeting was attended by the Chairman, Treasurer, Clerk plus 29 Board Members and was opened as is customary, with a prayer. The Minister was absent due to a family commitment.

**Opening Remarks.** The Chairman reported a busy spell since the last meeting, deciding on and obtaining estimates for the necessary work to be done over the next two years both at the Church and the Manse. Thanks were given to all volunteers on the Church cleaning rota. It is still intended that this be only a temporary measure.

**Matters Arising from Minutes of Previous Meeting.** William Logan has been duly elected as a new member of the Board. Two vacancies still remain. Our new Church Officer, Robert McCulloch, is now settling well into his duties. The newly convened Halls and Property Committee have had their first meeting and assessed various relevant topics.

**Correspondence.** No new correspondence on this occasion.

**Treasurer's Report.** The Treasurer was pleased to report that, in spite of the present economic downturn, our finances remain in a healthy state. A recent bequest of £7847 from the estate of the late Nora Forrester has been gratefully added to our funds and will be put to good use. Interest on our holding in the Church of Scotland Deposit Fund continues to offset our payments on the Manse Loan. This is now reduced to £10,500. We continue to hold most of our funds in the Church of Scotland Deposit Fund which currently pays more interest than does our bank account. The long downward spiral on the value of our Legacy Fund has, thankfully, seen a slight upturn at the latest accounting.

It was proposed and agreed to allow a working budget of £500 and £200 to the Minister and Organist respectively in order to allow them to purchase such materials as required to fulfil their tasks.

Holders of all Church records were reminded to hand them in on Thursday, 11<sup>th</sup> June at the Abbey Halls for the purpose of the annual Presbytery inspection.

The Chairman thanked the Treasurer for this report.

**Fund-raising Committee Report.** Miss Lily Miller reported that it is intended again this year to collect 10p pieces via the 'Sunshine Bags'. Elders were asked to assist by distributing the bags during their pre-Communion visits.

**Catering Committee.** Nothing to report.

**Property Convenor's Report.** The report was given by the Chairman due to the fact that he had also been involved in several of the negotiations along with the Property Convenor.

One estimate had been received so far for the repainting and redecorating work to be done at the Manse.

The screen for the overhead window in the Church, necessary to reduce the light falling on to the computer projection screen, was to be fitted on the day following the Board meeting. The cost of the screening is £200 and has been covered by an anonymous donation.

The idea presented at the previous meeting for a disabled ramp to the front door of the Church, has been abandoned as impractical. Instead a shorter ramp to the side door has been decided on as better suited. This, however, will mean that the doorway has to be widened and a new door fitted. The removal of the inside corridor doors and widening of these doorways will also be necessary. Estimates have been received for both works and grateful thanks were given to the Mens' Fellowship who have generously offered to fund one of them.

A possible answer to providing disabled access to the upper hall has been discovered on the Internet and is to be investigated by the Chairman and Property Convenor. It is a portable platform ramp which would rise one metre required from the back of the lower hall to the stage. When not in use it can be folded up and wheeled away. The cost is £5732 plus 5% VAT, which included fitting and testing. A service contract is also available. If suitable, it was suggested that the money from the Nora Forrester bequest be used to make the purchase, along with a commemorative plaque, as Nora was always active at our disabled services. With such a facility, it would also be possible to re-instate these services, something which the Minister is keen to do.

A new laptop has been purchased for Church use. It was also decided to go ahead with the purchase of a colour printer in order to allow us to produce our own instructional and promotional material.

Grateful thanks and a round of applause were given to Manuel Giraldas who volunteered not only to sand and re-stain the front door of the Church and the canopy, as well as the toilets but to also provide the materials.

A rolling programme of outside paintwork and replacement of windows in the session and other ante rooms was detailed as desirable but at a later date.

The requirements of a new cleaning contract to be set up by the end of the Summer are to be carefully looked at.

**A.O.C.B.** The bad state of repair of the kitchen floor is to be looked at as a matter of urgency to circumvent the possibility of a serious accident.

The Meeting closed with prayer.

The next meeting will be Monday, 24<sup>th</sup> August and not the first Monday in October as had been advised at the beginning of the year.

### **Summer Bowling**

The dates for the Summer Bowling evenings to which everyone will be made very welcome are :

July 6<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> and September 7<sup>th</sup>

Please come along and enjoy an evening of bowling and fellowship

### **Swingnastics**

We finished our session at the end of April with a lunch at the King Malcolm Hotel. I thank all the members for the continued support throughout the session although we did miss a few members due to illness and incapacity. I thank and am most grateful to our treasurer Mrs Joan Eadie for all her hard work. We managed to donate to the Church £275.

We intend to start again on Wednesday, 9 September at 10.00 a.m. Please come along and enjoy light exercise to music, a cup of tea/coffee and a chat and as we don't take ourselves too seriously, lots of laughs along the way. You will be made very welcome.

### **On the lighter side.....**

A man and his wife were having some problems at home and were giving each other the silent treatment.

Suddenly the man realised that the next day he would need his wife to wake him at 5 a.m. for an early morning business flight.

Not wanting to be the first to break the silence, he wrote on a piece of paper.

"Please wake me at 5 a.m." He left it where he knew she would find it.

The next morning the man woke – it was 9 a.m. and he had missed his flight. Furious he was about to go to see why his wife hadn't wakened him when he noticed a piece of paper on the bed. The paper said "It is 5 a.m. Wake up." Men are not equipped for these kinds of contests.

God may have created man before woman, but there is always a rough draft before the masterpiece!

### **Fund-Raising Committee:**

By this time I expect most of you will have received your Sunshine Bag and started to collect ten pence pieces – if not, there are bags available on the vestibule table.

Our previous collections have been so successful (2008 bags spilled over into 2009, and the final total was £1294), and we hope this summer will be one to remember with hours of sunshine resulting in lots of ten pence pieces!

The members of the Committee are very grateful to everyone in the congregation for their support, and we feel this is a real team effort.

**Flower Distribution**

|           |                     |                |
|-----------|---------------------|----------------|
| August 2  | Mrs M Brown         | Mrs McArthur   |
| August 9  | Mr & Mrs R Pratt    |                |
| August 16 | Mrs E Potter        | Miss Bicket    |
| August 23 | Mr & Mrs W McKay    |                |
| August 30 | Mr & Mrs W Faichney |                |
| Sept 6    | Mrs W Kenedy        | Mrs R Wilson   |
| Sept 13   | Mr D Clark          | Mrs S McLean   |
| Sept 20   | Mrs Hunter          | Mrs S Imrie    |
| Sept 27   | Mrs M Brown         | Mrs A McArthur |



**Tea & Coffee Rota**

|           |                |               |                  |
|-----------|----------------|---------------|------------------|
| August 2  | Mrs Kerr       | Mrs Angus     | Mrs Robertson    |
| August 9  | Mrs Cunningham | Mrs Gillespie | Mrs Hamilton     |
| August 16 | Mrs Imrie      | Mrs McIntosh  | Mrs Welshman     |
| August 23 | Miss Bicket    | Mrs Bisset    | Mrs Maureen Hynd |
| August 30 | Mrs Prentice   | Mrs Brown     | Mrs Stothart     |
| Sept 6    | Mrs Bowie      | Mrs Chapman   | Mrs Gray         |
| Sept 13   | Mrs Telfer     | Mrs Pratt     | Mrs McEwen       |
| Sept 20   | Mrs McCulloch  | Mrs Wilson    | Mrs Kennedy      |
| Sept 27   | Mrs McArthur   | Mrs Evans     | Mrs Welshman     |



**Next Issue**

Contributions for the September/October issue will be required on Sunday, 16<sup>th</sup> August, please.



**What am I?**

A teacher gave her young class a lesson on the magnet and what it does.

The next day in a short written test, she included this question –

“My full name has six letters. The first one is M. I am strong and attractive. I pick up lots of things. What am I?”

When the papers were turned in, the teacher was astonished to find more than half her students had answered the question with the word “Mother”.

**Grace**

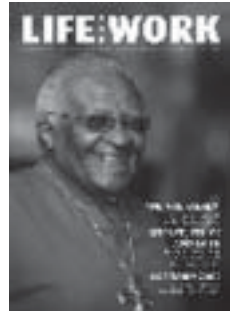
The minister was the dinner guest. The table was beautifully prepared and the food looked delicious. They were ready to begin. The hostess spoke to her daughter, aged six. “Katie, will you say grace, please?”

A rather long delay ensued.

The mother coaxed the little girl, “Come on, Katie, say what you heard me say this morning at breakfast.”

In a loud voice it came out: “Oh God, why did I invite the minister to dinner tonight?”

## July Issue



### **'We are Family'**

Exclusive interview with the Most Rev Desmond Tutu.

### **General Assembly 2009**

Round-up of the key issues of the week.

The week in pictures.

The best of the fringe.

### **A Genuine Democrat**

Dr Harry Reid rejects contemporary perceptions of John Calvin as he reflects on this month's 500th anniversary of the birth of the Reformation theologian.

### **Science, Ethics and Faith**

Dr Francis S Collins, former director of the Human Genome Project and one of the world's leading scientists, tells Jackie Macadam how he moved from atheism to Christianity.

### **Light Amid the Darkness**

The remarkable legacy left by the death of a nine-year-old girl.

### **A Gift from God**

A Church of Scotland elder describes the background to her altruistic kidney donation.

### **Parables for Today**

The winning entry from our contemporary parables competition.

### **Dreaming a Dream**

Douglas Galbraith reflects on the choral roots of Britain's Got Talent finalist Susan Boyle.

### **Plus –**

Presbytery of Ross, Irvine Old Parish Church, all the regular columnists, news, letters, reviews and crosswords - all for just £1.60.

## **CHILDREN IN CHURCH**

A little child in church for the first time watched as the ushers passed the offering plates. When they neared the pew where he sat, the youngster piped up so that everyone could hear: "Don't pay for me Daddy, I'm under five."



A little boy was attending his first wedding. After the service, his cousin asked him, "How many women can a man marry?" "Sixteen," the boy responded. His cousin was amazed that he had an answer so quickly. "How do you know that?" "Easy," the little boy said. "All you have to do is add it up, like the minister said: 4 better, 4 worse, 4 richer, 4 poorer."

After a church service on Sunday morning, a young boy suddenly announced to his mother, "Mom, I've decided to become a minister when I grow up." "That's okay with us, but what made you decide that?" "Well," said the little boy, "I have to go to church on Sunday anyway, and I figure it will be more fun to stand up and yell, than to sit and listen."

A 6-year-old was overheard reciting the Lord's Prayer at a church service: "And forgive us our trash passes, as we forgive those who passed trash against us."

A boy was watching his father, a minister, write a sermon. "How do you know what to say?" he asked. "Why, God tells me", the father replied. "Oh, then why do you keep crossing things out?"

A little girl became restless as the minister's sermon dragged on and on. Finally, she leaned over to her mother and whispered, "Mommy, if we give him the money now, will he let us go?"

After the christening of his baby brother in church, little Johnny sobbed all the way home in the back seat of the car. His father asked him three times what was wrong. Finally, the boy replied, "That minister said he wanted us brought up in a Christian home, and I want to stay with you guys!"

Terri asked her Sunday School class to draw pictures of their favourite Bible stories. She was puzzled by Kyle's picture, which showed four people on an airplane, so she asked him which story it was meant to represent. "The flight to Egypt," said Kyle. "I see ... And that must be Mary, Joseph, and Baby Jesus," Ms. Terri said. "But who's the fourth person?" "Oh, that's Pontius - the Pilot."

The Sunday School Teacher asks, "Now, Johnny, tell me, do you say prayers before eating?" "No sir," little Johnny replies, "I don't have to. My Mum is a good cook."

A college drama group presented a play in which one character would stand on a trap door and announce, "I descend into hell!" A stagehand below would then pull a rope, the trapdoor would open, and the character would plunge through. The play was well received. One day the actor playing the part became ill, and another actor who was quite overweight took his place. When the new actor announced, "I descend into hell!" the stagehand pulled the rope, and the actor began his plunge, but became hopelessly stuck. No amount of tugging on the rope could make him descend. One student in the balcony jumped up and yelled: "Hallelujah! Hell is full!"

Pastor Dave Charlton tells us, "After a worship service at First Baptist Church in Newcastle, Kentucky, a mother with a fidgety seven-year old boy told how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About halfway through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, 'If you don't be quiet, Pastor Charlton is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!' It worked."

# The Back Page

## Word Power

Words  
Are a matter of choice  
I can choose  
Which I use

Affirming  
Comforting  
Encouraging  
Healing  
Offending  
Condemning  
Destroying  
Hurting.



I can choose  
Which I use  
My words  
Are a matter of choice

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## OFFICE BEARERS

|                                      |   |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| Minister                             | Rev. Dr. Iain M. Greenshields BD, DipRS, ACMA, MSc, MTh,<br>38 Garvock Hill, Dunfermline 723955 |
| Session Clerk                        | Mr. Ritchie T. Campbell, 1 Pitbauchlie Bank 725516  |
| Treasurer                            | Mr. Frank Moyes, 33 Whitemyre Court, Dunfermline. 738341  |
| Clerk to the Congregational<br>Board | Mrs. Vera Wilson, 24 Masterton Road. 720250   |
| Church Officer                       | Mr. Robert McCulloch, 95 Garvock Hill. 734463   |
| Organist                             | Mr. Tom McMillan, 157 Halbeath Road. 727252   |
| Roll Keeper                          | Mr. Jim Adamson, 8 Garvock Hill. 727719   |
| Editor                               | Mrs. C. McCulloch, 95 Garvock Hill. 734463  |