

HOLYTOWN PARISH CHURCH OF SCOTLAND

NOVEMBER 2015



OUR VISION

**Our vision is to be a living, caring church
at the heart of our communities -
celebrating worship, offering support.**

Dear Friends,

While out driving a few nights ago I was mesmerized by the beauty of the crescent moon shining away brightly against the inky black sky - set as it was amid an array of twinkling stars.

It was a real autumnal night and the shadow of the earth causing the crescent on the surface of the moon was so clear and distinct that it gave me shivers up my spine!

It was a beautiful sight - a wonderful 'Wow' moment - one of those moments which cause you to marvel at our universe; to dwell on the workings of the planets and the way the sun, moon and earth are so interconnected and also to reflect on just how much we depend on their interconnectedness.

In such moments of wonder it always seems to me that no matter the vastness of our universe - our Creator is very near!

Yet how often do we miss Him because we fail to notice these wonderful moments?

The phases of the moon come and go, tides ebb and flow, our planets revolve bringing new seasons and often all of this is just so familiar to us that we don't even give it another thought let alone marvel at His creation!

Yet without such patterns in our universe - without these wonderful 'Wow' moments life here on earth might not be sustainable!

We are now turning on our axis and getting a little further from

the sun and autumn is now definitely with us - we are in that 'season of mists and mellow fruitfulness' and all around us are wonderful 'Wow' moments where we can see God very close - so please let's not miss them - let's take time to look for Him around us in the beauty of our autumnal earth and marvel anew at creation and at the hand of God within it.

Brian Ford, who was a sixth form Biology teacher, turned to writing poetry when he retired and on reflecting on the beauty of the autumn landscape, he penned these words as a thank you to God and I think he captures within this thank you many of those simple things we do often miss - many of those moments which should be 'Wow' moments when we feel God to be near:

*Thank you,
for the still, quiet woods of autumn,
carpets of shed acorns crunching underfoot,
mushrooms newly grown since yesterday
squatting among the gently shifting mosaic of fallen leaves.*

*For brown fields turned golden by the setting sun,
the cautious stare and stamping hooves of wary sheep,
the dapper magpie's raucous, laughing cry,*

*For hedgerows decorated purple, crimson, pink
by berries of bramble, bryony and spindle,
clusters of fluffy seeds released by willow herbs.*

*For all that has been grown, created and achieved this year,
As life settles to see out the winter's cold and storms
and waits to break out in new glories next year.*

I pray that you may find some 'Wow' moments this autumn - believe me they are there if you take time to look for them!

Autumnal Blessings
Caryl

FLOWER LIST

November	8	I McNally
	15	M Frazer
	22	D Paterson
	29	N McCartney
December	6	F Marshall

CHRISTMAS DINNER

Christmas Dinner is on Friday 11th December at 7 pm in the Church Hall. The price is £18. If you wish to go add your name to the list in the Vestibule of the Church. Do not forget to tick off your choice for each of the three courses. These are:

Lentil Soup	Braised Steak	Christmas Pudding
Paté	Roast Turkey	Gateau
Prawn Cocktail	Salmon in Dill Sauce	Ice Cream Sundae

Tea, coffee, mints and Christmas Pies will also be served. There will be musical items, carol singing and Santa has been invited.

All is silent, in the still and soundless air, I fervently bow to my almighty God.

THE GUILD

The new Session of The Guild has already begun. The programme for the next few weeks is:

November 11 Robert Nimmo - Ireland North & South

18 Guild Week

25 Healthy Eating

December 2 A Cheerful Heart is the Best Medicine

All will be made welcome.

THE PRAYER FOR PEACE

Our Father, up in heaven,
hear this fervent prayer -
May the people of All Nations
be United in Thy Care,
For earth's peace and man's salvation
can come only by Thy grace
And not through bombs and missiles
and our quest for outer space . . .
For until all men recognize
that "The Battle Is The Lord's"
And peace on earth cannot be won
with strategy and swords,
We will go on vainly fighting,
as we have in ages past,
Finding only empty victories
and a peace that cannot last . . .
But we've grown so rich and mighty
and so arrogantly strong,
We no longer ask in humbleness -

"God, show us where we're wrong" . . .
We have come to trust completely
 in the power of man-made things,
Unmindful of God's mighty power
 and that He is "King Of Kings" . . .
We have turned our eyes away from Him
 to go our selfish way,
And money, power and pleasure
 are the gods we serve today . . .
And the good green earth God gave us
 to peacefully enjoy,
Through greed and fear and hatred
 we are seeking to destroy . . .
Oh, Father, up in heaven,
 stir and wake our sleeping souls,
Renew our faith and lift us up
 and give us higher goals,
And grant us heavenly guidance
 as war threatens us again -
For, more than Guided Missiles,
All the world needs Guided Men.

Helen Steiner Rice

A TRUE STORY by Helen Roseveare, a Missionary to Africa

One night in Central Africa, I had worked hard to help a mother in the labour ward but in spite of all we could do, she died leaving us with a tiny premature baby and a crying two-year old daughter.

We would have difficulty keeping the baby alive. We had no incubator. We had no electricity to run an incubator and no

special feeding facilities. Although we lived on the equator, nights were often chilly with treacherous draughts.

A student midwife went for the box we had for such babies and for the cotton wool that the baby would be wrapped in. another went to stoke up the fire and fill a hot water bottle. She came back shortly after in distress to tell me that in filling the bottle it had burst. Rubber perishes quickly in tropical climates. “. . . and it is our last hot water bottle!” she exclaimed.

As in the west, it is no good crying over spilt milk so, in Central Africa it might be considered no good crying over a burst water bottle. They do not grow on trees and there are no supermarkets or chemists' down forest pathways.

All right I said, “put the baby as near the fire as you safely can. Sleep between the baby and the door to keep it free from draughts. Your job is to keep the baby warm.

The following noon, as I did on most days, I went to have prayers with many of the orphanage children who chose to gather with me. I gave the youngsters various suggestions of things to pray about and told them about the tiny baby. I explained our problem about keeping the baby warm enough, mentioning the hot water bottle.

The baby could so easily die if it got chilled. I also told them about the two-year old sister crying because her mother had died.

During the prayer time one ten-year old girl, Ruth, prayed with the usual blunt consciousness of our African children. “Please

God," she prayed, "send us a hot water bottle. It'll be no good tomorrow, Lord, the baby will be dead; so please send it this afternoon."

While I gasped inwardly at the audacity of the prayer, she added by way of corollary, . . . While You are about it, would You please send a dolly for the little girl so she'll know You really love her.

As often with children's prayers, I was put on the spot. Could I honestly say "Amen"? I just did not believe God could do this. Oh yes, I knew that he can do everything: the Bible says so, but there are limits, aren't there? The only way God could answer this particular prayer would be by sending a parcel from the homeland. I had been in Africa for almost 4 years at that time and I had never ever received a parcel from home. Anyway, if anyone did send a parcel, who would put in a hot water bottle? I lived on the equator.

Halfway through the afternoon, while I was teaching in the nurses' training school, a message was sent that there was a car at my front door. By the time I reached home, the car had gone but there, on the verandah, was a large 22 kilo parcel!

I felt tears pricking my eyes. I could not open the parcel alone, so I sent for the orphanage children. Together we pulled off the string, carefully undoing each knot. We folded the paper, taking care not to tear it unduly. Excitement was mounting. Some 30 or 40 pairs of eyes were focussed on the large cardboard box.

From the top, I lifted out brightly coloured knitted jerseys. Eyes sparkled as I gave them out. Then there were the

knitted bandages for the leprosy patients and the children began to look a little bored. Next came a box of mixed raising and sultanias - that would make a nice batch of buns for the weekend. As I put my hand in again, I felt the . . . Could it really be . . . ? I grasped it and pulled it out. Yes, a brand new hot water bottle! "I cried!"

I had not asked God to send it. I had not truly believed that He could. Ruth was in the front row with the children. She rushed forward crying out, "If God has sent the bottle, he must have sent the dolly too". Rummaging down to the bottom of the box, she pulled out the small, beautifully dressed dolly. Her eyes shone." She had never doubted. Looking up at me, she asked, "Can I go over with you and give this dolly to that little girl so she'll know that Jesus really loves her?"

That parcel had been on its way for 5 whole months, packed up by my former Sunday School Class, whose leader had heard and obeyed God's prompting to send a hot water bottle even to the equator. One of the girls had put a dolly in for an African child: - 5 months earlier in answer to the believing prayer of a ten-year old to bring it 'that afternoon'.

"And it shall come to pass that before they call, I will answer, and while they are yet speaking, I will hear." (Isaiah 65:24)

GRENADIER

The Queen she sent to look for me,
The sergeant he did say,
'Young man, a soldier will you be
For thirteen pence a day?'

For thirteen pence a day did I
Take off the things I wore,
And I have marched to where I lie,
And I shall march no more.

My mouth is dry, my shirt is wet,
My blood runs all away,
So now I shall not die in debt
For thirteen pence a day.

Tomorrow after new young men
The sergeant he must see,
For things will be over then
Between the Queen and me.

And I shall have to bate my price,
For in the grave, they say,
Is neither knowledge nor device
Nor thirteen pence a day.

(Written by A E Housman following the death of his brother in the Boer War.)

OUT OF SIGHT BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Even in communist controlled countries, by one means or another, Christianity does survive. A minister in the United Greek Church of Romania continued to have Communion Services throughout the period of Soviet rule. This account of what happened was written by his daughter, Maria after her father's death.

What remained always well looked after, is a small glass

which served as a communion cup. As a plate for the bread my father used a saucer. At this time the liturgical objects bore little resemblance to the true ones. During a house search nothing should be too obvious. My mother sewed white cloths. As with the small glass, the saucer and a white tablecloth these were only used for communion. We children knew about these things and treated them with reverence.' In addition everything was not stored in the same place, so that nothing would stand out. The dishes could be found in the kitchen, the "cloths" under table- and handcloths, the Gospel on the bookshelf was under many others. so We knew exactly where to find it and likewise the Book of Common Order.. An old stole was stored in a chocolate tin. The red ribbons from the bishop at the time of my father's ordination were used.

I was still small (9 years old) but I can remember the night the bishop came, spread the table and prepared everything. These red ribbons lay on the table as we stood round about. The bishop whispering rather mysteriously and in a soft tone said, "Now you must kneel here and pray for daddy". I also recall that earlier I had made a confession to him. It was a friendly talk and full of trust. I do not know what the ribbons symbolise, but I do know that during the consecration father had them bound round his hands and shoulders. After father's death most of the cloths were gifted to other ministers

Your idea (presumably an exhibition) has touched us greatly and even if it is hard for us to be separated from those precious objects, we shall lend or send them as we know that with you they will receive a place of honour. They can tell much, they cross boundaries and at the same time are a witness that the impossible became possible, that God's

mercy, love and justice has no boundaries, that people are free even when they are bound or chained.

I am glad and thankful to you for the initiative (in asking for the communion cup etc. At the same time I think about those who because of their faith suffer persecution, humiliation ,and torture.

(Translated and adapted from an article written in an Austrian magazine)

SCRIBES

In the Bible we often hear the words “Scribes” and “Pharisees” together. Today we still have occasions when a scribe is required to use his/her skill in writing down what has been said. Occasionally in schools a ‘Higher’ candidate may damage an arm or a finger and be unable to write the exam. At such times, it has been known for a scribe to come in and write, on their behalf, whatever the candidate wishes. Naturally when this happens the scribe and candidate are isolated from the other candidates.

The Bible quotes instances of when scribes were used to record events and decisions. (Jeremiah 36:26; 1 Chronicles 24:6; Esther 3:12) During the Babylonian exile scribes apparently became the experts in God’s written word, copying, preserving and teaching it. Ezra was a scribe in the sense of being an expert in teaching God’s word (Ezra 7:6).

By New Testament times they had become a professional group, most being Pharisees. (Mark 2:16) They interpreted the law, taught it to others and were expert in cases where

people were accused of breaking the law of Moses. They led in plans to kill Jesus (Luke 19:47) and heard His stern rebuke (Matt 23).

FROM THE SOMME

In other days I sang of simple things,
Of summer dawn, and summer noon and night,
The dewy grass, the dew-wet fairy rings,
The lark's long golden flight.

Deep in the forest I made melody
While squirrels cracked their hazel nuts on high,
Or I would cross the wet sand to the sea
And sing to sea and sky.

When came the silvered silence of the night
I stole to casements over scented lawns,
And softly sang of love and love's delight
To mute white marble fauns.

Oft in the severe parlour I would sing
Of morning sun upon the mountain vine,
And, calling for a chorus, sweep the string
in praise of good red wine.

I played with all the toys the gods provide,
I sang my songs and made glad holiday.
Now I have cast my broken toys aside
And flung my lute away.

A singer once, I now am fain to weep
Within my soul I feel strange music swell,

Vast chants of tragedy too deep - too deep
For my poor lips to tell.

(Written by Leslie Coulson, killed in action 1916)

SCRIP

A scrip was a shepherd's bag. In the Authorised Version of the Bible it is sometimes called a scrip, at others a vessel and also a bag.

This bag was important for the shepherd as in it he carried supplies of food for a few days. It was made of animal skin and was slung across the shoulder. Joseph's brothers carried grain in this type of bag (Genesis 42:25). Saul's bag was empty when he went to meet Samuel (1 Samuel 9:7), and David collected stones in his shepherd's bag when he confronted Goliath (1 Samuel 17:40,49). An Israelite traveller whose bag of provisions was empty could eat from a fellow Israelite's vineyard, but was not allowed to fill his bag for the remainder of his journey (Deut 23:24).

Jesus told his disciples not to carry a bag when He sent them out to preach (Matthew 10:10; Mark 6:8; Luke 9:3; 10:4). They were to be totally dependent on God and the hospitality and support of God's people. They learned from this experience that they would be cared for; but because of the critical nature of what they were about to face, Jesus later instructed His disciples to begin carrying a purse, bag and - curiously - a sword (Luke 22:35-36).

In order to realise the worth of the anchor, we need to feel the stress of the storm.