

Dear Friends

February 2015

I love snowdrops. In the Manse garden, as I write, they are pushing their way valiantly through the cold, hard ground. They bloom unafraid of the frost. They bring joy when the earth looks bleak. They herald growth even while the old leaves still lie on the ground. They are harbingers of spring, messengers of hope.

We begin our Lenten journey while the days are still dark and cold. (Shrove Tuesday is 17 February.) A journey towards Easter and its joyful message of resurrection life. This snowdrop prayer is a prayer for that journey.

Into a dark world
a snowdrop comes
a blessing
of hope and peace
carrying within it
a green heart
symbol of God's renewing love.



Come to inhabit our darkness
Lord Christ,
for dark and light
are alike to you.

May nature's white candles of hope
remind us of your birth
and your re-birth in resurrection
and lighten our journey
through Lent and beyond.

(Kate McIlhagga)

Sometimes it can feel as though there's not much hope and peace in our world....As we look around, as we read papers and watch TV, as we think about life, there are many things that can fill us with sadness and despair.

The snowdrop and the snowdrop prayer remind us that even when all seems dark and desolate there is hope. They remind us of God's renewing love. Love for every one of us.

May you know God's love and hope and peace,

Rosie

Lent Study Group

PRAISE HIM – Songs of Praise in the New Testament

We are used to singing hymns of praise when we go to church but often we miss the hymns and poems that are there in the New Testament. This course will explore five different Songs of Praise from the New Testament, looking at what they tell us about God and Jesus but also reflecting on what they tell us about us and our faith.

Our group will meet on Wednesday evenings at 7.00pm in the Manse, 83 Milton Road. A warm welcome is extended to all.

1. Gratitude (Ephesians 1.3-14) – Wednesday 25 February
2. Image of God (Colossians 1.15-20) – Wednesday 4 March
3. Humility (Philippians 2.5-11) – Wednesday 11 March
4. New birth (1 Peter 1.3-12) – Wednesday 18 March
5. Word made flesh (John 1.1-14) – Wednesday 25 March

Each meeting begins with us listening to a short discussion on the theme. The participants on the course CD are [Archbishop Justin Welby](#), [Sister Wendy Beckett](#) and the actor [David Suchet CBE](#).

Easter Services

Sunday 29 March, **11.00am** – Palm Sunday

Tuesday 31 March, **7.00pm** – Linktown Church

Wednesday 1 April, **7.00pm** – Bennochry Church

Thursday 2 April, **7.00pm** – Maundy Thursday Service in St Bryce Kirk

Friday 3 April, **7.00pm** – Good Friday Service in Abbotshall Church

Sunday 5 April, **8.30am** – Early morning worship in the Beveridge Park (by the fountain)

Sunday 5 April, **11.00am** – Easter Day Family Service

Count Your Blessings this Lent with Christian Aid

Celebrate the good things in your life this Lent with our thought-provoking

Count Your Blessings calendar.

Download the adult or children's version at

www.christianaid.org.uk/getinvolved/lent/count-your-blessings

Or order from Christian Aid, 41 George IV Bridge, Edinburgh, EH1 1EL

Telephone: 0131 220 1254

With daily reflections, stunning photography and other tools for your Lenten journey, our app will be available as a free download from the App Store or Google Play from the end of January 2015.

Local Church Review

Abbotshall is currently undergoing a Local Church Review. This process was agreed at the General Assembly in 2011. The aim and purpose of Local Church Review is to appraise the work and mission of every congregation within each Presbytery, normally within every five years. (This was formerly referred to as the Quinquennial Visit).

The object of this process is to give counsel and encouragement to each congregation as they set out priorities and plans for at least the next 3 years. It is also a time of exploration as minister and office bearers review all aspects of what happens in the Church.

Presbytery has appointed a small group of people to work with us during this time. The Convener is Jacqueline Thomson, Deacon at Buckhaven and Wemyss, supported by Mr Alex Redpath (Leslie: Trinity), Mr Graham Harrower (Bennochty) and Reverend Elisabeth Cranfield (Methilhill and Denbeath).

To date the Kirk Session has submitted a detailed questionnaire to the team and the minister and key office bearers have met with them. A series of further meetings with Board and Session members has been agreed. The Presbytery team will take time to attend worship and other church events. The 3 year plan will be shared with the congregation for comment and approval before it is finally submitted by the team to Presbytery.

Treasurer's report - January 2015

Our statements of account for 2014 have been drafted and will be subjected to Trustees approval and Independent Examination over the coming months before they can be formally released to the congregation and wider public at the Annual Stated Meeting. In the meantime I would recommend that we consider the, as yet, unapproved, unexamined results coming out of 2014.

The good news is that we ended 2014 with excess income of over £6,000. In each of the 3 years, 2011 to 2013 our deficits were well over £30,000. Our 2014 budget indicated a possible deficit of over £21,000. So what caused the turnaround?

The only significant unforeseen costs were for the repairs to damage caused by intruders on our church roof and in our hall. Thankfully our insurance claim paid for most of the repairs and recovered loss of income from hall rents and cancelled coffee morning. Even more thankfully no one was injured by escaping gas, electric cable breakage and leaking water pipes. So with unexpected costs nullified we then deferred some £4,000 fabric costs to 2015 while generally staying within budget for other costs. The net effect was that overall expenditure was under budget.

Overall income was about £22,000 over budget! The increases were across the board: £10,000 and more from donations; £6,000 and more from fundraising; £3,000 and more from hall rent. But what other factors should be considered?

In 2013 we identified that financial support came from 184 households within the congregation. In 2014 this number fell to 176 households. So immediately there is a bitter/sweet sensation. The membership continues to fall but the increase in income is made even more worthy of thanks.

In 2014 we spent very little on outreach whereas in previous years, for example, we gave £4,000 per year to KART to promote youth outreach. Perhaps the Trustees may wish to review this situation in the context of our actual year-end balances. But what other considerations for 2015?

The first tentative estimates for 2015 point to a possible shortfall of £10,000. As for last year, at this stage in the cycle, the estimates are based on a cautious approach to income. Can we sustain or improve their giving despite the continuing decrease in membership? Can we sustain or improve on the high level of time, talent and sheer hard work given to fundraising?

In 2014, not necessarily quantified in the accounts, there was commendable attention given to Stewardship and hard graft given to fundraising. We need to congratulate each other and take encouragement from the outcome of our response. In going forward, we should not miss out on any opportunity to enjoy the benefits that our heritage, our donations and our hard work continue to provide at Abbotshall. Participation in the life of Abbotshall allows us to share the benefits of fellowship (which will never appear on any financial statement).

The Treasurer's Smile

It was impossible to know as last year progressed what effect the "*Stewardship of Money*" activities were having on the finances of Abbotshall. You will recall that the situation in January 2014 was a projected deficit of over £21,000 and by the end of July expenditure had exceeded income by about £6,000 and the estimated deficit at the end of December was projected to be over £16,000. Regular inquiries of the treasurer revealed that because of the fluid nature of income and expenditure it was very difficult to grasp easily the state of financial affairs. The best indicator was the treasurer's smile which is not the most precise of measures but at least gave some hope as winter came. The treasurer has now prepared the Trustees report for last year and this shows that we have ended the year with a surplus of over £6500. A lot of prayer and effort has contributed to this for which we must be very thankful, the treasurer is cautiously optimistic and he is smiling a lot more.

This has come about through a reduction in expenditure and an increase in income. The Trustees examined every aspect of expenditure, eliminated it where possible, reduced it where possible and accepted it only if essential. Most aspects of income have increased including weekly giving and gift aid, special donations, halls income and the income from social events. A substantial contribution came from the Michael family's special fund-raising concert and our thanks must go to them and to Jim and Jane Gilmour who were the event organisers and to all who supported the event. All this coupled with an increased awareness of the Trustees responsibilities for expenditure has created a new financial culture. As we start the New Year what is to be our resolution since costs continue to rise and income needs to keep pace with it? Can we sustain and even increase the Treasurer's smile?

Jim Browning
Stewardship Convener

RAISING FUNDS FOR ABBOTSHALL CHURCH

Did you know that whenever you buy anything online - from your weekly shop to your annual holiday - you could be raising a free donation for Abbotshall Parish Church of Scotland - Kirkcaldy?

There are nearly 3,000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sainsbury's, who will donate a percentage of the amount you spend to Abbotshall Parish Church of Scotland - Kirkcaldy to say thank you for shopping with them.

It's really simple, and doesn't cost you anything.

All you have to do is:

1. **Go to** <http://www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/abbotshallchurch>
2. **Sign up for free**
3. **Get shopping** - your donations will be collected by easyfundraising and automatically sent to Abbotshall Parish Church of Scotland - Kirkcaldy. It couldn't be easier!

Using the easyfundraising website will not cost you a penny. There are no catches or hidden charges and Abbotshall Church will be really grateful for your donations.

Thank you for your support.

Prayer Group

We meet before church on the second and last Sunday of the month and would be so pleased if others would join us. If you are interested see Rosie or myself. Requests for prayers can be left in the prayer box in the church vestibule or in the box in the church hall entrance hall. There are at least 18 prayer promoters throughout Kirkcaldy Presbytery. Your prayer requests can reach a far wider prayer group this way.

Anne Gardner

The Young Church



After a very exhausting and enjoyable Disco and party on the Saturday the Young Church once again put on a delightful show with their Christmas nativity and sing-along.

We meet during Church time and look forward to new faces joining us.

The Young Church leaders

CROSSREACH CHRISTMAS CARDS

A huge "Thank you" to all who supported the sale of Crossreach Christmas cards. The excellent sum of £403 was raised, which Crossreach greatly appreciated.

I trust everyone was happy with the quality and value-for-money of the cards and calendar. The same again this year?

Thanks again

Anne Steward

BEREAVEMENT

We were saddened at the passing of
Christine Hadden in December 2014

ASH WEDNESDAY – mourning our sins

Lent begins with Ash Wednesday. But why 'Ash' Wednesday? The reason has to do with getting things right between you and God, and the tradition goes right back to the Old Testament.

In the Old Testament, the Israelites often sinned. When they finally came to their senses, and saw their evil ways as God saw them, they could do nothing but repent in sorrow. They mourned for the damage and evil they had done. As part of this repentance, they covered their heads with ashes. For the Israelites, putting ashes on your head, and even rending your clothes, was an outward sign of their heart-felt repentance and acknowledgement of sin. (See Genesis 18:27; 2 Samuel 13:19; Job 2:8, 30:19; Isaiah 58:5; Jeremiah 6:26; Jonah 3:6)

In the very early Christian Church, the yearly 'class' of penitents had ashes sprinkled over them at the beginning of Lent. They were turning to God for the first time, and mourning their sins. But soon many other Christians wanted to take part in the custom, and to do so at the very start of Lent. They heeded Joel's call to 'rend your hearts and not your garments' (Joel 2:12-19). Ash Wednesday became known as either the 'beginning of the fast' or 'the day of the ashes'.

The collect for today goes back to the Prayer Book, and stresses the penitential character of the day. It encourages us with the reminder of the readiness of God to forgive us and to renew us.

The Bible readings are often Joel 2:1-2, 12 – 18, Matthew 6: 1-6, 16 – 21 and Paul's moving catalogue of suffering, "as having nothing and yet possessing everything." (2 Corinthians 5:20b - 6:10)

The actual custom of 'ashing' was abolished at the Reformation, though the old name for the day remained. Certainly the mark of ashes on the forehead reminds people of their mortality: "Remember that you are dust and to dust you will return..." (Genesis 3:19)

The late medieval custom was to burn the branches used on Palm Sunday in the previous year in order to create the ashes for today.

The Collect for Ash Wednesday is:

Almighty and everlasting God, you hate nothing that you have made and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent: Create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness, may receive from you, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.

All in the month of FEBRUARY

It was:-

175 years ago, on 10th Feb 1840 that Queen Victoria married Prince Albert of Saxe-Coburg and Gotha.

100 years ago, on 18th Feb 1915 that Germany imposed a naval blockade on Britain. Also 100 years ago, on 1st Feb 1915 that Sir Stanley Matthews was born. He was one of the greatest British football players of all time, and the first British player to be knighted.

75 years ago, on 11th Feb 1940 that John Buchan, British statesman, novelist (*The Thirty-Nine Steps*), biographer and Governor General of Canada (1935-40) died.

70 years ago, from 4th to 11th Feb 1945 that The Yalta Conference took place in Crimea. US President Franklin D Roosevelt, British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and Soviet leader Joseph Stalin met to plan the final defeat of Nazi Germany.

65 years ago, on 9th Feb 1950 that US Senator Joseph McCarthy announced that he had a list of 'known Communists' who worked in the US State Department, fuelling Cold War tensions. His sensational claims caused havoc in US public life.

50 years ago, on 22nd Feb 1965 that US President Lyndon B Johnson approved a request to send the first US combat troops into Vietnam.

40 years ago, on 11th Feb 1975 that Margaret Thatcher became the first female leader of the Conservative Party in the UK.

Also 30 years ago, on 19th Feb 1985 that the first episode of the BBC TV soap opera EastEnders was broadcast in the UK.

25 years ago, on 11th Feb 1990 that Nelson Mandela was released from prison after 27 years. He became President of South Africa in 1994.

20 years ago, on 26th Feb 1995 that Barings Bank, the oldest merchant bank in London, collapsed after its chief trader in Singapore, Nick Leeson, lost £827 million on unauthorised transactions.

10 years ago, on 7th Feb 2005 that British yachtswoman Ellen MacArthur broke the record for the fastest solo circumnavigation of the globe.

Also 10 years ago, on 14th Feb 2005 that the popular video-sharing website YouTube was founded.

Saluting Free Trade

This month (Feb) we can celebrate two decades of the Fairtrade movement, founded back in 1995. Recent research showed that 78 per cent of the UK public now recognise the Fairtrade Mark, which stands for the world's largest and most recognised fair-trade system. Its aim is to secure a better deal for farmers and workers.

Based in Bonn, Germany, it sets international standards, organises support for producers around the world and promotes trade justice internationally.

The work of building a market for fair-trade products is carried out by national Fairtrade organisations across the world. There are such organisations not only in Europe but also in India, South Korea, Hong Kong and Kenya.

An independent company runs the Fairtrade certification system, ensuring that the relevant social and environmental standards are met for new raw materials and products. Here in the UK, the Fairtrade Foundation is an independent organisation that provides independent certification that licenses use of the Fairtrade Mark on products in the UK.

The Foundation was established in 1992 by CAFOD, Christian Aid, Oxfam, Traidcraft and the National Federation of Women's Institutes (to name just a few).

Diary Dates

Sunday 7 February – Presbytery Pulpit Interchange, Worship at Abbotshall will be conducted by Rev Richard Baxter of Kennoway, Windaygates and Balgonie: St Kenneth's. The minister is going to Buckhaven and Wemyss.

Tuesday 10 February, 1.45pm – Kirkcaldy West School Service in Linktown Church to mark the end of the Kirkcaldy 100 project. All welcome.

Saturday 14 February, 10.00am-12noon – Coffee Morning

Thursday 26 February, 2.00pm – Thursday Fellowship Group. Church memorabilia with Bruce Farrell

Thursday 26 February, 7.30pm – Kirk Session meeting

Sunday 1 March, 9.00am and 11.00am – Celebration of the Lord's Supper

Saturday 14 March, 10.00am-12noon – Coffee Morning

Thursday 26 March, 2.00pm – Thursday Fellowship Group.

Thursday 26 March, 7.30pm – Trustees meeting

NEXT NEWSLETTER – SUMMER EDITION 2015

The close down for the next newsletter will be **Sunday 26 April 2015**. Please send your contributions to Diane Murray on e/mail at dianemurray953@btinternet.com or by post to 97 Mellerstain Road, Kirkcaldy KY2 6UD or leave in our basket in the church vestibule.

THANK YOU – NEWSLETTER TEAM