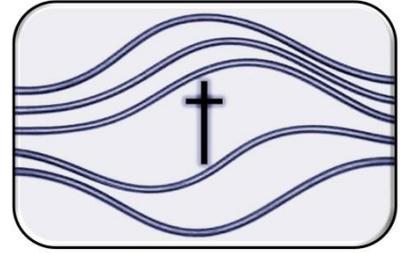




Wick St Fergus Church of Scotland



March 2016

By the time you read this I will have celebrated my 54th birthday. I have mixed feelings about things like birthdays and anniversaries. I've been on this planet for fifty four years and maybe some people wish that the mother ship would come back for me. Times like this remind me that I am getting older. In order to offset the maudlin feelings that come with times like this I tend to find time for some reflection which is why I am writing this in Blantyre. The words of one of my favourite songwriters, Larry Norman, come back to me as I write this. He wrote in his album *'Upon This Rock'* – “nothing really changes, everything remains the same, we are what we are till the day that we die.” Now while that might sound a bit fatalistic, it isn't as dark as it might seem. It provides a good basis for understanding human nature and that can't be bad. This in turn can be a cause of regret in a small way. One could argue that if things don't really change then why bother? A recent experience backed this up but when I reflected on what happened it turned out to be positive and productive. I wrote a letter about a certain issue and it was published in *The Groat*. It elicited some response and one of the responses was very interesting. The person clearly didn't agree with the position I took and he let me know it! In what passed for debate he accused me and all who disagreed with him of being afflicted with woolly spirituality. It took me back to those times in the past when debate was nothing more than a pseudo-polite exchange of insults. Nothing had changed. But I regarded it as a wakeup call and as a call of another kind.

It suggested to me that what we call debate has to be radically rethought if we are to live together in society with any kind of hope and social cohesion. Now I prefer to think of dialogue instead of debate. If we accept that we won't always agree, we can also assume that it is possible to live together with our disagreements. If we can respect one another it should be possible to disagree without necessarily coming to a unified position on something. At the very least we can come to an understanding of another's views without being rude. And if we can at least learn from one another then that can only be a good thing. This demands that I develop a new view of those who disagree with me. Instead of seeing them as opposition, I then am invited to see them as people who haven't reached my position yet and conversely, I become someone who hasn't reached their position. I haven't lived their lives and they haven't lived mine. This makes dialogue possible. It creates and furthers mutual respect. And this is thoroughly biblical.

All through the Bible we see God inviting humanity into dialogue with him/her. In one place God calls to humanity, “Come and let us reason together.” And when Jesus' opponents insult him and miscall him with names like winebibber and friend of sinners (in modern English *“jakey and tinkler”*) he didn't respond in kind. Instead he prayed as they insulted him, “Father forgive them for they know not what they do.” This carries an important implication for us. In the form of a question: are we so insecure in our thinking that we take defensive positions of seeking to understand others? The only thing that is at risk is ignorance. At the very least we will learn something new.

It is my hope and prayer that when we discuss sexuality at the General Assembly this year that we will go for dialogue instead of debate. Those who threaten to leave are, in fact, the ones who feel threatened and insecure. I would never want to live with that sort of angst. There is so much division in the world and there are too many people in our community who bolster their own insecurity by belittling the opinions and achievements of others. At Wick St Fergus we believe in dialogue. We believe in affirmation. We believe in inclusion. We believe that everyone has value. We believe that all have a part to play in making our world, our community a better place. If, like us, you believe that Wick is worth the effort then you are invited to join us. You know where we are.

Revd John Nugent BD(Honours)

Church Register

DEATHS:

Due to the Minister's annual holidays, all deaths will be reported next month.

MARRIAGES:

February 9th – Sylvia Stubbings & Terry Vine

Flowers for Sunday

DATE	DONOR	ARRANGER
6 th Mar	Mrs K Harper	Donor
13 th Mar	Mrs C Mowat	Mrs Harper
20 th Mar	Miss Smith	Donor
27 th Mar	Mrs P Gray	Donor
3 rd Apr	Mrs A Roberston	Donor
10 th Apr	Mrs E Henderson	Donor

Diary

Choir	Wednesdays
3 rd March	Stewardship – 7pm
4 th March	World Day of Prayer
10 th March	Board – 7pm
27 th March	Café Church – 2pm

Church Duty Rota

Date	BUS	STAIRS	DOOR	DOOR	USHER
6 th Mar	J MacIannan	<i>M Foubister</i>	J Coghill	J Houston	E Henderson
13 th Mar	B Campbell	G MacDonald	J Mackay	<i>A Duffy</i>	M Thompson
20 th Mar	W Robertson	G Ramsay	A Rosie	G Watt	A Sinclair
27 th Mar	M Duffy	H Gray	I Banks	J Cormack	R Mappin
3 rd Apr	<i>M Foubister</i>	J Coghill	J MacIannan	E Henderson	J Houston
10 th Apr	G MacDonald	J Mackay	B Campbell	M Thomson	M Foubister



The Guild

Guild Report Feb. 8th

Our leader for this evening was Mrs Kathlyn Harper who, after leading our opening devotions turned the evening over to “A Matter of Opinion.”

The panel members were Mr. Andy Anderson, Mrs. Pat Weir, Mrs. Kathleen Robertson and Rev John Nugent and the Chairman for the evening was Harry Gray.

The questions were quite diverse and there were some very interesting opinions with the panel split on many of the issues raised, such as “Would the UK be better in or out of Europe?” “Renewables versus Nuclear” and as for favourite or hated foods, seafood won high support, with the panel united in their hatred of stewed tripe. When asked “if the panel members had to join a circus what act would they see themselves perform, they chose, Clown, Lion Tamer, Bareback Rider and Trapeze Artist we refrain from identifying who chose what. All in all, a very informative and entertaining evening which closed with a hymn and benediction after which tea was served.



Church, but not as you know it!

The Stewardship Committee under its outreach objective has embarked on an initiative to set up regular Café Church sessions operating within St Fergus. Café Church may be described as family friendly 'coffee with a conscience' or 'church - but not as you know it', and may include presentations and discussions on issues from contemporary life. Reflective and other forms of worship can be used.

Café Church is aimed primarily at people within our local community that are looking for an informal approach to Church and two way discussion of spiritual issues that are relevant to their lives. We now have set up a separate Café Church committee with a range of volunteers from the congregation to set up and run what will be initially Monthly Café Church Sessions.

Rev John Nugent who is on the committee is fully supportive of the initiative and when our Worship Group is set up, there will be the opportunity to assist John with the Spiritual elements of Café Church. We will initially be holding the Café Church in the St Fergus small hall. There will be a time of fellowship before the Spiritual element which will take the form of contemporary prayer and worship. After the spiritual element, tea coffee will be served again and the volunteers will join the people at the tables to discuss the topics raised. We see this as a great opportunity to widen the appeal of St Fergus within our community and to reach out to families who are not comfortable with traditional Church services.

Alan Sinclair, Stewardship Convenor

Our first Café Church is provisionally set for 2pm - Sunday the 27th March

This Is What Wick Is Really Like – Revd Nugent

This month I had the immense privilege of being invited to officiate at a very special wedding. On the ninth of February I conducted the marriage of Sylvia Stubbings to Terry Vine. Sylvia is very ill indeed with oesophageal cancer and new husband Terry has been her primary carer for eight years.

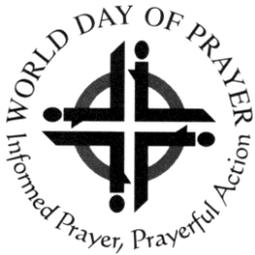
I took a phone call from the Town and County Hospital the previous week asking how one would go about organising a wedding in a hurry. I visited to hospital an hour later, had a chat with the staff and with the happy couple and within forty-eight hours we were good to go. The excellent staff at the hospital proved that we have excellent health care professionals in this town. It isn't simply a job for them. It is a vocation.

Elaine Gray at the registrar's office took care of the technicalities. Many local firms went out of their way to make sure that Sylvia's and Terry's day went without a hitch. The wedding was featured on STV News and also was reported in the Groat, the P&J, the Sun and the Daily Record. The wedding proved how much of a great community we have in Wick.

At Wick St Fergus we pray regularly for our town and its organisations. More importantly we thank God for the people who live here and who seek to make our town and district a better place for the rest of us. Most importantly we pray for Sylvia and Terry. They are two very special people.



Ask the Minister: *This will be an occasional feature, in which I will attempt to answer questions that are put to me. The questions can be on anything at all. If you have a question that you would like answered then please pass it either to me or Michelle, our editor, and all questions will be treated with discretion and can remain completely anonymous. This is your chance to tackle those questions which you otherwise daren't ask.*



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The world Day of prayer – Friday 4th March

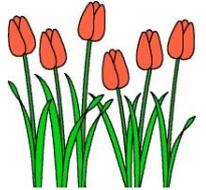
The World Day of Prayer will take place on Friday 4th March in St. Fergus Church at 2.30pm. This year's service has been prepared by the Christian women of Cuba and it is an ecumenical service where all are welcome.

Wick and District annual Bulb show - Wednesday 9th March

The annual bulb show will be held in the church hall on Wednesday 9th March at 2pm.

Tea and biscuits will be served at a cost of £2.

Mr Alan Sinclair will give a presentation (in film) about Caithness which has also been shown in Nova Scotia. The ladies make a real effort serving tea in china tea sets and the tables are covered in beautifully embroidered cloths, and with the colourful bulbs, the church hall looks very spring like. All are welcome to this lovely afternoon.



AGM/Social Evening – Wednesday 30th March 7pm

The AGM of the Congregational Board, followed by a Social Evening, will be held on Wednesday 30 March 2016 at 7pm. We would welcome everyone to come and join us on this special evening.

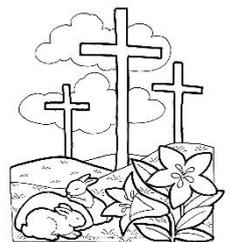
Spring Thrift: Tuesday 5th – Thursday 7th April

Yes, it's that time again, and if you've been doing an early spring clean, or have had a clear-out or are changing your colour scheme, we will be delighted to receive any items you wish to donate: ladies and gents clothes, bric-a-brac, and household goods – (only small items of furniture please!)

The Hall will be open on **FRIDAY 1st APRIL** from 2pm to 4pm to receive goods. If you are unable to deliver, please contact any Elder who can arrange to collect. The Thrift Shop will be open Tuesday 5th – Thursday 7th April from 10.30am – 3.30pm (closing 1pm Thursday). We also have a Baking/Jams Stall and donations for that would be most welcome. Come along, have a look and grab a bargain.



“Our Lord has written the promise of resurrection, not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.” – Martin Luther



Website: Find us at www.wickstferguschurch.org.uk

Please can all items for April's newsletter be with Michelle by Wednesday 23rd March – Thank you

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