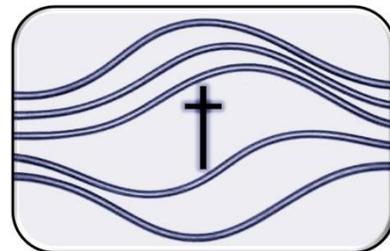




Wick St Fergus Church of Scotland



November 2016

Welcome to November at Wick St Fergus. At a time when attendance at Sunday worship is declining one would expect to hear this more and more. But, being the questioning kind of people that we are (and rightly so), another comment that is often heard is, "Why bother? I see no point in it." Even within the Church, large attendance at signature events is falling. I'm thinking of events such as Communion. The defence is often made: ***I have my own beliefs and I don't need to come to Church in order to worship God.*** This is actually a fairly reasonable assertion to make, as far as it goes. Another one that is heard states: ***I am a Christian and I don't need to come to Church in order to be a Christian. Besides, there are too many hypocrites in the Church.***

A couple of things to say about that. Tarring everyone with the same brush because of the failings of a few is hypocrisy in itself. What gives you the right to criticise or judge the spirituality or otherwise of another just because you disagree with them? Secondly, in the New Testament the Church is not an institution but rather it is an intentional community of the broken. What do I mean by that? What I mean is that the Church, whatever the tradition, is a community of people who have been called by Christ to be his disciples in the world. You don't have to be uber-Spiritual to do this, just willing. You don't have to have achieved a certain level of spirituality to do this. Just realise that you are called alongside others who are just as frail and weak and broken and in need of a hug and some love as the rest of us.

This is especially the case when it comes to communion. In Communion we remember Jesus. We remember his life, death and resurrection. We remember that the life which he led, led to his death on the cross. We remember that it was while we were still at a distance from God that Christ gave himself for others. He didn't wait until we were perfect. His first twelve disciples are evidence of that. A more dysfunctional bunch you will never meet. We also remember that we come to Communion at the express invitation of Christ. I use a call to the Communion table at each Communion service that was written, possibly, by the great saint of the Celtic Church, St Colm Cille (or as he is better known, St Columba). Himself a very humble man, he wrote: ***Come to this table: those of you who have much faith and those of you who need some more, those of you who have been to this table often and those of you who haven't been for some time. Come to this table: not because you must but because you may. Come to this table: those of you who have tried to follow Jesus and those of you who have failed. Come because it is Christ who invites you to come and he has promised to never, ever turn you away.***

So the Church, and Communion, is for those who are not perfect. We are a COMMUNITY OF FOLKS WHO ALL NEED FIXING IN SOME FORM OR ANOTHER. Writing one hundred years or so after Colm Cille's death, St Adomnan wrote that God doesn't send us out into the world on our own but instead he gives us as gifts to one another precisely so that we are not alone. He sends us as those in whom Christ, the living word of God, dwells. Not just a select few but all of us. That is why our favourite hymn at St Fergus says, "All are welcome in this place." So whether you are straight, gay, young, old, rich, poor, black, white we invite you all to come and be a part of the light that God wants to shine into Wick and district. White light is made up of many different colours as in the song, "Red and yellow and pink and green orange and purple and blue etc...." We invite you to be a part of God's rainbow people here at Wick St Fergus. You know where we are.

Revd John Nugent BD(Honours).

Church Register

DEATHS: We are sorry to report the passing of the following people:

7th October – Mrs Isabel Gates

**Due to minister's holiday, all other deaths will be reported next month.*

BAPTISMS:

23rd October - Sophie Lynne Sinclair; daughter of Christopher and Samantha Sinclair, granddaughter of Alan and Adelaine Sinclair.

We would like to make the following amendment to the notice printed last month, and apologise for the error contained.

Ishbel Steven – 25th August 2016

Diary

Choir Wednesdays
Stewardship Thursday 3rd November
Board Thursday 10th November
Remembrance Sunday – 13th November
Communion Sunday 20th November

Flowers for Sunday

DATE	DONOR	ARRANGER
6 th Nov	Mrs Kathleen Robertson	Donor
13 th Nov	Royal British Legion	MRs Harper
20 th Nov	Mrs Janice Henderson	Mrs Simpson
27 th Nov	Vacant	
4 th Dec	Mrs M Farrell, in memory of Elsa	Mrs Harper
11 th Dec	Mrs Janet MacDonald, Shore Lane	Mrs Harper
18 th Dec	Mrs Pamela McAdie, Girnigoe St	Donor
25 th Dec	Mrs Gunn, Netherby, Northcote St,	Mrs Anderson

If you would like to take over a vacant date, please contact Michelle, or Mrs Harper.

Church Duty Rota

Date	BUS	STAIRS	DOOR	DOOR	USHER
6 th Nov	R Mappin	I Banks	M Duffy	J Cormack	H Gray
13 th Nov	J Houston	J MacIennan	A Duffy	E Henderson	J Coghill
20 th Nov	M Foubister	B Campbell	G Macdonald	M Thomson	J Mackay
27 th Nov	G Watt	W Roberston	G Ramsay	A Sinclair	A Rosie
4 th Dec	I Banks	M Duffy	H Gray	R Mappin	J Cormack

Bella Gates – A Personal Tribute

Years ago people in churches never used to speak of members dying but rather they were spoken of as being “promoted to glory.” Bella Gates, one of our elders, received her well-earned promotion on Sunday 2nd October and her funeral took place on the 7th. Bella was a special kind of person. Never one to seek attention for herself, she simply got on with what had to be done. Her commitment to her Saviour and to the people of God was complete. Whether it was attending meetings of the Kirk Session or other Church committees or organising the subscription list for Life and Work, she taught us the meaning of faithfulness. She also had a mischievous smile that she used to devastating effect, especially when she was supplying me with her amazing homemade shortbread or Werther’s Originals sweeties. On a Sunday morning there would be a knock on the vestry door in the Kirk and in Bella would come. She would look around her to make sure that no one was listening or looking and then she would hand me a wee box of her shortbread or half a dozen sweeties and then she would say, “Take these quickly before someone sees you.” For years she served in the WRVS shop at Caithness General Hospital and she always had a kind word for staff and patient alike as well as a cup of coffee and a biscuit for me. But I will always remember one thing about Bella. When my own mother passed away two years ago she was the first person who contacted me to see how I was doing. On my first Sunday back after Mum’s funeral she took me aside, said a wee prayer and asked after my Dad and the rest of the family. For the next few months she always seemed to be there whenever I needed anyone. On the night before I went off on holiday I went up to the hospital to see her. To watch her loving family around her was indeed a privilege. I said my own farewell, asked her to pass a message on to my own Mum and prayed with her. Bella’s life was a true example of Christian living and I for one was privileged to be able to call her my friend. I will miss her smile, her voice, her spirituality, her prayers. Bella, well done thou good and faithful servant. Enter in to the joy of thy Lord.

The Minister.

Stamps

At St. Fergus, we continue to collect your stamps, which this year, will be sent to World Mission Stamp 2016 Appeal. The Church of South India (CSI) recently opened a Othara Eco-Spirituality centre, where people can learn about climate change and the importance of conserving the earth God has given us. This year’s stamp project will support some of their ecological innovations including harvesting and re-use of rain water, the establishment of biogas plant to power the kitchens and the development of a small dairy and chicken farm. Through retreats and conferences CSI hopes that the knowledge people gain at the centre will inspire them to live sustainably and encourage others in their community to do the same because caring for the earth is not only a calling, but a lifestyle. Help us support our partner in the Church of South India by collecting your used stamps which are sold to make money.



Christmas Tree Festival – Saturday 10th December

We are hosting a Christmas Tree Festival again this year and hope to make it even bigger and better than the previous ones. As before the idea is for Groups who could do with a helping hand to find volunteers and/or make people more aware of the service they provide, to decorate a Christmas tree and talk to our visitors about their organisation. If you would like to be part of this event, or know someone who would, please contact Elizabeth Henderson, 604156 or tannach.henderson@gmail.com for more details.



Illustrated Talk – Thursday 17th November @7.30 - A talk on Caithness & Sutherland, presented by Mr A Sinclair will tell us the geography, history, scenery, character and language of our home counties.

Harvest Open Day Saturday 8th October - “Caithness Past”

Our Harvest open day was very successful, and we would like to give thanks to everyone who supplied the pictures and other items on display, to all those who came along to view the exhibition, and to those who helped with the setting up and on the day. A total of £395.35 was raised in aid of Caithness & Sutherland Women’s Aid.

Autumn Thrift

We had a very successful autumn thrift and raised an amazing £1578. Many thanks to all those who supplied goods, baking and gave generous donations. We are very grateful for all the help we received to set up, clear up and of course, on the day itself to man the stalls and sell our goods.



The Guild

Presbyterial Council Report 2016

This year the meeting was held on 28th September in Thurso West Church. The speaker for the evening was Rev D McDonald who was formerly the Minister in St Andrew's Church in Valetta, Malta and it was during his tenure there that the great migration of people began from North Africa to the island of Malta. This of course is one of the projects (Out of Africa) that is supported by the Guild of the Church of Scotland and this was reported on by Mrs Janet Macdonald before Rev MacDonald began his talk. Using an audio/visual presentation

Rev McDonald took the company step by step through the workings of the project and it soon became evident how important the support of the Guild was. Everyone was spellbound and watched and listened in complete silence until, at the end of his presentation, there was hardly a dry eye in the church. It was wonderful to hear at firsthand how this project is progressing and how many of our fellow beings have had their lives transformed. Mrs Janet McDonald had the unenviable task of giving a very emotional vote of thanks followed by the closing hymn and Benediction. A big thank you to Thurso West Ladies for their wonderful hospitality.

October 10th: This year over the Christmas period our church will be supporting the work of Medicins Sans Frontiers, often referred to as Doctors Without Borders. The amount raised at our Christmas Tree Festival open day plus the offerings from both Christmas Eve services will go to this charity. Harry Gray was invited to come along and speak on the work of Medicins Sans Frontiers.

During his illustrated talk, he took us on a journey from Haiti to the Philippines and from Nigeria to Syria. MFS is an international humanitarian-aid non-governmental organization (NGO) and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, best known for its projects in war-torn regions and developing countries facing endemic diseases. We were shown some harrowing images as well as some of the amazing work carried out by doctors, nurses and other medical professionals, logistical experts, water and sanitation engineers and administrators provided medical aid in over 70 countries. These doctors and nurses decided to volunteer their time to solve issues of world health. We should perhaps remember that Jesus began his life as a refugee fleeing from persecution.

October 24th: Our Leader for this meeting was Mrs Janet McDonald who, after the opening devotion handed the evening over to Mrs Jenny Szyfelbain. Instead of her usual musical entertainment Jenny gave us a talk on her twenty years in Caithness General Hospital, mostly spent on night shift. Her stories were a mix of humour and pathos and shed a light on the ongoing work in CGH. Some of our ladies have had experience of Jenny's kindly, caring ways and appreciated her very much, Jenny did speak of the many changes over the years and some not for the best. She concluded by telling us that when she feels a wee bit down she finds that singing lifts her spirits and she sang two of her father's favourite hymns, Yield not to Temptation and Stand up Stand up for Jesus. Janet gave the votes of thanks and the company were served a very nice tea along with a slice of Kathleen Robertson's famous "Clooty Dumping."

Guild Meetings:

Monday 7th November - Guild Night and Bring and Buy Sale.

Saturday 19th November - Guild Week Rally in St.Peter's and St. Andrew's Church, Thurso at 2.30pm. Guest speaker Mrs Pat Weir. For transport, please contact Janet McDonald (602543).

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

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

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