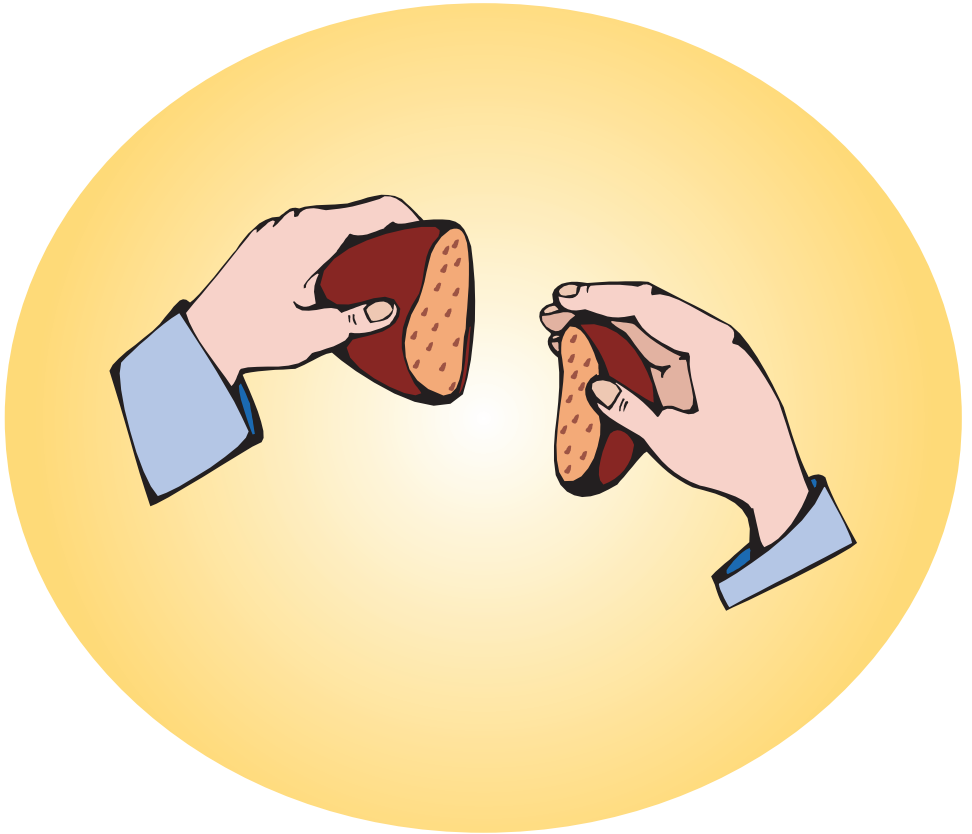


THE OPEN DOOR



*Penicuik North Kirk
Newsletter number 313
August 2009*

Dear Friends

Earlier this year Joan and I had the opportunity to visit once again one of our favourite holiday destinations – the island of Madeira. As we strolled about in the warmth, a couple of things caught our attention. The first thing to catch our attention was the impressive name of one of the banks: ‘Bank of the Holy Spirit’. I was determined to make a withdrawal from one of its cash machines and ask for a receipt. How neat it would be to have a piece of paper saying that I had withdrawn ‘x’ amount from one of the branches of the Bank of the Holy Spirit! I don’t want to bore you with the details. Suffice it to say that we were so frustrated by the whole complicated process of withdrawing money from the Bank of the Holy Spirit that, disappointed, we left and went to the cash machine around the corner!

But our experience made me think of ‘the spiritual Bank of the Holy Spirit’ and it made me reflect on

- how straightforward our access to God the Father is – it’s through Jesus – and it’s access to the very headquarters of grace – no access codes, no passwords, no PIN numbers;
- how ready the Father is to give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him, giving with an unconditional and unlimited generosity – no card required, just a simple request;
- how we will never ever be disappointed in him and never ever have to go somewhere else.

The second thing to catch our attention was that the statue of Pope John Paul II, erected to mark his visit to the island, had been moved from the hustle and bustle of Funchal’s busy town centre to the grounds of Funchal cathedral. This may seem like promotion, but to Joan and me it seemed like demotion. It

was a kind of parable that made us think, reflect and recall.

Our parable made us think about how secularists and others are putting pressure on us Christians to make our faith a private thing, something to be practised in church and religious settings. Our parable made us reflect on how this is the exact opposite of how Jesus sees things, the exact opposite of what he calls us to. And our parable made us recall how our faith is a 24/7 way of life and how Jesus calls us to serve him, to live and speak out our faith and to proclaim his message in word and deed, in the very hustle and bustle of the world and in the daily hectic activity of our lives. We gather together on Sunday to worship Jesus so that he can then send us out into the noise, movement and whirl of life in the world to serve him and make his love known. We have to stand firm against the ‘privatisation’ of the Christian faith.

What a wonderful and thought-provoking holiday we had!

Dear friends, my prayer is that we will all simply ask the Father to give us the gift of the Holy Spirit and be prepared for change; and that we will all rediscover that our faith is a 24/7 way of life to be lived in the world with all its joys and all its pressures.

Your friend and minister



News from Swaziland

This has been abridged. The complete letter can be found in the news section of the PNK website.

As we write to you on a beautiful midwinter day it seems impossible that we have been back in Swaziland for almost six months. Life



North Kirk Auction / Fun Day Saturday, 10th October

We are holding an auction of household items to raise funds for the Church general fund. Items required include small pieces of furniture, pictures, ornaments, lamps, sewing machines, kitchen appliances and utensils, tv's, computers and computer games, sporting goods, electrical goods, toys, cuddly toys, bikes, garden furniture and tools.

We do need items donated to us for the auction to take place, we also require helpers on the night before and on the auction day.

If you are able to donate such items or be a helper or both please contact Brian Thomson on 678114 or Andrew Knox on 673829.

The café will be open on the auction day.

And that day is Saturday 10th OCTOBER, please put that date in your diary. Tell all your family and friends and neighbours.

has been so varied and hectic that the time has flown by. We are so grateful for all your love, prayers and support for us which sustains us.

The theme of the USPG annual conference last month was Mission, Reconciliation and Hope. This made us ponder on our experiences in Bangladesh for 6 years and Swaziland for 3 1/2 years where the cultural norms are so different from England/Ireland/Scotland norms. In the West there is the basic concept that there can be discussion and openness between equals. In older cultures that we have experienced the norms are of duty, honour and obedience in relation to what family you come from, your role in that family or your position and status in society or even the church.

Where there is a 'dispute' it is not only the person but the status that the person has that is offended. In society the offended and offender are rarely equal – one has higher status and therefore discussion of the issue

is normally not an option. It seems that the only way out that could work is for the one with the higher status to reach out to the one of lower status, which is also not part of cultural norms. Our minds then moved to our God and how that we are the ones who have so dishonoured God and yet his love for us and desire that we should have the joy of being reconciled to him was so great that he came and still comes to us in Jesus Christ to bring about that wonderful reconciliation to enjoy a life lived in the joy of fellowship with God and each other. This is such glorious good news of liberation that should not those who have the status and power, like our God, reach out to instigate reconciliation regardless of rights and wrongs? We are reminded of the parable of the prodigal son. It is the father who rushes to greet and embrace the son when he is still a long way away. Also I recently spoke at the annual clergy wives retreat on 1 John 4 because there is just so much fear in Swaziland, fear of God, fear of ancestors, fear of neighbours etc. and this passage on the love

of God is so liberating.

Lay Training

School Holiday School of Theology

Clergy Training

Young People

Personal

As you can see from the above sample of activities, life has been really busy and Andrew became so exhausted that after a particularly hectic schedule, whilst he was taking the 6.30am service at the Cathedral one Sunday he lost his place twice which is not really the thing for the Diocesan Director of Training! As a result I took him away to a quiet local place in the country for three nights where we were able to have a bit of a break for which we were very thankful.

Whilst we are thankful for many encouragements and development there are still many frustrations of living and working in a culture that is not your own and being so far away from family and old friends.

Hippos, crocs and rhinos

We love our local nature reserve because you can walk in incredibly beautiful scenery amongst the zebra, wildebeest, several species of deer and see many birds. There are also hippos and crocs. On one day off we visited a game reserve about 50 miles away and as we were drinking tea in their newly opened cafe we were able to relax and watch the activities in the water hole. There were several hippos submerging under the water and coming up for air and a croc was sunning itself on a small island. A group of rhino sauntered up with a baby and we couldn't believe it when one of the hippos came out of the water to nuzzle

the baby rhino! The mother wasn't particularly impressed with that!

At the time of writing we have been coping with electricity problems from the strong July winds, we have not had a phone for 6 days, the water supply has stopped and the wood we bought for the fire to help with the winter nights doesn't want to burn. The joys of living in a different culture!

With our love and thanks

Rosemary and Andrew Symonds
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Heather's update – July 20th 2009

Heather's letter complete with colour photographs can be found on the website.

Greetings from Varanasi! Yes, I am back in Varanasi. Thank you all who were praying for my visa run. I obtained another 6 month visa in Bangkok.

I had a lovely time in Bangkok, but also experienced a bit of culture shock. I was not expecting this. I did not realise how different Bangkok is to India. Right from the time I landed I noticed the differences. When I went to get a taxi outside the airport I was NOT met with the usual chaos of a swarm of people trying to get me to use their taxi. The Thai drivers were lined up in a nice orderly queue, and the one at the front took me to his taxi. We drove on good roads with cars keeping to their lanes (not a 3 lane road with 5 or more lanes of traffic + animals wandering at will) and it took me a while to work out another big difference. We were in evening rush hour traffic, but it was QUIET. No horns. In India, all modes of transport compete to see who has the loudest horn.

The first thing I did when I got to my guesthouse was go out and have a beef burger at McDonalds. Yes I know, I go all the way to Thailand and eat in McDonalds, but in India you can't get beef burgers. Bangkok is a very clean city. It has loads of very large shopping centres and I found myself overwhelmed by it all. I remember years ago a friend on the Mercy Ship telling me that when the ship docks in a Western country you can always hear the ship's crew in the shops exclaiming loudly 'Oh there's....., and they've got.....etc.' I found myself doing that. The shops were like shops back home. I could get the little things from home that I can't get hold of easily in India.

The only touristy thing I did was travel up the river to visit the Grand Palace and Wat Pho. Thailand is a Buddhist country, but you can also see a lot of Hindu influence. The Grand Palace grounds have a temple housing the 'Emerald Buddha' and Wat Pho is a temple for the 'Reclining Buddha' (a colossal statue). Many people would come to worship these statues.

I got back to Varanasi on the 10th. It is nice to be back. It feels like I was never away as I have just slotted back into the routine. I was able to take a visiting American team into the Leprosy colony last week. They sang songs, shared testimonies and scripture. The people there are really open. We had the opportunity to pray with them. Please could you also pray for them, that God will bring not only physical healing but spiritual healing.

The Hindi school that my colleagues run has restarted. The children's ministry continues with teams going to two villages and the boy's jail. We just managed to finish the program on Tuesday when the rain started. When it

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Sudoku No 22. Solution on page 7

rains in India it REALLY rains. Thank God that the monsoon started a few weeks ago. It was late, and lots of people, especially farmers, were getting quite concerned.

My Hindi classes will restart in a few weeks when my language helper, Amit, returns from the course he was doing. Also, my medical co-worker, Aran, returns then too. Last week I spent a morning doing basic health checks on the widows. It gave me an opportunity to pray with them. We currently have 8 widows resident in the home and quite a few others as staff or employed by Hope Arts (the bakery and handicraft micro-enterprise aiming to provide widows with employment). Let me share one of our resident's stories. I don't know how long ago it was that she came to stay at the Ashram, but here is her story:

Mahasundri

Y staff received information of a widow in a difficult situation, lying down in front of the platform at the railway station. Hearing of this we sent some staff there. She is 55 years old. She had not eaten for many days, she was very thin. We informed the police that

we were taking her to the Ashram. She was in very bad condition; we thought that she would die. We put her in the van and took her to the hospital. The doctors told us to give her food and a good wash and she will recover. Her recovery was very good, our staff worked very hard. After some time she began walking again. Communication is difficult as she does not speak much Hindi. We had a visitor come who knew her Bengali language. He translated so we could find out her story. She came to Varanasi with the hope of finding somewhere to stay after her husband had died and her children had been killed in front of her. The people who gave her an address in Varanasi, with the promise of somewhere nice that she could spend the rest of her years, had given her a false address, so she was searching in Varanasi for this place. During this time she had eaten all of her food and spent all her money.

She is a sweet lady. Her health is quite good, except for arthritis in her arm. Please pray for her. Thank you for all your prayers and support. I really appreciate it and want to thank you again for being a part of this ministry.

Lots of love
Heather

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The Leprosy Mission

The Leprosy Mission's annual Pancake Day on 6th June proved to be a great success with over £1250 raised to aid the work of TLM

Zimbabwe. As a committee we were delighted with the success of the Pancake Day, but we gladly acknowledge our debt to all those who helped to make it possible. Thanks to all who helped us in any way, be it by buying a ticket, donating items for a stall, and/or coming along on the day; special thanks to those who gave their time on the day by manning a stall - we couldn't have done it without you! We are grateful for the continued support of the North Kirk family; thank you for your loyalty and commitment to our cause as we all work together towards a world without leprosy.

Roberta Mackenzie

Thank You

I wish to thank Penicuik North Kirk for the beautiful flowers I received during my recent 4 month stay in hospital.

Irene Purves

The Lighter Side

A kindergarten teacher was walking around observing her classroom of children while they were drawing pictures. As she got to one girl who was working diligently, she asked what the drawing was. The girl replied, "I'm drawing God." The teacher paused and said, "But no one knows what God looks like." Without looking up from her drawing, the girl replied, "They will in a minute."

At Sunday School they were learning how God created everything, including human beings. Johnny was especially intent when the teacher told him how Eve was created out of one of Adam's ribs. Later in the week his mother noticed him lying down as though he were ill, and said, "Johnny, what is the matter?" Johnny responded, "I have pain in my side. I think I'm going to have a wife."

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9	2	4	6	3	5	7	1	8
1	5	7	6	4	8	9	3	2
9	3	8	2	1	7	4	6	5

Answer to Sudoku 22

The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending; and to have the two as close together as possible. -- *George Burns*

A Sunday school teacher asked the children just before she dismissed them to go to church, "And why is it necessary to be quiet in church?" Annie replied, "Because people are sleeping"

A funeral service is being held in a church for a woman who has just passed away. At the end of the service, the pallbearers carrying the casket accidentally bump into a wall jarring the casket. They hear a faint moan. They open the casket and find that the woman is actually alive. She lives for 10 more years and then dies. A ceremony is again held at the same church and at the end the pallbearers are again carrying the casket out. As they are walking, the husband calls out, "Watch out for the wall!"

It was Palm Sunday but because of a sore throat, 5-year-old Johnny stayed home from church with a sitter. When the family returned home, they were carrying several palm fronds.

Johnny asked them what they were for. "People held them over Jesus' head as he walked by," his father told him. "Wouldn't you know it," Johnny fumed, "the one Sunday I don't go and he shows up."

Two boys were walking home from church after hearing a strong preaching on the devil. One said to the other, "What do you think about all this Satan stuff?" The other boy replied, "Well, you know how Santa Claus turned out. It's probably just your dad"

An inexperienced preacher was to hold a graveside burial service at a pauper's cemetery for an indigent man with no family or friends. Not knowing where the cemetery was, he made several wrong turns and got lost. When he eventually arrived an hour late, the hearse was nowhere in sight, the backhoe was next to the open hole, and the workmen were sitting under a tree eating lunch. The diligent young pastor went to the open grave and found the vault lid already in place. Feeling guilty because of his tardiness, he preached an impassioned and lengthy service, sending the deceased to the great beyond in style. As he returned to his car, he overheard one of the workmen say to the other, "I've been putting in septic tanks for twenty years and I ain't never seen anything like that."

Several children found a dead robin. Feeling that a proper burial should be performed, they secured a small box and some cotton batting, dug a hole in the back yard, and made ready to dispose of the deceased. The minister's 5-year-old son was chosen to say the prayer. And so with great dignity, he intoned, "Glory be to the Father...and unto the Son...and into the hole he goes."

News OfThe North Kirk Family And Parish

Marriages

“No man must separate those whom God has united.” The Good News as written down by Mark chapter 10, verse 9. *“Let marriage be held in honour among all.”* The letter to Hebrew Christians chapter 13 verse 4a.

3rd July Natalie Duncan and Alan Stenhouse

11th July Kate Thomson and Duncan Millar

Funerals

“Death is destroyed! Victory is complete! Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!” Paul’s first letter to the Corinthian Christians chapter 15, verses 54 and 57.

2nd July Jessie Yurek, Pentland House

Memorial Service

18th July Ronnie Lawrie, Spain

Worship at the North Kirk

From September to June our morning worship services begin at 11am and in July and August at 10am.

Communion is normally celebrated on the second Sunday of every month.

Our evening worship services begin at 7pm except on the second Sunday of every month when, at 7.30pm, we host Tribal Generation, a youth-friendly worship event.

There is a short *‘Start the Week’* service every Monday at 11.45am.

Groups And Organisations At The North Kirk

Crèche facilities are available during the morning worship service.

Sunday Club for children aged 3 to 11 and for young people in S1 to S3 meets during the morning worship service.

In the North Hall next to the church, a group for young people in S4-S6 meets on Sundays at 7pm – except Tribal Generation nights.

During the week we also have the North Kirk Music Group for pre-school children (Monday and Wednesday mornings), PiNKies for pre-school children (Friday mornings), BB (Tuesday and Friday evenings), the PNK art and craft group (Friday afternoons) and Bible Study Groups (Monday afternoons, Monday evenings and Wednesday evenings).

The Open Door Café is open from 10am to 12 noon and 2 to 4pm Monday to Friday throughout the year and offers real coffee, tea, home baking and friendship! The church is open at the same times.

For more information on the above contact the minister, 672213.

Next Newsletter

Copy for the next newsletter should be with the editors on or before 15th September for publication on 4th October. Copy can be sent as a Microsoft Word attachment to either email address or hard copy (preferably typescript) can be handed to either editor

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