



Jesus is the Same  
Yesterday, Today  
and Forever

The Manse  
December 2001

Dear Friends

Each of us will remember where we were and what we were doing on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the day of the terrorist attacks on America. Later, the horror of the events were played over and over again on TV screens, and I'm sure all who watched such catastrophic events knew that, in effect, the Third World War had started.

Almost a century ago the world experienced a similar reaction of Shock, Horror and Disbelief as the events began leading to the First World War. Yet despite these reactions there was, at that time, a very optimistic mood in Britain. The Empire was still in place, an Empire which had been victorious over Zulus, Boers and other races who had dared to challenge Britain's assumed "Right to Rule".

In 1914 this presumptuous, confident, even arrogant attitude still prevailed. The German threat would be dealt with without problems, and "it will be all over by Christmas".

Apart from British presumption and confidence, was there, also a concealed subconscious feeling in British minds, that it would be a contradiction in terms to be waging war at Christmas, the season of Peace and Goodwill to all people? Sending such Christmas Greetings to people at home and abroad is easy then an uneasy peace is in force. Sending the same greetings when a major international war is going on, might not be so easy.

It is no accident that the top two classic novels of war are very long books, i.e. "War and Peace" and "Gone with the Wind". These books provide an abundance of material for authors, material whose original sources come from Sacred and Profane documents, books and scrolls belonging to ancient societies in the same Middle East where the current conflict is taking place. One of the most important Dead Sea Scrolls is entitled "The War of the Sons of Light

and the Sons of Darkness”. This Scroll is contemporary with the Birth of Christ. Strong allusions and references to this way of religious thought are not difficult to find in our Bible, in the Book of Daniel, the Gospel of John and The Revelation.

Perhaps it is not entirely accidental that the Christmas film premiere of J.R.R.Tolkien’s trilogy “Lord of the Rings” is very consciously based on this theme of conflict between Dark and Light, Good and Evil. Victory over Darkness and Evil is assured in all these books and dramas, but at a huge cost of human lives and much suffering. Thousands of lives were lost in America on September 11<sup>th</sup>, and more lives could still be lost as a similar kind of “Apocalyptic” strategy is pursued against terrorism. How then is it possible at Christmas to proclaim the Good News of “Peace and Goodwill” to all, while continuing to give tacit consent to ongoing military action? When the angel announced these words to shepherds in the Fields of Bethlehem, he did not give lists of Exceptions, e.g. Taliban terrorists or IRA gunmen.

As told in the Bible the Story of the Birth of Christ is a “feel-good” story where everything turns out pretty well for a poor family. That’s how it looks and reads from the standpoint of Human Value Judgements. From the Divine Value Judgement stance, the Christmas story may appear very different. For example we think it right and proper Mary rode on a donkey to Bethlehem. To claim that was unusual in her contemporary culture would be a master understatement. Men rode on animals. Women and children walked. Even pregnant women walked by the side of the animal. When Luke’s Gospel describes Mary riding on the donkey, it is the first deliberate clue that the coming of God’s Kingdom in the baby Jesus will be the first move to turn Human Value Judgements upside-down.

As an adult, Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey, the symbol of Peace, not the traditional expectation of how God’s Saviour would come into the world to possess His rightful Kingdom. Christmas

begins the re-education of humanity to learn how the Gospel, the Christmas “Goodwill and Peace” can bring Happiness, only if those who hear it and accept it allow their Human Value Judgements to be turned upside-down to Divine Value Judgements. Notions of War and Peace are both External and Internal in each of our lives. The seeds of Conflict and War are to be found in each human heart. According to the level in which God is in us, so is the balance decided between War and Peace.

Christmas is very much concerned with this problem of “God in us”, or “God with us”. The ancient Jewish prophecies about God’s Saviour Messiah consistently name him as “Immanuel”, whose literal translation is “God with us”. This Advent-Christmas season of all seasons, it is bound to be a question uppermost in our minds. Can God be with us while apparently distancing Himself from events like those of September 11<sup>th</sup>? Can He be with us as we give some reluctant approval to the use of force against a peasant country?

Watching the horrors of September 11<sup>th</sup> played over and over again on TV screens throughout the world, the faith of even the firmest believer must have been put under severe strain. Since then ministers, priests, theologians and religious writers have strained every intellectual nerve in attempts to make some sense out of these events in relation to a belief in an all-powerful, merciful and living God. At the beginning of Nov. “Life & Work” is a magnificent sermon by the minister of the First Presbyterian Church, New York, in which the location of God is posited at the heart of all the human suffering, just as He was at the heart of human suffering when Jesus was dying on the Cross. There are no sickly platitudes in the sermon. Strict honesty is there in plenty, with strong clues about the shakiness and shakiness of corporate and individual faith. There were times when it looked as if God was not there, a concept uncomfortable to mainstream Christianity. Over reliance on Proof Texts, Creeds and Confessions has caused organised Christianity to make heavy weather of the present crisis. Because of its long history of Persecution, Catastrophe and Holocaust, Judaism has dealt more

positively with the crisis, because it has been there before many times. Platitudes do not exist in Jewish religious literature. Honesty about thinking of God's position as one of Absence has brought a measure of Understanding and Salvation in Judaism. After the events of September 11<sup>th</sup> a small, obscure "Doomsday" religious cult in Holland prepared for the end of everything. They said that if God did not come to meet them, they would pack and go to meet Him. Their authority for doing all this was "the sign in the New York sky on September 11<sup>th</sup>, the great columns of smoke, flame and darkness, not unlike similar signs of Divine Destruction mentioned in various parts of Scripture. That is one of many interpretations possible.

Nearly 2,000 years ago three scholarly Oriental men from some of the very countries being bombed at present, saw a sign of a different kind in the night sky. Three Wise Men saw a star of unusual brightness appearing to invite them to follow it. Because they were Wise the men went with it until it brought them to see a new-born male child in Bethlehem. Ancient scriptural prophecies aside, this child grew to adulthood, a human being like ourselves in every way, one who showed by His life, death and Resurrection, along with His words and deeds that He truly was "Immanuel", "God with Us".

If we can believe that, and hold fast to it this Christmas, it will be "Business as Usual". It HAS to be. It MUST be. The alternative is unthinkable.

With Best Wishes for Peace and Happiness at Christmas, and the Sincere Hope of a truly Happy New Year for all,

Yours sincerely,

*Samuel M. McNaught*

### **Church of Scotland Guild**

The new Guild Session is now well underway with many varied and interesting speakers for both afternoon and evening meetings. We were particularly pleased to welcome visitors from other Guilds and also congregation members, including some men, to the Nov. 12<sup>th</sup> meeting when Miss Sheena Wellington spoke and sang for us. Visitors and new members are welcome to attend and we look forward to seeing you one afternoon or evening.

### **Men's Association Bowling**

*J. Christie*

The indoor season is now well underway and is held in the Large Hall every second Monday, same day as the Afternoon Guild.

We could do with more players, amateur, professional or novice to have a fun evening. We are even prepared to go "Unisex"!

Come and have a go – bring a friend.



**"Thanks to your generous response to the fabric fund appeal I have been able to buy a new umbrella."**

## **Choir**

*Brian A. Booth, Organist*



On Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> November, the following five members of the Choir received Long Service Certificates:

Senga Booth, John Campbell, Ina Kennedy, Sandra Marshall, David Page

Effie Cooper, a former member of the Choir, also received a Long Service Certificate.

We are not quite certain how many years in total they have been members of Church Choirs because, for obvious reasons, they wish to keep that a secret! I also received a Long Service Certificate for 45 years as an organist in the Church of Scotland. After the Minister presented these Certificates, we sang Hymn 534 – “For all the saints who from their labours rest” and we did wonder if someone was trying to tell us something!

We are always looking for new members to join us, and are delighted to see Jim Marshall back in the Choir.

At the time of writing in early November, we are busy practising for our Carol Party on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December at 7.30pm in the Hall. There will be Christmas items by the Choir, community carol singing and a Christmas supper. Tickets cost £2 and are available from members of the Choir. Please support us. All proceeds will go to Church Funds.

On Sunday 23<sup>rd</sup> December at 11am the Choir will be taking part in a Service of Lessons and Carols for Christmas.

Our practices resume on Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January at 7.15pm in the New Hall when we would be delighted to welcome new members. We hope to perform “Resurrection Jazz” at Easter Time.

## **Weddings 2001**

**April 28<sup>th</sup>**

Neil Morgan to Pauline Loy, 17 Arran Crescent

**June 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Scott Buchan to Kim Duncan, 35 Cairnwell Place

**June 16<sup>th</sup>**

John Hunter, Inverkeithing to Joan Flood, 24 Wilson Avenue

**June 30<sup>th</sup>**

Robert Barrett to Angela Winton, 32 McIndoe Crescent

**December 1<sup>st</sup>**

Johnathon McWilliams, 4 Balmoral Drive to Katrina Duncan,  
Glasgow

### **Smile For You**

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu,  
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.

I passed around the corner and someone saw my grin;  
When he smiled I realised I'd passed it on to him.

I thought about that smile, then I realised its worth.  
A single smile, just like mine, could travel round the earth.

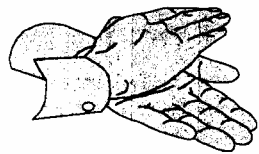
So, if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected.  
Let's start an epidemic quick, and get the world infected!

## NEWS FROM THE FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

The events organised for this year have been a great success socially and financially. The following amounts have been raised for Church Funds.

Bruce Davies in Concert (February)	220	
Dunfermline Strathspey and Reel Society (March)	483	
The Kevock Choir (April)	1,054	
East Fife Male Voice Choir (May)	714	
Promise Auction (September)	1,753	£4,224

Thanks to everyone who contributed to the success of these events.



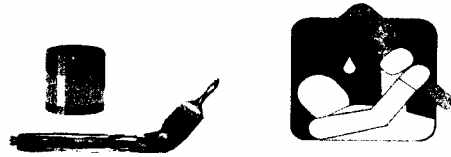
The events organised for 2002 are detailed below so that you may note these in your diaries:

East Fife Ladies Choir on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> February at 7.30pm in the Hall  
Fish Supper Ceilidh on Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> March at 7.30pm in the Hall  
The Central Band of the Royal British Legion Scotland on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> April at 7.30pm in the Church  
A Scottish Concert by Quern on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> May at 7.30pm in the Hall

We hope that you will enjoy these events and give them your fullest support.

## **Fabric**

*Bill Whyte, Fabric Convener*



MANSE: The annual Fabric Inspection took place in July, items of improvement were noted but for obvious reasons the intention at present is simply to keep the property wind and water tight and deal with emergencies only.

CHURCH AND HALLS: The Fabric Inspection took place in August and here again numerous items of repair and improvement were noted. Some of them are more necessary than others and our Committee will attempt to deal with them on a needs basis and as finances allow. At last years inspection several parts of external woodwork were noted as in need of renewal, including the rear door. This work has been completed now and our grateful thanks to Brian Fairfull for undertaking freely the painting of this work together with repainting the exterior of a number of windows. Likewise our sincere thanks to John Campbell (Choir John) for his excellent work in redecorating areas of the Lesser Hall damaged as the result of a main gutter failure.

In May, the Board approved in principle the upgrade of the kitchen. Because the cooker was in poor condition approval to replace it was given, this was done in July. Consideration to unit replacements, plaster work, electrics, and decoration is ongoing and final thoughts will be put to the Board in due course.

Vandalism is still an irritating problem with glass and slate damage. Further advice is being sought from the Police Dept.

Finally a plea is made for assistance to maintain parts of our grounds, shrubs, leaf clearing, weed control etc. If you can spare some time to help give me your name.

## A Letter from Sri Lanka



Dear Friends

As winter approaches in Scotland so monsoon approaches us in Kandy. In fact the monsoon season has already arrived and I have got soaked several times in the last week or so. Still, when the sky is clear everything is especially lush and beautiful.

Recently I have just enjoyed a visit from my brother Matthew who is doing a short tour of Asia. He got involved in taking local church bible studies, and came to stay at the college for one night. After tasting all the local delicacies, specially selected by the student connoisseurs, Matthew and I headed off with my student fellowship group to Trincomalee. We stayed in the Methodist Boys home, which is a very hospitable if less than luxurious holiday destination. We had a great time. About twelve of us visited the hot water wells there and thoroughly enjoyed pouring buckets of hot to tepid water over each other.

After the East Coast trip, which not many tourists go to because it is Tamil Tiger country, we joined some expatriate friends of mine and visited the Singharajah (Lionking) rain forest. There is a place in Haputale on the edge of the tea country where there is an old planters bungalow called Aerie cottage which you can rent. It is on Kelbourne estate – if you ever go to Sri Lanka don't miss it.

Now life is back to normal and the College term has restarted. Life in the Scotskirk too continues as normal. We have our harvest thanksgiving service on Sunday. The minister's wife Pearl has just returned from a trip to South India. She has a heart condition and diabetes – many Sri Lankans have diabetes. She went to India to take a special treatment. Pearl's husband George continues to hold the fort at the Scotskirk. The church is growing, I preached on Sunday to a full house and we have two afternoon services. Once a month we also have a special Tamil service. The growth of the church is really a kind of small miracle. Of course there are many problems but amidst them all God continues to work.

Every blessing to you all. *Tony*

### **Women's Group**

An American decided to write a book about famous churches around the world. For his first chapter he decided to write about famous British cathedrals. So he bought a plane ticket and made the trip to London, thinking that he would work his way across the country.

On his first day he was inside a church taking photographs when he noticed a golden telephone mounted on the wall with a sign that read "£10,000 per call".

The American, intrigued, asked a priest who was strolling by, what the telephone was used for. The priest replied that it was a direct line to heaven and for £10,000 you could talk to God. The American thanked the priest and went along his way.

Next stop was in Manchester. There at a very large cathedral, he saw the same golden telephone with the same sign under it. He wondered if this was the same kind of telephone he saw in London and asked a nearby nun what it's purpose was. She told him that it was a direct line to heaven and for £10,000 you could talk to God. "OK thank you", said the American.

He then travelled to Nottingham, Coventry and Bath and in every Church he was the same golden telephone with the same "£10,000 per call" sign under it.

With his first chapter going well, he left England and travelled to Edinburgh and again, there was the same golden telephone, but this time the sign under it read "10p per call".

The American was surprised so he asked the priest about the sign. "Father I've travelled all over England and I've seen this same golden telephone in many churches. I'm told it is a direct line to heaven, but in all the cities in England the price per call is "£10,000. Why is it so cheap here? The priest smiled and answered "You're in Scotland now son." "It's a local call."

## **CHURCH FLOWERS**

Once again another year has almost passed, and thanks to everyone who donated flowers. The flowers are very much appreciated by the sick, bereaved and housebound in the Congregation. If you would like to put your name on the Flower List for 2002, it is now available in the vestibule of the Church.

This little verse was sent to me by a member of the congregation.

Among the unsung heroines who grace this world of ours,  
Are those who give and who arrange their Church's lovely flowers.  
I wonder if they realise the pleasure that they bring  
To people who will gather there to worship and to sing,  
Or the warm friendship that they send  
When given to those who can't attend.

Again thank you for brightening our Church on a Sunday.

Senga Booth

## **St. John's Guides**

The guides have had another successful year and numbers continue to remain strong. A new programme was introduced by the Association in September 2000 and the first year of this has now been completed by all our guides. This programme is aimed at the girls making their own decisions and lots of teamwork.

We have had two successful weekend camps in St. Andrews – beautiful weather but biting cold winds on the West Sands.

Despite the foot and mouth restrictions during the summer we still managed our week under canvas at Balmullo – at the top of the hill!! Despite rain the first morning the rest of the week was either hot or misty. Lots of activities enjoyed by all but many tired legs at the end of the week.

## **Treasurer's Report**

*Brian A. Booth, Treasurer*



2001 has been a difficult year financially, but there has been a good response to the Fund Raising events and to the Gift Day. Details of the amounts raised at the events are detailed in the Fund Raising Committee Report. The Gift Day raised £3,866 with approximately a further £700 recoverable from the Inland Revenue on Gift Aid donations. This is a tremendous result, and, on behalf of the Congregational Board, I say thank you to all who donated so generously.

It is difficult in early November to anticipate the year end result, but I hope that we will finish the year without having to dip into our reserves.

A big thank you to you all for your financial support and encouragement throughout the year.



## **Get Together**

As you read this, our next highlight is almost upon us. I refer to our Christmas party, although some of our members feel every Thursday is the highlight of their week.

We have added a few more octogenarians to our number, not that you'd notice, they are more sprightly than the younger crew. Then there's our Mrs. Kemp, she's 95 and still likes to beat them all at dominoes.

We still extend an invitation to all, to come and join us any Thursday from 2 till 4.

A golf widow had a husband who had a habit of returning very late to the matrimonial home. One day she left a note on the table, which read:

"The day before yesterday, you came home yesterday morning.

Yesterday, you came home this morning.

But if today you come home tomorrow, you will find I left you yesterday!"

Talk kindly to the next person you meet and the end result can go beyond your dreams. The idea is neatly reflected in this verse:

Drop a pebble in the water, just a splash and it is gone.

But there's half a hundred ripples circling on and on.

Kindness spreading from the centre, flowing on and out to sea

And there's no sure way of telling where the end is going to be.

(Geoff Morris)