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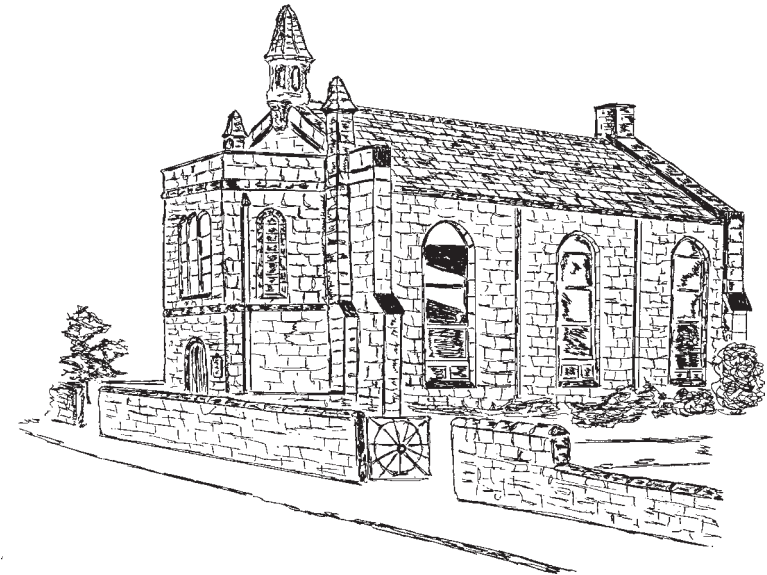
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THE LINK

**The Magazine of Hags Parish Church
Summer 2007**

Hi folks

Once more the holiday season approaches and all the church activities are winding down for the Summer as everyone takes a well earned break.

In May I took part in a Presbytery retreat where we walked a replica of the medieval Chartres Labyrinth. Just as we now journey on holiday for renewal of our body and spirit in the past people would make pilgrimages to the Holy Land for spiritual renewal. When these journeys became too dangerous the Labyrinth was designed to take the place of the pilgrimage. It is something like a maze but there are no dead ends but one path that meanders into the centre and out again.

You walk this path on your own but will be followed by other people and will pass them on the way in or out. As you meander around the path at times you come near to the centre and then wander away again just as in our journey through life there are times when we come near to God and times when God seems further away. Also most of the time you are looking down to follow the path and you need to stop and look up to see what is around, a reminder in our busy lives to stop and take in the beauty of God's creation and the companions around us. Something that I noticed on my walk was that I had cold feet and this made me wonder about the times that I might have had spiritual cold feet not wanting to move out of the comfort zone of the familiar.

I wish you well on what ever journeys you take this Summer. Take time to stop look and listen. Appreciate the beauty of your surroundings even if you don't move far from these parts. Remember the gifts and talents that God has given you and come and celebrate those talents in Haggs Parish Church on the first weekend in September.

Happy Holidays

God bless you all

Helen F Christie (Minister)

By the time this magazine reaches you, another General assembly will have come and gone. Did you see, or hear, anything about it? Did any significant events, or discussions get your attention?

One thing of significance this year was that the Moderator, the Rt. Rev. Sheilagh Kesting became the first female minister to hold the office. She was not the first female Moderator. That distinction went to an elder, Dr Alison Elliot, in 2004. The appointment of these two ladies to the highest office in the Church of Scotland is a demonstration of the rapid growth in recent years in the number of females who are holding positions that were formally looked upon as male domains. When I joined the Kirk Session at Haggs in 1978 there were no female elders, now the majority of elders are female. It will be interesting to see if the new Moderator brings anything new or refreshing to her office.

Next year the General Assembly will open on a Thursday and close the following Tuesday or Wednesday. The current pattern of meeting on a Saturday and concluding the following Friday was introduced in 1978 but a recent survey concluded that the majority of those attending would prefer a Thursday opening in future. Who says the Church never changes? Our minister attended this year's event and her report is included in the magazine.

We are once again almost at the end of another session of church activities. Leaders and helpers of organisations are taking a well-deserved break, recharging their batteries before another session starts in the Autumn. Our thanks go to all who help with the work of the church in Haggs.

But while we rightly take a break in the summer, the world does not stop – things move on:

The grass is growing, flowers are blooming, the trees are green, days grow longer. Nature reminds us of its wonders and, through them, the glory of God.

Weather patterns are changing, global warming, climate change, the depletion of the ozone layer. Is Nature telling us that we are failing as the stewards of God's creation.

Madeline McCann, a four year old on holiday was abducted, Alan Johnstone, a foreign correspondent, was kidnapped, Israel attacked Gaza, dozens die every day in Iraq and Afghanistan – countries where Western democracies intervened to help the oppressed of these nations.

Zimbabwe is heading to economic disaster, taking the majority of its people into abject poverty. This is a country that had everything going for it when it first gained independence, only to see them being eroded away by a selfish dictator.

Throughout the world people are suffering because of the selfish actions of others. They survive because a lot of people care enough to help through their generosity. We, as individuals, might not be able to influence the situations mentioned above but we can help the poor and oppressed of the world by giving some of our well-being – our time, talents and possessions- to one or more of the various charities that have been established to provide assistance to them.

I helped Elizabeth recently to do her Christian Aid Week door-to-door collections and was disappointed at the number of people who declined to make a donation to this worthwhile charity. I know that there are many charitable organisations and that we all grow tired of people coming to our door, so my charitable thought is that those who declined were making contributions to help the poor of the world in some other way.

On a positive note, Christian Aid hopes to have raised £15.5 million from this year's fund-raising week. Did you know that Christian Aid receives £3.50 for every mobile phone that it receives as part of its recycling scheme. Perhaps you would like to organise this for our church. I am sure that many of us change phones every year.

So take a break, recharge your batteries, come back refreshed but don't stop working for God, don't forget those who need our help, don't stop giving to support the work of the Church in areas of the world where help is desperately needed.

The magazine committee wishes you an enjoyable and spiritually rewarding Summer break.

Jack Dunn

Christian Aid

Christian Aid Week, Britain's longest running door to door fundraising week, turns 50 this year. To mark its golden jubilee it is going green by encouraging people of all ages to plant trees in support of its overseas work on climate change projects. They are encouraging people to plant trees in their gardens, community spaces and churchyards as a way of reflecting on the impact of deforestation and climate change is having on poor communities around the world.

The first Christian Aid Week, in 1957, mobilised residents in 200 towns and villages across Britain collecting £26,000 for overseas development work. Half a century later Christian Aid hopes to raise £15.5 million from the annual fundraising week – held this year from May 13-19. Christian Aid works with 700 local organisations across 50 developing countries. Working with poor communities, it trains people to deal with the effects of climate change and prepares them for the threat of natural disaster. The Climate Change campaign was launched in February with a report asking major UK companies to declare their true carbon footprint and then reduce it by 5% a year. The organisation believes that the UK must take responsibility for pumping greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, causing climate change that is already directly affecting the lives of poor people in developing countries.

Our Christian Aid lunch raised £145.00 and the Door to door collection £2155.71.

Well done, and thanks goes to all who gave freely of their time to collect, the total makes it all worthwhile, even if some of the rejections are disheartening at the time!

Hoops Jerseys for Street Boys

Street children are being cared for at the Lovemore Homes for Boys in Harare, Zimbabwe, have been kitted out in brand new football jerseys thanks to Celtic Football Club and a delegation from the Presbytery of Greenock and Paisley.

William Beattie, Session Clerk at Kilbarchan East Church of Scotland, took the strips donated by Celtic when he visited Zimbabwe. "We often see situations on television showing the problems facing those living in a third world country but only by being there can you appreciate how

difficult it is. I met many wonderful people who live in very difficult circumstances – much worse than our own. Surely it is our responsibility to help our fellow Christians in their plight in any way we can.” Quote from William Beattie on his return home.

Stewardship and Finance

Church of Scotland members continued to raise their level of giving with an increase in 2006 of 3.86%. Offerings received by congregations amounted to £58,886,196. The tax recovered on Gift Aid in 2006 amounted to £10,806,674 an increase of 4.62% on the previous year. The total offerings (including tax recovered on Gift Aid) amounted to £69,692,870, an increase of 3.86% on the total amount received in 2005.

Next April’s proposed cut in Income Tax is likely to affect this figure and it is estimated that if the lower rate of income tax had been in place during 2006 the Kirk’s gift aid income would have been reduced by almost £1.2 million.

Christian Aid, Hoops Jersey for Street Boys and Stewardship and Finance are extracts taken from May edition of Life and Work. (With an input regarding our own figures for Christian Aid)

Flower List

Thanks to the following:

April: Miss F Shuit, Mrs Harley, Mrs J Dunn, Mrs G Bateman, Mrs S Cowan and Mrs E Findlay

May: Mrs A Blair, Mrs H Lang, Miss J Leishman and Mrs M McDonald

June : Mrs A Gilmour, Mr M McCheyne, Mrs H Muirhead and Mrs W Harvey

July: Mrs J. Walls, Mrs M Proffit, Mrs D Duncan, Mrs R McLaren and Mrs D Milligan

The flowers provided by the congregation of Haggs Parish Church are once again bringing a touch of colour to our Church each Sunday and for that we are thankful to the people who donate them. The people who receive them after our morning worship are very grateful for the kindness and thoughtfulness in receiving them.

Thank you for your continued support, Jean and Moira

What are your Favourite Flowers

My favourite flowers are freesias and the sweat pea. I love the fragrance and the delicateness of them. They were also my mothers favourites although she very rarely received flowers as she preferred to see them growing in the garden. What are your favourite flowers? Let me know of any story connected to them.

Moira Martin

Newspaper Collections

Please note the collection of newspaper has ceased.

Our thanks go to all who helped over the years and more recently, the Boys Brigade. The company supplying the skip finds it is not a viable proposition for them these days.

The Blue Bins will now come in very handy!

Local Hero

We have a hero is our midst! Susan Swan has been awarded a Senior Hero award by the Daily Record Newspaper for her unstinting work for charity – and how well deserved it is too. She is a shy, retiring person by nature but with a firm grip on life and helping to achieve the impossible. Susan has worked tirelessly with Haggs Parish Church children for years taking them through their Duke of Edinburgh Award schemes and getting her Duke of Edinburgh Award too! She has always been a member of the St Andrew’s Ambulance devoting her spare time to their requirements but just recently she has certainly been a star amongst us all in abseiling down the Wallace Monument and the Falkirk Wheel, still not making a big ‘thing’ out of it! Just one of the things one might do in the course of raising funds! Well done Susan we are all very proud to have you as a member of our congregation and a friend.

J. McCheyne

1st Hags BB Company Section

This year is now finished but with an attendance of 16-18 boys from P.7 to S.4 on Fridays at Bankier Primary we have had a very busy year. We are progressing with the broader age group to achieving Presidents badges, Duke of Edinburgh Bronze and moving on to Queens Badge Level.

This year brought success in competitions at Battalion level winning the First Aid (for the 1st time), Football, Vaulting, Cross Country (Junior) and taking part in Badminton, Volleyball, Table Tennis, Pulpit Fall, Gold which overall placed the company 3rd in the Falkirk Battalion Trophy. Fundraising continues as it must to keep pace with rising insurance costs and this year we held a sponsored games night and a bag pack at Asda just before Christmas.

We had a successful Parents Night which was well attended thanks to the support of the Parents.

Next year is the 75th Anniversary of the Company and we hope to involve as many ex-members as we can in what we hope will be a special celebration of the past, present and all going well the future of the 1st Hags Boy's Brigade.

I would like to thank the Officers and parents who have supported and helped the continuing success of the company section in the past year.

Colin Meek

Keep Fit

Keep Fit meets on Wednesday evenings at 6 p.m. in the Church Hall. We are going to continue over the summer and if good weather we go for walks. If anyone wishes to come along please bring a gym ball as we work with one in class. £2 covers the cost of the class and this eventually goes to Charity. We have given to several charities close to our hearts over the time the class has been going. For more information contact Liz on 07813857486.

Liz. Heeps

Girls Brigade

1st Hags company wish everybody a happy holiday and hope the sun shines for us all.

The company finished at the end of March for our summer break with a very successful session as we had approximately 32 girls. Hopefully this will continue in our 2007-08 session which begins on Tuesday 4th September at 5.30 for Explorers and 6.45 Junior Brigaders. Anyone with an hour or so to spare please come along to help. Contact Liz on 07813857486.

Liz. Heeps.

Baptism: *'Suffer little children to come unto me'*

22 April Brian Ford
 Lucas Paul Samuel Ford
 Billy Christopher Cochrane

Marriage: *'Whom God has joined together'*

23 March Julie Graffen to Lee McAulay
31 March Amanda Trigell to Mark Davidson

5 April Margaret Bamford to Richard Law
11 April Kelly Boyle to Graeme Fettes
29 April Johanne Cain to Steven Stenhouse

5 May Amanda-Jane Blackhall to Brian Rutherford
19 May Michelle Binnie to John Thomson

Deaths: *'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord'*

Nov. Baby Robertson
 Andrew Stretton
 Mrs Mary Maxwell, Bonnybridge

March Rev. William MacLeod, Banknock

April Robert Lees, Bonnybridge
 William Harvey, Bonnybridge
 Baby Dominic Milne, Denny
 Baby James Sneddon, Brightons
 Miss Alison Rankine, Dennyloanhead
 Baby Leah Foley, Sauchie

May Mrs Mary Stewart, Banknock
 Baby Elliot Forsyth, Falkirk
 Miss Heather Fraser, Banknock