

Dialogue

September 2009

Issue 8

The Newsletter of Arthurlie Parish Church Barrhead

www.arthurliechurch.org.uk

New Feature this month
– Back Page Bible Study
An opportunity for quiet
personal study and
reflection

From the Minister	1
Balloon Race	2
Calling All Men	4
A Defining Moment	4
Holy Communion	5
The Guild	5
Wider Church	6
Presbytery News	7
Gift Day	8
Auction	9
Cradle Roll Service	9
General Assembly	10
Back Page Bible Study	



Dates for your Diary

Saturday 12th September
Barrhead Church Coffee Morning 10am -12noon

Sunday 13th September Communion 9.30 and 11am.

Tuesday 22th September Kirk Session meeting 7pm.

Saturday 26th September
Annual Gift Day 10-1.00pm (and preparation for Harvest)

Saturday 24th October Fundraising Auction

Dialogue

From the Minister

Dear Friends,

There has been a lot of discussion, particularly during the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, about human relationships; and about relationships which are other than what we might call normal, monogamous, marital relationships. And while we may not like, or agree with, what has been said, there can be little doubt that the subject of human relationships is one that the church ought to be concerned with; particularly in these days of broken relationships and fragmented families.



I believe there is a growing awareness of the sad lack of the strength and support of the family, not only in church but throughout society. In former times the personal, social and inter-personal problems dealt with by the General Assembly would have been handled, and solved, within the context of the family.

But now that so many people find they have no family to turn to when they need support, advice, encouragement and love, where can they turn? It would be great to think that they would turn to the church because they saw in us a family of God's people providing these things for one another. It would be great to think that if they did turn to the church they would receive a loving welcome regardless of what problems brought them there. It would be great to think that, within the support of the church family, people would feel secure enough to confront their problems and allow others to help. And within a community of Christian people, bound together by the family ties of mutual love, trust, fidelity and respect, these things can happen; but not if people look at the church from outside and see only a group of people in decline who are always bickering with one another.

We all need the security of people we love and trust, and who love, trust and accept us in return. If the church can provide these things for anyone then it is working as God's family. Yet there are still people we will accept gladly and others we want nothing to do with. Jesus said "whoever comes to me, I will never turn away" (John 6:37). In saying that I am not suggesting that we should be totally permissive, or that we should condone all kinds of immorality; on that score I'm with the apostle Paul when he said 'Someone will say, "I am allowed to do anything." Yes; but not everything is good for you.' (1 Corinthians 6:12).

I am always delighted when people tell me that they've come to our church and felt welcome, and that the people are very friendly. This is the family of God working as it should. Let's keep up the good work.

Jim Cowan

Dialogue

2009 Balloon Race for Kibera Secondary School

As reported by Catherine Frier

On Saturday 13 June at 8.00am I arrived at Arthurlie Church grounds, sneakily early to observe the start of the Annual Balloon Race in my new role as cub reporter for *Dialogue*. The sky was overcast and the weather forecast was gloomy. I had my notebook and pencil handy when two gents appeared loaded with what looked like camping equipment they turned out to be Jim, surnamed Law and the mighty Alan Stewart. They were about to start the proceedings by erecting two gazebos for shelter – just in case the weather forecasters had got it right for once. The two soon became four when Paul Winkler and Billy Docherty arrived so we had two big yins and two wee yins on the job the perfect combination when you consider the slope of the Arthurlie terrain. In no time at all the canvas was raised and the scene took on the air of a mediaeval jousting tournament.

There's quite a lot to this Balloon Race business you know. Now it was time to see the nets – in which the multi-coloured balloons would be imprisoned until the great "Balloons Away" moment. The nets are tricky but poacher and in no time at all they were up with tent pegs except for one slight technical hitch – no tent pegs. Well everyone had been warning me about a guy named Gus – the GF – no need for helium when Gus hit the worksite (only 30 minutes late) shouting commands from the car park before he had even left his car. He immediately went shopping and came back with tent pegs – no bother.



not to any seasoned salmon were strung up and tied down before he had even left his car. minutes late) shouting and came back with tent pegs –

The number of helpers was increasing by the minute from the Arthurlie, URC, Bourrock and South and Lavern – more than 50 – to support the cause. Soon the helium canisters were up and going and balloons were blossoming everywhere with Minister Jim Cowan leading the way as befits a professional in the hot air business! So far so good but these Balloons had all still to be tied and then the end pushed through an impossibly small hole in the ticket bearing the name and address of the owner. Have you ever tried tying up a helium balloon? In the end I had to leave it to the experts such as Helen Winkler (who eventually had to receive first aid for overworked fingers) and Agnes Brown, a veteran tier-upper from last year who had come prepared with protective sticking plaster already on her digits, unfortunately she had the wrong hand ready for service – oh well!

By this time the joint was jumping and all ages were getting involved. Lewis Brown, all of four years old was handing out the tickets to put on the balloons while big brother Conan was a dab hand at tying the knots – what a team! Soon the nets were straining towards the sky packed with brilliantly coloured balloons – a fabulous sight!

It was time to climb the stairs to the church to check out the new kitchen as an army marches on its stomach, after all. I found the troops enjoying hot drinks and delicious home-baked goodies and gratefully joined them. The marble cake was excellent as was the company – well done the tea ladies! (Ag, Morag, Janis, Marian and Susan).

Dialogue

As an observer – I heard a tale of generosity – which I must pass on. Jim Mitchell, Convener of the Kibera Project made the front page of the Barrhead News last week talking about Kibera and the publicity brought forth at least one beautiful response. An Auchenback man, who collects his loose change over the year and then gives it to a charity and this year he gave it to Jim for Kibera and when it was counted it came to the amazing total of £81 – an awful lot of pennies!

Up to this point the weather had been very calm. Would the Balloons just hang in the air over Arthurlie and land no further than Neilston? No, all was well we felt a stirring in the air the winds of God were at work.

Jim Law now takes up the story

It was only 11.45 am and the race was scheduled for 3pm with Air Traffic Control at Glasgow Airport. What to do? All the Balloons were ready (except for some late passing trade). We just popped over to Bourock for cream teas on the lawn in the sunshine. After tea, scones, strawberries, cream and some chatting it was time for “The Off” so back to Arthurlie. Four nets were bulging with over 2000 Balloons. Under the guidance of Paul Winkler and a crowd count-down the balloons were released bang on 3pm. The Arthurlie net was released by Molly Campbell and they headed straight for the big pine tree at the gate on Ralston Road but rose majestically to fill the sky with the colours of the rainbow and headed for Barrhead High School/Auchenback/ Glasgow and beyond driving to the north east.

The results

The first return was on Tuesday 16 June from Rait in Perthshire – 63.00 miles.

Over the next 4 weeks we had 58 returned tickets from Bannockburn, Alloa, Tillicoultry, Dollar, Glendevon, Bridge of Earn, Perth, and Dundee with the top three as follows:

1st (£100) Ecclesfied near St Cyrus, Aberdeenshire - 103.13 miles

2nd (£50) Arbroath Harbour - 90.76 miles

3rd (£25) Dumbarrow Bridge, near Letham, Angus - 85.88 miles

(All the results plus 20 photos and 2 letters are on the church notice-board)

Including £405 from the Strawberry Teas and generous donations from Auchenback (£81) and finders (£125) we made £2641 for the Secondary School in Kibera. The new 7 classroom Secondary School was opened by the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa on 24 July. We have raised £35,000. The School cost £32,000. We still need £7,000 for a water tank and toilet block to complete the building work.

We are almost there.

Dialogue

Calling all Men – Hungry & Needing Fed?

Hi, my name is Andy McIntyre and I am Maureen's new assistant in the Bourrock Church. Part of my remit over the next year is to become involved, not only in the Bourrock Church, but also to be part of the wider Barrhead Churches Together.

Several years ago I had a vision and a passion to equip and encourage Christian men in Scotland to reach out and be alongside non-Christian men so that together we can meet with Jesus. Over the last five years God has been preparing me to launch a venture and it's my great delight to say that God has opened some doors for me and as from the 5th of September I will be starting a 'Christian Men's Breakfast' in 'The Coffeehouse' in Robertson Street, Barrhead.

At the first meeting I will share more of the vision that God has shared with me and hopefully if you can come along, you too will catch the vision and support me in reaching out to the men of Barrhead who do not know Jesus.

As well as meeting for breakfast we will have some excellent and exciting men of God coming along to speak and share with us, as well as a monthly mid-week event somewhere out of the church.

Please take some time to pray about this and if this is something you want to support then why not contact me at 'andymc165@hotmail.com' or 07757098225 to book a place or to get more details.

Many Blessings as we journey together winning people for Jesus.

Kirk: Lockerbie decision a defining moment for all of us

The Church of Scotland praised the decision that meant Lockerbie bomber Abdelbaset Ali al-Megrahi was released on compassionate grounds by Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill.

Rev Ian Galloway, Convener of the Church and Society Council of the Church of Scotland said: "This decision has sent a message to the world about what it is to be Scottish. We are defined as a nation by how we treat those who have chosen to hurt us. Do we choose mercy even when they did not choose mercy?"

This was not about whether one man was guilty or innocent. Nor is it about whether

he had a right to mercy but whether we as a nation, despite the continuing pain of many, are willing to be merciful. I understand the deep anger and grief that still grips the souls of the victims' families and I respect their views. But to them I would say justice is not lost in acting in mercy. Instead our deepest humanity is expressed for the better. To choose mercy is the tough choice and our nation met that challenge.

We have gained something significant as a Nation by this decision.

It is a defining moment for all of us."

Dialogue

Holy Communion

I have written a number of pieces about my thoughts and feelings about being involved in Holy Communion. From these I would also like to share two pieces that reveal some of those thoughts and feelings.



This is the time

To be aware of Christ until aware of nothing else,
To lose all sense of self but our awareness of being loved,
To be lost in the timelessness of His perfect love.

This is the vastness of the Universal Eucharist,
It embraces all of us into the presence of God,
Yet this is the intimacy of the Eucharist,
It touches each of us deep within.

To be touched by a moment of eternal grace,
Is a moment that becomes the graceful part of us,
This is the moment of the body and blood of our redeemer.

This is the time and place of deepest prayer,
The time and place to grasp a Saviour's love.

The deepest part

In the deepest part of us is the brightest part,
A point of light – a candle lit with love – a glimpse of truth.

In the deepest part of us is the truest part,
A place of peace – a sanctuary of grace where we are cleansed.

In the deepest part of us is now the purist part,
A core of faith, a source of life so touched by God.

JBA
(A friend from Bourock)

Church Guild

Our new session begins on Monday 5 October. We are quite a lively group of ladies and we would welcome any new, interested ladies of the church and friends to join us any Monday evening at 7:30pm. Our discussion topic this session is 'Let's talk about justice: What we can do' Look forward to seeing you there!

Elizabeth Mitchell

Dialogue

The Wider Church

There are two pieces of good news from the wider church at a time when we feel 'church matters' have been put on hold for the summer.

1) World Mission Stamp Project.

As I am sure you all know we in Arthurlie collect used postage stamps which are forwarded to the World Mission Department, via Glasgow Presbytery, to support various projects. Each year about £2,500 is raised nationally, which we all get and which are classed as rubbish. Not so!! They are valuable, please keep them coming.

This year World Mission has accepted the challenge, organised by our sister church in the Czech Republic, to support an outreach programme among the Roma people. In the Czech Republic the Roma people are a minority who live on the edges of society are subjected to various forms of discrimination and prejudice. They suffer from extreme poverty and a lack of educational opportunities. Despite some government effort this situation is worsening.

The outreach programme consists of:

- a) Pre-School education and a drop-in centre for children and young people.
- b) Evening Classes and social events for parents.
- c) Home Care service for older people.

Please let's continue to collect stamps and allow our church to show Christ's love to the Roma people. Your thoughts and

prayers would also be appreciated for this project and the people who will benefit from it. Stamps should be placed in the jar provided on the table at the back of the church.

2) HIV/AIDS

Good news on this front. In Zambia some progress is at last being made in the treatment of HIV/AIDS. Ante-retroviral drugs have been available and distributed for some time with limited effect. Within the last 5 years, the Children of Africa Foundation, started by Dr. Kenneth Kaunda (who lost a son with AIDS) has placed emphasis on the need for good nutritious food which makes the ante-retroviral drugs more effective. Within a matter of weeks patients put on such a programme see signs of improvement in their health and consequently become more self sufficient. Many other African countries are trying to adopt similar programmes. The Guild has pledged to support this campaign. The Church of Scotland HIV/AIDS project is supporting this campaign. Arthurlie church Wednesday morning service group has sent over £5,000 in the last 6 years.

Christ said 'Love your neighbour as you love yourself'. Thank God for the people of the African continent who are obeying this command. Let us do our bit to give all the support we can to this immense problem for which there is now some hope.

Elma Farr

Dialogue

Presbytery News

Since the last edition of Dialogue, there have been three meetings of Greenock and Paisley Presbytery.

The April meeting must hold the record for one of the shortest, lasting a mere 35 minutes. Perhaps this was due to it being held during the holiday period just after Easter, with a smaller attendance than normal.

Congregations were urged to consider nominating additional elders to Presbytery, particularly those who may have specific skills.

After a long period, the Presbytery finally has a Prayer Co-ordinator in the person of Mrs Eleanor Hood, a Reader within the Presbytery. The Co-ordinator's responsibility is to keep in touch with congregations on matters where it is seen that joint prayer effort would be beneficial.

The May meeting saw the attendance back to normal. We heard a report from two members of the Guild Presbyterial Council.

The Guild continues to inspire with the breadth of its work and this year the sum of £611,646 has been donated to such diverse causes as a project for homeless Scots, work in Bangladesh, the Bluebell Project dealing with post-natal depression, leprosy in Nigeria, vulnerable people in Eastern Europe and work in India.

We are thankful that in Arthurlie we have a strong Guild playing its part in this wider work.

A presentation of a preaching scarf was made to the Revd Bill Hewitt to mark his impending year as Moderator of the

General Assembly. It is an honour for our Presbytery to have one of its members as Moderator and we all wished Bill well and prayed for him as he carries out his duties.

An issue which concerns members of the Presbytery is the fact that ministers no longer have access at hospitals to information regarding parish and church members who may be patients. Because of this, we would urge you all to notify Jim Cowan if you know of anyone in hospital who may wish a visit from the minister. This will often be the only way in which he will know of those people.

Another matter concerning hospitals is the current piloting in four hospitals of new style cafés, profits from which will be returned to the NHS rather than retained locally. It is likely that the cost of goods will be at least three times the present cost, and the cafés will be run by paid NHS staff, a departure from current practice where volunteers run these and profits are returned to the local hospital. In Greenock, for example, 60 volunteers presently generate £100,000 per year for their local hospitals. There is concern that if this scheme is adopted, there will be an effect on volunteer services and the knock-on cost for patients and relatives will be considerable. Presbytery is proposing to write seeking clarification on this matter.

The World Mission and Ecumenical Relations Committee was pleased to report that more than £3,000 was raised for Zimbabwe from offerings over the Easter period and expressed thanks to all who contributed. You may recall that an offering for this purpose was taken at the joint service on 19th April.

Dialogue

We are asked to pray for the complex situation in Pakistan and the growing crisis in Sri Lanka. The Committee has also noted a deepening food crisis in the slums of Kenya, due to rising world food prices. This has particular relevance to members of the Barrhead Churches, who support the church in Kibera Township.

At the June meeting, we heard from Alison Bennett, who was the Presbytery Youth Representative at the General Assembly. She gave an inspiring report on the youth view of the Assembly, from which the members of Presbytery took heart.

Among the new probationary ministers presented to Presbytery was Andy McIntyre, who you may remember started his journey to the ministry in Arthurlie Church. We will see more of Andy over the next year, as he will spend his probationary period with Maureen Leitch at Bourock.

Tributes were paid to retiring conveners, one of whom was our own Elma Farr, who served five years in that position on the Vacancy Procedure Committee; during Elma's time, there were over twenty vacancies within the Presbytery.

Sandy Farr

Arthurlie Parish Church Gift Day - 26 September 2009

Very shortly you will receive a letter inviting you to contribute to our Annual Gift Day – this year on Saturday 26 September from 10am -1.00 pm. The letter will explain what has been done with some of the money raised over the years. The Congregational Board and Kirk Session ask for two volunteers each year to organise this fund raising event. In the past, the following people have been involved: Kesley Irving and Lilly Esson; Jim Law and Harry McIlreavy; Lilly and Stanley Esson; Elma and Sandy Farr and this year Billy Docherty and Ag Law.

On the Gift Day we warmly welcome members and friends to pop into church for a cup of tea/coffee/home baking and a chat. There are specific envelopes ready for your contribution depending on whether you are a tax payer or not. You

may want to see the refurbished kitchen, paid for by last Year's Gift Day contributions.

Our present focus is the replacement of the weather damaged wood surrounding the Gordon Webster stained glass window at the rear of the church. At this moment we are in the process of asking three companies for repair estimates. As we feel the window is a particular architectural feature of Barrhead, we are applying for a Community Grant from East Renfrewshire Council. We all have particular priorities when spending our money but if everyone contributed even in a small way we would be fulfilling our membership vows to maintain the upkeep of our church. We look forward to having your support and your company.

Billy Docherty & Ag Law

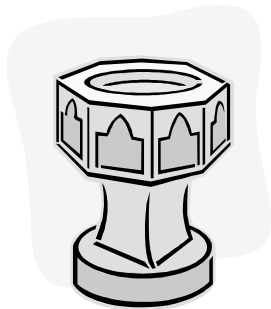
Dialogue

Fundraising Auction

A fundraising auction (not a silent auction) will be held in the church on Saturday 24 October at 10am with viewing available the evening before at 7pm. Donations for auction are invited and these can comprise of anything except clothing and large pieces of furniture. Amongst donations already received is a Homecoming Cup Final signed programme and football. There will also be a café and donations of baking are welcome along with offers of help at the café. Proceeds from the auction are for the church and Erskine Hospital. Further information can be obtained from Cathie Duncan on 881 4764.

Cradle Roll Service

On Mothering Sunday we held a Cradle Roll Service in the church. At this service all the children who had been baptised in Arthurlie during the last 5 years were given a special invitation along with their families. It was lovely to be in church and to experience all the happy noise and singing during the service. As there hasn't been a Cradle Roll Service for a few years in Arthurlie it is hoped that this will again become an annual event.



Catherine McGrath, Youth & Youth Education

September edition of Life and Work

The Warm Heart of Africa

Thomas Baldwin joins a group of children from the Church of Scotland on a groundbreaking trip to Malawi.

A Moral Framework

Jackie Macadam meets Julia Ogilvy, award-winning businesswoman, Church of Scotland elder and author.

Missing Malawian Millions

Una Bartley explains the background to Christian Aid's tax campaign for Africa.

A Wise Monk

Ron Ferguson reflects on the life of Father Joe and the importance of genuine listening.

A Source of Inspiration

The Moderator reflects on conflict, climate and Calvin.

Plus – Another winning Parable for Today, Irvine and Kilmarnock Presbytery, and four-page supplement on the work of the Mission and Discipleship Council - all for just £1.60

To subscribe, contact Cath McGrath, Life and Work co-ordinator or see the magazine for postal subscriptions

General Assembly Report

This year I was again privileged to be a Commissioner to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland for one week in May. The Assembly opened, on Ascension Day, with the usual pomp and ceremony (at which the church is very good!). Guests were welcomed, including the Lord High Commissioner George Reid who is a most interesting and erudite speaker and a great ambassador for Christ's church. He urged us all not to be the 'Chosen frozen' with glum faces and pessimistic outlooks. Instead we were to be joyful in the Lord and use every opportunity to witness for Christ. The new Moderator, Revd. Bill Hewitt from the Westburn Church in Greenock was duly installed. Throughout the week he proved himself to be a most competent, compassionate and sometimes even humorous leader of Assembly business.

The Bible Society report was first and was inspiring in its delivery and in the news of



the great things which are being achieved throughout the world in Jesus' name. It is most worthy of our support. Friday began with a wonderfully uplifting Communion service which followed a truly amazing rendering of 'Ye Gates' (even those who advocate the use of more modern worship couldn't fail to be moved). The message of the service was that we are unified by our weakness, strengthened by our faith, and supported by each other - worth remembering. The Church and Society Council expressed some concern that the Head of Religious Broadcasting for the B.B.C. was Muslim. It is also concerned about the negative influences being broadcast by the media. However on a positive note material produced by the Church of Scotland for use in non-denominational schools, and for the development of a child friendly church has been well received. Finally we were told that the HIV/AIDS project is well supported and

the challenge to raise £10,000 is likely to be achieved soon and our continued support is vital.

Saturday looked like being a difficult day. The theme - 'Hope, we have it in Jesus' was to sustain us all. Ecumenical Relations was the first report of the day. We were reminded that we are one fellowship in the gospel that we have colourful diversity in the gospel, and are unified in the gospel. Archbishop Mario Conti of the Roman Catholic denomination spoke movingly and hopefully on this theme. He also reminded us that, as little as 25 years ago he would neither have been invited to speak by our denomination nor allowed so to do so. Progress is being made further demonstrated through several good links with many other denominations which are encouraging. The Revd Cathy Galloway spoke passionately of the diversity of theology, all gender persuasions and varied nationalities experienced within the Iona Community. As she retired as Convenor she urged the church at large to adopt the ethos of her beloved Iona community. Then came Saturday evening and 'the big debate' which had been hyped, misreported and ridiculed in the press. The case raised specific legal issues and was determined thereon. The case was a dissent and complaint against a decision of the Presbytery of Aberdeen as follows:

- 1) Presbytery was incompetent in sustaining the call to a minister living in a same sex relationship before any debate and subsequent clear decision as to the mind of the church had been reached.
- 2) Presbytery was incompetent in creating a precedent which could lead to the establishment of church law. (Only Acts of Assembly can determine church law.)
- 3) Presbytery was incompetent in allowing this significant and sensitive issue to be agreed before debate had taken place.
- 4) Presbytery was not clear as to the mind of the church at large.

Although the situation arose because of the induction of a homosexual minister living in such a relationship, this subject was NOT the issue before the General Assembly. The only complaint was against the procedural path taken by the Presbytery of Aberdeen (of course the sexual arrangements of the minister impinged on any decision, but that is a future debate). The debate lasted until 10.40 p.m. What a way to spend a Saturday evening! After much in-depth discussion and debate a vote was taken as to whether or not the complaint would be dismissed and the Presbytery decision was upheld. The vote was 326 for and 267 against, a total of 593. Please remember that of 873 Commissioners only 767 can vote. Youth Representatives and members of other denominations are non voters (some 126 people.) We assume the remainder either abstained or were not too competent in using the electronic system of voting. This whole debate was conducted in a most dignified and compassionate manner; gave great credence to the church and its ways; and showed that there is much love, compassion and understanding prevailing within Christ's church here on earth. Believe me this was most heartening. I think Jesus might have been hopeful for His church. What now? Much further dialogue is needed; much tolerance and understanding is needed; and many prayers are needed. The instructions are now as follows:

A commission of nine to be established to debate the following:

- a) Same sex relationships as an issue in theology.
- b) Instruct Courts, Councils and Committees to observe a moratorium on issuing PUBLIC comment whether in publications or otherwise on contentious issues until the General Assembly of 2011.
- c) Instruct Presbyteries to observe a moratorium on ordinations and inductions which might appear to prejudice the report of the special commission. Discussion is in private, but we are advised not to speak to any form of media whose sole aim seems to

be to deride the church and make a circus of the whole issue.

Sunday was a day free from debate, being given over to worship and relaxation. Morning worship was held in St. Giles and conducted by the Moderator. His theme was the power of the Holy Spirit and the love of Jesus. The service was very pompous and liturgical, led by a wonderful choir and a magnificent organ, but none-the-less inspiring and uplifting. Evening worship was totally different. This was led by a praise band all of whom were inspired by their own faith and did much to radiate this to the congregation. It was wonderful and even produced a new praise item for Arthurlie!

Monday brought as a visitor to us Alec Salmond, Scotland's first minister. He was an erudite, witty and pertinent speaker, a firm supporter of the church, and an inspiration to us all. (Does no harm to have politicians on our side!). The Guild report followed and was certainly a contender for the highlight of the Assembly.

Esme Duncan is a dedicated and gifted lady who, during her year as national president travelled the length and breadth of the country in a camper van accompanied by her dog. Who says Guildswomen are stuffy and old fashioned? The projects and topics covered in the last 3 years were very varied and challenging. They included supporting: Homeless Scots in London; the Adivasi people in Bangladesh who are among the poorest in the world; the Bluebell project for post-natal depression; the Leprosy Mission in Scotland; the Lydia Project against child exploitation in Eastern Europe; Touching the Untouchables in India. All were well supported and a sum in excess of £733,000 was raised for this work. The new programme of themes and projects, under the title 'What does the Lord require of you?' is likely to prove equally challenging.



The Parish Development Fund continues to provide grants and loans to congregations to enable new and exciting ways of living out the Good News in the wider community. The Ministries Council is radically reviewing the training and flexibility of Ministers and Auxiliary Ministers, and providing guidelines for Interim Moderators, Nominating Committees and Vacancy Advisory Committees to enable the gospel to be spread in the most meaningful way for our time.

Tuesday brought representatives of the Armed Forces to the Assembly. The clear message that day was 'you don't need to agree with war but you must support the forces'. The highlight was a live link with Afghanistan which allowed the Moderator to speak with 2 chaplains on active service in that area. An added bonus was that the mother of one and the 16 year old daughter of the other were at the Assembly and were able to speak to them. As you can imagine there was hardly a dry eye in the house.

The absolute highlight of the whole Assembly was the visit of Archbishop Desmond Tutu. His warmth, charm and grace were a joy to behold. His desire to include all nations in to God's church was his lasting challenge. He told us that in his country God was too worried about the number of people dying of poverty, starvation and Aids to care whether or not

they were lesbian or homosexual. You can imagine how that pricked the conscience of all commissioners!! Perhaps this is the lasting message of the 2009 General Assembly.

The big issue of Finance was tackled under difficult circumstances. Although funds are well down because of the economic situation, all is not doom and gloom. Congregational givings are up, indicating added commitment from the ever decreasing numbers in the church. There is a need for careful stewardship of all resources at all levels. Happily '121' is about to embark on a cost-cutting regime which is probably long overdue. Congregations about to embark on a Stewardship campaign are reminded that help is available from '121' free of charge.

The social side of the Assembly was fantastic. I was lucky enough to attend the Moderator's Reception, the Garden Party, and the Beating of the Retreat. (At least 2 of those invitations were issued to all commissioners from Greenock and Paisley Presbytery.) I also had the company of one of our Presbytery readers who was a great source of companionship and support for the week.

All in all it was again a wonderful, if challenging experience. I would recommend to anyone who is offered the opportunity.

Elma Farr

Thursday House Group

We are a small group who meet regularly on Thursday evenings to explore the Bible to try and better understand what God is saying to us through His word. We do this through fellowship and love rather than grand intellectual debate and if you would like to join us you will be made very welcome. We restart on the 10 September at 7:30pm at 25 Lavernside Avenue. For more details speak to Douglas Allan or Morag Inglis.

Arthurlie Parish Church

You will be made very welcome at our services held at 9:30am and 11am and also at the informal Wednesday morning service held at 10:45am.

All services are held in the church at Ralston Road Barrhead G78 2QQ

A prayer group meets at 10:30am on Sunday mornings in the church.

The House Group meets on Thursdays at 7 for 7:30pm.

All welcome



Back Page Bible Study

Dig Deep

Be Open

“O Lord... you created my innermost being... Search me and know my heart and my anxious thoughts... lead me in the way everlasting” (from Psalm 139)

Read

Luke 6: 43-49

Picture 1

There are two pictures to think about here – though the second is a series of scenes in a story.

It's fruit picking time. What do you expect from a really good tree of fruit bush? What's gone wrong when you find a squishy bad fruit in your hand? Do you think it's right to judge trees – or people – in this 'judging by results' sort of way?

Picture 2

According to Jesus, what's the foundation of the house that withstands the flood? What is meant, in spiritual terms, by digging deep? Is it, for instance, the regular habit of 'deep' Bible study, so that we can hear what Jesus is saying? Or is Jesus talking about the initial foundation laying being at such a deep level that it gets rid of all the old rubbish...?

Confess

Confess anything that makes you bear bad fruit, or have wrong actions coming out of your Christian life. Confess anything that makes your foundation wobbly, any failure to listen to and obey God's word for you.

Pray

As you walk past houses today, or see a building site, think about those foundations: what bit of God's desire do you need to put into practice?

Contributions to *Dialogue* are always welcome and the deadline for the next edition is Sunday 1st November 2009

Douglas Allan

Contact:

Tel: 580 1837

E: doumor@ntlworld.com