

# Leaflet



Greenbank Parish Church  
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES

No 624 March 2013

## Pulpit Diary

### Mar 1 (Friday)

7.30pm Pre-Communion service

### Mar 3 Third Sunday in Lent

9.00am Communion

10.30am Communion (Springboard and Spectrum meet as usual)

3.00pm Communion (Braid Room)

### Mar 10 Fourth Sunday in Lent

10.30am Morning Worship

### Mar 17 Fifth Sunday in Lent

10.30am Morning Worship with Annual Meeting, followed by Spectrum lunch (end of Second Term for Springboard and Spectrum)

### Mar 24 Palm Sunday

10.30am All Age Worship

### Mar 25–29 Monday – Friday

United Holy Week Services

7.30pm Morningside Parish Church

### Mar 30 Saturday

Readings and Music for Easter

7.30pm Morningside Parish Church

### Mar 31 Easter Sunday

9.30am Communion

10.30am All Age Easter Celebration followed by egg-rolling in Braidburn Valley Park

### Apr 7

9.30am First Sunday Service led by World Mission

10.30am Morning Worship (Start of Third Term for Springboard and Spectrum)

To make contact with any of the organisations described in this *Leaflet*, please use the telephone number given, if there is one. Otherwise please contact the Church Office.

Website: [www.greenbankchurch.org](http://www.greenbankchurch.org)

## Minister's Letter

### Dear Friends

A few years ago I was fortunate to be part of a clergy familiarisation tour of the Holy Land. It was an opportunity to visit some of the biblical sites and learn more about the context and setting of many of the bible narratives. We were also able to meet some of the people living and working in the challenging conditions that



prevail there today. I thoroughly enjoyed the experience. So when I was speaking recently with my colleague Derek Browning who has just returned from a similar visit, we wondered if this was an experience that we might share with members of Greenbank and Morningside and Mayfield Salisbury (who are also interested). We are currently thinking about a ten-day pilgrimage in November 2014. This may seem like a long time off but it allows for forward planning (and saving!).

We hope to have an initial meeting of those who might be interested very soon. If you would like to find out more please let me know. In the meantime we are about to embark on a different kind of journey as we travel through Lent and Holy Week to Easter, following Jesus along the road to Jerusalem. Recently I read that in 1910 the Spring tides on the River Thames and the term dates of Oxford and Cambridge Universities meant that the annual boat race would have to be held during Holy Week. This created quite a rumpus. In the end the race was held, but the usual dinner was not and all the official invitations to places of entertainment were declined. By common consent, Holy Week was to be honoured, preserved and protected.

A century later things are very different. Britain is no longer a "Christian country". Indeed many Christians think that their views count for nothing. Some even feel that their faith is actively targeted or belittled. They cite recent decisions by the European Court of Human Rights as evidence of this. All of this presents a challenge to the Church and this year in our Lent Studies we will be reflecting on what it means to be the Church in a secular world.

I was struck by a comment which Jemima Khan, a former supporter of Julian Assange and his organisation, WikiLeaks, was reported as having made to the press. She was explaining how she had been on a journey from "admiration" to "demoralisation". To her mind WikiLeaks had gone from speaking truth to power

to expecting "blinker devotion".

And perhaps this is what the Church has to guard against. One of the greatest dangers facing the Church is that it becomes ever more inward looking. Such an approach can lead to an increasing dogmatism, an expectation almost of blinkered cultish devotion from people. At best this is surely intended to protect the Church. Yet sadly this approach often leads to disillusionment and division. We have witnessed this in recent times in the Church of Scotland, with ministers leaving and setting up independent congregations of like-minded individuals.

On the other hand "speaking truth to power" was something Jesus always did – indeed it was because he persisted in speaking the truth to the religious and secular leaders of his day that his journey to Jerusalem led to a cross. And surely it is this that the Church is still called to do today – to speak truth to power, to proclaim in word and action the good news of the God who gives his life for the life of the world.

In 2011 Archbishop Rowan Williams visited the Congo. There he met victims and perpetrators of violence who had been rescued by the Church when no one else cared. Afterwards he wrote movingly about how that visit left him thinking that there is nothing so transforming as a Church in love. As we journey through Lent may we be so touched by the Spirit of Christ that, despite our differences, we become ever more that Church in love! For then we will truly follow Jesus, and our life will speak truth to the powers of our day.

*With warmest wishes,*

**Alison I Swindells**  
Minister

## Lent and Easter Appeal 2013

The beneficiaries of the Lent and Easter appeal this year will be the following charities, nominated by members of the congregation:

- **The Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre** at Swanfield, Leith was set up in 1984 by a group of people with MS and their families and friends. They provide care, support and activities for sufferers as well as practical therapies.
- **The Garvald, Edinburgh 'Tools for Self Reliance' Project** Here the young people with learning difficulties at Garvald refurbish donated garden and handiwork tools which are then passed on to projects in Tanzania and other countries where they can be used by people to earn a living.

The funds will be split equally between the two charities.

## Church and Society

The following items are a flavour of the February 2013 newsletter of the Church of Scotland's *Church and Society Council* (<http://tinyurl.com/boumww4>).

### Stop Destitution campaign seeks your voice

The *Stop Destitution* campaign, from the Scottish Refugee Council and Refugee Survival Trust, aims to effect a change in the current law and is running a postcard campaign to highlight the reality for many Scottish based asylum seekers. They don't want money, instead they wish to engage your support to help change the law, and the Church of Scotland is supporting them. The more support, the louder the voices, the more likelihood of the campaign succeeding. So, please sign the online petition (<http://www.stopdestitution.org.uk/act.php>) and tell your friends, family and colleagues about the campaign. The campaign is asking for proper support, the right to work and a better system for decision making on asylum claims. There is a video which could be shown to church groups and societies featuring refugees telling their stories. To find out more, please email [campaign@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk](mailto:campaign@scottishrefugeecouncil.org.uk).

### Food is a gift from God

*'Give us today our daily bread.' Matthew 6:11*



Food is more than just fuel. It is a gift and a blessing upon which we all depend. Yet many of us shop in supermarkets for our food and perhaps never give a second thought about where it comes from or how it is produced. What we eat and how it is grown should mean much more to us than this.

The Church and Society Council have produced a leaflet with discussion points which groups of any age can use to lead conversations about food, its use and origin. With stimulating questions and thought-provoking quotes from the Bible, this leaflet is available for download from the Church's website (<http://tinyurl.com/boumww4> - page 1, right hand col), or for a hard copy email [agemmell@cofscotland.org.uk](mailto:agemmell@cofscotland.org.uk) or telephone 0131 240 2276.

## Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering and AGM 2013



This year's Eco-Congregation Scotland Annual Gathering will be held on Saturday 20th April at the Grassmarket Community Project, Greyfriars Church, Edinburgh. The theme this year will be food – and will include workshops on a range of subjects from food security to local food production. The event will be held in the new centre being built behind the churchyard which will give more space for additional workshops and group discussions.

The Grassmarket Community Project runs the woodworking project where the Eco-Congregation award plaques are made. Full details will be sent to all registered congregations nearer the time. More information is also available on the website. If you are interested in attending please contact Gordon Hudson, Manager, Eco-Congregation Scotland (telephone 0131 240 2274 or email [manager@ecocongregationscotland.org](mailto:manager@ecocongregationscotland.org)).

## 2012 Accounts and 2013 Budget

I would like to draw your attention to the insert in this month's *Leaflet*, which provides a summary of the Church's accounts for 2012 and its budget for 2013, along with a commentary on these.

Unfortunately the accounts for 2012 show a significant deficit which is substantially in excess of the budgeted level as a result of:

- lower than expected donations in the later part of the year; and
- approved, but unbudgeted, expenditure on the Manse.

The budget shows that the Church is expected to continue to have a significant deficit in 2013.

This level of deficit is unsustainable. Action is required on a Congregation-wide basis to tackle this deficit. I will be discussing the accounts and the budget further at the Annual Business Meeting on 17th March 2013.

**Robert Young**  
Congregational Treasurer



For information about church organisations, please contact the Church Office (Mon–Fri, 9.00am–12.00 noon, 1.30pm–3.30pm):  
Mrs Virginia Johnston

tel and fax: 0131 447 9969

e-mail: [greenbankchurch@btconnect.com](mailto:greenbankchurch@btconnect.com)

The pastoral team can be contacted through the Church Office:

Rev Alison Swindells

email: [alisonswindells@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:alisonswindells@blueyonder.co.uk)

Rev W. Peter Graham

Youth Minister: Rev Bill Stone

email: [billstoneiii@gmail.com](mailto:billstoneiii@gmail.com)

## Book Review

### *In the Midst of Life*

by Jennifer Worth

Orion Books, £7.99, ISBN 9780753827529, 2010

Jennifer Worth trained as a nurse in Reading and was later ward sister at the Elizabeth Garrett Anderson Hospital, then the Marie Curie Hospital in London. She is better known for her *Call the Midwife* books, but she also writes poignantly about people she knew as they were nearing the end of life. She raises challenging questions about death and changes in attitude over the years towards death – an event that is now more likely to happen in hospital or a nursing home in the midst of strangers while for previous generations there was an expectation that people would die at home in the loving care of their families. Jennifer also gives insight into children's understanding of this topic which many people find hard to discuss. The narrative covers a period of over 50 years: early chapters give comparisons between the lives of Dr Elisabeth Kübler-Ross and Dame Cicely Saunders. Radiotherapy and resuscitation are amongst the topics covered in later chapters – these treatments may be effective in prolonging life and both knowledge and attitudes towards them have changed over the years; there is a helpful appendix for anyone seeking more in depth knowledge of the current approach to resuscitation.

Members of the Book Group at Greenbank engaged in a deep and lengthy discussion about *In the Midst of Life* earlier this session. You might think that the subject of death and dying would make a book difficult to read; on the contrary we found it fascinating. Although there were some medical descriptions that some might gloss over, this level of detail did not detract from the overall message about quality of life and what we need at the end of life – peace and love. Jennifer Worth talks from first-hand experience as a nurse privileged to sit with patients on this journey, in a time when nurses received their training at the bed-side, and uses stories of warmth, humour and humanity to describe how varied the journey toward death can be.

Joan and John Ritchie

## Friendship Club

Amazingly, we are almost at the end of this Session's meetings. From the 'Deserts of Egypt' last month, we're travelling on March 6th with Kirsteen and Bill Scott to cooler climes in the spectacular scenery of the Antarctic, often viewed from the precarious safety of a Zodiac inflatable boat. On the 13th, Kathleen's musical afternoon will, appropriately, be full of 'Conclusions' and we take this opportunity to thank her for all the preparation and presentations of musical pleasure. On the 20th March, Mark Beaumont will take us via the 'Malawi Bike Ride 2012' to Malawi to hear about the work of LCDS (Link Community Development Scotland) an international charity working in partnership with Government and local communities to improve standards of education in Sub-Saharan Africa.

We have certainly done some globe-trotting this session and we'll finish more locally with our Outing on May 8th to the Falkirk Wheel.

For more information about this, or about the Club, please contact me.

Val Smart

## Design help wanted

For many years the Greenbank Christmas card and poster, the Easter poster and various other items have been designed 'in house', under the auspices of the Kirk Session's Communications Committee. This has helped to keep costs down.

I have been involved in this work for a while, but as my time as convener of the committee comes to an end I would also like to hand on the document design work to another member of the congregation. In any case, fresh eyes and ideas are always welcome!

Do you have the skills to take on this work or part of it? If you do and might be willing to help please get in touch with me.

John Murison

## World Mission Committee

### *Dates for your Diary*

**Monday 25th February–Sunday 10th March:** FairTrade Fortnight.

**Sunday 24th March:** One World Stall after the Service.

**Sunday 7th April:** The Rice Challenge comes to Greenbank! (See page 6.) Remember to come and purchase your rice, to support the farmers in Malawi. For more information: [www.justtradingscotland.co.uk/pages/90KG-challenge](http://www.justtradingscotland.co.uk/pages/90KG-challenge)

Susan Inch

## Greenbank Scout Group

**Do come along on Saturday 6th April  
to our Annual Jumble Sale  
9.30am – 12 noon**

**Tea/coffee and home baking  
Admission £2**

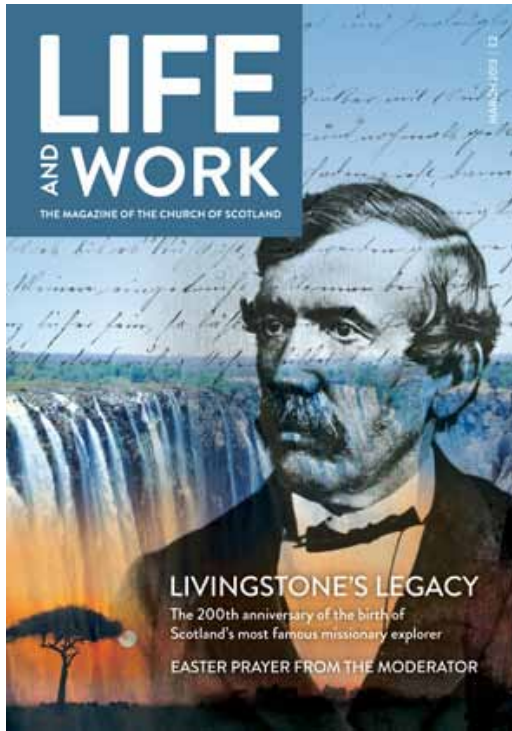
**During the week Monday 1st – Friday 5th  
April (evenings only 6.30pm–8.30pm),  
our Scouts will be calling on houses in  
the Greenbank area to collect items to  
sell such as:**

**books and toys; clothing; crockery;  
working electrical goods; small items  
of furniture; glassware; hardware;  
pictures and mirrors; records, DVDs  
and CDs; soft furnishings; and any  
other saleable items.**

**Unsold items will be offered  
to charities before disposal.**



## Life and Work: March Issue



### “Dr Livingstone, I Presume?”

The life and legacy of David Livingstone, born 200 years ago this month.

The Big Question: which missionary has inspired you?

### Easter 2013

Easter Prayer and contemplations from the Moderator, Ron Ferguson and the Very Rev James Simpson.

### The Deepest Darkness

The Rev Scott McKenna reflects on the dark day which preceded the Resurrection.

### A Land of Contradictions

The Rev John Chalmers, Principal Clerk to the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, reflects on the lasting impressions of his first visit to the Holy Land.

### If Only...

The launch of a major new campaign to tackle global hunger.

### Having Your Say

Chloe Clemmons emphasises the importance of participating in the debate on Scottish independence.

### Gathering of Song and Music

Lynne McNeil highlights *Different Voices*, the church's national music event which takes place this month.

### Biblical Botanicals

In the final part of her series, Muriel Armstrong considers the origins of the Burning Bush.

### A Moray Monument

John R Hume reflects on the gifts and history of Bellie Parish Church in Fochabers.

**Plus** all the regular columnists, letters, reviews and crosswords – all for just £2.

### Life and Work needs you

*View from the Pew* is your chance to have your say on anything relevant to the Church of Scotland – and we pay £100 to your church if we use it. Send 550 words to Life and Work, 121 George Street, Edinburgh EH2 4YN or email [magazine@lifeandwork.org](mailto:magazine@lifeandwork.org)



## The Guild

By the time you read this we shall have had our fund raiser in aid of our project *Heart for Art* and we shall let you know how much we raise.

Only two more meetings this session – I can hardly believe it. March begins with *The World Day of Prayer* service in Morningside Parish Church on Friday 1st at 10.30am and we hope to see a lot of you there.

On Tuesday 5th March our speaker is Dr A J Mackaill and the title of his talk is *Surgeon, Author and Cardboard Box*. What is this all about? We are looking forward to finding out.

Our ABM is on Tuesday 19th March when we look back over our year's work, hear how our funds are doing, how the work party is getting on, who is leaving the committee, and nominations and election of new committee members for next session. This is also an opportunity for you to make suggestions for next session's syllabus and to discuss any other business you would like to bring up. The business will be followed by a talk by a representative from Mellis Cheese.

All our meetings are open meetings so do come along and join us.

Ann Pirie

## The Aquillos Ensemble

The Aquillos Ensemble are kindly holding a concert in aid of the children of **Scottish Love in Action** on 6th April at 7.30pm in Morningside Parish Church.

Do come to relax and listen to a delightful programme of the following music:

**Ibert:** Trois Pièces Brèves

**Poulenc:** Novelette, arr G Emerson

**Mozart:** Piano and Wind K452

**Zemlinsky:** Humoresque

**Bozza:** Trois Pièces pour une Musique de Nuit

**Beethoven:** Quintet in Eb, arranged from the Sextet Op71

The concert will finish at about 9.10pm.

Tickets are £8; Children & Students free.

*The Aquillos Ensemble was formed in 2009 and includes musicians who have played with the BBC Concert Orchestra, SCO, RSNO, RPO, Royal Ballet Orchestra, the Ulster Orchestra and the BBC Northern Radio Orchestra.*

# Lent

a poem by Jean Watt



Lent is a tree without blossom without leaf  
Barer than blackthorn in its winter sleep,  
All unadorned. Unlike Christmas which decrees  
The setting up, the dressing up of trees,  
Lent is a taking down, a stripping bare,  
A starkness after all has been withdrawn  
Of surplus and superfluous,  
Leaving no hiding place, only an emptiness  
Between black branches, a most precious space  
Before the leaf, before the time of flowers;  
Lest we should see only the leaf, the flower,  
Lest we should miss the stars.

from *The Heart's Time* by Janet Morley  
Copyright © 2011 by SPCK Publishing

Have you looked at the website yet?

[www.greenbankchurch.org](http://www.greenbankchurch.org)



## Wanted – more good quality household goods

### Dates for your Diary

Next dates for Fresh Start are **10th March** and **14th April 2013**, at the Sunday service (table in Main Hall).

*Donated goods for the Fresh Start Starter Packs were reduced in quantity in January, as opposed to the previous collection date, and this is a concern.*

Here is a full list of the items needed:

**Dishes and Crockery:** Dinner plates, side plates, bowls, cutlery, mugs, glass tumblers, tea-towels.

**Pots and Pans etc.:** Pots with lids, milk pans, frying pans, plastic boxes, cooking utensils, can openers, potato peelers, wooden spoons.

**Cleaning Things:** Washing up basins, washing-up liquid, toilet cleaner, toilet rolls, hand soap, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dust pans and brushes, pedal bin liners, rubbish bags, all purpose cleaner, laundry tablets.

**Bed Linen and Towels:** Single flat sheets, double flat sheets, single duvet covers, double duvet covers, pillow cases, blankets, duvets, bed covers, towels, face cloths, bath mats, curtains, rugs.

**Also wanted:** small household electrical items (not TVs).

See [www.freshstartweb.org.uk](http://www.freshstartweb.org.uk) or Tel 476 7741 to find out more about Fresh Start. Or pick up a leaflet on a Fresh Start Sunday.

Alison Ambler

## WAGs Spring Coffee Morning

*Greenbank Church*

*Saturday 9th March, 10am – 12 noon*

Homebaking, teas/coffees  
and children's activities

Tickets cost £2.50  
(£1 for a child, under 2s free)

Ticket price includes a  
coffee/tea and a scone

Raising money for  
Tailor Ed Foundation

([www.tailoredfoundation.co.uk](http://www.tailoredfoundation.co.uk))  
and It's Good to Give

([www.itsgood2give.co.uk](http://www.itsgood2give.co.uk))

Tickets available on the door  
or from any committee member

For more details contact  
Carrie Reid

Donations of baking gratefully received!

All welcome





The World Mission Committee is calling everyone in Greenbank to rise to the Rice Challenge by buying 1kg of rice (or more) to help give a child in Malawi a year of education.

In 2009 Just Trading Scotland launched the Rice Challenge importing Kilombero rice from Malawi and to date they have sold 97 tonnes. The race is on to reach 100 tonnes.

If 90 of us buy 1kg rice each it will enable a child to attend secondary school for a year. So simple... so easy... so effective... and by working together we can make a difference!

Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world. For rice farmers and their families getting a fair price for their rice cannot be taken for granted. The Malawi National Smallholder Farmers' Association provides training, low cost farm inputs and marketing resources for its members. Regular income ensures improved living conditions and helps to fund education.

Rice is grown principally as a cash crop and is largely sold to the urban middle classes. It is a luxury food mostly enjoyed at special times of year, like Christmas. Smallholder farmers typically grow

it in addition to the maize and other root crops (sweet potato, cassava), which they grow to feed their family. The income from the rice enables them to improve their buildings, to buy fertilizer and other farm implements, as well as to pay for secondary education for their children.

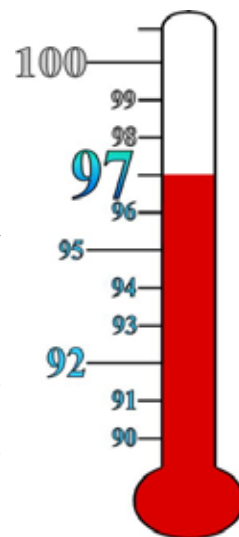
In Malawi primary education is not compulsory but the constitution states that all children are entitled to at least five years of free primary education. Sadly secondary education is not free and as a result only 30% of children in Malawi receive a high school education. The key to escaping the poverty trap is education.

The World Mission Committee will be selling this rice after the service on Sunday 7th April and on the following Sundays until we reach the 90kg challenge.

Kilombero Rice is long grain aromatic rice. It has a subtle, nutty flavour and makes an excellent accompaniment to stews, curries and risottos.

We will be selling the rice in 1kg bags at a cost of £3.

Please join in the challenge, buy some rice and support a place for a child in school!



## Scouts @ Greenbank

Be prepared for "probably the best..."

**JUMBLE** sale  
...in Edinburgh"

**SATURDAY 6TH APRIL 2013 : 9.30am – 12 noon**  
**GREENBANK CHURCH, BRAIDBURN TERRACE, EH10 6ES**

4th Morningside Scout Group is registered as a Charity, number CR43781.

**Admission £2**

*omitted*

## Welcome Teams

### March

- 3 **Alan Armit**, Edith Armit, Louise Coghill, Iain Davidson, Hugh Cowan, Susan Black, Malcolm Watters, Nora Kellock, Elizabeth Mackay
- 10 **John George**, Kenneth Aitken, Alastair Hunter, Hazel Macaulay, Kathleen Patrick, Jill Powlett-Brown, Dorothy Whitehead, Tony Foster
- 17 **Donald King**, Brian Barron, Walter Crosby, Donald MacLeod, Roderick Morrison, Mairi Stevenson, Jim Young, Kathryn Sangster
- 24 **Rosemary McCulloch**, Rona Ferguson, Fiona Grant, Frank Hutson, Christina Morrow, Alison Murison, Malcolm Reid, Joan Ritchie, Toby Tucker
- 31 **Ian Thom**, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Charles Black, Greig Scott

### April

- 7 **Roger Bland**, Eileen Campbell, Richard Dunbar, Clifford Hastings, Chris Horne, Doris Laing, Enid Mowat, Robin Nimmo, Keith Winton

## Coffee Rota

### March

- 3 Communion
- 10 John Mowat & Louise Coghill (D67 & D68)
- 17 Spectrum Lunch
- 24 Jill Powlett-Brown (D12B)
- 31 Lennie & Katy Maguire (D20 & D19)

### April

- 7 Clifford Hastings (D61A)



Material for the April *Leaflet* should be delivered to the Church Office or to the Editors' pigeon-hole in the Main Hall by Sunday 17th March, or sent by e-mail by 9am on Tuesday 19th March to [greenbankleaflet@googlemail.com](mailto:greenbankleaflet@googlemail.com)

## Crèche Rota

### March

- 3 Lucy Teall
- 10 Isobel Thom
- 17 Rosemary Collier
- 24 Liz Foster
- 31 Carrie Reid



## Flower Rota



### Provided by

### Delivered by

### March

- |    |                  |                   |
|----|------------------|-------------------|
| 3  | Isobel Aitchison | Fiona Connal      |
| 10 | Anne Mason       | Ruth Ray          |
| 17 | Doreen Milliken  | Jean Roynon-Jones |
| 24 | Joan Cameron     | Pauline Walker    |
| 31 | Louise Coghill   | Isobel Brown      |

### April

- |   |                  |                      |
|---|------------------|----------------------|
| 7 | Rona Sommerville | Joan & Sandy Cameron |
|---|------------------|----------------------|

## Christian Aid Collection 2013

### Christian Aid Week 12th–18th May 2013

Christian Aid continues to be well supported at Greenbank but we need to continue this momentum as our thoughts turn to this year's house to house collection in May.

Last year's total for the house-to-house collection amounted to £3600.35; 22% of envelopes were also gift aided and this raised an additional amount of £1570.20. I was very grateful for all the support you gave me in my first year of co-ordinating this event. Although Christian Aid week seems some time away, preparation work is underway and, as always, we need a team of collectors to cover all the streets in the parish. Thank you again to those who collected last year and I hope that most of you will be able to collect again this year. I shall be contacting you over the next few weeks but for anyone who is thinking of retiring I would be glad if you could "ask a friend" to take over your houses, preferably before I speak to you! I am also looking for some other new collectors to share the load.

It always seems a bit daunting to take a collection on for the first time but believe me everyone actually enjoys the experience, which makes new connections in the community and boosts our presence on a wider front in Greenbank. It takes up to about an hour to deliver the envelopes and about three hours collection time through the week. Most people do this over two early evening slots and sometimes couples take on an area between them.

I am also looking for administrative help nearer the time to assist me preparing the envelopes for collectors and also for counting up at the end.

Last year we had a follow-up 'party' to share our experiences and as a thank you for helping out – a massive additional incentive! Please contact me if you are able to help. I will contact existing collectors directly to check their availability.

Pam Jack

## Some difficult sayings of Jesus

### *Don't worry*

**Some sayings of Jesus are difficult to understand: others are easy to understand but are hard to put into practice.** This would seem to be true of what Jesus had to say about worry. Worry is mentioned five times within the space of ten verses in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6, 25-34):

*Do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear... Look at the birds of the air... And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field... And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? Therefore do not worry, saying, "What will we eat?" or "What will we drink?" or "What will we wear?" So do not worry about tomorrow...*

**The message could not be clearer: *Don't worry*.** Worriers that we are, we find this hard to accept. It was all very well for Jesus to tell his followers not to worry about food or drink or clothes or indeed about any aspect of their lives. But are there not some things worth being anxious about? Few of us are exempt from worry or anxiety. We worry about our children, our spouses and parents, our homes and jobs. We worry about breakfast, lunch and dinner, friends and relations, work and recreation, health and sickness. On top of our personal day-to-day worries, there are the big worries of the world: the threat of terrorism, the fear of poverty and disaster, the risk of epidemics, the future of the planet. But Jesus says, *Don't worry*.

***"Don't worry" can sound shallow, frivolous and unrealistic.*** In 1988 an American singer was a huge success with his song "Don't worry, be happy". This simple philosophy seemed very attractive: don't think about tomorrow and do whatever makes you feel good. For years people lived as if there were no tomorrow, getting and spending with the sole intention of enjoying the finer things in life. Although most people knew that money could not buy love or happiness, many had a good time trying. Then things went badly wrong. Keeping up with the Joneses has given way to just scraping by. The current economic recession continues to affect many households. Lives have been forever altered because we did not worry, we were happy. Perhaps we should have worried more than we did. But Jesus insists, *Don't worry*.

**So why did Jesus say, *Don't worry*?** This teaching of Jesus can sound glib, non-compassionate, overly simplified and even naïve. That would be the case if there were nothing to replace the anxiety or worry about life as we experience it. We have to have something to replace the worry and anxiety. But Jesus understands our predicament. His call to worry-free living is not based on unrealistic views of the world. There is a place in our lives for prudent planning, itself an expression of confidence and hope in God's good purposes for the world, a refusal to panic in the face of present uncertainty or catastrophe.

**Jesus himself had many cares but he was carefree.** The cares

did not have *him*: anxiety had given place to trust in God. When anxiety threatened to gain the upper hand, he retreated into solitude. He sought and found comfort in the birds of the air and the lilies of the field. The birds gather their food, singing their songs; the flowers stand there, simply being beautiful. The world of nature is seen as a disclosure of the character of God. And so he taught his followers: Look around you — see how God feeds the birds and clothes the wild flowers. Abundance, not scarcity, is the mark of God's care for creation. The invitation is to see God as life-giving, generous, lavish. Jesus saw reality as characterised by a cosmic generosity. How much more does God care for the children of humankind?

**There is a complication here.** Even the birds of the air and the flowers of the field have become a source of worry. Albatrosses in the middle of the Pacific Ocean are being poisoned by the waste thrown so carelessly into the oceans. Species of birds once common in this country are threatened with extinction. Programmes have been launched to protect endangered wild flowers. Carefree nature has become the object of our worry. We worry about it because we have contributed to its destruction. But there is a glimmer of hope: if we seek to protect the fragile environment on which we are so dependent, then it may again become an example to us of how we can live free from worry.

**The alternative to seeing the world as God's good creation is to worry, to be anxious.** Worry and "little faith" go together. According to Jesus, "little faith" is the failure to see God's character disclosed in the feeding of birds and the clothing of lilies. Worry and faith are opposites, for faith is trust in the generosity of God. Freedom from worry is possible for those who are willing to trust in the Father who cares about what his children need. They receive each day as a gift from God. They see God as the ultimate creator and source of all good things. They use the Lord's Prayer to turn this trust into prayer: *Give us today our daily bread.*

**The only way to provide sensibly for tomorrow is to live by the clear advice of Jesus.** He tells us to stop worrying, because it is pointless and does nothing to help us. On the contrary, it makes matters worse and can even make us unwell. Rather, we have to concentrate on the most important things in life: God, God's reign, love for one another, mercy and compassion. *Set your mind on God's kingdom and his justice before everything else, and all the rest will come to you as well.* His words are for those who understand that God will not leave us without resources or support. It was the conviction of Jesus that worry is banished when God becomes the dominating power of our lives. When we are about God's business and seeking to be what God wants us to be, we have no room or need for worry. We can face life with all its uncertainties and contingencies with the assurance that we are not alone — that God hears, sees and cares about us and whatever causes us anxiety.