

CHRISTMAS AT HOPE FOR CHILDREN IN LATVIA

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Picture Parable



When I first visited Latvia it was part of the Soviet Union and Christmas was celebrated rather secretly by only the most devoted Christians who had remained faithful despite persecution. In 1991 when I arrived in a newly independent Latvia some Latvians, who wanted to celebrate Christmas even asked me how they should do that since they'd had no previous experience and they hadn't heard or seen anything about it. Now though, the children of Latvia look forward to Christmas as much as any other European child, which thankfully here is not yet burdened with the excessive commercialisation seen in the UK.

Since our ministry began in 1994 among the street children of Riga, we've celebrated thirty Christmases with thousands of the most needy children and families - mostly with snow and once even a temperature as low as -20 C. I clearly remember the children begging me to light fireworks on that day, which involved reluctantly

taking off my gloves! I also remember two young street boys sharing with me how they too would light matches in the freezing cold to try to keep their fingers warm.

At the moment we have two day centres where children at risk, living in very difficult circumstances and lacking care and protection, can come to us after school for a hot meal, help with homework and to simply rest and play. Since our children are so burdened with rejection and guilt we love to share with them Bible stories of God's love and acceptance of us just as we are; of these the story of how Jesus was born in the most humble of circumstances is one that especially speaks volumes to them.

Christmas for us is therefore something we particularly love celebrating. We invite our centre children and the families that we help through our Family Support Centre to parties where there's a special meal, games and of course, a gift. Sometimes we're also able to invite parents to watch The Nativity Story or invite families to do a 'Quest' (a set of questions and tasks connected with Christmas). We thank God with all our hearts for the generosity of those who support us in this, for without this help Christmas would just be cold and dark for the majority of those we help.

Helen M Vipass, Director



WOMEN OF ACTION

God – Our Solid Foundation

Bozeat TLC, Saturday 21st September 2024

The ladies started to arrive at about 9.50 and we served tea and coffee and chatted as everyone gathered there was a good buzz of conversation.

We started with a time of prayer and praise led by Ellie Minney. To prepare us for Holy Communion we sang 'Jesus Christ, I think upon your sacrifice' and shared a special time together remembering our Lord's sacrifice for us. Sandra Fall then led our thoughts starting with the passage from **Matthew 7:24-29**, The Wise and the Foolish Builders. She pointed out that the people who were listening to His story would fully understand **that the Rock that Jesus spoke about would mean God, as in the Old Testament God is referred to many times as the rock:**

Deuteronomy 32 v4 – He is the rock, His works are perfect and all His ways are just, a faithful God, upright and just is He.

Psalm 18 v2 -The Lord is my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 62 v 6 – He alone is my rock and my salvation, my fortress where I will not be shaken.

Sandra pointed out that 'a fallen world' was not in God's plan. We are guilty of wilful sin that cuts us off from God but he is a good God who will forgive us if we come to Him in confession and repentance. The 'enemy' will take every opportunity to have a 'poke' at us and tell us that we are not good enough and God doesn't love us but we need to remember that Satan has no authority over us since we have been redeemed

and saved by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

Ephesians 6v 10-11 – Be strong in the Lord and in HIS mighty power.

Put on the whole armour of God so that you can stand against the devil's schemes.

Then a reminder that we have the Holy Spirit living within us who will never leave us or forsake us. **(Hebrews 13 v 5)**

We were encouraged to pair up with someone who we didn't know and share thoughts and issues that trouble us, and pray for each other. We ended our session with lunch, jacket potatoes and fillings, then fresh fruit, cheesecake and gateaux before the ladies took their leave in the middle of a terrific storm of thunder, lightning and torrential rain!!

We, at Bozeat, would like to say a big thank you Sandra, for a time of great blessing and fellowship shared by all.



WRU CONFESSION OF FAITH

(to be continued)

6. That the Holy Spirit is a divine Person both equal to and of one substance with the Father and the Son, that His work is necessary to make the death of Christ effective to the individual sinner, granting them repentance toward God and faith in Jesus Christ and He also indwells every believer as their Sanctifier, thus placing His seal upon him as a child of God.

When Jesus was near the end of His time on earth He told His disciples:

'I will ask the Father and He will give you another Helper to be with you forever. – the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all I have said to you' (John 14:16,26 ESV)

As Jesus describes the Holy Spirit as 'another Helper' it is evidence that he is both equal to and of one substance with the Son and consequently the Father

It was scriptures such as this that led to the early ecumenical councils of Nicaea in 325 AD and Constantinople in 381 AD to state:

'We shall believe in the single deity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit under the concept of equal majesty and of the Holy Trinity'

We can view the Holy Spirit as God's extending arm who touches and indwells in those who accept Jesus as Saviour and effects their lives in many ways as set out in scripture.

We see he is at work in salvation as Jesus states:

'I tell you the truth: it is your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come

to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. And when he comes he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgement' (John 16:7-8 ESV)

He is at work in our spiritual growth as Paul assures the Church at Corinth:

'You were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of God' (1 Corinthians 6:11 ESV)

He is at work in equipping us. The writer to the Hebrews states:

'How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared first by the Lord – and by gifts the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will' (Hebrews 2:3-4 ESV)

He is at work in guiding us as Paul testified as he reached the end of his third missionary journey:

'And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit' (Acts 20:22 ESV)

Our salvation is imparted through the Holy Spirit as we receive justification, and we need to embrace him as our sanctification progresses and we are equipped and guided in God's service.

George Phillips

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY



SHEFFIELD SHOW

SHEFFIELD CIRCUIT AUGUST BANK HOLIDAY



For many years Sheffield Circuit has felt it right to have a Christian presence at the annual Sheffield Show, at Norfolk Park. This is a big, popular, family event, full of Fairground rides, great food stalls, history areas etc. Every year we try to take a slightly different approach, seeking to engage with those attending and working at the fayre. The organisers are very keen for us to be there and tell us so frequently, when we book and when they meet us on the day. This year we hired a two Gazebo plot for around £130 which included tables and the very sturdy gazebos.

Free Book Stall We had a free book stall. We bought 'new' good quality new books, bibles and tracts, that would hopefully interest non-church goers as well as Christians. The children's section was very popular.

Children's & Family Area

We also had a children's area with colouring sheets and a miniature garden modelling activity. The children and adults got very creative making 'very little' bugs out of clay, that were then placed in our miniature garden. While the children got on with these things, many positive and encouraging conversations were had with the adults accompanying them. There was also a small throwing game next to the discussion board.

"What is Love?" - Discussion board

"If you could ask God one of these questions,"

- a) Why isn't love enough to decide what's good?
- b) What's love got to do with it? Don't you just want us to follow rules?
- c) What does real love look like?
- d) If you're a God of Love, why send anyone to hell.

Many people voted on which question they would like to put to God. **Question D, unsurprisingly, got the most votes, and as churches we looked to answer this in one of our services in September.**

The day was a great encouragement to all those involved. Some were there all day, and others dropped in for a few hours. It was a lovely warm sunny day and it was so encouraging to chat with so many people and see lots of books and tracts taken.

Many Christians also came up and encouraged us.

Pastor Andy Wilcock



What's Your Church Called?

It seems to be a fairly well known fact that, in order to fill your church (especially a rural one), simply announce that it is closing and announce the date of the last service.

And this made me start to wonder about what people think a church is.

As we travel around the country we see all manner of church buildings; from great cathedrals to a tiny chapel in the middle of nowhere.

Are they all churches and if so (or not), what makes them such?

Would perhaps a better description for these buildings be not a church but a 'place of worship'. Why?

If so, perhaps the better question then is 'what is the church?'

One definition (Christianity.com) which I read recently says that the church "At its core... is the global community of Christ followers who believe in the divinity and resurrection of Jesus Christ and are commissioned to proclaim the good news of His salvation to the world. The church transcends age, gender, race, geography and socioeconomic".

Wow - really?

At a time when we at Griffydam have moved out of our building for a while as essential maintenance is carried out, it behoves us all to remember **that moving out of 'our church' doesn't mean moving out of 'the church'**.

The same source as the one above says that "The church exists to strengthen and equip its members

for an external relationship with a broken world. More than an organization, the church is a life-giving movement, alive and thriving in the power of God's grace and Christ's free gift of salvation to all."

So, wherever we at Griffydam have found ourselves while the work is being done, **we are still, first and foremost, His Church, the body of Christ, bound together in unity.**

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Colossians 3:12-14 - NIV

Cliff Darby

CELEBRATION AT FINEDON

October 13th 2024 was a very special day in the calendar of Finedon Independent Wesleyan chapel because it was **150 years** since the opening of the building and they wanted to celebrate in style. The flower arrangers excelled with superb displays representing various aspects of the activities in the Church.



Invitations had been sent to past members and friends and a lavish lunch had been prepared. **Nick Addington** led the service and **Reverend Peter Norton** gave the message. Several people shared their reflections of past years, one of whom was **Reverend Tony Hodgkinson** who had been the minister from 1965 - 1969. Finedon had been his first Church.

Lorraine Todd remembered how she had been part of the Christian Endeavour class who met on Thursday evenings to study various passages of Scripture prior to taking a Scripture exam at the end of the year. She said, "We couldn't get enough of it at the time and would eagerly await



the results and were excited to be presented with a certificate." Happy memories indeed.

The morning concluded with a sumptuous lunch and everyone had an opportunity to chat together and **thank God for His continuing faithfulness in the past and trusting Him for the future.**

Daphne Hodgkinson



THE ADVENTURE WE WEREN'T READY FOR... BUT GOD WAS!



I'm writing this article, because I've been asked to, not because I think there is anything special about Sandra and myself, and in the knowledge that many are in more difficult circumstances than us. I'm also conscious of the instruction given in **1 Peter 3:15-17**, (... you can look that one up.)

In August 2019 Sandra suffered a stroke which has affected her mobility and we are now dependant upon a range of supports, frames, sticks and wheelchairs, life is very different and I've learnt many new skills. I've mastered the washing machine, the iron, even packing a suitcase, life changed in an instant.

But with change, we need to adapt, find other ways to do the things we enjoy. We've always enjoyed our theatre trips, holidays and our life at church.

Some things we haven't been able to do anymore, London is a step too far because of the transport situation and we haven't felt inclined to travel abroad or as far as Cornwall, **but many things are possible, even though they may take a little more time and planning.**

We have got back to most of our regular theatres and holiday destinations closer to home. The staff in theatres, without exception have been fantastic, caring, supportive and can't do enough for us. I could write another article about disabled toilet facilities and life from the point of view of the wheelchair user and carer, but perhaps another day. **Overall, we find people so kind and supportive in every situation.**

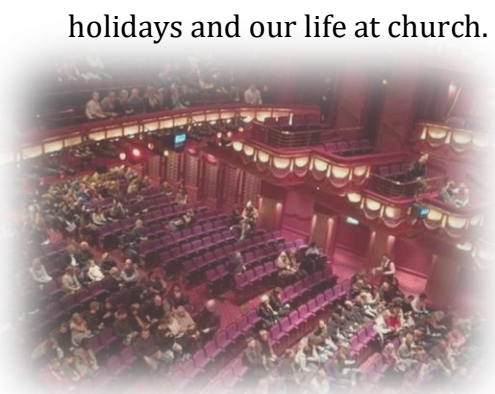
We are also grateful to God because He is always there for us, in the big things and in the

small ones too. Be it seats, parking spaces, hotel rooms, assistance at just the right time, **He is amazing and sometimes that makes us emotional.**

I don't believe God ever promised us an easy life, I don't believe that God ever said, become a Christian and your problems will disappear. I do believe that we as Christians go through tough times and that God uses them to teach us many things. **Through tough times, through difficulties we learn to rely upon God, we learn what others go through, and we learn empathy not just sympathy.**

I was told 400 words, so its time to stop, **but we have been blessed** through these years by the kindness of both friends and strangers, and an amazing Heavenly Father.

David & Sandra Rooksby



ST ANDREW

PART ONE

Many Saint-apostles have churches, colleges and even towns named after them world-wide, but St Andrew is probably the only one to have lent his name to a vast network of social clubs on the five inhabited continents. Originally, these were philanthropic charities. **Wherever the emigrant Scots have settled, there you can find thriving St Andrews' associations, because his also is the privilege to be appointed patron saint of Scotland.**

At first glance this looks to be an unlikely choice. An insignificant Galilean Jew from a vassal state of Rome in the warm and civilised near east, becomes saint-protector of a little cold, wet, wild, windswept land just beyond the northern fringes of that same empire and never subject to it. Andrew's name was not even Jewish but Greek – 'man' - not in the sense of 'person' but meaning in the macho sense, 'strong man' or just 'brave'.

We are told that he died in AD 60 at Patras in Greece, and his official saint's day – 30th November – is the day of his martyrdom. He is buried in what is now Turkey. He is not even mentioned in my little book of national saints: Ninian, Columba and Mungo were the pioneers of Scottish Christianity, (and much of English).

The reasons for choosing Andrew are lost in legend and the mists of early Scottish history.

One optimistic but certainly false tale is that Andrew the apostle himself visited Scotland and founded a church on the shores of the east



coast peninsula of Fife, on the present day site of St Andrews, an ancient university city most recently boasting among its alumni the Prince and Princess of Wales. More credible, if still doubtful, is the story that only a few bones of the saint made it to Scotland, carried there by a monk called Regulus (Latin for 'rule') after he was warned in a dream to carry St Andrew's bones to "the ends of the earth" for safe-keeping and not, as he had been ordered by the newly Christian Roman emperor, to re-bury them in the new imperial capital city of Constantinople. **In good apostolic fashion, this St Regulus was shipwrecked beyond the limits of the known world on the coast of Fife – at pictish Kilrymont, later called St Andrews.** The 33m church tower named for St Rule is still standing there (picture above).

Now graced with this relic, the church and monastery of St Andrews soon became an important place of pilgrimage and blossomed as a centre of learning through the Dark and Middle Ages.

Better historical evidence suggests that after Pentecost, the apostle Andrew was sent to carry the gospel to Greece and Asia Minor (Turkey) around its Black Sea coast, then to the Badlands of the wild Scythians. He was martyred in Greece on the orders of a Roman governor whose wife had converted after hearing Andrew's message, and is said to have chosen an X shaped cross to distinguish his unworthy death from his Master's. **This is the origin of the Scottish Saltire or "St Andrew's" flag.**

Lesley Notghi - Griffydam



The First Christmas

JESUS WAS BORN ABOUT 2,000 YEARS AGO IN THE SMALL TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, NEAR JERUSALEM.



AN ANGEL HAD TOLD MARY SHE WOULD HAVE VERY SPECIAL BABY

...YOU MUST CALL YOUR BABY - 'JESUS'

MARY AND JOSEPH MADE THE LONG JOURNEY FROM NAZARETH TO BETHLEHEM. THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED THERE BY THE CENSUS.



BUT THE TOWN WAS FULL... THE ONLY SHELTER THEY COULD FIND WAS A STABLE...

SORRY.. I'VE NO ROOM!

...WHICH IS WHERE THE BABY JESUS WAS BORN.



SHEPHERDS IN FIELDS NEARBY RACED TO SEE THE BABY. AN ANGEL HAD TOLD THEM WHERE JESUS HAS BEEN BORN.



THEY WERE THRILLED TO SEE THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT IN THE WORLD!

