

Leaflet



Greenbank Parish Church
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES
No 626 May 2013

Pulpit Diary

May 5

9.30am First Sunday Service
led by Help the Homeless

10.30am Morning Worship

May 12

10.30am Morning Worship

May 19

9.30am Pentecost Communion

10.30am All Age Pentecost Celebration

May 26

10.30am Morning Worship

May 31

7.30pm Pre-Communion Service

Jun 2

9.00am Communion

10.30am Communion (Springboard
and Spectrum meet as usual)

3.00pm Communion (Braid Room)

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

The pastoral team can be contacted through
the Church Office:

Rev Alison Swindells

tel and fax: 0131 447 4032

email: alisonswindells@blueyonder.co.uk

Rev W. Peter Graham

tel: 0131 445 5763

Youth Minister: Rev Bill Stone

tel: 07883 815 598

email: billstoneiii@gmail.com

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

Website: www.greenbankchurch.org

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends

I am aware, even in the relatively short time of my ministry here in Greenbank, that the nature of our parish as well as our congregation is changing. It is still a relatively stable community, but many who have lived in this area since most of the houses were built have now passed



on. And whereas at one time it might have been common to find three or even four generations of the same family in the congregation, this is less common than it used to be, as young people travel to find new employment opportunities and settle away from Edinburgh.

The other side of the coin is that it is great to welcome new families moving into the district but this presents us as a congregation with different challenges. How do we get to know the new faces in our midst? Holiday Clubs, WAGs, BAGs, Families@4 (Greenbank's version of Messy Church) and our New Members' Lunch are some of the attempts we are making to respond to this challenge. But as members of Christ's Church our responsibilities go much further than providing opportunities to meet and learn and even worship together. We also have the responsibility to love one another and support one another when life is hard and our faith is challenged.

In the Church of Scotland ensuring that this happens is the responsibility of the elders with the support of the minister. Traditionally every parish was divided into a number of Districts, each one under the care and supervision of an elder. This is the system which currently operates in Greenbank, where each elder also has the support of a District Visitor. As a general rule elders visit the members in their Districts four times a year prior to communion.

However because of the changing population of the parish, as well as the differences

in lifestyle brought about by new technology, the longer working hours of both men and women, and the many and varied opportunities that are available to children in this day and age, some are wondering whether the old system can still deliver the best pastoral care.

Over the last few months,

as you will read elsewhere in this *Leaflet*, the Kirk Session have been reflecting on the way in which we deliver pastoral care. I have been greatly encouraged by the importance which elders place on this aspect of their role, despite the difficulties which many have encountered in finding suitable times and occasions to visit. But we recognise that we could perhaps be more creative in enabling the building of meaningful relationships, between elder and members and members themselves.

As part of our ongoing reflection on the provision of pastoral care Session would like to know what you think. The District Elders on their visits in May will be engaging with the members of their Districts to see if they can find a visiting pattern that suits all concerned as well as exploring other methods of contact and communication. I hope that you will give this some thought before they call, bearing in mind that we all have a responsibility to love and support one another.

Finally I would draw attention to the pledge card that accompanies this *Leaflet* and encourage you to use this as a reminder of the decision which was taken following our stewardship campaign two years ago to invite all members to review their givings annually. We can only do the work that we do as long as people continue to give as generously as they are able, not only of their time and of their talents, but also of their money.

With warmest wishes

Alison I Swindells
Minister

Annual Business Meeting, 17th March 2013

In his introductory remarks the Preses of the Congregational Board, Roderick Morrison, stated that the Annual Business Meeting was required by the Church's constitution and allowed the Board to report its workings in the course of 2012 to a broad spectrum of the congregation. He commended the work of Property Convener, Ian Thom, who had overseen the maintenance and improvement of the church, halls, manse and church flat with great dedication and the work of the Church's Treasurer, Robert Young for the calm and efficient manner in which he had guided the finances of the Church through difficult economic times. Also thanked were Alan Armit, the Halls Convener, Alan Ramage, the Clerk to the Board, Hongsuk Um, the Beadle, Mirek Pociask, the Church Caretaker/Handyman, Brian Webster, the Church Cleaner and Ginny Johnston, the Church Administrator. The Preses also thanked all members of the Board for their positive and constructive contributions in the course of 2012.

On property matters the Property Convener, Ian Thom, reported that a large amount of work had been undertaken to maintain Church property to a high standard. This had included the re-pointing of the east wall of the Main Hall, the repair of internal damaged plaster on the south wall of the Main Hall, the replacement of the Main Fuse Box and the installation of an LCD screen in the Hub corridor. At the Manse, repairs to the roofing, consequential internal redecoration and the relaying of the driveway had been undertaken. In 2013 the regular annual maintenance required both by law and Health and Safety would be undertaken but, due to financial constraints, a number of planned activities would not now go ahead. However the kitchen upgrade involving the installation of an industrial cooker with associated equipment and a dishwasher would go ahead since funding had been obtained through a donation and related Gift Aid recovery. On financial matters the Treasurer, Robert Young, reported that statutory accounts were prepared annually for the wider Greenbank Church. These included the financial statements for the Church itself as well as the numerous Church-associated organisations including the Pre-School, the Guild, QII, WAGs, BAGs and others. He further explained that the accounts for 2012 had been approved by the Church's Trustees and the independent examiner, Anne Dobson. Copies had been made available in the vestibule. The Treasurer explained that, given that these accounts were in a statutory format and include the wider Church associated organisations, they did not show a clear position of the finances of Greenbank Church itself. His report at this annual business meeting would relate to the finances of the Church itself and would be based on the Management Report and Financial Commentary 2012 presented to the Congregational Board meeting on 22nd January, copies of which had been issued with the March *Leaflet*.

The Treasurer was disappointed to report a significant deficit of £36,000 for 2012. Total ordinary general income for 2012 had been £271,000, a decrease of £27,000 compared to the previous year, while total ordinary expenditure was £307,000, some £40,000 more than in 2011. Turning to income the Treasurer reported that total offerings, including Gift Aid, had amounted to £234,000. This had been a decrease of £36,000 or 13% compared with 2011 and was broadly in line with 2010 levels. He noted that

the 2011 financial position had benefited from the positive impact of the Stewardship Campaign and he had been disappointed to note that this positive impact appeared to have been of a one-off nature rather than a permanent increase as had been hoped. Other ordinary general income received from organisations, from the use of Church premises and from investment income, had amounted to £37,000, an increase of £9,000 or 34% compared with 2011. This had been largely due to higher income from renting out the halls and the full year effect of income received from renting out the flat at 2 Comiston Place. On the expenditure side the largest item of expenditure had been the contribution to the work of the wider Church, most of which went towards ministries costs for churches less fortunate, in financial terms, than Greenbank. In 2012, these costs were £141,000, £4,000 greater than in 2011. Salaries and staffing costs in 2012 had increased by £23,000 to £86,000 mainly as a result of the full year effect of the Youth Minister and small salary increases. Premises costs in 2012 had been £13,000 higher than 2011 at £57,000. Other costs overall in 2012 had been broadly in line with 2011 levels due to achieved cost savings offsetting cost increases. There had been limited movements other than the release of funds from the Youth Minister and Fabric funds to cover the deficit for the year.

With regard to the 2013 budget, the Treasurer reported that this would be another tough year financially and a deficit of £38,000 was anticipated which was slightly more than the 2012 deficit of £36,000. Broadly, this budget assumed a similar income to 2012, a £5,000 increase in contributions to the wider work of the Church of Scotland and an overall saving of £3,000 on other costs. This level of deficit was unsustainable. Given the current profile of givings, it would be a challenge to sustain the 2012 level of income far less exceed it. Actions would be required to increase the level of offerings and the Session would be leading the drive to increase givings. The Treasurer reported that he would be leading the drive to control costs along with other office bearers and members. The Treasurer stated that both givings and cost control were matters for the whole congregation and he invited the entire congregation to give generously and, for those responsible for expenditure, to take all steps to minimise costs. In conclusion the Treasurer thanked the Assistant Treasurers, Michael Struthers and Kathryn Sangster for all their dedication and hard work throughout the year and welcomed the appointment of Dan Lean as Assistant Treasurer with responsibility for Gift Aid. He invited questions. In answer to a question from a member of the congregation it was confirmed that the Rev Sean Swindells' church made a financial contribution in respect of Greenbank's Manse. Another member of the congregation asked how the contribution to the wider church was calculated. The Treasurer explained that the amount was driven by a formula based on the level of previous years' givings. The same member suggested that the Church's contribution should be reduced by the amount of the deficit. The Treasurer said that he would take this suggestion to the Board. [At the Board meeting held on 19th March it was decided to seek more information about how the formula used to determine the size of the contribution operated and, thereafter, an appeal would be considered. In the meantime the Church would continue to pay its full contribution].

Annual Business Meeting *continued*

The Preses intimated that the Congregational Board had selected two charities to be the recipients of the Lent and Easter Appeal. These were the Multiple Sclerosis Therapy Centre at Swanfield in Leith which provided practical therapies to people suffering from MS in a welcoming, friendly and supporting manner and the Garvald Edinburgh “Tools for Self Reliance” Project where young people with learning difficulties refurbished donated garden and handiwork tools for use in various projects in Tanzania and the People’s Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Turning to the Board changes and the election of new Board members, the Preses thanked Nora Kellock who was retiring after six years’ service. After three years’ service David Easton, John Ferguson, Henry Henderson, Anne Mackintosh, Val Smart and Jenny Wright were due to stand down. Iain Davidson, Clifford Hastings, Hazel Macaulay, Charlotte Tucker and Jim Young were retiring as Board members nominated by the Kirk Session. David Jackson and Diana Hastings had given up their positions on the Board following their ordination as Elders and Christina Morrow had been appointed to the Board as a Kirk

Session representative in succession to Maree Winchester. The Preses thanked all for their contributions to the Board. It was also intimated that Edith Armit, Dr Richard Denison, John George, Angus McLachlan, John Mowat and Jill Powlett-Brown had been appointed as Kirk Session representatives on the Board for the next three years. The Preses was pleased to note that, of those members who had served for three years on the Board, David Easton, John Ferguson, Henry Henderson and Anne Mackintosh had agreed to stand again, subject to the approval of the congregation. In addition Liz Shiel, Colin Archibald and Fiona Grant had indicated that they were willing to be elected to the Board for an initial three year period. The Preses invited further nominations.

In the absence of further nominations the congregation agreed the election of nominees to the Board.

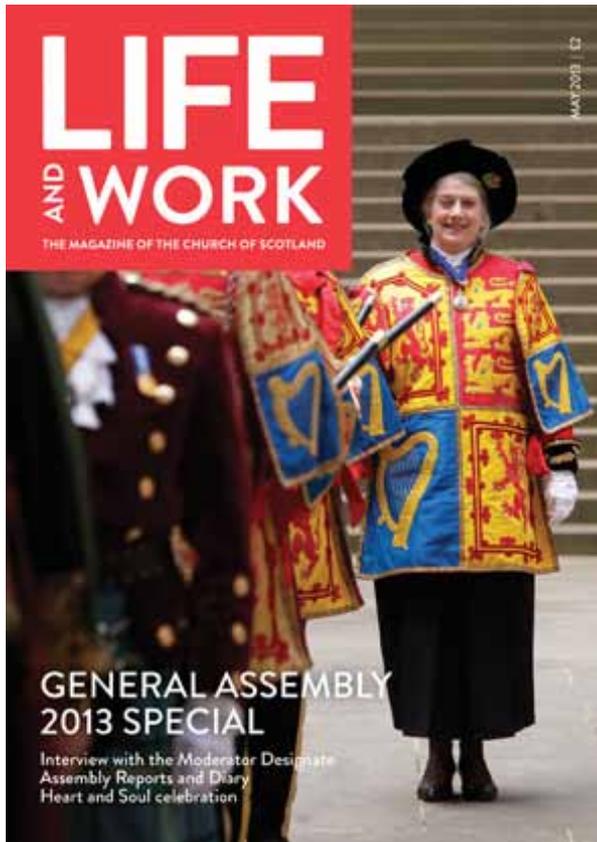
The Minister expressed warm appreciation to the Preses, Roddy Morrison for his role in leading the Board. The meeting concluded with a prayer of commitment.

World Mission Snippets

- The Committee is delighted to report that on 7th April in one morning, we sold all 90kg of Malawi Rice in the **Rice Challenge**. That means a year of secondary schooling for a Malawian child. We are now into selling the second batch so another child will get to school.
- Those of you who remember the work of **Jane and Roy Dodman in Jamaica**, will be interested to know that in spite of ‘retiring’ Roy is back in action as interim minister at Shortwood Church. He was minister there for 12 years during the years they were Church of Scotland Missionaries. Jane, who continues to work at the IUC, is an elder at Meadowbrook Church where their new minister is Norman Francis; Norman preached at Greenbank one Sunday morning when he was studying at New College in Edinburgh.
- **Christian Aid** in Bolivia has been the subject of publicity as part of this year’s ‘Enough Food for Everyone’ Campaign. The programme Director from Bolivia, Cecilia Cordoba, explained in a visit to Edinburgh the wide range of projects supported in this country of 10 million people. It has its capital, La Paz, in the high Andes, but most of its area is in the Amazon Basin. What was striking was the linking of food security, response to climate change, with broader action on human rights, governance and representation of indigenous people in economic decision making. This demonstrates that Christian Aid is supporting change at every level in poor countries to tackle injustice and eradicate poverty.
- The next **One World Stall** and the last until the Autumn, is on **Sunday 19th May** after the 10.30am service.



Life and Work: May Issue



Guild Outing

Tuesday 14th May: Purves Puppets, Biggar

The Guild outing to Purves Puppets will leave the Church at 11.30am.

Lunch, Show and Backstage Tour: £18.50.

There are places still available. If you are interested please contact Sharee Perks (Tel 447 1616).



Signs of Spring

General Assembly 2013

Interview with the Moderator Designate. Reports to the Assembly. Preview of *Heart and Soul* 2013.

Assembly Diary

Reflections from Ron Ferguson and the Very Rev James Simpson. Visit www.lifeandwork.org for daily updates from the Assembly, from May 18th.

Below the Breadline

Jackie Macadam meets a young woman who will be living on £1 a day to raise money for Christian Aid.

'Different Voices' United

Thomas Baldwin reports from a major Church of Scotland conference focussing on music and worship.

A Blueprint for the Future

Kenny Roger reports on anniversary celebrations at the Church of Scotland school in the Holy Land.

Changing Church

A Café Church in East Kilbride.

'A Poignant Reminder'

John R Hume visits the parish church of Ladykirk in the Borders.

The Presence of the Holy

The Rev Scott McKenna examines the place of icons within the Orthodox tradition of Christianity.

The Forgotten Mothers

The Rev Angus Morrison highlights the lives of Perpetua and Felicitas.

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

Please note the new Life and Work website (www.lifeandwork.org)

Member Consultation

Over the past year the Kirk Session has been considering the current and future provision of pastoral care in Greenbank in light of recent changes in society. One classic definition of pastoral care reads as follows: "Pastoral care is surprisingly simple. It has one fundamental aim: to help people to know love, both as something to be received and as something to give". This definition is rooted in Jesus' command to love God and to love our neighbour as we love ourselves.

In the Church of Scotland, under the system of Elders' Districts, the Elder is the pastor in the home. For the elder, the objectives of pastoral visiting might be summarised as follows:

- To form a 'good neighbour' relationship with each member by getting to know them; it is recognised that this has to be a two way process and that members have a part to play in allowing this to happen;
- To offer pastoral support in times of need with the support of the Minister/Ministry Team;
- To encourage attendance at church services and participation in church activities; and
- To communicate matters of interest about the church.

Following the review of pastoral care, the Kirk Session has issued new guidelines for District Elders. These guidelines introduce more flexibility to allow each elder to meet the objectives stated above in ways that are suitable to both the elder and the members. Consequently, as part of the implementation process, elders are to carry out a consultation exercise with their members to discuss current and future visits and to offer, in addition to a paper copy, the electronic delivery of the *Leaflet*. It is intended that the consultation exercise will be carried out shortly. Please will you welcome your elder into your home to discuss this with you.



Enough Food for Everyone IF
Everyone shares!



POVERTY

To celebrate the start of Christian Aid Week
Fairmilehead and Morningside Churches
will hold a

United Service

in

Fairmilehead Parish Church

on

Sunday 12th May 2013 at 7pm

Speaker: Mary Mulligan

Churches Development Officer
for Christian Aid

All Welcome



The next collection date this session is **26th May**, after the Sunday service (table set up in Main Hall).

Thanks to all who have donated items to Fresh Start. I would like to appeal for more small electrical items. These are helpful as they provide work for the PAT training initiative as well as providing items for the electrical packs that are made up and distributed. The problem of homelessness is as great as ever. So is the need for good quality donations to the starter pack scheme, for people moving into their own accommodation.

Here is the 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).

Pick up a leaflet from me, look at the website (www.freshstartweb.org.uk), or telephone 476 7741 for more information about the work of Fresh Start.

Alison Ambler

Book Review

Unapologetic

Why, despite everything, Christianity can still make surprising emotional sense

by Francis Spufford

Faber and Faber, £12.99, ISBN 978-0-571-22521-7, 2012

I offered to review this book because, despite some problems, I think it is important.

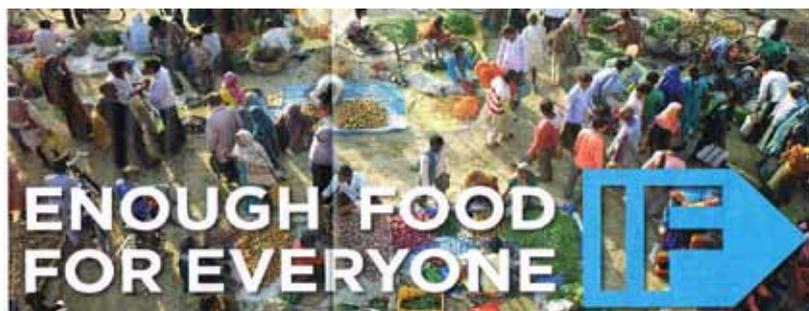
Francis Spufford is a practising Anglican. He is also a successful and well-regarded author, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature. He writes with brio, as when he takes on the "New Atheists". His demolition of their insipid bus advertisement "There's probably no God. Now stop worrying and enjoy your life." is thoroughly enjoyable as well as powerful. What he says here rings true, as so much of the book does; for example, when he attempts to describe what is almost beyond words, his feelings as he sits quietly in a church and shuts out the world ("It's hard to listen, even when misery nudges you into trying"). The result is a remarkable account of one man's attempt to open himself up to the Almighty. He writes powerfully and bravely, not hesitating to talk about past behaviour of which he is ashamed.

Why is this book important? Mainly, I think, because it represents Christians and Christianity to the large majority of its readers who not only do

not go to church but who think that those who do are, to use his word, 'weird'. The book is an unusual form of theology, even if Spufford concludes by saying "I don't think I need to point out that I am not any kind of spokesman for the Church of England, do I?" But *de facto* he has become a spokesman for church people in general, and we should understand how we are being represented to the world.

So what are the problems? Spufford writes for an audience used to late-night television. That is, he uses strong language – he swears a lot. For example, early on he produces an acronym, 'HPTfU', which is used throughout the rest of the book. This stands for "Human Propensity to F*** things Up" (my asterisks – he just wrote the word): his version, I suppose, of Original Sin. While some may find this offensive, I hope it will not put people off reading what is a fascinating and thought-provoking book.

John Murison



POVERTY

Spring Fair

at Morningside Parish Church Halls
(foot of Braid Road)

on Saturday 25th May, 10am–2pm

Stalls

Home Baking and Preserves

New and Nearly New Articles

Books, DVDs CDs, Jigsaws

Plants – Indoor, Outdoor, Bedding Plants

Fairtrade – Food and Craft

Tombola and Raffle – many prizes

Children's Activities, including face painting

Jewellery, Cards, Acupressure Massages

“Hudson's Handmade” Olives & Oils, Breadshare CIC

Taste the Marinated Olives, Seasoned Oils, Chutneys and Seaweed Oatcakes!

Refreshments – Coffee, Tea, Juice, Biscuits

Soup and Filled Rolls at Lunchtime

Donations for the Stalls and

Prizes for the Tombola gratefully received

Admission FREE – Come to the Fair!!

Congregational Register

Omitted

Welcome Teams

May

- 5 **Ian Thom**, Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Charles Black, Greig Scott
- 12 **Alan Armit**, Edith Armit, Louise Coghill, Iain Davidson, Hugh Cowan, Susan Black, Malcolm Watters, Nora Kellock, Elizabeth Mackay
- 19 **John George**, Kenneth Aitken, Alastair Hunter, Hazel Macaulay, Kathleen Patrick, Jill Powlett-Brown, Dorothy Whitehead, Tony Foster
- 26 **Donald King**, Brian Barron, Walter Crosby, Donald MacLeod, Roderick Morrison, Mairi Stevenson, Jim Young, Kathryn Sangster

June

- 2 **Rosemary McCulloch**, Rona Ferguson, Fiona Grant, Frank Hutson, Christina Morrow, Alison Murison, Malcolm Reid, Joan Ritchie, Toby Tucker

Friendship Club Outing

On Wednesday 8th May the Friendship Club is going to the Falkirk Wheel. We are meeting outside the Church at 10.45am. The cost, including lunch and bus travel, is £25. There are one or two spaces left on the bus.

If you are interested (you don't need to be a member of the Club), please contact Val Smart (Tel 447 6001).

Coffee Rota

May

- 5 Charles & Susan Black
- 12 David & Janet Ferguson (D13, D26, D28)
- 19 Caroline Kehoe (D70)
- 26 World Mission



Crèche Rota

May

- 5 Shona Murray
- 12 Janet Ferguson
- 19 Eileen McKinnon
- 26 Sharon Hamilton



June

- 2 Lucy Teall

Flower Rota

Provided by

Delivered by



May

- | | | |
|----|--------------------|--------------------|
| 5 | Caroline Kehoe | Catherine Ferguson |
| 12 | Anne Oxbrow | Liz Foster |
| 19 | Marjory Thomson | Fiona Kelly |
| 26 | Rosemary McCulloch | Susan Black |

June

- | | | |
|---|----------|------------------|
| 2 | Ina Weir | Charlotte Tucker |
|---|----------|------------------|

OPEN DOOR SPRING FAYRE

MORNINGSIDE PARISH CHURCH HALL
SATURDAY 11th MAY
 10 a.m. to 12 noon

Entry Fee £1 includes refreshments

MANY STALLS
 Home Made Cakes
 Jams, Marmalade & Chutney
 Tombola Raffle
 Jewellery Toiletries
 Cards & Gifts Quiz




THE OPEN DOOR
 420 Morningside Road, Edinburgh, EH10 5HY
 Tel: 0131 447 9757
 Email: theopendoor@morningside.org.uk
 Website: www.theopendoor-morningside.org.uk

Material for the June *Leaflet* should be delivered to the Church Office or to the Editors' pigeon-hole in the Main Hall by Sunday 12th May, or sent by e-mail by 9am on Tuesday 14th May to greenbankleaflet@googlemail.com

Some difficult sayings of Jesus

Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.

How hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! As Jesus said in the Sermon on the Mount, *The gate is narrow and the road is hard.* Here, in this particular saying about a camel and the eye of a needle, Jesus says that it is most difficult of all for the rich. These words were perplexing for those who first heard them. They were so astounded that they had to ask, *Then who can be saved?* (In the New Testament “being saved” and “entering the Kingdom of God” are two ways of saying the same thing.) The original disciples were not affluent. They themselves had left everything to follow Jesus. But they had not realised just how stringent the terms of entry into the kingdom were — and are.

Jesus’ teaching on wealth continues to puzzle all who try to take him seriously. His words are challenging for all who read them, but especially for those of us who take for granted the benefits of a regular income or pension, a comfortable home and well-stocked supermarkets. We may deplore the introduction of a cap on various benefits. We may recognise that making ends meet must be difficult for those paid only the minimum wage (£6.19 per hour) or even the so-called “living wage” (£7.45 per hour). We may find it totally unacceptable that one in four of Scotland’s children are officially recognised as living in poverty. However, even the poorest residents of Edinburgh are rich in comparison with billions of the world’s children, women and men who live on the brink of starvation. Half the world’s population struggles to survive on less than £2 per day. Worldwide, 22,000 children die each day due to poverty. One in three has no adequate shelter. In developing countries 1.1 billion people have inadequate access to water. If wealth is relative, we are the rich relations. So this is a word addressed to us as much as to anyone.

Jesus had much to say about wealth. Jesus talked about money more than anything else except the Kingdom of God. Eleven out of thirty nine parables refer to money. In the ancient world (Greek, Roman and Hebrew) material prosperity was widely seen as a reward or by-product of spiritual virtue. Things go well for the good, for men and women of good character, and poorly for the bad, those who lack good character and self-discipline. There are exceptions, which raise the question of why the good suffer and the wicked prosper. However, long ago (and sometimes still) the ideal remains the coincidence of virtue and prosperity. If you are prosperous, it is because you have done what is right; if you are poor, it’s your own fault. The wealthy deserve their wealth, just as the poor deserve their poverty. Yet in his sayings and stories Jesus regularly criticised wealth and reversed the conventional wisdom by declaring that the poor rather than the rich were blessed.

This saying about the camel and the needle’s eye comes immediately after a rich man had come to Jesus with a question. The story of the rich man — described as young in Matthew and as a ruler in Luke but simply as a man in Mark — is one of the most familiar passages in the Gospels. (It can be found

in Mark’s Gospel, chapter 10, verses 17–30.) Like the equally familiar parable of the Good Samaritan, the story begins with a question about salvation from an earnest adherent to the law. The rich man asks, *What must I do to inherit eternal life?* This question shows that the rich man has not grasped what Jesus had been saying. Rather than receiving the kingdom in complete dependence, like a little child accepting a gift, he wants to know what he can do to inherit eternal life. It is only in very rare circumstances that one can ever do anything for an inheritance: by definition an inheritance is something a person can only be given.

Paradoxically, Jesus gives the man something more to do. Jesus might have been expected to tell him to increase his charitable giving, for this was valued by the Jews as one of the most meritorious acts of all, a sure way of amassing riches in heaven; and the rich were regarded as being fortunate in having the resources to do this on a large scale. But Jesus pushed this beyond the limit that would have been thought desirable by most of his contemporaries. The man must give away everything and follow Jesus.

The question immediately arises, Would the same apply to every rich person? According to Jesus, wealth may make it difficult for us to be in a right relationship with God. In two stories he warned against the folly of pursuing wealth. He advised against placing our trust in material possessions: *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal.* He warned that wealth can be a form of slavery for those who seek it: *No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.* Jesus teaches that our dependence should be on God and God’s provision for us. Wealth may make it difficult for us to be in a right relationship with God — but not impossible.

How, then, can we enter the kingdom of God? Jesus does not leave us with any easy answers. Jesus always calls for total transformation and commitment. Being in the company and presence of Jesus is a good first step. Simply responding to the gracious invitation, *Come, follow me* brings us closer to the one who can work changes in us. And Jesus holds out the hope that with God change and transformation are not only possible but are already under way. For the rich man, Jesus’ call meant giving up all he had for a life of discipleship. What does it mean for us?

Have you looked at the website yet?

www.greenbankchurch.org