

Leaflet



Greenbank Parish Church
Braidburn Terrace, EH10 6ES

No 646 October 2015

Pulpit Diary

Oct 4

9.30am First Sunday Service led by Springboard

10.30am Morning Worship with Guild Dedication

Oct 11

10.30am Morning Worship
(Special activity for children)

Oct 18

10.30am Morning Worship
(Special activity for children)

Oct 25

10.30am Morning Worship

7.00pm Night Light at Fairmilehead

Nov 1

9.30am First Sunday Service led by the Guild

10.30am Morning Worship

Nov 8

10.45am Remembrance Sunday Service

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

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The pastoral team can be contacted through the Church Office:

Rev Alison Swindells

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Rev W. Peter Graham

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Youth Minister: Rev Bill Stone

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To make contact with any of the organisations referenced in this *Leaflet*, please use the telephone no given, if there is one. Otherwise please contact the Church Office. Website: www.greenbankchurch.org

Minister's Letter

Dear Friends

Most of us will be familiar with the song “Where have all the flowers gone?”. Written by the singer-songwriter Pete Seeger in the 1950s as a protest against the war in Vietnam, it has been sung by many different artists since then. The most recent release was in November last year when a number of those artists who have sung



it in the past came together to commemorate the outbreak of WW1. Peggy Seeger, sister of Pete, spoke in an interview about one of the challenges encountered in recording that last version. And that challenge was to have everyone sing in the same key at the same speed. She explained that most artists will take a song and sing it in their own way. Now they were being asked to sing to a particular template, which is always much harder for an artist than following their own inclinations. It lends new meaning to that line of the song “When will they ever learn? When will they ever learn?”

I have often wondered if the song might not have spoken more truly and deeply if that line had instead read “When will we ever learn? When will we ever learn?” For then it would perhaps be more reflective of our common humanity and offer less opportunity to shift the blame, or the challenge, onto someone else.

It is desperately sad that, at a time when we are celebrating the 70th anniversary of Quest, the Greenbank youth group initiated by Rev David Read on his release from POW camp at the end of WWII, the world is experiencing a migration of people that has not been seen since those very days. In 1945 hundreds of thousands of people displaced by war were moving across Europe in search of missing families and a place to call home. Today particularly we see the plight of Syrian refugees

fleeing from their homes, fearing for their own lives and the lives of their families, because of the threat of chemical weapons, surely as indiscriminate in their effect as the mass bombing of Coventry or Dresden. When will we ever learn?

Of course there are no easy answers to the acute differences that exist between nations, and some-

times even within nations. Just as there are no easy answers to differences of faith and belief. But sometimes we need to look closer to home and recognise how often we see things from our own point of view, the times we fail to take into account the bigger picture. And to recognise that so often we are motivated by our own fears – fears for the future, fears for our own position, fear for our own security, fear of the other. It is these fears that so often lead to hatred and war. In the bible we find these words “There is no fear in love but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). These words sing out to us of God’s love for us and for the world. When will we ever learn?

As politicians wrestle with the implications of feeding and housing, educating and caring for the exhausted and dispossessed refugees, let us pray for compassion that we might learn to sing God’s song of love in harmony with one another and be enabled to offer generous hospitality to those who are most in need.

Let me close by reminding you of Greenbank’s YACHT project which seeks to continue the work begun by David Read in a new way, appropriate to a different generation of young people that they might learn of God’s love for them and for the world. I would invite you to support our Auction of Talents on 3rd October.

With warmest wishes,

Alison I Swindells
Parish Minister

Quest – 70 Years On – QII

“When you rattle and bang in a 16 tram”

Dr Read’s own words on the founding of Quest are reprinted below from the *Leaflet* of November 1995, written for the celebration of 50 years since the beginning of Quest:

“Quest was born in a POW camp in Germany where 200 British officers with time on their hands were imprisoned. It occurred to me (and to an Anglican chaplain) that we had an exceptional opportunity to offer a course of lectures on the Christian faith. We found ourselves



immersed in discussions, explanations and arguments, soon attended by about half the camp.

We spent many hours deciding what to call this venture and eventually fastened on the name ‘Quest’, an attractive name with no echo of super-piety. It also suggested that genuine Christian experience is not something to be swallowed once-and-for-all, but an unending pilgrimage.

In 1945 when I reassumed my charge at Greenbank, I thought that there was room for a movement of this kind among the teenagers. About a dozen responded to my invitation to form such a fellowship, but voted to avoid that word and adopt the name we had used in my prison-camp. Thus Greenbank’s Quest was born. It was a lively infant and grew rapidly and Junior Quest soon came into being. Quest never depended on the initiative and ideas of its founder, but over the next fifty years developed in a great variety of ways with the guidance of my successors – Donald Mackay and Ian Scott.”

Alison Swindells and Bill Stone now carry on the torch.

A stream of talented young people have come through Quest over the years – among many others nurses, doctors, engineers, scientists, lawyers, accountants, academics, bankers, teachers – even a high court judge and three Ministers! However varied or exalted their careers may ultimately have been, they have all shared a common inspiration through Quest, its leaders, and the Ministers who nurtured it and allowed it to flourish. A committee structure was quickly formed, allowing Quest to run itself, with guidance from

successive Ministers. Early on, the position of ‘Jobmaster’ was created, as it was felt this would initiate avenues of service to prevent the group from becoming too inward-looking. All kinds of activities grew from that, culminating in the work camps of more recent years.



Many have been grateful for the influence their time in Quest has had on their lives – the friendships made, the opportunity to discuss big questions and share ideas and beliefs with other young people, and to work together, whether it was putting on entertainments or taking part in work camps across Scotland.

In more recent years the pattern of life has changed for young people leaving school, and where once the majority remained in Edinburgh to work or go to university, most now leave Edinburgh to study elsewhere, and the core membership is no longer there to the same extent. QII has evolved as a younger group to continue the Quest tradition under the initial inspirational guidance of Gillie Davidson and Brian Barron, who encouraged QII to spread its wings, with working visits to Hungary, the United States, and Tuni in India, but still retain the spiritual dimension which has always been such an important part of the group.

1950s Recollections Clifford and Isobel Hastings

The mid 1950s formed the central point of our involvement with Quest and thus the following recollections are of that period, which arguably saw the greatest number of participants taking part on a regular basis.

We remember: Sunday evening services preceding meetings at 7.45pm where numbers often exceeded 80; the hard work involved in leading a Bible study



session evidenced by the highlighting in copies of Daily Bible Readings written by William Barclay and still retained; the challenging addresses we received from visiting speakers (not only ministers) and their relief at times when the Chairman called time on further questions at the end of their talk; the coffee and fellowship enjoyed in local cafes or parents homes after these Sunday meetings; the excitement (and chaos) leading up to the staging of a Quest revue and the disappointment when it was all over. Yet we still sing today songs such as “When you rattle and bang in a 16 tram down the hill to Morningside”; the wonderful memories of retreats to Wiston Lodge, particularly that involving Dr Leonard Small and Cramond Youth Fellowship with over 110 attending. The success of these lay in the pattern of the day which remained unchanged – serious challenges to one’s beliefs and faith matched by very active play times. All speakers were asked to tell a story at the end of a meal and we heard the same story every year from the minister at Wiston Kirk, received in silence and greeted at its end with huge acclaim from the assembled company, much to the story teller’s delight!

Happy times too involving kids from Canaan Lodge, carol singing with mince pies at the manse, baby sitting services provided by the girls were all part of each session’s commitment.

But do these reminiscences reflect what Quest was all about all those years ago? It has definitely given us a foundation for our lives – a happy marriage, a close family, a continuing commitment to the Church and last but not least an ongoing

relationship with those who shared these very happy and memorable times with us.

1960/70 Looking back David and Janet Ferguson

Quest comprised two groups – Junior Quest and Senior Quest. It was great fun to be part of these groups. Junior Quest was run by the Assistant Minister. Rev Bob Brown and Rev Alan MacKay were very popular and successful in this role. We met at 5pm on a Sunday. Sometimes there was a guest speaker and a discussion. Attendance was around 30. Senior Quest was for 17s and over. The group ran itself. We had annual elections to elect our president and committee. Presidents around our time included Gus Sinclair, Andy Greening, Colin Naismith and John Ritchie.

We remember: The meetings which included a short act of worship, a talk, questions, finishing with the Quest evening prayer, numbers attending varied but 40

was probably typical; speakers included Liberal leader (now Lord) David Steel, Bob Kernohan and many young up and coming ministers

At Christmas, we went carol singing in the Parish and the evening would end at the manse for a wonderful supper provided by Mrs Mackay, and rounded off by a prayer led by Rev Donald Mackay.

In January, a highlight of our year was the Quest Revue. This annual three night production was held in the Church Hill Theatre. Opening and closing choruses, dancing, the folk group, sketches and front of curtain jokes were applauded by ever supportive audiences of our families and church members. The proceeds went to the three Quest charities selected for the year, as did money from the babysitting we did for families in the congregation throughout the year and from our carol singing.

At Easter, our retreat to Wiston, near Biggar, was a big event! It included morning and evening prayers, daily bible study, a programme of eminent speakers, lots of silliness, games, sketches, jokes and football matches. It all made for a great time of learning and growing in the faith as well as a deepening of friendships.

In the summer, we enjoyed our work camps, usually going to paint a church or a manse, in a wonderful location. These memorable trips took us to Hoy, Barra, Torridon and Benbecula. We sometimes found ourselves taking the Sunday Service too!

For many years, we also visited children who, at that time, spent months in the Princess Margaret Rose Hospital.

As well as being great fun, Quest provided a safe place to explore faith and to discover more fully our own identity.





1990s Inspiration Colin McRae

Although many friends of mine went to QII it was originally down to the fact they were looking for a piper on their next QII adventure to Budapest that I ended up tagging along. Little did I know that agreeing to go would have a huge and lasting impact on my life. Sitting on that train on the way to Hungary I had no idea what to expect, but I soon discovered I was with a very special group of people, everyone was accepted, you could be yourself and you were welcomed as part of the group, experiencing so many different things together, having so many laughs but with people there to support you.

I remember: QII changed Sunday nights, from it being a night you dreaded because it signified the end of the weekend, it became the night you looked forward to where you would get together with over 40 people you knew as friends. Every week something different, there were the shows in the hall with plots which we – let alone the audience – did not understand! All-night fundraising in the church ending with us taking the early service, learning about different faiths and so many fun and interesting evenings.

Then there were the annual summer expeditions, both here in Scotland doing community work in Orkney, Tiree and Boat of Garten, and then experiencing different countries and cultures in Taizé, Budapest, South Carolina and then India. Whether we were in the hall or away on our travels we always shared Burma Candle, that special time during an evening when a candle was lit and we all stopped and relaxed and listen to words and poems and sometimes just sat in silence. These Burma candles happened in so many different and unusual places and with different things acting as the candle including glow worms one night. It was such a special time for young people to stop for a moment and think about things. The experience we had was down to the amazing leaders Gillie and Brian, who brought us together and gave us so many opportunities to experience life and to look at things in a different way. They did not preach at us, the total opposite, they went with us on amazing journeys, allowed us to see things, hear different views, discuss things and realise no one had all the answers. They gave us the opportunity to be ourselves and made us realise the importance of each of us and that each has amazing potential and each has



the ability to do something that can make a difference. Throughout we could see Love in Action, seeing past just words, but showing and understanding what love is and how that love could be put into action in a positive way.

QII affected so many people's lives, strong friendships that last to this day, even marriages happening as a result of meeting at QII. Little did I know, when sitting on that train away on my first adventure to Budapest, that 20 years later I would be working for SLA – the lasting legacy of our amazing adventure in 1999.

I know I and others look back to those days and wish sometimes it was 6.30 on a Sunday evening and we were off to QII.

2000s Moving Forward Vanessa Hutchinson

QII has been a formative part of many teenage lives. The safe welcoming atmosphere allowed for a strong community to develop quickly. It was (and is?) a place to consolidate school friendships and make new ones, a safe place to discuss faith and moral issues and a group you could really feel part of. The flexible nature of the leadership and sensitivity to respond to our needs gave us a sense of ownership over the group and often hit where we were itching. Questions were welcomed and the reflective space at the end of each meeting (the Burma candle) gave each space to meet with God in a personal way.

I remember: The strong social heart of QII remained, continuing the legacy of Tuni, with fundraising and new trips abroad. QII's trip to Peru in 2008 (and the preparation leading up to it) was certainly a formative part of my faith journey and I know it had a big impact on the group as a whole. We appreciated the efforts made to make us feel at home in Greenbank and the outlets given for us to serve the wider congregation.

I thank God for my time in QII. It was through this group that I came to faith and made friendships that I am confident will last for a lifetime. We were given permission to lead, strive and flourish, encouraged to be the best we can be to make a difference in the world, and given great support as we worked out what that looked like for our lives. I now run my own youth group for my church in York and pray I can give to my young people as much as I received. My memories of QII fuel my passion to serve young people now and it's a privilege to see them grow and flourish.

christian aid

Morningside & Fairmilehead Christian Aid Committee

Presents

A Scottish Film Evening

with Ian Rintoul

On Friday, 16th October 2015 commencing at 7.30pm (doors open at 7pm) at Greenbank Parish Church Hall, Braidburn Terrace, Edinburgh.

39 STEPS

The Hour of the Eagle

Tickets priced £7 to include ice cream at interval are available from:

David Ferguson, after the 10.30am Service

All proceeds less expenses will go to Christian Aid.

POVERTY

Book Review: *Who are we to judge?*

by Fraser Dyer ISBN 978-0-281-07248-4 Price £9.99

I was initially attracted to this book by the title, and that impulse was confirmed by the introduction. The author, an Anglican priest in inner London, freely confesses that throughout his life he has rushed to judgement on a whole range of issues and people. That confession hit home as I realised immediately that I am the same. In fact I suspect a huge number of us are, and although there may be comfort in numbers it doesn't make it right!

The book is in three parts: 'Understanding Judgementalism'; 'Jesus and Judgement'; 'Towards Discernment'.

The first part looks at the reasons why we can be so judgemental, using headings such as 'Tribalism', 'Fear', 'Blame and scapegoating'. The second part examines the approach that Jesus took in making judgements and how, right down through the ages, Christians have found it difficult to live up to his example in this regard. The final part of the book examines ways in which we can retrain ourselves to be less judgemental about people and thereby become more Christian in our lives.

The world we live in now is one where the advent of social media has given people personal platforms to broadcast their opinions and criticisms of others and has added to the already existing tendency of some of our national newspapers to use lurid headlines to press their views. We all deplore these things but these are only the most obvious examples of instant, unthinking judgements, generally made to back up a prejudice. It seems to be an increasingly intolerant world. But deep down are we really that different? Read this book and be prepared to wince – I know I did!

I found the book to be very readable. It is short – only 125 pages – and is written in an easily read style and with humour. If I have a criticism it is that it repeats itself on occasion. I recommend it without hesitation. You can always put it down after the first few pages if it seems to be too close to home – or would that be judgemental?

David Reid

Friendship Club

To begin our new session on **Wednesday 7th October at 2.30pm**, we look forward to an inspiring and relaxing afternoon as we welcome the return of Bill Barr with another of his splendid "Audio Visuals of Colour and Music". On **14th October** Kathleen will be sharing some of her happy musical finds under the title "Serendipity", then on **21st October** we go to "Skara Brae and the Glens of Angus" in a presentation by Alistair McNeil and the group 'Stravaig' recently returned from two showings in Germany. We will stay in Scotland on **4th November** with a "Visit to St Kilda". If you would like to join us, please come along, maybe with a friend – you will be made most welcome.

Val Smart

World Mission Council

It seems appropriate, when the American Secretary of State has recently made an historic visit to Cuba to reopen the US embassy in Havana after 54 years, to comment on an article written in the World Mission Council's magazine of June/July this year. When the General Secretary of the Presbyterian Reformed Church of Cuba, Rev Daniel Izquierdo, was visiting Scotland he was asked "how can we develop the relationship between our churches?" He replied "Come and visit us, see the work of our congregations, but most of all get to know us."

In March of this year eight members of various congregations of the Church of Scotland went to Cuba, where their welcome was "warm and the hospitality of all the churches visited, from the vibrant city centre to tiny rural villages, was genuine and unpretentious". They said they experienced a real feeling of friendship as they shared stories, often over a meal, enjoyed wonderful Cuban musical evenings but also heard the story of a church who struggled with its very existence during the communist regime in the country. It was often the women who kept the churches open, their faith keeping them strong through many difficult times, and they are still supporting and encouraging the work of the church and its young ministers today.

The church is reaching out to the vulnerable in its community, providing social care to the elderly, a safe space for groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, activities for young people, and clean water for those living in the vicinity. The visiting group said they learned the meaning of receiving from others (when their own luggage hadn't arrived!) and in the experience of friendship, fun and laughter learned a lot about themselves and their own faith. (Text extract for some of the above taken from 'CUBA mucho blah blah' by Carol Finlay.)

Pam Jack

Bookstall – 4th October

After the 10.30am Service the Bookstall will be open on 4th October with a selection of books from *The Cornerstone*, with books that might help you on your faith journey or expand your knowledge of Christian doctrine or the Bible. If you would like to order a copy of any books reviewed recently in the *Leaflet* please contact us by 26th April.

John and Joan Ritchie



Friends Reunited

Our holiday this year found us returning to Edinburgh by car through England, and we took the chance of accepting Roy and Jane Dodman's invitation to visit them during their summer break in Belper, Derbyshire. Many readers will be pleased to know that Jane and Roy are in good health, and in the happy situation of enjoying two grandchildren in England, and two in Jamaica. They pass on their best wishes to all at Greenbank.

We talked about their work in Jamaica, which is progressing, though adversely affected by lack of funds and other problems. They have provided a colourful and encouraging update on all the affairs of the school in Hannah Town, and we reproduce this below, with photograph. Roy still lectures and preaches, but is technically retired, and Jane is thinking about full retirement in the near future. Those of us who know them, however, will be certain that they will both continue to work tirelessly for social justice and the extension of God's kingdom in Jamaica. We pray that their endeavours continue to bear fruit in the disadvantaged communities which they support so fully.

"We are spending time in England and thought you would be interested in some news of the Mel Nathan schools, which serve children from the economically deprived inner-city community of Hannah Town and its environs in Kingston, Jamaica. This is the school that friends at Greenbank have supported in different ways over the years. The school will celebrate its 21st anniversary in September and over these years it has provided primary education for children aged 6 to 12. Most of the children attending the prep school have attended the adjoining early childhood department for children aged 3 to 6.

The photo shows children from the two schools. The schools held a boys' and girls' day in May and the children were asked to dress up in the uniforms

and work clothes of their chosen career. They selected a wide range of careers, including nurse (the most popular choice by far for the girls), doctor, lawyer, fashion model, farmer and minister of religion. We hope that the education the children receive at the schools will lay the foundation for them to achieve their dreams."



Pam Jack

The Story of the Banners

At a Guild Meeting in 1995 the topic was "Making Banners" and the talk was given by some of the St Andrew's and St George's Church Banner Group. Theirs were the 'instant' kind, done quickly to illustrate a children's address or a sermon. A few of us were inspired to try and so, under Mary Hunter's leadership, the Greenbank Banner Group was formed from members of the congregation and eleven of us met to discuss plans. As is evident we opted for more permanent hangings, the initial thought being to do something for the children. Though many of us were accomplished sewers and embroiderers, we had little idea of how to proceed and so sought guidance from Jean Brownlie who was taking a City and Guilds Course. She then masterminded the overall design. Many evenings were spent discussing the theme, eventually choosing "Creation" as described in the hymn *All things bright and beautiful* and incorporating the words "The Lord God made them all". So the Big Banner began. John Weir made us a huge frame, Moira Davidson stitched the backing fabrics together and we drew our designs, chose our colours (with reference to the Nativity Window) and started stitching. We learnt many new techniques and tips (wet the eye of the needle before threading – it really works). When all the pieces were complete, sewing on to the banner began. We worked in pairs, one on each side of the banner on its frame, one to push the needle through and the other to send it back – time consuming but hilarious. As we were starting to plan the banner we heard the news of the disaster in Dunblane and after a service when all our thoughts and prayers were with the families of the children and the teacher who had died we decided to pay tribute to them. They are commemorated by the chain of 16 daisies. The inspiration for the inner panel came from the experience of teaching in Jamaica, and the smaller motifs illustrate the words of the hymn. It took three years to make.

The Christmas banners were planned following the same way of working, but on a smaller scale, discussion, design, colours and fabric selected then cut and stitched. The designs were turned into Christmas cards and sold in aid of SLA. The Pentecost banners displaying many complex techniques were followed by the Easter ones and then – a well earned rest. Being aware that the Pentecost ones are up for quite a long time we had the idea of creating a Harvest and Autumn pair. They have taken seven of us eighteen months to complete and we hope that you, the members of the congregation, will appreciate and enjoy them. Once again, they depict some of the wonders of God's creation and our thankfulness for his many gifts to us.

Session News

Retirement of an elder

Doris Laing, who was an elder at Greenbank from her ordination and admission in 1977, has retired recently from the Kirk Session. Doris served the Congregation with great diligence in the long years of her service. She became a District elder in 1978 and has looked after the same district (now 29) ever since. Later she also took on District 30. Doris will also be remembered and appreciated as a very efficient minutes' clerk for three Session Clerks from 1980 to 1997. She was Secretary and Treasurer of the Work

*Omitted from the Online
version of the Leaflet*

Flower Rota



	<i>Provided by</i>	<i>Delivered by</i>
October		
4	Chrissie Munro	Alison Ambler
11	Dunbar Family	Rachel Cadell
18	Winton Family	Moira Little
25	Ritchie Family	Ishbel Emery
November		
1	Louise Coghill	Janet Inglis

Coffee Rota



October	
4	Explorer Scouts
11	Neighbourhood Group
18	Mission and Service Committee
25	Country Dance Club
November	
1	Diana Hastings and Clare Campbell (D31A, D32 & D33)

Crèche Rota



October		
4	Janet Ferguson	Jenny Wright
11	Vivien Hutchison	Jenny Wright
18	Lorna Perriss	Eileen McKinnon
25	Lorna Htet-Khin	Lucy Teall
November		
1	Hazel McLachlan	Lorna Perriss

Welcome Teams

October	
4	John Rutherford , David Allan, Richard Denison, Caroline Kehoe, Anne Kinneer, John Mowat, Jean Roynon-Jones
11	Ian Thom , Keith Clark, Ray Dely, Catherine Hardie, Elizabeth Htet-Khin, Anne Oxbrow, Isobel Thom, Kay Ellis, Charles Black, Greig Scott
18	Donald King , Brian Barron, Walter Crosby, Donald MacLeod, Roderick Morrison, Mairi Stevenson, Jim Young, Kathryn Sangster
25	Keith Winton , Eileen Campbell, Richard Dunbar, Clifford Hastings, Chris Horne, Doris Laing, Enid Mowat, Robin Nimmo
November	
1	Rosemary McCulloch , Rona Ferguson, Fiona Grant, Christina Morrow, Alison Murison, Malcolm Reid, Joan Ritchie, Toby Tucker, Alastair Ross

Party, organiser of the Neighbourhood Group and Representative elder to the Country Dancing Club. Her resignation was accepted at the June meeting of the Kirk Session when she was thanked for her faithful and generous service.

30 year certificates

On 13th September the Minister presented long service certificates to 6 elders – Iain Davidson, Chris Horne, Lenny Maguire, Anne Oxbrow and David Reid for 30 years and John Ritchie for 31 years. She thanked them for all they had done in many different ways and looked forward to their continuing service to the Congregation in the years to come.

Material for the November *Leaflet* should be delivered to the Church Office or to the Editors' pigeon-hole in the Main Hall by Sunday 11th October, or sent by e-mail by 9am on Tuesday 13th October to greenbankleaflet@googlemail.com

CONCERNING WORSHIP – WHAT IS CHRISTIAN WORSHIP?

“Concerning Worship” is the title of a small book published in 1948. It was based on a series of talks given by a senior Army Chaplain to his colleagues in the closing stages of World War II. As the author explains in the Preface: “In order that we might for a little time put from our minds the grim pattern of war, the subject chosen was Christian worship...” Seventy years on the Church finds itself on a battlefield of a very different kind. In such circumstances the need to understand not only what we are doing when we gather for worship but also why we are doing it becomes paramount. That is why the title of this little book is unashamedly borrowed as the overall theme for this and subsequent articles on this page.

Worship is a matter of concern for all who belong to the Church. Worship is at the very heart of the Church’s existence. It is its core activity. It is what brings believers together on a regular basis. It is of the greatest importance, and so in that sense concerns us all. In another sense also it is a matter of concern, a constant topic of debate and discussion. We are anxious about its future, wondering whether worship as we know it will be around in another generation. All of us ought to be concerned about worship: its content, its relevance and its impact.

But what is worship? It can be hard for us to know whether or not we are doing something if we are not sure what that ‘something’ is. Defining words is important because not only do we use words, but words use us. Once we assign meaning to a word, it both reflects and shapes our ways of thinking and seeing and doing. That is why discussions about worship can be confusing.

Defining worship is not easy. The Dutch scholar Erasmus said “Every definition is dangerous.” And we must beware of falling into the trap of following Humpty Dumpty: “When *I* use a word,” Lewis Carroll’s character said, in rather a scornful tone, “it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.” No adequate simple definition of worship is possible. When we try to define a word simply and precisely, we often miss out significant aspects of the reality in its wholeness. Attempts at explaining worship as “encounter with God”, “engagement with God”, “enjoying God” or “relating to God” all say something true, but end up leaving out more than they contribute to our understanding of worship.

One way of expanding our definition of worship is to describe it. Although it may be tempting to consider worship as the distinguishing mark of the Church, we must remember that worship is a widespread human activity. “To be human is to worship” is the bold opening statement of a recent book. Worship is something religious people do, whether in a forest clearing before a sacred tree, in an ancient stone circle, in an ornate Indian temple, in the incense-filled atmosphere of Russian Orthodox cathedral, or in an unadorned whitewashed Scottish country kirk. For most of us, worship is something we do in a church building on a Sunday morning, when we come together to sing hymns, to pray, to listen to the Bible being read and to a preacher, and to make an offering of our money.

But what is going on in worship? It is all very well to describe what happens on a Sunday morning in Greenbank and in countless other churches, chapels and cathedrals. But what is it all about? Is it about the importance we attach to doing specific things in a particular way? Is it about the associations we have with a special, holy place, a church? More importantly, who is it all about? Who is it for? Is it about the people who come together? Is it for the sake of the people whom we regard as being “outsiders”? Or is worship primarily not about us at all but about God?

Worship is about God. Worship is our response to what God is and says and does. In worship the people of God demonstrate the supreme worth of God. In the Anglican marriage service the groom used to say, as he put a ring on the bride’s finger, “With this ring I thee wed, with my body I thee worship, and with all my worldly goods I thee endow...” The groom thus acknowledged the worth and value of the bride to him; and this he did not only with words but with actions and symbols, all indicating her loveliness. To worship God is to indicate God’s loveliness.

This is the language of intimacy and love. Christianity is a love affair with God and Jesus, a love affair in which we are bound to God and Jesus and to one another by the Holy Spirit. If we are to express our love towards another person, we must spend time with that person. So it is with God. We must devote time and energy to worship if we are to achieve what William Cowper called “a closer walk with God”. That is why regular worship in the company of our fellow believers is the first priority of every Christian able to engage in it. Of course our response to God and our worship of God can never be restricted or confined to public worship on the Lord’s Day, but this is where it must start and where it must be nourished and sustained.

For further reflection:

Man’s chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy him for ever.
(Shorter Catechism, 1645)

Worship is a gift between lovers who keep on giving to each other. (C Welton Gaddy, 1992)



We note with regret the death on 5th September 2015 of Maurice Berrill, editor of this *Leaflet* for eleven years, from April 1973 until June 1984. His continued interest in the *Leaflet* and his encouragement to the editors who followed him was much appreciated.